

THE EVENING OF THE LECTURE.

The much-talked of time was fast approaching. Already the western forest hid the sun from the eyes of the villagers, but several hours had yet to elapse before the lecturer would occupy the platform. These were hours when all the excitement around was converging in the village. Notwithstanding the muddy roads and the unpropitious appearance of the clouds above, many loaded vehicles, dashing equestrians, and fatigued pedestrians, were continually arriving in the place. The streets, hotels, and nearly every accessible spot, soon exhibited scenes of bustle, that would compare favorably with those of Broadway. Never before had been seen there such a collection of the literary talent of the parts. Here were famous politicians, members and ex-members of parliament, doctors, lawyers, authors, editors and reporters, assembled together, each occasionally glancing at his time-piece, while engaged in some interesting conversation. An unsophisticated important-feeling Londoner, who had unceremoniously initiated himself into their society, might be heard to abruptly enquire, "'As the horator harrived yet, and 'ow soon will the doors be hopened?"

Equally well was the illiterate part of the community represented, from Mr. Jones, the unlearned grocer, down to Biddy, the kitchen-maid. All who had succeeded in raising the admittance fee, were garbed in their best, and were trying to put on "important airs." Young gents dressed in broad-cloth at their fathers' expense, were strutting about, puffing cigars. Barney McFadden and Jim O'Brien, who had imbibed freely of the "intoxicating cup," were about settling with blows a dispute relative to the pedigree of the orator; one asserting that his grandfather was born in Europe, and the other that he was an Irishman.

Mischievous urchins, who had never possessed a sixpence in their lives, were devising ways for eavesdropping. One proposed that they should place some boards against the back wall of the chapel, so that they could ascend directly in rear of the speaker. Others thought that the windows

were the best stations for hearing; but one, more thoughtful than the rest, convinced them that "honesty was the best policy;" and, therefore, they had better be honest boys, and grow up honest men, when they could easily earn enough to take them to hear whom they liked.

There were honest people in the vicinity, whom misfortune had visited, that were longing to go, but whose scanty means did not allow them the privilege. They would willingly have denied themselves any luxuries in living and dressing, and thus have saved enough to provide themselves with tickets, but anything beyond the actual necessities of life, they were unacquainted with. There was poor Mrs. Wickson, who knit till her fingers were sore, to lay by the necessary amount; but before this Saturday night came, she had been compelled to spend a little for this thing, and a little for that thing, and now she saw, to her utter despair, that she would be denied the "blessed" privilege of hearing the orator. And Johnson, the lame cobbler, and Wilson, the decrepit weaver, and Samson, the sickly hatter, and Mitchell, the unfortunate cooper, with a host of others, remained at home through straitened circumstances, though they did so with heavy hearts.

There were a few "sneering persons," who seldom thought of anything else but eating, drinking, and sleeping, that had procured tickets in order to ridicule the "sham affair," as they termed it. These were already holding indignation meetings, censuring themselves as fools for giving away their money for nought. They, however, were afterwards some of the very first to besiege the entrance of the chapel.

An hour before the time appointed for the lecture to begin, a crowd of people, made up of the different classes already mentioned, had assembled in front of the church. Some were pressed against the door, while the sexton within was begging them to be patient only a little longer, and they should gain a respectful admittance. After many entreaties on both sides, the door was finally unbolted, and the mass began to move in. Every seat was soon occupied, and then ensued the tedious task of "waiting for the orator to make his