

Transactions

of the

Baptist Historical Society.

“Grace Abounding” of 1680.

I T can scarcely be necessary to seek for arguments to justify any elucidatory notice, whether bibliographical or historical, of such an eminent work as *Grace Abounding*. Any slight contribution to its adventurous story, on its way from the middle of the seventeenth century down to the present time, cannot fail to interest those who love the choicest piece of religious experimental literature yielded by this period. But while disclaiming the need of any supporting testimony to the high character of Bunyan's effort, I cannot deny myself and my readers the pleasure of hearing Dr. Duncan's verdict. This teacher of profound spiritual penetration, affectionately known in Scotland as *Rabbi Duncan*, used to inform his students that there were three great books of religious experience: Augustine's *Confessions*, Halyburton's *Memoirs*, and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, and that the last was the greatest of the three. Such a finding may not meet with universal acceptance. Many may hesitate to place the devout English tinker above the

seraphic saint of Hippo. But whatever comparisons may be made, or degrees of excellence allowed, *Grace Abounding* must ever be ranked amongst the greatest books of its kind. It enshrines scintillations of a flaming spirit which still flash and burn. Born for immortality, it defies the tooth of Time. It is infused with those subtle qualities which constitute the anti-septic in literature.

Having a love for books in original editions, or at least those contemporary with their authors, I venture to offer, to such as share my predilections, a few notes drawn together through the recent finding of an early and rare edition.

During the great revival of interest in Bunyan literature in the last century, not a single copy of this prison book, published in 1666, was brought to light until 1883. Mr. George Offor and other assiduous explorers worked in vain. At last the solitary example, which is now in the British Museum Library, was discovered by Mr. Henry Stevens. In his careful reprint of 1888, Dr. John Brown says:—"The *Sixth* is the next Edition we have."

With this fact in my mind, after the manner of book-hunters, I experienced an overpowering emotion of delight, when, not long ago, in the purlieus of Holborn—which still exist for the exploitation of the bibliophile's enterprise—I came upon a fifth edition, dated 1680. In the glowing confidence of having discovered an unrecorded edition I hastened to verify my conviction. Much flattered by a long research which revealed nothing contrary to my expectations, I was about to congratulate myself, when I remembered the issue of this work by the Tract Society, of 1905. Turning to this my hopes met their doom; for facing me was a record of a copy of the fifth edition. "This unique copy"—such is the phrase, which quickens so much cupidity among bookmen—possessed by W. G.

Thorpe Esqr. F.S.A. was sold at Sotheby's, April 23rd, 1904. I was greatly disappointed at not scoring an initial success; but am now trying to persuade myself, that to own one of two known copies of such a rarity is, after all, something of a distinction.

At this moment, then, speaking from what I believe to be up-to-date information, examples of the second and third and fourth editions are without record. Thus for a period of fourteen years, extending from 1666 to 1680, there is not a shred in our libraries of the books themselves, to witness to the existence of these issues, possibly including thousands of copies.

Without doubt many were worn into tatters by the sturdy thumbs of Puritan saints. But other copies vanished under the violent hands of barbarism and tyranny. Francis Smith, a publisher and bookseller of Fleet St., an “Anabaptist” of some force of character, known in certain quarters as a “notorious enthusiast,” makes the following statement:—“Immediately before the dreadful fire in 1666 one Mr. Lillycrop, a printer, and another, both servants of Mr. L'Estrange, as his assistance in surveying the Press, came to my shop and warehouse near Temple Bar, with their general warrant to seize unlicensed Books, and took Mr. Allen's, *Mr. Bunyan's*, and others, barely as unlicensed, though the prejudice the Licensers were pleased to take against the Authors, constrained my printing them without License, being books neither against Church nor State: nevertheless they took as many as two Porters could stand under, and carried them to Mr. L'Estrange's Lodging, then at the King's Wardrobe, some of which, with much difficulty and charge, was obtained again: the rest it's supposed the Fire took.” Also during the Venner insurrection, at which time Smith was ill, he tells us his house was searched ten times, each time his property suffering plunder. And during the August following piles of

his books were seized by warrant. Thus, while on the one hand, through being read out of existence Bunyan's popular religious books met with their proper reward; on the other, piety in one of its noblest forms was pilloried by a paltry persecution. Private bigotry also was another factor antagonistic to survival. And yet when all the particular and common enemies of books, which Mr. William Blades has shown us are legion, have been taken into account, one still stands amazed before the stubborn fact of the total disappearance of three complete editions; which fact is accentuated by the solitary survival—and that an imperfect example—of the first issue, and only two known copies of the fifth.

May I, then, venture to transcribe the title pages of these two earliest known editions? This process will not be deemed an ineptitude, at least, by book-lovers. Having carefully examined the British Museum copy, I am able to give the transcription line by line, with the somewhat fanciful use of capitals. The first edition, 1666, reads thus:—

"Grace | Abounding to the chief of Sinners : | Or, |
 A Brief and Faithful | Relation | Of the Exceeding
 Mercy of God in Christ, | to his poor Servant | JOHN
 BUNYAN. | Wherein is particularly shewed, The Man |
 ner of his Conversion, his fight and trouble for | Sin,
 his Dreadful Temptations, also how he | despaired of
 God's mercy, and how the Lord at | length thorow
 Christ did deliver him from all | the guilt and terrour
 that lay upon him. Whereunto is added, | A brief
 Relation of his Call to the Work | of the Ministry, of
 his Temptations therein, | as also what he had met
 with in Prison. | All which was written with his own
 hand | there, and now published for the support | of
 the weak and tempted People of God. | 'Come and
 hear, all ye that fear God ; and I will declare | what
 he hath done for my soul,' Psal. 66. 16. | LONDON :
 Printed by George Larkin, 1666."

The following is the reading of the fifth edition; 1680.

“Grace Abounding. | To the Chief of | SINNERS : |
 or, | A Brief and [aud] Faithful Relation of the Ex-
 | ceeding Mercy of God in Christ, | to His poor
 Servant | JOHN BUNYAN. | Namely | In his taking of
 him out of the Dunghill, and Con- | verting of him to
 the Faith of his Blessed Son | Jesus Christ. | Here |
 Is also particularly shewed what fight of, and | what
 trouble he had for sin ; and also what va- | rious
 Temptations he had met with, and how | God had
 carried him through them. | Corrected and much
 enlarged now by the Au | thor, for the benefit of the
 Tempted and | Dejected Christian. | The Fifth Edition
 Corrected. | Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and
 I will de- | clare what he has done for my soul, Psal.
 66. 16. | London, PRINTED for Nath. Ponder, at the |
 Peacock in the Poultry, over against the Stock-
 Market. 1680.”

It will be seen that considerable differences exist. How the changes came into being during the printing of the three unrepresented editions must await future discoveries, of which we should not despair. Optimism and hope must be the constant companions of all explorers in bookland; a bibliographer's enthusiasm and industry must never flag. And though Puritan title-pages, such as those before us, which are really epitomes of whole books, may be a severe trial to patience, yet they are not without their value, and form a striking contrast to the brevity of the modern title, which is often ambiguous on that account.

In advancing from the title to the foreword we come upon a remarkable piece of writing, combining exterior and interior experience, headed:—“A Preface; or Brief account of the publishing of this Work: Written by the Author thereof, and dedicated to those whom God hath counted him worthy to beget to Faith, by his Ministry in the Word.” It contains a plain

statement of a new period of imprisonment: "I being taken from you in presence," he says, "and so tied up, that I cannot perform that duty, that from God doth lie upon me to you ward, . . . yet, I now once again as before from the top of Shenir and Hermon, so now from the Lion's Den, and from the Mountains of the Leopard's, (Song. 4. 8) do look yet after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into *The* desired Haven." In which words we catch an anticipatory note of the *Pilgrim*, emphasised by the postscript: "My dear Children, The Milk and Honey is beyond this wilderness: God be merciful to you, and grant you to be not slothful to go in and possess the Land. John Bunyan." This choice introduction is in every way a fitting entrance into this sacred temple of a worthless sinner's experience of God's Grace. It has remained unaltered from its first issue. Bunyan's literary restraint is as significant as his spiritual insight. A necessary remark, though sounding banal at this conjunction of ideas, is, that the signature is abbreviated in the 1680 edition to Jo. Bunyan, while the first, sixth and seventh have the full "John." This minute distinction is indicated as a point in identification, providing the title should be missing, which is often the case in old books.

It is with some diffidence I approach the body of the work; for useful bibliographical information, in this case, can only be offered by comparisons; and as many points for this purpose are available, the notice of which might prove tedious, I will touch upon only those which are material.

This fifth edition, then, compared with the first is marked by substantial additions. As we have seen, it is impossible to speak of stages and processes through a period of fourteen years, for we are in ignorance; we can affirm confidently, however, with regard to the literary form crystallised in 1680. Dr.

John Brown wrote in 1888:—“The Earlier edition (1666) is shorter than the later (1688. The next then known.) by some fifty or sixty paragraphs.” As this is merely a general statement, I have been at pains to acquire precise knowledge.

As all readers of *Grace Abounding* are aware, it proceeds by numbered paragraphs or sections throughout. Now, it is a curious circumstance, and almost too trivial for notice, if important identifications did not depend upon it, that these enumerations in all known seventeenth century editions are incorrect in one way or another. By some singular aberration of mind afflicting all compositors concerned, they failed to count continuously up to so high a total. And what is still more surprising is, that they do not all stumble at the same point; which might not startle us; for both printers and bibliographers have secured a reputation for following the “wandering sheep.” Let us trace some of these faults. Beginning, then, with the first edition (Museum Copy 1666) the final section is numbered 272. But in following the sections *seriatim* the following record is the result:—number 127 is repeated. Through the missing pages, viz., from 45 to 48 a lamentable hiatus extending from No. 131 to 143 is involved. Number 161 is lacking. The total here of 272 may therefore be correct, as one loss and one gain, through false enumeration, render the balance even; providing, of course, the lacking numbers proceed in proper sequence. In coming to the fifth edition, 1680, the final number is 340; but 73 being omitted, the correct total is 339. Without further details, strangely enough, the editions of 1688 1692 and 1693, all, through some blunder, register 340 sections; while in reality there are 339. This is the ultimate number. Whether reached for the first time in 1680 one cannot say. It remained unchanged in 1688, the last edition that received corrections by the

author. It may here be said that the "Conclusion," which had but six sub-sections in 1666, has seven in 1680, the second being the last addition.

Definitely, therefore, it may be stated that sixty-seven paragraphs or sections were added to this work by 1680. And these by no means the least important or interesting. They include Bunyan's falling into a creek of the sea, (spelt "*crick*") the plucking out of the tongue of an adder, and his becoming a soldier, in sections twelve and thirteen. His bell-ringing experiences, recorded in sections thirty-three and four. The influence Luther's Commentary on Galatians had upon him, set forth in sections one hundred and thirty and one hundred and thirty-one. And chiefly his declaration of his Chastity stretching from section three hundred and ten to three hundred and seventeen. Respecting his imprisonment, he writes at section three hundred and twenty:—"I was had home to Prison, and there have lain now compleat twelve years."

These references, sufficient if not too numerous, will demonstrate this great increase in bulk and value. Nor can it be regarded as inalienable to the purpose of this paper to briefly indicate some subsequent legitimate additions. Eight years later, 1688, and in the year of his death, as we have seen, Bunyan issued his last personally revised edition, which contained only slight verbal changes. In the seventh edition, 1692, is added:—"The remainder of his Life and Character; by a Friend since his Death." Possibly intending Mr. George Cokayne, a Bedfordshire man, the ejected minister of Soper Lane, London, and subsequently pastor of the congregation in Red Cross Street. Also a Postscript giving the names of his four children, viz.: Mary, Thomas, Joseph, and Sarah; and recording the death of his "Wife Elizabeth." During 1693 was published an eighth edition containing the same matter. It was not until 1765 that:—"A Relation

of the Imprisonment of Mr. John Bunyan
 Written by himself, and never before Published” was issued. A laudable work, probably executed by Samuel Palmer, the editor of the revised edition of the *Non-conformist Memorial*. This narration, abiding in manuscript, in the possession of the Bunyan family up to this time, and being happily and expertly translated into print, is frequently and properly added to modern editions of the book.

This slight effort in bibliography is offered, merely, as an outline sketch of the history and growth of a great book, space excluding a more extended survey; but it may, without immodesty, claim to place a few new details within the reach of an interested public; which facts Baptists have no occasion to suppress.

While examining this work a little more closely than usual, sundry reflections as to its structure and style have been kindled. Many of which I cannot ask permission even to name; but the *Enumeration* of the sections may, I think, justly claim more than a passing thought. Much might be said upon this method from many points of view. For instance, as providing a convenient reference table it is not without value, though neither Bunyan nor the publisher so used it. It has, however, been so utilised in modern times. And this method adopted by Swedenborg was most effective. Its possibilities are plainly evident. From an æsthetic view point—which certainly did not influence the author—the effect is not pleasing. It approximates too closely to a formal and mechanical catalogue of insentient and insensible things; whereas this book is primarily emotional—really a bit of a man’s innermost heart. And whatever the subject in hand too many figures on a printed page are not pleasing to a cultivated taste. A literary vice of Puritan times was the multiplication of divisions, in sermons

and treatises at least, to a hideous and confusing degree. But to moderate the record of my own list of speculations; the important query awakened in my mind is; what was the influence of this method upon Bunyan's literary style? Frankly, then, and after repeated analysis, I have come to the conclusion that the crisp clear-cut division is not without its value; but I have also decided that it must not be repeated indefinitely, especially on argumentative efforts. A writer may divide and subdivide until he is in endless mazes lost. This breaking up of a piece of writing, into numerous fragments makes against homogeneity, harmony and continuity of thought; it defeats the author's purpose in reaching a definite and logical end; his ideas do not march steadily and in rank to an ultimate satisfying goal. At the same time where concentration, and an immediate impact upon the mind are required, the epigram and the brief paragraph are invaluable. Some limitation imposed on verbiage, as measure and rhyme in verse, prove to be an advantage to many authors. A sense of compression being realised leads to direct and potent expression. And these conditions, it appears to me, were operative in the production of all Bunyan's chief works. Thus in the *Pilgrim and Holy War*, in both of which the method of dialogue plays a conspicuous part, the author is distinctly at his best. Literary gems of nervous and brilliant English abound. And in a narrative such as *Grace Abounding*, a concise and brief setting forth of each successive adventure and experience give to the book its compact form, towards which the limiting and moulding imposition of the enumeration of events was no unimportant factor.

A remarkable conjunction of dates between this copy of *Grace Abounding*, viz. 1680, and Bunyan's two other great works, the *Pilgrim*, 1678, and *Holy*

War, 1682, is not unworthy of notice. For there can be no doubt the publication of the *Pilgrim* gave an impetus to the sale of Bunyan's previously issued works; for according to our most reliable information the third and fourth editions of *Grace Abounding* were issued in 1679. And these issues may both have included new matter, and if not, yet the endorsement by re-publication signifies mature approval.

Little here can, or should be attempted in the way of comparing these three great works; but as it has been affirmed that in “heart felt power” *Grace Abounding* “takes the lowest place,” I feel constrained to offer a word in vindication of the quality thus disallowed. For as a piece of writing both recording and exciting soul passion, it has always seemed to me to claim the supreme place. It brings us at once into contact with the throbbing heart of a trembling weeping penitent. And the emotionalism of religion touches the highest degree of intensity. Bunyan's severe style is determined by the acutest sensibility. Every temptation to the adornment of language is resisted. Embellishment of every kind is abhorrent to this grave sincere man. With awe in his voice we hear him say:—“I dare not. God did not play in convincing me of sin; the Devil did not play in tempting of me; neither did I play when I sank into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me. Wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple and lay down the thing as it was.” Here gleams forth the perfect taste of a cultured spirit. Austere words lie closest to stern realities; intense feeling clothes not itself in finical garments. Here we find inward restraint combining with the enumerative method to produce this unique result.

In the case of the two great allegories the circumstances are entirely different; they rest upon another plane. The initial stage is determined by

the imagination; a creative genius is in action. In frame and structure they are pure inventions of the mind; and in execution there is scope for the introduction of every artistic, poetic and literary device. Which are used by the author with inimitable skill. These books are galleries of sanctified curios. Parables "long drawn out." Etchings of the extremes of saintly experience. Now a terrible fiend, now a strong angel hovers over the scene. The festive dance alternates with the fierce clash of arms. Mansoul is alarmed by the tramp of marshalled hosts, or soothed by the encouraging assurances of Immanuel. Religion is crystallized into emblems, and truth becomes picturesque. These popular elements are excluded from the personal concentration of *Grace Abounding*. In its psychological realism no flutter of verbal drapery intrudes between the conscience and its Judge; no rhetoric intervenes between the saint and his Saviour.

Many pleas might be urged for the acquisition of contemporary copies of an author's works. In addition to antiquarian interests, the duty of preserving valuable literature, and filial reverence for the departed, there is that priceless thing, fellowship with great souls who stood for religious freedom and holy living. And a copy of a Bunyan book, that may have passed beneath his eye and rested under his hand, seems to be laden with something of his own personal magnetism. It is like a touch of his spirit, out to which our spirit leaps and clings.

Such writings in their ultimate and abiding interests, however, are not antiquarian but religious. And in this case, that particular aspect of religion which is mystical and experimental—the soul's conscious union and intimate intercourse with God. Bunyan is a great authority upon the interior life. Many converts have graduated in the mysteries of evangelical truth and holiness under the teaching of

this great master. A visionary if you will, but a most practical one. Divine communion to him was a reality, and the consuming desire of his soul was that God might speak to others through him. And surely Browning does not outstep the truth in saying:

His language was not ours :
'Tis my belief, God spake :
No tinker had such powers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

FIRST EDITION.

London: Printed by George Larkin. Sm. 8vo. 1666. Collation: pp. 10 unnumbered, title and preface, pp. 94. Only known copy, lacking pp. 45-48. (British Museum Library.)

SECOND EDITION.

No copy known to exist.

THIRD EDITION.

No copy is known to exist. An announcement, however, of a third edition, in “The Term Catalogue—Trinity Term,” 1679, republished by Professor Arber, F.S.A., gives definite information concerning it. It reads thus:—“Grace abounding to the chief of Sinners; or a brief and faithful Relation of the exceeding Mercy of God in Christ to his poor servant, John Bunyan, etc. . . . All written by his own hand; and now published for the support of the weak. In Twelves. The Third Edition corrected and much enlarged. F. Smith, at the ‘Elephant and Castle’ in Cornhill (1679).”

FOURTH EDITION.

No copy known to exist.

FIFTH EDITION.

“London, Printed for Nath. Ponder, at the Peacock in the Poultry, over against the Stocks-Market.” 12mo. 1680. Collation: pp. 8 unnumbered, title and preface, pp. 136. Not in any Public Library. (In possession of the writer.)

SIXTH EDITION.

London, Printed for Nath. Ponder, at The Peacock in the Poultry, over against the Stock Market. 12mo. 1688. Collation: pp. 10 unnumbered, title and preface, pp. 173, pp. 7, Advertisements. Copies in British Museum and several public libraries. Mr. George Offor owned three copies, one imperfect.

SEVENTH EDITION.

London, Printed for Robert Ponder, and are to be sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster. 12mo. 1692. To this title is added:—"The seventh edition, corrected, with the Remainder of his Life and Character; by a Friend since his Death." Also "Postscript." Collation: pp. 8 unnumbered, title and preface, pp. 193, pp. 2, Advertisements of Bunyan's Works, containing notices of 36 pieces, and the folio, not including *Grace Abounding*, published by William Marshall. 1692. (Copy in British Museum, two copies possessed by writer.)

EIGHTH EDITION.

London, Printed for N. Ponder, and are to be sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster. 12mo. (?) 1693. Collation (my copy lacks title): pp. 6 unnumbered, title and preface, pp. 172, pp. 2 advertisements and postscript, as before. (Copy in writer's possession.) In the Bibliography of the Tract Society edition of *Grace Abounding* 1905, there is added as a note to the eighth edition, as follows:—"This impression contains a '*Postscript*' referring to the death of Mrs. Bunyan, which occurred in the year 1691, so that the issue in all probability took place early in 1693." Surely there must be some confusion of dates and editions here. For my copy of the seventh edition, bearing date of 1692, has the postscript, which it might well have, and which I have no doubt all perfect copies have. So also has my copy, lacking title page, which I judge to be the eighth edition; having also postscript and two pages of advertisements, though a different collation. I conclude, therefore, that the eighth edition is a reproduction of the seventh in matter, though not in format and pagination.

JOHN C. FOSTER.

Jottings by John Lewis of Margate, 1742.

The Bodleian library contains a copy of the History of Anabaptism, 1738, prepared for a second edition by Lewis. He adds one or two interesting anecdotes.

After the debate of Baptists with Featley in 1642, Kiffin, Hobson and Ritor, together with watermen, cooks, turners and others, pasted bills on house-doors to advertise where meetings were held.

In 1647 Richard Wollaston and Hanserd Knollys presented proposals to the Long Parliament, to abolish tithes. They did so again in 1652 to the Rump.

On 4 May, 1660, the Baptist meeting-house on St. Dunstan's hill near Thames Street was sacked.