FIRST GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

Sunday, July 5, 1885.

Held at 13 Farringdon Road, London, E.C.

This first General Conference of the Socialist League will be remembered with pleasurable feelings by all that took part in it. It was a day of happiness and good feeling; of realization of hopes and the planning for future work. Whether the organisation founded in December last, and having its second birth, as it were, on Sunday, July 5, 1885, is to exist until the principles it works for are understood and accepted of us—whether it will ever be merged in a larger, wider, more international body; whether those gathered together on that Sunday will see in their time anything more than the lessened darkness of the sky before the dawn of the better day that is to come; whether all of those who are able to sing the able songs of the weeks as they depart—these are but secondary questions. The one thing of primary importance is that a veritable Socialist body is in existence, and is at work in England, the home of capitalism.

A genuine enthusiasm marked from first to last that all was done. Even the dry details of business reports were signals for cheering. In an assembly of men and women holding pronounced and advanced views, considerable difference of opinion upon points of detail and even now and again, on larger questions, was assured. But even where the difference was marked enough to be called a divergence, all discussion was carried on with kindness and generosity—on one thing the Conference was unanimous—its earnestness for Socialist, its eagerness to do everything for the furthering of the cause.

And now the League is thoroughly on its feet. Its Council and officers have been chosen. The inspiration of our first gathering together is yet strong upon us. Our work lies before us. The hideous superstitions, cruelties, and blasphemies due to capitalism, assail our every sense. Our fellow lie supine, or if they struggle at all, no fight they as those that fight the air. To work, then!

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Edward B. Aveling.

MORNING SITTING—11 to 12.

C. W. Mowbray proposed, and F. Lessner seconded, William Morris as Chairman.

C. W. Mowbray and Thomas Wardle, jun., were elected scrutineers on the motion of Lessner and Halliday.

Some discussion arose on the position of a member who had joined the League that day. It was ultimately decided that he could be present, but was not entitled to vote.

On the motion of Theodor and Mowbray, Edward Aveling, H. Halliday and J. L. Mahon were deputed to act as Secretaries to the Conference.

The Chairman, having read the agenda, said: Friends, though a speech is probably not expected of me, just a few words. The circumstances under which the League was formed are known to you all. Any body of Socialists have the right to make an association, as we have done, for the spread of revolutionary International Socialism. Their business, above all others, is to see that the doctrine is carried through purely, and not mixed with opportunism. The doctrine is a change in the basis of society. Of course, to some it seems absurd for a few weeks in an upper chamber to talk of this. But it is not that we are to effect this change, but the world of yesterday, to-day and to-morrow. We have to do with the past, the present and the future. We suffer many checks, some defeats, and not a little sacrifice at times among ourselves. We do not all of us always stick pertinaciously to the task, ready to make sacrifices in the certainty that things will change. For my part, I believe we shall see much of it in our own time. Now for the business of to-day. The Provisional Council, whose self-appointment you endorsed in a meeting by joining the League, will guide you in their account. They ask for just criticism, at your hands. I would beg of everybody to be ready to bear criticism in the interests of the cause. We are all friends, but must give no favour to one another, treating all as members of the party, and then there will be no more difficulty.

J. L. Mahon, as Secretary of the Provisional Council, read its report.

Report to the General Meeting of Members of the Provisional Council of the Socialist League of the United Kingdom.

The Socialist League was formed December 30, 1884, at 27 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. At the first meeting were—Wm. Morris, M. Balfour, John W. Forster, Aveling, Lessner, A. W. Wardle, R. Hughes, J. D. Newall, B. Maguire (Leeds), James Marrow (Glasgow), Andreas Scheu (Edinburg). The officers of the League are Wm. Morris, M. Balfour, Aveling, Lessner, A. W. Wardle, and S. J. Newall, of the second, C. W. Mowbray, F. Lessner, E. B. Aveling, W. Johnson. There are now eight Branches of the League—at Hammersmith, Bloomsbury, Leeds, Merton Abbey, Bradford, Oxford, Stratford, North London—the aggregate membership of which is 160. In addition to Branch members, we have over 70 members enrolled at the Central Office, and, it is hoped, any Branch, thus making the total membership of the League about 250. There is also affiliated to the League, the Labour Municipal League, the Scottish League and the Soviet League. We welcome all of the Branches and Glasgow.

The resolutions, the publications issued by the Provisional Council were:

(1) The Manifesto of the League, of which 10,000 have been circulated.

(2) The Communism, which will be dealt with in a separate report. (3) A Manifesto on the Russo-Japanese War, of which 11,000 have been circulated.

(4) Morris's Chants for Socialists, collected and published at one penny.

(5) Socialist Leaflets (two), of which 14,000 have been circulated. (6) The first number of the League, Bristol, Wm. Morris, stated to be receiving satisfactorily; but it is impossible to give definite details of the sale of other, as they are quite recently issued and returns have not yet been received from the Branches and newsmen.

The chief public meetings carried out were the following:

1. A course of 17 meetings at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, E. C. On several evenings Edward Aveling gave a series of lectures on 'Socialism in Practise,' being an explanation of Marx's 'Das Kapital.' On the other evenings a public meeting introductory to the League and Socialist Entertainment in conclusion.

2. The Executive Council of the League was held at Neumeyer's Hall, Bloomsbury, in celebration of the anniversary of the Paris Commune. The hall was filled with an enthusiastic audience, and the proceedings were of the most satisfactory character.

3. A meeting was held at St. James's Hall on April 2,organized and presided over by Mr. Bradlaugh, M.P. The purpose of the meeting was to protest against the British military operations in the Sudan and the recent massacre of the native rebels. As the Council had issued a Manifesto on the subject and given prominence to a series of articles in their journal, it was felt that a distinctly different from that of any other party in the country, it was felt that some such meeting be taken in reference to the matter. The Council to whom the matter was referred by the Council, and it was determined to send two delegates to the meeting for a ride which contained an explanation of the cause and indicated the necessity of measures for the protection of the natives. As a result of the proceedings the meeting was very well received by the meeting, but, owing to the truculence of Mr. Bradlaugh—who first asked the League delegates out of the proceedings—

4. On April 29 a meeting to protest against the War was opposed by the League. Immediately before the meeting the members of the