

THE COMMONWEAL

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1889.

WEEKLY; ONE PENNY.

CHICAGO MURDERS & BLOODY SUNDAY.

“Let the voice of the people be heard.”—Parsons.

A MEETING to celebrate the Anniversary of above events will be held on Monday evening, November 11th, at

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE.

The following comrades will speak:—James Blackwell, Frank Kitz, Peter Kropotkin, C. W. Mowbray, Wm. Morris, D. J. Nicoll, H. H. Sparling, John Turner, and Lothrop Withington

Eleanor Aveling, G. Brocher, F. Fregenbaum, Dr. Merlino, and S. Stepniak have also been invited, but have not yet replied.

John Burns was invited, but is engaged for Cardiff on the date of meeting. Mrs. Wilson has been compelled to decline the invitation through ill-health and absence from England.

Revolutionary songs will be sung during the evening, including the *Marseillaise*, *Carmagnole*, *Linnell's Death Song*, *When the People have their Own Again*, and *Annie Laurie*. Choir will practice at Hammer-smith on Thursdays, October 24th and 31st, and November 7th; at 13, Farringdon Road, on Tuesdays, October 29th and November 5th. No member of the choir who has neglected to attend these rehearsals will be eligible to sing on the night of meeting.

All willing to assist are asked to give or send their names to the Secretary of Committee on Arrangements.

By order of the Committee, H. HALLIDAY SPARLING, Sec.
13, Farringdon Road, E.C.

NOTES ON NEWS.

THE last few elections, though they prove little in themselves, yet taken with other symptoms seem to show that, unless something very startlingly unexpected happens, the Gladstonites will have a majority in the next Parliament, and even make it probable that there will be a dissolution before long. The fact is that the swing of the pendulum is operating; the promise of performance of the old government has died out; they have pretty much exhausted their powers of pretentious do-nothing plus coercion, and people are beginning to think, “Now let us have a general election, and give the other fellows a turn.”

Well, so be it! We shall weep dry-eyed for the Tories; who, to speak shortly, are always and everywhere our declared and deadly enemies, and who include no section that can be of any use to us except as stimulating revolt by their stupid reactionism. Let us hope that no single Socialist and no group of workers will be taken in by the game of the Tory Democrats and their coquetting with one side of Social Democracy, or State Socialism, whichever you may please to call it. The Irish prisons show us pretty well what the meaning of Tory State Socialism really is. Let us remember that it can never go further than this—the bettering of one or more groups of workmen at the expense of other groups, the whole to be paid for by votes at the next election; which votes will, of course, be used for coercion in some form or other.

At the same time I don't see how we can throw up our hats very high for the advent of the Liberals to power. All we can hope of them is that they will be forced to clear away the Irish matter for awhile; though no doubt they, as well as the Tories, would be glad enough if they could keep on lugging it backwards and forwards as a convenient red herring across the trail of the welfare of the workers.

But when they have done that, what next? Will they even be near adopting the programme of the Socialist Radicals? which itself means nothing unless it is at once going to become real Socialism. It

is pretty clear that they cannot turn themselves into incipient Socialists. It will be the old story: a few more Radicals more advanced than earlier Radicals were, but quite powerless in Parliament; a great accession to the strength of the Whigs, who as soon as the crisis is over will turn their minds to becoming more Tory than the Tories themselves.

This is the regular history of party government in England. A Tory government with a Whig opposition, backed by a Radical revolt according to the ideas of Radicalism current at the time. The Radicals (as notably now the Socialist Radicals) make a great stir, and begin to move popular public opinion. They get the Whigs in, and these, when in, kick the Radicals to the devil, where they may do what they can.

This is quite sure to happen once more. Let us hope that it will be a dangerous game for the Whigs this time, and that *after* the kick, since they won't do it before, the Socialist Radicals will drop the latter end of their name, which means nothing, and become real Socialists looking forward to revolution as the only possible true change, and relegating the phrase “Parliamentary reform” to Mr. Murray's new dictionary of the English language. W. M.

The fears we expressed last week as to the action of the County Council on the licensing of music-halls have not been realised. By a majority which was not far from a clear two-thirds they have rejected the proposals of the Licensing Committee and refused to embark on the system of puritanical tyranny which that committee had planned out for them. The minority made, of course, a great noise and angrily contested every inch of ground, but suffered all the same from the most galling reverse, the most crushing defeat they have ever met. Like all beaten reactionaries, as they lost ground they lost temper; and with their tempers lost everything. Were it not for the good it has wrought it would have been pitiable, this utter discomfiture of theirs.

It does not matter much to us as Socialists, perhaps, to any very great degree, whether this or that music-hall shall have a license or no. But it does matter very much to us indeed whether a puritanical tyranny, an entirely reactionary and oppressive censorship, shall be established among us. The men who shriek and rave now about a “blue” line in a music-hall song or a little too lofty kick on the part of a dancer, would be just as ready, if they got the power, to exercise it in suppressing free speech as in “putting down indecency.” And those who are now so ready to hunt the poor whores off the streets and drive them into the workhouse, the river, or the prison—or, deeper misery still, into their terrible “refuges” and “charitable homes”—would be just as willing to stone a Socialist or Atheist or any other rebel against their conventional respectability whenever they got the chance of doing so.

Sir Charles Russell rose above the advocate as he touched on this in a few masterly sentences. Mr. Nathan Robinson and the Rev. H. B. Chapman made stirring and impressive appeals to the Council on the side of the unfortunate women; Mr. Thornton declared that even prostitutes were citizens and had rights as such; and John Burns, speaking “as one of the class from which most of them were drawn,” made a plain and telling statement of the conditions which produce them, and demanded that the root causes be struck at and not the unhappy products be persecuted.

On the other side, Mr. Charrington spoke with such virulence, such blind and bigotted intolerance, that one could almost believe in the Whitechapel murder-fiend being such another as he. Like him, but not quite so bitter, was the Rev. Fleming (“Fog-horn”) Williams. Both of these, pretended followers of the man before whom was brought the woman taken in adultery, spoke with a fury that reminded one of the old-time zealots who burnt and racked and tortured men and women “for the glory of God and the good of their own souls.” A fury which was only less hateful than the smug hypocrisy and pretended moderation of the notorious Mr. McDougall.