Starting the Anti-Poverty Society

Chickering Hall Crowded to its Doors to Hear Dr. M'Glynn's Expositions of His Life Work

Chickering Hall held even a larger crowd last night to hear Dr. McGlynn than it held that night last Fall when he spoke in the George campaign. The people were of all classes. There were the Irish working girl and the more fortunate aristocratic maid, each with an escort, the one ungloved and the other gloved; there were the salaried clerk and the incomed merchant; the professional man and the day labourer; the Catholic, the Jew, and the Protestant; the very old and the very young. There were, by far, more women than men. St. Stephen's parish was on hand in full force, and it was no gathering of unknown faces that the deposed Rector smiled down upon. Before 8 o'clock, not a seat was to be had, and after that time, hundreds were turned away for lack of standing room.

It was the christening feast of the "Anti-Poverty Society" that called the people together. A blank application for membership in the organization was given to each person. The applicant signed a creed declaring that it was time to fight the conditions causing poverty and announcing the society's object to be "to spread, by such peaceful and lawful means as may be found most desirable and efficient, a knowledge of the truth that God has made ample provision for the needs of all men during their residence upon earth, and that poverty is the result of the human laws that allow individuals to claim as private property that which the Creator has provided for the use of all."

A chorus of Dr. McGlynn's friends sat on the stage and helped the big organ fill the hall with the melodies of a hymn, and then Henry George advanced from the central seat in the platform. "This society," he said, "was built up to fight the social crime of poverty. I invite all men and women to join. We do not propose to start a church. There are churches enough in the community. No orthodox Catholics, no orthodox Jews, no orthodox Episcopalians --" and the rest of that sentence was smothered in a whirlwind of cheering applause. Off in one corner of the stage Dr. McGlynn was seen approaching. The crowd rose to their tip toes, and shouted and
stamped and waved their hats and handkerchiefs. A woman on one of the front seats almost went into hysterics. For five minutes the din was kept up, and then Mr. George was allowed to go on.

"If Archbishop Corrigan would enter our society," he said, "he would be welcome [Hisses.] We don't want to praise God, but we do want to work for God. We want to arouse the religious sentiment of the community to do something for the suffering of the poor. We want to strike at the very root; we want to procure for everybody the opportunity to develop himself. The church has gone so far as to condemn and persecute the poor. So far from trying to obliterate poverty they condemn and persecute the men who fight against it." [Cheers and applause for McGlynn.]

Then Mr. George explained that by sending an application for membership and $1 for initiation fee to Benjamin Urner, Treasurer, 6 Harrison Street, New-York, anybody can be enrolled. No assessments will be made, though contributions will be welcome. The money will be used to hire halls, to print and distribute tracts in the propagation of the faith. A collection of applications was then taken up. There were 63 in all.

"I need not introduce Dr. McGlynn," said Mr. George; "I will merely announce him." Again the audience stood up and went almost frantic. When they were still Dr. McGlynn said:

"I am intensely conscious that we stand here tonight upon a historic platform. Those who were the first to form the Anti-Poverty Society will some day later than this bless as exceedingly precious the little bits of paper that show that they were the first to put this society into being, and you will be pleased in later years to tell your children and your children's children how you met here tonight. It is not amiss that I should stand here tonight, a priest of the church, to help the cause that shall diminish poverty." [Applause.] The "Progress and Poverty" argument as to the early condition of man, his right to the land in common, were next set forth, and the conclusion argued that the spirit of the creation is that if all men are the children of God the Father, then they are all brothers of one family. "And in the nature of things," added Dr. McGlynn, "it must be admitted that if God is a father then He is not a stepfather." [Laughter.]
Here are some of the things that brought out applause:

"As the heaven of heavens is the Lord's, so has He given the earth to the children of men."

"The teacher, the minister, I care not of what church, who would rob man of what God has given him, is a sacrilegious thief. Their acts are much worse if done in the livery of God."

"They create an artificial scarcity of land by fencing it in and letting no man use it when they themselves are not using it. So originates the low condition of the masses. It is as much the result of stupidity as cupidity."

"And men living in marble palaces, clothed in purple and fine linen, as guilty as Dives was, find it in their hearts to condemn the priests of the people who are preaching the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Men who call themselves representatives of Him who loved the poor, preachers of the Christ, find it in their hearts to tell us that we are sinning against God, [laughter,] that we are breaking that command which says, 'Thou shalt not steal;' that we are invading the sacred rights of property when we priests take it into our hearts to say to the land robbers 'this thing must stop; you shall steal no longer.' "

"We are attracted to this work by the religion that is in it. This movement has brought many men back to God."

"We hear nothing from the ministers of the church, because they dare not. And those who did preach this doctrine are not allowed to preach anything now. To preach the truth is the only salvation of the church."

"Some say to me: 'Is it true, Father McGlynn, that you are going to start a church?' No. 'Are you going to turn Protestant?' No. 'Are you going to preach against the Pope?' No, I am for the Pope. 'And why are you not in a Catholic church?' Because they won't let me. 'And why are you not saying masses?' Because they won't let me. 'And why is all this?' Because somebody made a mistake."

"The doctrine was never examined in Rome. It has not been condemned. It can't be
"But, come what may, I am and ever will be a Catholic priest."

"This blessed Sunday morning I knelt at a Catholic altar to receive the holy sacrament of the body of Christ, and I hope to do the same thing tomorrow. And I asked Him to bless His ministry in which I am now engaged, and to make wise my mind and to give strength to my tongue when I should stand on this platform that I might teach nothing that God himself has not taught."

"True religion has nothing in it contrary to national greatness. Religion never will be right till we reconquer the world with the same weapons with which it once conquered so much of it. Religion never will be right till we see a Democratic Pope walking down Broadway with a stovepipe hat, in a frock coat, and with an umbrella under his arm. And in my opinion he will be the greatest of the Popes, and instead of being carried on men's arms he will have the joke on them, for they will carry him in their hearts."