THE

THORN BUSHES.

LONDON:

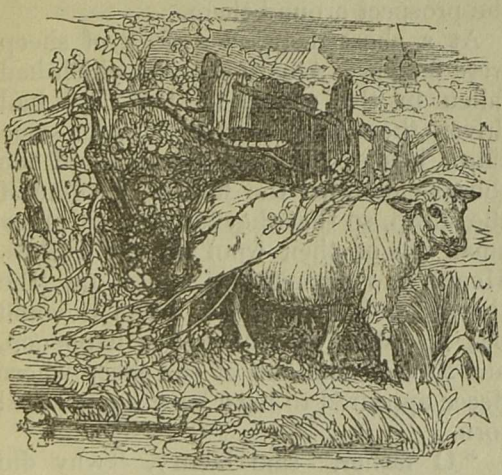
RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

56, *Paternoster-row;*

SOLD ALSO BY J. NISBET, BERNERS-STREET

11

THE THORN BUSHES



One fine evening, early in the month of May, Henry took a walk with his dog, upon a very pleasant common near his father's house. The sun was just setting, and the sky reflected all those beautiful

colours which generally are signs that the next morning will be fine. Henry met his father, and they sat down to enjoy this beautiful sight, and to admire the prospect around them.

At a short distance a flock of sheep were feeding. A hard shower, which had fallen in the course of the day, had driven them to take shelter under some thorn bushes near an old oak, and the thorns entangled the fleeces of some of the sheep, so that they left a great many small bits of their wool on the bushes. Henry saw something white on the thorns, and went to see what it could be; his father told him how it happened, and showed him one of the sheep whose fleece appeared to have been a good deal torn.

"O father," said Henry, "why did God make thorn bushes to tear the fleeces of the sheep? and why do men let them grow? I will get up early to-morrow morning, and if you will let me have the bill-hook, I will cut down that bush; and perhaps you will come with

me, and then I am sure we can manage it long before breakfast time."

Mr. W. I will think about it; but be sure that the thorn bushes were made for some useful purpose, and that there is some good reason why they are suffered to tear the fleeces of the sheep. Do not you recollect the sheep-shearing last year, when you and Ellen saw not merely little pieces of wool taken from the sheep, but the whole fleece was cut off?

H. Yes, father; but you told us that, as the winter was quite gone, the sheep did not want their fleeces any longer; that the wool would fall off if they were not shorn; and that as God gave man all the animals for his use, so it was right to take the wool and make clothes of it, and other things which are useful. But I am sure these thorn bushes can make no use of the wool; so, father, it is only wasted, and you must allow that we should do well to cut them down.

Mr. W. Well, I will come with you to-morrow morning, and we shall then see more about it.

Henry had learned that to be useful was the way to be happy; but sometimes he was rather too hasty in making up his mind what was best to be done, and he did this in the present instance, as we shall find. However, he supposed that what he intended to do would be very useful, and the thought of it pleased him so much that he could hardly sleep all night. As soon as he saw the day break he jumped up and dressed himself, and I am afraid he was in such a hurry that he repeated his morning prayer without thinking much what the words meant. I hope my young readers will be more careful when they are in a hurry. He then called his father, and got the bill-hook and a pruning-knife. Mr. Watson was not quite in such haste as his son; but he thought, as the morning was fine, the walk would be pleasant, and Henry might learn something which would be useful.

They soon came to the common. Henry walked so quick that his father

could hardly keep up with him. Presently they came near the thorn bushes. "Now, father," said Henry, "let us set to work directly."

"Stop," said his father, "look at the number of little birds flying among the bushes: let us wait a few minutes and see what they are about before we disturb them." They sat down on a little hillock, and saw that the birds picked the bits of wool from the thorns, and flew away with them; there were whole flocks of sparrows, and linnets, and chaffinches, and other birds, very busily employed.

"What are they going to do with the wool?" said Henry. "What does it mean?"

Mr. W. It shows us, my dear boy, how God is pleased to provide for the meanest and weakest of his creatures. You have read that not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge, and you now see how God in his providence enables them to make their nests warm and comfortable. At this time of

the year they build their nests for their young ones, and they could not get the wool from the sheep themselves. Thus you see that although the wool was of no use to the thorns, yet they took it from the sheep, and it is useful to the birds. Now what do you say? shall we cut down the thorn bushes?

H. No, father; I think not. But could not God have appointed some other way, by which the birds might have been supplied with what they wanted to make their nests?

Mr. W. Certainly; but, as he appointed this way, it is doubtless the best. The mercies of God are over all his works, and he supplies even the smallest bird or insect with food. We read, in the 147th Psalm, "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry:" this and other texts like it are written to encourage us to trust in God. And what you have seen this morning shows you that, although we cannot at first account for many things which we see, yet we may be sure

there is some good reason for them. But, my dear child, when we see what care God takes of the little birds, and are encouraged thereby to trust in him, that he will give us all that will be for our good in this world, let us remember that there are things of much more consequence that we have to look to him for. Our souls will live for ever, and the Bible, you know, tells us of salvation by Christ Jesus our Lord. Think what he suffered for us when he came down from heaven and lived upon the earth.

H. I recollect Christ said, "Birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Mr. W. Yes; that text shows us that Jesus was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, even before he suffered the death of the cross. Oh may you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ; love him and obey him who thus became worse off than his meanest creatures, that he might save sinners! It is now time to return home to breakfast, and

as we walk let me hear you repeat that pretty verse—

"Young sparrows as they chirp,
Young ravens as they cry,
Young lions as they roar,
Find God's compassion nigh
And surely he will ne'er despise
My youthful songs, and prayers, and cries."

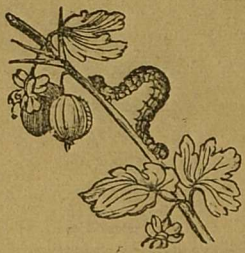
"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," Ps. xxxiv. 10.

"He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry," Ps. cxlvii. 9.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows" Matt. x. 29, 31.

RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

37131 048 627 889



GREAT God, at thy command
Seasons in order rise;
Thy power and love together reign,
Through earth, and sea, and skies.

With grateful praise we own
Thy providential hand,
While grass for beasts, and herb and [corn
For men, enrich the land.

But greater still the gift
Of thy beloved Son;
Oh may we never cease our praise
For all his love has done.