

staying away a considerable time. I wrote to Dolly soon after your accident, but she appears to have taken me into her bad graces as well as somebody else. Anyhow, we have ceased corresponding."

Beau sighed, and looked dreamily out of the window in order to hide his disappointment. But there was nothing to be said. In his heart of hearts he acknowledged that Dolly's conduct was perfectly justifiable. She had had such cause of offence as very few women were likely to forgive.

Nevertheless, as week after week passed away, and the hunting season was brought to a successful termination, his yearning to see her increased to such an extent, that he felt he should go melancholy mad if he continued much longer leading the same unhappy and inactive life.

So one fine morning, when the birds were sending up a perfect rage of song to the fleecy spring sky, and everywhere the tender green buds were uncurling themselves in the sunshine, he startled his faithful friend and companion by saying :

"Harry, old man, I've often heard people talk about what they called 'The Pain of Life,' but I've never understood it until now. Since being boxed up here, however, I've taken to thinking a good bit."

"Well, Beau, and what's the result of your thinking?"

"Principally that I have become deeply impressed by the trouble and strife everywhere apparent. Happiness is a delusive word. There is no such thing in reality. We are creatures, driven onwards by a mysterious force beyond our comprehension. Call it God, First Cause, what you like, it defies our human brain, and the wish to solve this vast, relentless Power, only produces infinite sadness, perplexity and confusion. Evil seems to predominate over good, cruelty over mercy. Struggle and strife are the law of Nature. Lydia Stapleton and myself were but an instance of it. I—the strongest—survive to drag out a wretched existence, she goes to the wall. And what does it all come to, what does it all mean? That is what I would give my soul to know."

"Come, come, old man, cheer up. These are gloomy thoughts at best, and can lead to no result. When a mystery is recognised as a mystery, why not leave it alone and give over puzzling one's head about it? That's my plan, and it answers capitally."