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Annie Fellows Johnston & the Little Colonel Books

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ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON AND THE LITTLE COLONEL BOOKS

BY

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PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to study the original background and influences of the Little Colonel Series, their wide popularity, and the criticisms made by friends and critics. In my research work it soon became evident that Mrs. Johnston's own life and observations played too great a part in her books to be omitted; so two full chapters of her life have preceded the study of the series.

There is very little original interpretation of her works, but I have endeavored to collect all the available material concerning the author's life, and the origin, form, popularity, criticism, and influence of the Little Colonel books.

CHAPTER I

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON: 1863-1895

During the colonial days in America, a Maryland family freed their slaves for conscience' sake and moved into Kentucky, then to the southwestern section of Indiana.[1] There they met their Scotch-Irish neighbors, the Erskines, who had emigrated from Ireland in 1812, lured by reports from the New Harmony Colony, settled by their friend Robert Owen.[2] They too, had moved to the frontier, Evansville, Indiana.[3]

These two families were united when an Erskine son, John, married the daughter of the Maryland family.[4] To this union were born nine children. The second child, Mary, soon felt her responsibility to the younger children.[5] From childhood she was inspired to higher learning. Often she and her brother Joseph heard their minister describe the world beyond their realm and persuade the young uncles to seek an education.[6]

In spite of the hardships and struggles of this pioneer family, they were not rough or uncouth people with strong physique but limited vision. Underneath the crude surroundings there burned in their hearts a love for the beautiful and a spiritual and mental capacity for the finer arts in life.[7]

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1 Annie Fellows Johnston, The Land of the Little Colonel (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1929), p. 14.

2 Verne Lockwood Samson, in Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 137.

3 Ibid.

4 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 14.

5 Ibid., p. 16.

6 Ibid., p. 20.

7 Ibid., p. 12.

Mary was a woman of fine common sense but "finer instincts for romance and ideality."[8] There was no leisure time for dreaming and feeding the mind, but Mary found a way. While ironing she would study spelling, and many a pudding was stirred to the parsing of sentences from Paradise Lost.[9]

She and Joseph planned to go to college together when she was eighteen, but death came first to her mother, then to Joseph and the baby. Mary was needed at home to care for the motherless children. Finally, however, she succeeded in getting help, and took two older boys and Anne away to school. In later years she was able to help every member of her family gain a college education. Although women were not allowed to attend the classes, Mary received the same instruction each day from her brothers.[10] They attended "Old Asbury" now De Pauw University.[11]

The second year a fever epidemic took many students. One was Mary's cousin. A young theological student, Albion Fellows, who was tutoring his way through college, came to their help. His father was a methodist minister who had left New Hampshire by wagons when Albion was three years old. They had settled in Illinois.[12] At the end of the school term when Albion graduated, he and Mary were married.[13]

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8 Cale Young Rice, in Library of Southern Literature, ed. E. A. Alderman, C. A. Smith, J. C. Metcalf (Atlanta, Georgia: The Martin and Hoyt Company, 1923), XXVII, 325.

9 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 21.

10 Ibid., p. 26.

11 Ibid., p. 29.

12 Samson, op. cit., p. 137.

13 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 30.

They had three daughters, Lura, Albion, and Annie. The latter was born at Evansville, Indiana, May 15, 1863.[14] Two years later Mr. Fellows died,[15] and Mary took her children to the country to live in a house on their grandfather's farm not far from Evansville.

Annie's childhood was a normal, happy one which she relives in many of her books written when life was not very bright or entertaining. Her first experience of grief and tears was at the age of five. She was watching a political pageant which impressed her vividly but not because of its beauty or originality.

> It was for the fact that on that float went my best white dress and I was not in it. I had not been allowed to ride with the goddess, although I had been especially invited; but my dress had been loaned to the little neighbor who took my place. It was bad enough to be deprived of the glory of riding with the goddess, but to see some one else flaunt by in my beloved frock was more than I could endure without utter heartbreak.

The same year she begged to learn how to read. Her mother stopped work to take Annie in her lap and point with the scissors to those first mysterious words. She could not neglect the tasks long; so Annie trailed behind her while practicing the simple lessons in the First Reader. She held the book in one hand and her mother's skirts in the other. Mr. Johnston was obliged to listen.

Learning to read soon inspired the child to write. She subscribed for The Children's Hour and paid for it each month out of her own savings kept in a work box. She planned to write for that magazine.[16]

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14 John Wilson Townsend, Kentucky in American Letters 1784-1912 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1913), II, 165.

15 Samson, op. cit., p. 37.

16 For the last five paragraphs see A. F. Johnston, op. cit., pp. 36-40.

One day everyone was busy preparing for Aunt Anne's wedding. Some one had carefully covered the large cake and placed on top of it a copy of Youth's Companion. Annie seized it with delight, for it was the first copy she had ever seen. She read it in the haymow in the barn and was much more interested in it than in the wedding. From then she became a constant subscriber.

The fall after Aunt Anne's marriage, Lura lived with her and attended the University of Wisconsin. That summer Annie, Albion, and Mrs. Fellows visited them. It was their first overnight trip, and Annie was greatly disappointed when she discovered she had crossed the state line without knowing it.

That summer was a happy one. They fished, sailed, and fed the squirrels. They also saw "Old Abe", the eagle mascot during the Civil War. The keeper gave Annie one of its feathers. Her uncle made it into a quill pen, telling her to write a book. He was merely joking, but the suggestion made a deep impression on her.[17]

When Annie was nine, the family moved to Evansville, but they soon returned to the country, where they built a home next to the old homestead in which Mary's eldest brother lived and just across the lane from another brother. In fact, McCutchanville, Indiana, was a small community made up of their relatives.

The three sisters played with their eight cousins. There were no streets, no stores. The post office was Squire Mack's sitting room, where mail was distributed only once a week. There were, however, a church and a school house.

Mrs. Fellows believed in teaching her girls to do everything around the house. After their work was neatly done, they could relax and play. Albion

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[17] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

and Annie would often sing or recite long poems while working: Lord Marmion's quarrel with Douglas, "Twickenham Ferry", "The Lady of Shalott", or Whittier's "Snow-bound." Then when the work was completed, Albion would draw pictures to illustrate their own fairy stories and verses.[18]

Some of their tasks were soap-making, candle-making, churning, drying apples, quilting, gathering eggs, wiping dishes, setting the table for neighbors who came to help in wheat harvest time; yet all of this was really fun for the children.[19]

Thrift was one of their first and primary lessons. Mrs. Fellows saw Albion with a lump of sugar which she had secreted in her pocket. She told the girls of her own hardships in life when sugar had not been so plentiful, and insisted it was still wasteful to use carelessly or to destroy anything of value, even though only a lump of sugar.

Another time when the children had misbehaved, their mother tied them to the bedpost while she tried to shame them by telling the story of her life. This, however, was more pleasure to Annie than punishment. She would sit for hours to hear a story.[20]

From the beginning Mrs. Fellows encouraged Annie's attempts to write. One day she said, "I have always wanted to write a book, but leisure has come too late. You must do it for me."[21]

On Sunday all the relatives gathered in one of the three houses and stood around the piano to sing for an hour or more. They sang not only gospel hymns

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18 Ibid., pp. 37-38.

19 Ibid., p. 21.

20 Ibid., p. 17.

21 Ibid., p. 31.

but ballads and classical music.[22]

Many of the games which the children played are later recorded in her books or short stories. One Hallowe'en Annie went to a neighbor's party where no boys were expected. They played the usual games; then the hostess suggested the "stolen supper". They set the table, two plates for each one. Then in pairs they walked to a house and entered without knocking. Annie and her partner went to an Irish woman's home. They were not to speak, but she understood the prank and gave them eggs and potatoes.

On their way back they met a drunkard in their cornfield. In their haste to run from him, they broke their charm by talking. However, they placed their food on the table and sat with their backs to the plates. All lights were low. Suddenly ghosts entered and took the extra places. The ghosts were uninvited boys who saw a chance to "crash" a party. Annie did not like her ghost, but she consoled herself with the fact that her charm had been broken. This incident later furnished material for a story sent to Youth's Companion, but it was rejected.[23]

Many times the children's games consisted of watching the elders work, sampling the molasses candy, riding in wagons or on top of the hay.[24] There were also quilting parties,[25] singing school, and delightful visits to relatives in the city, eight miles away.[26] A unique pastime, however, was to wander through the churchyard reading the tombstones. Annie felt that Gray's Elegy

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[22] Ibid., p. 54.

[23] Ibid., pp. 56-59.

[24] Ibid., p. 52.

[25] Ibid., p. 56.

[26] Ibid., p. 53.

must have been written there.[27]

The matter of clothes also caused Annie's second great sorrow. She was ten years old and the proud owner of a white organdy dress which she had worn only once. Her mother refused to allow her to wear it even on Sunday, because she thought it too fancy for the country.

The last day in October Mrs. Fellows left Albion and Annie with their Aunt Lou while she went to the city. The children were invited to spend the next day at the Harrison farm to celebrate Hallowe'en. That evening Annie decided she must wear her organdy dress so she could look her best when seeking her future husband down in the cellar.

She was unable to find the key to unlock the drawer where the dress was kept, but she did find her green kid slippers. Undaunted, Annie took them and borrowed a pair of white stockings from her cousin Lottie. They had been knitted by Lottie's grandmother when she was eighty years old. To protect them, red pepper had been wrapped with them.

The next morning Annie proudly rode in the three-seated express wagon. The day was cold and threatened snow. For the first time she began to doubt the wisdom of wearing the shoes, which fit too tight when she wore the wool stockings.

In the woods they hunted for wild grapes and persimmons, but Annie could not run in her high heels. One youngster saw her shoes and exclaimed, "My eyes! What made you pull your shoes so soon for? They ain't ripe. They're green as gourds." Annie's wounded pride was nothing in comparison to the smarting of her feet. The red pepper had made its presence felt so keenly that she hid behind a tree and suffered alone. There Lottie found her and

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[27] Ibid., p. 43.

advised her to take off the shoes, but Annie stubbornly refused and played so furiously that a stick snagged one shoe, and a sharp rock cut the other. As a climax, Annie had to climb a fence. The same boy who had commented on her shoes was there to help her across. She haughtily shunned his aid, jumped by herself and landed in his basket of wild grapes. So ended the green kid slippers.[28]

This incident was used for the short story, "Anne's Own Way", which appeared in the book, Mildred's Inheritance.

Annie's school experiences were typical of those in a country school of that day.

> Just beyond the church was the school house, a very primitive affair. Through the wide cracks and knot holes we could see now and then a stray pig walking around. The desks were rude and clumsy with initials carved deeply in them. From the stove near the teacher's desk a stovepipe ran the length of the room to the chimney in the rear. More than one noon hour when the teacher was absent, the big boys played crossing the Alps on benches; till the stovepipe was shaken from its fastenings and came down with a bang. Then the smoke would pour out, and we would have to be given a vacation while it was being replaced.
>
> The boys sat on one side of the room, the girls on the other, three in a seat. On the girls' side one end of the seats rested against the wall, there being no aisle there as on the other side. Pupils had to climb over each other when classes were called for recitations. Sometimes a pungent odor of mince pie or pickle would float out through the room, and heads would turn inquiringly from the boys' side to see which one of us had dropped down out of sight behind the sheltering desk to nibble at forbidden food. We had our lunch baskets and pails with us during study hours. Both ends of the boys' desks being open, they could not refresh themselves the way the girls could.
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> That they were rarely caught is due to the fact that there were more wheels going around than one teacher could watch. Classes just beginning arithmetic crowded those in algebra, and our shrill reading....was followed by grown pupils reciting Latin. It was never monotonous, for when

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28 Ibid., pp. 70-71.

> we tired of our own lessons we could always listen to the big scholars' recitations. Many an incident in history and many an extract from Webster's speeches or from Shakespeare's plays were learned simply by listening to the higher classes recite.[29]

Later a new brick school house was built across the road. The classes were graded and two teachers were employed. On the second floor many entertainments were given: orations, plays, debates, reading of essays, verses, and dialogues.[30] It was here that Annie laid the foundation of her career, for these programs were their only source of amusement, and Annie had a great share of the responsibility.[31]

There were several sources of literature open to Annie. Her father had books of poetry as well as theological material in his own library.[32] She read Harmony and Exposition, Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Aesop's Fables, Pilgrim's Progress, several volumes of The Ladies' Repository, and later Godey's Lady Books were given to them for colored paper dolls. She memorized a great deal of poetry.[33]

In the red bookcase in the corner of the church were two score volumes of books which she also read. They were sentimental stories dealing with unreal children either too good or too bad. They were typical Sunday School stories a generation old, but Annie spent many hours sitting in hard pews and reading these books.[34]

The magazines which she read were: The Children's Hour, Little Corporal,

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29 Ibid., pp. 77-78.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., p. 79.

32 Cale Young Rice, op. cit., p. 325.

33 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 41.

34 Ibid., p. 42.

St. Nicholas, Youth's Companion, American Agriculturists, Harper's Weekly, The Monthly, and The Christian Advocate. She especially enjoyed the column of obituaries and the page of children's stories in the last-named magazine.[35]

Besides reading by herself, Annie hungrily absorbed the stories which were told to her. Lura would read serials to the other two children during the summertime when she was home from school. She was a good reader and enjoyed reading such stories as The Fall of the House of Usher to make her hearers shiver. When one child heard a new story, he always passed it on to the others just as Betty told tales to Davy at the Cuckoo's Nest.[36]

Molly, an orphan girl who worked at the home of Annie's grandfather, would often have them gather around the dining-room table at twilight while she thrilled them with ghost stories.[37] Molly and her stories appear years later in The Little Colonel's Holidays.

Annie was impatient to grow up. When Lura came home the year she was sixteen, Annie was eleven. She envied her older sister's privileges at night, her long skirts, piano-playing, and ability to embroider.

One day she agreed to work all the button holes on the ruffled dress which Lura was making if she could wear the dress first when she went for the mail. In her imagination she dreamed that Prince Charming would ride by and see her pretty dress trailing along behind her. She was quite sure that without the dress the prince would consider her much too young to attract him.

It was a hot August day when Annie donned the long dress. With a book satchel for the mail in one hand and her skirts in the other, she tripped

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[35] Ibid., p. 40.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 50.

daintily along, her hopes soaring high. No prince came, but this experience and many others helped her create Mary Ware.[38]

As the years went by, Mrs. Fellows continued to encourage her daughters to write. When Annie had an inspiration, her mother would say, "Drop everything, fly upstairs. I'll finish your work for you."[39] When Annie was sixteen and Albion fourteen, Mrs. Fellows began to see the first hopeful fruits of her efforts and dreams for the children.

Annie had written some verses, "The Harvest", and Albion had written "Rain", which they sent to Gems of Poetry. Several months later they found their verses published, but their names were not signed.[40]

They did not try publishing anything else for several years, but they redoubled their literary efforts in school. They practiced verse-making by writing in their friends' autograph albums.[41]

The summer Annie was sixteen she passed an examination for a teacher's license, but could not teach because she was below the age limit.[42] The next year, however, she passed again and succeeded in obtaining the position to teach in the same district school which she had been attending.[43] She enjoyed teaching, and she felt it helped her later in writing for children.

The same year in November, Lura married and moved to town. Albion also left home in order to take art lessons in Evansville.[44]

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[38] Ibid., p. 72.

[39] Cale Young Rice, op. cit., p. 325.

[40] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 80.

[41] Ibid., p. 81.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Samson, op. cit., p. 137.

[44] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 82.

After teaching a year, Annie went to Iowa University in 1881 and 1882.[45] She lived with her father's brother, Stephen Fellows, a doctor of divinity and professor of didactics in the University. She had never seen these relatives until she went to live with them, but she had corresponded with their son, Olin, who entertained her while she was there by taking her to the theaters, a real treat to Annie, who seldom had seen a play.[46]

After a year at Iowa University, Annie taught in the public schools of Evansville for three years.[47] She had short hair and looked even younger than her eighteen years. Albion was also in Evansville attending high school.

They met two sisters across the street from where they stayed. The four girls formed the Crambo Club, which met once a week.[48] Each member would ask a question and give one noun. The object was to use this noun in answering the question in verse in a limited time. These verses were often perfected later and read to the group. They also wrote a novel by "Alma", the initials of the four girls. Each wrote a chapter as her turn came. No one wished to kill the characters or write the love scenes; so each delayed these happenings for the next chapter.

Two boys in Evansville, who were also interested in writing, went to the Crambo Club one day. One of them asked Annie for a copy of her poem, "Apple Blossoms" and sent it to a high school paper in the East. It was not only published, but Annie received her first literary earnings, the large sum of seventy-five cents.

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45 Samson, loc. cit.

46 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

47 Samson, op. cit., p. 137.

48 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 83.

Albion finished high school in two years and took up stenography. She was employed in the office of her great-uncle, a judge.

Teaching soon became too strenuous for Annie. To avoid a nervous breakdown she resigned after three years and travelled through New England with one of her great-uncles and his wife. This was the first time she had ever seen the mountains or sea.

Rest brought about a rapid recovery; so Annie began working as private secretary for a second cousin in the insurance business. While working, she found time to write. Her poem "Bob White" was accepted by Harper's Weekly, which paid her ten dollars for it.

The three years of office experience probably again aided her in sympathizing with Mary Ware's business aspirations. Without a doubt it was good training for her later work.

At the end of three years in the insurance office, Annie became engaged to her mother's cousin, Will Johnston, a widower with three children. About the same time Albion was also engaged to Hilary Bacon. They planned a double wedding in the fall.[49]

Before the wedding Albion and Annie realized their childhood dreams by travelling for a few months in England and Europe.[50] During Queen Victoria's Jubilee they took a party trip, landing in Ireland in June. From there they went to Scotland, down the Rhine, and through the Black Forest.

In Switzerland they visited their American cousins, some of whom were tutors. They intended to stay only two weeks, but as there was much to see, and they were enjoying their visit, a month passed before they joined their party.[51]

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[49] Ibid., pp. 84-86.

[50] Samson, op. cit., p. 137.

[51] Ibid., p. 88.

After selecting their trousseau they returned home to prepare for the wedding.[52] They were married at Evansville, October 11, 1888,[53] at the Trinity Church, which their father had built in the last year of his life.[54] It is not strange that Annie should marry a cousin when one considers how much her life was spent in the company of only relatives.

Then to cap all came the publication by the two sisters of a book of poems under the title of "Songs Ysame".[55] It was probably at this time that Cale Young Rice remembers seeing her and describes her as "a dainty figure and exquisite face, from the dark eyes of which shone a spirit that was to prove itself so rare in American letters."[56]

As soon as Annie and her husband were established in their new home in Evansville, they sent for the children, who had been staying with an aunt in Pewee Valley, Kentucky. John, the youngest, was seven. The two girls, Reva and Mary, were older.[57] Through them Annie learned first of the "Land of the Little Colonel."[58]

She did not have much time for writing during these first happy years. There were social affairs, home duties, and duck-hunting with her husband; but he encouraged her to write and would help her seek the correct words or

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52 Ibid., p. 88.

53 Townsend, op. cit., p. 165(For month and day, see A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 88).

54 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 88.

55 Cale Young Rice, op. cit., p. 326 (The name of the only book of poems by Albion and Annie to be published was given by Miss Mary Johnston; however, Townsend gives the date of publication for "Songs Ysame" as 1897).

56 Ibid., p. 325.

57 Ibid., p. 326 (The name of the city was given by Miss Mary Johnston).

58 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 88.

criticise her manuscript. He was not her only critic. She would read her stories to the children. If they listened quietly, she sent the stories to be published. If they squirmed or became restless, she rewrote the stories.[59] In this way she managed to write a few stories for Youth's Companion.[60] These and others were collected and published in 1934 under the title For Pierre's Sake.[61]

The carefree and happy days of her married life suddenly ended when her husband became ill in 1891. The following year he died. After settling his business affairs, Annie had no money and found it necessary to take her writing more seriously in order to gain an income. She kept the children with her for comfort and companionship, and endeavored to support them. The income from her writing soon proved too meager; so she tutored a boy and his sister for several years and also did typewriting at home.[62]

In 1893 her first book, Big Brother, was published.[63] It was based on an incident which happened the summer she and Albion had been in Iowa. They had met a carload of orphans on the way to a Kansas home. Two of them were like Big Brother and Robin. The book was disappointing to Annie, for it was only a child's short story. She wished to write a great American novel.

Soon after the publication of her first book, a neighbor sent a note which told of a prize of one thousand dollars for a story of a child who lived

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59 Ibid., p. 89.

60 Samson, op. cit., p. 138.

61 Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

62 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 89.

63 Samson, op. cit., p. 138.

in the time of Christ.[64] She immediately began the story of Joel: The Boy of Galilee. At first she did not realize what a task lay before her, but as she wrote and found it necessary to know the social conditions of the period, she sought this information from libraries and men of authority until she succeeded in writing a story which the harshest critics could not condemn for false settings or background.

Joel is a story of a lame boy who lived at the time of Christ and witnessed His miracles. He was cured by Christ and became a faithful preacher of the gospel.

The book did not win the prize, but Mrs. Johnston sent it off again. It was accepted by Roberts Brothers and published in 1895. Several years later when in Rome, she saw a translation of Joel in Italian. It was used in a mission school. She was repaid for the tedious hours of research spent on the book, for "the careful writing of that story was an invaluable part of my apprenticeship."[65]

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64 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., pp. 88-90.

65 Ibid., p. 92.

CHAPTER II

ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON: 1895-1931.

After completing Joel, Annie went with John to visit relatives in Pewee Valley.[1] From the first this quiet little village appealed to her. It seemed to be set apart from the outside world and revealed the romantic atmosphere of southern hospitality and refinement of the days before the Civil War. She often saw the Old Colonel, whose arm had been shot off in battle, and his attractive little granddaughter, "Little Colonel."

Annie's hostess suggested that she use Little Colonel as a character in a child's book; so when she returned to Evansville she began The Little Colonel, the first of her famous series. At the time, however, she had no idea of writing a series. It was accepted and published by Joseph Knight in 1895.

After completing The Little Colonel, Annie wished to write a book for adults, but her friends sent her as a delegate to the International Epworth League Conference at Chattanooga. Here she heard the story of a Jew who had been converted. She used this material for her next book, In League with Israel, which she completed in six weeks. The secretary of the League accepted it and put it on the reading course of the League in the United States and Canada. It was published in 1896.[2]

The story concerns a young Jew, David Herschel, who meets a young Christian girl. She becomes his secretary, and through her influence and others' he is gradually converted to the Christian faith.

The strain of writing the book so rapidly almost caused Annie to have a

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[1] Samson, op. cit., p. 138.

[2] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., pp. 95-98.

nervous breakdown; so she went to Sanibel, an island fifty miles off the west coast of Florida, to rest.

By September, 1897, her financial condition was so much worse that she sent Reva and Mary to Pewee Valley while she sold or stored the furniture and took John to Highland Park to place him in a military school. She went to visit cousins in Evanston. They suggested that she write a story of the Deaconess movement. She boarded in their home and spent a great deal of time visiting the slums to gather the material for a short story, "Where the White Ties Lead," written also for the Epworth League.

While staying in the Deaconesses' home Mrs. Johnston received a telegram from an Aunt Florence who asked that she meet her in Oconomowoc. There she received the offer to chaperon Aunt Florence's relative, Elenor, eighteen, on a trip abroad.

In November, 1897, she left Pewee Valley for Chicago, where she met Elenor. Their trip over was uneventful. They went to Paris, Tours, then to a villa across the Loire and beyond St. Symphorium to live with Madame Chevrail, wife of a retired professor who taught Elenor French.

While Mrs. Johnston stayed there, she made excursions and used her experiences for short stories. Near the villa was a house built by Ciseaux, a very peculiar man, who had a large pair of scissors on top of his gate and a smaller pair on each gable of the house. Mrs. Johnston had photographers take pictures of the gate, and she used the house as the setting for The Gate of the Giant Scissors.[3]

While she was travelling in Europe, L. C. Page and Company published Old Mammy's Torment in 1897. Mary Johnston drew the illustrations using as models

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[3] Ibid., pp. 98-112.

the negroes whom she knew; but when the book came out, some of the illustrations were by Amy M. Sacker.[4]

The book is only a short story dealing with the typical Kentucky negro. The small boy, John Jay, gets many a spanking from his old black mammy, but he is influenced by an educated young negro preacher to study in order to help his ignorant race.

At Christmas, Elenor became homesick. To cheer her, Mrs. Johnston planned a Christmas tree for a group of thirty children who had never seen one. The party was a great success, and Mrs. Johnston relates the entire episode in one of the chapters in The Gate of the Giant Scissors.[5]

On January 16, 1898, Madame Chevrail took Mrs. Johnston to the Little Sisters of the Poor to see Sister Denisa de la Providence. They went through the Old Folks' Home, where they saw an eighty-nine-year-old woman crying, not because she lacked necessities, but because she lacked a home and was herded with many unfortunates.

On February 9, Elenor and Mrs. Johnston visited the Latin Quarter in Paris, where they heard of the explosion of the Maine. They left Paris after Mardi Gras and went to Genoa. In Rome they met Cousin Nell, who was studying Italian and helping with a girls' school. She acted as their guide for almost a month of sightseeing.[6] In the midst of all this travelling Mrs. Johnston finished a short valentine story and sent it to Youth's Companion.[7]

In March of the same year she and Elenor visited Naples and Pompeii, and

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[4] Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

[5] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 112.

[6] Ibid., pp. 116-118.

[7] Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

spent the night at Cova. From there they went to Amalfi and ate in a hotel which had been a monastery. From Sorrento they took a boat back to Naples, then to Rome, where they spent another week. From Rome they went to Florence, and spent Easter in Venice.

In Paris they heard wild rumors that a war had started and a United States boat had captured a Spanish vessel. This made Mrs. Johnston impatient to return home, but Elenor wanted to see the coaching in the English Lake region; so they stayed for that. On the boat for home, Mrs. Johnston met a lady who told her a story quite similar to the one used for Mildred's Inheritance, published in 1899.[8]

They returned from abroad in 1898. After John's commencement she moved to Pewee Valley, where she lived for three years. Although she later left for long periods of time, it remained home to her until her death. In August of that year she completed The Gate of Giant Scissors and sent it to the publishers.

During the summer the Author's Club was organized at the suggestion of Evelyn Snead Barnett, who was spending the summer there. She, George Madden Martin, Eva Madden, and Mrs. Johnston met with Miss Fanny Craig to discuss the methods of writing. It was always a small club, seven or eight members at a time. Others who belonged at various times were: Alice Hegan Rice, Abby McGuire Roach, Mary F. Leonard, Margaret Vandercook, Margaret Steel Anderson, Ellen Semple, and Eleanor Mercein Kelly. After the first summer, the club met in Louisville once a week for over twenty years. Each member wrote and read her manuscript to receive criticism. The Black Cat magazine published a tale by each member. All of the stories were based on "a well-bred young lady in a barber shop at midnight. Why and how did she get there and away?"[9]

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[8] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., pp. 119-121.

[9] Ibid., pp. 121-22.

In the summer of 1899 Mrs. Johnston wrote Two Little Knights of Kentucky. She also had published Asa Holmes, or At the Crossroads. The latter is a series of pictures of typical people and happenings in a country store at the crossroads. Holmes, suggested by Mrs. Johnston's uncle,[10] is a philosopher of life. He discusses politics, religion, teachers, love, or gossip. At the end he dies and all his many friends, whom he had quietly helped, mourn his loss. The book is a character study similar to Goodby, Mr. Chips.

On September 12, 1899, Rena died after an appendicitis operation. This caused Mrs. Johnston to be even more greatly concerned about John's health; so she sent him to Walton, New York, where he held a position out-of-doors. While he was away The Little Colonel's House Party and The Story of Dago were published. The latter is a small book in which a monkey tells the story to his brother in the mirror. It teaches that old age should be respected no matter how unlovely. Although this book is not included in The Little Colonel series, the two young brothers who own the monkey are introduced as main characters in the later books.

Just before Christmas in 1900, Mrs. Johnston joined John in Walton and stayed until the following autumn. Two more books appeared in this year, The Little Colonel's Holidays and Travelers Five. The latter is a series of five short stories dealing with five different types of individuals, the Irish cook, a patent medicine man, a clown, an undertaker, an old misunderstood man. They appeared in McClure's, Century, and the Short Story Publishing Company before collected in book form later in 1911. Bliss Carman wrote a foreword to the book in which he rates it as a masterpiece of fiction.

After leaving Walton, Mrs. Johnston and John returned to Kentucky, where

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10 Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

a specialist advised John to go to Arizona. Annie took him to Lee's Ranch, near Phoenix, where they lived in tents all winter. The ranch was kept for invalid boarders.[11] At this time three more books appeared: The Little Colonel's Hero; Cicely, a short story; and Flip's Islands of Providence, published by the Trustees of the Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work. It, too, is a short story dealing with the moral struggles of a poor boy in a city.

Later in 1902, Mrs. Johnston rented a shack on the edge of the desert where she wrote every morning and finished The Little Colonel at Boarding School, published in 1903.[12] May of the same year was so hot that they left Arizona for California and then to Comfort, Texas, to another invalid ranch. That fall Mrs. Johnston returned to Evansville for the winter while Mary took her place with John. Here Mrs. Johnston wrote The Little Colonel in Arizona, published in 1904.

In the fall of 1904, she joined John and Mary in San Antonio, where they kept house until June, 1905, when John grew worse; so they took him back to Comfort. During this year she wrote The Little Colonel's Christmas Vacation and had it published.

On March 14, 1906, Mrs. Johnston bought Penacres in Boerne, Texas. She describes it in Mary Ware in Texas. Here she sat by John's bed and wrote The Little Colonel: Maid of Honor (1906), The Little Colonel's Knight Comes Riding (1907), Mary Ware: The Little Colonel's Chum (1908), and Mary Ware in Texas (1910). The Little Colonel's Good Times Book (1909) is only a diary with an introduction by Mrs. Johnston, who tells the girls how to keep a good

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[11] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

[12] Ibid., p. 124.

diary by relating only the pleasant happenings. The Little Colonel's Doll Book (1910) is a paper-doll book containing the real faces of the main characters in the Colonel series with bodies and clothes drawn by her daughter, Mary.

With all their care and attention John continued to grow worse. He died at Penacres in the fall of 1910, but Mary and Mrs. Johnston did not leave for Kentucky until March, 1911.[13]

When they arrived at Pewee Valley, they bought "The Beeches", the old home of Mrs. Henry W. Lawton, widow of the famous American general.[14] Here Mary would spend the mornings keeping everything quiet while Mrs. Johnston stood for hours at a specially built desk similar to a bookkeeper's and wrote the last of the Colonel series, Mary Ware's Promised Land, published in 1912.[15]

Many changes had taken place in Pewee Valley while she had been away. The old boarding school had burned down. New houses stood on the former college campus. The cabin where Gay spent the summer and the Haunted House of Hartwell Hollow had also burned. Oaklea had been sold, and the new owner had cut down all the trees.[16]

The following year Century Company brought out Miss Santa Claus of the Pullman, which had previously appeared in St. Nicholas magazine. During the following years she spent several summers on Cape Cod, which was the setting for two books; Georgina of the Rainbows (1916) and Georgina's Service Stars (1918). These books were favorably reviewed in the Louisville papers and

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13 Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

14 Townsend, op. cit., p. 165.

15 Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

16 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 127.

New York Times. It was even predicted that they would become as popular as the Colonel series.

On September 29, 1918, The Courier Journal carried her fairy tale, "The Kaiser and the Service Stars," in which the Kaiser is an ogre trying to devour the universe until the Land of the Torch (America) conquers him. In the same paper on March 2, 1919, appeared her editorial praising Henry Watterson.

Mrs. Johnston finally gave up the idea of ever writing the great American novel. When she heard one day that a child had quietly sat through a painful operation in order to obtain a complete set of her Little Colonel books, she resolved to remain a writer of children's books, for she felt sure no adult would be comforted in such a case by the six best sellers or by anything written by Thackeray, George Eliot, or Dickens. Children were much more loyal than their parents.[17]

In 1920 she started on her autobiography, The Land of the Little Colonel, but had to give it up in February when she underwent a serious operation at the St. Joseph's Infirmary.[18] On March 3 the Louisville Times reported that the famous author was dying. Her two sisters and Mary were with her. In spite of her serious condition, however, she improved and returned to "The Beeches" on March 22.[19]

Her health improved to the extent that she was able to represent Kentucky at the National Executive Board of the League of American Pen Women at Washington. On May 11, 1922, she was elected vice-president of this organiza-

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[17] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 128.

[18] Louisville Herald-Post, February 18, 1920.

[19] Louisville Courier-Journal, March 22, 1920.

tion.[20]

In October of the same year she appeared as guest speaker on the first children's program of that year sponsored by the Louisville Woman's Club. She read to them an original story, "Thunderstorm".[21] Later she appeared on Chatauqua programs, where she lectured about the real characters and settings of her books and her interesting experiences as a writer.[22]

Her autobiography appeared nine years after she began it. She dedicated it to Mary Johnston, and Alice Hegan Rice wrote the foreword. This was really the last book which she wrote; although two more were published later. While at Cape Cod, one summer, she rewrote Old Mammy's Torment and included characters from the Colonel series. This book was published in January, 1931, under the title The Little Colonel Stories, Second Series. It was not her wish to rewrite the story, but her publishers insisted until she agreed. The other book was For Pierre's Sake (1934) published after her death. It includes short stories which formerly appeared in magazines, and stories still in manuscript at the time of her death.[23]

Mrs. Johnston's health had been failing for several months, and on April 19, 1931, she went again to St. Joseph's Infirmary in Louisville for a throat operation.[24] At first the operation seemed to be successful, but by October 1, her relatives were called to her bedside in Pewee Valley, where she died at 8:30 o'clock on the morning of October 5, 1931.[25] Funeral services were held

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[20] Ibid., May 12, 1922.

[21] Herald-Post, October 3, 1922.

[22] Willa Jean Rankin, Herald-Post, January 17, 1926.

[23] Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

[24] Courier-Journal, April 19, 1931.

[25] Herald-Post, October 6, 1931.

at Pewee Valley the next afternoon. The body was then carried to Evansville, where short services were held in the Trinity Church, built during her father's life time.[26] Thus ended the career of one of the most popular and beloved writers of juvenile books in her day.

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26 Courier-Journal, October 6, 1931.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST LITTLE COLONEL BOOKS

After the war the South passed through a dreary period of reconstruction, so it

> turned its face backward and created a legend of the past. For half a century, Southern authors--Thomas Nelson Page, F. Hopkinson Smith, George W. Cable, Mary Johnson, Joel Chandler Harris, even the Little Colonel' books and the 'Elsie Dinsmore' series-created, added to, and intensified a vision of life in which crinolined maidens, hanging on the arms of gallant soldiers, walked forever beneath magnolia trees; where white-mustached and always courtly colonels drank an eternal julep brought to them by their devoted body-servants; where the laughter and the singing of the darkies was only interrupted to listen to the softer singing of birds.[1]

Such was the impression Pewee Valley made on Mrs. Johnston. She immediately fell under the spell of this quiet little village which seemed to take her back to the ante-bellum era when every day was a holiday, and the chief business in life was hospitality to the many guests who leisurely strolled over the spacious lawns shaded by tall stately trees.[2] These families sprang from old Virginia stock, and many prominent Louisville people spent their vacations in the large summer homes where they entertained.[3]

During Mrs. Johnston's first visit, she saw an old Confederate Colonel strolling with his granddaughter, who was pushing a doll buggy in which rode a parrot. The elderly gentleman was Colonel George Weissinger of Louisville.[4] He had lost his right arm in the Civil War, resembled Napoleon, always wore white duck in the summer and a military cape in winter.[5] The child was four-

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[1] Mark Sullivan, Our Times, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935),VI., 404.
[2] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 95.
[3] Ibid., p. 5.
[4] Courier-Journal, January 10, 1932.
[5] A. F. Johnston, loc. cit.

year-old Hattie Cochran.

> She had a dreadful temper and would sometimes bang on a tree with a broom until she was red in the face, if the parrot objected to riding in her doll buggy or if any little thing displeased her. But on the other hand, she was grace and gentleness itself, as she tiptoed around singing to the flowers and stringing words together that pleased her fancy with its beauty.[6]

One day she and her parents had dinner with Mrs. Johnston. Hattie displayed her temper, and Mrs. Johnston and her hostess remarked that The Little Colonel would be a good title for a story.[7]

Thus it was that Pewee Valley in Oldham county became Lloydsborough, the setting for the Land of the Little Colonel, which, "like Gaul, is divided into three parts. One lies in the state of Kentucky, one in the country of imagination, and one in the dear demesne of memory."[8]

The first edition of The Little Colonel (1895) was only a short story illustrated by Mary Johnston. It is dedicated "To One of Kentucky's Dearest Little Daughters--The Little Colonel Herself--This Remembrance of a Happy Summer is Affectionately Inscribed."

In the story Elizabeth Lloyd marries a Yankee, Jack Sherman, and her father disowns her. After Mr. Sherman loses heavily in bank failures, he goes west and sends his wife and five-year-old daughter, Lloyd, to their cottage in Lloydsborough. Lloyd peeks through the gate at "The Locusts" where old Colonel Lloyd lives. He talks to her and realizes she is his granddaughter, but the child's black mammy, "Mom Beck", comes to take her away.

The next time he sees her, she is with some negroes making mud pies on his steps. When he scolds her for being dirty and blames her father, she shows

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6 Ibid., p. 95.

7 Mary Elizabeth Plummer, "Heroine Recalls History of the Little Colonel Series", Courier-Journal, January 10, 1932.

8 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

the family temper by throwing mud on him. He is highly amused and manages to win her friendship to the extent that she visits him.

Mr. Sherman returns home very ill. The doctor advises that Lloyd be sent to the Colonel, who, although he is lonesome, still refuses to see his daughter. He buys Lloyd new clothes, and allows her to strum the strings of his dead wife's harp. Later when Mr. Sherman has a relapse, Lloyd runs to the Colonel for help. When he refuses, she goes into a rage. Her bitter words shame him into forgetting his pride and forgiving his daughter.

Mrs. Johnston's description of the Old Colonel is just as she heard it from her hostess. Lloyd even has her parrot, doll buggy, dog, and fiery temper like Hattie, and she also sings to the flowers. "Mom Beck" was really Hattie's old nurse, Rebeccah Porter, and Mr. and Mrs. Sherman are Hattie's parents.[9] Thus the book is based on actual happenings and real people which have been idealized by Mrs. Johnston's imagination.

Mrs. Johnston did not intend to write any more books about Little Colonel; so in The Gate of the Giant Scissors she is not even mentioned, and the setting is entirely different. This book would have had no connection with the series if it had not been included later with The Little Colonel and Two Little Knights of Kentucky in one volume entitled, The Little Colonel Stories. Then, too, Joyce Ware becomes a main character in many of the later books.

The story concerns the experiences of Joyce Ware in France with an aunt. She stays at Madame Gréville's, really Madame Chevraille's, takes some of the trips which Mrs. Johnston in reality took, and celebrates Christmas as Mrs. Johnston records in her diary she and Elenor spent it. Joyce also goes to

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9 Courier-Journal, January 10, 1952.

visit the Old Folk's Home, and sees Sister Denisa de la Providence. She, too, is impressed with the mystery surrounding the house which is enclosed by a wall and a gate with giant scissors on the top, but, unlike Mrs. Johnston, she succeeds in solving it.

Behind the grim walls, a child of nine, Jules, lives alone with two servants, one of whom sadly mistreats him. Joyce manages to make his acquaintance secretly, and he is one of those thirty children who enjoy their first Christmas tree at Madame's home. When Jules's great-uncle returns home, he finds the boy seriously ill from maltreatment, but too completely cowed by the servant to tell his uncle the true cause of his illness. Joyce, however, is not afraid of the servant's threats and tells. Immediately he discharges the servant. Joyce brings more happiness to this home when she finds the uncle's lost sister, who is in the Old Folk's Home.

The scene which describes Joyce's first meeting with the old lady is quite similar to Mrs. Johnston's own experience when she was impressed by seeing an old lady in the home cry because she lacked a home and family. Thus the experiences in the book are based on Mrs. Johnston's own observation while she was in France with Elenor. The characters in the book, however, are mainly the product of imagination; but some of Mary Johnston's experiences are responsible for the creation of Joyce.[10]

After the publication of this book both the publishers and the children demanded to hear more about The Little Colonel; so Mrs. Johnston allowed her to take a minor part in Two Little Knights of Kentucky (1899), which is again laid in Lloydsborough Valley, Kentucky.

Two brothers--Malcolm MacIntyre, ten years old, and Keith, eight--are

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10 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 127.

staying with their grandmother while their parents are in Florida. Their cousin, Virginia("Ginger") Dudley, is also staying there while her mother has gone to her father, Captain Dudley, who was wounded in Cuba. The boys allow a tramp, a bear, and a small boy, Jonesy, to sleep at a cabin on their place. They tell no one except the cook.

"Ginger" plans a Valentine party and invites Little Colonel, who is now eight and lives close by at The Locusts. Their aunt, Miss Allison MacIntyre, tells them all about what happened to Lloyd in the first book, and they are anxious to see her.

At the party Lloyd and Ginger are badly frightened when they find the bear in one of the bed rooms. The boys have bought it. That night an old German professor sees the cabin on fire and rescues Jonesy, who is very ill and has been abandoned by the tramp, whom the Courier-Journal reports to be an escaped criminal. The professor keeps Jonesy, and the children, with the aid of Miss Allison, decide to perfrom Vision of Sir Launfal in order to raise the money necessary to send Jonesy back to his brother. The program is successful and all the cast, including Little Colonel, have their pictures made in their costumes. The boys are impressed with the noble characters they played and decide to take as their motto, "Live pure, speak truth, right the wrong." Aunt Allison buys them two white enamel flowers with a tiny diamond center for them to wear as their pledge of knighthood.

One day while playing a game, Keith takes Lloyd for a ride on a hand car. A train nearly runs over them, but Jonesy turns the switch just in time. When Mr. MacIntyre returns home, he has a simple home built in the country for Jonesy and his brother. Later six orphans come to live there, and the home is dedicated on Memorial Day.

The two little knights are really drawn from Alexander Craig Culbertson,

and William Stuart Culbertson, nephews of Miss Fanny Craig (Miss Allison) whose home in Pewee Valley is the true setting for the story. Jonesy is a true description of an orphan from the Chicago slums.[11]

After Mrs. Johnston completed these three short stories, the children and publishers insisted on having more about the Little Colonel herself. As she had introduced many characters in the stories, she decided to join the books more closely by bringing some of them together in one story. This suggested the next book, The Little Colonel's House Party (1900), which is really the first one of the series to be of regular book length.

The setting is again Lloydsborough Valley at The Locusts, Lloyd's home. A long row of trees on each side of the lane leads to the great stone house with white pillars covered with Virginia creeper. From Locusts to the post-office runs a "wide pike with a railroad track on one side of it and a bridal-path on the other."[12] On this road the reader gets his first new glimpse of the Little Colonel riding on her pony, Tarbaby, and wearing the well-known Napoleon hat. She is now eleven years old.

As an introduction to the book Mrs. Johnston feels the necessity to introduce and explain her characters for those who have never read the preceding books, so there is a brief repetition as the Old Colonel and others are described.

Joyce Ware, the daughter of one of Mrs. Sherman's best friends in Plainesville, Kansas, and Betty Lloyd Lewis, an orphan living on a farm up Green River and a daughter of another close friend, go to visit Lloyd during the summer. Lloyd's cousin, Eugenia Forbes, who is very wealthy and lives

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[11] Courier-Journal, January 10, 1932.

[12] A. F. Johnston, The Little Colonel's House Party (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1900), p. 14.

at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, is the other house guest. Betty is a child with meager opportunities, but a burning desire for literary achievements. She eagerly reads the books which are in the church bookcase. Joyce wishes to be an artist, while Eugenia haughtily seeks social success.

The four girls meet and enjoy an exciting summer. Through Eugenia's disobedience, all, except Betty, visit a gypsy camp to have their fortunes told. They catch the measles and have to spend many days in a dark room. Mrs. Sherman and Miss Allison as well as Bobby Moore, Judge Moore's son, and Keith and Malcolm do their share to cheer them. When they recover there are many picnics, horseback riding and parties. One can well imagine Mrs. Johnston in the capacity of an entertainer for children's parties, for she cleverly relates games, contests, and programs suitable for all occasions.

Their fun is suddenly ended, however, when Betty takes the measles and almost loses her sight. At this time she tells the story of "The Road of the Loving Heart," which appeared in Youth's Companion. It was about Robert Louis Stevenson's kindness to the natives on the island where he died. They built him a great road because he had freed them from prison. So Betty wishes to act in such a way that she will leave behind her a pleasant memory. The girls are deeply impressed, especially selfish Eugenia, who seeks to improve. She writes her father a full confession, and he sends her a gold ring on which is engraved the word "Tusitala" to remind her of the motto.

While Betty is blind, her poem "Night" is published in the paper. Later she regains her sight, and Eugenia gives each girl a ring like her own. The last night a lawn party is given. Mr. Forbes comes for his daughter and makes arrangements to take Betty with them to Europe that fall.

To the original characters Mrs. Johnston has added Eugenia, Betty, Joyce's family, and Bob Moore. These new characters continue to be mentioned or to

appear prominently in all of the following books. Betty is not a portrait of any one person. She is patterned after Albion and Lura, which makes her seem more real to Mrs. Johnston than the others. However, she is described to look like Elizabeth Matthews of Macon, Georgia.[13] She at one time visited Pewee Valley and really had literary inclinations. Her father was on the staff of the Courier-Journal.[14] The library in the church where Betty reads is the same which Mrs. Johnston read as a child. Bob Moore is really Muir Semple at Anchorage. In reality the Little Colonel never had this house party and never knew Joyce, Betty, or Eugenia, who was not real.[15]

Mrs. Johnston's description of the Locusts drive and the road leading to the post office is accurate. Even today one can easily recognize it if he visits there. The old mansion, however, has burned and a smaller place is built in its stead. The Little Colonel never lived there, but her grandfather did.[16]

It seems natural that a fourth story in the series might be less interesting than the original ones, but in this case the opposite is true. The story is a full-length novel filled with more action and interesting experiences which a child thoroughly enjoys. The book itself is better bound and has more expensive illustrations, for the demand warranted a more attractive outward appearance to live up to its increasing popularity.

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13 A. J. Johnston, The Land of the Little Colonel, p. 81.

14 Courier-Journal, January 10, 1932.

15 Herald-Post, December 23, 1928.

16 Courier-Journal, loc. cit.

CHAPTER IV
THE LAST TEN LITTLE COLONEL BOOKS

In the preceding chapter I have discussed the first books of the series rather fully in order to describe most of the main characters and to give a general idea of the settings and the plots. For the remaining books, however, I shall mention only those incidents which appear to be directly influenced by Mrs. Johnston's own experiences or observations.

The third volume, The Little Colonel's Holidays (1901), is dedicated "To 'The Little Captain' and His Sisters Whose Proudest Heritage is That They Bear The Name of a Nation's Hero." At the beginning Mrs. Johnston speaks to her readers and explains why she has written the new book. She received so many letters asking what happened after the party that she could not answer each letter personally; thus she asks all of the children to gather around the magic kettle while she passes her hand through the steam to see what it reveals. She then gives a summary of the previous books and describes the same characters.

The setting is first at The Locusts a month after the house party. It then shifts to Betty's former home in the country on Green River. Here Lloyd learns how to appreciate and to recognize true character stripped of all glamor of wealth or material success. The descriptions of country life, hardships, and fun are largely the product of Mrs. Johnston's own childhood. She describes one game in particular, Barley-Bright, which was one of her favorites as a child.[1] Even Molly, an orphan helper on the farm of Mrs. Johnston's grandfather, makes her appearance in the story and tells them the ghost stories which used to thrill the Johnston children.

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[1] A. F. Johnston, The Land of The Little Colonel, p. 51.

Back in Lloydsborough Miss Allison gives a Hallowe'en party in the old haunted house in Hartwell Hollow, which actually existed. Here Lloyd meets new friends, who become main characters in the later books. They are the Walton children, just returned from the Philippines, where their father, the great General Walton, was killed in battle. The son, Ronald, has the distinction of being the youngest boy to receive the rank of Captain in the United States. This family is almost an exact description of the late General Lawton's family. "The Little Captain" is Manly Lawton, and his three sisters are: Frances (Allison), Louise (Elsie), and Catherine (Kitty). These children and the Culbertson boys were really the Little Colonel's friends in Pewee Valley. Another new character introduced is Anna Moore, drawn from Anna Burge Muir.[2] She, however, never assumes a prominent part in the stories.

In conclusion Mrs. Johnston implies that perhaps there will be other books which may tell of college days and weddings. She evidently changes her mind, for there are several intervening books before these incidents occur.

The Little Colonel's Hero (1902), is dedicated "To All the Friends of the 'Little Colonel' to Whose Letters The Author Could Not Reply, This Book is Offered in Answer To Their Many Questions." Again one sees Lloyd, now twelve, wearing her Napoleon hat and riding Tarbaby, but not for long does she stay in Lloydsborough. Mr. and Mrs. Sherman take her abroad. In Geneva a trained St. Bernard dog saves Lloyd's life, and the account is sent to the Courier-Journal, "a big American newspapah,"[3] and Lloyd keeps the dog.

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[2] Courier-Journal, January 10, 1932.

[3] A. F. Johnston, The Little Colonel's Hero (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1902), p. 96.

She meets Eugenia, Betty, and Mr. Forbes in France, where they visit those places recorded in The Gate of the Giant Scissors. This, of course, is only a repetition of Mrs. Johnston's own experiences in France. A good deal of the material was gathered while Mrs. Johnston was in Geneva, but she did not realize it then.[4] The description of the Walton's new home, "The Beeches", in Lloydsborough Valley, is based on facts. The Lawtons did buy The Beeches, a beautiful home in a six-acre grove of beech trees. Later Mrs. Johnston purchased it.[5]

This book differs from the others in that a complete three-act play in verse form, "The Princess Winsome", is included. The words and music of the songs in the play were composed by Mrs. Albion Fellows Bacon and are printed in the book. This play appealed to the readers to the extent that it was produced by them all over the United States. One group of boys and girls in New York reported $250 net income, which they gave to the local hospital.[6]

The Little Colonel at Boarding School (1903), written in Arizona, was dedicated "To All the Girls Who, Like the Little Colonel, Are Standing With Reluctant Feet Where the Brook and River Meet, Womanhood and Childhood Sweet." The setting, one year later, is old Lloydsborough Seminary, which Lloyd has attended as day pupil for five years and where she becomes a boarding student for a short time. The setting is suggested by Mr. Sloane's school in Pewee Valley--well-known a generation ago.[7] The Seminary is a typical girls' school thirty or forty years ago when privileges were few, and the least

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[4] A. F. Johnston, The Land of the Little Colonel, p. 120.

[5] Courier-Journal, loc. cit.

[6] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 131.

[7] Mary Elizabeth Plummer, "Heroine Recalls History of the Little Colonel Series," Courier-Journal, January 10, 1932.

offense against one of the innumerable rules meant utter disgrace. Because of these restrictions those in search of excitement indulged in harmless escapades.

The original Little Colonel, however, studied piano and voice under Miss Fanny Craig (Miss Allison) and later studied French, Latin, mathematics, history, and geography in Miss Craig's school in Pewee Valley.[8]

One of the customs between Bob and Lloyd is measuring their height from year to year on an old tree. Kodak pictures of the originals at the tree may still be purchased at a small general store in Pewee Valley. The only new character which is drawn from life is Katie Mallard (Katie Malone).[9]

Included in the book is Mrs. Walton's story of "The Three Weavers," in which only one girl so weaves her life that she can accept the real Prince when he comes. The others give favors too freely, or accept the first that comes. The story inspires the girls to form the Hildegarde Order, and Mr. Sherman offers the Silver Yardstick by which a girl should measure her friends--honor, strong character, and a clean life.

Although Mrs. Johnston shows plainly that she is not entirely in sympathy with the old-fashioned girls' school, she acknowledges its virtues and reveres its traditions. Her purpose is to influence adolescent girls to live a normal healthy life in order to be happy. She does not preach, but the high standards kept by Lloyd became those of her admirers. Mrs. Johnston's aims were realized to some extent--just how far-reaching and permanent cannot be known. She received many letters from young girls who told her they had saved themselves from some foolishness by the warning of "The Three Weavers." They, too, were making their standards those of Lloyd's Silver Yardstick.[10]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 135.

The setting for The Little Colonel in Arizona (1904), is taken from Mrs. Johnston's own observations the first year she stayed at Lee's Ranch. The book concerns the Ware family, who live near a health camp in Arizona, where the Little Colonel, fourteen, visits them. Their troubles, which they bear bravely, must have been the result of Mrs. Johnston's own feelings at this time of financial distress and John's illness. Since the scene is no longer in Lloydsborough, the book lacks the aristocratic southern atmosphere of the former ones. There is more reality, more dissatisfaction against the monotony of the camp which oppresses them. The allegory of Old Camelback Mountain, which an invalid relates to Joyce, was suggested to Mrs. Johnston by a remark of one of the boys at Lee's Ranch. "It's just like us, broken down and left to die on the sands."[11] Yet the book does not become morbid. There is joy in hard work, and the happy ending.

John and Mary Johnston are responsible in some ways for the creation of Joyce, who, like Mary, has artistic talent, and of Jack, who takes the family responsibility seriously.[12] Little Mary Ware, who hides in a ditch to keep Lloyd from seeing her dirty and slips in to dress and make a dramatic entrance, reveals many of the characteristics of Mrs. Johnston's own childhood. She is always concerned about her clothes, and the rosebud sash, which delights her, used to please Mrs. Johnston in the same way.[13] Her experiences at the country school are made more real by the fact that Mrs. Johnston had attended one similar to Mary's.

The setting for The Little Colonel's Christmas Vacation (1905), is

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[11] Ibid., p. 124.

[12] Ibid., p. 126.

[13] Ibid., p. 6.

"Warwick Hall", an old residence and estate on the Potomac, where Kitty, Allison, Betty, and Lloyd, sixteen, go to school. Such a place never existed,[14] but since the boarding school at Pewee Valley burned down, Mrs. Johnston sends her characters away to one which she considers ideal. There are few rules except the school motto, "Keep faith, keep promises, be trusted."

In the books previous to this one, the Wares, Betty, and others furnished the hardships. Lloyd lived an ideal life of comfort and happiness, but Mrs. Johnston's own troubles probably influenced her to add a few disappointments for Lloyd, whose illness causes her to stop school in the middle of the term. The remainder of the book describes a country town and its inhabitants.

The charm string, which Lloyd makes to keep a record of her progress in school and in life, is a description of Mrs. Johnston's charm string, which she kept as a child.[15] The original Little Colonel went away to school when she was sixteen, but she attended Miss Kendick's school in Cincinnati.[16]

In conclusion Lloyd receives a letter from Eugenia, who tells of her engagement to Phil Tremont's brother, Stuart. They plan to marry within a year, and Lloyd, Joyce, and Betty are asked to be bridesmaids. This makes way for The Little Colonel: Maid of Honor (1906), where all the main characters in each book meet again at The Locusts for the wedding. Even little Mary Ware, who blisters her face trying to bleach it for the occasion, is invited. Mrs. Johnston describes their entering the Union Depot at Louisville, having lunch at Benedict's Restaurant, and taking the trolley out to Lloydsborough Valley.

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14 Mary Elizabeth Plummer, loc. cit.

15 Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

16 Mary Elizabeth Plummer, loc. cit.

In The Little Colonel's Knight Comes Riding (1907), Lloyd makes her debut in Louisville society, and has many suitors before she finally realizes that her old playmate, Bob Moore, is her Knight. The original Little Colonel also made her debut in Louisville, but instead of marrying Bob and living at Oaklea, she married Mr. Albert Dick and lives in Louisville.[17]

The cabin, which Mrs. Johnston describes as Gay's rented residence, at one time existed in Pewee Valley, but it has been torn down. Oaklea is now owned by a stranger who has cut the trees. The chapters in which the characters pose for pictures for Miss Katherine Marks is based on fact. Miss Katie Matthews, a resident of Pewee Valley, took many pictures of the original characters and familiar locations in Pewee Valley. These kodak pictures may be purchased at only one store in Pewee Valley.

The last chapter of this book skips three years between Lloyd's engagement and her marriage at The Locusts. Mrs. Johnston fully intended to close the series with this book, but her readers wrote letters and complained that she had skipped. They wished to know what happened during that time; so Mrs. Johnston allowed Mary Ware, now sixteen, to tell in Mary Ware: The Little Colonel's Chum (1908).[18] The book begins in September when Betty leaves to teach at Warwick Hall, Lloyd begins to prepare for her debut, and Joyce becomes a designer in New York. The scene is again at Warwick Hall, which Mary Ware and Elise Walton attend.

Mary cuts out items from the Courier-Journal which relate Lloyd's social successes. She spends Christmas with Eugenia and sees her baby and Phil.

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17 Ibid.

18 A. F. Johnston, Mary Ware: The Little Colonel's Chum (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1908), p. vii.

Betty, like Mrs. Johnston, writes short stories for Youth's Companion, and Mary returns home to nurse Jack, who is crippled by a falling tree. She has him read "The Jester's Sword", which concerns a crippled man who makes others happy to forget his own pain. John Johnston inspired Mrs. Johnston to write this story, because:

> Wherever he went men felt a strange strength-giving influence radiating from his presence. One could not say exactly what it was, it was so fleeting and intangible-- So blithely did he bear his lot it seemed a kingly spirit dwelt among us, and earth is poorer for his going.[19]

Her own emotions are poured out through Mary's grief. Because Mrs. Johnston was passing through a similar sorrow, she makes the Wares' suffering very real.

After complying with her readers' wishes in regard to this book, she felt that she should tell no more, for "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."[20] Her public, however, refused to allow her to stop the series; so against her better judgement Mrs. Johnston continued with Mary Ware in Texas (1910), which is a description of her own emotions, when she went to Texas with John, her own feelings as a child, and many of Mary Johnston's experiences.

The Ware situation is quite similar to that of the Johnstons at that time. There are Mrs. Ware, Mary, and Norman seeking a cooler place to live for Jack's health. They can't find a place in San Antonio, since no one wishes to take an invalid. Finally they move to a small house in a German town, Bauer, where Mary is very lonesome. She often climbs up on top of the windmill in order to see as far away as possible.

Mrs. Johnston and Mary likewise left Arizona to take John first to San Antonio and then to a German town, Boerne (Bauer), where they, too, rented a

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[19] A. F. Johnston, The Land of the Little Colonel, p. 126.

[20] A. F. Johnston, Mary Ware: The Little Colonel's Chum, p. viii.

small house, and the real Mary climbed up the windmill to gaze into the distance.[21] Although the book reveals their own grief and tedious days, Mrs. Johnston, by having a happy ending, avoids depressing her young followers too much. Jack is cured.

The last of the series, Mary Ware's Promised Land (1912), is dedicated, "To Miss Fanny Craig, the 'Miss Allison' of These Stories, Whose 'Road of the Loving Heart' Runs Wide and Far Through All This Happy Valley." The setting is out west just where the preceding book ended. Mary seeks a business career. After Mrs. Ware's death, she works as private secretary for Mrs. Blythe, who is interested in the improvement of tenement conditions. She becomes greatly interested and makes public speeches which result in some improvements. Later she marries Phil and lives across from Lloyd at Lloydsborough Valley.

Mrs. Johnston's own business experiences aided her in picturing Mary's, and the months she spent studying the slums with the Deaconess movement helped her describe the slums which Mary visited. Mrs. Blythe was no doubt suggested by Mrs. Johnston's sister, Mrs. Albion Bacon, whose book Beauty in Ashes concerns housing plans. Mrs. Johnston even includes Mrs. Bacon's poem "The Torch" as Mrs. Blythe's composition.

The rewritten Old Mammy's Torment was supposed to be the thirteenth volume, but it has never been accepted as one of the series; for that reason, I am not including it in my study.

In the Mary Ware books the Little Colonel no longer assumes a part except through occasional letters or news from friends. Neither do these books display the carefree, happy, and idealized situations as freely as those set in Lloydsborough Valley. They are the products of the author's own hardships out

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21 Information given by Miss Mary Johnston.

west when John gradually lost his battle for life. However, she does not wish to depress her readers, but to show them how to overcome great handicaps, and she always rewards her characters' courage with a happy ending. Her books are living symbols of the often repeated saying--every cloud has a silver lining.

CHAPTER V

POPULARITY AND CRITICISM

By 1913 the Little Colonel books had made Mrs. Johnston the most popular modern writer of girls' books in the United States--an honor she enjoyed all the rest of her life.[1] The series consists of twelve volumes and fourteen titles written over a period of seventeen years. If one counts Old Mammy's Torment as the thirteenth volume, seventeen stories had been written over a period of thirty-six years. Thus they have been read by the first readers' children and some grandchildren.

Three volumes of her books which were originally published by various companies were taken over at her request by L. C. Page and Company; so all the books are now under the same imprint.[2] The twelve volumes uniformly bound in special imported silk cloth, fully illustrated and with a jacket of striking color, may be bought for twenty-four dollars or separately for two dollars each. There are other editions bound in cheaper cloth and sold for $1.50 each.

In 1924 a popularity contest was held among young readers in the United States to determine their favorite books. Two of Mrs. Johnston's were awarded honors: The Little Colonel's Hero and The Little Colonel's House Party.[3] By 1931 more than one million copies of all the books in the series had been sold. The following year the Page Company ordered new printings

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1 Margaret W. Vandercook, "Beloved Writer of Books for Young Folk," St. Nicholas, XLI (December, 1931), 129.

2 Dorothea Lawrance Mann, "Author of the Little Colonel Series," Publishers' Weekly, CXX (October 24, 1913), 1925.

3 Herald-Post, October 19, 1924.

of the following volumes: The Little Colonel's Hero, The Little Colonel's Christmas Vacation, The Little Colonel: Maid of Honor, The Little Colonel's Knight Comes Riding, The Little Colonel in Arizona, and The Little Colonel at Boarding School.[4]

At the present time the popularity of the books according to the number of sales is as follows: The Little Colonel's House Party, 139,000; The Little Colonel Stories, 132,000; The Little Colonel's Holidays, 113,000; The Little Colonel's Hero, 100,000; The Little Colonel at Boarding School, 94,000; The Little Colonel's Christmas Vacation, 87,000; The Little Colonel in Arizona, 86,000; The Little Colonel's Knight Comes Riding, 85,000; The Little Colonel's Chum: Mary Ware, 82,000; Mary Ware in Texas, 63,000; Mary Ware's Promised Land, 60,000.[5] Thus a rather uniform interest has been shown in all the books.

Besides the sale of the Colonel Books there has been a demand for the publication in separate form of those short stories, plays, and allegories which she included in several of the books. Those published separately are: "In the Desert of Waiting", "The Three Weavers", "Keeping Tryst", "The Legend of the Bleeding Heart", "The Rescue of Princess Winsome." Teachers in Mexico have translated her allegory of Camelback Mountain into Spanish for their classes. It has also been printed in Braille for the blind and in Japanese in book form.[6]

The influence of the books inspired the children to form Little Colonel Clubs all over the world.[7] Girls from New England to the Philippines even

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[4] Courier-Journal, January 10, 1932.

[5] General Catalogue and Trade List, L. C. Page and Company, 1935.

[6] A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 125.

[7] Townsend, op. cit., p. 167.

were the Tusitala rings as a reminder of The Road of the Loving Heart.[8] In 1917 Mrs. Johnston visited in New Orleans and saw a complete set of her books in a privately owned home library. The children swarmed around her to ask questions about the characters and scenes.[9] Just as she was honored then, so her name continued to be remembered after her death. In 1935 a Little Colonel memorial house was opened in New York. It was formerly the home of a millionaire bachelor. The place is called The Locusts, and many things associated with the Little Colonel are assembled in it.[10]

During her lifetime many people visited the scenes which were used in the books, The Locusts, The Beeches, Clovercroft, Haunted House of Hartwell Hollow--all in Pewee Valley. They even went to see Lee's Ranch and Camelback Mountain in Arizona. One little New York girl went to France and insisted on seeing the gate with the giant scissors and the home of The Sisters of the Poor.[11]

Today Miss Mary Johnston lives at The Beeches, where she graciously allows visitors to drive around the estate. She personally meets those who wish to ask questions, and she takes them into one of the front rooms where all the pictures of the original characters were placed by her mother. During the summer she has as many as 120 visitors in one week, and many times there are more.[12] Even the original Little Colonel, Mrs. Dick, has children visit her

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8 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 130.

9 Courier-Journal, May 5, 1935.

10 Loc. cit.

11 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 132.

12 Courier-Journal, August 18, 1935.

and ask to see the harp which she was supposed to have played.[13] Such popularity won for Mrs. Johnston the distinction of being included in Who's Who in America from 1908 to the time of her death.

The characters in the books became endeared to the readers who wrote questions asking about all the Little Colonel's friends.[14] Mrs. Johnston probably received more letters from appreciative readers than any other author in the United States.[15] This friendship of so many young people was the greatest thing her work brought her.

> Sometimes when I look at the insignificant pile of books which bear my signature, and then think of the responses they have called forth, I feel somewhat of the same awe that must have stirred the heart of that lad in Galilee when he found his few loaves and fishes feeding a multitude. And then I remember that his miracle and mine were wrought in the same way. Only because his offering was put into the Master's hand was it multiplied. No page that I have ever written was begun without a prayer that it might thus be taken, blessed and used.[16]

A renewed interest in The Little Colonel naturally occurred in 1935, when it was filmed by the Fox Company and the title role was played by Shirley Temple, who still enjoys a popularity unrivaled by old or young in her profession. Ten thousand fans had written and demanded that the book be filmed.[17] Mrs. Thomas Allen Moore of New York and formerly of Louisville was responsible for bringing this about. The film rights sold for an unannounced sum said to rival the amount paid for Common Clay by Cleves Kinkead, which was one of the largest sums ever paid for film rights. Mrs.

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13 Ibid., January 10, 1932.

14 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 131

15 Vandercook, op. cit., p. 130.

16 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 133.

17 Courier-Journal, December 27, 1934.

Johnston's heirs then made Mrs. Moore literary agent with the right to dispose of the film rights to Mrs. Johnston's other novels as she sees fit. The picture had its world premiere in Louisville on February 22, at the Rialto Theater. It was then shown at Radio City, New York, on Feburary 28.[18]

Miss Mary Johnston accepted the invitation to be in New York for the opening of the film there.[19] Years ago Mary Pickford was supposed to play in the same story, but the plans fell through.[20] While this new interest was at its height, New York designers went to Pewee Valley to see pictures from which they created modern Little Colonel fashions for girls from two to twelve.[21]

> The Little Colonel books cannot be numbered among the masterpieces of children's literature. Nevertheless, they have filled a larger place in the reading of adolescents than many books of greater truth and beauty. Sentimental and often saccharine, they are that comfortable combination of reality and unreality so satisfying to those formless years between twelve, or even younger, and sixteen.[22]

Even though she lacks a superior gift of imagination, a keen and balanced observation, and a psychological acuteness, Mrs. Johnston has succeeded in entertaining thousands of children and inspiring many of them

> to emulate the integrity of her characters, who lived in a world where good intentions prevail and where simple virtues are glorified. By drawing upon her own idealized childhood and the scenes and the people she loved, she created a glamour about her characters which charmed youthful readers.[23]

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18 Herald-Post, February 20, 1935.

19 Courier-Journal, February 17, 1935.

20 Herald-Post, February 20, 1935.

21 Ibid., April 13, 1935.

22 A Bookcover of The Land of the Little Colonel in Louisville Public Library Scrapbook.

23 Samson, op. cit., p. 138.

Just as Louisa M. Alcott made New England life real to children all over the country, so Mrs. Johnston, through her characters and Kentucky background, reflects in her stories the fine ideals of the South. Both authors gained a wide following, and both stressed moral earnestness and character.[24] Thus Mrs. Johnston in a newer generation had no rival in the children's field. Each new book was received by throngs of eager youngsters who not only accepted what she offered, but insisted on having more.[25]

The secret of such popularity lies in the simple fact that Mrs. Johnston always remained young in mind and in sympathetic interests. She remembered vividly her own youthful emotions and interpreted the younger generation in a kind and understanding way. Those who knew her saw behind the charming story-teller a woman of rare character and exalted vision, one in every way worthy to lead youth toward its highest fulfillment.[26] It is small wonder then that the Boston Transcript ranked her as the most helpful and most gifted of the present-day writers for young people.[27]

> Woven through all of Mrs. Johnston's books are such engaging threads of symbolism as the "Tusitala" rings, "The Road of the Loving Heart", and the prism idea of "Georgina of the Rainbows," and these symbols have had more than a literary effect on our young people. The symbolic or allegoric element in Mrs. Johnston's work is not confined to her child books, for in such fine legends as that of "The Jester's Sword" or "In the Desert of Waiting," it has moved and sustained her adult audience quite as profoundly.[28]

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24 Miriam Gaines, "Annie Fellows Johnston", Kentucky Woman's Journal, November, 1916, I., 13.

25 Cale Young Rice, op. cit., p. 327.

26 Alice Hegan Rice, Foreword to The Land of the Little Colonel (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1929), p. x.

27 A. F. Johnston, op. cit., p. 138.

28 Cale Young Rice, op. cit., p. 328.

She tried to have a normal outlook on schoolgirl love affairs; so she included the Silver Yardstick and "The Three Weavers" in her books. When she discovered that those books were barred from libraries in Pittsburgh and Boston because there was too much heart interest, she defended herself publicly. In her opinion adolescent girls needed to read books which would include love as it should be rather than allow them to stumble on it alone through current literature for grown-ups.[29] So she pictured life and love from a moral and spiritual point of view and strove to inspire her readers to seek the more ideal life rather than the one which actually exists. Although all her main characters experience this idealistic love, Mrs. Johnston did not ignore the fact that unhappy marriages exist, for Ida Shane's mistake and unhappiness was pictured to warn young girls not to make the same error.

Children loved Mrs. Johnston and treasured her books, even after they reached maturity.

> The never-forgotten Little Colonel group holds something of a Cavalier gallantry, a gracious and an ample hospitality. They were set in Kentucky and conferred immortality upon Pewee Valley, in other ways a favored community. Their characters were identifiable and their protagonists acknowledged the impeachment with a blush of pleasure, a smile of happy proprietorship.....
>
> To be accounted among those who have made tens of thousands happy year after year is to have acquired a presence which will continue to linger among us. There is about such writing so close to nature, so tender, so alive to the quick response of children, something of Wordsworth.
>
> Annie Fellows Johnston is no more. But succeeding generations of the young will not cease to rise up and call her blessed.[30]

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29 New York Times, July 10, 1921.

30 Clipping in Scrapbook J, Kentucky Library of Western Kentucky State Teachers College.

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CORRECTION

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