

“Grace Abounding” of 1680.

UNDER the above title an interesting Paper appeared in the *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* for October, 1915, in which the writer, Mr. J. C. Foster, makes reference to Bunyan's "Relation of his Imprisonment," which since 1765 has been appended to his well-known work, "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners." Perhaps I may be permitted to supplement this reference by stating how this vivid prison story came to be printed for the first time, seventy-seven years after its author had departed this life in 1688.

In 1691 Charles Doe, a personal friend and devoted admirer of John Bunyan was very bent on bringing out a Collected Edition in folio of all Bunyan's writings. For this purpose he issued a paper entitled "The Struggler" by way of obtaining subscribers' names to the proposed edition. This paper contained a list of all Bunyan's printed works with their dates of issue; and at the end of this list mention was made of four manuscripts which as yet remained unprinted, namely: A Christian Dialogue; a Pocket Concordance; The Heavenly Footman, and a Relation by Bunyan of his own Imprisonment. The first two of these four appear never to have been printed but the remaining two have fortunately been preserved. The "Heavenly Footman" was published in 1698, but the Prison Recollections were not given to the world till far on in the next century. Some five and

thirty years ago, in a second-hand book shop I came upon a copy of the *first* edition, bearing date 1765 and having for its publisher James Buckland at the Buck in Paternoster Row. I naturally began to wonder to whom—after this long interval—we were indebted for the printing, and therefore permanent preservation, of this most racy product of Bunyan's pen. My first conjecture was, that it was to Samuel Palmer, in after years the editor of Calamy's Nonconformist Memorial, we were indebted for this act of service. For in his youth he joined the Church at Bedford, was for years in affectionate relations with its minister, and for years also a fellow-worshipper with Hannah Bunyan, Bunyan's great-grand-daughter, who was the possessor of the manuscript in question, and who must therefore have been well-known to him. Moreover, in later years Samuel Palmer, as a minister, had business relations with James Buckland, the publisher. I therefore came to the conclusion that he was the man who took the necessary steps for giving to the world the work in question. It was perhaps a natural conclusion, but it has turned out to be wrong. I know now as a matter of certainty that the man to whom we are indebted for this act of service was Thomas Gurney, at one time official shorthand writer to the Law Courts and who married the grand-daughter of Thomas Marsom, the founder of the first Baptist Church at Luton in Bedfordshire. On a stray leaf of the *Evangelical Magazine* for May 1813, which accidentally came into my possession a few years ago, Joseph Gurney, the son of Thomas, in a letter to the Editor, tells us how the whole thing came about. Writing from Walworth he refers to the fact that some people doubted the authenticity of a small publication entitled "A Relation of the Imprisonment of Mr. John Bunyan," and he asks leave of the Editor to lay the circumstances of its discovery before his readers. He

says: “I accompanied my late honoured father in his annual visit to his relations and friends in Bedfordshire in the summer of 1765. When at Bedford my father was informed that a grand-daughter of Mr. John Bunyan’s had a manuscript of her grandfather’s for which she wished to find a purchaser. She was aged and infirm. My father and I went to her lodging, and she delivered the manuscript to my father in my presence requesting him to sell it. The manuscript was in Mr. Bunyan’s handwriting. The copy was very fair; and it was sewed up in a little book. When my father returned to London he offered it to several booksellers, but the late Mr. Buckland was the only person who was willing to purchase it; he gave five guineas for it, which the poor woman joyfully accepted; and Mr. Buckland immediately printed it.”

It may interest some readers if I mention that, the year after this visit to Bedford with his father, the Joseph Gurney who wrote the letter married Rebecca Brodie at St. Andrew’s, Holborn, and they had a son, William Brodie Gurney, born to them in 1777. This son, again in after years married Ann Benham, and of two of their daughters one married the Rev. W. A. Salter, and another, Amelia, married the Rev. Joseph Angus, D.D.

When it is remembered that the “Relation of Bunyan’s Imprisonment” contains some of its author’s raciest utterances:—his own account of his arrest at Samsell when going there to preach; his subsequent conference with Justice Wingate and the Vicar of Harlington at the old manor house; his trial at the quarter-sessions at Bedford before Justice Keeling, who told him that he ought to use the Church Prayer Book because it had been ever since the time of the Apostles; and to whom Bunyan made the final answer that if he were out of prison to-day he would preach the Gospel again to-morrow; when it is further remem-

bered that this little book contains Bunyan's after-conference with the Clerk of the Peace who tried to get him to submit at the end of three month's imprisonment; and, not least, that it contains Bunyan's wife's plea for her husband before the Judges in the Swan Chamber, one of the noblest manifestations of Puritan Womanhood:—when we remember all this we may well be glad that this little book has become a possession for ever to the Church of God. Further, may we not sincerely congratulate the family of Dr. Angus and their kinsfolk, the Salters, that it was an ancestor of theirs who rendered this inestimable service to all those, and they are many, who are heart-lovers of the Dreamer of Bedford Gaol?

JOHN BROWN.

Marriage License of 1756.

Given by His Excellency Jonathan Belcher, Esq., Captain-General and Governor-in-chief in and over His Majesty's Province of New Jersey and territories thereon depending in America, Chancellor and Vice-Admiral in the same. To any Protestant Minister or Justice of the Peace. Whereas there is a mutual purpose of marriage between Joseph Sheppard of Fairfield in the County of Cumberland of the one party, and Mary Sayer, of the other party, for which they have desired my license, and have given bond upon condition that neither of them have any lawful impediment of free contract, affinity or consanguinity to hinder their being joined in the holy bonds of matrimony. I empower you to join the said Joseph Sheppard and Mary Sayer in the holy bonds of matrimony and then to pronounce man and wife. Given under my hand and prerogative seal at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, the third day of January, in the twenty-ninth year of the reign of our lord, George the Second, by the grace of God of Great Britain France and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith.

Entered in the Secretary's office,

J. BELCHER.