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EDITORIAL

## TAFT'S UNFELICITOUS WORDS.

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**S**PEAKING to the students of Yale on April 23d, Secretary (of War William Howard) Taft alluded to the Socialists as “cranks,” and added “that will pass.” These words are unfelicitous.

A “crank” is a thing that creates revolutions. It is an implement known even in countries where the mechanical arts are at a low level. In so far as the term is applied to men, the article so designated is no stranger anywhere. Everywhere, to the sorrow of the Tafts and the greater sorrow of the Taftees, the thing is well known, and known in all languages.

“Cranks,” in good old Tacitian Latin, were the Christian propagandists called in the days of Tacitus; and, as if to furnish one more evidence to the fact of the oneness of the human mind, the passing of those “cranks” was confidently predicted.

“Cranks,” in dog-latin and in the several vernaculars of northern Europe, was the term with which the Hussites, the Wycliffites, the Lutherans were successively dismissed—and they certainly cranked the comforts of their supercilious contemners.

“Cranks,” with good round oaths attached, was the Cavalier term for the Roundheads who eventually centered around Cromwell. They “cranked” the feudal rule of Britain and they “cranked” Charles I. out of shape, nor yet did they “pass away.”

“Cranks,” in the choicest French of the elite of Louis XV., were the oncoming bourgeois styled—the Turgots and Rousseaus and the Mirabeaus, who, with science, however fractional, and with sentiment not at all fractional, propounded views that evoked the merriest peals of silvery laughter from the décolletée dames of the Oeil de Boeuf.

“Cranks!” said the itinerant courtiers, the Tafts of the British Crown, when

struggling bourgeois and still colonial America was laboring to snap the feudal trammels to commerce.—And how those “cranks,” led by their Franklins and Madisons, their Adamses and Washingtons, cranked the British regime out of joint.

“Crank!” again was the epithet hurled at the Lovejoys and Garrisons by the Bourbon South and her putty-face North. “It will pass,” was the confident prediction when Abolitionists were tarred and feathered, ridden on rails, and John Brown hanged.—And yet what a sorry picture did the then Tafts cut at Appomattox!

There is a fatality in the word. It may be nothing but a superstition. But why tempt the Gods? Our Tafts, if they would be good to themselves and not invite stores of woes for their youthful listeners, should use some other word than “Crank” against the Movement that, as sure as fate, is approaching to seal their doom. Some other word might, perhaps, conjure away the doom. The use of the same historic term looks like a defiant challenge to the Inevitable.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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