

AN ORATOR IN A COUNTRY PLACE.

BY P. K. CLYNE, WALSINGHAM.

The village of T—y is situated on a fine stream of water, in rather a thinly-settled portion of the Province of Ontario. Being a considerable distance from the track of the "iron horse," its inhabitants, as might be expected, seldom enjoy anything very far beyond the ordinary, in the line of "intellectual feasts." It was not at all strange, then, that an announcement like the following should cause a general sensation in the village, and among the people of the surrounding country:—

"The Reverend Mr. Punshon, M.A., will deliver a lecture on Saturday, the 21st day of November. Tickets, seventy-five cents each, to be obtained at the principal stores."

WHAT THE PEOPLE SAID ABOUT IT.

For some days before the meeting, the principal topic of conversation in nearly every household for miles around, was the "lecture and the lecturer." A school-master of a rural section said that he had heard Mr. Punshon in the city once, when he was so carried away with his eloquence, that at one time he actually had to gasp for breath. Another person, a sapient merchant, who had travelled a great deal, and had patronised all the city orators of the day, asserted that he had heard *one* Canadian, at least, that "could beat the man from 'Old England' all out." But Mr. Punshon was a good speaker, and he meant to hear him again.

Some of the literary class of the community, who knew how the reverend gentleman was appreciated as an orator, at first could scarcely believe that his services had been secured. Could it be possible that he who would be greeted as one of the greatest of speakers in any city on the continent, would condescend to visit this out-of-the-way little village, to give to the inhabitants a treat having scarcely any prece-

dent? It was not long, however, before such incredulous persons were convinced that it was actually a fact, and they immediately made arrangements to attend on the evening appointed.

There were a few individuals, and such may be found in nearly any community, who denounced the thing as an "enormous speculation," and declared that they would not pay such a sum to hear any man. Others thought that their money would not be entirely lost if the lecture did not come up to their expectations, as the proceeds were to be applied towards the liquidation of the debt of the chapel, which place of worship was a credit to the village.

Even P. Finnigan, one who believed in his countryman, Mike O'Leary, the politician, as being the greatest orator on earth, actually put aside enough money to insure him an admittance; but his wife cruelly objected to his going, notwithstanding many weighty arguments were given by Pat in favor thereof. "And sure and you are detarmined to go," said Bridget to her husband on the Saturday evening before the lecture. "You had better lay your money out for tobacco that is naided in the house, for all the good it will be till yous," she continued. "Be aisy, Bridget," answered Pat, "I havn't the sowl to kape away when it's him that's comin' so far to give a bit of advice. According to the paper, sure the likes of him we can't hear every day, Bridget."

In many a cottage, fathers and mothers, with sons and daughters, were anticipating a glorious time. Even grandfather on his crutches caught a spark of the excitement and concluded that he, too, must hear the wonderful man speak. He was very doubtful, though, about understanding the language the orator must use, as his education was, unfortunately, very limited.