

MARQUESS OF MONTROSE

Relic Sent to Canada

From a Correspondent

TO-DAY, New Year's Eve, a 300-year-old relic, said to be the heart of the Marquess of Montrose, is being dispatched to Canada by registered air mail from a Bournemouth post office. The sender is Captain Henry Stuart Wheatly-Crowe, who has treasured the embalmed heart for 20 years, always hoping to find its rightful owner.

After refusing many requests from curio hunters who wanted to purchase the heart, Captain Wheatly-Crowe found that the rightful claimant is Mrs Maisie Armytage Moore, of Vancouver, British Columbia, a direct descendant of Sir Alexander Johnston, who lost the heart in France at the time of the Revolution. Captain Wheatly-Crowe is the Governor-General of the Royal Stuart Society. This is his account of the wanderings of the "lost" heart.

"After Montrose's death by hanging in Edinburgh in 1650, Lady Napier, his favourite niece, sent a trusted servant to take the heart from the mutilated torso of Montrose, which had been buried at the foot of the gibbet. Lady Napier had the heart skillfully embalmed and placed in a case made of steel from the blade of Montrose's sword. She sent the heart to the young Marquess of Montrose on the Continent, where it passed out of the family. The 5th Lord Napier found it again and bequeathed it to his daughter, who married Sir Alexander Johnston.

"Sir Alexander was Chief Justice of Ceylon, and the heart travelled out to the East. On its way there, the Indiaman, in which Sir Alexander and Lady Johnston were travelling, was engaged by a French frigate, and a cannon ball shattered the gold filigree box in which it was kept. But the heart itself was saved and was kept in the Johnston house in Madras.

REVERED AS TALISMAN

"It was again stolen, and came into the possession of an Indian Nabob where it was revered as a talisman.

"The Johnstons recovered it and brought it back to Europe; but while they were crossing France in 1792 they left it behind in the care of Lady Johnston's French maid, Mrs Knolles, who hid it down a dry well at Boulogne to escape the attentions of the French Revolutionaries.

"Nothing was heard of the heart again until it was discovered in Wales, and some years ago the heart passed into the possession of the late Mr Johnston Bird, of Hampstead, London, who left it to me in 1931."

Mrs Moore has written to say that she is overjoyed to have the heart back as "with its return, luck will come back, I think, to the family."

Captain Wheatly-Crowe, concluding his story, said: "Well, I took an oath 45 years ago to serve the Martyr King Charles the 1st. I have done so, and will do so until the end, regardless of what it has cost me, or old age creeping on."

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THE MONTROSE RELICS.

SOLD FOR £340.

THE Montrose relics, which Messrs Sotheby sold yesterday to Mr Barlow for £340, consisted of the stockings, close-fitting cap, and piece of fine linen trimmed with lace, supplied for James Graham, first Marquis of Montrose, on his execution in the Market Place of Edinburgh on May 21, 1650. According to the tradition of the Napier family, from whose possession they have not passed until now, it was the Lady Elizabeth Erskine, wife of his nephew, the second Baron Napier of Merchiston, who prepared these garments for Montrose. From the description of John Nicoll, notary-public, an eye-witness, it does not appear that the Marquis wore the cap. The hat he carried in hands, "with delicate white gloves," was evidently a beaver. But he stood up to be hanged in these stockings "of incarnate silk," and the square of linen "pearled" about is quite possibly one of the "sarks" mentioned by Nicoll. It is not, as the family have always called it, Montrose's handkerchief, steeped in his blood, being four feet square, and big enough for a winding-sheet. In the days of drawing and quartering a "sark" for the dishonoured trunk may well have had a recognised place among the dead-clothes, and Mark Napier suggests that this linen square was used for that purpose. This "sark" is associated with another lost and more romantic relic, Montrose's heart. For while—so the story pieces itself best—the stockings and cap (always the blockman's perquisites) would be bought back from the hangman by the devoted Lady Napier, the shroud was returned to her two nights later, containing the heart, rifled, by her instructions, from Montrose's shameful grave on the Burghmuir. Just as the stockings are darkly stained with streaks diminishing towards the ankle, so something it once contained has marked the linen square, especially towards the centre, with stains and blotches. The story of the strange adventures of Montrose's heart is told by Napier in the "Memoirs." It should be mentioned that this is the tercentenary of Montrose's birth.

The relics were the property of the late Dowager Lady Napier and Ettrick, and from the same source came books, autograph letters, &c., for the most part collected by her husband, the late Lord Napier and Ettrick, formerly Ambassador at St Petersburg, Berlin, and Washington. Mr Sabin paid £132 for the seventh Lord Napier's record of Burgoyne's campaign in the American War of Independence, and Mr Hopkins gave £22 for a series of characteristic letters of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. The Napier sale realised £1891, 2s.