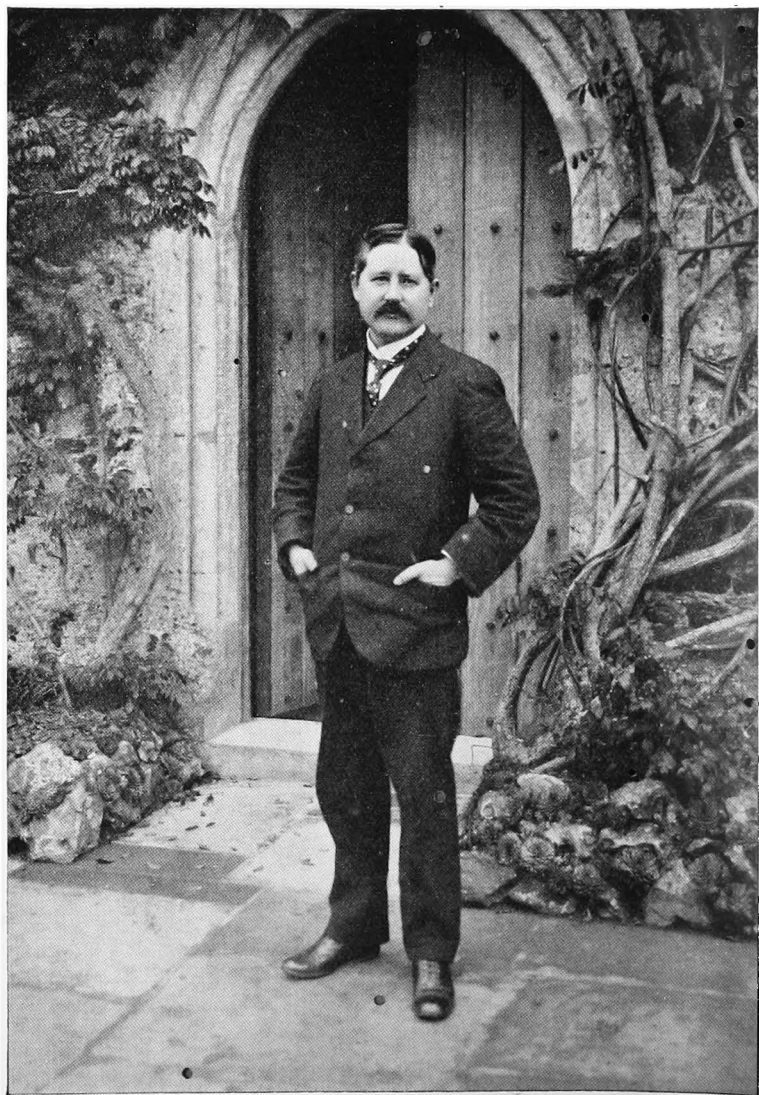


THE LIFE AND LETTERS  
SIR HARRY JOHNSTON



SIR HARRY JOHNSTON AT ST. JOHN'S PRIORY

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
SIR HARRY JOHNSTON

BY

ALEX. JOHNSTON



LONDON  
JONATHAN CAPE 30 BEDFORD SQUARE

FIRST PUBLISHED 1929

PRINTED IN GUERNSEY, C.I., BRITISH ISLES,  
BY THE STAR AND GAZETTE COMPANY LTD.

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To  
W. M. J.  
WHO JOURNEYED WITH US  
PART OF THE WAY

## FOREWORD

THE fact that I am his brother, was for thirteen years his Private Secretary in different parts of the world, and now have access to his unused correspondence may be sufficient justification for my writing *The Life and Letters of Sir Harry Johnston*.

My aim is to supplement, not to supersede, his autobiography published by Messrs. Chatto & Windus in England and Messrs. Bobbs-Merrill in America in 1923, under the title of *The Story of My Life*.

To be complete, the analysis of a man's life should be made both by himself and by witnesses. I question the cynicism that a man is never a hero to his valet. I know he can be to his Secretary, though none knows better his chief's hidden springs of action and all his funny little foibles. By claiming the privilege of a near relation to season great with little things, I hope I may render my brother not less, but more, attractive in the eyes of others.

There was much more in him than the artist, the explorer, the Doctor of Science, the Governor, the knight of two Orders, the Gold Medallist of five Societies, the novelist and the free-lance politician known to the public. Mr. W. T. Stead (whose daughter I wish to thank here for the loan of letters), not realizing that the success of the last of these rôles was incompatible with the energy expended so widely on the rest, even ventured to prophesy for him in quite early days no less a rôle than the Premiership. That may strike the reader as extravagant, but not

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necessarily inconsistent with the verdict of two of my brother's most intimate friends and colleagues—Sir Alfred Sharpe and Mr. Edward Vicars—to whom I am also indebted for the loan of some of his letters. Both have written to me to say that Harry was the most brilliant man they ever met. I think they meant this estimate to apply even more to their private than to their public view of him. A man can only be intimate to his intimates, but it is for them to retail to a wider circle those same intimate touches without which great actions and still greater aims lack humanity.

A many-sided man of strong will and convictions must inevitably cause friction and make some enemies. Harry's wit, though it gave persuasiveness to the frequent vehemence of his views, often offended those who themselves lacked an introspective sense of humour, while his earnestness and logic would admit of no softening compromise. Time gives me an advantage over my brother; for his controversies are just sufficiently remote by now to allow of their being alluded to without bad taste. Mere indiscretion is, I believe, reckoned a virtue in biographers nowadays.

Writing of himself, a man may reveal, but cannot describe his own character. If it be praise, he cannot even quote the opinion of others. Living, as he did, the lives of three ordinary men of genius at a time of greatest expansion in our thought, research and Empire, Harry came successively into close personal touch with such diverse and outstanding people as Sir Henry M. Stanley, W. T. Stead, Cardinal Manning, Sir Richard Burton, Sir Charles Dilke, the late Lord



## FOREWORD

Salisbury, Queen Alexandra, Lord Northcliffe, Lord Bryce, President Roosevelt, and Mr. H. G. Wells. I have been witness of the mutually favourable impression established by some of these contacts. In other cases I have to judge by my brother's anecdotes and letters. In cases where a mutual enmity, coldness or suspicion arose, if I seem to more than echo my brother's strictures of his opponents, it is only from the conviction that they had a somewhat unfair advantage over him, not necessarily that they were conscious of unfairness. That is to say, they wielded or inspired powers of government or preferment to his disadvantage; or were able to impose silence on him so long as he remained a Consular official, and then to cold-shoulder him out of politics.

Puzzled observers of his career have often asked me to explain why he did not attain more of his ambitions and realize more completely the high hopes of his friends. It would be impossible to give this explanation if I left out of account the personal element which really lies at the bottom of so much unrecorded or misconstrued history.

I have usually made it a practice to summarize rather than to quote Press notices, but there may be cases where I should have named my authority and have forgotten to do so, or lost it. Only in Chapter IV have I quoted conversations which took place when I was not present, and for these I have pleasure in acknowledging the kind permission of Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., the publishers of my brother's book, *The Kilimanjaro Expedition*, 1884.

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