

## A VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE first meeting of the most ambitious society the world has ever seen, was held on Sunday night in Chickering Hall—we mean the “Anti-Poverty Society.” The object of this society is not to diminish poverty, or to console those who suffer from it with the promise of better things in a future life, but, to use the words of Dr. McGlynn, who was the principal speaker, “to pluck out the very heart of the hated thing—not to coddle it by plaster or poultice, but to reach to the basis which is the perennial and fruitful parent of that horrid poverty resulting from the injustice of man in violating the laws of God.”

The metaphors here are a little mixed, but there is no rhetorical fault which may not be pardoned to a man who is announcing such a change in the near future as the disappearance of poverty. This would really be the most tremendous change seen since the appearance of the human race on this globe, for during the whole of that period, as at this moment, the great mass of mankind has lived and died in poverty—that is, has been able by hard labor to extract little more than a bare living from the soil. This is true of all countries and all ages, under all systems of land tenure and all systems of government. There are countries, and there have been ages, in which men were less poor and more contented than in others, but in all countries and all ages most men are more or less poor and more or less discontented. This is true of the people of Europe, of Asia, Africa and America. In all of them poverty has probably the same cause, whether it be, as we think, the niggardliness of nature, or, as Dr. McGlynn thinks, the injustice of man. In other words, whatever may be the cause of poverty, it is something tremendous in its power, and extent, and duration. The Society, therefore, which undertakes the speedy squelching or removing of this cause is a glorious society. If it succeeds without deceiving anybody, or obtaining money or goods from anybody on false pretences, its founders will take the place in human memory and imagination now occupied by all the prophets, apostles, saints, and sages of every age and clime. To say they will become famous would be ridiculous. Their position towards the human race will more nearly resemble that once occupied by the Greek and Roman divinities than that which the modern world has been in the habit of assigning to mortals, however illustrious. McGlynn and George will, in other words, if the Society succeeds, most certainly be worshipped as deities. Nothing the Positivists or Agnostics can say will prevent it. Halls dedicated to them and in which they will receive divine honors will spring up all over the country, and Chickering Hall will be put under glass and kept for pilgrims from all parts of the globe as the sacred spot from which the decree went forth which put an end to the greatest and most constant of human ills.

We are not ourselves, however, very sanguine about the matter, because Dr. McGlynn already seems to us to profess to know a great deal more of the intentions of the Almighty than the facts quite warrant. He

said, for instance, apparently from his own knowledge, that “God cannot have sent the great mass of His children into this world to be cursed for ever with misery and poverty.” Now, we do not ourselves know what the future of the race is to be. We trust it will be far happier than the past has been; but we are sure there is something wrong about Dr. McGlynn’s deductions from the fatherhood of God. His argument is, that as God is our father, he cannot have intended any of us to be poor and miserable. But the fact is that the great bulk of us have been poor, miserable, and ignorant for countless ages, and are so still. Why this should be, we no more know than why man was sent on this planet at all. But Dr. McGlynn knows no more about it than we do. If his argument be good for anything with regard to the future, it ought to be good with regard to the past. But with regard to the past we know it to be as vain and empty as the ring of a brass farthing. God, in other words, has not governed the world on the McGlynn plan, and there is no reason to suppose that He will govern it hereafter on any plan recommended by McGlynn. He takes no account of resolutions passed in halls or even of popular majorities. In India, within our own time, where the land is all held on the George plan—that is, owned by the State and rented to the cultivators—hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have perished miserably of famine, not through the injustice of men, but through drought. How is this to be explained on the McGlynn theory? Why did the earth not bring forth her fruits for these innocent peasants, and prevent the awful misery of a great famine? Why did earthquakes and volcanoes lay waste thousands of square miles in the Spice Islands a few years ago, and the overflow of the lower Ganges drown tens of thousands? We do not know, and the man who says *he* knows, and tries to get simple people to *act* on his information in the management of their lives, is undoubtedly either a deluded person or a charlatan.

What is most melancholy, however, about such oratory as Dr. McGlynn’s and Henry George’s is, not simply that they are trying to persuade ignorant people that their land scheme is divine in its origin, and would banish poverty, but that it can be successfully carried into execution by human agency; or, in other words, that we have the talent and capacity at command for the management of the whole continent as Government property, with such justice, honesty, intelligence, and foresight that no man shall be poor or unhappy. They do this, too, in full view of the result of poor Powderly’s much less ambitious attempt to regulate the affairs of a few hundred thousand wage-earners, in different parts of the country. Powderly is really a man of very moderate abilities, little education, and apparently a poor physique; but he nevertheless undertook to create an organization which should solve the “labor problem” on this continent, and which he was to direct for the ridiculously low salary of \$5,000 a year. He has only been two or three years in full work in his new post; and although he has never come anywhere near success, he is already crying out to his followers to

have mercy on him. His wail, printed in the morning papers, is, when one considers what the man undertook, as ludicrous as anything in comic literature. He complains of the number of letters he receives, and implores people not to write to him or send him invitations to lecture. His strength, he says, will not stand the strain, and he “must have relief from unnecessary labor.” But he has no right to ask for relief. Anybody who undertakes to tell all the trades in the United States how to manage their business, and all capitalists how to spend their money, is not entitled to relaxation.

## TRUSTS AND CONFIDENCES.

THE public are hardly aware of the magnitude of the power growing up among them under the name of “Trusts.” We are all familiar with corporations. We know where to find them. We know what their powers are. We can call them to account. The shareholders can inspect their books and in some cases understand them. They are the creatures of law and are subject to its limitations. These have been defined by judicial decisions extending over hundreds of years, so that anybody who takes the trouble can learn to a nicety what any corporation can do, and what it cannot. Nearly all corporations, for instance, have a limited capital and a limited debt, neither of which can be exceeded without express public authority. So, also, they are limited as to the nature of their undertakings. A railroad company cannot engage in manufacturing or general trading without express authority. A manufacturing company cannot engage in navigation, or banking, or publishing newspapers, or supplying gas to cities, or speculating in land or in stocks, or in any trade not specified in its charter. These limitations are in the interest of the shareholders as well as of the public. They are grounded in reason, and they form the substratum of corporate existence everywhere.

The “trust” is the sphinx of corporations, except that it is not a corporation at all. It may own and control many corporations, but it is bound by no law. There are no limitations upon it, not even those of time and space. Neither the public nor the shareholders can call it to account. It has no fixed abode, no place of meeting, no books of account that anybody can demand access to. It may engage in any kind of business or in many different kinds at once. It is irresponsible to the last degree. It may dissipate the capital confided to it without danger to anybody except the confiding investors. It may oppress the public without fear of the State because there is nothing for the State to lay hold of. Although it calls itself a trust, it is as far as possible from being such. There is a body of law applicable to trusts, but there is no law applicable to “the trust.” It should be called a Confidence, since it has no similitude to anything known to the law as a trust.

What is meant by a trust in the present acceptance of the term, as, Standard Oil Trust, Cotton Oil Trust, Gas Trust, etc., is this: Certain persons conceive the idea of buying up all the machinery and tools in the country ap-

plied to the production of some staple article. They call themselves a trust, and invite the public to subscribe money to carry the plan into effect. They also invite the producers of the article to put their establishments into the trust, representing that thus competition can be controlled. They have no act of incorporation. They could not get one if they wanted it, and they do not want it. They get a certain number of producers with their plant into the trust and a certain amount of money into the treasury. Then they begin to force the other producers to come in by employing their heavy capital to crush them if they do not. The Standard Oil Trust had, as is well known, the cooperation of the railroads to help them to crush out rival refiners and dealers; but such assistance cannot be reckoned on hereafter if the Commerce Act remains in force.

It is a matter for surprise that the public are willing to put their money and property thus into the hands of irresponsible persons beyond the safeguards of law. That they will do so is shown clearly enough by the rapid growth of the Cotton Oil Trust. The Standard Oil Trust is a slower growth, but a much more formidable one. It has "blazed the way" for all the others, and has excited the investing public with a vision of equally large profits to be derived from the magical name of trusts. It has kindled a new form of madness in the speculating public, such as the South Sea Company bred after its kind in London a century and a half ago. There is nothing in the history of the "bubble companies" more absurd than the present eagerness of the public to put their money in places where they can never control it again, or learn anything about it more than the "trust" chooses to tell them. Most of those who throw their money into these confidences will lose it. They certainly ought to. They will lose it not because the managers are dishonest—so far as we know anything about them, they are not—but because they are striving after the unattainable. They are striving to circumvent the law of competition over the whole of a vast continent.

The Standard Oil Trust has accomplished this end for the time being, but the Standard Oil Trust will be put to death somehow and some time, most probably by its own vaulting ambition. Having secured its oil monopoly, it is now reaching out in many different directions after other things—railroads in Virginia, steam-heating works in New York, gas wells in Pennsylvania and Ohio, etc. It may have cattle ranches in Montana, and cotton presses in Texas, and salmon canneries in Oregon for aught that anybody knows. But whether it comes to an end one way or another, it is certain that the American people will not allow themselves to be bound and strangled, like a blind Samson or an aged Laocöon, by a lot of new-fangled monopolies calling themselves trusts. A way will be found to get rid of them, and it will be a lawful way. Meanwhile we counsel the investing public to give them a wide berth.

#### "THE MUGWUMP IDEA."

THE Nashville (Tenn.) *American*, a Democratic journal of ability and force, is impatient

at our recent suggestion that the Administration cannot afford, at this stage in its history, to permit the use of the offices merely as patronage, and our criticism of dismissals of Republicans for purely political reasons. The *American* makes a serious blunder, however, in stating the ground of this criticism. "The Mugwump idea of civil-service reform," it says, "is to keep all Republicans in office and fill all the vacancies with Republicans."

The misconception of the Mugwump position here shown is so radical that it seems worth while to restate it correctly. To do so requires the change of only a very few words in the *American's* definition, which should read thus: The Mugwump idea of civil-service reform is to keep all faithful and competent incumbents in subordinate offices, and to fill all the vacancies with the best men who can be secured. It is understood, of course, that the small number of high offices whose incumbents necessarily have to do with the formulation or execution of a party policy are not here taken into account, since nobody disputes that a President should make changes in such offices.

It is always much easier to elucidate a principle by a few illustrations than by abstract reasoning, and we think we can make our meaning plain by referring to three or four concrete cases. Soon after Mr. Cleveland became President, the term of Mr. Henry G. Pearson as Postmaster of New York expired, and the question arose as to who should fill the office for the ensuing four years. The spoilsmen in the President's party urged that, as there was a Democratic President at Washington, there should be a Democratic Postmaster in New York, and that the President's duty was to order a competitive examination, open only to "party workers," and give the place to the applicant who could establish the strongest "claims." The Mugwump idea was that the incumbent, who had scrupulously kept out of politics and had made his office the model post office in the country, ought to be reappointed, on the simple ground that he could render the public better service than anybody else, and that the fact that he was personally a Republican in party predilections had nothing to do with the matter.

About a year later the term of the Brooklyn Postmaster expired. He had been an incompetent official, who had been given the place largely on sentimental grounds, because he had been a brave soldier and his wounds pleaded that he should be "taken care of" at the public expense. The Mugwump idea in this case was (it being assumed that the vacancy must be filled by a Democrat) that the Democrat should be selected, not who could present the strongest evidence that he deserved public reward for partisan service, or who could make out the strongest case that he needed the office because he could not earn a living in any other way, but who should appear most likely to give the Brooklyn public a businesslike administration of the office.

Since Mr. Cleveland was inaugurated, several notable cases have happened in Massachusetts where the terms of postmasters expired who had been Republicans, but not offensive partisans,

and who had conducted their offices upon business principles. The Mugwump idea in all such cases was that, these offices being purely institutions for conducting a branch of the public business, men who had proved their competency and had not been politically objectionable should be retained in charge. A case now pending in Roxbury, a suburban district of Boston, perfectly illustrates the Mugwump idea. The Post-office in Roxbury is a branch of the Boston office, and its superintendent is an old Union soldier, who began his postal service in the main office, and was promoted ten years ago to the charge of the Roxbury branch, where he has been for ten years. As an official, by universal consent, he has been quiet, gentlemanly, accommodating, and efficient in the highest degree. No complaint of failure in duty has ever been lodged against him; on the contrary, patrons of the office are enthusiastic in his praise. A Republican in party faith, he has scrupulously kept the office out of politics, and no Democrat ever found cause of grievance against him for any display of partisanship. The Mugwump idea is that such a man should be retained as head of the Roxbury office just as long as he can be had. The spoilsman's idea, on the other hand, is that he should forfeit his place to some Democrat, because he is a Republican in party faith, while there is a Democratic Administration at Washington, and a movement is now under way to secure his removal solely and avowedly upon this ground.

A case which has just come to the surface in Illinois still more pointedly illustrates the Mugwump idea by presenting the perfect flower of the opposite theory. The Post-office at Rochelle fell vacant, and it was filled in accordance with the spoils principle. The boss of the Democratic organization in that region is one McNamara, and, by virtue of that fact, McNamara was held to be the man who should dictate the choice of Postmaster at Rochelle. He recommended and thus secured the nomination of a man named Gardner, as his first choice. But Gardner turned out to be the proprietor of gin-mills in three or four places, and to have been indicted for violating the liquor law, while a fresh indictment for the same offence was found when his name was before the Senate, and it had to be withdrawn. Although thus deprived of the salary himself, Gardner resolved to make something out of the office, and he offered to get the place for one Taylor, demanding \$600. Taylor was willing only to pay \$300, and a contract was drawn up on that basis, a facsimile of which has been published and is not questioned. But there was a quarrel, the negotiations finally fell through, and Taylor forwarded his papers without McNamara's endorsement. The next development was the announcement that one Furlong, a clerk in a clothing-store, with no qualifications for the office, had been appointed, and, of course, everybody believes that he got the place because he would pay what McNamara demanded.

These illustrations are enough to show what the Mugwump idea about appointments really is, in contradistinction to the spoilsman's idea. But there is one other phase of the matter to which we call the especial attention of