

## *A Trial and a Reprimand.*

he owned eleven niggers at that time, and a good plantation; but the rebellion has since cleaned him out, and he attends lodge regular). All the dimitted Masons were present, together with large delegations from the eight surrounding lodges. The weather being warm, the air of the lodge room was in as healthy a condition as the pages of Blanchard's anti-masonic paper usually are when some good Masonic brother has been stirring him up. After a hasty lunch I went up and "tuk the cest," as officially requested by brother Honeybag, a diffident man, not an LL. D., but honest and sensible as anybody. The lodge had strictly fulfilled my instructions. They had "opened the case; brought charges; issued summonses (more than a hundred); taken testimony (the pile of cap paper measured more than four and a half inches in thickness), and done all things needful, as preliminary to the question." The committee on evidence had given its undivided attention to evidence; and now the rest was left to me.

Brother Elmore sat in the lodge a wounded, weary, penitent man, if ever I saw one. His church had expelled him. His wife's three brothers had each of them thrashed him, the oldest (a blacksmith) most tremendously. All the old ladies in the neighborhood had had their fling at him. The owner of the cow he had shot had sued him for her value, and had recovered exemplary damages of a hundred dollars or more, and besides that, had put him under heavy bonds to keep the peace with all other cows that chose to lie down by his woodpile. His poor little baby, so summarily chucked out of the window, had indeed lived through it, but not till after grievous sickness and a still more grievous doctor's bill—greatest of temporal calamities. He had been made the scape-goat of the community. The preachers had made him their text for scathing sermons. The boys at the school-examination had given it to him in their celebrated (original) dialogue of "The Wife-whipper; or, The Plain Road to Hell." The local correspondent had written three articles (and threatened a fourth) to the county newspaper, "The Weekly Ink-slinger; or, The Messenger of Truth," detailing all the circumstances of the case highly colored. I may safely repeat, then, that Brother Elmore was a wounded, uneasy, penitent man, if ever I saw a W. U. P. M.

As soon as I took my seat, after acknowledging the Grand Honors (never saw I such motions on mortal pinions before; how they were made without detaching "bone from his bone," how without peeling off the cuticles of the hands; how without inducing apoplectic attacks, I do not know); as soon, I say, as I sat down, I cast my eye (metaphorically of course) upon the W. U. P. M. already mentioned. He sat with his head resting on the palm of his hand, the pallor of death on his features, and one of his front teeth absent, "removed," as the dentist terms it, by the fist of his wife's brother, the blacksmith aforesaid.

The air was so impure in that lodge room, that, without taking time to instruct the large assembly in the whole subject of lodge trials, as I usually did in such cases, I ordered the Secretary to read the proceedings. This included the "charges" brought by the Junior Warden, and very proud the Junior Warden was of them, for in framing them he was guided by a form law-book of the oldest date, had exhausted the legal vocabulary in the operation, and I counted thirteen times in which he used the words, "party of the first part" in a single page. It took him just thirty-six minutes only to read through the charges! To my surprise, as soon as the "charges" were read, and even before we had come to the evidence, Brother Elmore arose and asked leave to speak. There was something so impressive in his manner, so modest and gentle, that my heart warmed to him in a moment, and though the request was a little out of order (I was a great stickler for "points of order" in those days; I am not now), I authorized him to do so. He simply said that the lodge had already had too much trouble with his case. It was unnecessary to go over all that pile of evidence. He owned himself guilty. He had acknowledged it all from the first. He had told the Junior Warden, and had told the lodge when they first summoned him, that he was guilty. Why weary the patience of the lodge longer? He pleaded guilty.

After a whispered conference with Brother Honeybag, the Master, I took the list of "charges" in my hand and said, "Do we understand you to say, Brother Elmore, that you are guilty of all of these charges?"

"Guilty," replied Brother Elmore.

"What," said I, quoting from the portentous document, "guilty of the vilest crimes known to man?"

"Guilty," replied Brother Elmore.

"Guilty, on the aforesaid night, with the aforesaid club, chunk, firebrand, broomstick, sliver, etc., etc., of striking, beating, defacing, maiming, mutilating, cutting, carving, hewing, etc., etc., the aforesaid wife."

"Guilty!"

"Guilty of ————" I really haven't patience to copy all the absurd repetitions and alliterations of the indictment, but if there is any offense in the calendar that the