

close to the table and began in a business-like way to break the seals of his letters and packages and as he sits in his cosy room, with the gas light falling on his pleasing face, we will take the liberty to sketch his form and features in their most natural state. They are those of a stout, well built, good humored sort of man, of about fifty, with just enough of the "silver threads" among his curly black locks to show that he had met with a little of the tear and wear of life—just a few lines of sadness on his clean shaved face, but for all that, looking the jolly, good sort of fellow that everyone acknowledged him to be, with a tender heart and a ready hand for the unfortunate, always honest and upright, yet thoroughly practical and business-like in all his undertakings. Henry Rayne was descended from a good old English family, whose name he bore proudly and honorably, and many an interesting anecdote he was wont to tell at his dinner table of the "Stephens," "Edwards," and "Henrys," of the bygone generations of "Raynes."

With his private life was connected a sad little secret. He had been a young man in his day, and the charms of the weaker sex had not fallen vainly on his susceptible soul, oh dear no! Henry Rayne had loved once, earnestly and well, and had offered his proud name and comfortable fortune to the object of his devotion, but though he, to day, was the same hale hearty Henry Rayne of the past, the young bud he had cherished so fondly, lay withered in the churchyard far away in old England. Death had come between them, and in the grief that followed, Rayne outlived his susceptibilities, preferring to dwell fondly on the memory of the old tie, than to reopen his heart to any new appeal. But a day came when Henry Rayne had to incline his ear again to the winning voice of a woman, when his forced indifference had to give place to the old warmth and the old enthusiasm, when the withering heart revived and bloomed afresh under the tender influence of a woman's smile, a woman's care and a woman's sympathy. Of the causes of this happy revival we will have to deal in the course of our narrative. Let us return to the scene by the fireside where Henry Rayne sits opening his letters.

Three or four dry-as-dust laconic productions, of no earthly interest to anyone but the unromantic writers, one