

***ALEXANDER
WHYTE***



***BUNYAN
CHARACTERS
(3RD SERIES)***

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Alexander Whyte

Bunyan Characters (3rd Series)

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BUNYAN CHARACTERS—THIRD SERIES

**LECTURES DELIVERED IN ST. GEORGE'S
FREE CHURCH EDINBURGH**

BY ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.

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CHAPTER I—THE BOOK

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‘—the book of the wars of the Lord.’—*Moses*.

John Bunyan's *Holy War* was first published in 1682, six years before its illustrious author's death. Bunyan wrote this great book when he was still in all the fulness of his intellectual power and in all the ripeness of his spiritual experience. The *Holy War* is not the *Pilgrim's Progress*—there is only one *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the same time, we have Lord Macaulay's word for it that if the *Pilgrim's Progress* did not exist the *Holy War* would be the best allegory that ever was written: and even Mr. Froude admits that the *Holy War* alone would have entitled its author to rank high up among the acknowledged masters of English literature. The intellectual rank of the *Holy War* has been fixed before that tribunal over which our accomplished and competent critics preside; but for a full appreciation of its religious rank and value we would need to hear the glad testimonies of tens of thousands of God's saints, whose hard-beset faith and obedience have been kindled and sustained by the study of this noble book. The *Pilgrim's Progress* sets forth the spiritual life under the scriptural figure of a long and an uphill journey. The *Holy War*, on the other hand, is a military history; it is full of soldiers and battles, defeats and victories. And its devout author had much more scriptural suggestion and support in the composition of the *Holy War* than he had even in the composition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. For Holy Scripture is

full of wars and rumours of wars: the wars of the Lord; the wars of Joshua and the Judges; the wars of David, with his and many other magnificent battle-songs; till the best known name of the God of Israel in the Old Testament is the Lord of Hosts; and then in the New Testament we have Jesus Christ described as the Captain of our salvation. Paul's powerful use of armour and of armed men is familiar to every student of his epistles; and then the whole Bible is crowned with a book all sounding with the battle-cries, the shouts, and the songs of soldiers, till it ends with that city of peace where they hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more. Military metaphors had taken a powerful hold of our author's imagination even in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, as his portraits of Greatheart and Valiant-for-truth and other soldiers sufficiently show; while the conflict with Apollyon and the destruction of Doubting Castle are so many sure preludes of the coming *Holy War*. Bunyan's early experiences in the great Civil War had taught him many memorable things about the military art; memorable and suggestive things that he afterwards put to the most splendid use in the siege, the capture, and the subjugation of Mansoul.

The *Divine Comedy* is beyond dispute the greatest book of personal and experimental religion the world has ever seen. The consuming intensity of its author's feelings about sin and holiness, the keenness and the bitterness of his remorse, and the rigour and the severity of his revenge, his superb intellect and his universal learning, all set ablaze by his splendid imagination—all that combines to make the *Divine Comedy* the unapproachable masterpiece it is. John

Bunyan, on the other hand, had no learning to be called learning, but he had a strong and a healthy English understanding, a conscience and a heart wholly given up to the life of the best religion of his religious day, and then, by sheer dint of his sanctified and soaring imagination and his exquisite style, he stands forth the peer of the foremost men in the intellectual world. And thus it is that the great unlettered religious world possesses in John Bunyan all but all that the select and scholarly world possesses in Dante. Both Dante and Bunyan devoted their splendid gifts to the noblest of services—the service of spiritual, and especially of personal religion; but for one appreciative reader that Dante has had Bunyan has had a hundred. Happy in being so like his Master in so many things, Bunyan is happy in being like his unlettered Master in this also, that the common people hear him gladly and never weary of hearing him.

It gives by far its noblest interest to Dante's noble book that we have Dante himself in every page of his book. Dante is taken down into Hell, he is then led up through *Purgatory*, and after that still up and up into the very Paradise of God. But that hell all the time is the hell that Dante had dug and darkened and kindled for himself. In the Purgatory, again, we see Dante working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, God all the time working in Dante to will and to do of His good pleasure. And then the Paradise, with all its sevenfold glory, is just that place and that life which God hath prepared for them that love Him and serve Him as Dante did. And so it is in the *Holy War*. John Bunyan is in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, but there are more men and other men

than its author in that rich and populous book, and other experiences and other attainments than his. But in the *Holy War* we have Bunyan himself as fully and as exclusively as we have Dante in the *Divine Comedy*. In the first edition of the *Holy War* there is a frontispiece conceived and executed after the anatomical and symbolical manner which was so common in that day, and which is to be seen at its perfection in the English edition of Jacob Behmen. The frontispiece is a full-length likeness of the author of the *Holy War*, with his whole soul laid open and his hidden heart 'anatomised.' Why, asked Wordsworth, and Matthew Arnold in our day has echoed the question—why does Homer still so live and rule without a rival in the world of letters? And they answer that it is because he always sang with his eye so fixed upon its object. 'Homer, to thee I turn.' And so it was with Dante. And so it was with Bunyan. Bunyan's *Holy War* has its great and abiding and commanding power over us just because he composed it with his eye fixed on his own heart.

My readers, I have somewhat else to do,
Than with vain stories thus to trouble you;
What here I say some men do know so well
They can with tears and joy the story tell . . .
Then lend thine ear to what I do relate,
Touching the town of Mansoul and her state:
For my part, I (myself) was in the town,
Both when 'twas set up and when pulling down.
Let no man then count me a fable-maker,
Nor make my name or credit a partaker

Of their derision: what is here in view
Of mine own knowledge, I dare say is true.

The characters in the *Holy War* are not as a rule nearly so clear-cut or so full of dramatic life and movement as their fellows are in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Bunyan seems to have felt that to be the case. He shows all an author's fondness for the children of his imagination in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. He returns to and he lingers on their doings and their sayings and their very names with all a foolish father's fond delight. While, on the other hand, when we look to see him in his confidential addresses to his readers returning upon some of the military and municipal characters in the *Holy War*, to our disappointment he does not so much as name a single one of them, though he dwells with all an author's self-delectation on the outstanding scenes, situations, and episodes of his remarkable book.

What, then, are some of the more outstanding scenes, situations, and episodes, as well as military and municipal characters, in the book now before us? And what are we to promise ourselves, and to expect, from the study and the exposition of the *Holy War* in these lectures? Well, to begin with, we shall do our best to enter with mind, and heart, and conscience, and imagination into Bunyan's great conception of the human soul as a city, a fair and a delicate city and corporation, with its situation, surroundings, privileges and fortunes. We shall then enter under his guidance into the famous and stately palace of this metropolitan city; a palace which for strength might be called a castle, for pleasantness a paradise, and for largeness a place so copious as to contain all the world. The walls and the gates of the city will

then occupy and instruct us for several Sabbath evenings, after which we shall enter on the record of the wars and battles that rolled time after time round those city walls, and surged up through its captured gates till they quite overwhelmed the very palace of the king itself. Then we shall spend, God willing, one Sabbath evening with Loth-to-stoop, and another with old Ill-pause, the devil's orator, and another with Captain Anything, and another with Lord Willbewill, and another with that notorious villain Clip-promise, by whose doings so much of the king's coin had been abused, and another with that so angry and so ill-conditioned churl old Mr. Prejudice, with his sixty deaf men under him. Dear Mr. Wet-eyes, with his rope upon his head, will have a fit congregation one winter night, and Captain Self-denial another. We shall have another painful but profitable evening before a communion season with Mr. Prywell, and so we shall eat of that bread and drink of that cup. Emmanuel's livery will occupy us one evening, Mansoul's Magna Charta another, and her annual Feast-day another. Her Established Church and her beneficed clergy will take up one evening, some Skulkers in Mansoul another, the devil's last prank another, and then, to wind up with, Emmanuel's last speech and charge to Mansoul from his chariot-step till He comes again to accomplish her rapture. All that we shall see and take part in; unless, indeed, our Captain comes in anger before the time, and spears us to the earth when He finds us asleep at our post or in the act of sin at it, which may His abounding mercy forbid!

And now take these three forewarnings and precautions.

1. First:—All who come here on these coming Sabbath evenings will not understand the *Holy War* all at once, and many will not understand it at all. And little blame to them, and no wonder. For, fully to understand this deep and intricate book demands far more mind, far more experience, and far more specialised knowledge than the mass of men, as men are, can possibly bring to it. This so exacting book demands of us, to begin with, some little acquaintance with military engineering and architecture; with the theory of, and if possible with some practice in, attack and defence in sieges and storms, winter campaigns and long drawn-out wars. And then, impossible as it sounds and is, along with all that we would need to have a really profound, practical, and at first-hand acquaintance with the anatomy of the human subject, and especially with cardiac anatomy, as well as with all the conditions, diseases, regimen and discipline of the corrupt heart of man. And then it is enough to terrify any one to open this book or to enter this church when he is told that if he comes here he must be ready and willing to have the whole of this terrible and exacting book fulfilled and experienced in himself, in his own body and in his own soul.

2. And, then, you will not all like the *Holy War*. The mass of men could not be expected to like any such book. How could the vain and blind citizen of a vain and blind city like to be wakened up, as Paris was wakened up within our own remembrance, to find all her gates in the hands of an iron-hearted enemy? And how could her sons like to be reminded, as they sit in their wine gardens, that they are thereby fast preparing their city for that threatened day

when she is to be hung up on her own walls and bled to the white? Who would not hate and revile the book or the preacher who prophesied such rough things as that? Who could love the author or the preacher who told him to his face that his eyes and his ears and all the passes to his heart were already in the hands of a cruel, ruthless, and masterful enemy? No wonder that you never read the *Holy War*. No wonder that the bulk of men have never once opened it. The Downfall is not a favourite book in the night-gardens of Paris.

3. And then, few, very few, it is to be feared, will be any better of the *Holy War*. For, to be any better of such a terrible book as this is, we must at all costs lay it, and lay it all, and lay it all at once, to heart. We must submit ourselves to see ourselves continually in its blazing glass. We must stoop to be told that it is all, in all its terrors and in all its horrors, literally true of ourselves. We must deliberately and resolutely set open every gate that opens in on our heart—Ear-gate and Eye-gate and all the gates of sense and intellect, day and night, to Jesus Christ to enter in; and we must shut and bolt and bar every such gate in the devil's very face, and in the face of all his scouts and orators, day and night also. But who that thinks, and that knows by experience what all that means, will feel himself sufficient for all that? No man: no sinful man. But, among many other noble and blessed things, the *Holy War* will show us that our sufficiency in this impossibility also is all of God. Who, then, will enlist? Who will risk all and enlist? Who will matriculate in the military school of Mansoul? Who will submit himself to all the severity of its divine discipline? Who will be made

willing to throw open and to keep open his whole soul, with all the gates and doors thereof, to all the sieges, assaults, capitulations, submissions, occupations, and such like of the war of gospel holiness? And who will enlist under that banner now?

'Set down my name, sir,' said a man of a very stout countenance to him who had the inkhorn at the outer gate. At which those who walked upon the top of the palace broke out in a very pleasant voice,

'Come in, come in;
Eternal glory thou shalt win.'

We have no longer, after what we have come through, any such stoutness in our countenance, yet will we say to-night with him who had it, Set down my name also, sir!

CHAPTER II—THE CITY OF MANSOUL AND ITS CINQUE PORTS

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‘—a besieged city.’—*Isaiah*.

Our greatest historians have been wont to leave their books behind them and to make long journeys in order to see with their own eyes the ruined sites of ancient cities and the famous fields where the great battles of the world were lost and won. We all remember how Macaulay made a long winter journey to see the Pass of Killiecrankie before he sat down to write upon it; and Carlyle’s magnificent battle-pieces are not all imagination; even that wonderful writer had to see Frederick’s battlefields with his own eyes before he could trust himself to describe them. And he tells us himself how Cromwell’s splendid generalship all came up before him as he looked down on the town of Dunbar and out upon the ever-memorable country round about it. John Bunyan was not a great historian; he was only a common soldier in the great Civil War of the seventeenth century; but what would we not give for a description from his vivid pen of the famous fields and the great sieges in which he took part? What a find John Bunyan’s ‘Journals’ and ‘Letters Home from the Seat of War’ would be to our historians and to their readers! But, alas! such journals and letters do not exist. Bunyan’s complete silence in all his books about the battles and the sieges he took his part in is very remarkable, and his silence is full of significance. The Puritan soldier keeps all his military experiences to work them all up into

his *Holy War*, the one and only war that ever kindled all his passions and filled his every waking thought. But since John Bunyan was a man of genius, equal in his own way to Cromwell and Milton themselves, if I were a soldier I would keep ever before me the great book in which Bunyan's experiences and observations and reflections as a soldier are all worked up. I would set that classical book on the same shelf with Cæsar's *Commentaries* and Napier's *Peninsula*, and Carlyle's glorious battle-pieces. Even Cæsar has been accused of too great dryness and coldness in his *Commentaries*, but there is neither dryness nor coldness in John Bunyan's *Holy War*. To read Bunyan kindles our cold civilian blood like the waving of a banner and like the sound of a trumpet.

The situation of the city of Mansoul occupies one of the most beautiful pages of this whole book. The opening of the *Holy War*, simply as a piece of English, is worthy to stand beside the best page of the *Pilgrim's Progress* itself, and what more can I say than that? Now, the situation of a city is a matter of the very first importance. Indeed, the insight and the foresight of the great statesmen and the great soldiers of past ages are seen in nothing more than in the sites they chose for their citadels and for their defenced cities. Well, then, as to the situation of Mansoul, 'it lieth,' says our military author, 'just between the two worlds.' That is to say: very much as Germany in our day lies between France and Russia, and very much as Palestine in her day lay between Egypt and Assyria, so does Mansoul lie between two immense empires also. And, surely, I do not need to explain to any man here who has a man's soul in his

bosom that the two armed empires that besiege his soul are Heaven above and Hell beneath, and that both Heaven and Hell would give their best blood and their best treasure to subdue and to possess his soul. We do not value our souls at all as Heaven and Hell value them. There are savage tribes in Africa and in Asia who inhabit territories that are sleeplessly envied by the expanding and extending nations of Europe. Ancient and mighty empires in Europe raise armies, and build navies, and levy taxes, and spill the blood of their bravest sons like water in order to possess the harbours, and the rivers, and the mountains, and the woods amid which their besotted owners roam in utter ignorance of all the plots and preparations of the Western world. And Heaven and Hell are not unlike those ancient and over-peopled nations of Europe whose teeming millions must have an outlet to other lands. Their life and their activity are too large and too rich for their original territories, and thus they are compelled to seek out colonies and dependencies, so that their surplus population may have a home. And, in like manner, Heaven is too full of love and of blessedness to have all that for ever shut up within itself, and Hell is too full of envy and ill-will, and thus there continually come about those contentions and collisions of which the *Holy War* is full. And, besides, it is with Mansoul and her neighbour states of Heaven and Hell just as it is with some of our great European empires in this also. There is no neutral zone, no buffer state, no silver streak between Mansoul and her immediate and military neighbours. And thus it is that her statesmen, and her soldiers, and even her very common-soldier sentries must be for ever on the watch; they must

never say peace, peace; they must never leave for one moment their appointed post.

And then, as for the wall of the city, hear our excellent historian's own words about that. 'The wall of the town was well built,' so he says. 'Yea, so fast and firm was it knit and compact together that, had it not been for the townsmen themselves, it could not have been shaken or broken down for ever. For here lay the excellent wisdom of Him that builded Mansoul, that the walls could never be broken down nor hurt by the most mighty adverse potentate unless the townsmen gave their consent thereto.' Now, what would the military engineers of Chatham and Paris and Berlin, who are now at their wits' end, not give for a secret like that! A wall impregnable and insurmountable and not to be sapped or mined from the outside: a wall that could only suffer hurt from the inside! And then that wonderful wall was pierced from within with five magnificently answerable gates. That is to say, the gates could neither be burst in nor any way forced from without. 'This famous town of Mansoul had five gates, in at which to come, out of which to go; and these were made likewise answerable to the walls; to wit, impregnable, and such as could never be opened or forced but by the will and leave of those within. The names of the gates were these: Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate; in short, 'the five senses,' as we say.

In the south of England, in the time of Edward the Confessor and after the battle of Hastings, there were five cities which had special immunities and peculiar privileges bestowed upon them, in recognition of the special dangers to which they were exposed and the eminent services they

performed as facing the hostile shores of France. Owing to their privileges and their position, the 'Cinque Ports' came to be cities of great strength, till, as time went on, they became a positive weakness rather than a strength to the land that lay behind them. Privilege bred pride, and in their pride the Cinque Ports proclaimed wars and formed alliances on their own account: piracies by sea and robberies by land were hatched within their walls; and it took centuries to reduce those pampered and arrogant ports to the safe and peaceful rank of ordinary English cities. The Revolution of 1688 did something, and the Reform Bill of 1832 did more to make Dover and her insolent sisters like the other free and equal cities of England; but to this day there are remnants of public shows and pageantries left in those old towns sufficient to witness to the former privileges, power, and pride of the famous Cinque Ports. Now, Mansoul, in like manner, has her cinque ports. And the whole of the *Holy War* is one long and detailed history of how the five senses are clothed with such power as they possess; how they abuse and misuse their power; what disloyalty and despite they show to their sovereign; what conspiracies and depredations they enter into; what untold miseries they let in upon themselves and upon the land that lies behind them; what years and years of siege, legislation, and rule it takes to reduce our bodily senses, those proud and licentious gates, to their true and proper allegiance, and to make their possessors a people loyal and contented, law-abiding and happy.

The Apostle has a terrible passage to the Corinthians, in which he treats of the soul and the senses with tremendous

and overwhelming power. 'Your bodies and your bodily members,' he argues, with crushing indignation, 'are not your own to do with them as you like. Your bodies and your souls are both Christ's. He has bought your body and your soul at an incalculable cost. What! know ye not that your body is nothing less than the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and ye are not any more your own? know ye not that your bodies are the very members of Christ?' And then he says a thing so terrible that I tremble to transcribe it. For a more terrible thing was never written. 'Shall I then,' filled with shame he demands, 'take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot?' O God, have mercy on me! I knew all the time that I was abusing and polluting myself, but I did not know, I did not think, I was never told that I was abusing and polluting Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Oh, too awful thought. And yet, stupid sinner that I am, I had often read that if any man defile the temple of God and the members of Christ, him shall God destroy. O God, destroy me not as I see now that I deserve. Spare me that I may cleanse and sanctify myself and the members of Christ in me, which I have so often embruted and defiled. Assist me to summon up my imagination henceforth to my sanctification as Thine apostle has here taught me the way. Let me henceforth look at my whole body in all its senses and in all its members, the most open and the most secret, as in reality no more my own. Let me henceforth look at myself with Paul's deep and holy eyes. Let me henceforth seat Christ, my Redeemer and my King, in the very throne of my heart, and then keep every gate of my body and every avenue of my mind as all not any more mine own but

His. Let me open my eye, and my ear, and my mouth, as if in all that I were opening Christ's eye and Christ's ear and Christ's mouth; and let me thrust in nothing on Him as He dwells within me that will make Him ashamed or angry, or that will defile and pollute Him. That thought, O God, I feel that it will often arrest me in time to come in the very act of sin. It will make me start back before I make Christ cruel or false, a wine-bibber, a glutton, or unclean. I feel at this moment as if I shall yet come to ask Him at every meal, and at every other opportunity and temptation of every kind, what He would have and what He would do before I go on to take or to do anything myself. What a check, what a restraint, what an awful scrupulosity that will henceforth work in me! But, through that, what a pure, blameless, noble, holy and heavenly life I shall then lead! What bodily pains, diseases, premature decays; what mental remorsees, what shames and scandals, what self-loathings and what self-disgusts, what cups bitterer to drink than blood, I shall then escape! Yes, O Paul, I shall henceforth hold with thee that my body is the temple of Christ, and that I am not my own, but that I am bought with a transporting price, and can, therefore, do nothing less than glorify God in my body and in my spirit which are God's. 'This place,' says the Pauline author of the *Holy War*—'This place the King intended but for Himself alone, and not for another with Him.'

But, my brethren, lay this well, and as never before, to heart—this, namely, that when you thus begin to keep any gate for Christ, your King and Captain and Better-self,—Ear-gate, or Eye-gate, or Mouth-gate, or any other gate—you

will have taken up a task that shall have no end with you in this life. Till you begin in dead earnest to watch your heart, and all the doors of your heart, as if you were watching Christ's heart for Him and all the doors of His heart, you will have no idea of the arduousness and the endurance, the sleeplessness and the self-denial, of the undertaking.

'Mansoul! Her wars seemed endless in her eyes;
She's lost by one, becomes another's prize.
Mansoul! Her mighty wars, they did portend
Her weal or woe and that world without end.
Wherefore she must be more concern'd than they
Whose fears begin and end the self-same day.'

'We all thought one battle would decide it,' says Richard Baxter, writing about the Civil War. 'But we were all very much mistaken,' sardonically adds Carlyle. Yes; and you will be very much mistaken too if you enter on the war with sin in your soul, in your senses and in your members, with powder and shot for one engagement only. When you enlist here, lay well to heart that it is for life. There is no discharge in this war. There are no ornamental old pensioners here. It is a warfare for eternal life, and nothing will end it but the end of your evil days on earth.

CHAPTER III—EAR-GATE

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‘Take heed what ye hear.’—*Our Lord in Mark.*

‘Take heed how you hear.’—*Our Lord in Luke.*

This famous town of Mansoul had five gates, in at which to come, out at which to go, and these were made likewise answerable to the walls—to wit, impregnable, and such as could never be opened nor forced but by the will and leave of those within. ‘The names of the gates were these, Ear-gate, Eye-gate,’ and so on. Dr. George Wilson, who was once Professor of Technology in our University, took this suggestive passage out of the *Holy War* and made it the text of his famous lecture in the Philosophical Institution, and then he printed the passage on the fly-leaf of his delightful book *The Five Gateways of Knowledge*. That is a book to read sometime, but this evening is to be spent with the master.

For, after all, no one can write at once so beautifully, so quaintly, so suggestively, and so evangelically as John Bunyan. ‘The Lord Willbewill,’ says John Bunyan, ‘took special care that the gates should be secured with double guards, double bolts, and double locks and bars; and that Ear-gate especially might the better be looked to, for that was the gate in at which the King’s forces sought most to enter. The Lord Willbewill therefore made old Mr. Prejudice, an angry and ill-conditioned fellow, captain of the ward at that gate, and put under his power sixty men, called Deafmen; men advantageous for that service, forasmuch as

they mattered no words of the captain nor of the soldiers. And first the King's officers made their force more formidable against Ear-gate: for they knew that unless they could penetrate that no good could be done upon the town. This done, they put the rest of their men in their places; after which they gave out the word, which was, Ye must be born again! And so the battle began. Now, they in the town had planted upon the tower over Ear-gate two great guns, the one called High-mind and the other Heady. Unto these two guns they trusted much; they were cast in the castle by Diabolus's ironfounder, whose name was Mr. Puff-up, and mischievous pieces they were. They in the camp also did stoutly, for they saw that unless they could open Ear-gate it would be in vain to batter the wall.' And so on, through many allegorical, and, if sometimes somewhat laboured, yet always eloquent, pungent, and heart-exposing pages.

With these for our text let us now take a rapid glance at what some of the more Bunyan-like passages in the prophets and the psalms say about the ear; how it is kept and how it is lost; how it is used and how it is abused.

1. The Psalmist uses a very striking expression in the 94th Psalm when he is calling for justice, and is teaching God's providence over men. 'He that planted the ear,' the Psalmist exclaims, 'shall he not hear?' And, considering his church and his day, that is not a bad remark of Cardinal Bellarmine on that psalm,—'the Psalmist's word *planted*,' says that able churchman, 'implies design, in that the ear was not spontaneously evolved by an act of vital force, but was independently created by God for a certain object, just as a tree, not of indigenous growth, is of set purpose

planted in some new place by the hand of man.' The same thing is said in Genesis, you remember, about the Garden of Eden,—the Lord planted it and put the man and the woman, whose ears he had just planted also, into the garden to dress it and keep it. How they dressed the garden and kept it, and how they held the gate of their ear against him who squatted down before it with his innuendoes and his lies, we all know to our as yet unrepaired, though not always irreparable, cost.

2. One would almost think that the scornful apostle had the Garden of Eden in his eye when he speaks so bitterly to Timothy of a class of people who are cursed with 'itching ears.' Eve's ears itched unappeasably for the devil's promised secret; and we have all inherited our first mother's miserable curiosity. How eager, how restless, how importunate, we all are to hear that new thing that does not at all concern us; or only concerns us to our loss and our shame. And the more forbidden that secret is to us, and the more full of inward evil to us—insane sinners that we are—the more determined we are to get at it. Let any forbidden secret be in the keeping of some one within earshot of us and we will give him no rest till he has shared the evil thing with us. Let any specially evil page be published in a newspaper, and we will take good care that that day's paper is not thrown into the waste-basket; we will hide it away, like a dog with a stolen bone, till we are able to dig it up and chew it dry in secret. The devil has no need to blockade or besiege the gate of our ear if he has any of his good things to offer us. The gate that can only be opened from within will open at once of itself if he or any of his newsmongers

but squat down for a moment before it. Shame on us, and on all of us, for our itching ears.

3. Isaiah speaks of some men in his day whose ears were 'heavy' and whose hearts were fat, and the Psalmist speaks of some men in his day whose ears were 'stopped' up altogether. And there is not a better thing in Bunyan at his very best than that surly old churl called Prejudice, so ill-conditioned and so always on the edge of anger. By the devil's plan of battle old Prejudice was appointed to be warder of Ear-gate, and to enable him to keep that gate for his master he had sixty deaf men put under him, men most advantageous for that post, forasmuch as it mattered not to them what Emmanuel and His officers said. There could be no manner of doubt who composed that inimitable passage. There is all the truth and all the humour and all the satire in Old Prejudice that our author has accustomed us to in his best pieces. The common people always get the best literature along with the best religion in John Bunyan. 'They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and which will not hearken to the voice of charmers charming never so wisely,' says the Psalmist, speaking about some bad men in his day. Now, I will not stand upon David's natural history here, but his moral and religious meaning is evident enough. David is not concerned about adders and their ears, he is wholly taken up with us and our adder-like animosity against the truth. Against what teacher, then; against what preacher; against what writer; against what doctrine, reproof, correction, has your churlish prejudice adder-like shut your ear? Against what truth, human or divine, have you hitherto stopped up your ear like the Psalmist's

serpent? To ask that boldly, honestly, and in the sight of God, at yourself to-night, would end in making you the lifelong friend of some preacher, some teacher, some soul-saving truth you have up till to-night been prejudiced against with the rooted prejudice and the sullen obstinacy of sixty deaf men. O God, help us to lay aside all this adder-like antipathy at men and things, both in public and in private life. Help us to give all men and all causes a fair field and no favour, but the field and the favour of an open and an honest mind, and a simple and a sincere heart. He that hath ears, let him hear!

4. As we work our way through the various developments and vicissitudes of the Holy War we shall find Ear-gate in it and in ourselves passing through many unexpected experiences; now held by one side and now by another. And we find the same succession of vicissitudes set forth in Holy Scripture. If you pay any attention to what you read and hear, and then begin to ask yourselves fair in the face as to your own prejudices, prepossessions, animosities, and antipathies,—you will at once begin to reap your reward in having put into your possession what the Scriptures so often call an ‘inclined’ ear. That is to say, an ear not only unstopped, not only unloaded, but actually prepared and predisposed to all manner of truth and goodness. Around our city there are the remains, the still visible tracks, of roads that at one time took the country people into our city, but which are now stopped up and made wholly impassable. There is no longer any road into Edinburgh that way. There are other roads still open, but they are very roundabout, and at best very uphill. And then there are other roads so

smooth, and level, and broad, and well kept, that they are full of all kinds of traffic; in the centre carts and carriages crowd them, on the one side horses and their riders delight to display themselves, and on the other side pedestrians and perambulators enjoy the sun. And then there are still other roads with such a sweet and gentle incline upon them that it is a positive pleasure both to man and beast to set their foot upon them. And so it is with the minds and the hearts of the men and the women who crowd these roads. Just as the various roads are, so are the ears and the understandings, the affections and the inclinations of those who walk and ride and drive upon them. Some of those men's ears are impassably stopped up by self-love, self-interest, party-spirit, anger, envy, and ill-will,—impenetrably stopped up against all the men and all the truths of earth and of heaven that would instruct, enlighten, convict or correct them. Some men's minds, again, are not so much shut up as they are crooked, and warped, and narrow, and full of obstruction and opposition. Whereas here and there, sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot; sometimes a learned man walking out of the city to take the air, and sometimes an unlettered countryman coming into the city to make his market, will have his ear hospitably open to every good man he meets, to every good book he reads, to every good paper he buys at the street corner, and to every good speech, and report, and letter, and article he reads in it. And how happy that man is, how happy his house is at home, and how happy he makes all those he but smiles to on his afternoon walk, and in all his walk along the roads of this life. Never see an 'I incline' on a railway or on a