

THE
FAWNS.



BY
MRS. SHERWOOD,

Author of "Little Henry and his Bearer," &c. &c.



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[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

FRONTISPIECE.



See Page 5.

Mary Hoban

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FOURTH EDITION.



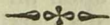
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THE FAWNS.



MY brother and I were playing in our father's park one day in the month of June, when, approaching a thicket where we had seen something stir, we found two little fawns sleeping together in the shade. We went very gently to them, and seizing them before they were aware, we carried them home, and, taking them into our mother's parlour, we asked leave of her to keep them till they were grown larger.

Our mother did not say no, though she added, that they would not be so happy with us as in the open air among their native groves. So we carried them up to a room at the top of the house; for we did not dare to let them loose in the court-yard, because of the dogs.

Have you ever seen a fawn? There are no little animals which God has made more lovely than the young of deer. They are tall and graceful, and have long and elegant necks and small heads, with eyes so mild, that, when the people in the East would say that any one has lovely eyes, they say that he is fawn-eyed. Their coats are so beautifully variegated, and they step so delicately, and are so timid, that one would think no one could have a pleasure in hurting them. But there are people who make it a sport to hunt and destroy them: men are so wicked, that they delight in cruel practices.

We let them loose in the large room at the top of the house; and when they were at liberty, they ran round the room, and sprang at the window, and uttered a gentle cry, as if calling their mother; but their poor mother was far away, and was, no doubt, weeping for them in the park; for

deer, when in trouble, shed tears, they say, like human beings.

My brother and I sought some milk, and brought it up to our fawns; and they lapped it when we held their heads to the bowl.

Now, while we were busy in feeding our fawns, we heard some one coming up stairs very slowly, and our grandfather entered. "Look, grandpapa!" I said, "look at our lovely fawns! See, they can lap milk! Are they not beautiful? Do you not admire them?"

"They are beautiful," he said, "and I admire them. But, my dear boys, is it not very cruel of you to take these pretty little creatures from their mother, and from the sunny lawns and the shades in which they delight, to shut them up in this garret? What makes you do so?"

"O," I answered, "because we like to have them, grandpapa, and to look at them, and feed them."

"See," said our grandfather, "how they tremble and turn about their eyes! they are very miserable, and you have made them so. O, my boys! be sure of this, you are taking the wrong way to render yourselves happy. No person can find real happiness in making any creature miserable. We should try to

make every thing that has life comfortable about us. Sometimes, indeed, it is necessary that even such lovely things as these fawns should be killed; but no compassionate man or boy will torment any living thing for his sport. Be advised then by me: carry these pretty fawns back to the place where you found them, and you will have more pleasure in so doing, than ever you will derive from seeing them shut up in this dismal garret."

He went away, and my brother and I stood looking at each other till we could no longer hear his steps upon the stairs; my brother then went to his fawn, and, taking it in his arms, "I am going, Francis," he said, "to carry back my little deer, and I am sorry that I brought it away from its mother." The tears stood in his eyes while he spoke, and he stooped his head to kiss it. "Little fawn," he added, "I do love you; I should like to keep you: but I will not make you unhappy."

"Stop, George! stop!" I said, "wait a moment. Put your fawn down again. Don't take it away. My fawn will be happier if you leave yours with it. It will be miserable if left alone."

"What!" said he, "don't you mean to

take your fawn back to the park, Francis?"

"Perhaps I may some time or other," I answered, "but not this evening. Pray, George, leave yours with mine till to-morrow morning at least, and then we will think about setting them both free."

"If I keep my fawn till to-morrow," replied George, "it will be harder for me to part with it than it is now, so don't persuade me to delay another minute." And he pressed the little creature to his bosom and said, "Poor little fawn, I am sorry for you; I will take you this very evening to your place." So saying, he hastened down the stairs with his little deer in his arms, and I ran after him; but I lost sight of him till he had passed through the garden and was in the park. I saw him go to the wood where we had found our fawns asleep. I got up with him just as he had set the little creature down, and saw it bounding away, very eager to find its mother.

"There, Francis," said my brother, "it is contented now, and I have done what grandpapa bid me do; now I hope it will be happy. And then he asked me again what I meant to do with my fawn, and I told him that I would think of that the next

day. So we walked home, and I felt very sad, but my brother was merry, and said he would go to the park the next morning to see if his fawn had found its mother.

That night I was very unhappy ; and the next morning the first thing I did was to go to the garret to look at my fawn and feed it, but when I opened the door, it was missing. The window had been pushed open. I hastened to it, and looked out upon the slates, but could not find it. I ran down stairs, and upon the lawn under the window I found my little fawn lying without life ; the poor animal had sprang to the window, burst it open, and had fallen through.



What a sight was this for me ! I sat down on the grass, and took the little breathless creature on my lap, and burst into tears. "O, my fawn ! my little fawn !" I said, "had I been a kind and obedient boy like my brother, you might now have been skipping and playing by the side of your mother in the park, enjoying the morning breezes and drinking the dew ; and now you are dead, through my cruelty. But I will bury you where I found you asleep, and I will often go to weep over your grave." So saying, I carried my fawn and my spade to the wood, and dug a hole in the place where I had





found him asleep the day before, and put him in it, and covered him with grass. I then sat down to cry at a little distance from the spot, for I was very unhappy.

I was sitting under the shade of some high trees, and before me was a wide lawn surrounded by woods. The dew was still on the grass, and the mist upon the tops of the trees, but the sun was rising above the woods. Presently the herd of deer came out from under a grove, and spread themselves over the lawn. There were the harts with their branching horns, and hinds without horns, with little fawns playing by their sides.

I distinguished my brother's fawn, for I knew him by a particular spot on the brow; he was bounding and exulting by his mother's side, rejoicing in his recovered liberty. What would I then have given to have seen his twin brother with him! But alas! my little fawn was never more to play on those green and sunny hills, and never again to skip around his mother. "And it is I," I said, "who have cut short his innocent life. I have been very cruel and disobedient." And I wept much. At length I heard a rustling noise among the trees, and saw my dear grandpapa coming towards me leaning with one hand on a stick and with the other on my brother's shoulder. I ran to him and fell upon his bosom and confessed my fault to him, and told him how I had been punished, and he embraced me and sympathized with me.

"My dear little boy," he said, "do not weep, though I would have you remember the story of your little fawn, that when you become a man it may admonish you to escape such painful feelings as you have had this morning, by avoiding cruelty to animals. Be sure, my dear boy, that all sports and pleasures which make any creature uncomfortable tend to sadness of heart: whereas

what we do to make others happy, will end in giving peace and joy to ourselves."

He then urged us to examine our Bible, and reminded us that deer are emblems of holy persons. "Our Saviour," added he, "is compared to a roe or a hart, because of the beauty and majesty of that fair creature, and because of the swiftness with which it flies to the assistance of those it loves. The branching horns of the hart are typical," he added, "of the royal dignity of our Saviour. And the love of the hart for the hind shews the affection of Christ for his Church.

"The deer also is said," continued my grandfather, "to have a particular hatred to serpents, and to eat many of them; and hence we find in this creature another resemblance to our dear Saviour, who is for ever at enmity with the old serpent, the evil one."

Thus my grandfather talked to me and comforted me; and as he walked home with us, he taught me that if I would become a member of the flock of Jesus, I must aim at the harmlessness and innocence which are so lovely in the fawns of the forest; adding, that these qualifications were more to be commended in the members of Christ's

Church, than any distinctions which talents or wisdom could procure them.

I fear I did not understand all that my grandfather said to me, yet his words sank into my heart, and from that time till the present (and I am an old man now) whenever I have seen a park filled with these beautiful animals, I have remembered the simile of the deer to a society of holy people under the protection of their Saviour. O may I be found in the last day in the likeness of Him, of whom the hart and the roe are the beautiful and lively emblems!

FINIS.

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