The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure III -- A Scandal in Bohemia

As we start in on the short stories, I'm proposing a continuing thread: Change the variable. If we could change just one variable in a story, would that story still work? Or would the outcome change? How? And does changing one variable inevitably lead to changes in other variables? Just a few of the variables in a detective story:

- the client
- the motive
- the weapon
- the victim
- the perpetrator

SCAN gives us an excellent window on how changing a variable might affect the storyline and outcome when Holmes seizes on the damning evidential variable. Quizzing the king, he actually asks about possible variables, then either dismisses or suggests excuses for them — legal papers or certificates (none, but presumably could be forged), compromising letters in the king's handwriting (forged), private note paper (stolen), the king's personal seal (imitated), a photograph of the king (bought). The piece of evidence that propels the story to the conclusion is that photo of the king with Irene.

So I offer a variable from SCAN for the group to discuss this week. It's the hiding place. The story tells us where Irene hid the photo — but would the story change if she'd chosen another hiding place for it? How important is the hiding place she selected? What alternative hiding places might she consider, and do they change the story's outcome? How?

Sonia Fetherston

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