A Woman Who Rules over a Million Acres

It is Fifty Miles from Mrs. King's Doorway to her Front Gate

ASK any Texan the question, "Who is the most remarkable woman in the country?" and he will promptly respond: "Mrs. Helen M. King."

For Mrs. King and her career are always referred to with pride by Texans—by the people of the entire Southwest, for that matter. Not only is she the pioneer woman rancher of that vast territory of great cattle kingdoms, but she is numbered among the world's richest women, having run a close race with Mrs. Hetty Green in the accumulation of millions.

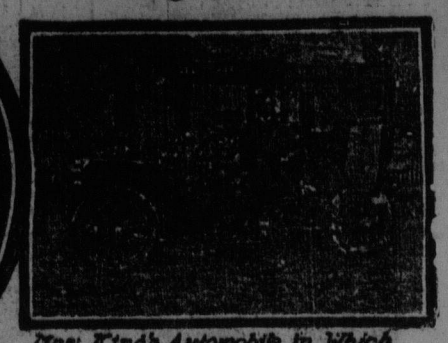
Her successful business career stamps her as the peer of any of the famed American captains of industry who now dominate the industrial, corporate and financial affairs of the United States. Left the nucleus of her now vast fortune by her husband, who has been dead many years, she has increased her wealth by many millions in a period of a quarter of a century.

Visitors to the Lone Star State have heard for years of Mrs. King and her two great ranches in Texas—together they have 1,000,000 acres, or not a great deal less in area than the State of Delaware. For years, in illustration of the immensity of her land holdings, it has been customary to state that it was fifty miles from her doorway to her front gate.

Over this principality of the cattle country Mrs. King has ruled in person, not delegating authority to others. She has managed her affairs so well that her wealth has grown as if by magic. Recent negotiations by a party of capitalists for her 1,000,000-acre ranch have attracted attention to her possessions and her really romantic career.

Sally Rice, Cowgirl on the Santa Gertrudes Ranch

Mrs. Helen M. King



Mrs. King's Automobile in Which She Goes over the Farm

A Corner of the King Ranch

COUNTIES in Texas are not small, yet so large are the real estate holdings of this progressive woman that they extend into four counties—Duval, Nueces, Zapata and Starr.

Her first possession, the Santa Gertrudes ranch is her pride. To it, a few years ago, she added an adjoining property, the Los Laureles ranch, thus bringing her land property to 1,000,000 acres.

Over these million acres are scattered more than 100,000 head of beef cattle. In addition, there are hundreds of horses, mustangs, Texas ponies and live stock of other kinds. Most of this stock is of excellent quality—there is very little of the kind known as "scrub," and it brings the highest prices at such centres as Kansas City, St. Louis and Chicago, to which points the ranch queen makes regular shipments.

Few sheep are raised on the two ranches, but there are thousands of hogs, chickens, geese and ducks. Much of the fowl product is retained for the tables of the King household and the homes of the employes, but the surplus is sent to market. While Mrs. King is generous, even open-handed in relieving the needy and in giving to worthy objects, nothing goes to waste anywhere on her great estate.

In laying the foundation of her present great fortune, Mrs. King was a helpful assistant of her husband, the late Captain Richard King, whose memory is highly esteemed by all Texans.

When he died, leaving her extensive land interests, she bravely continued the work that he had begun, and has seen her wealth increase by leaps and bounds. By common repute she is rated as worth at least $60,000,000.

BRAVED INDIANS AND OUTLAWS

Almost from the time that Captain King located in that section of Texas bordering on Mexico, his wife was with him and shared with the settler the hardships and dangers that beset them in the days of lawlessness for which the period following the short-lived republic of Houston, Crockett and Bowie became notorious, and the years subsequent to the Mexican and the Civil Wars.

When she went there with her husband, Indian bands roamed at will on the land which is now her own. But the Indians were far less dangerous, and not so much a menace to the safety of the Kings and other settlers as were their neighbors on the border, the desperadoes of that wild period.

From Mexico flocked outlaws, cutthroats, smugglers, cattle thieves and revolutionists; and from various parts of the United States criminals and renegades of society—all of whom sought refuge from the grip of the law in the then almost unpenetrated Southwest.

It was in Brownsville that Captain King and his young wife lived when they began farming and cattle-raising, acquiring by degrees the land which formed the nucleus for the vast estate which the latter now controls.

Brownsville was in the very centre of border ruffianism, but the sturdy settler and his young wife were industrious and knew not fear. Captain King was not long in establishing a reputation far and wide for his bravery and ability to take care of himself and his family.

His handsome young bride, a Southern belle, educated in the select schools of New Orleans, was just as courageous, and could handle a rifle with as great skill as the frontiersmen of that day. She was accounted a sure shot, and the desperadoes who crowded Brownsville had a wholesome regard for her.

Never by word or act was she molested either in Brownsville or on the farm. She was a Diana on horseback, and few of the men could excel her in horsemanship. In her old age she still has a splendid and perfect mount on the back of the most spirited steed.

Captain King was noted for his honesty, fairness and ability to take care of his interests in any business transaction. He fought his way through the long period of terrorism carried on by the border ruffians, who combated him at every step for the coming civilization and development of that section of the Southwest.

BATTLES WITH DESPERADOES

Innumerable stories of his battles with the bands of desperate outlaws who preyed on his roaming herds of cattle are told today in the campfires of cowboys in the employ of his widow. By hard work and close attention to business he added to his original small parcel of land, section by section and tract by tract, until at the time of his death, a quarter of a century ago, he owned half a million acres, and his herds of cattle had grown from a few hundred to many thousands in numbers.

Highly educated and reared in luxury, Mrs. King was of a strong, progressive and self-reliant disposition, good natured, but determined. These characteristics were of invaluable assistance to her husband, more especially as she had a natural gift for business, and was a masterhand at understanding and grasping details.

During all the time that Captain King was struggling for the future welfare of his family and battling with the desperadoes infesting the region, seeking to enrich themselves by robbing him of his cattle and live stock, his brave young wife was his constant companion and lieutenant. In a little shack—a hovel compared with the fine old Southern mansion in which she had reigned as a queen in the days of her beliehood—built on the first tract of land they bought, Mrs. King, surrounded only by her young children, attended to the household duties and kept a keen watch for marauders who might seek to raid the farm.

The only protection she had when alone with her babies consisted of a rifle and a revolver. These she kept close at hand, and many a time she rocked the babes to sleep with a six-shooter lying by her side and the rifle in easy reach.

She was an excellent shot, and so thoroughly inured to frontier life and its dangers that the outlaws and thieves who infested the section gave the house a wide berth when they learned that she was there alone with her "shootin' irons." Indeed, the desperadoes, who at some time or other had to see Captain King on legitimate business, readily admitted that they preferred to call at the house while the captain was there rather than meet his wife alone.

Home of the Cattle Queen

Indians never troubled the King ranch. They had a wholesome respect for the captain's prowess, which was tested in many an encounter when he first settled on the border. In course of time the red men established friendly relations with Captain King and became his staunchest allies against the cattle thieves and cutthroats.

Indeed, many a time, while King was away from home looking after his scattered herds of cattle, the Indians sent messages to his wife, alone with her babes in the shack, to warn her of impending danger.

Friendly redskins would wait in ambush for gangs of raiders and rout them after a lively battle. During the conflict the brave wife and mother stood on guard with rifle in one hand and a six-shooter in the other, ready to defend with her own life the dear ones she was protecting.

Once she had occasion for real alarm. While she was busy cooking supper—Captain King being from home and nothing indicating danger—she heard a noise in the area before the cabin. Running to the window, she saw a notorious Mexican bandit dismounting from his broncho.

She quickly withdrew and reached for her six-shooter. She had misplaced the weapon and did not find it at once. Finally she discovered the revolver on top of the kitchen cupboard, and grasped it. As she turned, however, she saw the Mexican standing in the doorway.

He had her covered with two pistols, which he pointed directly at her. In broken English, interspersed with many Spanish oaths, the Mexican warned her to throw down her gun and make no resistance, as it would be sure death for her. The intruder told her he had come for the captain's gold, and that he wanted it quick.

Mrs. King did not scream; she was not frightened, but she was angry that she should have been taken by surprise by a cowardly "greaser." She parlayed for time and talked to the Mexican, hurling questions at him and telling him that the captain's money was all in the bank in Brownsville. The woman was hopeful she would get the outlaw off his guard if she could only anger him. Then would come her opportunity to get a shot at him.

The Mexican was fast losing patience, and put one foot on the threshold. Quick as a flash and before he could advance further, Mrs. King had her six-shooter aimed at him and her finger on the trigger. But as quick as she had been, the bullet meant for the cutthroat's heart sped o'er his prostrate form. The fellow had thrown up both hands, and with a cry of agony had fallen in a heap in the doorway. Mrs. King approached cautiously and discovered that the Mexican's head was almost cleft in twain by a tomahawk.

Just as she fired at the Mexican an Indian had hurled his tomahawk at the bandit. The aim of the redskin was swift and sure. In the dusk through which she peered she saw two forms approaching, and readily recognized a couple of Indians belonging to a band friendly to Captain Brown. As a matter of fact, the same band had on several occasions intercepted thieving outlaws attempting to raid the King ranch, and put them to rout or death.

The two red men informed Mrs. King that the dead Mexican had come alone to the shack, and was without companions. They had discovered him too late to prevent him getting into the cabin, but feeling sure that he was bent on mischief and knowing that the "good paleface chief," Captain King, was away, and his "squaw" and "papooses" alone they followed him.

This episode in the early life of the now famous ranch queen is but one of many and equally thrilling experiences through which she passed.

From a very humble beginning with her husband in the acquirement of an estate, Mrs. King has developed business ability and a knowledge of affairs such as few women in this country can boast. The original ranch which she helped her husband get together by the gradual addition of tracts of land, the Santa Gertrudes, is an enormous revenue producer.

While most of the land comprised in this ranch is used for stock raising, practically every acre is susceptible of the highest cultivation. Mrs. King states that in the last twenty-five years the land has increased in value from 15 and 20 cents an acre to $15 or $20.

All of it is in the artesian water belt, and can be irrigated without much trouble, and at little cost. Such land under cultivation is selling in Texas for $100 an acre. Mrs. King has been planning of late to reclaim all her grazing land in the four counties, and, by boring artesian wells, irrigate it. The plan was to rent the land to progressive and practical farmers who thoroughly understood modern agriculture.

DEFIES OLD AGE

Mrs. King is no longer young, for she is just passing three-score-and-ten. Despite her age, she is the active manager of her vast property and all other interests, giving everything in connection therewith her personal attention. She took up the task of managing the ranches when her husband died, twenty-five years ago, and requires no other assistance than that of ranch foremen, cowboys, bookkeepers, housekeepers and servants.

True, she entrusts the routine management to one of her sons-in-law, R. J. Kleberg, who lives in Kingsville, near the main part of the great ranch, and also where the King homestead stands. But this manager, who, with his wife, are the only members of the ranch queen's family living near the parental home, has no authority to negotiate or close any important business transaction without the approval of Mrs. King.

Her sons and daughters are happily married and settled comfortably in some other parts of the country and have each received a good education and generous portions of the estate. Mrs. Kleberg is the only one of Mrs. King's children living near her.

Notwithstanding the fact that she has spent most of her life on the plains of Texas, many miles from her nearest neighbor, Mrs. King has not shut herself out from the influences of the world of culture. She has accumulated a library, filled with the best works, is familiar with literature, art and music, as much so as the most cultivated and highly educated women in any of the large American cities can be. She would feel as much at ease in fashionable drawing rooms in the East as she is in her comfortable sitting room in the King homestead.

There is always open-handed hospitality on the Santa Gertrudes and Los Laureles ranches, though never unseemly feasting. The needy and worthy are always welcome. Mrs. King employs nearly 1000 persons, the majority of them are Mexicans.

CARES FOR HER WORKERS

She takes a kindly and personal interest in the families of the workers who live on her estate. In return they look upon her as their best friend and protectress, and the women and children always come to her for advice or relief, always certain that she will help them. For them the "ranch queen of the Southwest" is an angel mother.

Mrs. King is generous as well as rich. During the last two years she has given away nearly 100,000 acres of land. Of this, 25,000 acres was to aid the building of the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad, which runs through her property for more than 100 miles.

For the founding and building up of the town of Kingsville (named after her husband), in Nueces county, Texas, she donated 10,000 acres, without a cent of cost to the projectors. The town now has a population of about [illegible], and is thirty-five miles southwest of Corpus Christi, an important shipping and distributing centre for southern Texas.

How Shaking Hands Originated

YOU HAVE wondered often, perhaps, when and where the custom of shaking hands originated. Like many other practices, it originated in military circles.

In early times, when soldiers met, to convince one another that no harm was intended and that they held no weapons, they extended and grasped each other's hands.

To let those he met in peace know he had no fear of them and felt he was among friends, soldiers removed helmets from their faces when in the presence of acquaintances in feudal days. The custom survives in the lifting of hats to women.

Probably men, when shaving in a hurry, have often wondered why their forbears ever began to remove hair from their faces. In the time of Alexander the Great it was found that when troops came in conflict the beard formed a good handhold for the enemy. Alexander ordered that all his soldiers shave their faces, to the advantage of his army.

There is no reason that men should wear buttons on the back of their coats except that it is the style. In ancient times, however, the buttons were required to support the sword belt. When men gave up fighting they retained the buttons.

In ancient times lords kept large bodies of retainers, who fought with them as well as served in the castles. On festive occasions they dressed in special livery. Thus originated the custom of servants wearing a livery.

Are Women Losing the Softness of the Sex?

ARE WOMEN gradually losing the softness of their sex? Are they becoming more masculine as the years go by?

To this question many physicians and students of sociology answer, yes.

Sad to relate, many critical observers of the gentler sex assert that its members are writing a new history of woman; that she is becoming masculine in demeanor; masterful and independent in manner; assertive in maintaining her so-called rights. No longer the dependent, is she to sacrifice that intangible charm of sweet, demure womanliness in this era of the new woman, the working woman, the scholarly woman?

Woman was once an angel, but she became disenchanted; so now she is in the devils.—Ludwig Feldt.

MOST of us have read of the lasses and laddies of Colonial times—of the dainty, demure maidens "tripping lightly," "speaking softly," "blushing radiantly" and coquetting with "bashful, downcast eyes."

The voice of one of these was like a whisper, her coming as gentle and beautiful as a Southern zephyr. She looked up to her lover, the robust man, with trustful dependence and love, losing nothing by her submissiveness to his will, her sweet, childish simplicity of manner, her willing confidence and clinging ways. Instead, she became a greater idol in the strong man's eyes; like a rose she wound herself about his heart more securely.

Yet does one meet the simple little Colonial maiden nowadays? In the southern States, so it is said, many of the women retain the old-fashioned charm. The young women are modest and meek and refined; the older women cultured, dignified and graciously womanly. In the country districts of the Northern States, too, one also finds her as described by Nossetti, "a soft, sweet woman."

STRICTURES ON CITY LIFE

But in the cities—the hurly-burly cities with their thousands of working and professional women—does one find woman of the meek and gentle type?

"Alas, no," said a physician who has spent much time in observation and study. "The women of the great cities of the country are changing in manner; the melodious softness is departing from their voice, they are becoming ungainly and masculine in carriage, loud, self-assertive, domineering.

"To one who travels in Europe and returns to Philadelphia, New York, Chicago or any large American city, the change is apparent. One becomes convinced that the pace of modern life tends to coarsen women. It destroys the essentially feminine nature. Why? There are probably many causes.

"American women once held the highest place, probably, in the regard of men of many nations—the grace and sweetness of the young women of the period of the Civil War and before were proverbial. And with her gentleness and sweetness the American girl was independent; unhedged by the conventionalities of Europe. But a change has come. Ask any person who has lived abroad and he will tell you this is true.

"Walk the streets of any big city—you will see lofty, frigid looking women, walking with the gait of an athlete. You will see June-like "roses with faces as hard and unsympathetic as a bronze statue. You will see women jostling by one another, rushing people before them, talking in a loud brazen manner.

"In stores you will see the utter selfishness manifest. In the street cars you rarely s[illegible] get up any more—it is a sad, ungallant spectacle to see men sitting and women standing, but the fact is obvious that a man who works at bookkeeping doesn't regard a woman bookkeeper any more than a fellow employe and deems her worthy of no more consideration.

"There are many reasons for this change in women. Account for the change in voice? It was low and whispering once; it is loud and uncultured now.

"The trolley car and telephone, no doubt, have much to do with this. While riding in trolley cars women have got accustomed to speaking in a higher pitch of voice. Talking over the telephone requires extra exertion; besides, troubles with the operator make one irritable and there is naturally a change in tone.

"The pulling of engines, the noise of trolley cars and street traffic certainly affect the voice when one tries to carry on a conversation in the street. One can attribute a change in the voice of women to the noise of a modern city.

"Formerly women, as a rule, did not work. The young girl was wooed by her lover and made the mistress of a home. She passed from her mother's care to that of a loving husband. [illegible] depended upon her helpmeet, looked up to him and loved him.

"Now see the reversed face of the medal. See the army of women stenographers, bookkeepers, saleswomen, doctors, teachers, lawyers. What profession is there in which statistics will not show women? Very few.

"Nowadays, instead of staying at home and learning the art of housekeeping the young girl works in an office. The modern girl does not want to wash dishes and darn socks. She prefers to type on a machine or keep books—as a result she becomes independent, she feels that she is not dependent upon man, and unconsciously her manner becomes masterful.

"Take the women doctors, lawyers, the women who win prizes in athletics—you will find them intellectual, noble, estimable women, but are they the gentle, soft-voiced women that we idealize? I fear not.

"Women doctors regard men of their profession as rivals; so in every other walk of life, where both sexes compete. In many cases women are willing to work for less money than men—naturally men have respect for their successful rivals.

WORKING WIVES ARE INDEPENDENT

"Take families where both the man and woman work. Naturally the wife feels that she earns her share of the living, and is entitled to seek recreation where she pleases.

"There is no doubt to my mind that many modern conveniences have their disadvantages. I believe you will find a woman who rides in a subway and talks continually will develop a louder voice than the woman who does not.

"I believe that the woman wage-earner must sacrifice much of the attractive reticence and timidity which constitute a peculiar charm of woman. I am convinced that many of the women who enter into competition with men lose all love of home and naturally when this occurs a nation must suffer.

"Woman's place is in the home and not in the workshop. One would not like to see our women becoming Amazons, domineering and aggressive.

"Of course, women of this kind still are exceptions, but one has only to read the works of a man like Schlatter, who idealized women—the soft, sweet, clinging women—and the works of a modern writer to see the change that is taking place."