

Faugh a Ballaugh!

POSSIBLY some readers on seeing the above title will be reminded of Mark Twain's courier whom he delegated to bring back a report on a continental European beauty spot, and who returned with an account heavily loaded with a number of strange and incomprehensible words which he explained were sundry Zulu, Red Indian, etc., etc., terms that he had adopted through having noticed that it was considered fashionable to interlard such literature in this way and that; as these were the only non-English expressions at his command, he had been compelled to use them.

However, such is not the "raison d'être" (1) of the above, for it is a Hibernian phrase which, a native Irish lady informs the writer should be pronounced "Foch a Bolya," and means "Clear the Way!" We use it with reference to the present necessity for taking the first steps towards the Socialist work of Reconstruction of Society. It is, besides, quite topical, because not only, as dealt with in another column, is March the month of the Paris Commune, but it also contains the famous "17th of Ireland," or, in other words, St. Patrick's Day. And not alone is the month of breezes thus noteworthy, for it is also—as far as the astronomical calendar goes—the first month of spring.

Now, as the poet reminds us, it is in spring that the fancies of the younger set lightly turn to thoughts of love. But what, though equally true, he does not say is that all of us who have endured the rigors of a genuinely cold winter, emerge therefrom in spring with our bodily condition more or less deteriorated and run down. In some, these disturbances result in boils! As medical science informs us a boil generally arises from a movement to eject poisons out of the system and, when properly understood, such movements afford material for admiration and wonderment, because they are the movements of an army! It is not, however, an army of men; it is not even, though such might be expected, a Red army. It is an army whose units are White blood corpuscles.

As many may be aware, the red color of the blood is due to the presence therein of minute bodies called the red corpuscles. But the blood also contains a smaller proportion of another and larger kind called the white blood corpuscles. The duties of the latter are to march against and, if possible, defeat any poisonous elements whose presence in the blood threatens the welfare of the organism that houses them. The discharges from a boil are, therefore, nothing more than the corpses from a "gathering of the clans" of these useful and intrepid white warriors who have so nobly and willingly given up their lives for the protection of their master or mistress. But although all this must arouse our admiration and gratitude, still it does not alter the fact that, in itself, a boil is anything but a pleasant thing to suffer from so far as the victim is concerned. Hence the picturesque slang expression for annoyance is, that someone feels "as sore as a boil!" In short, therefore, and without any high falutin' nonsense, a boil is simply a Disease!

In that larger organism called society, we find a parallel state of affairs, because whenever it suffers from poisons in its system that constitute a real distress and menace to any or all sections of the community, various movements arise to expel the nuisance or danger, a political or politico-economic army. And just as with the diseased human body, a trifling infection through a slight surface cut may serve to precipitate a boil that actually results from a deeper general impurity of the system; so is it with society. It was the Sarajevo assassination that

precipitated the Great War, but as all of us now know, that murder was merely the occasion but not the Cause—which was economic—of the terrible catastrophe from which the civilized world is still suffering.

By no means the least important of such movements is the Socialist. Indeed, so important and also so fascinating is it that its units are liable to forget that they must not limit themselves solely to the movement—which is merely a means—but that they should get rid of it as soon as possible by rendering it unnecessary when the revolutionary objective has been accomplished. Whatever we take a pleasure in—the master-motive of all living beings—tends to absorb our activities and become an end in itself, in accordance with that universal, subtle and insidious "Bias of Happy Exercise," which the genius of the Scottish race has long recognized and combatted with the pregnant and bitingly sarcastic remark, "Aye, ye're daein' fine!" And not only does danger arise from this source, but as each phase of the Socialist movement tends to reflect itself in a special literature and literary organs, and official mouth-pieces, "economic determinism" consciously or subconsciously inclines to produce a certain rivalry of interests manifesting itself in more or less harmful suppressions or half-suppressions of fact that still further create confusion and disunity and postpone the rapid achievement of what should be the Socialist's unswerving purpose.

Such being the case, it is worth while to note the words of the American, Capt. Paxton Hibben, whom his military superiors took action against because of his activities for Russian recognition. Addressing a meeting recently in New York Labor Temple, he said that "A revolution means no more than a ground-clearing; an opportunity to create. If those who have achieved revolution are unable to build anew or unwilling to create where they have destroyed, the fruits of revolution may be lost in great part."

Doubtless, it is a recognition of the practical value of work as opposed to mere speculation that has, on this comparatively New Continent, placed the "good worker" and pioneer upon the honorable pedestal they now occupy as compared with the "intellectuals." Science, too, appears to support that verdict, for Dr. Adolf Meyer tells us that "thought at its very best is only a link in a chain of events leading up to some final achievement. Its real and lasting fulfilment is found only in action. Janet has constructed an interesting hierarchy of mental functions. His study of psychasthenia (mental debility) brings him to the conviction that complete action is the most difficult and highest function. I am tempted to add (continues the Dr.) that completed action is the first essential for rest and for beginning something new. . . . It is lamentable to hear youngsters, encouraged by their elders, refuse to do certain things because they already know how to do them. When doing things becomes less attractive than knowing things, an avenue for disappointment if not for failure, has been opened before the pupil." It is one of the most damning features of this capitalist system, especially in these days of its advanced decay, that however much one may be willing to or actually does work, the opportunity to labor for adequate recompense therefor, fails of materialization.

Yet even if it be true, as Dr. Meyer says, that thought is only valuable insofar as it leads to action, there are distinct degrees of effectiveness whereby it produces its object. In a world based upon materialism (and laziness!) it is, therefore, not surprising that most thinkers should suffer both from their own dislike and incapacity for action and from the treatment their fellows accord them; for curses and persecution have ever been the lot of the mental innovator and action-provoker. Their "trade," in fact, might well be classed amongst the "dangerous occupations."—it is difficult to serve God and Mam-

mon (or selfishness). That certainly was the experience and opinion of one of the world's most powerful thinkers and action-stimulators—Robert Burns, and he thus, in whimsically-regretful form, states this fact:—

"I backward mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthful' prime,
An' done nae-thing
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

"Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might by this' hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank an' clarkit

My cash account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit (half-shirted)
Is a' th' amount."

Of course, in subsequent verses, he showed that he had not wasted his time. And where, as his biography informs us, would Marx himself have "got off at" had it not been for the financial assistance of his more practical and commercial friend, Engels? What the latter was (fortunately!) able to do as a private individual, will be done far better in the future by Communist society.

Granted, as above said and as a human institution that the more transient, aggressive and controversial literary side of the socialist movement is somewhat vulnerable to certain regrettable disabilities, yet these are by no means so serious as to interfere with its necessary and fruitful functions. Life, we are told, may be defined as a perfect correspondence with environment. If then we become, as Socialists, entirely shut off from every phase of Socialist activity, we will, so far as the movement is concerned, be as dead as a door nail. To avoid this it is essential that we keep in touch with our Socialist environment, not only by studying its various text books and general literature, but also—what is just as, if not more important—by subscribing for its various journals which record the progress and nature of current events. Therefore, as the very least one can do, never let your subs. to Socialist papers run out—if you can possibly avoid it. And by the same token, see that you raise your non-Socialist fellows from the dead and make them "born again" by similarly bringing them into touch with "the living Marx!"

Some people have curious ideas about Revolution; they seem to think it is always an act of blood-thirsty vengeance. It is not. As Com. Harrington recently pointed out, the spectacular and "movie" features of a revolution are merely the trappings and the suits of conflicts, the garb in which they are arrayed, the moral image of a material fact. A clergyman lately asserted, in his Burns' supper address, that the British Labor Government was due to the increasing appreciation of those truly religious qualities of Service and Sympathy with which that poet was so deeply imbued. The "man of God" was wrong in thus accounting for the British workman's change of allegiance from Sport to Spirituality—that resulted from conditions of chronic Unemployment. Indeed, in a state of society that fosters anti-social "trade secrets" and a life typical of the jungle, religion has the same chance of existing as permanent and secure employment, peace or business stability. For those, we require the Social Revolution that removes the obstacles which stand in their way.

Therefore, and to conclude, we repeat the slogan and "the burden o' the sang" that heads this article: "Faugh a Ballaugh"—Clear the Way. And the less "movement" features the process may involve, the better; for it is not "movements" or their literary or official reflexes that are wanted, but tangible practical results in the shape of a clean and healthy Socialist Society wherein a political or economic class war "movement" will have as little chance or need to exist as has a boil upon the surface of the body of a perfectly clean and sound individual.

"PROGRESS."