

CHAPTER II

ENTER TWO VAGRANTS

"IT is four o'clock, I hear the faint rustling of the wings of dawn—and it's dam' cold. The orb of day, sir, forsakes the Old World, leaving it to wallow in the gloom of monarchical tyranny, that it may shed its radiance upon this glorious hemisphere of freedom."

So rhapsodized the seediest of all tramps as he crawled feebly on to an empty packing-box against the wall of a shed. He seemed the more an object of compassion because his was a frock-coat that had become green with age, a fashionable top-hat which was masquerading as a smashed accordion. His trousers were such as could never have foreseen the evil day when they would be belted with a yard or so of dirty lamp-wick, his boots must have been invalidated and put out to grass when he adopted them; yet the man's bearing made a forlorn protest of respectability which even the foulest linen could not quite repudiate. He was weak with prolonged starvation, his jaws were rough with grey bristles, his alert eyes sunken away in shadows of tragic depth; yet the face was of lionlike strength, and a man has no small courage who can laugh when it would be a relief to die.

"Sir," he continued, arranging himself the while on his perch; "I have the pleasure of introducing you to New York, metropolis of a republican paradise, bounded