

HENRY WILLIAM KING

Henry William King was born in Martinsburgh, Lewis County, New York on December 18th, 1829. His parents, William and Christina (Rockwell) King were natives of that state and his early education was obtained in the state public schools. At the age of thirteen he entered the State Academy at Lowville, New York where he planned to study for college. However at seventeen, fully prepared, instead of entering college he went into his father's store and from then on continued steadily in commercial life. Until 1854 he remained with his father, when he went west joining the firm of Barrett Kellogg and Company in Chicago. This firm later became Barrett, King and Company and still later the name was changed to King, Kellogg and Company. In 1868 this partnership was dissolved and Mr. King later formed a connection with W. C. Browning and Edward W. Dewey of New York City under the name of Henry W. King and Company; the firm conducted a wholesale clothing business at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Lake Street, Chicago. Later on, also in connection with Mr. Browning, retail clothing stores were opened in many parts of the country under the name of Browning King and Company.

Mr. King found time in the midst of his business activities to bear his share of public burdens and to interest himself in his community. During the years 1870 to 1873 inclusive, he was President of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society which during his incumbency distributed five million dollars for the relief of sufferers from the Chicago fire of 1871. His service to these sufferers was the more remarkable because his own home and business house were completely destroyed by the great fire.

Mr. King married Aurelia Roxana Case of Chicago.

On the death of Seth Wadhams the house which is now the Elmhurst Public Library was bought by Mr. King as suggested in Mr. Wadham's will. It was enlarged in 1888. The grounds of the house were landscaped by the

elder Olmsted, who planned Central Park in New York City. Both at the Elmhurst house and from Mr. King's town house, on the corner of Rush and Huron Streets, Chicago, a most generous and notable hospitality was dispensed. Many distinguished men and women entered those doors and Mrs. King's garden at Elmhurst, planned by her on the order of that at Mount Vernon, was known here and abroad. In fact the collection of herbs, (the first in this part of the country) was copied in a famous garden in England.

Mr. King died on April 16th, 1898, and it may be said that his career was typical of the kind of leadership which in his day made Chicago known not only for its progressive business spirit, but for its forward-looking attitude toward the best kind of community influences, charitable, cultural and spiritual.

HENRY W. KING

It was at Martinsburg, Lewis County, in the state of New York that the subject of this sketch was born. The date of his birth was December 18, 1828. His parents, William and Christina (Rockwell) King, were natives of Massachusetts. Mr. King is a representative Chicagoan - one of that army of men whose courage and will have surmounted what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles, with the brilliant ability and unswerving integrity have only achieved a marked success in their individual enterprises and an enviable fame in the commercial world, but have made this second city of the nation what it is today. The business push and restlessness of Chicago have led to the charge that she is almost wholly devoted to the material things. It seems to be believed by some that her people esteem a new packing house or a twenty story commercial building as much more desirable than a library or an art gallery. She is charged with such devotion to the details of business that her merchants neglect the softer phases of human action and stifle the aspirations of humanity. Such a belief does Chicago a great injustice. The city is great materially. Her successful business men are alive to the duties that devolve upon them in this direction. But Chicago is a center of culture and human demonstrations. The hearts of her merchants generously and readily respond to the requirements of culture and charity, and the grander charities and more splendid benevolence are seldom found than in those which the

city of Chicago has fostered. Mr. Henry W. King during all his business success has never for a single moment lost sight of the great truth of the universal brotherhood of man, and his name and contributions have invested with life and vigor and proficiency some of the best charities and movements for the benefit of the people of Chicago that city has ever enjoyed. His early education was obtained in the public schools of his native state. At the age of thirteen he left the public schools and entered the State Academy at Loirville, N.Y., where he prepared for College. But at the age of seventeen he left the academy and there occurred one of those changes which happen in the lives of men, and which may be forerunners of an entire turn in ones affairs. Young King was now fitted to begin his college course. Had he then entered college the world might have lost a successful merchant and Chicago a citizen whose wealth has enabled him to do so much for his adopted city. Instead of doing so, however, he entered his fathers store, intending to remain only temporarily; but his love and fitness for business were soon developed so strongly that he concluded to secure his further education in the great school of observation and experience, in which so many of the world's successful men have been educated and thenceforth to devote himself to business pursuits. He remained with his father until 1854 when he came to Chicago and organized the firm of Barrett, King & Co. to do a wholesale clothing business. The firm located at 189 South Water Street. In 1857 the house removed to 205-207 South Water Street. The reader who knows Chicago only as it is at present will conceive the idea that a clothing house on Water Street of Lake Street would seem sadly out of place; and the

very idea will show him as well as anything can the vast changes which have been wrought in the extent and methods of commerce in the last forty years in the metropolis of the west. In 1863 Mr. Barrett retired from the firm, which then became King, Kellogg & Co. and was composed of H.W. King, Charles P. and Palmer Kellogg. In 1868 there was a dissolution of this firm, Mr. King retiring and the Messrs. Kellogg continuing in business at the old stand. Mr. King now formed a partnership with W.C. Browning and Edward W. Dewey of New York City under the firm name of Henry W. King and Co., which conducted a wholesale clothing business at the corner of Michigan Avenue and Lake Street. The membership of the great firm has remained unchanged from the time of their organization until the present time except that some junior members have been admitted. The house like so many others was in the path of the great Chicago fire, before which so many fortunes were consumed and so many merchants disheartened. The fire loss was \$550,000. Still the house was much more fortunate than most of its neighbors. The late Wert Dexter, a life-long friend of Mr. King, then attorney for the Michigan Central Railroad, acting with his characteristic generosity and good judgment placed a train of freight cars at the disposal of Messrs King and Company and a force of men began loading these cars with goods from the doomed building. About a hundred thousand dollars worth had been placed on board when the depot caught fire and it was found necessary to move the train to save it from destruction. The goods which had been saved were carried to Michigan City where they were stored for two weeks at the end of which time the firm had secured new quarters at the corner of Canal

and west Washington streets. The goods were shipped and business was resumed at once. The fact that the firm had at that time already established a manufactory in New York City aided it greatly to overcome the difficulties which many others were not able to meet. In 1872 the firm removed to the Farwell block on Market Street, three years later to the corner of Franklin and Madison and in 1891 to their present large store, corner of Adams and Market Street. In addition to its large and constantly growing wholesale business the house during the last few years has established retail stores in Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Paul, Minneapolis, New York, and Brooklyn. The retail stores are conducted under the name of Browning, King & Co. These retail stores and the wholesale house do an annual business of about five million dollars and the immense growth of the business will be seen when the fact is stated that the total sales in 1854 were only one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

As previously stated, Mr. King has found time in the midst of the demands which his large business makes upon his time and abilities to bear a share of public burdens and to devote himself to the good of his fellowmen. In the years 1870, 71, 72, 73, he was president of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, which during his presidency distributed five million dollars for the relief of the sufferers of the fire of 1871. The disbursment of this large sum of money was made with such consummate business ability that not one cent was unaccounted for. The management of these contributions was so excellent that it reflected a model for all similar organizations in all parts of the world. From 1873-1888 Mr. King was treasurer of this society. He is vice-president of the Chicago Nursery and Half-orphan asylum and a director of the

Peoples Home. He is a member of the Fourth Presbyterian Church which owes much to his influence and interest in its general prosperity. Naturally, a gentleman of Mr. King's financial standing and business ability would be sought by some of the monetary institutions of the city that they might have the benefit of his influence and judgment. Mr. King however, has not ventured outside business of any kind. Still for more than twenty years he has been a director in the Commercial National Bank of Chicago. He is also a trustee of the United States Mortgage Company of New York and one of the trustees of the United States Mortgage Company of New York and one of the American trustees of the Liverpool, London and Globe Fire Insurance Company. Mr. King was married to Aurelia Case of Chicago. They have had three children - one son and two daughters. He is a member of the Chicago Club and Commercial Club of Chicago. In politics he has always been republican and had his taste run in this direction he could have enjoyed political distinction, but he has always declined to be a candidate for office. His reputation for fairness, honesty, and integrity have been so well known that there have been occasions in the history of Chicago when his candidacy for office would have commanded the votes of all respectable men, regardless of party. He is not strongly partisan as such men seldom are, but his patriotism and desire for good, honest government prompted him to vote for the best man who might be nominated. Such a life is a model for the young men who are sometimes tempted amidst the only two great degrees of loose commercial morality to think that success depends on methods which conscience and public opinion will not approve. Mr. King has

achieved success and maintained his honor unspotted. He is as well known in Chicago for his unswerving honesty and integrity and for humanity as he is a great and leading merchant. His career has been a credit to himself in every respect and a blessing to the city in which he has so long lived and is so well known.

Newberry Library also has a copy of another biography on Mr. King. See Biographical dictionary and portrait gallery of representative men of Chicago., c1895 - p.68.