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'SANCTUARY.'

It is not so very long since Holyrood abbey precincts were deprived of their ancient privilege of sanctuary. In the twentieth century people yet live who have themselves sought refuge from creditors within the magic circle surrounding the grim old Scottish palace.

Also, people yet remember the fuss caused by the death of the childless Earl of Glen Luce. No less than five claimants contested the succession; public interest ran high.

More than one of the litigants was ruined. There was Sir John Rutherford, who claimed through the marriage of the first earl, Major Griffiths, who descended from the Lady Margaret's ill-advised match—both these were reduced to their last penny.

It was Sir John Rutherford whose chance seemed to be gaining as time passed on. An old Indian K. C. B., he was too well used to the buffings of fortune to talk much about the matter; but his daughter, Marcia, saw that he snapped her up less viciously when he overheard her discussing the Glen Luce claim with her brother. He had played the game pluckily. Could he last out to the end?

'It is either Glen Luce or Holyrood,' his son Ned remarked, in a jocular tone. Marcia, whose sporting instinct was undeveloped, looked gravely at him, and then turned to his friend, Captain Christopher Haig, who was spending a short leave in their home in Edinburgh.

'I wish,' said she, 'that the old earl had never died at all. We were quite happy before this terrible fuss burst over us!'

'Nonsense!' her brother cried. 'You'll be as proud as punch when the pater takes his place among the bigwigs, and you go sweeping to the top of the room in the wake of the Countess of Glen Luce!'

Captain Haig, with a folly he himself condemned, lingered long in Edinburgh—singing his wings, until he was actually losing the power to fly away. He thought Marcia adorable. Had it not been for that hideous earldom business he would have proposed to her weeks ago.

He had pretty fair prospects—a decent little place of his own in Berwickshire, an ancient name, and a clean record to lay at her feet. Enough, perhaps, for Sir John Rutherford, but ridiculous to mention to the Earl of Glen Luce! Christopher Haig grew more and more down-hearted as the legal horizon seemed gradually to clear.

Long before August came it seemed pretty certain who would have the right of shooting the Glen Luce moors.

'You will be back with us for the twelfth, old man?' Edward Rutherford said to his friend some time in June.

'I think not—no!' Haig answered gloomily. 'The fact is, Ned, I've stayed here too long!'

Haig shrank from the rough touch on the raw wound. 'Say rather my own laziness,' he said lightly. 'I've not had much of a home, as you know, Ned; and I've stayed in yours till it is a wrench to be off and away. Sure sign I've been here too long. I must go on Monday!'

Go he did. But when he saw in the papers the conclusion of the Glen Luce affair it startled him strangely. The 'Morning Post' announced that the Earl and Countess of Glen Luce and Lady Marcia Rutherford had left Edinburgh for their house in Hill street. The 'Times' had a leading article on the great case, in which it recalled the facts of many other 'causes celebres.' Society rang with the story.

Captain Haig's congratulations went by the next post. And once more he said how sorry he was that he was prevented from running down to Scotland.

Edward was piqued. 'I can't think what has happened to the fellow!' he said to his sister. 'If he thinks the title and the few acres of country are going to change us all—rot, I call it!'

Marcia made no answer. But her brother had quick eyes.

Marcia! 'You don't mean to tell me he has said anything to you?'

'No, no! What nonsense, Ned! Oh, Ned, he never will say anything—now!'

The cry came from her heart. And Edward, though young and inexperienced as to

the ways of women, could not but recognize the pain in it.

'Tell me, dear—' 'There is nothing to tell. Nothing! There never will be anything. It seems, Ned, his name is in the "Gazette" to-day. He has exchanged to the Rifles, and is off to the front.'

Yes, here it was in black and white. Haig had exchanged into a regiment bound for the Indian frontier, where one of our 'little wars' was then in full fury.

The affair was beyond Edward's wits to disentangle.

He ran down to Aldershot to see his old comrade, but by tacit consent neither man mentioned Marcia. Lady Glen Luce had written the kindest of farewells. Marcia, of course, made no sign. How could she?

And so Captain Haig and Edward parted—the former to sail for India in a week or so, the latter to return to his new position.

It was all very delightful. The shooting parties were voted great successes—good sport, well chosen company, and the added interest over the Glen Luce folk, who were celebrities in their way. All Britain had been interested in the claims, all Britain was prepared to be gracious to the successful ones.

It was close on Christmas when the bolt fell from the blue. The London house had been refurbished; its owners were planning for a season in town. The dear old Edinburgh home already seemed shrunk and shabby to eyes that had opened on the magnificence of Glen Luce.

A vague rumor, two insignificant to cause serious concern, suddenly became fact. A Scotch marriage—one of those elusive apparitions that still flit over the legal horizon—had been proved. A raw lad from Australia arrived in London. He had been born and bred on a sheep-run; he had the physique of a prize fighter, and the education of a ploughman. But he was the true and undoubted Earl of Glen Luce!

Sir John Rutherford, K. C. B., was only Sir John, then, after all! There was no countess, no Lady Marcia; and as for Edward—could he afford to keep his commission? Debts, whole battalions of them, seemed to the Rutherfords the only abiding remains of the earldom of Glen Luce.

There was Sir John's pension; there were his savings and the little investments he had made for his wife and Marcia. He totaled them up, and tried to balance them against the sum of those terrible debts. Time—would they only give him time!

He would seek lodging in Holyrood. Living there, safe from fear of arrest, he would work, if work could be found, and save up every farthing to pay his debts. Edward would find some post or other and back him up in the battle. No shilly-shally bankruptcy, and wriggling out of liabilities by paying so many shillings in the pound. The debts were just debts, and should be justly paid—every single penny.

And so it came to pass that the Rutherfords found themselves in rooms in the mean little streets that were the actual nineteenth century rendering of the 'picturesque old right of sanctuary of the precincts of the Abbey of Holyrood. Edward sent in his papers and accepted a berth in a city counting house. Sir John had tried to retain a few favorite possessions for his wife and daughter, but they insisted on sharing his struggle and making sacrifice of all, even as he had done.

Marcia had determined to turn her talent for drawing to account. She had found a market for water-color sketches of the palace. They were on the counter of a shop in Princes street, and priced at a modest sum, they sold steadily. And so she used the daylight hours in working away with her little tin box of colors in the empty old palace.

The oblique winter sunlight fell across the room where the lovely and luckless Queen of Scots had spent so many of her tragic days; the light was unusually brilliant, and brought to notice a dozen of beauties Marcia had never before observed. She was working earnestly, eagerly; her lips parted with excitement, the color heightened on the sweet face.

Very fair indeed, she appeared to a pair of eyes that had been watching her for some moments.

'Miss Rutherford!' The tones were low and pleading, Christopher Haig stood before her, hat in hand, most carefully self-controlled, elaborately quiet and commonplace.

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She looked up. She neither started nor exclaimed. It was almost as though she were expecting him. For some seconds their regards met thus—his eyes full of the passionate joy he had succeeded in keeping out of his voice; hers accepting, replying, rejoicing. Just for a moment. And then the girl's lids dropped, her head fell forward, she swayed on the seat, and would have fallen had he not sprung to her help.

She had fainted. Such an idiotic thing to do, as she said afterward. Her head rested against his shoulder, and her hat tilted stiffly over her nose. Haig held her while her paint-box clattered to the wooden floor and her little 'dipper' of muddy water spilled itself over her gown. And then, with a little sobbing sigh, her senses returned, and she sat up very straight indeed.

How it happened they never knew exactly. While Haig's words came brokenly, passionately, the old caretaker of the palace came stumping through the rooms. Marcia straightened her hat, and Haig gathered up the little paint pans and brushes. Somehow his fingers, big as they were, were also shaking and indefinite.

'I thought you were in India!' was the first coherent remark Marcia made.

'So I was. But I heard from our colonel's wife—an Edinburgh woman, she is—I heard from her about this earl from Australia; and—and—and about your father being here at Holyrood.'

'And you came?' 'Could I do less? Marcia, it is not much that I have. Do you think Sir John will listen to me? Do you think he will let me stand with Edward in seeing him through with his debtors' difficulty? Marcia, darling, will you help me to put it before him in a reasonable light? I am a little afraid of Sir John?'

'A reasonable light?' 'Sweetheart, it is very reasonable; but he may not see it! I want you for my own, my very own! And if he will give you to me it is only fair to give also a son's rights. Don't you see?'

He had gathered together all her belongings, and they prepared to go.

'Blessed old palace!' said Christopher Haig, glancing round on the old walls that had heard so many lovers' words in the days of long ago.

'We thought we would hate Holyrood,' she responded tremulously. 'But I love it!'

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Diplomatic Bachelor (who has forgotten whether the baby is a boy or girl)—Well, well, but he's a fine little fellow, isn't she? How old is it now? Do her teeth bother him much? I hope he gets through its second summer without getting sick. She looks like you, doesn't he? Every one says it does.—[Puck.]

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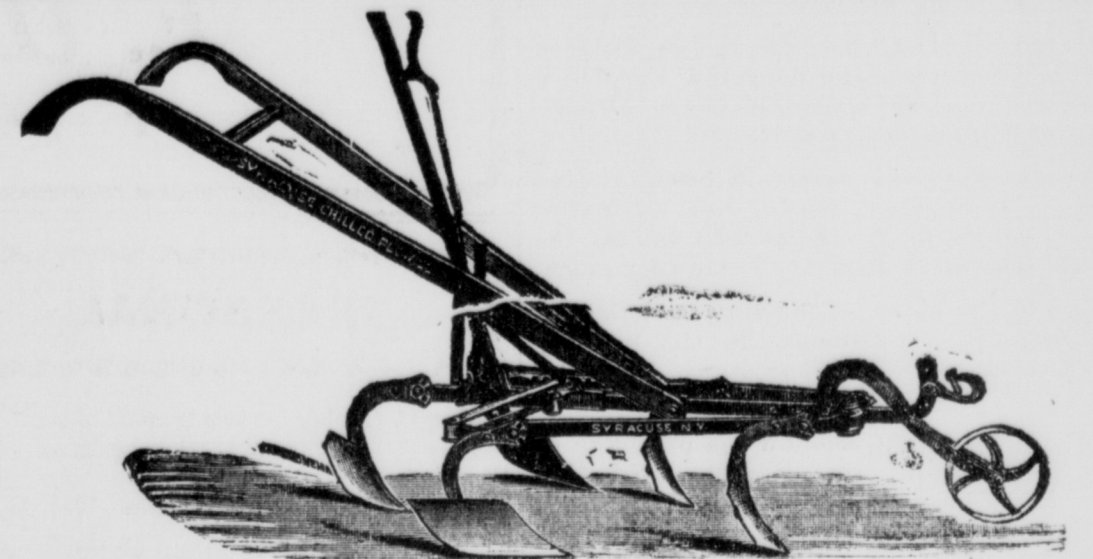
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