

too prevalent, there is abundant evidence that the corner stones and foundations of a people of high and abiding moral fibre were not neglected.

There is a dignity about the old marriage bonds, used for more than two centuries after the first settlement along the James, that appeals with peculiar force in these iconoclastic days. These documents have quite generally disappeared, but in one of the numerous counties where Carters lived and sought maids in marriage, the old bonds have all been preserved and thus they run:

“ Know all men by these presents, that I John Carter of Brunswick County and James Jones of the County of Surrey, are held and firmly bound unto our Sovereign Lord George the Second, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc., in the sum of fifty pounds current money of Virginia, to be paid to our said Lord the King, his heirs and successors to the payment whereof we bind ourselves, our heirs, executors and administrators, jointly and severally, firmly by these presents. Sealed with our seals and dated this 3rd Jan’y, 1754.

“ The condition of this obligation is such, that whereas there is a marriage suddenly intended to be solemnized between the above bound John Carter and Rebecca Stuart of the Parish of St. Andrew in

Brunswick Co. Spinster—Now if there is no lawful cause to obstruct said marriage, then this obligation to be void, or else to remain in full force and virtue.

JOHN CARTER (Seal).

JAMES JONES (Seal).”

Upon the execution of such a bond, with approved security, the clerk issued a certificate authorizing any one licensed by the county court to perform the ceremony. If the marriage was to be celebrated according to the rites of the established Church, the words “solemnly intended” were inserted; if any other ceremony was to be used then the words “suddenly intended” were substituted. The licenses were not returned to the clerk of the court, and except for family Bibles and the private records kept by ministers, these bonds constituted the only marriage registers required by law, until the middle of the Nineteenth Century. Many of the clerks transferred the essential facts from the bonds to books for their own convenience, but fire and the sword, vandalism and the corruption of time have caused most of these to disappear.