

Secret

HUNTERS' LODGES.

PERSONS about to be initiated as members, are introduced into the Lodge blindfolded ; on which the following oath is administered :—" You swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that you will not reveal the secret sign of the Snow Shoe to any, not even to the members of the society. You will not write, print, mark, engrave, scratch, chalk, or in any conceivable manner whatsoever, make the shape or sign of the Snow Shoe, to any living being, not even the members of this society. You furthermore solemnly swear, that you will not reveal any of the secrets of this society, which may come to your knowledge, through the President, Vice-President, or his Cabinet. You furthermore solemnly swear, that you will give timely notice to any member or brother, if you know of any evil plot or design that has been carried on against him or the society. You furthermore solemnly swear that you will render all assistance in your power, without injuring yourself or family, to any brother or member of this society, who shall at any time make the sign of distress to you. You furthermore solemnly swear, that you will attend every meeting of your Lodge, if you can do so, without injury to yourself or family.—This you swear, as you shall answer to God."

The first degree is called the Snow-Shoe degree. There are four signs:—the test made use of, of membership, is that upon which most reliance is placed, in case a stranger should happen to become acquainted with the other signs, is that of the Snow Shoe. If all other questions should be satisfactorily answered, the person under examination is asked, whether he ever saw a Snow Shoe, and he is required to make the sign upon a paper.—If he attempts to make any representation of a Snow Shoe, he is immediately known not to be a member, since all are sworn not to make that sign. This is intended as a catch. The first of the signs used in communication is as follows:—Lay the palm of the left hand over the back of the right, with the fingers of both hands extended and apart from each other, and let both hands fall carelessly in front of the body. The second sign in the Snow Shoe degree is used in shaking hands, when the parties take the cuff of each other's coat between the finger and thumb. The third sign is made by asking the question, "Are you a Hunter?" The answer is, "Yes on Tuesday," (the day on which the sign is made being Monday) the day following the one on which the sign is made being always used. The fourth sign is by lifting the right hand to the ear, with the palm in front, and by pressing the ear slightly forward. The signs are answered by the same sign, or any of the signs.

The second or Beaver degree.—The oath is—"You swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that you will not reveal the sign of the Beaver degree to any one who is not a member of the same degree with yourself." The sign of the Beaver is as follows: Question—"Do you know the Beaver to be an industrious animal?" No answer is made verbally, but the left hand is lifted to the mouth—the palm nearest the face: the fingers are bent—the fore-finger placed under the chin, and the nail of the thumb between the front teeth, which are closed upon it, to imitate a Beaver gnawing a tree.

In the third degree, the oath is similar. You are not to reveal the signs or secrets of this degree to any one who is not a member of the same degree. This is called the Master Hunter's degree. The sign is—Question "Trouble?" the answer is "Calm!" at the same time moving the right hand from the left side of the body to the right—the back of the hand upwards, and the fingers and hand horizontal.

The fourth degree is called the "Patriot Hunter" degree: the oath is similar to the third. There are three signs.

First Question—"Do you snuff *and* chew?" Answer, "I do"—at the same time, if you have a snuff or tobacco-box about you, you take it out and make three scratches with your nail upon it; if you have no such article, you put the thumb of your left hand in your left waist-coat pocket, and make three scratches with the finger-nail upon the waist-coat. The second sign, fourth degree: Question—"Have you any news for me?" Answer—"Some." The third sign, fourth degree, is the sign of distress.—The left hand is raised, palm forward: the fingers extended, but not apart: the thumb pointing to the coat collar.

There is a method of getting into the Lodge exclusive of all these signs—you go to the door and make two raps on the outside—answered by two on the inside.—You then make one on the outside—answered by one on the inside.—You then make three scratches on the outside, and you are then admitted to go in.

The first, or Snow Shoe degree, is intended to be universal in the army of the Patriots; The Privates take the first degree; the Commissioned Officers two degrees; the Field Officers three degrees; the Commanders-in-Chief four or more degrees: the members of the society, whether enlisted or not, always take four degrees, but they are only to use the first degree in the army, if they enlist. The object of the society is stated after you have taken the fourth degree—also some of the plans and operations—but they do not communicate the whole, unless to the Grand Masters, Commanders-in-Chief, and others, in whom implicit confidence is placed. The general object of the society is stated to be, "to emancipate the British Colonies from British thralldom."