

WOMEN MANAGERS

in Industry?

THE following replies have been received to an article published in our May issue in which Mr. A. M. Floyd suggested that on the whole women were less satisfactory than men in managerial positions.

Mr. R. D. PALMER, The Northern Aluminium Company, Limited.

FOR women managers on the personnel side of industries employing largely women workers, there is undoubtedly a wide and increasing field, but it is on the commercial side that we see the greatest scope.

Of itself, sex is of no special significance as a factor in fitness for management, but the high degree of practical knowledge necessary in the higher executive is the most formidable bar to women. Equal opportunity for practical training has not yet been achieved and until it has, the scope for women managers must remain very restricted. Training is, in our opinion, the crux of the whole question.

Miss RUTH TOMLINSON, The Incorporated Federated Associations of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers.

TO examine fairly the question of the scope for women managers in industry, all prejudice must be banished. This is not an easy task, but it is nevertheless necessary. Prejudice, conscious or unconscious, must "stand off" during the examination of this subject.

Beginning with a sound general education, including mathematics and science, followed by the right kind of technical training in the industry it is desired to enter, and then given the opportunity to put what has been learnt to the test, there is no reason why, broadly speaking, the scope for women managers in industry should not be at least as good and as wide as it is for women entering professions.

A manager, to be efficient, must have authoritative knowledge of what is going to be managed, and in some industries this is more difficult for women than in others.

Each industry presents its own peculiar features. For instance, a boot and shoe factory is organised in four or five clearly defined departments, and the would be successful manager of the factory should have knowledge of all departments with practical working experience of at least two of them. It is desirable that one of these departments should be either the finishing or lasting department, but at present both these departments require heavy physical exertion and the opportunities for a woman acquiring practical knowledge of them is not great. But scientific research will no doubt in time minimise these difficulties, so that the full managerial road for women will be more open and easier to travel.

Whilst, however, the opportunities for managerial work over an entire boot and shoe factory are not very considerable for women at the present time, there are excellent opportunities for women becoming departmental managers in what might be termed women's departments, viz., the closing department and the stock or shoe room where women are proving an unqualified success. To these might also be added the labour costing department.

To those, however, whose knowledge of boots and shoes is confined to the wearing of them, there perhaps comes the thought that surely some women are already managing those departments in which colour, design, pattern making, and choice of leathers are the chief concern, and surely too they are controlling in some instances the buying of the many materials used in the manufacture of footwear. The answer is that as yet few women only are occupying these positions, despite the fact that they could undoubtedly fill them to advantage

(Continued on page 321)

machines and this kind of stationery will have been considerably reduced in price.

THERE IS little difficulty to-day in finding machines capable of performing all the major operations of office routine. The difficulty is that office technique has not kept pace with the march of progress and as a consequence is impeding the profitable use of machines. The vital necessity which exists to-day is to lead the operations into channels which will enable machines to be used effectively.

THE DEMAND for the production of information at increased speed and high accuracy has resulted in the adoption of labour saving machines and appliances. There will be a considerable increase in the number of machines used in offices in the future, and even very small offices will probably be equipped with some form of machinery. Apart from general developments in all types of office machines which are inevitable, photographic machines will probably be used in most offices. Photographic machines with an "eye" which can rapidly see and record any documents which are fed into them will effect considerable economies and improvement in technique. The present day camera and contact processes fall very far short of what is required as regards cost, speed of operation, thinness of paper and method of handling. The typewriter is not likely to be very different except that it will undoubtedly be silent and probably fitted with electric power and several different sized types. It will also be linked when necessary with tabulating punches, calculating machines, etc. Many people have visualised the typewriter which will automatically type to dictation but I am afraid it will be difficult to transpose English phonetics into English spelling. Systems or machines which will enable messages to be transmitted over a telegraph or telephone line by means of a typewriter will also be widely used. Teletypewriters will provide rapid and accurate communication facilities between the office and all the sub-departments.

IN ATTEMPTING to prophesy the office of the future I am afraid I have merely indicated a few directions in which the office manager and the machine maker are most likely to

apply their energies, but these directions will, I venture to believe, result in a much needed rationalisation of office work.

* * *

WHO'S WHO ON YOUR STAFF

EMPLOYERS will find useful reading in Mr. Tom Clarke's "My Northcliffe Diary" (Gollancz, 8s. 6d.). Lord Northcliffe's intelligent interest in his staff is well known, and was a factor in his success. He contemplated preparing a private "Who's Who" of his staff, to be revised every six months, with the object of discovering hidden talent. The following is a draft of his memorandum:—

Get a questionnaire ready. These are some of the things to be asked, but no one need answer if he does not wish to. Send the list to every man in the building. (1) Name, address and 'phone number. (2) What is your ambition in life? (3) Where have you been? (4) Where do you spend your holidays? (5) What are your sports and hobbies? (6) Are you married? (7) Languages? (8) Do you write shorthand? (9) What special subject are you interested in?

WOMEN MANAGERS

(Continued from page 319)

to a much greater extent, for generally speaking, women have instinctively a more sure eye for colour and a more delicate touch for materials than a man.

WITH THE spread of a wider general education for girls, and the increased use of the facilities at technical colleges where women can acquire a technical knowledge of operations in what are now regarded as men's departments, together with the dying down of that inherent prejudice against women holding managerial posts, the scope for women managers and departmental managers in the boot and shoe industry will grow, and the filling by fully trained and competent women of such posts as require those qualifications, special and instinctive to women, would be, in my view, to the general benefit and advantage of the industry.