

MARY JOHNSTON

To Have and To Hold



Introduction by Francis R. Gemme

Complete and Unabridged

To Have and To Hold

MARY JOHNSTON



AIRMONT

AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
22 EAST 60TH STREET • NEW YORK 10022

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER

THE SPECIAL CONTENTS OF THIS EDITION

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE COLONIAL PRESS INC., CLINTON, MASSACHUSETTS



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INTRODUCTION

To Have and To Hold is a romance in the best tradition of the historical novel. Love and fidelity, quest and conquest, separation and hardship, heroic deeds and noble sacrifice, court corruption and treachery, swordplay and piracy, Indian warfare and captivity, are all found in this swashbuckling narrative of colonial Virginia. The adventure begins with a roll of the dice, an incident which persuades the heroic and dashing Captain Ralph Percy, the first person narrator of the story, to seek a wife. This romantic impulse is indicative of the man and the story.

The setting is the Jamestown settlement in 1621; a shipload of honest English maids in search of good homes and enduring husbands has just arrived and the following day Captain Percy will select a likely prospect, pay the necessary fees to the company, and marry the maid within a few hours. A passage describing the day's activities will serve to illustrate Miss Johnston's highly readable style as well as the way in which she handles historical materials:

Before the arrival of yesterday's ship there had been in this natural Eden (leaving the savages out of the reckoning) several thousand Adams, and but some three-score Eves. And for the most part, the Eves were either portly and bustling or withered and shrewish housewives, of age and experience to defy the serpent. These were different. Ninety slender figures decked in all the bravery they could assume; ninety comely faces, pink and white,

or clear brown with the rich blood showing through; ninety pair of eyes, laughing and alluring, or downcast with long fringes sweeping rounded cheeks; ninety pair of ripe red lips—the crowd shouted itself hoarse and would not be restrained, brushing aside like straws the staves of the marshall and his men, and surging in upon the line of adventurous damsels. I saw young men, panting, seize hand or arm and strive to pull toward them some reluctant fair; others snatched kisses, or fell on their knees and began speeches out of Euphues; others commenced an inventory of their possessions—acres, tobacco, servants, household plenishing. All was hubbub, protestation, frightened cries, and hysterical laughter.

The title of the novel is an allusion to the famous solemnization of matrimony from the *Book of Common Prayer*, "To have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." After marrying in haste, Captain Percy is sorely tested against the ideals of this vow. He has not married simply "a shepherdess fresh from Arcadia," as he describes his bride, but Lady Jocelyn Leigh, a maid-of-honor and ward of the King, who shipped aboard the ship-of-brides in order to escape marrying the villainous Lord Carnal, a well-known libertine.

When Lord Carnal arrives in search of his future bride, Jocelyn's identity is revealed and the conflict between hero and villain is firmly established. Lord Carnal, the King's minion, uses both the pressure of the court and the company to accomplish his designs. The resourceful Captain Percy, however, is determined to protect his fair lady. In time the company (the subtitle of the romance is "By Order of the Company") supports Lord Carnal's claim and orders Captain Percy and Lady Jocelyn to return to England. At this point, Captain Percy is forced to resort to extralegal means in order "to have and to hold" his beautiful bride.

Mary Johnston is adept at idealizing history; in most cases she avoids the sentimentality which weakens works of this kind. Early in the story one of her characters comments on "Sandys' maids," as the eligible women who came to the colony were called: "Beggars must not be choosers. The land is new and must be peopled; nor will those who came after us look too curiously into the lineage of those to whom a nation owes its birth. What we in these plantations need

is a loosening of the bonds which tie us to home, to England, and a tightening of those which bind us to this land in which we have cast our lot." Yet, while this prophetic allusion to independence is enunciated, the rallying cry and national pride expressed in the face of danger is an evocation of the motherland as eloquently stated by Governor George Yeardley: "I think our duty is clear, be the odds what they may. This is our post, and we will hold it or die beside it. We are few in number, but we are England in America, and I think we will remain here. This is the King's fifth kingdom, and we will keep it for him." A larger issue in the conflict of Lord Carnal and Captain Percy is that of the old world attempting to dominate the new world. Carnal is a symbol of the decadent past, the corruption of the court, and the Machiavellian character of old world politics. Captain Percy is the self-reliant and freedom-loving colonial adventurer. An exchange between these antagonists emphasizes this philosophical opposition. Lord Carnal appeals to authority to press a point, ". . . we all have a past . . .," but in the spirit of America, Captain Percy cuts him short, "In Virginia, my lord, we live in the present."

It is in "the present" of the administrations of Governor Yeardley (1619-1621) and Sir Francis Wyatt (1621-1624), and the Indian uprising under Opechancanough, the successor of Powhatan, that the action unfolds. The main characters are supported by a varied cast of lesser ones ranging from actual historical personages such as the governors above and John Rolfe, a friend of Percy's in the story [the man who is remembered in history as the husband of Pocahontas and as the planter whose crop of tobacco proved that Virginia could compete with Spain in the production of the profitable weed], to fictional creations like Jeremy Sparrow, the fighting parson, Diccon, Percy's loyal servant, Nantaugas, a friendly Indian, and Nicolo, Lord Carnal's devious lieutenant. These figures play a part in resolving the story in the tradition of the romantic happy ending where retribution comes to Carnal and Ralph Percy learns, "All things die not: while the soul lives, love lives: the song may now be gay, now plaintive, but it is deathless."

Mary Johnston was born on November 21, 1870 in Buchanan, Virginia. The eldest child of the seven children of John and Elizabeth Johnston, the future writer numbered among her progenitors successful colonial adventurers and high ranking officers in both the Revolutionary and Civil

Wars. Miss Johnston was a frail child and was educated at home where she read widely and precociously in her father's library. Histories were her favorite reading matter. Her father, a lawyer by training, fought for the Confederacy throughout the conflict. He was wounded several times, his homestead was destroyed by the sweep of the war and he was a major in the artillery at the time of Appomattox. Following the war, Major Johnston served in the Virginia Legislature and became associated with the emerging Southern railroads. It was in connection with this financial interest that the family removed to Birmingham, Alabama, when Miss Johnston was sixteen years old. With the death of her mother a few years later, she became the woman of the house for her father and brothers and sisters. Occupied with these duties, she did not write her first novel until her twenty-seventh year. Because of her penchant for writing historical romances and her life long battle with poor health, she is often compared to Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), the father of historical fiction, and Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), who was sickly the large part of his life and whose most famous tale, *Treasure Island*, appeared when Miss Johnston was fourteen years old.

Prisoners of Hope (1898), Miss Johnston's first novel, was written during a visit to New York City in "a quiet corner of Central Park." Her second work, *To Have and To Hold* (1900), was written in Birmingham and its publication brought the author instant success and fame. These first novels were written in pencil and revised from typescript. In later years, Miss Johnston dictated her works; she devoted her mornings to dictation, revision and proof-reading while the rest of the day was devoted to research or social amenities. Following the death of her father, Miss Johnston lived for a time with her sisters in Richmond, Virginia. Within the initial decade of this century, her first six novels sold over a million copies; *To Have and To Hold* was by far the most successful, selling 250,000 copies within a several month period. The romance earlier appeared serially in the *Atlantic Monthly* from June 1899 to March, 1900.

Brief excerpts from contemporary as well as later reviews will indicate the critical reception accorded *To Have and To Hold*: "Original in plot, thrilling in its situations, strong and sweet in its character drawings, vital with noble emotion, perfect in style," (*New York Times*) . . . "She does

not weary us with analysis of character; her people arrive with something to do, and forthwith do it, with something to say and immediately say it. She is a master of incident; she presents stirring scenes with swiftness and with vigor; her descriptions by the mouth of Percy are fresh, striking, and brilliant," (*The Independent*) . . . "a rich concentration of evocative detail and magically compelling historic atmosphere . . . in the authentic tradition of Sir Walter" (*Commonweal*) . . . "interesting throughout . . . a style so full of dignity and grace, so picturesque in descriptive power that it is worth more than passing comment," (*Atlantic Monthly*).

Her success with this novel permitted her to build a home called "Three Hills" near Warm Springs, where she lived until her death on May 9, 1936. Often for her health, she traveled widely over the years, wintering in Egypt, summering in England and Scotland, and spending extended periods in Italy, Southern France, Sicily and Switzerland. She never married and lived a quiet, shy, retiring life much like the fictional ladies of quality who filled the romantically conceived South of her novels. At midpoint in her career, there is a temporary shift in the subject matter of her romances; an interest in mysticism, feminism, and socialism emerges.

Of twenty-three romances written over a thirty-six year period, more than half have their backgrounds in Virginia. Colonial Virginia is the setting for seven of these: *Prisoners of Hope* (1898), a story of unrest when convicts migrate to the colony; *To Have and To Hold* (1900); *Audrey* (1902), *Croatan* (1923), and *The Hunting Shirt* (1931), tales of settlers and Indians; *The Slave Ship* (1924), a story of the early slave trade; and *The Great Valley* (1926), the story of John Selkirk, a Scottish Presbyterian minister who emigrates to the Shenandoah Valley. Among other romances of Virginia are three Civil War stories, *The Long Roll* (1911), *Cease Firing* (1912), and *Drury Randall* (1934), all told from the Southern point of view, *Miss Delicia Allen* (1933), picturing life on a Virginia plantation before and during the Civil War, *Lewis Rand* (1908), a story of the Virginia of Thomas Jefferson, and *Michael Forth* (1919), a tale of the adjustment of Southerners to reconstruction times.

The remainder of the Johnston canon ranges from witchcraft, *The Witch* (1914), to a tale of sixteenth-century mysticism, *The Silver Cross* (1922), from *Sir Mortimer*

(1904), a story of the Spanish Main to 1492, an account of Christopher Columbus from his first voyage until his death, and finally from *The Fortunes of Gavin* (1915), a medieval knight's tale to three romances set against the background of the French Revolution and eighteenth-century Scotland and England to one which even pictures prehistoric times. The exception to the theme of her canon remains *Hagar* (1913), a work which raises contemporary social questions especially about the status of women.

Mary Johnston achieved success at a time when there was a dichotomy in taste, mood, and philosophy among American writers and readers. The turn of the century found optimism and idealism in conflict with naturalism and determinism; the "genteel tradition", upheld chiefly by the local color writers and the writers of historical romance, was waning before the inevitable forces of literary realism. On the one hand, there was the tradition of romances, historically the literature of "escape," inherited from English writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard, and A. Conan Doyle. The leading American romancers of the period were, besides Miss Johnston, Winston Churchill, Francis Marion Crawford, Paul Leicester Ford, Thomas Nelson Page, and Maurice Thompson. On the other hand, there was the realism of William Dean Howells and Henry James, the naturalism of Hamlin Garland, Jack London, and Frank Norris, and the determinism of Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser.

Publishing history shows that readers in the early part of the century clearly preferred romances to the "sterner stuff" of the now more famous realists. The once wide entertainment value of romances has been largely replaced by the media of radio, movies, and television. Yet one need only cite Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1937), Leon Uris' *Exodus* (1958), or James A. Michener's *Hawaii* (1959), to show that romance remains a popular genre and the phenomenal success of such writers as Mickey Spillane and Ian Fleming to show that the literature of escape has a secure place in our anxious and realistic generation.

FRANCIS R. GEMME

Northampton, Massachusetts
January, 1968

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Chapter 1 *In Which I Throw Ambbs-Ace*

The work of the day being over, I sat down upon my doorstep, pipe in hand, to rest awhile in the cool of the evening. Death is not more still than is this Virginian land in the hour when the sun has sunk away, and it is black beneath the trees, and the stars brighten slowly and softly, one by one. The birds that sing all day have hushed, and the horned owls, the monster frogs, and that strange and ominous fowl (if fowl it be, and not, as some assert, a spirit damned) which we English call the whippoorwill, are yet silent. Later the wolf will howl and the panther scream, but now there is no sound. The winds are laid, and the restless leaves droop and are quiet. The low lap of the water among the reeds is like the breathing of one who sleeps in his watch beside the dead.

I marked the light die from the broad bosom of the river, leaving it a dead man's hue. Awhile ago, and for many evenings, it had been crimson,—a river of blood. A week before, a great meteor had shot through the night, blood-red and bearded, drawing a slow-fading fiery trail across the heavens; and the moon had risen that same night blood-red, and upon its disk there was drawn in shadow a thing most marvelously like a scalping knife. Wherefore, the following day being Sunday, good Mr. Stockham, our minister at Weyanoke, exhorted us to be on our guard, and in his prayer besought that no sedition or rebellion might raise its head amongst the Indian subjects of the Lord's anointed. Afterward, in the churchyard, between the services, the more timorous began to tell of divers portents which they had observed, and to recount old tales of how the savages distressed us in the Starving Time. The bolder spirits laughed them to scorn, but the women began to weep and cower, and I, though I laughed too, thought of Smith, and how he ever held the savages, and more especially that Opechan-canough who was now their emperor, in a most deep distrust; telling us that the red men watched while we slept, that they might teach wiliness to a Jesuit, and how to bide its time to a cat crouched before a mousehole. I thought of

the terms we now kept with these heathen; of how they came and went familiarly amongst us, spying out our weakness, and losing the salutary awe which that noblest captain had struck into their souls; of how many were employed as hunters to bring down deer for lazy masters; of how, breaking the law, and that not secretly, we gave them knives and arms, a soldier's bread, in exchange for pelts and pearls; of how their emperor was forever sending us smooth messages; of how their lips smiled and their eyes frowned. That afternoon, as I rode home through the lengthening shadows, a hunter, red-brown and naked, rose from behind a fallen tree that sprawled across my path, and made offer to bring me my meat from the moon of corn to the moon of stags in exchange for a gun. There was scant love between the savages and myself,—it was answer enough when I told him my name. I left the dark figure standing, still as a carved stone, in the heavy shadow of the trees, and, spurring my horse (sent me from home, the year before, by my cousin Percy), was soon at my house,—a poor and rude one, but pleasantly set upon a slope of green turf, and girt with maize and the broad leaves of the tobacco. When I had had my supper, I called from their hut the two Paspahagh lads bought by me from their tribe the Michaelmas before, and soundly flogged them both, having in my mind a saying of my ancient captain's, namely, "He who strikes first oft-times strikes last."

Upon the afternoon of which I now speak, in the mid-summer of the year of grace 1621, as I sat upon my doorstep, my long pipe between my teeth and my eyes upon the pallid stream below, my thoughts were busy with these matters,—so busy that I did not see a horse and rider emerge from the dimness of the forest into the cleared space before my palisade, nor knew, until his voice came up the bank, that my good friend, Master John Rolfe, was without and would speak to me.

I went down to the gate, and, unbarring it, gave him my hand and led the horse within the inclosure.

"Thou careful man!" he said, with a laugh, as he dismounted. "Who else, think you, in this or any other hundred, now bars his gate when the sun goes down?"

"It is my sunset gun," I answered briefly, fastening his horse as I spoke.

He put his arm about my shoulder, for we were old

friends, and together we went up the green bank to the house, and, when I had brought him a pipe, sat down side by side upon the doorstep.

"Of what were you dreaming?" he asked presently, when we had made for ourselves a great cloud of smoke." I called you twice."

"I was wishing for Dale's times and Dale's laws."

He laughed, and touched my knee with his hand, white and smooth as a woman's, and with a green jewel upon the forefinger.

"Thou Mars incarnate!" he cried. "Thou first, last, and in the meantime soldier! Why, what wilt thou do when thou gettest to heaven? Make it too hot to hold thee? Or take out letters of marque against the Enemy?"

"I am not there yet," I said dryly. "In the meantime I would like a commission against—your relatives."

He laughed, then sighed, and, sinking his chin into his hand and softly tapping his foot against the ground, fell into a reverie.

"I would your princess were alive," I said presently.

"So do I," he answered softly. "So do I." Locking his hands behind his head, he raised his quiet face to the evening star. "Brave and wise and gentle," he mused. "If I did not think to meet her again, beyond that star, I could not smile and speak calmly, Ralph, as I do now."

"'Tis a strange thing," I said, as I refilled my pipe. "Love for your brother-in-arms, love for your commander if he be a commander worth having, love for your horse and dog, I understand. But wedded love! to tie a burden around one's neck because 't is pink and white, or clear bronze, and shaped with elegance! Faugh!"

"Yet I came with half a mind to persuade thee to that very burden!" he cried, with another laugh.

"Thanks for thy pains," I said, blowing blue rings into the air.

"I have ridden to-day from Jamestown," he went on. "I was the only man, i' faith, that cared to leave its gates; and I met the world—the bachelor world—flocking to them. Not a mile of the way but I encountered Tom, Dick, and Harry, dressed in their Sunday bravery and making full tilt for the city. And the boats upon the river! I have seen the Thames less crowded."

"There was more passing than usual," I said; "but I was

busy in the fields, and did not attend. What's the lodestar?"

"The star that draws us all,—some to ruin, some to bliss ineffable,—woman."

"Humph! The maids have come, then?"

He nodded. "There's a goodly ship down there, with a goodly lading."

"*Videlicet*, some fourscore waiting damsels and milkmaids, warranted honest by my Lord Warwick," I muttered.

"This business hath been of Edwyn Sandys' management, as you very well know," he rejoined, with some heat. "His word is good. therefore I hold them chaste. That they are fair I can testify, having seen them leave the ship."

"Fair and chaste," I said, "but meanly born."

"I grant you that," he answered. "But after all, what of it? Beggars must not be choosers. The land is new and must be peopled, nor will those who come after us look too curiously into the lineage of those to whom a nation owes its birth. What we in these plantations need is a loosening of the bonds which tie us to home, to England, and a tightening of those which bind us to this land in which we have cast our lot. We put our hand to the plough, but we turn our heads and look to our Egypt and its fleshpots. 'Tis children and wife—be that wife princess or peasant—that make home of a desert, that bind a man with chains of gold to the country where they abide. Wherefore, when at midday I met good Master Wickham rowing down from Henricus to Jamestown, to offer his aid to Master Bucke in his press of business to-morrow, I gave the good man Godspeed, and thought his a fruitful errand and one pleasing to the Lord."

"Amen," I yawned. "I love the land, and call it home. My withers are unwrung."

He rose to his feet, and began to pace the greensward before the door. My eyes followed his trim figure, richly though sombrely clad, then fell with a sudden dissatisfaction upon my own stained and frayed apparel.

"Ralph," he said presently, coming to a stand before me, "have you ever an hundred and twenty pounds of tobacco in hand? If not, I"—

"I have the weed," I replied. "What then?"

"Then at dawn drop down with the tide to the city, and secure for thyself one of these same errant damsels."

I stared at him, and then broke into laughter, in which, after a space and unwillingly, he himself joined. When at

length I wiped the water from my eyes it was quite dark, the whippoorwills had begun to call, and Rolfe must needs hasten on. I went with him down to the gate.

"Take my advice,—it is that of your friend," he said, as he swung himself into the saddle. He gathered up the reins and struck spurs into his horse, then turned to call back to me: "Sleep upon my words, Ralph, and the next time I come I look to see a farthingale behind thee!"

"Thou art as like to see one upon me," I answered.

Nevertheless, when he had gone, and I climbed the bank and reëntered the house, it was with a strange pang at the cheerlessness of my hearth, and an angry and unreasoning impatience at the lack of welcoming face or voice. In God's name, who was there to welcome me? None but my hounds, and the flying squirrel I had caught and tamed. Groping my way to the corner, I took from my store two torches, lit them, and stuck them into the holes pierced in the mantel shelf; then stood beneath the clear flame, and looked with a sudden sick distaste upon the disorder which the light betrayed. The fire was dead, and ashes and embers were scattered upon the hearth; fragments of my last meal littered the table, and upon the unwashed floor lay the bones I had thrown my dogs. Dirt and confusion reigned; only upon my armor, my sword and gun, my hunting knife and dagger, there was no spot or stain. I turned to gaze upon them where they hung against the wall, and in my soul I hated the piping times of peace, and longed for the camp fire and the call to arms.

With an impatient sigh, I swept the litter from the table, and, taking from the shelf that held my meagre library a bundle of Master Shakespeare's plays (gathered for me by Rolfe when he was last in London), I began to read; but my thoughts wandered, and the tale seemed dull and oft told. I tossed it aside, and, taking dice from my pocket, began to throw. As I cast the bits of bone, idly, and scarce caring to observe what numbers came uppermost, I had a vision of the forester's hut at home, where, when I was a boy, in the days before I ran away to the wars in the Low Countries, I had spent many a happy hour. Again I saw the bright light of the fire reflected in each well-scrubbed crock and pannikin; again I heard the cheerful hum of the wheel; again the face of the forester's daughter smiled upon me. The old gray manor house, where my mother, a stately dame,

sat ever at her tapestry, and an imperious elder brother strode to and fro among his hounds, seemed less of home to me than did that tiny, friendly hut. To-morrow would be my thirty-sixth birthday. All the numbers that I cast were high. "If I throw ambs-ace," I said, with a smile for my own caprice, "curse me if I do not take Rolfe's advice!"

I shook the box and clapped it down upon the table, then lifted it, and stared with a lengthening face at what it had hidden; which done, I diced no more, but put out my lights and went soberly to bed.

Chapter 2 *In Which I Meet Master Jeremy Sparrow*

Mine are not dicers' oaths. The stars were yet shining when I left the house, and, after a word with my man Diccon, at the servants' huts, strode down the bank and through the gate of the palisade to the wharf, where I loosed my boat, put up her sail, and turned her head down the broad stream. The wind was fresh and favorable, and we went swiftly down the river through the silver mist toward the sunrise. The sky grew pale pink to the zenith; then the sun rose and drank up the mist. The river sparkled and shone; from the fresh green banks came the smell of the woods and the song of birds; above rose the sky, bright blue, with a few fleecy clouds drifting across it. I thought of the day, thirteen years before, when for the first time white men sailed up this same river, and of how noble its width, how enchanting its shores, how gay and sweet their blooms and odors, how vast their trees, how strange the painted savages, had seemed to us, storm-tossed adventurers, who thought we had found a very paradise, the Fortunate Isles at least. How quickly were we undeceived! As I lay back in the stern with half-shut eyes and tiller idle in my hand, our many tribulations and our few joys passed in review before me. Indian attacks; dissension and strife amongst our rulers; true men persecuted, false knaves elevated; the weary search for gold and the South Sea; the horror of the pestilence and the blacker horror of the Starving Time; the arrival of the Patience and Deliverance, whereat we wept like children;