Look Out for the Foxes!

In the Song of Songs is a touch of Hebrew poetry, which sounds as if it were a verse from the ballad of a vine-dresser. It translated literally, and put in a rhythmical form, would read:

"Catch us the Foxes,
Foxes the little ones,
Wasting our vineyards,
When our vineyards are blossoming."

The mischievous foxes nibbled away the blossoms, or else devoured the tiny and tender grapes, so that the vintage was destroyed. This recalls the sad experiences of the good people of Nebraska and Kansas, whose grain fields were devastated by so insignificant a creature as the grasshopper. Great mischief may be wrought by very small agents.

The real danger with most good people is not from enormous and heaven-defying sins. It is from what we call little sins, and often regard as mere faults, foibles, or infirmities. Where shall we find a pair of scales or a measuring line to determine the size of a sin? What we regard as very small may be in God's sight very great. The essence of sin is breach of God's laws—an offence against Him; it is a matter of principle. The principle of evil may be just as distinctly visible in the theft of a dime, as in the midnight robbery of a bank. The lustful look is adultery in the egg. Sin and holiness are rated by the same scales of measurement. As the divine Master tells us that a "cup of cold water given in His name" is a righteous act worthy of reward, so is the man "who is unjust in that which is *least*, unjust also in that which is much." If the vine of a Christian's character is so damaged that its spiritual beauty and influence are impaired, it matters nothing whether a single huge crime or a thousand petty sins work the havoc. Rarely does a professed Christian commit a huge crime; we are all in danger from the stealthy little foxes that slip in and do Satan's work unchallenged. Dr. Maclaren puts this truth very pungently when he says that "the worst sin is not some outburst of gross transgression, forming an exception to the ordinary tenor of a life, bad and dismal as such a sin is; but the most fatal are the small continuous vices which root underground and honeycomb the soul. Many a man who thinks himself a Christian is in more danger from the daily commission, for example, of small pieces of sharp practice in his business, than ever was David at his worst. White ants pick a carcase clean sooner than a lion will."

Big sins frighten us; little ones steal in unobserved, like the insects that eat out the fibre of solid furniture in Cuba, and when the strain comes the timber snaps, and fills the eye with dust. More than one minister has lost his place by little artifices that engendered a suspicion of his square, solid honesty. Thousands of Christian parents destroy all their religious influence over their children by their ebullitions of bad temper. This is not a mere foible. Bad temper is an ugly, venomous sin—it is a sin against the central, cardinal, Christian grace of *love*. Look at the mischief that is often wrought in a congregation by a hateful tongue of censoriousness, that embroils a neighborhood and poisons the reputation of fellow-members of Christ's fold. Envy is often accounted a small sin; so is a pistol-ball small, but if lodged in a human brain it is deadly. A very able and excellent minister once left a church because they had practiced on him a petty piece of stinginess; he rightly concluded that if they acted meanly in one act, they could not be trusted to deal fairly by him in other things. Foxes do not loom very large or make a loud noise, but they can strip the Lord's vineyard as clean as the weevils will strip a wheat-field, if they are allowed to have full swing. How does spiritual declension begin with a Christian? It commonly begins with small offences against the laws of absolute purity, or honesty or conscientiousness; it starts with occasional neglects of Christian duty and occasional acts of self-indulgence. When robbers want to plunder a house, they hoist a small boy up into a window, and he unbolts the doors for the gang. Let us look out for Satan's imps slipped in at the open windows of our hearts!

There is a solemn significance in that word "*blossoming*." A frost at the time when orchards are in blossom may kill the whole crop. So when a soul is awakened by the Holy Spirit it is a critical time. A slight influence for good or evil may decide the wavering scales. An unconverted husband, for example, is deeply moved by a faithful sermon; his professedly Christian wife goes home and criticises the sermon, or vexes him by some petty vexation, or in some equally wicked way diverts his thoughts when she ought to be watchful to do him good. Christian parents too often return from the house of God to their own homes, and let loose a whole bevy of foxes that devour all the serious impressions made on the hearts of their sons and daughters. Pile up snow flakes enough on a railway track and the most powerful locomotive is "stalled" in the drifts. So I verily believe that it is the aggregation of small sins, and of neglected duties, which often block revivals and hinder the *progress* of Christ's work. Satan's foxes are always especially busy when the Holy Spirit is active in a church; they nip blossoms and kill the tender grapes.

Young converts are also in a state of blossoming. They are just beginning a new life. Character has not yet got strong fibre and solidity. Therefore small sins and slight departures from the promptings of conscience and the commandments of Christ, "shunt" them off on the track that leads farther and farther from God. An evening spent in bad company sows evil thoughts that sprout like thistles. A glass of wine starts a dangerous appetite and weakens self-restraint. The choice of a theatre instead of a prayer-meeting undoes in a single night the good work of months, as a fox in one night will nibble a whole vine. Life turns on small pivots. Nothing ought to be regarded as small that tells on character or the welfare of an immortal soul. If our chief dangers throughout the whole Christian life arise from what we call little sins, then may God help us all, young and old, to beware of the little foxes that devour the blossoms of piety, and make melancholy havoc with even the vines of His own planting.—*Rev. T. L. Cuyler.*

The Living Christ.

The Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, in a recent sermon on "Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame"—Heb. 12: 2, dwelt on (1) The Heroism of Jesus Christ, (2) The Motive. The following is found under the second head:

St. John saw the Lord in his glory—his face like the sun in its strength, his eyes like unto flames of fire, the white robes of his royalty girt with a golden girdle. He heard the great chorus singing to him the rapturous anthem of their praise. The disciples fell at His feet as dead. Is this his Christ? gone up beyond the reach of the people? No, indeed. "He laid His right hand upon him and said, 'Fear not.'" It was the same gracious Lord. "And He said unto me, Write"—and we bend to listen to the message—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and will open unto me, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne."

If we see Him amidst the glories of Paradise, it is ever as the Lamb that has been slain; the same all-gracious Lord. "He that sitteth upon the throne doth dwell amongst them; and the Lamb, which is in the midst of them, doth feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters.

Do not let us put the great Captain of our salvation so far away that we cannot get at him. Do not think of Him as up so high beyond the battlements of heaven, and within its ranks of holy angels, whilst His poor Bride, the Church, is left to struggle on as best she can! Think you that can ever be His joy? He who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it? Never! He is entered into His joy, the joy of our help and our deliverance; the joy of saving and blessing us. Consider Him ever at hand for our defense; watchful, and mighty to save. It was thus that the early disciples saw Him, their glorious Captain, leading them forth against their foes. It was thus that Stephen saw Him, the Son of God, standing for His deliverance, coming forth to greet him with His "Well done!" It was thus that St. Paul triumphed in the presence of the Almighty Saviour, when all the forces of Rome and all the cruelties of hell were at hand to destroy the Christians. He seems to delight in looking forth upon the troops of dreadful enemies, persecution, and famine, and distress, and tribulation, and nakedness, and peril—each a captain with a noisy and hideous following, seizing one and another for their prey, so that he cried, "We are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But yet—a single look upward, one glimpse of that Face, one grasp of that Hand, and St. Paul was girt and thrilled with omnipotence. "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that hath loved us."

What Hinders You.

My young friend, this frank question comes home to your conscience, "What hinders you from becoming a Christian?" Though you may not reply with your lips, yet your inner man might speak out if it could, and honestly say, "I am afraid of ridicule. They will laugh at me."

But *who* will laugh at you? Will your parents laugh at you? I hope they are praying for you. Will your "best friends" laugh at you? Then they do not deserve the name; they are really your soul's enemies. But your companions, your shopmates, or your schoolmates may sneer at you. Suppose they do. What then? Is not every good act and every noble act, liable to sneers? Will you always continue to be shamed out of your eternal happiness by the short-lived "laughter of fools?" Was not your Divine Master scoffed at and reviled beyond measure? Did He not endure contempt for you? And will you refuse to bear a little harmless ridicule for Him? Ah, my friend! it is better to endure a silly sneer or two in this world, than to "awake to shame" and everlasting self-contempt in the hour of judgment! It is better to be "despised" by a few light headed scoffers here, than to despise and loathe and abhor yourself, and to be abhorred of God, and to all eternity.

But perhaps you say, "Youth is no time for psalm singing and gloom. It is the time for merriment." Well, my dear mistaken friend, I do not ask you to be gloomy; it is *the very thing I want to deliver you from.* "Gloom!" Is it a gloomy thing to have your sins forgiven? Is it a gloomy thing to have a good conscience? Is it a sad state to be in fellowship with Christ, and an heir of Heaven? Is it a melancholy business to sing God's praises, or to labor for God's glory—to be busy in doing good—in relieving misery, and blessing souls?

Ah! I will tell you what *is* a "gloomy" thing, enough to draw tears from a stone. It is a gloomy sight to see a son or daughter setting out on the perilous voyage of life without chart or compass, in hourly danger of everlasting shipwreck. It is a gloomy sight to see a young man despise salvation. It is a sad sight to see a young maiden "quench the Holy Spirit," and give herself up, head and heart, to the senseless frivolities of the world. It is the saddest of spectacles to behold the slow, steady hardening of a heart in sin—to behold the chains of the destroyer coil closer and tighter every hour about a soul "without God and without hope."

You admit the force of these brief suggestions, and say, "I ought to be a Christian; I mean to be a Christian; *but there is time enough yet.*" Who told you so? Has God drawn aside the veil, and revealed to you a long life ahead? Has He given you an assurance that *next year* will be your "accepted time" and your "day of salvation?" You will be harder next year than you are to-day, even if you live to see it. But your "next year may be spent among the wailings of the lost." The shroud may be already weaving for thee. The "feet of them who are to bear you out" may be almost at "the door."

"Time enough yet!" Where is that young man with whom you made your social calls last New Year's Day? Where is that young girl whose rosy cheek you kissed on her bridal night, a twelvemonth since?

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips you then pressed
In their bloom;
And the name you loved to hear
Has been carved this very year
On the tomb!"

— *The Word and the Way.*

New Methods.

Pastors sometimes become weary of their churches, and churches, in turn, of their pastors. This result is natural; perhaps in some cases it is inevitable. The preacher's voice becomes familiar; his methods of sermonizing can be readily anticipated by hearers familiar with his sermons. They, therefore, lose interest in him and his sermons. What shall he do? Resign and go? Yes, he can do that; he may go elsewhere, and repeat the process; he may so keep on until his troubled and enfeebled ministry reaches its close, and he gladly lays down his commission. But it would be vastly better for him to exercise his ingenuity, develop new resources in himself, and discover new treasures in God's wonderful book. At such a crisis in a man's ministry, God gives him a call not to a new field of labor, but to new labor in his old field. Are there difficulties where you are? Of course there are; there are difficulties everywhere. Every field is a hard field; but we are called into the ministry to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Why should a pastor cowardly shirk difficulties and leave them for some other man to endure or remove? Let him call into exercise hitherto dormant powers; let him adopt new methods of sermonizing, getting down into the glorious mine of God's word and bringing forth treasures new as well as old; let him determine to be a man, and not a dwarf. A crisis of this sort comes to every pastor; it tests him; it will make a man of him, if the right stuff is in him. It will, if bravely met, enable him to win a glorious victory out of apparently certain defeat. No greater kindness can be done to many a young pastor, bowed under real burdens, and weighed down with imaginary griefs, than to summon him to give up all thought of going elsewhere, and to put forth his best efforts where providence has cast his lot. Dear brother, stop saying, "The church is cold, will not come up to the help of the Lord, will neither pray nor pay." What are you there for but to warm the church, to bring it up to the help of the Lord, and to make it both pray and pay. That is part of your work; perhaps you were sent there just for that purpose. Counsels like these have recently prevented three brethren from resigning. They went heroically back to their work; their churches felt a new power in, and inspiration from, the pulpit. The churches wondered at the improved work; the Lord blessed, and at this moment these very pastors are in the midst of gracious revivals.—*R. S. M. Arthur.*

Salvation by Growth.

A sermon by Dr. Lyman Abbott, in a recent number of *The Christian Union*, contains the following bit of good reading for some parents:

"There are a great many fathers and mothers that, more or less, believe that their children are to be saved by growth, by a natural process. They say, 'Let them alone; they will come out all right.' How often you hear it! This little child is passionate; he strikes his brother, he pants, he sulks, he kicks and struggles with his nurse, and we laugh at him. It is quite amusing, this anger, when he is only a year or two old. Yes, these manifestations please us, as the claw of the kitten pleases us when it isn't yet strong enough to scratch deeply and do much harm. And if some one says, 'You musn't allow that; stop it, stop it!' the father says, 'Let him alone; he will outgrow it.' The little girl prinks before the mirror, and comes down pleased to show her dress. 'Oh, let her alone; she will outgrow all that.' And so we imagine that our children, by growth, by a natural process, without any intervention on our part, will outgrow their pride, they will outgrow their passion, they will outgrow their vanity. 'No!' says St. Paul, 'we are by growth the children of wrath; we are by growth the children of our irregulated passions and appetites.' Growth never cured a sick man. Growth never redeemed a sinful man. And the little fist that strikes the blow that doesn't hurt, and the little passion that inflames the fist, all of which we laugh at now—wait! Wait until the muscle grows strong; wait until the knuckles grow steely; wait until the passion grows fierce,—and that blow will be the blow of Cain on Abel. This little child that prinks before the glass; wait! wait! let it grow, and by and by it will fling that girl out into the street to gratify her vanity by the awful sale of herself to some man's passion. Our vices grow with our growth; our sins strengthen with our strength. Growth never did anything for any man but make him strong along the line along which he is walking, whether it be for good or for evil.

"So in society we stand in the presence of thronging evils. No man questions that; but the optimist says, 'Never mind; we shall outgrow them all. It is true there is drunkenness, but we shall outgrow it; it is true there is great ignorance, but we shall outgrow it. We shall come out all right; we have gone and are going prosperously along. Time cures all things.' I beg your pardon. Time cures nothing. Time strengthens, time intensifies, but time cures nothing. The man who says that it does, doesn't know as much as the Chinaman, for his creed is that with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes satin; and this optimist has left out patience. . . . . Growth cures imperfections and infirmities of character, but growth never makes changes in character; never! never! Your puppy will grow to be a dog, but your wolf-puppy will never grow to be a shepherd dog. Your wheat seed will grow to be a full head of wheat, but your thistle field will never grow to be a wheat field. . . . And now some of you will say to me, 'Why, Dr. Abbott, I thought you were an evolutionist!' I am. Do you know what the doctrine of evolution is? Struggle for existence; survival of the fittest. It is salvation by struggle; not by idle, lazy growth; that is not evolution. There is not a lower form anywhere, that reaches a higher form, that doesn't struggle for the attainment."

Thousands of cures follow the use of Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy. 50 cents.

A Lesson for Boys.

MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

It was a sleety, icy, disagreeable morning; the sidewalks almost as slippery as glass, and so, though even nickels were valuable just then, Harry Owen stepped into a Fourth Street car to ride up home. He had been walking all the forenoon in search of a job, which he hadn't found, and was tired and out of heart. He sat down in the only vacant seat in the car without noticing who sat beside him, until a familiar voice said:

"Why, hello, Harry! where did you spring from?"

Then Harry looked around and saw a rather showily dressed youth with an air of smartness about him which Harry could not have imitated to save his life, though he was none the worse off for that, if he had known it.

"That you Tom?" he responded. "I did not see you, I was so busy with my own affairs."

"Must be important to make a fellow look so solemn," answered Tom. "Where do you—"

Just then an elderly man very plainly dressed came into the car and looked about for a seat. He was quite close to our boys. Tom looked the other way; but Harry sprang up at once and said, politely, "Take my seat, sir. I'm younger than you are."

"Thanks," answered the plain man, sitting down, and seeming to gaze out of the window without minding anybody.

"Now, what did you do that for?" asked Tom Andrews in a tone of vexation.

"Why, because I couldn't keep my seat and see an old man standing," returned Harry, good naturedly.

"Well, I could! and I do every day; I pay for my seat, and I don't expect to give it up to anybody less than a handsome young lady."

"There's where we differ, then. Tom, my mother taught me to respect every one."

"Well, I believe my mother used to talk some such humbug. But the world has grown too fast for that, now, and I mean to keep up with it. Where do you hang out now, Harry? in school yet?

"No; I've had to quit and go to work; but I have not found the work yet, though I've tried everywhere. Don't know of a place for me, do you?"

"Bless you, no; I'm out myself just at present."

"Why, I thought you had a settled thing of it with Barton and Jones."

"Well, I did; but old Jones got so tight on us fellows, I couldn't have a bit of fun, so I quit."

"You did? if I can get a place, bet you I don't quit for any such reason as that, Tom."

"Oh, you always are an old fogy, Hal. But I've got a better thing than Barton's, as good as [illegible] in fact. I go up there to begin this afternoon."

"Where is it?"

"Up at old Holden's furniture warehouse."

"It is? why, Tom, I've always heard that Mr. Holden was very particular about his boys. I don't see how you ever got in there."

"Oh, I worked it!" said Tom, with a knowing wink. "Takes me to pull the wool over his eyes. I guess he is an old crank; but he won't get to fool round this chicken. I'm up to his tricks, or will be. I haven't seen old Holden himself, yet, but I've made his foreman think I am a young saint, and so I got in. If I don't have larks off their money you take my head for a football, that's all. Ha! ha!"

"Well, Tom, I don't see how you make that way of doing square, and honest; it wouldn't suit me."

"Oh, who cares for the square so you have a good time? Not I, for one."

Just here the man to whom Harry had given his seat left the car and stepped from the platform. But as the horses were going slow, he did not ring to stop the car, and in stepping off the icy steps he slipped and fell. The boys both saw the fall. Tom broke out in a loud laugh, but Harry was out in a twinkling, and assisting the unfortunate stranger to rise.

"I hope you are not much hurt, sir, indeed," he said, as he brushed the snow and sleet from the old gentleman's back.

"No, only jarred; much obliged for your assistance, my lad," was the answer. "There, I'm all right now. Serves me right for not stopping the car. What's your name?"

"Harry Owens, sir."

"Well, I heard you say you wanted a place, didn't I?"

"I do want one very much, sir."

"Well, you come around to 140 North Street this afternoon, at two. Will you?"

"Yes, sir; I will."

"That's all, then. Run, or you'll lose your car."

But the car had already gone on, so Harry did not try to catch it. He was not far from home, now, anyway; so he turned up at the nearest corner, and sped away. Though he did wish he could have told Tom that he had a chance for a situation, now; or, at least, he hoped he had.

"Don't believe that old chap would have told me to come round there if he had not known of 'something to my advantage,' as the advertisements say," he thought, as he ran on. "I'll be there to see, anyhow, on time, too."

While he goes home to tell his mother of his new hopes, let us follow Tom for a short time.

He, too, went home to his dinner, and afterwards hastened down to the great furniture manufactory, to take his place as junior clerk.

"Tell you, it's a big thing to get in with old Holden," he said to himself, as he went up the steps. "I couldn't have made it, if I hadn't been pretty sharp. Guess I'll crow some over the other boys."

The first person he met after he entered the building was Mr. Martin, the foreman, who had engaged him.

Taking off his hat, with a bow, he said, "Ah, good afternoon, Mr. Martin; I am on time you see."

"Young Andrews, is it?" asked the foreman, eyeing Tom, and speaking rather curtly, Tom thought.

"Yes, sir,"

"Well, you go down this side, to Mr. Holden's private office. He wants to see you before you do any work here. Third door to the left you'll find the office."

"Yes, sir."

Tom walked along very gayly. Surely it was an honor to be sent to the chief's office the very first thing. He did not believe that was the usual way.

"Maybe they are going to give me a better post than I looked for," he thought, as he rapped on the door to which he had been directed.

A voice within bade him come in, and he opened the door. A man sat in a leather-covered chair near the window, and Tom at once recognized the old fellow in the plain clothes who had got the fall from the car step in the morning.

"Wonder what he's doing here," thought Tom. "Hope he won't tell tales on me. Perhaps I'd better be polite to him this time," and so, with another bow, he said,

"Good afternoon, sir. I called to see Mr. Holden."

"Well, you do see him," was the gruff reply.

Tom turned cold all over, and stammered, "I—I think there must be some—some mistake, I—"

"Yes; no doubt," returned the old man dryly. "You have made a mistake, young sir, in sneering at a companion for showing courtesy to a shabby old fellow. You made another in judging a man by his clothes. And you made the biggest one of all in trying to make the 'old crank' think you a young saint, and intending to have your 'larks' off his money. You know his tricks, do you? Well; the first one is to tell you to turn around, find the front door of this establishment, and take yourself out quicker than you came in. If you are ever seen on the premises again, I'll give you in charge of a policeman; see if I don't."

Tom, utterly crestfallen, turned to go without a word.

As he opened the door, Mr. Holden called out, "Let this teach you to be courteous and honest wherever you are, young man, and perhaps you may do better in future. You can have the comfort of knowing that I shall give your place to the youth who was with you this morning, and who showed himself to be the true gentleman. Take that to console you, and go."

Tom slunk out, not daring to raise his head as he went down the long outer room, but plainly hearing the suppressed laughter of the clerks, who, no doubt, had heard all about him from Mr. Martin.

A little later, Harry came up, with a light step and a bright face.

"Why, hello!" he said, as he saw the sign; "I didn't know that this was Holden's Manufactory. If my old man could get me in here it would be grand. I wonder if he is employed here; I'll bet he is; and I hope he'll speak a good word for me."

He sprang up the steps, went in, and met Mr. Martin, as Tom had done.

"Good afternoon, sir," said he, cap in hand.

"How are you, sir?" responded Mr. Martin. "Want to see anybody?"

"Well, yes, sir," replied Harry, smiling, "but I don't know just who to ask for. My name is Owens—Harry Owens; and this morning, in a Fourth street car, I met a man who told me if I was looking for a situation to come round here this afternoon."

"Exactly. Well, what kind of a looking man was he?"

"An elderly gentleman, with a grizzled beard, dressed in some sort of gray stuff."

"Exactly," repeated Mr. Martin. "Well, you go down to the third door, down that way, and I guess you'll find your man."

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

Harry went to the office door, rapped, and was bidden to come in.

He opened the door, and there sat the man he had helped up from the icy street that morning.

"Here I am, sir," said Harry, with a bow and a smile.

"So I see," returned the old man. "Well, have you found that job yet?"

"No, sir; I have not."

"Ah? sit down, then, and let's see if we can't fix one up. My name is Holden."

"Is it, indeed, sir?" cried Harry, quite surprised.

It had never occurred to him that this plain old fellow might be Mr. Holden himself.

"Yes. Now, you will understand when I tell that young Andrews has just been here, and has received short orders not to come again."

"I am sorry for him," said Harry soberly.

"You need not be. The lesson was a well-deserved one. Perhaps it will do him good. Now, then, if you choose, you can have the place intended for him, at $9 a week. I am not afraid to trust a boy who remembers his mother's teachings, and is honest and courteous to every one alike. What do you say, Harry?"

"Oh, Mr. Holden, I can't say how grateful I am, nor how hard I will try to deserve your kindness."

"All right, my boy. Report here at half-past seven to-morrow morning, and Mr. Martin will tell you what to do."

"Yes, sir; I'll be here."

And with that, Harry left the office, to carry the good news home to his mother; while Tom had leisure to digest the bitter lesson he had brought upon himself.—*National Baptist.*

Happiness.

The foundation of all happiness is health. A man with an imperfect digestion may be a millionaire, may be the husband of an angel and the father of half a dozen cherubs, and yet be miserable if he be troubled with dyspepsia, or any of the disorders arising from imperfect digestion or a sluggish liver. Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Purgative Pellets are the safest and surest remedy for these morbid conditions. Being purely vegetable, they are perfectly harmless.

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