

JOHN BUNYAN



John Bunyan

FROM ROBERT WHITE'S PENCIL DRAWING
(Cracherode Collection British Museum).

JOHN BUNYAN

HIS LIFE TIMES AND WORK

BY

JOHN BROWN B.A., D.D.

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH AT BUNYAN MEETING BEDFORD

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WHYMPER

Wipf & Stock

PUBLISHERS

Eugene, Oregon

Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 W 8th Ave, Suite 3
Eugene, OR 97401

John Bunyan
His Life Times and Work, Third Edition
By Brown, John
ISBN 13: 978-1-55635-219-5
ISBN 10: 1-55635-219-0
Publication date 1/24/2007
Previously published by Wm. Isbister Limited, 1887

PREFACE.

EVERY author has, of course, a more or less sufficient reason for sending forth his book to the world. If I honestly gave mine I should say that in the first instance I drifted into its production by force of circumstances rather than set it before myself of deliberate choice.

As the minister for more than twenty years of the church of which Bunyan also was minister, and as the official guardian of such personal relics and memorials of him as remain to us, I have necessarily been brought into intercourse with the yearly increasing stream of visitors who, from all parts of the world, come to Bedford and Elstow to see for themselves the scenes and associations of Bunyan's life. I have found from a somewhat wide observation that, more than most writers, he has not only secured the intellectual interest of his readers, but also their personal affection ; and that everything relating to him that can be reliably told is matter of unfailing interest to minds the most diverse. Innumerable questions from others, therefore, first sent me forth on researches of my own, and, as a relaxation from the more serious duties of my ministry, this work became to me one of the pleasures of my life.

I send the result forth now in the hope that others may share this pleasure with me, and under the conviction that, notwithstanding the many lives of Bunyan that have appeared, there is still room, and even need, for one that should aim at strictest accuracy, and bring up to present date all that can be known concerning him.

My long residence among the scenes and surroundings of Bunyan's life has given me some advantage over previous biographers, who were only able to make occasional visits to the neighbourhood. I have had, however, still greater advantage in the fact that recent years have made available, for purposes of local and personal history, resources till quite lately unknown or inaccessible to the historical student. For the purpose of this biography researches have been made among the stores brought to light by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. Through the labours of the gentlemen who have acted as inspectors under that commission, there have been found among the MSS. of the House of Lords and in the numerous private collections scattered through the country, documents which have supplied missing links in our history, and made more vivid to us the story of the past. The papers relating to the diocese of Lincoln, in the Archbishop's Library at Lambeth, I have also found to be of considerable interest and value. I have, of course, availed myself of the priceless stores garnered up among the State Papers at the Record Office, and among the steadily accumulating materials in the manuscript and printed book departments of the British Museum. I have also found great help from the collections in the Bodleian, in the University Library at

Cambridge, and in Dr. Williams' Library in London. Among resources of a more local kind I have found the most valuable assistance from the Transcript Registers and Act-Books of the Archdeaconry of Bedford, the Minute-Books and other documents in the Archives of the Bedford Corporation, and the Bedfordshire wills preserved in the district registry of the Court of Probate at Northampton.

In addition to these materials of a more public and national character the records of the church at Bedford, with which Bunyan was so long associated, have for the first time been woven into the story of his life; and for the first time, also, his general works have been placed in due order and chronological relation to his personal history. On this latter point it may be well to say, that as during the sixty years of Bunyan's life he wrote something like sixty books, the account of most of these had necessarily to come within limited space. I have, therefore, sought to give not so much an abstract or general estimate as to bring together whatever was most characteristic of his special genius and cast of mind.

In the course of these researches I have always found the name of Bunyan a certain spell with which to divine, and I have most gratefully to record the readiness on all hands to afford me the most kindly help in the furtherance of my enterprise. Where so many have been kind it seems invidious to make selection for special acknowledgment, yet I feel I must express my personal thanks to Archdeacon Bathurst for ready access, readily granted, to the documents in the Archives of his

registry, also for important references or suggestions, and sometimes both, to the Rev. S. R. Wigram, author of "The Chronicles of the Abbey of Elstow;" to Henry Gough, Esq., F.S.A., of Redhill; to Edward Arber, Esq., F.S.A., Professor of English Language and Literature, Sir Josiah Mason's College, Birmingham; to Edward Peacock, Esq., F.S.A., of Bottesford Manor, Brigg; to J. Allanson Picton, Esq., M.P.; and to J. E. Bailey, Esq., F.S.A., of Manchester.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the sympathetic zeal with which Mr. Edward Whymper has undertaken the work of illustration. The choice of subjects has been made in great measure on his suggestion; and the sketches, taken by him on the spot, of places and buildings associated with memories of Bunyan will perhaps do more than is possible by any verbal descriptions to give local colouring to the narrative. It is hoped also that the value of this work will be increased by his careful reproduction of the Portrait of Bunyan, taken on vellum, by Robert White, which was preserved in the Cracherode Collection, and which forms the frontispiece to this volume.

JOHN BROWN.

THE MANSE, BEDFORD,
October 14th, 1885.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

IN this edition, as in the second, I have to make grateful acknowledgment of the kind reception accorded to this my endeavour to reproduce the facts of Bunyan's life. It has been gratifying, indeed, to receive from many, both in this country and in the United States, the assurance that this, the latest biography of the great dreamer, has met and supplied a felt want in our literature. It is sent forth in its present form without any change, except such as was required in bringing up the bibliographical appendices to the latest date.

When two years ago I ventured in the first edition of this biography (pp. 253—262) to put forth a theory of my own as to the time of Bunyan's later imprisonment, and to express my belief that he was arrested for the third time in 1675, I little thought that this supposition of mine would so soon receive complete confirmation. Yet such is the fact. A few weeks ago, when the Chauncy Collection of Autographs came to the hammer at Messrs. Sotheby's, the original warrant for his apprehension was found to be among them. It is signed by no fewer than thirteen Bedfordshire justices,

ten out of the thirteen adding their seals as well as their signatures, and is as follows :—

TO THE CONSTABLES OF BEDFORD AND TO EVERY
OF THEM.

J. NAPIER (L.S.)	Whereas information and complaint is made unto us that (notwithstanding the Kings Maj ^{ties} late Act of most gracious generall and free pardon to all his subjects for past misdemeanours, that by his said clemencie and indulgent grace and favour they might bee mooved and induced for the time to come more carefully to observe his Highenes lawes and statutes, and to continue in theire loyall and due obedience to his Maj ^{tie}), yett one John Bunnyon of your said towne, Tynker, hath divers times within one month last past in contempt of his Maj ^{ties} good laws preached or taught at a Conventicle meeteing or assembly under colour or pretence of exercise of Religion in other manner then according to the Liturgie or Practise of the Church of England. These are therefore in his Maj ^{ties} name to comand you forthwith to apprehend and bring the Body of the said John Bunnion beefore us or any of us or other his Maj ^{ties} Justice of Peace within the said county to answer the premises and further to doe and receave as to Law and Justice shall appertaine, and hereof you are not to faile. Given our handes and seales the fflowerth day of March in the seaven and twentieth yeare of the Raigne of our most gracious Sovereigne Lord King Charles the Second, A ^o q ^m D ⁿⁱ juxta gr: 1674. [New Style 1675.]
W. BEECHER (L.S.)	
(L.S.)	
G. BLUNDELL	
(L.S.)	
HUM: MONOUN	
WILL: FRANKLIN (L.S.)	
WILL: SPENCER	
JOHN VENTRISSE (L.S.)	WILL: GERY ST: JO: CHERNOCKE (L.S.) W ^m DANIELL (L.S.) (L.S.) T. BROWNE GAIUS SQUIER W. FFOSTER (L.S.)

This document was purchased by W. G. Thorpe, Esq., F.G.S. of the Middle Temple, to whose kindness, in first sending me a copy and afterwards furnishing me with every opportunity of making a personal examination, I desire to bear grateful testimony. The document is undoubtedly genuine. To those familiar with seventeenth century MSS., the paper and handwriting are evidence sufficient of this. In addition, Mr. Thompson, head of the department of MSS. in the British Museum, has verified several of the seals with the coats of arms of

the justices, and I have myself independent evidence bearing on the genuineness of some of the signatures. The magistrates signing were: Sir John Napier of Luton Hoo, Sir William Beecher of Howbury, Sir George Blundell of Cardington, these two being also upon the bench at Bunyan's first conviction in 1661; Sir Humphrey Monoux of Wootton, Sir William Franklin of Bolnhurst, Mr. Ventriss of Campton, Mr. Spencer of Cople, Mr. Gery of Bushmeade, Sir St. John Chernocke of Hulcote, Mr. Daniell of Silsoe, Mr. Browne of Arlesey, Mr. Squier of Eaton Socon, and Dr. Foster of Bedford.

It will thus be seen that there was a formidable and unusual list of names to the warrant, and Bunyan was evidently regarded as an offender to be secured by the strongest exercise of authority. Foster, whom Bunyan had met at the time of his first arrest in 1660, whom he then described as "a right Judas," and who, as this work shows, pursued the Nonconformists with relentless malignity through all the intervening years, was almost certainly the main mover in the matter. The document was evidently prepared beforehand by a professional scrivener, probably one of Foster's own clerks, and was ready to be signed and sealed when the Justices met for Quarter Sessions at Bedford. Foster was in hot haste; for the King's proclamation recalling the preachers' licences was only signed on the 3rd of February. It would be the 4th before it was known in London, and probably the 6th before it reached Bedford. The month therefore mentioned in this warrant signed on the 4th

of March, was a short month indeed. Bunyan, as a marked man and an old offender, was probably on his arrest committed for trial, he being held to bail, and the trial coming on at the following Quarter Sessions. Various considerations, such as the date of the publication of "*The Pilgrim's Progress*;" the tardy and circuitous interference on his behalf by Bishop Barlow, who was not consecrated till the end of June; and the condition of Bedford Gaol in the early months of 1675, all point to the latter half of that year as the time of his six months' imprisonment after conviction. It may be indeed that it was in prospect of such a prisoner as Bunyan that the Borough Council gave that order for the repairing of the prison on the bridge, which was passed on the 13th of May.

It is only necessary to add, on the authority of their solicitors, Messrs. Maples, Teesdale & Co., that it was the Chauncy family who recently sold the collection in which this interesting document was found, and that that collection was made in the last century by Dr. Charles Chauncy, a celebrated physician and antiquary (1706—1777), and his brother Nathaniel, who succeeded to the collection and increased it. It originally included paintings and prints, coins and books, and among the MSS. were many important documents, some of them bearing the autographs of Charles I., Oliver Cromwell, Prince Rupert, Charles II., William III., and various eminent statesmen and officials of the 17th century.

If I am not prolonging this preface unduly, it may be interesting to mention a reference to Bunyan's maternal

grandfather, William Bentley, recently met with. In the month of November, 1886, G. A. Aitken, Esq., of Kensington, purchased at Sotheby's a number of old deeds principally relating to property in Elstow. He very courteously sent them down to me for inspection, and in looking them through I found William Bentley's signature as that of a witness attesting a deed of sale between two inhabitants of Elstow, bearing date 12th June, 1611. This signature of the father of Bunyan's mother is written in a superior manner, and indicates an amount of education not common in those days even among persons of good social position. There was also another deed by which Thomas Purney sold to Thomas Hoddle, late of Elstowe, "All that messuage, tenement, or Inne called The Bell in Elstowe, between a tenement in the tenure of *William Bentley* on the south side and a tenement in the tenure of Widdowe Braye on the north." This deed is dated 1st November, 1612, and indicates the spot which was the home of Bunyan's mother in the days of her childhood.

In conclusion, I would fain express the hope that this Life of a brave and godly Englishman may further those principles of civil and religious freedom to which he bore such faithful testimony, and on behalf of which he suffered so much. Above all, it is pleasant to me to think that renewed intercourse with the spirit of Bunyan in these pages may deepen the religious life in the hearts of some of my readers, bringing them into a closer, diviner fellowship with his Lord and theirs.

THE MANSE, BEDFORD,

October 10th, 1887.

CONTENTS.

I.	PAGE
EARLY CHURCH LIFE IN BEDFORDSHIRE	1
II.	
ELSTOW AND THE BUNYANS OF ELSTOW	17
III.	
THE CIVIL WARS.	39
IV.	
SPIRITUAL CONFLICT	53
V.	
THE CHURCH AT BEDFORD	69
VI.	
FIVE YEARS OF BEDFORD LIFE: 1655—1660	96
VII.	
HARLINGTON HOUSE AND THE CHAPEL OF HERNE	130
VIII.	
TWELVE YEARS IN BEDFORD GAOL	160
IX.	
THE CHURCH IN THE STORM.	192
X.	
THREE YEARS OF LIBERTY: 1672—1675	223

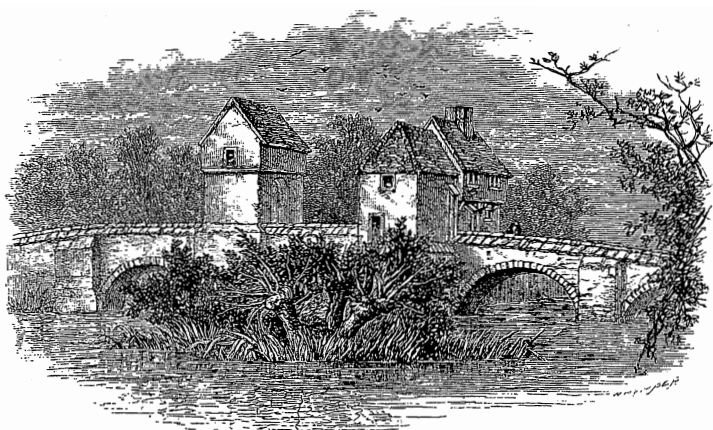
XI.		PAGE
THE "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS"		253
XII.		
THE PLACE OF THE "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS" IN LITERATURE		282
XIII.		
INTERVAL BETWEEN THE "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS" AND THE "HOLY WAR": 1676-1682		301
XIV.		
MANSOUL AND THE BEDFORD CORPORATION		321
XV.		
IN THE REIGN OF JAMES THE SECOND		345
XVI.		
BUNYAN'S LAST DAYS		371
XVII.		
BUNYAN'S DESCENDANTS AND SUCCESSORS		397
XVIII.		
BUNYAN'S POSTHUMOUS PUBLICATIONS		427
XIX.		
EDITIONS, VERSIONS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND IMITATIONS OF THE "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS"		453

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I. CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF BUNYAN'S WORKS	483
„ II. FOREIGN VERSIONS OF THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS	489
„ III. VERSIONS, BIOGRAPHIES, LECTURES	493
„ IV. PERSONAL RELICS OF BUNYAN	496

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
1. PORTRAIT OF BUNYAN (from a drawing by Robert White, in the Cracherode Collection, British Museum)	1 <i>Frontispiece</i>
2. BEDFORD TOWN GAOL (from an old Print)	1
3. ELSTOW CHURCH	17
4. WEST VIEW OF ELSTOW CHURCH	19
5. HILLERSDON PORCH	21
6. MOOT HALL ON ELSTOW GREEN, THE COURT-HOUSE OF THE MANOR.	25
7. MAP OF BEDFORD AND ELSTOW (showing Bunyan's Birthplace)	29
8. FAC-SIMILES FROM THE ELSTOW TRANSCRIPT REGISTERS	32
9. ELSTOW CHURCH FROM THE ABBEY FISHPONDS	37
10. BUNYAN'S COTTAGE AT ELSTOW. (His place of abode after his Marriage, 1649-1655)	53
11. ELSTOW GREEN	61
12. BELFRY DOOR, ELSTOW	63
13. ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, BEDFORD	91
14. SPEED'S MAP OF BEDFORD IN 1610	99
15. JOHN BUNYAN PREACHING IN FRONT OF THE MOTE HALL, BEDFORD, OCTOBER 18, 1659 (from an old Etching)	121
16. MAP OF THE DISTRICT	136
17. SITE OF THE COTTAGE AT LOWER SAMSELL IN WHICH BUNYAN WAS ARRESTED	137
18. HARLINGTON HOUSE. (As it appeared in the Seventeenth Century)	141
19. THE CHAPEL OF HERNE, BEDFORD	149
20. BUNYAN'S CHAIR	231
21. BUNYAN'S JUG	252
22. BUNYAN'S CABINET AND STAFF	320
23. BUNYAN'S HOUSE IN ST. CUTHBERT'S, BEDFORD	371
24. THE HOUSE ON SNOW HILL IN WHICH BUNYAN DIED (from an old Etching)	387
25. BUNYAN'S TOMB IN BUNHILL FIELDS	396



BEDFORD TOWN GAOL. *From an old Print.*

I.

EARLY CHURCH LIFE IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

JOHN BUNYAN, born in the English Midlands, may be taken as in some sense a characteristic representative of the region that gave him birth. For the tract of country between the Trent and the Bedfordshire Ouse, which from its northern half gave the Pilgrim Fathers to New England, furnished from its fens and fields in the south a succession of men of his own sturdy independence of thought, and in strong sympathy with his own Puritan faith. In the development of even the most original genius, the environment counts for much; it may help us, therefore, to a truer estimate of the man if we first briefly recall the spiritual antecedents of the county in which he was born and in which his life was spent.

When the Reformation broke in upon the old ecclesiastical

system of England, Bedfordshire seems to have been more than usually receptive of the new ideas then rising over Europe. Not that the whole county, any more than other counties, was prepared to become Protestant at a stroke. Here, as elsewhere, many Englishmen, after their manner, were inclined to "stand in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths." Leading families, like the Mordaunts of Turvey, remained firm in their allegiance to the ancient faith, and turned their houses into hiding-places for its bishops and priests during the hard days of Elizabeth and James. Not a few of the yeomen also held tenaciously to the old well-worn modes of religious thought, even while diligently attending the services of a Reformed Church. As late as 1579, or more than forty years after England had broken with the See of Rome, farmers like Robert Bonyon, of Wingfield, in the parish of Chalgrave, in the wills they made, still commended their souls not only to Almighty God, but also "to our blessed Ladie St. Mary and to all the holy company of heaven." * No wonder, therefore, that Protestant vicars did not always find it easy to carry their slowly moving parishioners with them. It was far on in the reign of Elizabeth, for example, when Peter White, the Minister of Eaton Socon, having reconstructed the rood-loft of his parish church, where anciently stood the rood called Mary and John, had in 1581 to preach and publish a "Godlye and fruitefull sermon against Idolatrie," to quiet "the consciences of the simple." He found it needful to assure troubled souls among his parishioners that the changes he had made were really very slight. "The Rood-lofte wanteth nothing of his former state, but only the images and uppermost front." The loft itself, "being nine foot in bredth, yet standeth with the beame," only instead of having "the Roode or Idoll," "the Tabernacle that sometimes stood upon the Altar is placed from the beame aforesaid." The rest "remaineth as it did in the time of popery." Even yet they were not altogether reassured, and another pamphlet issued by the vicar the following year, shows that the feeling roused by his Protestant innovations was neither slight nor soon allayed.† Possibly similar clashings of opinion disturbed

* *Bedfordshire Wills*, 1576-9, No. 126.

† *A Godlye and fruitefull Sermon against Idolatrie*. Preached the xv daye of

other parishes in the county; and it is tolerably certain that in the hearts of many there was still, from old association, a strong attachment to the religious usages and superstitions of the Church, now no longer the Church of the State.

Still, these instances were exceptional. The tradespeople in the towns, as well as a majority of the gentry in the country-houses, were staunchly Protestant, as were also the two great noblemen, the natural chieftains of the county, the Earls of Kent and Bedford. The county, indeed, became a recognised asylum of religious liberty for many from across the sea. Refugees for conscience sake came from Alençon and Valenciennes, and settled at Cranfield in 1568, bringing with them their lace pillows, and establishing the lace trade of the district. And while many Protestants from the Netherlands, fleeing from Philip of Spain and the Duke of Alva, thus found a home in the villages of Bedfordshire, introducing names still to be recognised in the parish registers, collections were also made in the churches of the county for others still in their own land, and still suffering cruel hardships on account of their faith.

Both before the Reformation and for a century after we get what is probably the most realistic view possible to us now, of the ecclesiastical life of the people of England, from a source hitherto comparatively neglected, the "Act-Books" of the Archdeacons' Courts. From the middle of the fifteenth century certainly, and probably much earlier, with the exception of the brief reign of Edward VI., down to the year 1640, when the procedure known as *ex officio* was abolished, there was kept up a close surveillance of the lives of the people in each parish of each of the deaneries of which the archdeaconry was composed. These Courts, which were regularly held, took cognisance of every conceivable offence against morals as well as against ecclesiastical discipline. The form of procedure was either by *Inquisition*, when the judge was the accuser; by *Accusation*,

Januarie, 1581, in the Parrishe Church of Eaton Sooken, within the Countie of Bedforde, by P. W., Minister and Preacher in that place. At London Imprinted by Frauncis Coldocke, 1581, 8vo. [black letter].

An Answer to certaine crabbed Questions, pretending a real presence of Christ in the Sacramente. Gathered & set forth by Peter Whyte. London, Imprinted by John Wolfe and Henry Kirkeham, 1582.

when some other person made the charge; or by *Denunciation*, which was simple presentment. The most frequent penalty on conviction was a money fine, but in many cases the culprit had to do penance in a white sheet, or make public confession before a congregation of his neighbours. More serious offences were followed by excommunication, a penalty carrying with it social consequences of the gravest kind. For example, from the Act-Books of the Bedford Archdeaconry, we find that in 1617, William Worrall of Kempston was cited before the Court at Ampthill for buying and selling with Thomas Crawley, which he ought not to have done because Thomas Crawley was an excommunicate person. The same year John Glidall, fuller, of Cranfield, and Francis Crashop, were cited and fined, "for setting Richard Barrett, an excommunicate person, a work." Even love must be crossed and courtship forbidden till the Church was reconciled. In 1616 Roger Perriam, of St. Cuthberts, Bedford, was cited, "for that there is a report that he doth frequent and keep company with Margaret Bennet, who standeth excommunicate." If an excommunicated person ventured to appear among his neighbours in the parish church, the minister was compelled to call public attention to his presence, and absolutely stop the service till the proscribed person had left the building. Indeed, the consequences which followed a man through life did not even cease with his death. Robert Baker, the parish clerk of Potton, was punished for burying the body of an excommunicate person in the churchyard; and some years later Anne Skevington of Turvey was herself excommunicated because that, in widowed grief, she had been present at the burial of her own husband, who for his nonconformity had died under the ban of the Church.

It lies outside the range of our present purpose, of course, but it would be interesting to show what curious light the records of the various Archdeacons' Courts throw on the morals and manners of our forefathers. A large proportion were cases of intemperance and impurity. Among the ecclesiastical offences were such as refusing to follow the cross in procession, hanging down the head at the elevation of the host, throwing the pax-bread on the ground, separating the holy oil, washing hands in the baptismal font, singing the Litany derisively, refusing to

pay dues and keep feast days, reading heretical and English books during the mass, not receiving ashes on Ash Wednesday, and not confessing at Easter. Among offences of a more miscellaneous character, we find one man bringing judgment upon himself for "marieing his wife in their parish church in her mask;" another "for being married to his wife under a bush;" and yet a third, "for that the day he was marryed he dyd blowe oute the lightes about the altar and wolde suffer no lightes to bourne." One unloving spirit was dealt with "for not treating his wife with affection;" another, yet more unloving, "for cheening his wife to a post and slandering his neighbours." People offended by "exercising the magic art," by consulting cunning women, by using private conventicles, and by "hiring foreigners to work at their art." It was an offence also not to "make two torches and keep the drynkynge in the parish, according to the laudable use and custom;" and a shoemaker was punished, for that he "kepeth his bedd upon the Sundaies and other holy days at time of mattens and mass, as it were a hownde that shuld kepe his kenell." One man came into trouble for "folding some sheep in the church during a snow storm;" and another, for "living in the church-porch, and suffering his wife to travail in childbirth there and to continue there her whole moneth." Women fell under the judgment of the Court for "coming to be churched without kercher, midwife or wyves;" or not "as other honest women, but comynge in her hatt, and a quarter about her neck;" or for "not coming in a vaile;" and one brisk housewife, striking out a bright idea on a rainy day, found to her cost that she had offended by "hanginge her lynnens in the church to dry."

The law was administered with even-handed justice against the officials of the parish as well as against the common people. The clergy were cited for "not sprinkling holy water on the parishioners," for "letting divers die without howsill or shrifte throw his defeaute;" for "refusing to reply to the archdeacon in the Roman tongue;" for refusing to hear confessions, "because it grieves him to heare the confessions made." One rector went quite wrong by "taking upon himself to the scandal of his calling, to be lord of misrule at Christmas among certein yongelinges," and another by leaving some ecclesias-

tical ceremony to be present at the more exciting spectacle of an execution. The churchwardens incurred penalty by "suffering unrulie persons to ring and jingle the bells out of due season," by permitting a minstrel to play in church at a wedding, and because the white sheet used for penance was missing. The schoolmaster was fined for teaching children above sixteen years of age without licence, or for "being negligent in his place, his schollers not profiting under him." And, finally, that chartered libertine, the parish clerk, was dealt with summarily, and surely most righteously, "for that he singeth the psalmes in the church with such a jesticulous tone and altitnant voyce, viz. squeaking like a pigg, which doth not only interrupt the other voyces, but is altogether dissonant and disagreeing unto any musicall harmonie."*

Some of the citations in the Act-Books of the Court of the Archdeaonry of Bedford relate to Puritan scruples on the part of several of the clergy of the county. For example, in 1601, Cæsar Walpole, curate of Woburn, and in 1617, William Moore, minister of Sharnbrook, Oliver Roberts, vicar of Goldington, and Christopher Watson, curate of Pertenhall, were cited for "not wearing the surplisse usuallie," or for "wanting a hoode," or for not making the sign of the cross in baptism, or for not reading prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays. It is usually assumed that the Puritan party were the only strict Sabbatarians in the country; but in Bedfordshire, as a matter of fact, the same court and the same commissary dealing with the ministers just named for Puritanism, enforced also upon the laity the strictest observance of the Sabbath. Within the years 1610—1617, Oliver Lenton and Walter Lewin of Barford, were punished for looking on football players on Sunday; John Hawkes of Renhold, for playing at nineholes; and William Shellie of Bedford, for playing at tables on that day. Roger White of Risely, also was cited for travelling his horses on the Sabbath day; Robert Kinge of Shelton, "for going towards London on the Sabbath day in winter," and William Dennys of Bedford, "for going out of St. John's Church to Elstowe in sermon tyme." The following persons were also cited: John Tirolde of Bedford, for "bringing in his wares on

* Hale's *Precedents and Proceedings in Criminal Causes*, 1457—1640.

the Sabbath day in praier time;" John Sharman, for killing meat; Thomas Styles, for dressing a calf in the open Butcher-rowe, and Peter Lord, the barber of Woburn, for "trimming men" on that day. Saints' days were to be as rigorously observed as Sundays. Three parishioners of Milton Ernys came under the lash of the court: Leonard Willimot for carting on St. Luke's day; James Hailey, for winnowing corn on Easter Tuesday; and Walter Griffin "for putting upp netts and catching larks on a holliday." John Neele of Luton, also found to his cost that he had done wrong in "stocking a fruit tree on All Saints' day," so did Thomas Bigrave of Pavenham, and John West of Stevington, who were "at a foote-ball plaie on Ascension Day, and absent from praier;" and Henry Waters of Litlington had to answer at Ampthill "for carrying a burthen of woode home from Beckring Park on Easter day last." Among others presented before the court were five parishioners of Poddington, for not receiving the communion thrice a year; Anna Chandler, of Studham for being "a Brownist;" the wife of John Wheeler of Cranfield, with others of his neighbours, for not frequenting church; Richard Reade of Keysoe, for so far anticipating the Quaker, George Fox, by some thirty years as to sit "with his hatt on usually at the reading of the Epistle and Gospell," and William Shackspeare of Odell, for not communicating.

It is curious to see the uses to which the churches were sometimes put in the days to which the Act-Books refer. Indeed we are almost startled to find Harman Sheppard, the curate of the parish, presented in 1612, for baiting a bear in the church at Woburn.* Some years later, also, the church-wardens of Knotting were cited because that on three successive Shrove Tuesdays they and their sons and Mr. Alvey, the rector of the parish, "permitted and were present at cockfightings in the chancell of the said church in or about the sacred place where the communion table stands, many persons being there assembled and wagers laid."† In still later years the rector of Carlton was presented because "immediately before service he did lead his horse in at the south doore into the chancell of

* *Lambeth MSS.* Miscell., 952; 43.

† *State Papers, Dom.*, Chas. I., 1637, vol. ccclxx., 90.

Carlton church, where he sett him and there continued all the time of the said service and sermon." Patrons of benefices also, as well as clergy and churchwardens, sometimes dealt with the sacred edifice in remarkably free and easy fashion. An instance of this may be found in a village between Bedford and Northampton, of which in 1641, it was certified that the vicarage had been pulled down, the glebe lost, and the tithes detained, and that the lord of the manor, Jasper Hartnell, after dismantling the body of the church, selling the lead and the bells, had turned the chancel into a kennel for his greyhounds, and the steeple into a dove-house for his pigeons.*

The country squires who could so rudely handle the churches would not be over nice in their treatment of the clergy. Jasper Fisher, the rector of Wilden, in his visitation sermon preached at Ampthill in 1635, complained that "the great men do send God's messengers upon their base errands, place them below their serving-men; esteem them below their parasites; nay, deride and abuse, persecute and destroy them for their message."† In the same strain speaks out that Shakespeare of the Puritans, as he was called, Thomas Adams, the vicar of Willington. In a Visitation Sermon preached at St. Paul's, in Bedford, in 1612, he asks, "Shall the Papists twit us that our *Our Father* hath taken from the Church what their *Paternoster* bestowed upon it? Were the goods of the Church for this intrusted to gentlemen and lords of the manors, that they should set them to sale and turn their benefits into their own purses? . . . We are well freed from the Bonners and butchers of Christ's lambs; but we have still fleecers enough—too many—that love to see learning follow Homer with a staff and a wallet. Every gentleman thinks the priest mean, but the priest's means hath made many a gentleman."‡

The Puritan movement, like the Protestant before it, found a congenial home in Bedfordshire. Thomas Brightman, the vicar of Hawnes, a celebrated preacher and writer in his time, was one of several ministers who, in 1603, waited upon King

* *A Certificate from Northamptonshire*, 4to. London, 1641.

† *The Priest's Duty and Dignity*, by Jasper Fisher, Presbyter and Rector of Wilden in Bedfordshire: London, 1636.

‡ *Heaven and Earth reconciled*: a sermon preached at St. Paul's Church in Bedford, Oct. 3rd, 1612. Adams' Practical Works, 1862, I., 448, *et seq.*

James, at that time the guest of the Cromwells at Hinchinbrook, near Huntingdon. Speaking for the people from whom they came they "had some good conference with his Majesty and gave him a book of reasons." They pleaded against the use of the sign of the cross in baptism, against baptism by women, and against the use of the cap and surplice. They urged that there ought to be examination into the life of such persons as came to the communion, and that ministers ought not to be called priests. They petitioned against "longsomeness of service, and the abuse of church songes and music," against profanation of the Lord's Day, and against excommunication by such lay persons as the Archdeacon's commissary, or for trifles, and without the consent of pastors.*

It need not be repeated here how the Puritans got nothing from King James but this "good conference" at Hinchinbrook. But though disappointed in their hopes from him they held on their way, their opinions obtaining wider and firmer hold among the people. In 1633, the Bishop of Lincoln, reporting the condition of his diocese to Archbishop Laud, observes, "Some in Bedfordshire use to wander from their own parish churches to follow preachers affected by themselves, of which the officers are caused to take special care." The following year Laud himself reports to the King: "As for Lincolne, it being the greatest diocese in the kingdom, I have now reduced that under Metropolitcal Visitation, and visited it this preceding year. My visitors there found Bedfordshire most tainted of any part of the diocese, and in particular Mr. Bulkeley is sent to the High Commission for Nonconformity."† The first of the two visitors here referred to by the Archbishop was Dr. Farmery, chancellor of the diocese of Lincoln, who in July, 1634, reported to him as follows: "That sort of people that run from their own parishes after affected preachers are the most troublesome part of the ecclesiastical inquisition in Buckingham and Bedfordshires, where they found great abettors in this their disorder. The new recorder of Bedford questioned at a sessions one of my apparitors for troubling, as

* Petition to King James, Nov. 30th, 1604. *Addl. MSS.* 8978.

† Laud's Annual Reports of his Province to the King, 1633, 1634. *Lambeth MSS.* 943, p. 251.

he said, these godly men, and then delivered publicly that if men were thus troubled for going to hear a sermon when their minister at home did not preach, it would breed a scab in the kingdom.”*

It was at this time that Archbishop Laud revived the long disused claim to Metropolitan Visitation, sending his Vicar-General, Sir Nathaniel Brent, to report upon the ecclesiastical condition of the whole of the diocese of Lincoln. The month after Dr. Farmery's report had been received, Sir Nathaniel set forth, beginning at Lincoln and working his way southward. He unearthed strange doings and met with curious experiences. Ale-houses, hounds, and swine were kept in churchyards; copes and vestments had been embezzled; clandestine marriages were celebrated by the clergy; and both clergy and laity were much given to drunkenness. At Saxby, Lord Castleton's bailiff was found melting in the middle aisle of the church the lead he had stripped from the roof. At Brigstock, the Court had to deal with a clergyman who was charged with ensuring an audience to the end of his discourses by the simple expedient of locking the church door upon his congregation, keeping them there till it was quite dark. After this we come upon a different class of offenders. “At Huntingdon, divers ministers in that division were suspected for Puritanisme, but being questioned they professed absolute conformitie.” Brent reached Bedford on the 26th of August, of which he reports: “Mr. Peter Bulkeley, rector of Odell, suspected for Puritanisme, was suspended for absence. He came to me to Aylesburie, where he confessed he never used the surplisse or the crosse in baptisme. He is to appear in the High Commission Court the first court day in November if he reform not before. Divers ministers in Bedford, especially Mr. Smith, are suspected for Nonconformitie.”†

This Peter Bulkeley thus singled out by the Vicar-General, had succeeded his father, Dr. Edward Bulkeley, as rector of Odell, in 1620. His sister was the wife of Sir Oliver St. John, of Keysoe, and therefore the mother of that Oliver St. John, who was afterwards Cromwell's Lord Chief Justice. Educated at

* *State Papers, Dom.*, Chas. I., 1634, July 14th.

† *Ibid.*, 1634, vol. cclxxiv., 12.

St. John's College, Cambridge, Peter Bulkeley was fellow of his college at an early age, and is spoken of by those who knew him as eminent for scholarship. He was equally eminent for his godly life. Cotton Mather says of him that he was "full of those devotions which accompany a conversation in heaven," and no neighbour could talk with him, but "he would let fall some holy, serious, divine, and useful sentences ere they parted." He was in the full career of his usefulness when silenced by Brent. The summons to the Vicar-General's court reached him, says Mather, "at the time his ministry had a notable success in the conversion of many unto God." Finding after his appearance at Aylesbury he could not, with a good conscience, retain his ministry, he took sorrowful leave of the good people of Odell, and accompanied by Zachary Symmes, minister of the Priory Church of Dunstable, sailed for New England, where he joined the Pilgrim Fathers in 1635. Resting for a time at Boston, he subsequently pursued his way "thro' unknowne woods" to the banks of the Musketaquid river, where he founded the town of Concord, the first inland plantation of the Massachusetts colony. It may be interesting to mention that Ralph Waldo Emerson, Concord's best known citizen, sprang from Peter Bulkeley, whose granddaughter was married to the Rev. John Emerson in 1665.*

While thus dealing with the two Pilgrim Fathers who went from Bedfordshire, Sir Nathaniel Brent still went on his tour of search. From Ampthill, where he was on the 30th of August, he reports to Laud that "great complainte was made of the inconformitie of Mr. Shirley, the vicar of Hawnes, Mr. Holmes, the vicar of Whipsnade, and many others whom I questioned for inconformitie." Of Bow Brickhill, where he was on the 2nd of September, he says: "The people thereabouts, and indeed in all the south part of this diocese, are much addicted to leave their parish churches to go to hear affected preachers elsewhere. The country much complayneth of the Court at Leyton and those of the Court, of Puritanisme. Much complayning, but no proving." With which words Sir Nathaniel took his leave.

* *The Bulkeley Family, or the Descendants of the Rev. Peter Bulkeley*, by F. W. Chapman. Hartford, Conn., 1875.

When the Vicar-General was gone the officers of the local Ecclesiastical Courts still zealously carried out the policy of driving conscientious men into those ways of conformity so dear to the ecclesiastical mind. Among the MSS. in the House of Lords, calendared in recent years by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, there are numerous petitions, interesting to the local historian, which throw light on the course steadily pursued. In one petition, for example, John James of Olney complains that, though nothing had been proved against him, he had been compelled to pay a fine of £10 towards the building of St. Paul's, in London, the ordinary fees, and £16 to the Court. He had also, he says, to give a beaver to Sir John Lambe, Dean of Arches, "which cost your petitioner £4 more." His own minister being suspended, and no preaching going on in his own parish church, he went to hear a sermon elsewhere, and, though this sermon was preached in a parish church, and not in a conventicle, he was for this offence excommunicated. To obtain absolution from this sentence cost him the ordinary fees and a fine of £24 more. John James has further sorrows to recount, "all which unjust proceedings have caused your petitioner to sell his inheritance, and to spend above £100, and tend greatly to his undoing."*

It would seem that many of the clergy fared no better than the laity. Another petition is from Daniel Clarke, vicar of Steventon, and others, and complains that Walter Walker, the commissary of the Court at Bedford, "hath, by virtue of his office, tyrannized over the clergy of sett purpose to ingratiate himself with the Archbishop of Canterburie." In apportioning the tax laid upon the clergy for the King's expedition to Scotland, he had made excessive assessments, "threatening to suspend them, and to return their names if they did not comply." From Clarke he had demanded £5 instead of forty-six shillings, and from Thomas Wells, the rector of Carlton, £6. "This was greatly too much, and because he did not pay he cited Mr. Wells (though a hundred years olde) to Bedford Courte, being five miles from his living; and because he did not appear he suspended him, and called him an old owle, and would not dismiss him till he paid the £6." The petition, which was evi-

* *House of Lords MSS.*, Feb. 9th, 1640, 1641. Petition of John James.

dently a combined expression of grievances, goes on to describe how "the said commissarie did suspend the curate of Bromham for referring to the Government in his sermon," and did "exhibit articles against the rector of Stondon for reading divine service once without a surplice, though it was proved by witnesses that at that time his surplice was at the washers;" how "he suspended the vicar of Cardington for once omitting to weare the surplice in the afternoon, though he had worne it in the morning;" and how he declared he would make Richard Kifford, the churchwarden of Cockayne Hatley, stand in three market towns barefooted and bareheaded, or pay a fine of £13 6s. 8d., for not presenting that the font was in decay.*

In another section the same petition complains of a change of procedure forced upon the parishioners of St. Paul's, in Bedford, in the manner of observing the Communion of the Lord's Supper. From the time of the Reformation and the abolition of the mass there had been no rails round the communion-table. As to whether it was a table or an altar, whether its right place was in the body of the church or chancel, or altarwise at the east end, controversy had been briskly waged. But, practically, a compromise, favourable to the Puritans, had been come to in Elizabeth's time, which was substantially adopted in the canons of 1603. According to this the table should stand in the church where the altar stood before the Reformation, *except at the celebration of the Communion*, at which time it was to be brought out and placed where the communicants could most conveniently see and hear the minister, and then to be returned to its former place when the service was over. The Eighty-Second Canon distinctly enjoins a moveable Communion-table, so that a fixed altar with altar-rails and kneeling communicants thereat were unlawful innovations introduced into the Church of England by Archbishop Laud.

In his endeavour to change the practice thus established Laud was met by stout resistance. In 1636 he reported to the King that in Bedfordshire there was great opposition both to the erection of altar-rails and to the kneeling before them. He says, "The people in some places refuse to do so. His lord-

* *House of Lords MSS.*, August 5th, 1641. Petition of Daniel Clarke, vicar of Steventon, &c.

ship [the Bishop of Lincoln] desires direction, as this is not regulated by any canon of the Church." On the margin of this report there is, in the well-known handwriting of the King, the following note: "C. R. Try your way for some time."* Immediately after, as the petition referred to complains, the commissary "ordered steppes to be raised at the upper end of the chancel of St. Paul's in Bedford, and gave strict orders that the communion-table be sett there north and south." This was done, yet, in spite thereof, both minister and people still retained the mode of administration to which they had been long accustomed. The petition then relates, that in 1639 Walter Walker "gave orders to John Bradshaw, vicar of St. Paul's in Bedford, to keep within the rails at the administration of the communion, and because he did not, but came down to the communicants, he complained against him. He gave orders to the communicants of St. Paul's to come up to the rails about the communion-table, and first went up thither himself to show them how. Those that failed he cited, and threatened to make them make public confession in the church."†

The commissary was a resolute man, but the men with whom he had to deal were resolute also. A year later, in October, 1640, the vicar of St. Paul's was cited before the High Commission Court, and asked plain questions as to his mode of administering the communion. He replied that he knew of no canon forbidding him to administer the sacrament to them that did not come up to the rails.‡ In this attitude he was sustained by his leading parishioners, among whom were John Eston, his churchwarden of the previous year, John Grewe, and Anthony Harrington, three men whom we shall meet with again as the founders of the church to which Bunyan afterwards belonged.

What the Court of High Commission did with John Bradshaw there remain no records to show. For before long both that court and those who inspired its proceedings had more urgent duty on their hands than that of looking after him. A storm was gathering, before the fury of which great heads were soon to bend low, and within a few months there was

* Laud's Reports to the King, 1636. *Lambeth MSS.*, 943, p. 267.

† *House of Lords MSS.*, Aug. 5th, 1641.

‡ *State Papers, Dom.*, Charles I., Oct. 7th, 1640, vol. cccclxix., 52.

summoned that Long Parliament which was to change so many things before its work was done. To this ever-memorable assembly Bedfordshire sent up three parliamentarians, Sir Beauchamp St. John of Bletsoe, Sir Oliver Luke, and his son, Sir Samuel of Cople Wood End, and the royalist Lord Wentworth of Todyngton. Within a month Lord Wentworth was raised to the Upper House in his own right, and Sir John Burgoyne, a parliamentarian, took his place. By this change the county in its representation came to be wholly on the side of Pym and Hampden in the impending struggle. The feeling of the time was electric, both as to hopes and fears. Parliament met in November, and in January those of "the nobility, knights, gentrie, ministers, freeholders, and inhabitants of the county of Bedford" who were for Laud and the King sent up a petition desiring to "manifest their affection to the Book of Common Prayer, which was with such care and sinceritie refined from the dross of Romish intermixture, with so much pietie reduced to its present purity;" and they pray that the present form of Church government may be continued, and the statutes concerning offenders against the same be put into execution.*

Parliament received this petition, but not with the same sympathetic attention they bestowed upon another document sent up from Bedfordshire on the 13th of the same month. This was a petition and articles from John Harvey of Cardington against Dr. Pocklington, rector of Yelden, "as a chiefe author and ringleader in all those innovations which have of late flowed into the Church of England." Hugh Reeve also, of Ampthill, another Bedfordshire clergyman of like proclivities, was ordered to be arrested by the Sergeant-at-Arms for his popish practices, and in the early months of 1641 petitions from aggrieved parishioners went up from all sides, like leaves before the storm. Nor did the men of Bedfordshire content themselves with seeking redress of local and private wrongs. On Tuesday, the 16th of March, a petition was presented to Parliament by Sir John Burgoyne, who was accompanied by some two thousand persons, "the high sheriff, knights, esquires, gentlemen, ministers, freeholders, and others, inhabitants of the county of

* *State Papers, Dom.*, Charles I., 1640, 1641 [Jan.], No. 110.

Bedford." They first express their gratitude to Parliament for what in so short a space had already been accomplished; for the pious care which had removed scandalous and superstitious innovations in religion; for the reassembling of Parliament, the removal of illegal taxes; for the abolition of the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission, and for the taking away of bishops' votes in Parliament. With an obvious reference to Strafford and Laud, who were then in the Tower awaiting their trial, the petition asks for the displacement of all evil councillors and the punishment of all delinquents, and for the complete removal of all burdensome and scandalous ceremonies, and of all corrupt and scandalous ministers. They desire also that a learned, pious, and conscientious ministry may be provided for and maintained, especially in market towns and populous places; that the pious and painful divines who for unjust and frivolous causes had been deprived by the bishops and their officers, might receive ample reparation, and that there might be "a faithfull magistracie as well as a painfull ministrie." *

Such was the tenor of the petition subscribed so numerously and presented to Parliament so impressively by the people of Bedfordshire. In the then prevailing temper of the House of Commons, both the petition and the demonstration were right welcome at Westminster. It was ordered that Mr. Speaker, in the name of the House, shall take particular notice, and give the gentlemen of Bedfordshire thanks for their petition. It was no ordinary occasion, no common display of the feeling of the country, and even London was stirred at the sight. For these men from the Midlands rode four abreast through the city on their way to Westminster. "I myself," says Nehemiah Wallington, "did see above two thousand of these men come riding from Finsbury Fields, four in a rank, with their protestations in their hats." †

* Broadside, Printed by a true copy with the petitioners' approbation, at the charge of John Chambers, 1641.

† *Historical Notices*, II. 31.



ELSTOW CHURCH.

II.

ELSTOW AND THE BUNYANS OF ELSTOW.

IF, as is not improbable, any considerable portion of the two thousand petitioners from Bedfordshire started from the county town, Bunyan, who was then a lad of twelve, may have stood and with wistful eyes watched this significant cavalcade as it passed through his native village, along the main street of which then lay the high road to London.

Elstow, a little more than a mile to the south-west of Bedford, is a quaint, quietly nestling place, with an old-world look upon it, scarcely touched by the movements of our modern life. Fronting

the road-side, with overhanging storeys and gabled dormers, are half-timbered cottages, some of which, judging from the oaken rafters and staircases of their interiors, have seen better days. The long building in the centre of the village, and now turned into cottages, with projecting upper chambers and central overhanging gateway, still retains much of the external appearance it presented as a hostelry for pilgrims in pre-Reformation times. Opposite to the gate of this hostelry is the opening to the village green, on the north side of which stands what we may call the Moot Hall of the parish, a picturesque building of timber and brick, which, with its oaken beams bearing traces of Perpendicular carving and its ruddy tiles touched here and there with many-tinted lichen, presents to the eye in the summer sun-light a pleasant combination of colour and form. This curious structure of fifteenth century work, furnishing a somewhat fine example of the domestic architecture of the period, was probably originally erected to serve as the *hospitium* for travellers, and while not far from the road was yet within the *ballium* or outer court of Elstow Abbey.* At a later time, when the manorial rights passed from the Abbess to the Crown, there were held in the upper chamber those courts of the lord of the manor with View of Frankpledge, of which Bunyan's ancestors had some experience in the century before his birth. It was the scene, also, of village festivities, statute hirings, and all the public occasions of village life.

To the west of this building, on what was probably once the centre of a much larger green, rises the pedestal and broken stem of the ancient market cross round which were held those famous fairs of Elstow, possible suggestions of Vanity Fair, which had been a great village institution ever since the days of Henry II. It was on the green sward stretching this way and that round the cross that Bunyan played his Sunday games and heard those mysterious voices which changed for him the current of his life.

The elm-trees by the churchyard wall have, for safety's sake, been shorn of their upper branches, and the Church, of stern necessity, but with loving, heedful care, has been extensively

* *Architectural Notes*, by M. J. C. Buckley, 1885.

restored; but the church tower, standing apart and, like the towers of Blyth, Shrewsbury, and Christchurch, of later date than the main building, remains the same as when Bunyan leaned against its doorway and delighted to ring the bells in the chamber overhead. The massive buttresses, the time-



WEST VIEW OF ELSTOW CHURCH.

worn oaken door, "the roughly paved floor trodden with the hob-nailed boots of generations of ringers," the very bells themselves are unchanged by the two hundred years which have come and gone since he was there.

Passing through the church, or round it, on the south side we come upon a park-like meadow, with its handsome trees and colony of rooks, once part of the monastic enclosure;

upon the delightful little chamber, with its groined roof and central pillar of Purbeck marble, sometimes, though erroneously, called the chapter house, sometimes the nuns' choir, but the actual use of which, standing as it does west of the church, it is not so easy to determine. We come also upon the fish ponds of the abbey, now choked with weeds, and upon the old mansion of the Hillersdons, whose stately doorway, and ruined walls, and mullioned windows strong shoots of ivy have covered with a mantle of green.

Elstow, or Helenstow, the *stow* or stockaded place of St. Helen, a name cognate to such forms as Bridestow and Morwenstow, was so called because of the dedication of the old Saxon church to Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. In 1078 there was founded in the place, by Judith, the niece of the Conqueror, a Benedictine nunnery, which remained the central feature of Elstow life till the surrender of the monasteries at the Reformation. In 1553 a grant was made by the Crown to Sir Humphrey Radcliffe, of "the whole demesne and site of the late Monastery or Abbey of Elenstowe, in our County of Bedford, dissolved." And while the abbey with its surroundings was thus handed over to the grantee, the church was dismantled, the materials being probably used in the construction of the mansion-house hard by; the nave was shortened by two bays; the central tower beyond, and the transepts, chancel, and Lady Chapel were taken down; a beautiful Norman doorway was removed from the east end, to form the present north-west entrance; and the church tower now standing by itself was constructed to hold the bells, which had been removed from the central tower.

Sir Humphrey Radcliffe died in 1566, his widow surviving him at Elstow till 1594. In 1616 his son, Sir Edward, sold the Elstow estate to Sir Thomas Hillersdon, who, in the days of James I., built at least a part of the house now in ruins to the south-west of the church. The Hillersdon arms are to be seen over the very graceful porch, which is in the best style of the English Renaissance. Of this part of the building Mr. Buckley says:—"The harmony of its proportions and the grace of its details show this little edifice to have been the work of a master hand; in the masques and arabesques

which decorate the *intrados* of the arch, as well as the panels in the pediments of the pilasters, are traces of Italian taste; and from the general style of the work there seems every reason to believe that Inigo Jones planned and added this elegant porch to the old manor-house."* Standing back a little way from the high road, its carriage-drive leading up to this finely sculptured entrance, the manor-house was at its best in Bunyan's



HILLERSDON PORCH.

Elstow days, and may have suggested to him the conception of that "very stately palace the name of which was Beautiful, which stood just by the highway side."

Turning now from the surroundings of Bunyan's native village to his family antecedents, we find that his ancestors were in Bedfordshire as early at least as 1199. From the fact that in 1219 the form of the name was Buignon, really an old

* *Architectural Notes*, p. 205. In support of the opinion here expressed, it may be mentioned that Inigo Jones is known to have been on a visit to Bedfordshire about the time this porch was built.

French word equivalent to the modern *beignet*,* it is more than probable that the Bunyans sprang from those Northmen who came to us through Normandy. At all events, the name was found on the other side of the Channel as well as on this, for in the time of Henry VIII. the authorities of Dieppe complained to the deputy of Calais that the Flemings had taken prisoners Jehan Bunon and Collin Allais.†

The earliest settlement of the Bunyans in Bedfordshire seems to have been at Pulloxhill (*Polochessele*), a village about nine miles from Elstow. When Norman nobles quartered themselves upon English lands they gathered round them retainers and domestics from across the sea. In this way probably the Bunyans came to be the feudal tenants of Nigel de Albini, the ancestor of the Earls of Arundel, whose son Henry established himself at Cainhoe Castle, and to whom Pulloxhill, and eleven other neighbouring manors, belonged. In the Dunstable Chronicle we find the following record made by prior Richard de Morin in 1219: "In this year the aforesaid Justiciaries were at Bedford in presence of whom we obtained our return against Henry Bunyun for the land of John Travayle."‡ The

* Godefroy gives this quotation from an early Soissons MS.: "Et bone char et granz buignons." *Dictionnaire de l'Ancienne Langue Française et de tous ses Dialectes du ix^e au xv^e Siècle*. The word signifies a little raised pattie with fruit in the middle, and came to be applied to any round knob or bunch (*Ital.* bugnon); any small elevation or convexity (*Icelandic* bunga). Thus we get *bun* and *bunch* and curiously enough the ordinary *union*, a raised swelling on the feet. Vide Skeat's *Etymol. Dict.*

It may be mentioned that as the surname of the Bedfordshire family the word has been spelt in no fewer than thirty-four different ways, thus: In the *Assize Rolls* of 1 John and 3 Henry III. it was spelt Bingnon, Buington, Bunium; in the *Dunstable Chronicle* of the same century: Boinun, Boynun, and Bunyun; in the *Subsidy Rolls* of a century later: Bonionn, Boynon, Boyonn and Boynun; in the *Book of the Luton Guild* of 1518: Bonean and Boynyon; in the *Court-Roll* of the manor of Elstow (1542—1550), and in the *Chalgrave Register* (1539—1628): Bonyon; in the *Transcript Registers* from Elstow (1603—1640): Bonion, Bonionn, Boniun, Bonnion, Bonnionn, Bonniun, Bonoyon, Bonyon, Bonyonn, Boonyon, Bunen, Bunian, Bunion, Bunnion, Bunnionn, Buniun, Bunyan, Bunyon, Bynyon; and finally in the record of Bedfordshire *Administrations* it is twice spelt Binyan and once Binnyan. Bunyan's grandfather signed himself Bonyon; his father seems to have been the first to give the name the form it has since retained.

† *Letters and Papers*, Henry VIII., vol. iii. part 3, 1521.

‡ *Annales Monastici*, edited by H. R. Luard, M.A., 1866, vol. iii., 54.

Assize Roll of Bedfordshire for that year has preserved no record of this case, which may, however, have been on a missing membrane, but it shows that at the same Assize there were presentments made by commissioners of Henry Buignon by Simon son of Robert, and of John Buignon by Roger son of Walter.* In the Dunstable Chronicle† there are three other references by a subsequent prior, showing the relation of the family to Almaric St. Amand, the descendant of de Albini. They are as follows: "In the same year (1257), after the feast of St. Martin, we bought of Almaric St. Amand land which he had of John Boynun at Pullokeshille for forty-three marks and a half." Three pages later the entry is repeated, with the addition that the purchase made from St. Amand was land which he had "of the gift of John Boinun." It would appear that this John Boynun or Boinun was a freeman of St. Amand's, for on the death of the latter in 1286 the then prior of Dunstable tells us that scutage was paid to St. Amand's executors, and that "for the fee of John Boynun who made service for half a knight," a certain payment was made. This is some clue to his social position, for the prior had previously said that a knight's service was for five hides of land, so that Boynun held some two hundred and twenty acres on condition of furnishing military service to the extent of half a knight. This scutage fee paid on the death of his chief amounted to about £80 of present value.

From Pulloxhill the family of the Bunyans moved, one part of them to the south, in the direction of Chalgrave and Dunstable, the other branch to the north in the direction of Elstow. Of those who moved to the south there sprang one concerning whom there remains this dark and evil record in the Assize Roll of 1219: "In the half-hundred of Stanburgh. A certain clerk unknown was found killed in the fields of Toternhoe. William Turviter was the first person who found him, but he is not suspected; Ralph Buignon of Dunstable, who was hanged for that death, acknowledged that he killed him, and on account of that death was arrested. Let enquiry be made at Dunstable for his chattels. The Englishry was not

* *Assize Rolls*, Bedfordshire, 3 Henry III.

† *Annales Monastici*, vol. iii., pp. 43, 204, 207.

presented, therefore the crime was murder.”* The meaning of this being, of course, that the Normans, living in the midst of the hostile population they had conquered, for their own defence enacted and kept in force till 1340, the law known as the Presentment of Englishry, in accordance with which an unknown man found slain was presumed to be a Norman, unless the hundred in which he was found could prove that he was an Englishman. If they could not a fine was levied on the hundred, and in this case towards the payment of the fine for the murder of this unknown priest the murderer’s own chattels were to be inquired for.

Leaving this Ralph Buington, who came to an end so tragic in the south of the county, we turn now to that portion of the Bunyan family with whom we are more immediately concerned, and who, at least twenty years earlier, had moved in the direction of Elstow. The earliest reference we have to the name relates to these. In 1199 William Bunium pleaded against the abbess of Elstow in the Court of King’s Bench that William of Wilsamstede had sued him in respect of half a virgate of land which he held in that place.† The meaning of the plea probably being that this was a friendly suit to determine the title to the land—to settle, in fact, whether Bunium was the tenant of the abbess or of the aforesaid William. The point of interest for us in the case, of course, is that as early as 1199 there was a Bunium holding land at Wilstead, only a mile away from Elstow.

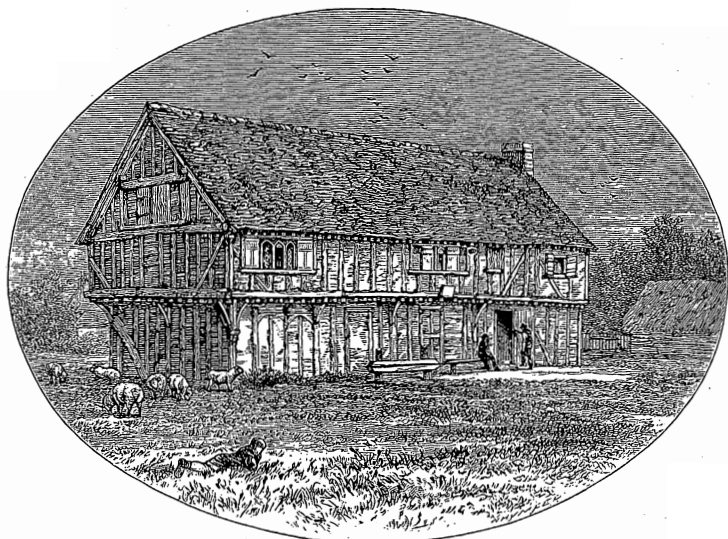
The next document is even more interesting still, inasmuch as it shows that not only had the Bunyans come to Wilstead, but that a William Boynon, probably a descendant of the William of 1199, was living in 1327 on the very spot in the fields by Harrowden and Elstow, on which, three hundred years later, John Bunyan was born. This document, again, relates to an agreement made at Westminster, on the morrow of All Souls, in which Simon, son of Robert atte Felde, of Elnestowe, and William de Maydenbury Peleter were the plaintiffs, and Wm. Boynon, of Harewedon, and Matilda his wife were deforciantes of a messuage and an acre of land with the appurtenances in

* *Assize Rolls*, Bedfordshire, 3 Henry III., memb. 14.

† *Rot. Cur. Reg.*, 1 John (20th June, 1199), i., 417.

Elnestowe. A certain covenant was made; "and for this acknowledgment, warranty, fine, and agreement the said Simon and William gave to the aforesaid William Boynon and Matilda one hundred shillings of silver." *

It is a long interval between this document of 1327 and the year 1542, yet between these two dates no references to the Bunyan family of any kind have reached us. There has been preserved in the Augmentation Office the Court Roll of the



MOOT HALL ON ELSTOW GREEN, THE COURT-HOUSE OF THE MANOR.

manor of Elstow, embracing the years between 1542 and 1550, which presents several points of interest. The earlier records of the manor appear to have been lost with the rest of the documents in the possession of the Abbess of Elstow. During these years, which were those between the surrender of the monastery and the grant to Sir Humphrey Radcliffe, the manor was vested in the Crown, and there was held each spring and autumn a Court of the Manor, with View of Frankpledge. That is to say, at these Courts the socmen, or juratores, or

* *Fines*, Bedford, 20 Edward II. (1327), No. 2.

homagers, as they were variously termed, the men who held lands under the manor did fealty for those lands, or paid fines on renewal or relief, in socage, which was a kind of succession duty to the lord of the manor. Besides transacting such business as this, these Courts also exercised jurisdiction over the general affairs of the village, marking delinquencies, settling disputes, redressing grievances, and punishing offenders. The first Court of which the Roll makes mention was held on the 13th of April, 1542, and among the homagers present was Thomas Bonyon. After the record of other business transacted, there is the following entry:—

“At this Court it is witnessed by the homage that William Bonyon who held freely of the lord the King as of his manor of Elnestow a messuage and a pightell with the appurtenances in Elnestow. And nine acres of land particularly and severally lying in the fields of Elnestow by fealty, suit of court, and rent by the year of three shillings and one halfpenny from which last Court he died. And that Thomas Bonyon is the son and next heir of the aforesaid William Bonyon and is of the age of forty years and more, whereupon there falls to the lord the king of relief in socage— $\text{iijs } 0\frac{1}{2}^d$ —which said Thomas Bonyon acknowledges that he holds the aforesaid messuage, pightell, and nine acres of land by the rent and service aforesaid. And that the aforesaid messuage and pightell are situate together and lie in Elnestow aforesaid between the messuage and close of Thomas Whytebred on the west part and the highway there on the east part.”

In the record of the Court held six years later, on 30th of April, 1548, there is the following entry, which is interesting as describing yet more accurately the identical spot, with its surroundings, on which, eighty years afterwards, Bunyan was born. It relates to the sale of three roods of the land which had belonged to the Bonyons, and the subsequent readjustment of the small quit rent payable to the lord of the manor:—

“Elnestow — View of Frankpledge with Court, 30th April, 38 Henry VIII. Fealty. To this court came Robert Cortey and acknowledged that he held freely of the said lord the king as of the manor aforesaid by fealty suit of court and rent of a penny and a halfpenny by the year three roods of arable land together lying in the east field of Elnestow upon the furlong called Pesselynton,

between the land of John Gascoign, knight, on either side, and abuts on the north head upon Cardyngton broke and the south head upon the close called Bonyon's End, which he had of the gift of Thomas Bonyon of Elnestowe, in the county of Bedford, labourer, as by the charter of the said Thomas bearing date the 18th day of the month of April in the 37th year of the said lord the king is fully clear, which said three roods were late parcel of a messuage and certain lands late of William Bonyon, father of the aforesaid Thomas Bunyon, and which said messuage and lands were charged to the said lord the king with one whole yearly rent of three shillings and fourpence. And the aforesaid three roods were apportioned at the aforesaid rent of a penny and a halfpenny by the year. And the aforesaid Thomas Bonyon is discharged of the same yearly rent of a penny and a halfpenny."*

Thomas Bonyon was evidently going down in the world, and selling piece by piece his ancestral land. For a year later came John Lynwood to the Court, acknowledging "that he held freely of the lord the king as of his manor there by fealty, suit of Court and rent of 2d. by the year, three acres and a rood of land particularly and severally lying in Harodon Sharpe-fold, in the parish of Cardyngton, which were formerly of Thomas Bonyon."

There were sixteen Courts of the manor of Elstow of which we have knowledge at the end of the reign of Henry VIII. and the beginning of that of Edward VI., and at all of them but one Thomas Bonyon appears among the dozen or so of juratores or homagers. Besides the sale, first of three roods and then of three acres and a rood of his land, there are signs that either he or his wife was in trouble at twelve out of the sixteen of these Courts. She is described in one place as "a common brewer of beer;" and in another as "a common baker of human bread"—human bread, we may presume, as distinguished from horse-bread; and eleven times over she was fined for breaking the assize of beer and bread—that is, for asking higher prices than those fixed by the Court of the manor. In the days of the Abbess she would have been sent to the cucking-stool for her repeated offences; but in the more lenient days on which she had fallen, she was

* Exchequer Court of Augmentations, *Court Rolls*, portfolio xi., No. 22.

simply amerced seven times at a penny and four times at two-pence. In 1547 Thomas Bonyon himself and not his wife appeared before the Court as the offending brewer of beer, and was fined a penny. This, however, did not prevent his being chosen, in the autumn of the same year, along with Thomas Crowley, as parish constable, to which office he was duly sworn. Seven years later this ancestor of Bunyan, who seems to have been the keeper of a small roadside inn on the way to Medbury, was called before a much more august tribunal than that of the Court of the manor. In 1554, for some reason not given, he was summoned to appear before the Privy Council at Westminster. In the register of the Council there is a minute under date November 18th, ordering "certain persons to attende upon the lorde Cobham at Rochester at the commying in of the lorde Cardynall Pole, and from thence to Gravesend." Two days later another meeting of Council was held, when letters of appearance were addressed from their lordships to "baylief Williams, George Walton, gent., Bunyon, victualler, all of Ellstowe, in the Countie of Bedford," with seven other persons from the same parish, whose names were also given.* The mention of Cardinal Pole at this time is suggestive of the returning tide of Papal power in England. Was it for his Protestantism that Bunyon the victualler was summoned before the Privy Council of Queen Mary?

The Court Roll of the manor, interesting as it is in itself, is interesting also as furnishing incidental confirmation of the tradition among the people of Elstow as to the exact spot which was Bunyan's birthplace. There is a cottage shown in the village street as Bunyan's cottage, in which there is no doubt he lived for some time after his marriage; but the ancients of the place have always maintained that he was born in the eastern fields of the parish, and close to the hamlet of Harrowden. That extremity of the parish they called Bunyan's End—the name by which, as we have seen, it was known eighty years before Bunyan was born, and probably for centuries earlier. A pathway in the fields was spoken of as Bunyan's Walk; two fields on the slope beyond the southern stream still go by the name of "Bunyans"

* *Privy Council Register*, 1553—1558, p. 189.

we are tempted to linger. The Court Roll, it will be remembered, describes Bonyon's End as having on both sides of it the land of John Gascoign, knight. Sir John was at that time living at Cardington, the adjacent parish, where his son George was born about 1525. So that George Gascoigne, our earliest English satirist, and John Bunyan, our greatest religious allegorist, were born within a mile of each other, and on ancestral lands which interlaced. Gascoigne, with not a little original genius and freshness of thought, was one of the earliest of our strictly vernacular poets. It is said that Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* was partly suggested by the joint version of the *Phenissae* by Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh.* He had certainly not a few quaint touches and homely thrusts such as Bunyan himself might have written; as when he says that "he who will throw a stone at everie dogge which barketh had neede of a great satchell or pocket;" or when, in after years, regretting his wanton, wasted youth, he says: "I have loytrede, I confesse, when the sunne did shine, and now I strive al in vaine to loade the cart when it raineth. I regarded not my comelynes in the May-moone of my youth, and yet now I stand prinking me in the glasse, when the crowes foote is growen under mine eye." Gascoigne's *Steele Glas*, Shakespeare's mirror held up to Nature before Shakespeare's time, was "a glasse wherein each man may see within his mind what canckred vices be." A priest "more saucie than the rest" asks when he may leave off praying for people that do amiss, to whom the poet makes reply:—

"I tel thee (priest) when shoemakers make shoes,
That are wel sowed, with never a stitch amisse,
When taylors steale no stufte from gentlemen,
When tinkers make no more holes than they founde,
When thatchers thinke their wages worth their worke,
When Davie Diker diggs and dallies not,
When smiths shoo horses as they would be shod,
When millers toll not with a golden thumb,
When weavers weight is found in housewives' web:
When al these things are ordered as they ought,
And see themselves within my glasse of steele,
Even then (my priests) may you make holy day,
And pray no more but ordinarie prayers."

* The *Complete Poems* of George Gascoigne: Collected and edited for the Roxburghe Library, by W. C. Hazlitt, 1869. Two vols. 4to.

There is something in these lines from Thomas Bunyan's racy neighbour at Cardington which seems to remind us of his own descendant, and having thus connected the two for a moment in our minds, we may now return once more to the Bunyans themselves. Of them, after the Court Roll, of 1550, and the Privy Council minute of 1554, we know nothing more till 1603, when the Transcript Registers commence. The Parish Register of Elstow for the period earlier than 1641 has long been lost, but fortunately the returns sent year by year to the Registry, in accordance with the canon of 1603, come to our assistance. Almost the first entry we find in the first return from Elstow is that of the baptism of John Bunyan's father, which is recorded thus:—

1602-3: "Thomas the Sonne of Thomas Bunyon the xxiiijth daye of ffebr."

The mother of the child then baptized may have died in giving him birth, for towards the end of the same year Thomas Bunyon, the father, was again married at Elstow Church to Elizabeth Leigh. This Thomas, the elder, the grandfather of John, lived on till 1641, and describes himself in his will as a "pettie chapman," or small village trader. Like his grandson after him he appears not to have been quite so submissive to the authorities of the time as they could have desired. Two, and only two time-worn Act-Books of the Archdeaconry of Bedford relating to the times of James I. have been preserved. From one of these we find that at the Court held at Ampthill, October 21st, 1617, two of the Elstow parishioners were presented by the churchwardens before the commissary. One of these was Thomas Cranfield, who was charged with "refusing to sit in a seat of the church where the churchwardens placed him;" the other was Thomas Bonion, who was presented for telling the churchwardens they were "forsworne men." Feeling was evidently running high just then, and indeed that year matters ecclesiastical were altogether in a bad way in Elstow, for three months later the vicar of the parish himself, Henry Bird, was presented at the same court for neglecting his cure; "on Sonday was a fortnight there was noe service," and on another occasion "Rose Ravens of Elstowe was cited for churching herself, the minister being at home."

Seven other children were born to the elder Thomas Bonion after the birth of Bunyan's father, four of whom died in infancy. He himself surviving till 1641, made his will on the 25th of November in that year, in which he describes himself as, "I Thomas Bonyon of the parish of Elstowe in the countie of Bedford, Pettie Chapman, being sicke of bodie but of perfect remembrance, thanks be given to Almighty God, doe make and ordayne this my last Will and Testament in manner and forme following That is to say First I give and bequeath my soule into the handes of Almighty God my Creator assuringe myselfe by the death and passion of my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ to receive pardon and remission for all my sinnes and that my soule shall be received into his heavenly kingdome ther to rest with him for ever And my bodie to the earth whereof it is made to be buried in Christian buriall at the discrecion of my executrix hereafter named And for the worldly goods that God hath blessed me withall I doe dispose of as followeth Item I give and bequeath to Anne Bonyon my wife [his third wife] after my decease the Cottage or Tenement wherein I doe now dwell with the appurtenances during the tearme of her naturall life And after the decease of Anne Bonyon my said wife I give and bequeath the said Cottage or Tenement with the appurtenances unto my Two Sonnes Thomas Bonyon and Edward Bonyon and their Heires for ever to be equally parted and devided between them after the decease of my said wiffe." He further leaves the sum of £5 to his daughter, Elizabeth Watson, the wife of Thomas Watson, and to his grandchildren, of whom, of course John Bunyan was one, "sixe pence a peece toe bee paied them when they accomplish their severale ages of one and twentie yeares." Everything else he leaves to Anne Bonyon, his loveing wife, whom he makes whole and sole executrix, concluding thus: "I doe further make and ordayne Thomas Carter of Kempston in the said countie of Bedford, gentleman, my loveinge and Kind Friend, overseer of this my last Will and Testament And do give him Twelve pence in remembrance for his paines to be taken in seeinge this my last Will and Testament duly and truly executed."* The document was signed with a cross in the

* *Bedfordshire Wills*, 1641. No. 202.

presence of Henry Latham and Walter Cooper, and was proved before Walter Walker on the 14th of December, 1641.

Thomas Bonyon, the son of this man and the father of John, was first married to Anne Pinney, at Elstow Church, on the 10th of January, 1623, when he was in his twentieth year. In 1627 Anne died, and so far as the register shows, died childless. The same year he came again to Elstow Church to be married, this time to the wife who was to be the mother of his illustrious son. As we did not, till the recent search among the Transcript Registers, know the maiden name of the mother of the Dreamer, it may be well to give the entry in full, which is as follows :—

1627. "Thomas Bonnionn, Junr., and Margaret Bentley were married the three and twentieth of May."

We who, in the course of modern thought, have come to attach so much importance to hereditary transmission, would have been glad to know more than we do of the character and personality of the parents of one who occupies so prominent a place in English literature, and who was so unmistakably a child of genius. Unfortunately, their son, while telling so much about his own inward experiences, tells us but little concerning his father and mother. Even the little he does tell seems as if it ought to be qualified. When we remember that the wills of his father and grandfather, and of his maternal grandmother have been preserved in the Registry of the District Court of Probate from a time when the poorest of the poor never made any wills at all, and that the house in which he was born had been the property of his ancestors from time immemorial, it would seem as if Bunyan in his humility had depreciated the social position of his family more than he had need. He says, "For my descent then, it was, as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land." That these expressions ought not to carry the full force they carry to-day is shown by the fact he proceeds to state. "But yet, notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school to learn both to read and write, the