## IMPRESSIONS OF THE PARIS CONGRESS.

Wholegees of the League met as agreed at London Bridge Station, and its per lar enormous crewd of people going our way. We got stowed into the carriages somehow, and whiled away the time in singing songs and selling a few numbers of Commonweal to divers good folk, who had only a glimmering about the events that the French were going to celebrate on the morrow. Getting to the boats at Newhaven we found that the clerk of the weather had provided us with a sell in the form of spring tides, so that the boats which were timed to start at 11 p.m. did not stir from the harbour till close on 3 a.m. And even then there was not enough water for us to get into Dieppe for an hour or two; so that, in short, instead of getting into Paris at 8 a.m. we did not start from Dieppe till 10, and got to Paris at 1.30, somewhat weary with the long journey.

We were met at the station by several old acquaintances, and made the best of our way to our headquarters, which is in the Montmartre district, the northern suburb of Paris. As a matter of course we thus missed the first sitting of the Congress at the Rue Petrelle, though I, having been put upon the committee, went down to the hall and saw our friend Lafargue and the members of the Organising Committee; after which there was nothing left for us but to take our pleasure as we best could in wandering about the city and seeing what I should irreverently call the "fun of the fair."

The next morning, Monday, we went down to the Salle Petrelle, and found the delegates assembling; I found myself also appointed to verify the mandates of the English-speaking delegates, and had plenty of work to do. It was obvious from the first that the Salle Petrelle was not large enough for the Congress, as it would not hold 300 persons, and besides the delegates the public was admitted. Hasty arrangements were made for another hall, and we were presently on the way to a kind of theatre, called the Fantasies Parisiennes, in the neighbouring Rue Rochechouart, where we soon got to business, with Vaillant and Liebknecht in the chair. The first business was of course the roll-call of the delegates, which of itself was a somewhat imposing ceremony, considering the great number of them, and the trouble and even risk to which some of them had been put to come. The numbers of the delegates first taken were as follows: French, 180; Germans, 81, English, 21; Belgian, 14; Austrian, 8; Italian, 11; Russian, 6; Swiss, 6; Denmark, 3; Roumania, 4; Spain, 2; Poland, 4; Hungary, 3; America, 2; Portugal, 1; Greece, 1; Holland, 4; Sweden, 1; 1. In all, 353; but later comers made up the list to upwards The spirit of the Congress was good, the enthusiasm undoubted. As above said, the mere presence of so many Socialists come together from so many countries so earnest and eager was inspiriting and encouraging.

Little was done at this morning meeting except what might be called formal business; but it was clear from the first that there were two parties in the Congress, one of which was anxious almost at any price for fusion with the Possibilist Congress, and the other quite contented to let them hold their deliberations by themselves. Accordingly a meeting of the English delegates met on the Monday afternoon to decide upon their course of action, at which the delegates of the League were unanimous for keeping quite apart from the Possibilist Congress, which has no pretentions to being a Socialist Congress, and considering that Germany is quite unrepresented there, and that there is a distinct smack of jingoism about it, no valid pretensions to being international.

We expected that this question of fusion would come on in the evening sitting of Monday, but the whole time was taken up in settling various details of the constitution of the Congress, some of which excited angry feeling among the French delegates; the cause of which it was difficult, or impossible rather, for a stranger to understand. Underlying it all, however, was this question of fusion: for it must be understood that the Belgian, Dutch, and Italian delegates had a definite mission to bring about a fusion of the two congresses, and that many of them were very hot about it. The chairman (a Swiss) at this evening meeting, though apparently a straightforward sincere man, had no hold on the meeting, so that it got rather out of hand; and no doubt there was some of the usual police element present. However, amongst the genuine Socialists no harm was meant and none was done.

The next morning we received at our headquarters comrades Charles and J. and R. Turner, and at the Congress the ground was cleared for the settlement of this question of fusion. There were practically three resolutions before the meeting. Domela Nieuwenhuis spoke for the fusion in a speech which his obvious earnestness and good-will made very impressive; though he ignored the fact that as to the French party neither the Guesdists nor the Possibilists really desired it, and rightly so, as the breach was too great between them to be healed by Tressaud, the Marseilles delegate, in a speech quite straightforward and to the point, spoke against the fusion, and I followed him, and supported him with the full assent of our comrades of the League.

Liebknecht brought forward another motion which threw the onus of making the fusion on the Possibilists; and this was clearly the popular view among the French and German delegates. The propositions made, a long time was spent in a somewhat wearisome and very involved discussion as to how we were to vote, and at last it was settled that the voting should be by nations. Then the voting took place, and it became clear that if we voted for Tressaud's proposal, as we should have preferred to do and thus took our votes away from Liebknecht, we should risk giving the majority to those who wished for

fusion on almost any terms, and thus should find ourselves sitting in a Congress which, as above said, was not a Socialist one. veted for Lieblinecht's proposal, aspending to our vetes statement that if Tressand's had been brought up we should have voted for it; and we found that the French delegates had voted in the same way. There was a large majority for Lieblinecht's motion; and a committee was appointed to confer with the Possibilities and see if anything practical in the way of fusion could follow from this motion, which expressed a wish for fusion, but only on the terms that there should be no submission on our part; and thus a long sitting came to an end.

The next morning (Wednesday) we heard that the Possibilists had accepted the fusion; but on condition that we should submit to having our mandates examined by the united Congresses, which it was clearly impossible for us to agree to, as even those who had been most eager in pressing on the fusion admitted. We answered the Possibilists therefore that we could not agree to these terms, and in the evening received an answer from them in return breaking off the

negociations for good and all.

We had thus wasted two whole days in discussing a matter which in the opinion of the delegates of the Socialist League ought never to have been discussed at all, since our Congress was open even at the last moment to the delegates of any genuine working-men's association, so that there was nothing to prevent any one from joining us who felt friendly towards us. And furthermore, the plain truth is that real union between the two French sections was impossible, and an artificial union would have produced worse quarrels, and have prevented any profitable discussion to say the least of it.

On Wednesday morning, with this matter of the fusion hanging unsettled over us, began the reading of the reports, Bebel leading off for Germany. These have lasted all to-day; but as we shall go to press before an account of the end of the Congress could be given, I

will leave these for the present.

Our comrades should understand that whatever is said in the Con gress, whether French, German, or English, has to be translated doubly; and the translations seemed on the whole to be very well Mrs. Aveling acted as translator between German and E and English; Vollmar did the German part: the translators had their difficult task made more difficult by the buzz of conversation which arose as soon as the original speaker ended.

The earnestness and enthusiasm of the delegates was very impressive, and seems to have made some impression even on bourgeois observers; and whatever eagerness there was in debate, we all met out of debate with great friendliness and goodwill. A great many of the delegates have continually found themselves sitting at the same table for the meal after the session in the pleasantest and most fraternal manner in the cheaper restaurants round about the place of

I am sorry to say that I must finish this letter with mentioning a disagreeable affair, on which it is impossible to be wholly silent. the discussion which took place in the Possibilist Congress anent the fusion, Mrs. Besant allowed herself to say that the English delegates at our Congress represented nothing but themselves. consequence offered our comrades here to give them every opportunity for the fullest scrutiny of our mandates; but it is quite clear that we owe no account of ourselves to a Congress for which we have received no mandate. WILLIAM MORRIS.

Thursday, July 18th, 1889.

(To be concluded.)

## "BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION."

In conversation the other day, a friend, who has a good deal of sympathy with Socialism, said, "One of the most difficult things you will have to deal with under Socialism will be the corruption of the The remark arose out of a talk about different forms of corruption and bribery which flourish under the present system; and as this difficulty may be presenting itself to others, it will be worth while to compare the two, and see whether Socialism or the present competitive system would be the more likely to foster corruption, assuming for the present that anything like "officials" as we know them would exist under Socialism.

It will be well first to give some examples that have either come under my own observation or have come direct to me from those The first case is in the wood line. When a railway is fresh cut a large amount of wood fencing is required; this is let out by contract to the makers, and is put up by men employed by the contractors for the railway, and will have to be to the satisfaction of the inspecting engineer. My friend (a manufacturer of this fencing) described to me how he and another man, who had contracted to supply something else, went with the engineer to inspect a portion of Now, inspecting rough wood fencing, as may easily be imagined, is not a difficult operation, but it is one the result of which will very largely depend upon the humour in which the engineer happens to be; if he was in a bad humour he could easily condemn every piece of wood that looked at all as if it had a flaw in it, while if he was in a good humour he would condemn nothing that was really fit for the work. So that, even with an inspector who is too honest to be bribed into passing really bad work, there is a large margin for him to be worked upon by the maker of fencing. In this case the two contractors whose work he was going to inspect made it as easy as possible for him, first by providing a carriage and pair to take him to