



## CHAPTER I

### A STRANGE BEHEST.

'They say that love, like death,  
Levels all ranks, and lays the shepherd's crook  
Beside the sceptre'

BULWER LYTTON.

**Y**OU are about to begin a new life, Denis. After to-morrow you will know nothing of this place. It must be as a dream to you. Only if you should ever be in need you may recall Hanbury Lane, and know there is help for you here at any and all times, so long as I am alive.'

The above strange speech was spoken by a mother to her son, whom she most passionately loved, who was the idol of her heart, the object upon whom every hope was centred, in whom the ambition of a life expected to have fulfilment.

The place in which these words were uttered was a dingy living-room at the back of a small provision shop in Hanbury Lane, a poor, squalid, and even disreputable thoroughfare in the neighbourhood of London Tower. In that low, dimly-lighted place it would have been difficult to define