

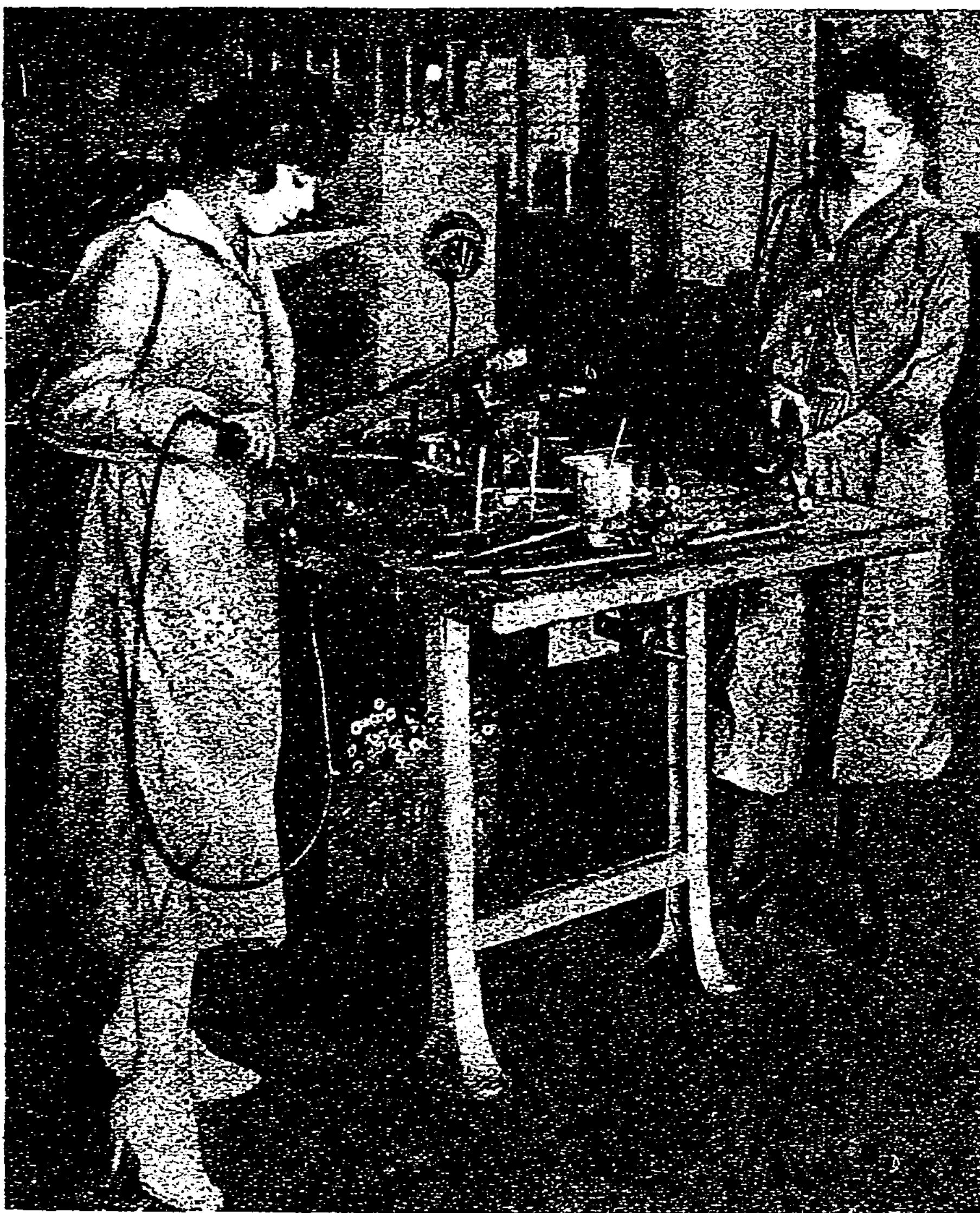
Where Women Supplant Men Because of War

Changes Taking Place in Many Industries—Employers Report New Workers' Adaptability in Fields Hitherto Barred—Equal Pay Now the Rule

ACCORDING to many signs, we are fast taking the road that England has followed in solving the labor problem brought on by the war. Women today are taking the places of men in many lines of work in which they had heretofore been barred. With quiet seriousness of purpose, proved by the fact that the vast majority of people know little of these changes, man labor is being replaced by woman's. And this is but a beginning of what it is expected to be as the war progresses. In many cases, it is not the present urgent need which is causing the change, but the anticipation of the increased shortage which will undoubtedly be felt at the time of the second draft.

Up to the present time, the women street-car conductors and subway guards are perhaps the most familiar to the public. These have been engaged by both the Interborough and Brooklyn Rapid Transit Companies. The need arose out of a real shortage of men. In the Rapid Transit Company alone 500 men have been called to the colors. At the present time the Interborough has ninety-two women who are either actually working on the cars or who are being trained for the work at the company schools. The Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company has more than 160 women in the place of men. Of these, 150 are employed as guards on Brooklyn subways. The remainder are conductors on low-step cars. The women get the same training as the men, must pass a similar physical examination, are subject to the same age limits, that is, 21 to 45, and receive the same pay, 27 cents an hour. The type of women employed are of average intelligence, and with one exception they come from occupational fields that are unusual in no way. In many cases they are members of the families of the men previously employed who have been drafted. The exception is a woman on the Brooklyn Rapid Transit who worked as a car conductor in Norway. This same company has also employed a colored woman station porter. Both companies are well pleased with the results so far, and are making arrangements to increase the numbers of women workers.

Another new occupation which women have taken up with great success is that of elevator running. In many of the apartment houses on the upper west side women have in large measure displaced the men. Some of the department stores are also turning to women for this work. One of these is entirely depending upon women for elevator operators. The Greenhut Company now employs twenty-five women elevator runners. Some changes in schedule that were considered necessary to insure the best service have been made. Where the men worked on three-hour shifts with relief, the women work on two-hour shifts, with a half hour's rest between. Where one man used to relieve four runners, a woman relieves only three. That has made it necessary for the company to employ four additional runners, but the ultimate result, very satisfactory, has made the additional expense worth while.



Young Women at Work on the Manufacture of Fire Extinguishers.

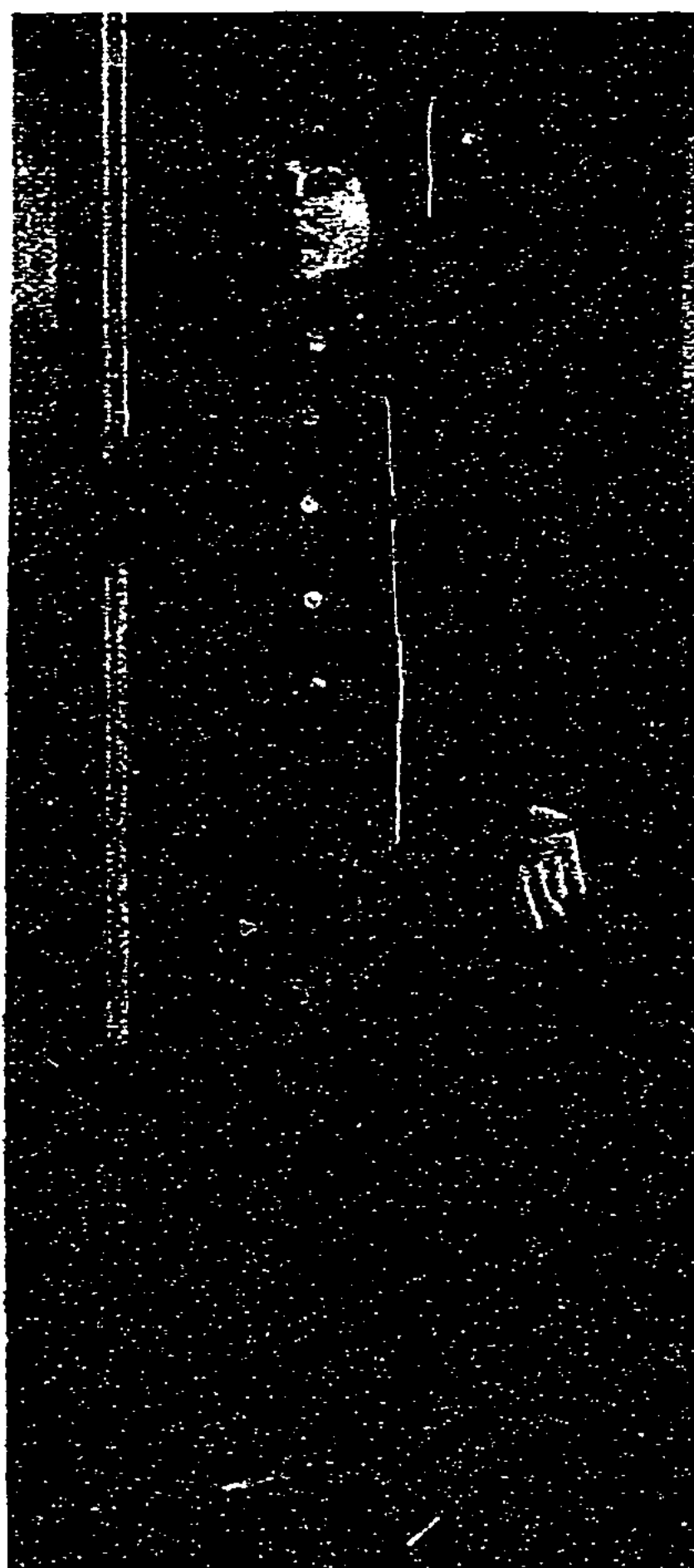
The women draw the same pay as the men, \$10 a week.

Women have also been drafted as workers in the fire-extinguishing industry. The Pyrene Company now employs 275 women at work that has previously been done by men. Women are taking part in every process, from the beginning to the end of the manufacture of the product. Here, too, the management is planning to add to the present number of women workers, in view of the shortage of men expected as a result of the second draft. So enthusiastic are the heads of department in praise of the work now being done that they are considering a policy of making their plant more largely dependent upon woman labor.

In the factory of the Otis Elevator Company at Yonkers there are about 160 women in the machine shops, which had before entirely been run by men. Compared to the 2,000 workers employed there, this is a small number, but it is a beginning. This number will be raised as the exigencies demand. The women are employed in making the small machine tools, in drilling, in electrical work, and in other departments. Opportunity is given to the women to advance from the simpler to the more complex operations, with corresponding advance in pay. The salaries paid them are the same that the men received previous to the pre-war period. No girl gets less than \$9 a week. They are during their work unsegregated from the men, with perfect good-fellowship. During the morning and afternoon, the women are allowed fifteen-minute rest periods, which they spend in rooms especially outfitted for them. To prepare for any accident that might happen, the plant

has opened a separate first-aid room, under the supervision of the same nurse and doctor who are in charge of the men machinists' room. Every effort is made to insure the health and safety of the women. The work they turn out is on a par with that of the men.

Many women are employed in the munition works. The assembling of the parts of the shell calls for a type of work for



© Western Newspaper Union.
Woman Conductor on Brooklyn Street Car.

which women are peculiarly adaptable. The fitting of the fine screw and the insertion of the tiny springs make the sensitive touch perceptions and delicate handling of a woman's hands really needed. For the last fourteen years women have been employed in these departments. The work now is therefore an extension of what has gone before, arising out of the increased demand for munitions. Some factories are going so far as to put women to work on the drill presses. Women are also being employed in powder cutting.

An industry from which women had always heretofore been barred is the felt hat industry. The reason was, in the main, purely physical. The work is heavy and the conditions under which the people employed have to work are such as to test even the powers of some men. At the present time, however, employers have sent out a call for strong women, and several of that type have responded, showing themselves able to do the work. The pay is commensurate with the kind of labor required.

Another industry in which women have heretofore not been seen as workers is radium plating. Now, in many of these factories women are used to meet the shortage made by the departure of men. Again the judgment passed on her work is "entirely satisfactory."

A sight that is so far peculiar to the streets of Brooklyn alone is that of women drivers on laundry wagons. They are proving themselves efficient, clear-headed, and quick. One company in New Jersey reports the employment of women as steamfitters. The work is of the lighter kind, but women are taking to it amazingly well.

Women have for some time now been engaged in various kinds of railroad work. In Delaware, women are employed in railroad machine shops, in the drillrooms, and at the stations where light freight is unloaded. One station in New York can boast of a track foreman, the head of a woman's gang.

The Sperry Gyroscope Company of Brooklyn has also gone into the employment of women in its factories. At the present time the firm is engaged in Government work, supplying the military forces with army compasses, boat compasses, and altimeters. The women are engaged in the assembling of parts, in the glass bending processes, in cutting of tubes, and in inspection of instruments. Their salary to start with is \$10 per week with advancement according to ability. Attention is paid to the physical well-being of the workers, and rest periods and reliefs form part of the schedule of labor. One of the reasons given by this firm for the employment of woman labor is significant. As the company is engaged in Government work, men employees might be subject to exemption.

Mrs. Edgar Strakosch, Secretary of the Employment Committee of the Mayor's Committee of Women on National Defense, who has made a study of women in industry, is of the opinion that it was not so much a shortage of labor caused by the war that brought on this new phase of industrial conditions, but that the public mind had been led by the conditions of the war to that point where it could countenance the entrance of women into industries which before had been controlled by men. It was a case of women taking advantage of the psychological moment, which, in a leap, advanced their entrance into new fields. Another point to be taken into consideration, she said, was the one that although women were receiving the pay that men had previously got, they were not, in a large measure, receiving the wages at which a man might today be willing to work.