

THE COMMONWEAL

The Official Journal of the Socialist League.

VOL. 4.—No. 114.

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1888.

WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

THE PARIS COMMUNE.

THE celebration of the anniversary organised by the English Socialist Societies will take place at the

STORE STREET HALL,
Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, W.C.
MONDAY MARCH 19.

The following speakers will address the meeting:—

ANNIE BESANT, JOHN BURNS, ELEANOR AVELING, WILLIAM MORRIS, CHARLOTTE WILSON, P. KROPOTKINE, F. KITZ, A. HEADINGLEY, F. HICKS, H. H. SPARLING, DR. MERLINO, BORDES, KAVTSKY, and others.

The Chair will be taken at 7.30, by

H. M. HYNDMAN.

The following is the resolution which will be moved at the meeting:

"That this meeting expresses the deepest sympathy with the heroic attempt of the workers of Paris to overthrow the domination of the classes that live by the robbery of labour, and looks forward to the time when the distinction of classes will be abolished, and the hopes for which so many workers have sacrificed their lives will be realised in the true society of the workers of all countries."

A Choir will attend and give a selection of appropriate music.

* * * Members of the Choir and their friends are requested to attend for practice at 13 Farringdon Road, on Sunday at 5 p.m.

Comrades willing to act as stewards or to assist in the sale of literature are asked to send in their names at once.

Comrades and friends are earnestly requested to take in hand the collection of money for the defrayal of expenses, for which purpose collection sheets have been issued. Donations may be sent to

G. CLIFTON (S.D.F.) Treasurer; or to
H. A. BARKER (S.L.) Secretary,
13 Farringdon Road, E.C.

VIVE LA COMMUNE!

A CARTOON BY WALTER CRANE,

Will be GIVEN AWAY with next week's COMMONWEAL.

* * * Newsagents and others are requested to send their orders early, as a large demand is anticipated.

Copies on fine paper for framing, 2d.; post free, 2½d.

DEAD AT LAST.

THE flood of cant and servility which has been poured out by the bourgeois press during the last few days, because the long-expected death of a tyrant of the old type embedded in a modern type of tyranny, has at last happened, disgusts one so much that at first one is tempted to keep silence in mere contempt for such degraded nonsense. Court mourning is always a preposterous spectacle, but here is a case where it is more preposterous than usual. Conventional universal grief, when scarcely any one is grieved at the event, no one whose interests do not suffer by it, most people are profoundly indifferent, and a great many cannot help being glad, although the death of this man may make no immediate difference in the condition of the people who suffered from his life—what can one say of this?

Yet though silence may be best in the abstract, it may be misunderstood at a time when even democratic papers, which are busy

advocating federalism, profess to share more or less in the sham sentiment of the day which weeps strange tears indeed over the death-bed of this tough specimen of the ancient absolutist lined by the modern centraliser. As a Socialist print, the *Commonweal* is an outlaw from the press, and its poverty and desolate freedom compels it to speech, though but of a few words.

For what the death of this sham mediæval tyrant calls our attention to is a weighty and serious matter enough in spite of the nothingness of the man himself. The ancient and obviously irrational absolutism is gone from Europe except for the tottering throne of the Czar of the Russias; but the house of Hohenzollern has gathered to itself whatever of dangerous and practical in absolutism still exists, and has built up of it a fortress of the new bureaucratic absolutism as a last refuge to the capitalistic civilisation of our day, and has put a face of rationality and business capacity on it, so that the scarcely less grievous tyranny of constitutional bureaucracy under which we suffer might reach out a hand to it unashamed; and so helpful have our masters felt this fortress to be to the system which enables them to rob the people at home, that even the elevation by its builders of the Germans into a holy race of military and commercial conquerors which may one day swallow them up also, has not scared them from accepting their friendship.

Abundance of patience, energy, skill, almost genius, have been expended in this attack on the progress of humanity, but not only these qualities were needed, and the most has been made of persons who could serve as instruments towards it, although they had no qualities but the blindness and dogged hardness inbred by their position. Of these instruments the person just dead was as fit for his post as might be, just as Bismark and Moltke have been fit for theirs; though the German centralising absolutism is modern, a monarch or figure-head of the modern type would not have suited it as well as what was ready to its hand for the purpose, a mere stupidly implacable soldier without any capacity for doubt or remorse. The man who began his career of "glory" by the slaughter of citizens in the streets of Berlin in '48, was a proper tool for the statesmen who saw the necessity of the system, which had bred them, of "educating" Germany by constant wars of ambition, and was not likely to shrink from the last success of a hideous race war, which will when all is said, lead to events that these pests of humanity were far from foreseeing.

Plainly then, the somewhat timid whitewashing by the Radical press of this figure-head of the most dangerous form of absolutism is a sorry business, and I must say sincerely that the German people are not likely to thank our press for it. Even the *Daily News* is compelled to allude to the Berlin massacres, though it speaks of them as an event to be lightly passed over, a venial offence, to be expected (as indeed it was) of a person in the position of its hero. But are the people of Berlin forgetting it? Are they really worshipping the memory of the pious hero of Sedan? If this is true of even a part of the population, it can only be said that it shows into what depths of degradation the vice of patriotism can lead people—of patriotism, that is, the cultivation of national rancour founded on the national development of selfish greed which is the basis of civilised society.

One thing, at least, we should not forget, and that is the protest of the German Socialists in the teeth of all the jingoism newly stirred up by the danger and excitement of the occasion, against the race-war which Bismark and his willing puppets were leading Germany into in the interests of law and order, to whom the death and suffering of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, is a light matter, so only that the people may be kept down.

The Government are determined that we shall not lack sensation. Mr. Snelling's sentence to seven month's hard labour for speaking his mind in Ireland, is quite on all fours with the sentences in London on those who tried to speak their minds in Trafalgar Square. Really we must repeat our advice to the G.O.M. to show that he is in earnest by going over to Ireland, and daring the Government to arrest him.

The House of Commons has at the instigation of Mr. Labouchere been debating as to whether it would be advisable to abolish the hereditary element in the Upper House—whether it would be advisable to spend a pound or two in mending a bad sixpence. Here is comfort for the unemployed, the men on strike, the hewers of wood and drawers of water!

W. M.