

MR. GEORGE'S LECTURE.

PROPERTY IN LAND NOT RIGHT—A STRUGGLE FOR ITS ABOLITION.

Mr. Henry George, the author of "Progress and Poverty," spoke last evening to an attentive audience at Chickering Hall, on the subject of the "Next Great Struggle," which, he conceives, will be a conflict for the abolition of private property in land. He was introduced by Mr. F. B. Thurber, who read the declaration of the National Board of Trade as to the monopoly of the great forces of steam and electricity by powerful corporations, and repeated some lines from the ballad of the "Under Dog in the Fight." He had noticed, he said, in the published utterances of Mr. George, whom he only slightly knew, a peculiar sympathy with the masses of the people in their struggles. Mr. George began his lecture by citing the case of the San Francisco editor, one of whose axioms was that to write well upon a subject one should not know a great deal about it. There was some truth, he said, in that observation. What one knew a great deal about and had thought long upon, was difficult of condensation, and grew in the mind until each department of it would furnish the materials for a lecture. He was going to speak upon a subject that he had thought long and deeply upon, and he could only drop hints here and there, that would furnish landmarks for the thinking of his audience. To put everything he should say into clear and logical sequence would be impossible. There were those who never saw a revolution till it was upon them. These were they who, having eyes, would not see what was directly before them; and it was perhaps true that the greater proportion belonged to this class. None, however, could fail to discern some signs of a great movement impending. There was general disquiet: a deepening sense of wrong pervading the masses. In France, the martyrs of the Commune had just been recalled from tropical prisons; in Germany, the Socialistic propaganda was making its way against every device of the man of blood and iron who sought to crush the movement; the bomb that slew the Russian Czar startled the world. Every King trembled with the concussion. In England a Prime Minister, who began life as a Tory, had just brought in a bill that a few years ago would have been regarded as revolutionary, but did not now satisfy the advanced thinkers of his party. Everywhere, groping beneath the surface, showing itself in vague aspirations, the masses appeared to be realizing the central truth of the equality of man.

Mr. George contended that it made no difference what the form of government was to the working man if the institutions under which he existed were such as to make it easy and comfortable for him to make a living. The worst despotism in the world was that of poverty; the worst tyranny that of want. Political liberty was utterly impossible where the mass of the people could not make an easy living. Given a community in which wealth was so unequally divided that a few had large fortunes, while the mass of men were steeped in poverty, and the very extension of suffrage gave one advantage to demagogues by creating a class to whom a few dollars on election day outweighed all abstract considerations. He would say it deliberately, he regarded our great American experiment in free government as a failure. Our system of representative institutions had already broken down. Did the people of New York imagine that they governed themselves? For years it was Boss Tweed who ruled. When he was driven out another boss succeeded him. "You pretend to govern yourselves?" asked the lecturer indignantly. "Why, in Moscow, or St. Petersburg, or Constantinople, such a row about the condition of the streets could not have been made without producing some result."

Mr. George next came to the question whether the condition of the masses was actually improving under the application of labor-saving contrivances, and then to the land question and the abolition of private ownership, which he considered the fundamental political issue of the future. If men were to be slaves they must be educated as slaves; their religion must be that of slaves. There was at present no great thinker living, Mr. George said, who claimed that property in land was right. Herbert Spencer was outspoken in his rejection, and even Carlyle could find no defense for it. There was such a thing as property in what man's muscle produced, but did man's muscle produce land? Who could show a title to the soil derived from the producer of it! He contended that until this question was settled all reforms would come to naught, because their benefits would be appropriated by the landlords; rents would be raised and that was all. He believed the Irish land agitation had done great good in setting on foot the discussion of this question.