

By the time that he was twenty-five years old he was in a position considerably superior to that in which he was born. "God," says a contemporary biographer, "had increased his stores so that he lived in great credit among his neighbours." On May 13, 1653, Bedfordshire sent an address to Cromwell approving the dismissal of the Long Parliament, recognising Oliver himself as the Lord's instrument, and recommending the county magistrates as fit persons to serve in the Assembly which was to take its place. Among thirty-six names attached to this document appear those of Gifford and Bunyan. This speaks for itself: he must have been at least a householder and a person of consideration. It was not, however, as a prosperous brazier that Bunyan was to make his way. He had a gift of speech, which, in the democratic congregation to which he belonged, could not long remain hid. Young as he was, he had sounded the depths of spiritual experience. Like Dante, he had been in hell—the popular hell of English Puritanism—and in 1655, he was called upon to take part in the "ministry." He was modest, humble, shrinking. The minister when he preached was, according to the theory, an instrument uttering the words not of himself but of the Holy Spirit. A man like Bunyan, who really believed this, might well be alarmed. After earnest entreaty, however, "he made experiment of his powers" in private, and it was at once evident that, with the thing which these people meant by inspiration, he was abundantly supplied. No such preacher to the uneducated English masses was to be found within the four seas. He says that he had no desire of vainglory; no one who has studied his character can suppose that he had. He was a man of natural genius, who believed the Protestant form of Christianity to be completely true. He knew nothing

of philosophy. The doctrine of naturalism, which certain moralists and common-sense men have been rightly called upon to defend, was not of the nature of the Gospel.

"The Gospel is not with sinners, with a good man, my translation of what the dead chains, and persuaded and terrified strong heart."

Many theological subjects, however, was the rope. It was by Knox and Cromwell believed,