

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEDFORD GAOL.

THE irregularities in the proceedings against Bunyan had perhaps been suggested by the anticipation of the general pardon which was expected in the following spring. At the coronation of Charles, April 23, 1661, an order was issued for the release of prisoners who were in gaol for any offences short of felony. Those who were waiting their trials were to be let go at once. Those convicted and under sentence might sue out a pardon under the Great Seal at any time within a year from the proclamation. Was Bunyan legally convicted or not? He had not pleaded directly to the indictment. No evidence had been heard against him. His trial had been a conversation between himself and the Court. The point had been raised by his friends. His wife had been in London to make interest for him, and a peer had presented a petition in Bunyan's behalf in the House of Lords. The judges had been directed to look again into the matter at the midsummer assizes. The high-sheriff was active in Bunyan's favour. The Judges Twisden, Chester, and no less a person than Sir Matthew Hale, appear to have concluded that his conviction was legal, that he could not be tried again, and that he must apply for pardon in the regular way. His wife, however, at the instance of the sheriff,