1887-05-09  Cheering Henry George

TALKING OF THE AIMS OF THE ANTI-POVERTY SOCIETY.

An audience that filled every available foot of sitting and standing room in the Academy of Music last night greeted Henry George when he stepped before the footlights. Many had come in expectation of welcoming the Rev. Dr. Curran, who had been announced to preside, but in this they were disappointed. Mr. George explained that after it was too late to give proper notice it was found that the arrangements of Sunday trains would not allow of Dr. Curran coming from Ellenville without neglect of his duties, and that Dr. McGlynn was in Boston. He proposed James Redpath for Chairman of the meeting, and the proposition and appearance of Mr. Redpath were greeted with loud applause. Mr. Redpath was not wholly recovered from his recent illness, and the duties of Chairman were therefore performed by Mr. George.

Mr. George, in his address, said that no great social revolution was ever accomplished that did not begin as a religious movement. This fight was for the abolition of poverty and to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The Anti-Poverty Society proposed to abolish poverty by creating more wealth. Their opponents had set up for themselves a God who rather liked poverty because it gave the rich an opportunity to display their charity. The Creator had not been niggardly, but the laws which discriminated against productive labor had caused an inequitable distribution of wealth. The society proposed to disturb no just right of property. The products of a man’s industry belonged to him by natural right. But who could claim a title to land coming from the God who made it? Until he can carry the title back to the Creator, showing that that field or lot or coal mine was made exclusively for him, then they had a right to assume that it was made for all. What was stealing? It was the taking of anything more than one needed to the detriment of others. The society did not propose to divide up property. “I wish we could get that through the heads of the editors of this city—we don’t propose to divide up land: we propose to divide up the rents that come from the land.” The society had a long and severe fight before it, but it would not waver in the contest.

Mr. George was frequently and loudly applauded. The general collection amounted to $335 61. and that of initiation fees to over $125.