

## THE ARTIST.

**S**TANDING at the south-east corner of Duke Street and High Street waiting for a city-bound tram, there shuffled towards us the most woe-begone creature we had ever seen. He was in rags. His skin showed through the rents in his trousers, and his jacket was held together by bits of string. But it was his face, cadaverous and hopeless, that moved us. In its expression was gathered and fixed all the tragedy of life. It may have worn a smile at one time, but that was long ago. He spoke in a low, hungry voice. His story was simple. He was down and out, had walked from Falkirk, had not tasted food for two days, did not want food, simply wanted the wherewithal for a bed on which to lie down and rest, perchance to die. As he spoke he trembled. His blackened teeth chattered in his head. The man was not lying. This, we both felt, was clear. He was too utterly broken for that. By what terrible stroke of fate could one fall so low? We gave him a few coppers. "My God," said my friend as we entered the tram, "that such misery could exist in a Christian country!"

Just at that moment, while the tram was moving off, I heard a tenor voice warbling quietly but blithely at my ear. The song was "Sweet chiming bells." I turned. There was our woe-begone friend whipping round the back end of the tram, the spring of youth in his step, his face wreathed in one unforgettable, if

murky, smile. And as he tripped (yes, literally tripped) across the road to a pub, he winked a knowing wink and waved a pale black hand in affectionate farewell.

The complete artist! Rembrandt had no greater technique than this man. Henry Irving was a marionette in comparison. The great artists of diplomacy might have sat at his feet. I take off my hat to him and salute his tatters.