

# LIVED FIFTEEN YEARS AS MAN

Experiences of Woman Whom Nature Obligated to Assume Masculine Garb.

After traveling about the country for fifteen years in male attire, the sex of Mary Johnston of New Orleans was discovered at Ellis Island, N. Y., when the immigration doctors decided to examine her for tuberculosis. Miss Johnston is 50 years old, slight of build and of a sallow complexion. Her manner and conversation show refinement and some culture. She won the sympathy of all the officials at Ellis Island who heard her story yesterday, following the disclosure that she was a woman. She arrived in New York October 3, in the steerage of the American liner New York, from Southampton. Miss Johnston was born in Canada, of English parents, both of whom died when she was 20. Nature had blighted her with a thick black mustache and an unusually low toned voice, and it was in accordance with these unwelcome handicaps that she was forced to disguise herself as a man, associate with men and earn her living in occupations usually followed by the male sex.

Her sallow cheeks became scarlet when she was picked out of a group of men in the male detention ward on Ellis Island and told that she was suspected of having tuberculosis.

The woman protested that she was in perfect health, but the examining surgeon said he wanted to be sure, and ordered her to the hospital for examination.

The woman tried hard to control her nerves, but when the surgeon said, "I shall have to ask you to remove your clothing, Mr. Woodhull," Miss Johnston wept.

"Oh, please don't examine me!" she pleaded. "I might as well tell you all, I am a woman, and have traveled in male attire for fifteen years. I have never been examined by a doctor in all my life, and I beg of you not to make an examination of me now. I know a woman is treated with respect and courtesy in this place, and I ask that you send a woman to make the examination. Surely this consideration is due me as an honest and respectable woman."

The surgeon called in a matron at the woman's request, but later they examined her lungs to make sure she was not tubercular. It was found that she was in good health, but not rugged. She was an alien, but not an undesirable one, and had it not been for the clothes she might have been admitted to the country.

Commissioner Murray, who was at the island, asked Miss Johnston why she had traveled as a man. The nervousness pre-

ceding the examination had passed, and, with the unfeigned ease of a man, the woman tilted back her Fedora hat well over her black short-cropped hair, thrust her hands deep in the side pockets of her trousers, and said slowly and forcefully: "I was left alone in the world when I was a girl of 20. I tried to get employment as a woman, but everywhere I went my low pitched voice and my mustache were against me, and I could not get on. For fifteen years I struggled along in the field of female employment, but it was of no avail.

"I have been an honest woman all my life and have never violated any law. I am sorry that it is a violation of the law for me to dress as a man, but I did not know it. I have become so accustomed to acting as a man that it will be difficult for me to live now as a woman. To go back to woman's apparel and try to earn my living would be extremely hard for a woman of my years."

Miss Johnston said that after leaving Canada she went to California, where she remained for fifteen years. As Frank Woodhull she sought employment in the country and worked on several big ranches. She lived with the ranch hands, associated with them, but the identity of her sex was never discovered.—New York Tribune.