

Could we, Dearly Beloved Brethren, keep silence with regard to so great an impiety and social disorder, and not recall to your memory the sanctity of an oath ?

It is always a mortal sin to take an oath to affirm any thing that we know to be false.

It is always a mortal sin to perjure one-self in order to affirm that one is an elector, or that he possesses really, and in good faith, sufficient property, whilst his conscience testifies to the contrary.

It is always a mortal sin to induce any one to commit perjury.

Fear the great God who holds your lives in his hands : fear to offend the sovereign Judge who is the witness of all your thoughts, and of all your words, and *who has the power not only of condemning you to death, but also of casting your souls into eternal flames.* (S. Luke, XII. 5.) What will it then avail you if having, by unlawful means, by fraud, by violence, by perjury, gained an election, or even *gained the entire world, you lose your soul for all eternity ?* (S. Matt., XVI. 28.)

VII.

OF PROHIBITED SOCIETIES.

What we have just said concerning the enormity of perjury, brings us naturally to speak to you of those rash oaths and of those rash promises, by which men are initiated into those societies called *secret*, because they pledge themselves to keep the most profound and most inviolable secrecy with regard to the aim, the resolutions, the acts and the members of these associations.

The holy catholic Church formally and under pain of excommunication, forbids her children to be enrolled in the secret societies, whether they exact an oath of secrecy or a simple promise. Experience proves how dangerous they are both for Church and state. Moreover, common sense alone will tell us that truth and justice are not afraid of the light, and that any association with a praiseworthy object in view would not conceal itself in impenetrable mysteries.

“ Close your ears then, says the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XII, of blessed memory, close your ears to the words of those who, in order to entice you into their assemblies, will assure you that nothing is done there contrary to reason and religion. In the first place, the guilty oath that is taken, even in the lower grades, is sufficient to enable you to understand that you are forbidden to enter into those grades or to remain in them. In