

through that body, to the people of the State, the opinions entertained by me of the policy of encouraging associations for political purposes, so pregnant of mischief to the common weal.

I thought the language employed for the purpose free from all ambiguity; it was certainly intended so to be; and I was as much surprised at finding myself misunderstood as I was at learning that the fact of the existence of such societies was any longer a matter of doubt or uncertainty. I hope, however, that in this communication I may be more fortunate, and that your committee may be at no loss to discover to what political societies I referred, or the purposes for which it is alleged they were instituted.

I intended, in the part of the Message referred to your committee, respectfully to call the attention of the representatives of the people to the fact of the existence of any and all *secret political* societies or combinations; and to express the opinion that, in my judgment, such associations of themselves are calculated to produce great evil, and are inconsistent with, and injurious to, the healthful action of Republican institutions; and that when the purpose of such societies is to reduce a large portion of the people to the condition of a slavish submission to their secret edicts and decrees, and to exclude from all honorable preferment the Catholic and the naturalized citizen, because a Catholic and a naturalized citizen, they become dangerous in the extreme, and should awaken the deep solicitude of every true American in the State.

I am credibly informed by a large number of citizens, that in their opinion and belief, there exist now within this State numerous societies of a secret character, whose object and purpose is to prevent the election or appointment to office of any person belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, or who is not a native-born citizen of the United States; and that in such secret associations, councils or lodges, oaths, pledges and obligations are administered to effect this object.

The existence of such unlawful combinations throughout the States has been repeatedly charged in the Congress of the United States, in the Legislatures of one or more of the States, and by a large portion of the press and people in every section of the country. The fact is moreover evidenced by disclosures made in the Legislature of a sister State, and by many members of the "Order," who, having been thoughtlessly and innocently drawn into it, and finding that they were deceived as to its purposes, have answered the suggestions of conscience, by abjuring the oaths and obligations therein illegally administered.

With you, gentlemen, abides, under the sanction of the House of Delegates, the power of ascertaining the truth or falsity of these serious allegations. I am powerless in the premises, beyond the making known to you what I fear and believe in regard to them.

You, however, in the exercise of the power conferred upon you, to send for persons and papers, and to examine persons under oath, as to the existence of secret societies, and the ends they propose to accomplish, may bring before you the living witnesses, and the record proof which can effectually set at rest the questions at issue. It will give me great pleasure to facilitate, by all the means in my power, the objects for which your committee was raised; and in compliance with the request in your