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Side Talks by Ruth Cameron

TIMES ARE BETTER, LET'S MAKE THEM BETTER STILL.

A friend of mine, no I did not mean that, an acquaintance of mine, says that there is no such thing as the unemployed problem. How does she know? Because she has tried and tried to get a maid and cannot get one (she has five in her family and pays something under the current wage which a competent maid can get in a family of two; also she is exceedingly "particular," if you use her word—"cranky" if you use the word her ex-maids apply to her.

That is one of the bases of her conviction. The other one is that she has a friend who has a friend who got an unemployed man a job and he didn't keep it.

She Knows Far More Than the Experts.

On these two facts she bases her scorn of "all this talk about unemployment. People don't want to work. That's what's the matter with them."

From the height of this knowledge she looks scornfully down on all efforts to create work for men and to relieve the suffering in the families of men who are out of work.

If this woman were an exceptional case she would not be worth writing about or thinking about. But is she? Don't you know many like her, who because they are mortally afraid that they might be called on for help go about proclaiming that there isn't any unemployment situation, and giving as the basis of their contention such instances as those I have quoted above.

They Think Things in the Top of Their Heads.

I suppose these people really think what they say. That is they think it

in the top layer of their minds, the part of our minds in which we do "protective thinking." (Protective thinking is a clever phrase coined to describe the sort of thinking that we do to protect ourselves from facts and conclusions we don't want to face.) They struggle so hard to protect their time and their sympathy and their pocketbooks that they really convince themselves. But down underneath they must know that closed factories, and unemployment figures issued by city, state and national labor bureaus cannot be brushed aside by references to the difficulty of getting a maid or to some individual who did not want to work.

Here is what one big charitable organization in New York bravely says: "Some of the unemployed are unworthy. Let's admit it. A study of the homeless men at the Municipal Lodging House made some time ago revealed that 20 per cent would not work; 20 per cent could not work because of old age or permanent disability; ten per cent were temporarily disabled, but 50 per cent were able bodied and were eager (the word hardly expresses their desperation) for a job."

Dare we make the ten per cent an excuse for our failure to help the rest?

Can't You Start This in Your Community?

This particular charity is starting in its community a plan to "Give a Man a Day's Work" by suggesting through printed cards and other methods of publicity, odd jobs which might be given to the unemployed by housekeepers, office managers, storekeepers, landlords, and others.

I feel sure it would be glad to help any organization which wants to start a similar movement, by outlining its publicity.

And since any such movement means a start on the blessed circle that will eventually bring prosperity and good times to us all, surely we ought all to be glad to do what we can toward it.

Mistletoe Superstitions.

Everybody does not know the real reason of the good old Christmas custom of kissing beneath the mistletoe, nor is everybody acquainted with the many superstitions that have grown around the sacred evergreen.

According to the legend, Balder, the Scandinavian god of eloquence and poetry, secured immunity from the violence of his enemies by extracting from everything in earth, fire and water, a promise not to do him any hurt. It was from mistletoe alone that he forgot to obtain this assurance, and the fact becoming known to Loake, the enemy of Balder, he induced a herring to shoot Balder dead with an arrow formed of the unplugged mistletoe.

Now, the god of eloquence and poetry was such a great favourite with all the other gods and goddesses that they prayed and prayed, until out of the love they had for him he was restored to life.

With Balder alive again we have no further concern; the mistletoe after his restoration being given to the goddess of love to safely guard and keep. The evergreen thus became an emblem of love instead of death, in token of which all and sundry passing beneath the mistletoe bough, which the goddess held in her hand, saluted her with a tender kiss.

But the mistletoe has its sad, as well as its sweet, romances, chief amongst which is that of the charming bride, Ginevra, of the gallant Lord Lovel, immortalized in Haynes Bayley's affecting ballad of "The Mistletoe Bough." But some probably do not know that the fatal chest, in which, as all will remember, the beautiful girl, in a spirit of mischief, hid herself, as told in the ballad, is still in existence and in a good state of preservation. This is, however, the case. It has a beautifully carved front, which is divided into panels on which three landscapes are depicted with rare artistic skill.

In the Midland counties mistletoe superstitions have not yet died out. In some parts a sprig of the evergreen that has been used in the decoration of the church is highly prized, as it is supposed to bring good luck throughout the ensuing year to the fortunate possessor.

In rural Gloucestershire a very curious belief prevails. According to it, any unmarried woman who places beneath her pillow a sprig of mistletoe, which she has taken from the inside of the parish church, will be sure to dream of her future husband.

One aged dame, in the forest of Dean, is fond of telling the story of how she dreamt that a certain man was to take her "for better or worse," how she met him a few days later, and told him of the dream, and how she married him before the festive season came round again!

Farmers have their own peculiar superstitions regarding the mistletoe. "No mistletoe, no luck," is an axiom

with some of them; and to many of them Christmas would not be Christmas without a profuse display of the evergreen about the farmhouse. But it is considered fatal to allow Christmas decoration of any sort to remain in its place after Twelfth Night.

In country districts the destruction of the decorations is dignified into a solemn ceremony. But mistletoe must be removed as soon as Christmas is over. In many cases as soon as the festive season is at an end, the mistletoe used for the decoration of the dwelling will be all carefully collected and solemnly burnt on the parlor fire.

Some farmers believe that mistletoe can bring good luck to the dairy. But to ensure this a branch of it must be given to the first cow on the farm that gives birth to a calf after the birth of the New Year. When there is an abundance of mistletoe at Christmas it is supposed, in agricultural districts, to foreshadow a prosperous twelve months.

THE NEW FRENCH REMEDY.
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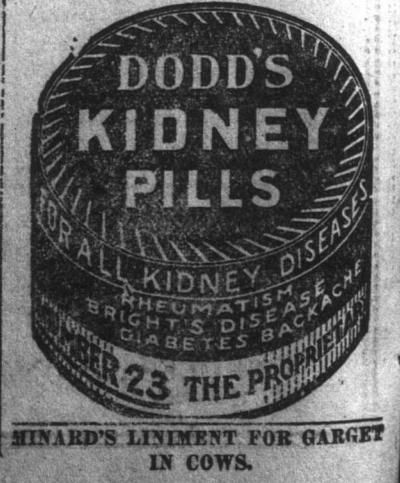
THE SUBMARINE ISSUE.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23

In the Arms Conference session today the debate continued on the British proposal to abolish submarines. Admiral Bon, chief French naval expert, declared no important power could afford to maintain less than 50,000 tons of submarines as proposed in the reduction plan for Britain and America. Ninety thousand tons would be greatly in excess of the present French submarine strength, and three times the amount she would have under an application of the ratio already agreed on as to capital ships. Admiral Bon argued that submarines were legitimate weapons when properly used, and were indispensable for

their defensive value. Replying for Great Britain, Arthur Balfour used illustrations drawn from experience of France herself during the war to support his argument against the submarine's value as an arm of defence. He added, both France and Italy would have much to fear from the submarine if employed in the fleet of an enemy in a future war. Senator Schanzer, for Italy, asserted the long Italian coastline made the submarine an important element of National defence.

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