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SECRET SOCIETIES.

AN opinion is becoming widely prevalent that the secret society business is considerably overdone, and there are well-informed persons in this city who do not hesitate to say that the influence of those societies is becoming decidedly pernicious, if not absolutely dangerous to the public weal.

Such remarks as these are made, not by cranks, or by those claiming to be suffering from chronic grievances, but by liberal-minded persons of the highest intelligence, who are not given to talking at random or making extraordinary charges without having facts to support them.

Direct testimony is of course very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain in such cases, but there is a large accumulation of circumstantial evidence which cannot be ignored, and which is being quietly collected with a view to ultimate publication.

We have recently had an opportunity of examining a considerable portion of this evidence, and we frankly confess that we have been more than a little surprised at some of the revelations which the examination has forced upon us. Very little of the testimony is of such a character as to be available before a legal tribunal, even if there were any means of bringing it to such a test. But much of it is of a kind to carry conviction to the mind of anyone who gives it serious and dispassionate consideration, and who has no object but to get at the plain truth. And if a tithe of what is alleged is susceptible of verification, it is high time for the community to awaken to the danger by which it is threatened.

It is said that persons who belong to secret societies exercise an altogether unjust discrimination as against outsiders in dealing with the business and social affairs of every-day life.

Some of the facts brought forward in support of this assertion are such that the conclusion forced upon the mind is simply irresistible. Specific instances are given, with names and dates, and a good deal of light is thrown upon certain contracts and public events which have hitherto been enveloped in an air of mystery.

It is even beginning to be whispered pretty loudly that, in the lodges of some of the higher degrees, political and other appointments are discussed and determined upon, and that, when necessary, pressure is brought to bear in various quarters to force the hands of those having the power of appointment.

Some of the appointments in connection with the School Board and the Public Library are thus for the first time made intelligible.

We are informed, moreover, that this is no new thing, but that it has of late assumed dimensions which it never before attained, at any rate in this country.

It is possible that the Church of Rome, in setting her face against secret societies, may have been acting not merely in her own interests, but in the interests of society at large.

We shall return to this subject at an early day.

AN HOUR AT THE EDUCATIONAL MUSEUM.

HAVING been unwillingly absent for a long period from all artistic associations, save a few books and the great canvas of nature, I was glad to refresh my memory of some of the greatest Old World pictures the other morning by viewing the copies at the Museum of the Education Department. I procured a catalogue and started at once for the Italian schools. Among my first discoveries were the facts of many pictures being unnumbered or wrongly numbered, and of others being hung either in dark spaces between windows or in corridors where a gloomy coloured light and plenty of darkness prevented one from seeing them at all. In the relations between spectator and picture, chiaroscuro is all very well, if the latter be in the light and the former in the shade. When the case is otherwise, everything—soul, sense and object—is entirely in the dark. In Normal buildings one is tempted to expect normal methods. However, the majority of the copies are as fairly placed as possible, although the necessity for economy of space has so crowded them together as to destroy the possibility of any chronological arrangement. Nor can a scholastic grouping be expected. Where there is little art one must make great allowance, and in a city of incongruous architecture and inconsistent morality, too much taste cannot be expected. Which remark is not intended as a sneer.

It seems a little strange that Angelico's art—so important as being the earliest effort of the pre-Raphaelites and the most spiritual product of the pietist painters—should only be represented by a small reliquary, stuck away at the top of a dark corner, where nothing is distinguishable but the blaze of gold groundwork on which the Virgin is seen *en masse*, with surrounding figures. It may have been placed there by accident, or because it is small and not very distinct, on which latter account it should certainly occupy a light and discernible position. Of this purest of religious painters, perhaps the best example would be a copy of one of his Annunciations or Crucifixions, which should be placed in the best possible position in veneration of the holy monk who made it, and of the earliest and purest devotional paintings. The example at present in the room is completely useless as a type of Fra Angelico's power and purity even if one could see it.

The one copy of him nicknamed Ghirlandajo—a "Holy Family"—is an excellent example of his style. The figure of the Child Jesus is especially fine, though not comparable with Carlo Dolci's beautiful infant figures, and still less with