

## SOCIAL SECTION.

## THE SOCIAL PROBLEM.

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It was no less a thinker than Immanuel Kant who declared that he regarded as his best friend the man who robbed him of his dearest error and put despised truth in its place. Perhaps such a devotion to truth requires a philosophic spirit like that of the wise man of Königsberg. This at least is certain: when a crisis of greatest magnitude is undermining the old foundations and preparing for a new epoch of thought and life, multitudes of men who ought to be leaders are simply echoes of old and effete traditions, repeaters of a dogmatism which has lost its life and force, and advocates of systems which have had their day.

Lombroso puts the opposition to what is new among the popular diseases. Novelty attracts and may have the force of a new sensation; but the change of old habits and customs requires an energy which few possess. Hence conditions which have outlived themselves continue with a force almost irresistible, and worn-out methods are projected from the past into the present. There are times when wars and revolutions alone seem adequate to the changes needed. Some things which can not be bent may be broken.

For our era we demand peaceful evolution *versus* violent revolution. But we are obliged to reckon with large numbers of men in places of influence who merely drift or are shoved along mechanically, whose principles are ready-made by their class and environment, as a coat or a vest, and the grooves of whose life are determined by the average of popular morality and aspiration. It need not be said that for the leadership now required they are totally unfit. The man who would meet the requirements of the age must keep up with the age; he must move

with the rapid march of events; he must master the age which he seeks to affect and direct; he must think and act for himself, as God gives him light; and he may have to defy those in authority, as Jesus did the Scribes and Pharisees in His day.

Things are not finished, and finished men will be left behind. Especially in social matters is the development rapid and marvelous. Even in a single decade marked changes have been made. We are living in a crisis, peaceful in the main, but with deep agitations and with unmistakable forebodings of violent outbreaks. Open anarchists are not the most dangerous elements; the most dangerous men are those who cry peace when war is upon us, who try to smother calm and thorough investigation into social conditions which are a crime and can not be smothered, who apologize for evils which cry to heaven against their perpetrators, and who denounce all who dare to study frankly the diseases of the age, to diagnose them, and to apply the remedy.

In our crisis no hope can be placed in the unburied dead. On the other hand, they should not be stumbling-blocks in the way of the living. In the pulpit and the pew some are alive and awake—alert, with quick pulse, sensitive to social movements, their conscience unseared respecting the responsibilities of the age, and with a heart turned as sympathetically toward suffering humanity as it is devoutly to the Father in heaven.

To these men we say, "Be firm, be heroic." They have heard and heeded Christ's "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Our appeal to them is that they be not swerved from their purpose by men who, whatever their professions, are too much the votaries