

A Popular Novelist.

Remarkable Success of Mary Johnston, Author of "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope."

The success, popular as well as artistic, of Miss Mary Johnston, the author of "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope," is one of the romances of literature paralleled most nearly by the careers of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. Until a few years ago she had written nothing. Then she wrote "Prisoners of Hope," which was eminently successful for the first work of an author, and now "To Have and to Hold" has not only enhanced her reputation as a literary artist, but has placed her in the front rank of "popular" romancists. The success of "To Have and to Hold" has been really remarkable. On the day of its publication advance orders for 45,000 copies had been received, and two weeks after it had issued from the press of Houghton, Mifflin & Co., the actual sales amounted to over 100,000. In one week alone, over 64,000 were taken by dealers, and exactly one month after publication it had passed into its 125th thousand. Even "Uncle Tom's Cabin" probably the most popular American novel ever published did not so well, for two months after publication had passed before Mrs. Stowe's classic had been sold to the number of 100,000. The author of this highly successful novel comes of an old Virginia family. Her father was Major W. Johnston, who won his rank as an artillery officer in the Confederate army. He is a lawyer by profession, but since the war has engaged in Southern Railroad enterprises. When his daughter was sixteen years old, he removed with his family to Birmingham, Ala., and with the exception of a residence of four years in New York City, this has been the home of the family. Miss Johnston's mother died not long after the removal of the family to Birmingham, and Miss Johnston, as the eldest of daughters, became the head of her father's household. She still occupies

As a child Miss Johnston's health was delicate; and, in fact, she has never been in possession of entirely good health, both "Prisoners of Hope" and "To Have and to Hold" having been written under stress of great physical difficulty. On account of her frail health as a child her schooling was irregular. When not at school, and yet too ill to wander about the woods, she read. Her tastes were catholic, and, moreover, she had not a great library from which to pick and choose, and so must take what she could find. She read everything her father's library afforded, and at an age when most young girls are still lingering over the pages of their favorite storyteller she had read children's stories, fairy tales, novels, religious works, essays, biographies, histories, memoirs, plays—everything she could lay her hands on. As a child she loved Scott and read and re-read him; and with Dickens it was much the same. She read also a great deal of the best of seventeenth and eighteenth century literature, and delighted in history. She grew to love poetry with increasing years and was fond of then, as she is now, of the ballads of Scotland and the writings of Shakespeare. In later years, her ill health continuing, she was taken from school and had most of her studies at home, and she then developed a fondness for the English dramatists which she has never outgrown. Certainly to the influence of these writers must be due much of the fine constructive qualities which would so admirably fit both "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope" for dramatic production.

Nothing is more noticeable in both "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope" than the author's love of Nature, which finds expression in charming descriptions of the Virginia mountains among which she spent her childhood; and it is not less noticeable and is equally refreshing and restful in the pictures of the Tidewater section of the Old Dominion with which she is equally familiar. Buchanan, the little Virginia town in which Miss Johnston was born, is situated on the James where it breaks through the Blue Ridge. The surrounding country is a region of mountains and valleys, of forests and running waters, and in her childhood the author of "To Have and to Hold" was never so happy as when rambling up and down the river, or over the mountain sides and through the beautiful woods in which the regions abound. There were in the family two old and faithful servants, and with either of these for guardian Miss Johnston and her sisters were allowed to roam the country side at all. The town itself was so small that a walk of a mile in any direction brought one into the deep woods or up on the mountain side. It was

an almost ideal environment for a child fond of nature as she was; and the impressions of those early days have furnished most of the beautiful pictures of forest



MARY JOHNSTON.

and mountain and sky in both of her romances.

Both in "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope" some of the most effective writing is shown in descriptions of the ocean. The account of the storm, and the standing of Percy and the Lady Jocelyn and their companions on the sandy islet in "To Have and to Hold," and the story of the tempest on Chesapeake bay which served to display to Patricia in "Prisoners of Hope" the bravery and worth of Godfrey Landless, both evince a familiarity with the ocean and its moods that only intimate association could give. Up to her nineteenth year Miss Johnston's life had been spent chiefly in the mountains. The summer of that year was the first of a series spent almost entirely upon the water. Off the coast of the eastern shore of Virginia are a number of small islands, and one of these—Cobb's Island—had been a favorite resort for Virginia people since long before the war. This island served, in after years, for that one in "To Have and to Hold" upon which Captain Ralph Percy and the pirates had their memorable encounter. In the days when the Johnstons made it their summer refuge it had a Life Saving station and a picturesque population of perhaps fifty or sixty fisher folk, and there was a long, low, white-washed building, called by courtesy "the Hotel," and a half dozen or more or less dilapidated cottages. Upon this island Miss Johnston spent a great part of six summers. She had a sailboat and one of the island fishermen for boatman, and with her father or a brother was upon the water morning, noon and night. She was fond of the boat and of the ocean, and was not afraid of squalls, and in the delight of those days, no doubt, many a scene in "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope" has its origin.

Now that "To Have and to Hold" has gained a popular favor that will certainly carry it into many editions, and has compelled a critical estimate that declares it to be an addition to the permanent literature of romance, it is interesting to go back to the beginnings of the literary effort that has produced two such remarkable romances as "To Have and to Hold" and "Prisoners of Hope." In 1893 the Johnstons removed to New York city, which they made their home for several years. In the following year Miss Johnston's health, always delicate, failed so that she became for a time practically an invalid. Forced to lie quietly and to give up all active effort, she could still read and

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study, and at length she began to write a little for her own amusement. A year or two later housekeeping was given up on account of Miss Johnston's continuing ill health, and apartments were taken in one of the big apartment houses overlooking Central Park. Here she began "Prisoners of Hope." Work upon it was finished after two years of effort more or less interrupted by seasons of ill health, and published with eminent success for the first work of an unknown author. So well was the romance received that Miss Johnston determined to make literature a serious pursuit. That

she was justified in so doing has been abundantly attested by the judicious praise which has been bestowed upon "To Have and to Hold" in most discerning quarters, as well as by the immense popularity the book has achieved upon its publication.

MYSTERIES OF THE MAIL BAG.

Something That Officials Cannot Understand or Explain.

An enterprising newspaper man gathered some facts about the queer things in the postal service of the United States. Among them he found out that thousands of letters vanish every year, together with United States mail pouches in spite of comprehensive precautions. Mail bags are supposed to be always either under lock and key or in the hands of responsible employees, yet not a month passes without the discovery of a ripped and rifled pouch in out-of-the-way hiding places, a tramp's "hang-out" in a deserted building or a weed-grown ditch of railway track. The only explanation is that some of the carriers or distributors have been caught napping. But of a number of mail bags transferred from train to train in a Tennessee railway junction three disappeared in broad daylight, and the manipulator of the push cart remembered that a well dressed stranger, apparently in a hurry to reach the ticket office, had stopped him for a moment to ask a question or two. He had not touched the cart but his dupe admitted to have turned his head long enough to give a possible accomplice of the stranger a chance to make a grab and dive into a recess of the crowded platform.

In Post Office transactions the lack of ingenuity and even of ordinary common sense is astonishing. The curios of the Dead Letter Office include envelopes legibly cross-marked; "Return if not delivered," or "If not called for in five days return to sender," without a word of further specifications. Others bear names without topographical data: "Hermann Kemper, painter and decorator, successor to Ritchie Brothers & Co." Workmen, foreigners especially, often seem to credit mail clerks with the gift of geographical clairvoyance: "Jen Jansen, at the miners' boarding house or perhaps, stops at Mrs. Baumgarten's place"—no doubt to hint about the State or county of the mining camp. "Please deliver as soon as possible," some such letters are marked and seem often to have been plastered with an extra stamp in the hope of inducing the carrier to give the matter his earliest attention.

Money to the amount of \$50 has been found in envelopes with absolutely illegible addresses, hieroglyphics, too blurred and tangled to furnish even a clue to the nationality of the sender. In some cases marginal notes, in American or Kalmuth Paratense, for all the best experts can tell, attest

the senders' anxiety to obviate misunderstandings, and one might suppose that persons taking such risks and trouble would have thought it worth while to adopt the collateral precaution of letting a competent native revise their chirography, but the idea of that expedient may often have been nipped in the bud by the dread of a five or ten cents' fee.

No packages—certain classes of printed matter excepted—are forwarded in excess of five pounds, but within that limit all possible chemicals, comestibles, machines, beasts, birds, and bugs are mailed every day in the year, and forwarded, too, unless the sender should commit the mistake of an amateur naturalist who shipped a live rat of the speckled denomination in a package ingeniously constructed to look like a good sized book. Everything would have gone well, but in his over anxiety to avoid examination or prevent the escape of his pet, the sender had bandaged and sealed the parcel all around, and thereby made it subject to letter-rate charges. His postage covered only the book rates for a consignment of three pounds, and the addressee declining to pay the difference, the package was filed away till the most unsuspicious began "to smell a rat."

Confiscation is all that can be done in such cases, and a mere peep at the suspected contents often causes investigators to shrink in horror. Florida tourists mail swamp rattlesnakes and juvenile alligators; south Texas scientists hairy tarantulas, with fangs that work their way through the first glimpse of a business opening.

In the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico, they have red ants as large as a gadfly, and so horribly venomous that a mere rip of their pinchers will make a sanctificationist elder swear, and on a trip to a summer camp in the Ozark mountains an assortment of those pets worked their way out of their pasteboard prison and very soon afterward out of the seams of the United States mail bag. The mail rider was half asleep and beginning to nod in his saddle, when to his astonishment his equally drowsy old mare suddenly rose on her hind legs and then started off at a gate beating the record of the best Arkansas State Fair races. In an attempt to clear a gully she spilled her cargo rider and all, and then commenced rolling in the gravel, delving approach with a storm of kicks. The stunned carrier eventually gathered himself together, but in attempting to continue the trip on foot was seized with convulsions that induced a ploughing farmer to rush to the rescue, under the impression that steed and rider had been attacked by St. Vitus.

Rat poison and corrosive sublimate are not the worst chemicals sent through the mail, and more than one pouchful of miscellaneous consignments has been drenched with fluids as destructive as nitric acid, or the solution of fluorine that will eat into a man's finger bones like the touch of a red-hot poker.

Explosions in Post offices and street letter boxes, too, occur every once in a while, and in Tucson, Ariz., a conflagration was caused in that manner, the flames having spread with a rapidity that precluded the chance of obtaining a clue to the identity of the mischief maker.

The Washington Post Office museum has a collection of some fifty different venomous bugs and reptiles captured by the vigilance of United States mail clerks, and the 15 per cent duty on West Indian products may not prevent the completion of the assortment by the arrival of a fer-de-lance snake, warranted to beat the sharpest Texas rattler at his own game.

Sleeping on the March.

Some philosopher has said that a man with a strong mind can sleep or keep awake at will. Perhaps that philosopher never tried forced marching in a tropical country. Owen S. Watkins, who was in the last Sudan campaign with General Kitchener, tells of seeing an adjutant and a senior major riding side by side on long marches, so that if they fell asleep they could lean on each other and not fall from their saddles.

Mr. Watkins repeats some queer stories that were told him, without saying that they are true. But if truth is stranger than fiction, one of them at least is strange enough to be true.

It is about a transport master, who rode in the rear of his train of camels. He had been very busy, and had slept little for a week. The day was hot, and for comfort he had removed his helmet and belt.

Then he fell asleep. Pretty soon the jolting of his camel uneaten him, and he rolled to the soft ground unhurt. In fact, he was not even awakened. When at last he did wake, the caravan was out of sight and he could not tell how long he had been sleeping. There he was, the master of that column of transport camels, alone in the desert, unarmed, and with not even a covering for his head.

As nothing was to be gained by staying

where he was, he started to follow the trail, and had hurried along for sometime before he noticed by the fast setting sun that he had started back, instead of ahead, on the trail of the camels. He turned, and fortunately a camel and driver soon met him. They had been sent back from the caravan, not to search for him, strangely enough, but to look for some article that had been lost by the way.

STANDS FIRST AND HIGHEST.

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Paine's Celery Compound, the wonderful discovery of America's greatest physician, is now within reach of every ailing person, young and old, and should be used before sickness and disease are aggravated by the coming hot weather.

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ET CETERA.

A bit of caricature is sometimes better, or at least more efficient, for the correction of a fault than any amount of direct reproof. Short Stories tells of a certain banker's wife who had an undue appreciation of her own importance as the wife of a prominent townsman:

She was in the habit of riding down to her husband's office in the street-car every day. Entering the car with a haughty air, she was accustomed to say in voice loud enough to be heard by all present: "Conductor, put me off at my husband's bank."

One day she came in and seated herself, making the usual demand. Close by her was a man, disreputable-looking in the extreme. His clothes seemed almost devoid of buttons, a multitude of pins doing duty instead. During the momentary hush which followed the lady's order this passenger rose, and drawing himself to his full height, pompously said:

"Conductor, put me off at my old woman's peanut-stand!"

Since then the conductor has heard nothing more of "my husband's bank."

Durability of Glass.

It does not seem remarkable to find inscriptions written ages ago still visible on the Tower of London, or on the steeple of some cathedral. But one would hardly look on a fragile pane of glass in a common window for characters two hundred years old.

A notable case has just come to light in London, says the Weekly Irish Times, in an old house where the notorious Jack Sheppard once lived as a carpenter's apprentice. One of the window-panes still bears an inscription cut in it by a glazier's diamond, recording the name and address of a man who preceded Jack's master in that house.

The inscription is: "John Woolley Brand Painter and Glazier, March 12, 1706."

That was nine years before the coming to the house of Jack Sheppard, and almost two hundred years ago.

"Balm of Hurt Wounds."

So Shakespeare terms sleep, but irritated breathing tubes prevent sleep through desire to cough. Balsam is the same word as balm, and the balm for wounded lungs is Adamson's Botanic Cough Balsam. 25c. all Druggists.

"But said the soldier lover, as he kissed her goodbye, 'suppose I should return maimed, minus both arms, for instance, wouldn't you hesitate to marry me?'"

"I'd marry you at once," she replied. "It would be useless to prolong our courtship."

Riggs—You were very fortunate not to be injured when the train was telescoped.

Jiggs—Yes, but you see I was on the through car.