

Pastor and People.

BEGINNINGS.

BY HELEN E. BROWN.

Alas, the beginnings,
The very first sinnings,
That scarcely are noticed to-day;
But they lead to worse doing,
And dark utter ruin
By a short but a sure and straight way.
One step, little brother,
And then just another;
You go faster with every one;
Down hill you are sliding,
And the evil betiding
You scarcely believe till it's done,
And, O, the beginnings,
The true upward winnings,
When we start with the right step first;
The pathway grows brighter,
And duties seem lighter,
As we tread in the way of the just.
One step, little brother,
And then just another,
And upward you steadily climb;
And strength will be given,
For your Father in heaven
Is watching you all the time.
Which way are you going?
Is the sin in you growing?
Are you treading the downward way?
Or do you, the rather,
Reach up, little brother,
Growing stronger and better each day?
—*Temperance Banner.*

Written for the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

LITTLE FOXES.

BY REV. JAMES HASTIE, CORNWALL.

Do you know how I came to select this topic, young friends? Well, the other day, the word 'little' flashed into my mind. I turned up my concordance and there found a long list of verses in which it occurred. I began to count them: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; 10, 20, 40, 50, 80, 100; 110, 140, 170, and a few more; over 170 verses containing the word 'little.' And I thought, surely this word stands for some very important things when it occurs so often in the Bible. So, out of these 170 or 180 verses I selected this one in the Song of Solomon (ii. 15), which reads:

'Take us the foxes, the little foxes,
That spoil the vines.'

Palestine was a country where grapes grew abundantly. Foxes grew abundantly too. Foxes like grapes as much as people do. Young foxes like grapes as well as old foxes. These young mischief-makers would not wait till the grapes were ripe, but were at them as soon as they were formed. And besides eating many, they did immense mischief with their claws, by scratching stem and branches, that though they were young and small, they were big in mischief.

Now, I need scarcely say that Solomon's purpose in referring to these little foxes was not to make us think and talk about the animals themselves, but about sins and sinners which may seem small and harmless, yet often do immense harm.

1. The first little fox that I shall name is: PRIDE—SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

A little boy who lived in Sparta, Greece, once stole a little fox, hid it under his coat, and ran off.

The fox began to gnaw at his coat, and cut through his clothes to his body. Then it commenced gnawing at his body, and ate a hole into his side.

But, so ashamed was the boy to let it be known that he had been stealing, that he kept the fox under his coat till it had eaten a hole into his side, of which he died.

That boy was carrying two foxes in reality, one inside, the other outside. The one inside was by far the worse of the two. Its name is *pride*. Pride it is which keeps many boys and girls from throwing away their deadly sins by confessing them to Jesus, and by-and-bye these little sins will kill their soul.

It was a little fox of this sort which almost destroyed a great general of old, called Naaman. A dreadful disease had laid hold of him, leprosy. No one in all the land could cure him by medicine. He must die. In his house lived a little slave-girl of Israel, who had been captured in war.

And when she saw her great master dying of that dread disease, she said she knew a man who could cure him, Elisha the prophet of the Lord. Naaman sent for Elisha; Elisha came and prescribed, and guaranteed a cure, if he would do exactly what he was told:

'Go, wash seven times in Jordan, and you shall be cured' (ii Kings, v. 10).

This made Naaman mad, because it wounded his pride. He thought Elisha would make a great ado over him, and cure him by speaking the word, and save him all trouble. This Elisha would not do, but insisted on his going to Jordan and bathing seven times—seven times, the perfect number. The proud man had to choose between keeping his pride and keeping his leprosy, or parting with his pride and parting with his leprosy.

Fortunately, he gave up his pride, washed seven times in Jordan, and was immediately cured.

Sin is to the soul what leprosy is to the body—a deadly disease. No cure for it but by washing in the blood of Jesus.

Some are too proud to do this, thinking that it proclaims them to be very vile. They want God to save them in some other way. God will not save them in any other way.

Take this little fox, pride, then, and slay it, and let it not destroy your only chance of being saved. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2. The second little fox I shall name is:

TEMPTATIONS—SMALL TEMPTATIONS.

In the great city of Babylon there once lived a woman called Semiramis, poor, but very cunning. Somehow she managed to get an influence over the king, whose name was Ninus, so that he promised to grant her any request she should make.

One day she asked him to let her rule the empire just for one day, only for one day. He laughed, and told her she might. So they fixed upon a certain day, and early in the morning, trumpeters galloped through the city telling everybody that Semiramis was queen that day, and that everybody must obey her commands. That day she put on robes of royalty and ascended the throne, while Ninus sat down amongst the people.

Crowds gathered in the great square, and paid their addresses to the new Queen, *pro tem*. Fancy how she must have felt now that she occupied a royal seat for one whole day; and she said to herself: 'Is it not possible for me to be here always, if I only should try?'

Then she began to issue her commands, at first only little things and easy of execution, to see if the people would obey. And when she found they did, she thought a minute and said to the soldiers, 'Go tie the king's hands and feet, and bring him before me.' Off went the soldiers and brought the king to Semiramis, bound hand and foot. And now all the city was talking and wondering what she was going to do next. But they had not to wait long. She commanded chains to be put upon the king, and he was chained. She commanded him to be brought into the square and killed. He was brought into the square and pierced with arrows and spears, and was killed. And now, Semiramis, who only asked to rule for a day, for the fun of it, was queen of the great Babylonian Empire. The king's fatal mistake lay in yielding to that little request to allow that woman to sit upon the throne one day. That mistake cost him his throne and empire, and his life.

A very little fox that simple request seemed at first to be, and harmless; but, oh! what havoc it wrought by-and-bye!

Now, beware, young friends: Satan comes and says: 'Oh! let me be king in your heart just for one day. Let me be the ruler of your thoughts, and words, and actions, just for one day.' But, if you do, ten chances to one, he will bind you hand and foot and kill you.

'Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin, Each victory will help you some other to win.'

3. The next class of little foxes I would name is

NEGLECT—NEGLECT OF TRIFLES.

On a certain farm stood a gate enclosing the cattle and poultry, which was constantly swinging open for want of a latch. Ten cents of money and ten minutes of time would have made all right.

It was on the swing every time a person went out or in, and many poultry were lost from time to time. One day a fine young porker made his escape; a very valuable young pig.

The whole family, with the gardener, and the cook, and the milk-maid, turned out in

quest of the fugitive. The gardener was the first to discover the pig, but in leaping a ditch to cut off his escape, he got a sprain that laid him up for a fortnight. On returning to the house the cook found the linen burned which she had hung up before the fire to dry. And the milk-maid, having forgotten in her haste to tie up the cattle in the cowhouse, found that one of the loose cows had broken the leg of a colt that happened to be kept in the shed. The linen burned and the gardener's time lost amounted to twenty dollars. The colt was worth double that. Thus in a few minutes a loss of sixty dollars was caused, to say nothing about loss of temper and cross words, all for want of a little latch which could have been supplied for a few cents.

A long train of losses, spiritual losses, which cannot be expressed by dollars and cents, have often resulted by neglecting to ask God's guidance in prayer before taking some important step; by neglecting to read a few verses of Scripture, night and morning; by neglecting to follow the kind advice of mother, Sunday school teacher, or pastor in an important crisis. Don't neglect the little latch. As neglect of trifles is the surest way to entail heavy loss, so non-neglect of trifles is the surest way to reach perfection.

'What is the secret of your doing your work so beautifully?' asked one lady of another who was making a piece of crotchet work. 'There is no secret about it,' replied the lady. 'I only make every stitch as perfect as I can, and I am careful to put it exactly in the right place. There isn't one wrong or careless stitch in all that work. If I make a mistake I unravel it and correct it.'

Yes, young friends, there lies the secret of all successful work, one stitch at a time, and every stitch just right. Thus it is, that the marvellous fabrics of lace shown at the late Chicago fair, costing fabulous prices, were made. Thus, all the costly garments of kings and queens and other grandees are made; one stitch at a time, and every stitch just right.

Thus the noblest lives are lived—Enoch, Joseph, Daniel, Paul, Timothy, John, Hannah, Mary, Lydia—one moment at a time. No moments carelessly spent; no moments viciously spent where 'tis possible to avoid it.

Wrong stitches in crotchet can be unravelled and made right. Wrong stitches in garments can be picked out and others put in. But who can recall an evil word once spoken? or can bring to naught the influence on others of one bad action? Who can reverse the tide of time, and live a day or an hour over again?

Some unknown friend left on a gentleman's desk a card on which were printed these words:

'I shall pass through this world but once! Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now in His name, and for His sake! Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.'

That man possessed the secret for making the whole fabric of life perfect. 'Any good thing that I can do'; 'any kindness that I can show to any human being.' These two sentences cover all our duty to God, and all our duty to our neighbor. And these two—practical love to God and practical love to man is the fulfilling of the law.

4. One more little fox I shall name, one of the most destructive of all; its name is:

PROCRASTINATION,

which means putting off to a future time what should be done now.

Do you remember the sad story of the steamship *Central America*, which sprung a leak in mid-ocean on her voyage from New York to San Francisco? Seeing her signal of distress, a vessel bore down toward her. 'What is amiss?' shouted the captain to the other captain. 'We are in bad repair, and are going down; lie by till morning,' was the answer.

'Let me take your passengers now,' said the rescuing captain again.

But as it was night and very dark, the captain of the *Central America* did not like to send his passengers away, lest some might perish, and thinking that the ship could easily keep afloat till daylight, replied: 'Lie by till morning.'

Again the captain of the rescue ship called: 'You had better let me take them now.'

'Lie by till morning,' again sounded back through the trumpet. An hour and a half later her lights were missed, and though no sound was heard, the appalling fact was, the *Central America* had gone down with all on board. All perished because the captain procrastinated.

How many souls go down to the bottomless pit, we cannot tell. But, just think how many people die in a week, in a day, in an hour, in a minute, the world over. Eighty people die every minute, which is more than one every second; 4,800 every hour; 115,200 every day; 806,400 every week; three millions and a quarter every month; thirty-nine millions of people die every year. And few, very few of these expect to die soon. And how know you but you may die next minute, next hour, to-morrow? Listen! what saith God to you: 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation' (II. Cor. 6, 2). Listen again: 'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near' (Is. 55, 6).

Learn a lesson of prompt obedience from the soldier and from the sailor. Never, never does one or the other reply, 'In an hour,' or 'To-morrow I will,' or 'I will think about it.'

But the moment the command is given, 'All hands aloft,' there is a rush as to who shall first reach the mast-head.

When the commander says, 'Attention, battalion,' every eye and ear is on the alert. Every man is ready to act. Oh! why not be as prompt to obey the commands of Christ?

Next year is not yours. Next week is not yours. To-morrow is not yours. This evening is not yours. An hour hence is not yours. The present moment is not yours, and that is all you have.

Think now, act now, as God wants you to do, for it may be your last chance.

Now, I have mentioned four little foxes—spiritual pride, small temptations, neglect, procrastination. There are many, many more, which I leave you to hunt up at your leisure and slay; but be sure that you slay them all, and keep not one.

FINALLY.

Remember, 'tis not enough to keep all bad things out of your heart and life. God wants your heart and life filled with all that is good. He wants your little bodies and souls and minds to be holy temples for Him, holy gardens for Him, where He can come and abide and find delight.

To help you to be and do all this for Jesus, I give you the following verses to learn and live by:

Jesus, can a child like me,
Thine own living temple be?

Yes, Thy Spirit, day by day,
In my heart will deign to stay.

Then that heart must ever be
A fit dwelling place for Thee.

Naughty tempers, thoughts of sin,
These things must not enter in.

But a temple is a place
Built for constant prayer and praise,

And the teaching of Thy Word:
Am I such a temple, Lord?

Yes, if all I do and say,
In my work and in my play,

Shall be gentle, true, and right,
Pleasing in Thy holy sight.

Help me, Lord, for I am weak;
Make me hear when Thou dost speak.

Cleanse my heart from every sin,
Make me beautiful within.

May Thy presence from above
Fill my heart with holy love.

Then shall those about me see
That the Saviour dwells in me.

Such is the heart and life of one from whom every little fox has been driven out.

The churches in New York City continue to be stirred with a religious revival. During the week ending March 24, meetings were being held in halls, theatres, and the open air, as well as in the churches. During Mr. Moody's visit to Washington some four thousand persons, it is said, professed conversion.

'The Land and the Book.'—The death is announced of Rev. Dr. Thompson, the author of this well known and most valuable work on the Holy Land. He died at Denver on a late Sunday, in the 89th year of his age. In 1832 he went to Syria as a missionary of the American Board. For forty-six years he continued in the field.