

LITTLE FOXES

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Little Foxes by Christopher Crowfield

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# LITTLE FOXES.

BY

CHRISTOPHER CROWFIELD,

AUTHOR OF "HOUSE AND HOME PAPERS."



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## LITTLE FOXES.



### I.

#### FAULT-FINDING.

"PAPA, what are you going to give us this winter for our evening readings?" said Jennie.

"I am thinking, for one thing," I replied, "of preaching a course of household sermons from a very odd text prefixed to a discourse which I found at the bottom of the pamphlet-barrel in the garret."

"Don't say sermon, Papa,—it has such a dreadful sound; and on winter evenings one wants something entertaining."

"Well, treatise, then," said I, "or discourse, or essay, or prelection; I'm not particular as to words."

"But what is the queer text that you found at the bottom of the pamphlet-barrel?"

"It was one preached upon by your mother's great-great-grandfather, the very savory and much-respected Simeon Shuttleworth, 'on the occasion of the melancholy defections and divisions among the godly in the town of West Dofield'; and it runs thus,—'*Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.*'"

"It's a curious text enough; but I can't imagine what you are going to make of it."

"Simply an essay on Little Foxes," said I; "by which I mean those unsuspected, unwatched, insignificant *little* causes, that nibble away domestic happiness, and make home less than so noble an institution should be.

"You may build beautiful, convenient, attractive houses,—you may hang the walls with lovely pictures and stud them with gems of Art; and there may be living there together persons bound by blood and affection in one common

interest, leading a life common to themselves and apart from others ; and these persons may each one of them be possessed of good and noble traits ; there may be a common basis of affection, of generosity, of good principle, of religion ; and yet, through the influence of some of these perverse, nibbling, insignificant little foxes, half the clusters of happiness on these so promising vines may fail to come to maturity. A little community of people, all of whom would be willing to die for each other, may not be able to live happily together ; that is, they may have far less happiness than their circumstances, their fine and excellent traits, entitle them to expect.

"The reason for this in general is that home is a place not only of strong affections, but of entire unreserves ; it is life's undress rehearsal, its back-room, its dressing-room, from which we go forth to more careful and guarded intercourse, leaving behind us much *débris* of cast-off and every-day clothing. Hence has arisen the common proverb, 'No man is a hero to his