

and-go-one with ineffectual attempts to fly was a piteous sight. The Doctor did not like it. "Ah! that ruthless cutting of the wings! Poor crippled things!"

Driven from the water they wandered about the frozen field, never troubling their heads to look for worms or other non-existent means of subsistence. Miss Porchester doubled her doles of meat, much to the satisfaction of Juno, who prowled about and laughed and grew fat, while the pitiable gulls starved. It was a lugubrious business.

However, that was the lowest ebb of their fortunes, and at last matters slowly began to improve. Under stress of circumstances the gulls began to show some shadow of a sporting spirit. They ventured into the kitchen-garden, and pecked about among the winter cabbage, possibly finding some dormant dainty here and there in the shape of food. John Carey, the gardener, liked to see them pay him a visit.

Harry Dawson, with all his love of the sea, which dated back to that summer time at Eastbourne, when his sandcastle caused such grievous misadventure to Dr. Porchester in the bathing-machine—Harry Dawson took a lively interest in the gulls. He would wheedle tit-bits from the cook, and coax the coy birds to come and feast.

He certainly had better luck than Miss Porchester. Their chilly contempt seemed to thaw under the warmth of his blandishments. He would keep up a sort of purring chuckle, and hold out portions of meat in a tempting manner, throwing them down and retreating gradually. And the gulls would swim across from the island sending broad ripples in their wake, and Harry always had the satisfaction of seeing them gulp down the food. He would tell Miss Porchester of his success, and she encouraged him in the task; so that he was regarded by us as the authorised keeper of the birds. Woe betide Juno, if Harry caught sight of her on the prowl when he was on a feeding errand!

Time passed on, and April, with sunshine and showers, smiled upon the scene. Warbling birds sang the sweet glee:

Spring delights are all returning,  
Verdant leaflets clothe each spray;

and every heart was gladdened with thoughts of vernal rapture. We had noticed of late that one of the gulls was always trying to fly. It would take three or four hopping skips at full speed, and follow them up with a great flapping of wings. By long practice of this sort it made considerable progress, until it actually succeeded in flying a few feet, and then a few yards.

And lo! one radiant May morning we saw the happy bird fly with glorious freedom round the pond, high above the fir-trees! It was a splendid sight! We cheered the gallant bird to the echo, and sang: For he's a jolly good fellow at the top of our voices. Excitement was tremendous. Harry rushed off at full speed, bounced in at the front door, regardless of the door-mat's command to wipe his feet, sped through the hall, and burst in-

to the drawing-room. He said he knocked, but he had opened the door before any had time to say "Come in."

"Oh, Miss Porchester, the gull flying round the pond! Do come and see!"

You may be sure she came and saw, and shared in the general rejoicing with true sympathy.

Then, two days afterwards, when the wings were harmonised and attuned to the rhythm of flight when the rapture of new life was thoroughly awakened, and the wind coming in from the sea whispered some message of breaking waves and breezy cliffs, that gull said good-bye to his envious companions. Free as the winds of heaven, we saw it rise to a great height over the pond; and then, after wheeling in one majestic circle, it headed away to the towards south. We watched it till it dwindled to a speck and we saw it no more.

The Doctor had been a spectator of this entrancing scene. He rejoiced at the gull's recovery of flight and freedom. His eye moistened as he said, "Fletcher, it is like a resurrection to new life; it reminds me of the words, Oh, what the joy and the glory must be!"

"It was a beautiful sight!" said his sister.

"I wish the others would follow its example! The poor draggle-winged things! It is a dishonour to the beauty of bird life!"

Alas! the others could not! Two of them made resolute efforts—three hops and a flurry of flaps repeated in a scurry half-way across the field. This practice was kept up daily by the hour. Then they relapsed into long periods of moody silence, standing one-legged on the gravelly margin of the island.

The other gull took no part in such proceedings. Its lame wing seemed to have been more severely dealt with—oh! the pity of it! Possibly the cruel hand that cut it had maimed the delicate mechanism incurably. The wing trailed so hopelessly when the piteous creature travelled from one spot to another, that the bird made a grotesque exhibition of itself. It seemed wofully discouraged, and lost all heart, and at last grew tired of life. Harry could not lure it to take any food. It kept apart from the other two, moped and miserable, with plummage always ruffled. Then it passed whole days on one leg, with its head resting on its back towards the tail. And one day it did not appear at all.

Harry got leave to punt over to the island and search for it. He found it dead behind a clump of reed-pas grass.

So now the Doctor's sea-gulls were reduced to two. And this pair kept together, wondering what it all meant; they came to be fed side by side; they practised their attempts at flight together; they sometimes ventured on short prom-enades out of bounds, crossing the road into the wood.

Such was their daily routine through May and June, until one day in July, when Harry could no find them at feeding time.