

striking instance of the inadequacy of such an ideal, that in the end these mendicant orders, instead of affording any social uplift to the masses, became notorious for their wealth, and one of them became a leading force in the Inquisition. It was because ecclesiasticism was so anti-democratic that Luther himself, bound up as he still was with his early training as a monk, urged the nobles to cut down the peasants without mercy when they resorted to force in their revolt against oppression; so that German socialism to-day holds Luther guilty of the blood of a hundred thousand fallen;—which is one of the ironies of history.

THE PASSING OF THESE FORCES.

Now it can scarcely be denied that these various obstacles in the way of social advance have one by one passed away. That is a curious fact and probably a deeply significant one. Asceticism is to-day a mere echo of a former time. The monastery is an anachronism. The right of public agitation, the freedom of the press, an almost unlimited liberty of speech—these afford every opportunity for airing views as to social reconstruction. Protestantism has largely wrecked churchliness. Subtleties of theological discussion have given way to active steps towards church union. The age is practical as never before. 'Organization and Efficiency' is the watchword of the civilized world. And besides this, modern research has developed a separate science, sociology, whose exclusive aim is the betterment of men in their relations with one another. Is there any reason why the Church should not awake to her duty and fill her place as the operative, efficient agent in the transformation of society?

IV. THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL CRISIS.

The Christian Church, it may be, is awaking to a realization of the problem which she is called to face. But being the oldest organized institution in our society, she is quite as cautious and conservative as any; and in the matter of the social situation she is rather last than first in being aroused to it. She is assuredly not first in seeking a solution of the social problem. It is not till social questions are in the air, till they have permeated the popular consciousness, as evolution did a generation ago, that the Church as a church begins to take notice. The social problem is fundamental in the Zeitgeist of to-day.¹

THE PRESENT SITUATION.

Has the Church awakened too late? We have seen that it was committed by its Founder to the work of social reconstruction. We have seen that a series of historical causes have in succession proved effective barriers between the Church and her work. We have seen that those causes have been removed, so that the call of the Church seems clear. And now we see that the consciousness

¹Cf. the quotation from Peabody on the second page.