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The CHANGED BAG

How it happened I can't explain. I  
 remember being at the glove counter  
 and laying my shopping bag on the  
 counter. Then I went to the other end,  
 where there was a lady for whom I  
 was obliged to wait before getting  
 room. I bought a pair of gloves, open-  
 ed my bag and put them in. I did so  
 without looking into the bag. I passed  
 the lady for whom I had waited. She  
 was standing at the end of the counter  
 I had first visited, and I remember see-  
 ing a bag before her that looked so  
 like mine that I looked down to discov-  
 er if I had my own bag in my hand  
 and saw that it was an exact duplicate  
 of the one before the lady. I thought  
 nothing of this, for they were a very  
 common type.

When I got home I tossed it into a  
 closet. The next day, before going  
 out with it, I opened it to put in some  
 samples. I was surprised to find in it  
 a purse containing \$20, a few samples  
 and a letter, the envelope of which  
 was missing. Eager to learn what  
 these things meant, I read the letter. It  
 ran:

Dear Julie—Meet me Thursday after-  
 noon (3:15) at the northeast angle of the  
 open square. I shall disguise myself as  
 an old man. Wear the costume of an old  
 woman. Mary doesn't suspect anything.  
 Don't fail.  
 GILBERT.

I was petrified with horror. I was  
 Mary; Gilbert was my lover. The  
 writing was disguised, but the longer  
 I looked at it the more I was convinced  
 that it was a bad attempt to conceal  
 the hand of Gilbert Merriman. I glance-  
 ed at the clock. I had just half an  
 hour to get to the place of meeting.

When I reached the square the clock  
 in St. Paul's spire stood at 3:10. I  
 walked to the northeast angle, draw-  
 ing a heavy veil down over my face,  
 through which I could see, but not be  
 recognized. I concluded to sit on one  
 of the benches and wait. Several  
 women came in, but they were all  
 young and passed on. Five minutes  
 before the appointed time an old wom-  
 an came by with a basket of apples  
 on her arm. As she passed me I asked  
 if she would sell me one. She held  
 out her basket for me to choose, but  
 did not speak. I looked into her face  
 and felt sure that I had caught my  
 bird.

"Julie?" I asked.  
 She gave a repressed shriek.  
 "You and Gilbert are mistaken in  
 thinking Mary does not suspect. You  
 must have lost Gilbert's letter, for  
 Mary has it and will be here—perhaps  
 is here now—to expose you. As soon  
 as he comes both of you follow me. I  
 will take you to a place where you  
 can confer in safety."

"Dear, dear woman, how kind you  
 are! There he is now. I'll go and tell  
 him."  
 An old man, much bent and leaning  
 heavily on his cane, came in at a side  
 entrance to the square, and the old  
 woman hastened toward him. They  
 stood talking excitedly, the man look-  
 ing at me with evident suspicion. The  
 woman was apparently begging him  
 to do as I had suggested, but he ap-  
 peared to be of a different mind. A  
 policeman happened to stroll by, and  
 the man called to him and said some-  
 thing to him, and they both started for  
 me, followed by the woman.

I began to be frightened.  
 When they reached me the old man  
 called to "Julie" to come forward.  
 "Is that your bag?" he asked.  
 "Heavens, yes! I didn't notice it be-  
 fore."

In my excitement at my discovery of  
 the letter on leaving the house I had  
 snatched up the bag with its contents,  
 and there it was hanging to my wrist.  
 The old man took it from me and  
 opened it.  
 "Here's your property," he said to  
 the woman, "and here's the thief. Take  
 her along, policeman."  
 "Not unless you'll agree to appear  
 against her."

The man promised, giving his name  
 and address. I was startled to hear  
 him say not Gilbert Merriman, but  
 George Gilbert. The policeman took  
 the bag and its contents and great  
 heavens—marched me to the police  
 station.

The only person in the world on  
 whom I could rely to help me out of  
 the scrape was Gilbert Merriman. I  
 vowed that I would be tried and con-  
 victed as a thief rather than send for  
 him. Indeed, they took me to the very  
 door of a cell before I succumbed. One  
 look inside the horrid place was  
 enough.  
 "Wait," I said. "I'll send for a  
 friend."

They took me back to the office, gave  
 me pencil and paper, and I wrote a  
 note to Gilbert begging him to come  
 to me at once. The messenger was a  
 long while finding him, and when he  
 came I was ready to collapse. I never  
 shall forget the look of pained won-  
 der on his face when he saw me.

"What in the world is the meaning  
 of—"  
 "Oh, Gilbert, I've been very silly.  
 Yesterday I changed bags while shop-  
 ping with a woman at a store. There  
 was a note in the bag I picked up  
 signed "Gilbert" to a girl named Julie.  
 appointing to meet her in the park. I  
 went there expecting to catch you. In-  
 stead I—"

"Caught a tartar."  
 He went to the desk and explained  
 the matter to the inspector. Then he  
 returned to me and led me out, every-  
 one present laughing at me, I red as a  
 cock's comb from my neck to my hair.

Gilbert was perfectly lovely to me  
 about the matter, never referring to it,  
 but I never can forget it. As for the  
 other couple, the man gave a false  
 name and never appeared against me,  
 nor did they claim the bag or its con-  
 tents.  
 ANNIE E. NICHOLS.

Stealing a Bride

In colonial times there was a curious  
 custom called bride stealing. Persons  
 who had not been invited to the wed-  
 ding would watch for a chance after  
 the ceremony had been performed to  
 kidnap the bride. Placing her on a  
 horse behind one of their party, they  
 would gallop to a neighboring tavern  
 where they had ordered supper. If  
 they reached the tavern before the  
 bride had been rescued the night was  
 spent there in feasting and dancing,  
 and the bridegroom was expected to  
 foot the bills.

Mary and Helen Harrington, daugh-  
 ters of an old colonial justice of the  
 peace, were very attractive girls. Mary  
 was engaged to an officer in the British  
 army, and her parents, being Tories,  
 were well satisfied with the match, but  
 Helen's fiancé, being outspoken in con-  
 demnation of the taxes the king lev-  
 eld on the colonies, was not acceptable  
 to her father, who declared that she  
 should never marry a man tainted  
 with a spirit of rebellion.

On the other hand, preparations for  
 the marriage of Captain Hinchelwood  
 and Mary Harrington were being made  
 with great satisfaction to all, though  
 Truxell and Helen could not but be  
 cast down at the contrast between  
 their own condition and that of the  
 happy pair. In vain Truxell endeavor-  
 ed to gain an interview with Helen,  
 hoping to persuade her to elope with  
 him. But she was so closely watched  
 that communication was impossible.

Preparations for Mary's wedding  
 having been made and the wedding  
 day arrived, guests from all the coun-  
 try roundabout were assembled at Har-  
 rington Hall to take part in the festi-  
 vities. Captain Hinchelwood wore  
 his scarlet uniform, Mary a white satin  
 gown beautifully trimmed with lace.  
 Her sister was her only bridesmaid.  
 There was a plentiful sprinkling of  
 redcoats from the groom's regiment,  
 stationed at Boston, who held their  
 heads very high among the plainer  
 young men who were soon to meet  
 them at Concord, Lexington and Bun-  
 ker Hill. The ceremony had taken  
 place, the bride and groom were re-  
 ceiving congratulations, and the negro  
 cooks in the kitchen were bringing in  
 the supper. Suddenly every candle was  
 extinguished, and there was a commo-  
 tion, amid which voices cried:

"Bride stealers!"  
 "The bride has been stolen!"  
 "Mount!"  
 "They're galloping away!"

There was a clattering of horses'  
 hoofs, growing fainter in the distance.  
 Under the sheds horses and vehicles  
 which had brought the guests were  
 standing, and a number of the men,  
 headed by the bride's father and her  
 husband, mounted and dashed away  
 after the kidnapers. A full moon illu-  
 minated the landscape, and at every  
 straight stretch of road the pursuing  
 party could see those who were fleeing  
 before them lashing their horses. At  
 one point the pursuers came to  
 branches of trees piled in the road to  
 prevent their progress. That the kid-  
 nappers were not delayed was because,  
 having prepared the obstructions them-  
 selves, when they came to them they  
 took a bypath around them. Dismount-  
 ing, the pursuers soon cleared the road  
 and were off again. Then they ap-  
 proached a covered bridge which had  
 been packed with straw and which as  
 soon as the kidnapers had passed  
 through it they had set afire. Indeed,  
 the pursuers saw the sparks struck  
 from the flint for the purpose. By the  
 time they reached the bridge it was  
 aflame, and they must go to a ford a  
 good mile around. This decided the  
 race. When the pursuers reached a  
 tavern where the lady had been taken  
 and Mr. Harrington went up on to the  
 porch his daughter came out to meet  
 him. But instead of throwing herself  
 into his arms she knelt at his feet.  
 Then for the first time her father no-  
 ticed that a man who followed her was  
 young Truxell.

"What do you mean by this?" ex-  
 claimed the old man angrily.  
 "Father," said the kneeling girl, "for-  
 give me. I am married."

"Of course you're married and, thank  
 heaven, to a loyal subject of the king.  
 What! Helen! Do you mean?"  
 "It means, Mr. Harrington," said  
 Truxell, "that the bride is at home.  
 This is her sister, whom that clergyman  
 who is standing within has just united  
 in wedlock to me. Our wedding supper  
 is ready. Send for the guests at the  
 hall, and we will celebrate a double  
 wedding here."

Helen led her father to a room where  
 they were alone and, winding her arms  
 about him, besought him to forgive her  
 and make the occasion a merry instead  
 of a mournful one. One circumstance  
 was of great assistance to her. In the  
 settlement pertaining to Mary's mar-  
 riage Mr. Harrington had been obliged  
 to use £20 worth of stamps that had  
 been rendered essential under the  
 stamp act—an act which usually made a  
 rebel out of the old Tory. At any rate,  
 he forgave the young couple, and all  
 rode back to the hall, meeting messen-  
 gers to say that the bride was safe and  
 it was the bridesmaid who had been  
 stolen. On reaching the hall they ate  
 one supper there, then went to the tav-  
 ern, where they ate another.

The marriage that Mr. Harrington  
 expected would be a blessing to him  
 turned out quite the reverse. Mrs.  
 Hinchelwood went to England with her  
 husband, and her father never saw her  
 again. Truxell later became an officer  
 in the Continental army and was much  
 admired and beloved by his comrades.  
 After the war, when his father-in-law  
 was very old, Truxell took charge of  
 his affairs, and under his management  
 they greatly prospered. Mrs. Truxell  
 eventually succeeded to her father's es-  
 tate, and her descendants have enjoyed  
 it ever since.

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