

THE LITTLE FOX, "BY-AND-BY."

THERE is a beautiful old song in the Bible about Love. It is called 'The Song of Solomon,' who was the wisest of the kings of Israel. It tells about the heart, and how the love that is in it may be kept pure and holy, or made impure and bad.

One verse in that song—Solomon's Song ii. 15—says, 'Take as the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.'

The old Jewish vine-dressers used to be greatly troubled by the foxes, which had a way of stealing in among the tender vines, and gnawing the roots and eating off the fresh green shoots, and doing a great deal of damage. They had to watch very carefully for them; and they had a song which they used to sing as they were going out to work in their vineyards. A part of it was:

'Destroy the pests of the vineyards

Catch the foxes every one?

By all means take the little foxes,

For they are the ones that spoil the vines?'

Now, our hearts, you know, are spoken of as vineyards. God has planted them and watered them, and He wants them to bear fruit for Him. Do you know what fruits they may bear? There is love, and purity, and patience, and gentleness, and kindness, and mercy, and faith. There are good deeds and kind words and pure thoughts. All of these our Heavenly Father has made it possible for our hearts to bear, and He expects them to do it.

But there are a great many things that he p to spoil the vines in God's vineyard. They are like little foxes, and they get into our hearts and nibble off the grape clusters, and break the tender twigs, and trample out the delicate roots. They are unkind thoughts, bad habits, cross dispositions, love of self, and a great many more. Let me tell you the names of some of these little foxes. There is 'By and By,' a lazy fox; and 'I Can't,' a shiftless fox; and 'I Won't,' an obstinate fox; and 'I'll do as I please,' a selfish fox; and 'Cover up,' a sly fox, and a whole pack more.

Sometimes good things begin to grow in children's hearts, like buds on a vine. There is the bud of patience, and the bud of love, and the bud of obedience, and the bud of modesty, and the bud of helpfulness. Then something comes and nips off the little bud, and it stops growing. It is a sly little fox that has been on the watch for it, and you cannot think how much mischief he does.

I should like to speak about several of these little foxes, but there is time for only one to-day.

He is a mischievous little fellow; but so lazy that you can easily catch him if you wish to.

'Among my garden vines I spy

A little fox, named "By-and-By."

Have you never seen him? By-and-By has a great many brothers and sisters, and they are all very much alike.

There is 'Put-off,' and 'Pretty-soon,' and 'Wait-a-bit,' and 'To-morrow,' and what I say about one of them I could say about them all.

By-and-By is a sly little fox. He looks innocent, and is a great pet with children. Whenever there is anything which you ought to do, he whispers in your ear, 'Oh, you don't need to do it now! Some other time it will be very much easier. There is no hurry.'

Do you know that one of the great-great-grandfathers of this little fox lived twenty-five hundred years ago, in the days of the good Prophet Isaiah? He used to get into people's hearts then just as his descendants do now, and made them say, '*To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.*' You may call that the text of this little sermon, put right here in the middle.

By-and-By prowls about everywhere. He persuades you to lie in bed late in the morning. When you are dressing he makes you dawdle and look out of the window, and be a long while buttoning up your shoes. When you are in school he makes you slow in learning your lessons. He calls off your mind to play, and to other things that you want to do. When you are sent on errands, he makes you loiter on the street, or stop to play, or to look in at the shop windows. When your parents