

# What Woman is the Power Behind the Throne in Quivera?

**H**ERE'S where we give away a secret of the House of Ak-Sar-Ben, one that has been kept with such jealous care that not any of the valiant knights and true have ever suspected the truth.

A woman runs Ak-Sar-Ben's affairs. Woman has always been a most potent factor in the affairs of man, especially those of the royal kind. From the Garden of Eden down to the present her influence has been more or less effective and apparent at all times, but the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben, glory be! thought they could manage their little fun without any help from a petticoat. No woman has ever seen the inside of the castle hall while the mysteries were under way; it is one of the strict and inviolable rules of the order that nothing of the inner workings of the order shall ever be communicated to a woman.

All these years the knights have been under the impression that they had something that a woman didn't have anything to do with, save to grace with her lovely presence the formal ball, at which time the queen is crowned. For you couldn't have much of a ball without the ladies fair, although it might be managed, but a queen—well, you are simply compelled to have a fair maiden if you want a queen in Ak-Sar-Ben. Gelsa girls and Paprika Schnitzels may be arranged for, but it isn't on record that any of them ever wore skirts outside the Den.

And now comes the disclosure that during all this time the cocky knights have been pluming themselves on having something the women folk didn't cut in on, a woman, a mighty clever woman, has been the power behind the throne. All the time it has been a woman's hand that has held the strings and kept them from being tangled; that has kept the business of Ak-Sar-Ben in apple-pie order, just as she would have kept house if she had turned her bent in that direction.

And she comes from Lincoln, too! No great surprise at that, for a lot of clever people have come from Lincoln; most of them do. She was at the University of Nebraska some years ago—no matter how many—when the Board of Governors were looking for an assistant to the secretary, and was engaged for the responsible position she has since filled so well.

From the day of the advent of Miss Katherine Hughes, the assistant secretary, into the Kingdom, down to the present time, the king and Board of Governors have congratulated themselves upon their find. They appreciate her worth more especially at the time of the big annual autumn carnival and coronation ceremony and ball. Of all times in the year, that is the time of greatest stress upon everyone's temper, from the king down to the heralds and stewards is in a state of inflammable uncertainty.

But Miss Hughes is as steady and serene amid all the rush and turmoil of getting ready for the big event as a seasoned sailor on a rough sea. Unruffled and undisturbed, she "rides the whirlwind and directs the storm." She never lets herself be worried nor hurried nor flurried.

She admits that sometimes, when six or seven stenographers surround her desk, all asking for instructions at the same time, when the printers are howling for copy and when the Lord High Chamberlain is rampaging for plans of this and that—she does get just the least little bit perturbed inside. But no one would ever guess it from the calm and smiling exterior.

And in fact, no one in the realm can equal her. She is mistress of the art of rubbing people the right way and of smoothing them down until they fairly purr. Her very voice is soft and low and has a quieting effect upon all around her.

So much more marvelous this seems when one considers the vexations which come up in connection with the details of the great ball. Sometimes the wife of one of the most trusted knights of the kingdom is left off the list of ladies in waiting and ladies of the court by mistake. The knight,

thinking that his lady has received an irreparable slight, buckles on his armor and brings siege upon the secretary. But you may be sure, he goes away completely mollified by her gentle reasoning.

No one knows quite so well as the secretary what heart burnings and discontent are caused by those lists of maids of honor, ladies of the court and ladies in waiting, which are made up of wives and daughters of knights who serve most faithfully their king, Ak-Sar-Ben; who are heads of the most prosperous business houses of the realm; or who, through talent, wealth or social accomplishments, have become members of that exclusive circle known as the "400."

As a general rule, the older matrons are put upon the list of the ladies of the court; the younger ones upon the list of ladies in waiting. Sometimes a lady whose chief ambition is to defy the years becomes greatly incensed at being placed among the ladies of the court. Often a young matron wishes to enter the ranks of the ladies of the court, because she thinks their status higher.

The princesses, the maids of honor, the ladies, the knights—they must placate them all. She must see that social distinctions are carefully considered and that none of the delicate social toes are stepped on in the hurry of preparation for the big ball.

Often at the very last moment when the ball programs have gone to press, one of the governors will telephone wildly to the secretary, "Is Lady Such-an-one upon the list of ladies in waiting, No. For Heaven's sake, put her on. Save my life!"

The secretary's duties do not end with keeping tab on every person in the kingdom. She must write official letters and papers of state and compose the proclamations and edicts which are sent in the king's name to summon the subjects to appear at the coronation ceremony.

When Sir Knight receives an edict from the great Ak-Sar-Ben, king of Quivera, duke of the seven cities of Cibola, feudal lord of Omaha, most mighty grand master of the corn belt and exalted high priest of the harvest festival, citing him to appear at the royal castle, "The Den" on the eve of the coronation, he is duly impressed with the importance of the message. But he does not know that the edict signed "Samson, Lord High Chamberlain," has been composed by the woman scribe.

When the princesses, ladies and maids of honor receive their bidding to wait upon her majesty, the queen, on the evening of her crowning they view with delight the artistic booklet with its cream-colored pages and red binding and gold lettering. They do not know that the woman secretary in the office of Ak-Sar-Ben designed the edict.

Miss Hughes is the keeper of the royal archives, as well as court artist. In strong boxes she keeps the records, past programs, edicts and other



Miss Katherine Hughes

literature of the dynasty of Ak-Sar-Ben; the photographs of past kings, queens and princesses of the court.

She is the court historian, the compiler of the court events and happenings. And, of course, she keeps the books and accounts of the realm in the best of apple-pie order.

When new ideas are needed the secretary has an unlimited supply to draw on. The king once took it into his head that a coat of arms should be made for the line of Ak-Sar-Ben. No sooner was his wish made known in the office of Samson than the secretary set her wits to work to design heraldic bearings for the king's household.

Soon after she submitted to the sovereign's pleased gaze a coat of arms symbolizing in each detail the various things for which the kingdom of Quivera is famous. The shield has four sections—red and green, picturing corn, wheat, oats and alfalfa. Across the shield are two bars of yellow with "Ak-Sar-Ben" lettered in gold on one

and "Omaha" on the other. At either side stands a steer rampant. Above is a gold crown. Below the shield, attached to two crossed swords, is a green banner with the motto of the realm, "We Grow."

The woman scribe is the oracle of the realm to whom all go with questions of every kind. "When does the carnival open?" to "What kind of a necktie should a knight wear to the hall?" She is the human encyclopedia of the kingdom, the one who knows, the major-domo, factotum, chief cook and bottle washer, clerk-of-works and Samson's left bower, all rolled into one—and then some.

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