

WAS SHE A MAN OR WAS HE A WOMAN?

The Question Settled.

Among the prisoners who arrived at the Penitentiary last Saturday was an individual whose patronymic struck every one as being somewhat singular, it being no less than Ben Jane Jones and the person hailed from the parish of Caddo. Jones had resided in that parish ever since the year of our Lord 1863, and up to the time of being sent to our noble State Institution, wore the garments particularly appertaining to the feminine sex. Jones left Alexandria in 1863 as a camp follower, remaining with the Federal troops until they went up to Shreveport to close terms for the final surrender. While there, Jones always passed for a woman and was often wooed for a partner by many of the gay young colored gallants of that city, but Jones was shy, and could not be made to understand the meaning of the honorable title of "wife," though frequently importuned by many who were fain to have her share their name and fortunes.

After enjoying the hospitalities of the gay metropolis of Shreveport for some time, Jones thought the chances were ripe for a first-class larceny and Jones took advantage of the propitious moment. Jones was suspected from certain little facts here and there and Jones was arrested, tried, found guilty and sentenced to six months in the penitentiary. In the course of human events, Jones reached his final destination and was duly entered upon the books of that institution as Ben Jane Jones, a woman, of course, and an order for private apartments as such. Now, there comes a slight hiatus in the history of Ben Jane Jones. Somehow or other peace did not exactly prevail among the feminine inmates of that gloomy receptacle, and an investigation was ordered. Jones pretended all the time that he did not belong to one sex or the other, although claiming to be of the feminine gender as near as possible, and in reality, there was no seeming cause to doubt his asseverations. The voice was feminine, the walk, actions and general deportment, all substantiated the fact, still there was "dole in Astolat." A physician was called in and to the intense dismay of the whole college of penitentiary benefactors, it was discovered that Ben Jane Jones was a full fledged man! What a fall was there, my countrymen! Astonishment is no name for it—everybody charged around like mad at the singular equivoque of gender and a change in the sleeping apartment of Mr. Jones was immediately ordered, and is still rigidly maintained. Now, a question or two naturally arises. If Jones was tried as a woman—sentenced as a woman—conveyed to prison as a woman, are not there one or more loopholes in the law by which he can escape? A woman cannot be tried for a crime as a man, nor a man be tried for the crime of a woman!

As we go to press the excitement is not a whit abated in the minds of the penitentiary employes, and there is some talk about looking after the officers of the court in Shreveport, who charged, arrested and sentenced Mr. Jones as a man committed. Fun for Shreveport but chagrin for the penitentiary officers.—*Baton Rouge Advocate.*