

so crippled with rheumatism that she could not hold a scrubbing-brush.

I do not know whether Mr. Fields gave a thought to his knuckleduster when he heard this announcement, and the suggested suspicion was not openly floated. Perhaps his conscience shrank from the charge of having inflicted bodily hurt upon a woman.

He had his little joke out of the incident at a Latin prose lesson with the second class. He always seemed to relish that lesson more than any other.

"Now, then, Dawson, do the sentence," Caesar demanded hostages from the Lingones.

Dawson began glibly enough: "Caesar" followed by a long pause, with no prospect of further procedure.

"Go on! Say something anything is better than nothing," Caesar, seize her, tease her, squeeze her! Or! here's a sentence that may possibly interest you more. No. 7. The geese, sacred to Juno, preserved the Capitol."

"That's just like my sea-gulls, sir," said Harry.

"Good! They woke up Titus Manlius to do great things at Rome. I wish the seagulls would wake up Harry Dawson to do great things at Latin prose!"

CHAPTER VII.

The Festival of St. Thomas had passed. The earth had turned in her sleep once more towards the sun, and a daily dole of extra light was paid from the treasury of the lord of the mountains heritage. The cold strengthened as the days lengthened, but the happy prospect of spring was in the near future, and all things were beginning to grow glad.

A long spell of skating at the beginning of term helped the cold days to speed their flight. Rosy cheeks and laughing eyes were seen on the pond in every period of playtime. Hockey on the ice, and "touch-last," and extemporized sleighs roped along by runners who could not skate, provided exercise and recreation for all.

The two gulls seemed to catch a spirit of exhilaration from the lively scenes enacted on their frozen realm. They kept their feet warm by untiring exercise, striving earnestly to perfect flight, "perched assuredly by faith and hope," as the Doctor said one Sunday in his sermon.

So January gave place to February, frost to thaw. Rains fell, and dikes were filled. Then blustering Boreas sounded the advent of March. Coming in like a lion, March went out like a lamb, with a kiss to April, the sweet-smiling month of Venus, bidding her to mingle showers and sunbeams and to open the lovely buds.

All through the changeful days of that Easter Term the gulls persevered in their flight-drill. Most of Harry Dawson's pocket-money found its way into the fisherman's scaly hand, and the gulls thrived on the generous diet.

One cloudless evening towards the end of April, when the long glories of the western sun lingered upon the landscape, Dr. Porchester met Harry on his way to the pond to call the gulls in.

"I have been watching them lately," said the Doctor. "Their wings seem in great measure to have regained the long-lost art. I believe they will succeed, Harry. What fervent purpose! what path of perseverance they have shown! What a lesson they teach to you and me! There they are, see!"

Even as the Doctor spoke, as though his words brought to the birds a final touch of inspiration, they took a short run, and with wings outspread they glided through the air some distance before they alighted.

"They have got back the power," said the Doctor.

"Oh, sir, they really did fly," said Harry. A moment's pause, and the gulls rose in the air once more, not timidly, but with bold assurance. The parting sun-glow shone roseated upon their white wings as they flew in a great circle round the pond. Then, rising in a spiral ascent, glorious, strong, and free even as their brother had done just a year before, they headed straight for the south, athwart the glowing haze.

"They have their reward!" said the Doctor. "Farewell! We use ourselves in light!"

"Oh, sir, isn't it splendid! I can't wish them to come back!"

"No, my boy. You have helped them to achieve the highest good, and you must rejoice with them. You have done a good work, Harry, and the Wise King has said, 'Glorious is the fruit of good works.' I no longer regret having bought the gulls. They have taught us a grand lesson. May we strive, as they strove, to reach the full vigour of the highest life! God's intention has been fulfilled in them, despite the spilling interference of man. May the same be said of you and me!"

"Is that the way to the sea, sir?" asked Harry.

"Yes, Rocksands lies yonder."

"We are going there next holidays, sir. Perhaps I shall see them."

They walked back to the house in silence, but Harry had recovered the use of his tongue at tea, when he described the scene.

The holidays came, and Harry went for the last week to Rocksands, with his mother and sister. He had grown out of the age when rearing moated castles and channelling the courses of real rivers from rocky pools afford the height of happiness. But he could enjoy boating, and fishing, and long tramps by the shore of the loud-roaring sea.

He always looked with sympathetic affection at the gulls and wondered if his own were among them.

The days went swiftly by. Old Father Time has such an aggravating habit of hurrying up the clock in the holidays! So the last day of the Dawson visit to Rocksands arrived. Harry was anxious