

# A BAD MAN'S SWEETHEART.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE LATE JOHN KING.

The closed shutters and the long folds of crape pendant from the door-knob intimated to the passer-by that someone was dead at No. 25 Mowburn Street. The someone was John King. In the handsome drawing-room, amid the trappings and millinery of death, as provided by a fashionable undertaker, John King lay in state in the most expensive coffin his weeping widow could procure. John King had left his widow and ten-year-old son with fortune enough to keep them in comfort, but when his eyes closed in death there was no agony in their gray depths except the fear that his wife was unable to take care of herself and her boy. With his last effort he had turned and grasped his little boy's hand and faintly whispered, "Be good to her, Jack." The little fellow sprang from the slender girl who held him, and with his freckled hands clasping his father's face, kissed passionately the stiffening lips. The weeping girl bent over the dying man to remove the child, and heard—"and you, Dell—good to her." His eyes again sought his wife's face, God lifted the cloud of fear and John King died with a happy look on his stern face that death could not chill from the firm lips and sunken jaw, over which swept the long, reddish-blonde moustache which in life had scarcely ever wreathed a smile.

Light enough, that late summer afternoon, crept through the shutters to show the rugged but intellectual beauty of the dead man's face, with its smiles of peaceful content. Leaning with his elbow on the mantelpiece, an animate man stood gazing calmly at the dead. "The old fellow looks happy, doesn't he?" he said, thinking in half audible communion with himself; "really more so than when he was alive. He evidently prefers being dead to practising law in the day-time and teaching mission-school at night. Never had any leisure or pleasure. Poor old chap, he's having a rest now