

Women in Banking

Is it possibly true that we must look outside of our great cities into the towns of the country to find complete demonstrations of the capacity of women to head business and professional activities? Take this matter of banking. We now have in the country a National Association of banking women with a membership of

The leaders in this Organization are the fine women whom all of us have learned to know and depend upon in various banks of New York City, but in this group there is not a single bank officer. The highest position which anyone has reached in a New York City bank is

The reason that they have done so well, in my judgment, apart from their ability, their natural capacity for the kind of work which they are doing, is that they have regarded themselves as pioneers. They know that in the nature of the case there must be a doubt of the ability of women to succeed in the banking world. They are sufficiently intelligent - humorous - philosophical - to be willing to earn their way and they are doing it nobly. They are an essential part of the banking world, I think any great banker in New York City will tell you.

Naturally these women have their eye on the positions of authority ahead of them. Positions which call for large understanding of economic and social conditions as well as the imagination to forecast - judgment to live within the laws which govern the productive world, and then they find, as they

did at their last National Meeting, held in October in Cleveland, Ohio., a woman who has come to the top of a banking institution however small, they are right to feel that their faith in the ability of women has been justified.

This demonstration seems to have been quite accidental. The Association was in the middle of its three or four days meeting in Cleveland, when the President noticed one afternoon just before the program began, standing at the door, hesitating a little, a squarely built, very much on her own, a woman of fifty or sixty. She went to her at once, asking her if she would like to come in for the program, also if she was interested in banking.

"Well," she said, "I thought I would come down and look you over."

"Then you are interested in banking?" said the President.

"Well, yes, I am in a little bank in Michigan. I suppose it would look pretty small to you people from the big city banks."

"And what are you doing in this bank in Michigan?" asked the President.

"Oh," she said, "I am its President."

A real live woman bank President. The first one, so far as I know, that they had ever had in their gatherings.

They hustled her in in a hurry and although she was a little shy, a little averse to talking they got out of her gradually her story. Here are the essential points of it:-

Twenty-three years ago she had gone into the bank in the town of Addison, Michigan. Addison lived on agriculture. It was the center of the rich farms of the lands. She knew the people in Addison. There weren't so many then - only about four hundred. For fifteen years she had been the barber of the countryside. She seems as a barber to have saved money - to have won respect - to have gotten a hold in the bank, probably through her business capacity. The people who had known her in her barber's chair trusted her judgment and honesty. In she was made the President of the bank, after having served her apprenticeship as

When the story was out the women began to ask questions. One was, "Whether she gave mortgages on land and to what extent?" She said, "Of course, we are an agricultural country. But in twenty-three years we have never had but three foreclosures and the bank has never lost a cent." But she continued. "We lend much less these days on land than we used to do. The trouble is that people do not buy it to put into the land, they buy it for a radio, a car. We do not lend money for luxuries."

If the bankers of the country had universally followed the plan of lending money only for legitimate business

expansion - would we have had a panic last Fall?

It was quite natural, I think, that this bank President who had come to look them over and had hung on the outskirts at the start, not feeling at home among women who were associated with the great institutions of the country, should have become the center of their interest. They recognized that she was carrying out in her field the sound methods they aspired to, doing ^{what} they firmly believed, women would in the long run be doing in this country in large cities. She was a demonstration. If it could be done in Addison, Michigan it could be done elsewhere in time, with patience. This little incident is another proof of what has been growing on me more and more as I have watched activities of women through the country, that the best chances for women to get to the top in independent businesses is not in the great cities but in the towns and countryside - but it takes a lot of patience and proving.