

Something for the People.

A True and Veritable Account of the Organization, Forms, Ceremonies, &c., of the Order of Know-Nothings.

T. Jefferson Laplet, Esq., one of the National officers of the American Order or Secret Society of Know Nothings, called upon us, yesterday, on special business. He says that the members of the Order throughout the Union, have felt themselves deeply aggrieved by some pretended exposures of their association, put forth to the world through the partizan press, and at a late meeting of the National Organization of the Society, held in a Western city, the subject was brought forward and discussed. While the members were aware, that strict secrecy, in relation to everything connected with the Order is desirable, yet, as the objects of the Association are purely patriotic, it was the unanimous opinion of the members of the National Camp that no harm could result from a voluntary publication of the forms and ceremonies of the Order. The High Adjutant was then instructed to furnish us with a copy of the ritual and to give us permission to copy such portions as we deem of interest to the people. They have certain secrets which they cannot, of course, give to the world, such as pass-words, signs, &c. These we would not publish if we could.

ORGANIZATION OF THE KNOW-NOTHINGS.

The organization of this mysterious order, which has spread with the rapidity of lightning throughout the Union, partakes of a military character. The ordinary bodies are called regiments; the State bodies, composed of delegates from each regiment in the State, battalions; and the national body, composed of representatives from the battalions, is called the Grand Camp. The members of the regiment are regularly divided into "messes," and each mess has a peculiar duty to perform. The officers of a regiment are nearly those of the United States service, and in the other bodies they are of a higher grade, the highest officer being called a Major General. The object of the Order, as set forth in the ritual, is the restoration of a pure administration of the government; and to this end it aims to accomplish the following:

1st. To discard politicians of every character, and to fill all offices with men of tried integrity, who are to be selected, and if possible, elected, without their own knowledge, and who will therefore enter upon their public duties, without being embarrassed by obligations.

2d. To put none but Americans in office, as men born and reared upon the soil have undoubtedly the interests of the country more at heart, than those who have sought it merely as an asylum from oppression.

3d. To oppose all influences tending to change in the least, the time-honored institutions of our country, and to sustain at all risks, a universal system of public free schools, religious toleration, and a thorough enforcement of all laws.

4th. To have our government, and all its officers thoroughly republican, particularly those holding positions abroad.

5th. Economy among office-holders, but liberality in establishing and sustaining public institutions.

The above, according to the ritual, are the sole objects of Know-Nothingism. One apparent inconsistency ought to be explained. It professes to uphold religious toleration, while it proscribes Roman Catholics from membership. In one of the "charges" this is overcome by the assertion, that the church has officially proscribed all secret associations, not entirely composed of Catholics, and that no member of that church could honestly become a Know-Nothing. And further that the governors of that church, supported by a large portion of the membership, have assailed and endeavored to overthrow some of our "bulwarks of liberty," and that, therefore, all who hold to the church must be looked upon with suspicion.

HOW MEMBERS ARE PROPOSED.

Members are not allowed to ask persons to join the Order, but proceed in this wise. Knowing that a neighbor or an acquaintance is an American in sentiment, he proposes his name and has him balloted for. If elected, he informs him on initiation night of the simple fact, and asks him to go to the meet-

ing. He will answer no inquiries as to the order, and if the candidate refuses to go, that ends the matter. A man once rejected, can never enter the order. The recommending of an application is cause for expulsion, and should an office-seeker happen to get in and the fact be sustained, he is not allowed to hold office, or take any part in the business of his regiment.

INITIATION—BEAUTIFUL CEREMONIES.

When a successful candidate signifies his willingness to enter the order, he is conducted to a convenient position near the place of meeting, by the member who proposed him. There he is kept until a signal known only to the members, is given from a window of the regiment head-quarters. Both member and candidate then disguise themselves with false whiskers and spectacles, and proceed to head-quarters. From this we infer, that all enter the lodge-room disguised. The candidate is conducted to an ante-room, where he finds himself alone with a priest, bearing aloft a richly mounted cross. "Son of the Holy Church, why darest thou enter here? Heresy lurks in every corner of this house, and the curses of the damned are upon it. Avaunt! or the fires of hell shall punish thee, and through all eternity thy soul shall be with the accursed." The church speaks, wilt thou obey?"

The candidate may obey, but if he does not, the officer throws off his priestly gown, and appears in the uniform of an orderly sergeant. An inner door opens and the guard (composed of four men in uniform and armed with muskets) enters, and fronting the candidate or candidates, (for it appears that more than one are initiated at the same time,) present their bayonets to the breast of the candidate. The following, (we copy from the ritual,) then occurs:

The orderly sergeant swears the candidate to well and truly, and without any mental reservation whatsoever, answer such questions as will be put to him.

Orderly Sergeant.—Sir: (or plural if more than one)—Before you advance further it becomes my duty to inform you as to the objects of the association to which you have been elected, and now evince a desire to become a member. It is thoroughly national, and purely American in its character. None but those born on the soil, and those too, who have a pride in their country's welfare, can enter here. You, sir, are well aware that the formation and growth of our country is without parallel in the history of the world. In the beginning, she presented the picture of an infant conquering a giant, and our forefathers, astounded the old world with their firm devotion to the cause of right, and their apparent intention of sacrificing their all, even life, rather than be the slaves of a tyrant, or to submit to the yoke of a foreign oppressor. God crowned them victors, and made them free men. Republicanism was yet an experiment in the world, when these United States were reluctantly recognized as an Independent Government by the crowned heads of the Eastern Hemisphere.

Glittering monarchs and tinselled nobles looked upon the young nation with no alarm, for they were confident that a few brief years would find these States a monarchy—its people slaves. But our wise forefathers succeeded in framing a government unequalled for its simplicity and grandeur. Under it we now stand among the greatest of the nations of the earth—and Americans are yet free! But a sad gloom has of late o'erspread our fair land. A foreign priesthood with foreign prejudices, and which has for centuries been the main reliance of despotism, has sought to intrude itself in our midst, disturb the tranquility of our people, and impair, if not destroy the beautiful fabric erected by our fathers. Alas! they have been, so far, too successful. They have been supported by hordes of slaves, liberated from European bondage only to become the tool of a crafty priesthood in a free land, and by—the curse of Heaven rest upon the traitors!—a corrupt brotherhood of politicians, which ramifies every section of our country. Already we see representatives of our government abroad, taking sides with despotism, and even in our midst are found those proclaiming the most pernicious doctrines.

Columbia's fair fame has been polluted and the rights of her sons trampled upon. It therefore behooves all true Americans, all who love liberty, to bestir themselves in their country's cause, ere it is too late. The signs of the times call us to arms in our country's defense, and it is in that cause, and that alone, in which we are enlisted. Do you, sir, feel like joining us?

If the candidate answers in the negative he is allowed to depart, if in the affirmative, he is asked the following questions:

Where and when were you born?
Were your parents natives of this country, and were they connected with the Roman Catholic Church?

Have you ever been connected with the Roman Church, or sympathized with its political doctrines?

Do you love your country, and have you always desired the success of its institutions?

Have you ever been a seeker after public office?

Are you willing to sink your own interests, if necessary, into those of your country?

Are you willing to most solemnly pledge your life, services and property for your country's good, if either should be demanded?

These questions answered in the affirmative, the Guard shoulder arms, and under the command of the O. S. escort the candidate to another room. The O. S., the G. and the candidate then march to the inner door, where they meet the Sentinel, also in uniform, and the following words are exchanged:

Sentinel—Who comes there?
Orderly Sergeant—A Guard of the True Blue, having in charge a countryman, anxious to enlist on the side of right and liberty.

Sentinel—But none can pass here who are not pledged to their country's cause, and willing to suffer as our forefathers did for freedom and human liberty.

Orderly Sergeant—Such is he (or those) we have in charge. He has been tried, and we stand pledged for his integrity.

Sentinel—The countersign. [The O. S. gives the pass-word.] Enter, and may a traitor's curse never fall upon your head.

The party then enter. That our account might be truthful and perfect, we were favored yesterday afternoon with a view of a regiment head-quarters as it is when a candidate is presented, and a more sublime sight we never witnessed. The candidate enters a room but faintly lighted, yet with sufficient light to make each object distinguishable.—At both ends, and in the centre of each side, under canopies of the stars and stripes, are the officers of the regiment, dressed entire in the old continental uniform. The three-cornered hats, the shad-belly coats without trimming, the knee breeches and buckles, and the flowing white wigs—present a picturesque scene in the dusky light. In front of the Commandant stands the goddess of liberty, erect, holding in her hand a shield, upon which is a motto which we are not allowed to publish. Opposite her, at the other end of the room, is a tableaux representing America destroying the demon of party. The members are formed on each side in platoons, arrayed in a regalia we cannot describe, but presenting a sublime appearance.

Between the guard, the candidate is escorted into this room. A halt is made for a few seconds, that he may have time to look about him. To the slight rap of a muffled drum, the guard then moves slowly around the hall. Every figure, save the moving guard, look like statues, so noiseless is every thing. The candidate is at length taken before the Adjutant—when the following occurs—

Adjutant—Hail, countrymen, hail. Patriotic hearts welcome you here, for with such as you to aid us, our country still is safe. You are now about to pledge your all to your native land, and it is my duty to tell you that the act is no farce. Before high Heaven, and these, your countrymen, the solemn work must be done, and your oath will be recorded above. And 'tis well you take it, for it may save you and your children, from shackles, worse than those

which now bind the children of men, in the old world. And when you take it, remember that it must be kept, for Columbia's sons have decreed that this (holding up a dagger) shall be the traitor's doom. Comrades, conduct our countryman to the Colonel, for obligation, instruction and advice.

To the solemn tap of the drum, the guard again move across the room, and bring the candidate face to face with the Colonel.

Colonel—Are you ready for the solemn obligations of this order?

Candidate—I am.

Colonel—Guard, to duty. [The guard point their bayonets at the candidate's breast.] Ensign, advance. [The Ensign approaches with the colors of the regiment, and the candidate is made to kneel upon one knee, and to place one hand on a copy of the Holy Writ, and the other upon the flag of his country.] You will now repeat after me the following obligation.

"Before high Heaven, and in the presence of these my countrymen, I, John Smith, do most solemnly declare that I am devoted to the institutions and government of the United States of America, which country is my native land, and that I desire them to flourish and prosper, that my countrymen and their descendants may enjoy the blessings of a free government. Therefore, I do most solemnly renounce and denounce all political demagogues or men who aim to live solely off of public office, let them profess whatever principles they may, and in the presence of these, my countrymen, I swear that I will never hereafter vote for any such, or for any Roman Catholic for office. And I do further declare, and swear, that in voting for public officers, hereafter, my preference shall be for men born on the soil, and nominated by this order, provided they are equal in qualifications and integrity to such as may run against them. And I do further swear, that from this moment to the hour of my death, I will keep sacred all the secrets of this order, and will never divulge them to any person, whatsoever, unless authorized by the authorities of the same. I further promise that if my connection with this order shall cease, or * * * * * I will consider this oath binding to the end of my life. So help me God."

The candidate then kisses the Bible and the flag, when he is raised to his feet and all shout "Welcome, comrade!" The Guard then escort him to the Major, who instructs him in the secrets of the order, which are not, of course, in the book. He is then presented with what is called the "Legion of Liberty," and "Columbia's Own," which we presume, contains certain emblems indicative of membership. He is assigned to his "mess," and informed as to who is hereafter to command him in emergencies. The Guard then escort him to his seat, where he is received with a military salute, and pronounced "one of them."

This ends the initiatory ceremonies, which are certainly beautiful and impressive.

OPENING AND CLOSING CEREMONIES.

When the hour for opening a Regiment arrives, the Colonel bids the drummer give two distinct raps on the drum, which instantly commands silence and order. He then says, "Ensign advance!" The color-bearer takes a position in the center of the hall, with the standard of the regiment. The Chaplain then comes forward, and stationing himself beneath the folds of the flag, reads a portion of holy writ. After which the members assume an erect position, while the Chaplain offers up the following prayer:

"Most High and Ever Gracious Father of Mercies! Before Thee we again humbly appear, to crave Thy blessing. Grateful for Thy many mercies, we supplicate Thy guidance in all our acts, that we may honor Thy name and add glory to Thy Kingdom of Heaven. Thou, O Lord, knowest the hearts of all men, and Thou knowest that in assembling here, we seek only our country's welfare, the natural rights of a free people, and the extension of a pure Christianity. As Thou, O Lord, aided our forefathers in the first struggles for liberty, so, now, we humbly beseech Thee, be with us. Guide our counsels, and direct our action to the present and future welfare of our beloved country. We pray that Columbia's soil, its broad