

EDITORIAL

## THE IMPEACHMENT OF SULZER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A** GREAT event is on the stage at Albany. The title given it is “The Impeachment of the Governor of the Empire State.” The title is misleadingly inadequate. It should be merely a sub-title. The event records vastly more pregnant matter than the title denotes.

A regulation politicians’ shindy had been going on between Tammany Hall and William Sulzer since the latter’s inauguration as Governor. The contending parties manoeuvred for position with an eye to the immediately following elections. The trenches thrown up by the Governor were not ill chosen: they ran along the lines of State-wide primaries: the success of the manoeuvre would strip the Tammany-ruled State Conventions of the despotic power that they, in common with all other purely political party conventions, enjoy of dictating the ticket to the unorganized but by far more numerous supporters of such parties at the hustings. Tammany realized the danger to itself, and, characteristically, threw up its trenches along the lines of mystification—the alleged sacro-sanctness of conventions.

In the struggle, Tammany had the advantage: it owned the Legislature: it voted down the Sulzer primary propositions, and when the Governor called the Legislature in special session to re-consider the bill, the Legislature re-voted it down. So far Tammany held the fort, with what looked like an impregnable position. The Governor flanked the same.

There is an election for Assemblymen this November; next year Senators also are to be elected. The agitation, conducted in the meanwhile in favor of the State-wide primary, might, or might not, wrench the Legislature from Tammany; scandalous disclosures, however, of Tammany corruption in State Departments surely would. The Governor moved in that direction. The Moreland act of recent enactment

afforded a handy means to this end. The act authorizes the Executive to institute special investigations of State Departments. Accordingly, while the Tammany Legislature was investigating the Governor, the Governor started a back-fire investigation by appointing his principal lieutenant, John A. Hennessey, to investigate the newly established and Tammany-run Department of Efficiency and Economy. To raise the lid from that Department was a thrust aimed at Tammany's vitals. How avert it?

William Sulzer is no better than the run of politicians, perhaps worse than some; moreover he is an intellectual feather-weight. All that notwithstanding, that he should have committed, so scatter-brainedly, the acts of corruption that he is charged with by the Frawley (Tammany) Committee is, while not impossible, yet unlikely. The suspicion that the Frawley disclosures are fraudulent half-truths receives strong confirmation from the records of the Tammany legislators and placemen at Albany, some of whom have convict records.

What, then, can the purpose of these gentry be in starting impeachment proceedings that, in all likelihood, will fall through, and bring only ridicule and disgrace to the impeachers? The answer is found in the interpretation that the leaders of the impeachment move put upon certain clauses of the State Constitution.

According to their interpretation, the mere act of impeaching the Governor suspends him; vacates his seat, permanently, if he is convicted, or temporarily, if acquitted. The immediate consequence of this interpretation would be the immediate occupation of the gubernatorial chair by the Tammany Lieutenant-Governor, Martin H. Glynn; and, in the intoxication of their glee, some of the indiscreeter Tammany impeachers have allowed their interpretation's further and rapidly-to-follow consequences to leak out—first, the recommendation to the Legislature by the then Gov. Glynn that it repeal the Moreland act; secondly, the immediate and glad acquiescence by the Legislature; and, last not least, indeed, the real purpose in mind, the dropping of investigator Hennessey's head into the basket. The Moreland act being out of the way, the Governor's acquittal and re-installation, tho' not desirable, would be immaterial—Hennessey's investigating head could not be restored to him, and the lid will remain tight on the Department of Efficiency and Economy. In short, the solemn machinery of impeachment is put in motion, not in order to

cleanse the gubernatorial chair, but to side-track the incumbent long enough to enable the Lieut. Governor, in conjunction with the Legislature, to strike off the statute book an act by virtue of which light threatens a peculiarly dark corner of Tammany.

Nor yet is the event at Albany unveiled in all its instructive fullness.

The present Constitution of the State is the handiwork of the State's and the Nation's leading lawyers. Joseph H. Choate, since then American Ambassador to Great Britain, was a member of the Constitutional Convention that framed the present constitution; Elihu Root, since then Federal Secretary of State and now senior Senator from New York, was its chairman. And yet, a Convention largely composed of such legal luminaries in the bourgeois firmament of the land framed a State Constitution whose knock-kneed clauses are giving room for the spectacle of two Governors sitting simultaneously and at once at Albany—one, agreeable to one interpretation, the Tammany; the other agreeable to another interpretation, the anti-Tammany; either interpretation being plausible.

The impeachment of a Governor, even of the Governor of the Empire State, need not necessarily be matter of much importance to the Socialist, or the Working Class in general. The impeachment might be the result of one of the numerous clashes of political opinion, pushed to an acute stage by the scorching breath of bourgeois competition. The impeachment might even disclose bourgeois corruption; but that would furnish only cumulative evidence of what already is superabundantly known by everybody. That which does deeply interest the Socialist in the event at Albany, and raises the same to the dignity of an Event, is the spectacle and proof of the Political State on the rocks—the Empire State, as becomes her pre-eminence, furnishing the stage.

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Uploaded January 2016

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