

uninitiated as positive new light. Indeed, it is to be feared that occasionally new members of the great Masonic family are not unfrequently led by a natural curiosity to peruse publications bearing the attractive title: partly, no doubt, to see unfolded,—as they think,—in a popular form, further or varied narratives of the symbols, mysteries and ritual which has opened upon them in the successive steps of the wondrous work. Upon all such let us once for all endeavor to impress an important fact, namely: that all real knowledge of the Masonic art which ever has been, or can be furnished publicly, or in this popular form of narratives, treatises, allegories, or what not, has already been done fully, ably, together with the seal and token of absolute authenticity, and by authority from high accredited, legitimate, Masonic sources. Moreover, manuals, text-books of the Order, its very trestle-boards themselves, are hand-books of positive knowledge concerning Masonry. To all this must be added the frequent expositions running over the centuries since the invention of printing, in orations, occasional addresses, centennial celebrations, wherein learned and distinguished Freemasons have gathered into eloquent presentation the marvellous story of its antiquity, its progress, its very landmarks, its scope and accomplishments. Verily, can profane hands, instigated by that spirit of persecution which would bring to nought a love of independence, a lofty, heaven-guided aspiration; a spirit, which would smother the dearest longings of humanity, flying in the face of the most precious instincts of our common natures—can such a spirit, we say, be trusted for light upon an Institution whose purposes, open as the noon-day sun, have been hallowed by the intimate devotion and association of the purest men for ages?

We have been led to this topic from reading one of the most recent works of the "ready book compiler," entitled "The Secret Societies of all Ages and Countries," by Chas. Wm. Heckethorn, London, 1875. From the Magi to the Ku-Klux, the work of course is complete. Where single societies have engaged the patient, unrequited toil of noted antiquaries, our author has full returns, item upon item; political, civil and religious, all classes of secret societies which have made notable marks illustrative of curious phases in the conduct of men from remote ages, are at length and again laid bare. As no book of this sort can get on without seeking to gratify the traditional intensity of desire to peer more and more into Freemasonry, so the illustrious Order is complimented with a space occupying quite half the volume before us; and, what is noteworthy, whether it be the intention of the compiler or not, he seems to reckon much of its renowned symbolism an emanation from the best of all the other secret societies which he marshals to view.

The great body of this work is drawn from De Castro's History of the Secret World. All this, however, is immaterial, inasmuch as successive books purporting to give a history of secret societies are in nearly every case either a relash or a paraphrasing upon what has been before printed. The reflections in each part are apt to be the author's own; in the one before us we are are pleased at any rate to think so, and while he shoots wide, drawing with a long bow, in what he terms facts, but in what are really statements out of the whole cloth, we recognize justness in discrimination; as, for instance, where he declares that, "Every secret society is an act of reflection, therefore of conscience. For reflection accumulated and fixed is conscience. In so far, secret societies are, in a certain manner, the expression of conscience in history."

We have not space nor inclination to refute the tendency of such publications; they dwell upon points that have over and over again been set in their true light and value; and by an audacious assumption of premises wholly unwarrantable, infer conclusions prejudicial to the rights of all confidential associating for any purpose whatever. The closing chapter upon Freemasonry we read twice, taken by the minor headings, as well as by the proper desire to see what our author, who had dwelt in so many pages upon the career of the Order, could find in his breast to sum up with.

These headings are as follows: "Vain Pretensions of Freemasonry," "Vanity of Masonic Ceremonial," "Masonry Diffuses no Knowledge," "Masonry is Unfitted for the Task," "Decay of Freemasonry," and lastly, "Masonic Literature."

On these themes, without noticing obviously gratuitous charges, there are, here and there, considerations in which a loyal lover of the mystic may find suggestions worthy of thought. They are not necessarily attacks upon the principles of the Order or its peculiar organization, but on its mode of meeting the quickened beneficent impulses of the age.

Again, the author finds fault with the growth of the Order, in the view that unworthy admissions must occur, bringing with them all manner of wordliness.

Unwittingly, perhaps, but nevertheless the author in vain conceals under all his thoughts of criticism, the conviction in his own mind that the Order has had a great mission, and been powerfully instrumental for the promotion of human welfare. On the whole, this history of secret societies is entertaining and readable. It evidences painstaking, yea, erudition somewhere, and if the reader has the wit to separate the chaff from the wheat, may be read with profit.—*New England Freemason.*