

The Success Of

THE BUSINESS WOMAN

By GLADYS BURLTON

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IN THE ARTICLE by Mr. A. M. Floyd entitled "An Office Manager" which appeared in the May issue of this journal, the suggestion was made that, "possibly the extent to which women have taken up office work—with results so beneficial in many ways—tends to restrict the supply of really good office managers, because it is doubtful if the art can be learnt from textbooks."

THIS CURIOUS COMMENT naturally provokes a question or two. Firstly, how is it doubtful if office management or any other art can be learnt from text books? It obviously cannot. Secondly, what is the connection between the reading of text books and female management? Is it suggested that women managers learn their trade differently from men or that they depend for proficiency on text books rather than on practical study? There is surely no foundation for such a theory. Thirdly, are competent women managers rare?

MR. FLOYD GOES ON to explain that "many women in offices do not follow a special career beyond a certain point" or else do not "aspire to a leading executive position." Most of us will agree with both of these last propositions. They are demonstrably true. Considering the vast company of women who work in the ranks of industry and commerce the number who attain distinction is significantly small. To most women business life is a temporary expedient. They lack ambition because their centre of gravity lies in other spheres.

IT IS EQUALLY TRUE, however, that thousands of women take business seriously

and remain there long enough to hold important executive positions. Hundreds of them do in fact hold such positions, and it is in administration rather than in work demanding originality that they are successful.

A RECORD OF WOMEN'S achievements as office managers would be interesting. A few outstanding examples come to my mind as I write. There is the firm of J. Lyons, the caterers, where one woman has for many years been in control of ten thousand waitresses, and where others hold influential executive posts of various kinds.

SEVERAL FAMOUS ADVERTISING agencies are virtually run by women, as I discovered recently when I was the guest of The Women's Advertising Club of London. There is also the well known example of an electric manufacturing company, the Edison Swan, with its woman publicity manager in control of a senior male as well as female staff. British Celanese have several important clerical sections in charge of women. So have most of the big retail stores. At Selfridge's for instance there are women who for periods varying from five to twenty years have been in control of the sales ledgers, the remittance office, the dissecting office, the correspondence department, the cashiers, the education department, and the staff office, the last of which includes the management of several thousand women employees. Lewis's Ltd., the chain of large provincial stores, have appointed women to supervise all their clerical departments and incidentally most of their selling departments as well. In the States the

employment of women in managerial positions is taken as a matter of course. Macy's, the gigantic emporium in New York, even have a woman in charge of their packing, dispatch and transport sections.

SPEAKING GENERALLY there is little to be said for the view that the question of sex has anything to do with good management. Management is essentially a faculty to be found equally among men and women. There is a technique of successful office management and one need not be an ardent feminist to hold the view that it can be learnt by women just as well as by men. In fact, since most offices are staffed by women—because they are more efficient and cheaper—there is everything to be said in favour of having a suitable woman in charge.

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WOMEN MANAGERS

WE have received a further opinion on the scope for women managers in industry from Mr. F. C. Chapman, A.L.A.A., A.I.S.A., of Nicklaver Transport Ltd.

TREATING this subject in the widest sense, it seems to me that except in the case of exceptional women, for they exist as well as exceptional men, women can never hope to excel in management.

The majority of women, even in the present age of independence, look forward to marriage as their real career, despite what our feminists may write and speak to the contrary.

This fact eliminates many capable women from the industrial field either entirely, or early in life. The average woman who remains in industry past early middle age seems to age rapidly, both mentally and physically. This fact again seems to limit the scope for women in industry. Women in sole control seem far less able to manage and control staff and large scale business organisations than do men of similar attainments and age.

Women who continue in business, however, have their field, provided that they will recognise its limitations. As sub-managers under capable men they can and do become of great assistance in supervising routine work, be it in the office or the factory. As

disciplinarians where girls are employed and where their natural hardness to their own sex is tempered by a man's usual laxity in that respect, as welfare supervisors, organisers of canteens, clinics, sports and social organisations, they are in their element.

These are vast fields of labour, especially in days of industrial research.

If women keep to these fields they will do at least two things:—

(a) Create professions akin to nursing and almost exclusive to themselves.

(b) Cease to attempt to fill posts for which after a period, they, from no fault of their own, often become unsuitable.

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WELFARE SUPERVISORS

THE Annual General Meeting of the London Association of Welfare Supervisors was held on the 3rd of June, at Horseferry Hall, on the invitation of the Gas Light and Coke Company. The meeting was well attended and concluded with a visit to the "Chelsea Follies."

The following is the new committee, appointed for the ensuing year:—President, Capt. P. J. Pither; Hon. Treasurer, Miss P. T. Williams; Hon. Gen. Secretary, Miss K. M. Dowding; Chairman of Winter Sessions, Mr. B. L. Lelliot; Secretary of Winter Sessions, Mr. E. V. Wright; Chairman of Hospital Scheme, Miss D. A. Frye.

It is noteworthy that the membership has grown during the year from 97 to 112.

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WE MAY ASSUME that the women in the higher salary classifications are holding the more responsible positions. The scope for women managers in industry is limited by their innate ability to take training, and their opportunity and willingness to prepare for positions of responsibility. Two other factors need to be pointed out. The more successful women are single, and they are engaged in independent businesses or professions.