

sion had taken place which did some damage, and it was reported that that misguided youth had employed himself in the manufacture of destructive missiles in anticipation of a popular outbreak. The police inquired into the affair, but no investigation took place, as Boldero had escaped, and had managed to remove all traces of his recent occupations. Still the Reform Bill was the principal topic in men's mouths; but the women had found another subject of interest—the approach of the Asiatic cholera.

At length the Bill that was to effect such wonders passed the Upper House, and received the royal sanction. Then England went mad in earnest, and consumed an infinity of tallow-candles in illuminations. The best thing it did was to provide, in some parishes, dinners of commemoration for the poor, and its greatest folly was the national acknowledgement of abundant satisfaction with the work of its legislators. That was in 1832. We are now on the threshold of 1848. Where are the wonders? What has the Reform Bill done for the people?

The passing of the Bill and the consequent satisfaction of the nation dissolved the P. F. D. Many of the late adherents spread themselves throughout the country, and preached physical force doctrines. The riots in Wales and the north, at a subsequent period, were mainly owing to their exertions. Imprisonments took place, and some suffered transportation. You shall never repel wrong by wrong, but you shall conquer the wrong by the right, and overcome hate with love.

Nearly a year had passed since the Reform Bill became the law of the land, and Harding still retained his situation. He was now the father of two children, and Emma practised domestic economy on eighteen shillings a week. They dwelt in a house, as Harding had foretold, *without a passage*; but M. Jean Masson had for a long time visited them, although of late his visits had been irregularly, and less frequently paid. As Madame Cacasi, Emma was to be the delight of the lords and ladies of the Grand Theatre. She had made such progress as a vocalist, that in musical circles her *debut* was already talked of, and as no one had ever seen her, M. Jean was beset with inquiries touching her voice and execution, her features, stature, complexion, age. But he was very reserved and mysterious on all these points. However, it got whispered abroad that the husband of the new *debutante* was a cheesemonger's shopman, and the people shrugged their shoulders, and remarked that, if she had any talent, it was a thousand pities that she had also such low connexions.

Now, the man enobles his work. The office never degrades the individual, respect being always paid to honor; but the individual confers superiority on the office. Why should William Harding be less acceptable, being a cheesemonger's shopman, than the secretary of state's secretary? Tell me that. Or than the secretary of state himself? Tell me that. Away with this cursed barrier of alleged respectability of station which separates between man and man! Shakespeare, holding horses' bridles at the door of the Globe Theatre, was still Shakespeare.

I should not have praised William Harding if he had hesitated to accept the situation which he now filled, because it was subordinate. Wherever the brave man serves there are angels, there is the presence of God. The world overlooks the uses of subordinate. It is not thankful for benefits unless it views them through lenses of its own construction, which have too frequently the demerit of falsifying the real proportions of services.

Harding had some such philosophy as this to sustain him, or he would, long since, have been a most miserable man. His family were sure of the humble bread, that consideration kept him at his post. The question which he often asked himself was, am I not better fitted for another service? His wife said from the first that he was throwing his self away, and, after a period, he entertained the same conviction. Now, to throw one's self away, literally means to do a dishonorable action. All other interpretations are conventional, and will fail to influence the brave. The real question was, whether William Harding could be more usefully employed? He found bread, it is true, but was it BREADWINNING? For man does not live by bread alone, and there is bread which was never kneaded by baker, by miller never crushed, never sown by farmer.

On Saturday night, entering the house, and throwing

down his wages, he told his wife that he should not return to his employment on the following Monday morning, as usual.

"I have never given satisfaction to Terry," he said, "and to-day we came to an open rupture. He allows me to go without the ceremony of a notice. And I am glad of it, for I am heart-sick of his service."

She was not surprised, she rejoined. How could it be otherwise?

"God knows what I am to do!" he exclaimed. "I must teach again, I suppose."

"If you can find pupils," she interposed.

"If I can. Yes. And if I can't—what then?"

She did not reply at once, but rocked the infant that she held in her arms faster than before.

"You have been seeking bread these three years," she said, presently.

"And have not found it. Oh, I know. The knowledge is very bitter, Emma."

"It is my turn now. Let me try."

"Emma?"

"I repeat, let me try, You shall stay at home. I will go forth and find our bread. Come, what have you to object to that?"

"You, a woman!"

"You, a man, have failed. Now, let the woman, and the mother, try."

"Ah, yes! You mean with M. Jean Masson's help. You would be a *cantatrice*?"

"No," she sadly answered. "No, William. My voice is not what it was. M. Jean says so. We have deceived ourselves. I shall never be a singer."

"Are you in earnest?"

"I am. M. Jean assured me, on his last visit, that I must no longer cherish the hope of appearing as Madame Cacasi."

That was bitter news, indeed; and the next day was moodily spent. Harding set himself, for the twentieth time, to review his life. Lest Emma should accuse him of want of fortitude, he feigned a necessity for leaving the house. It was then the coming on of night.

He went forth,—whether he knew not,—cared not. At length, when from scores of church towers the bells pealed forth a summons to the evening service, he remembered that it was Sunday, and that the public temples offered a seat to the weary. He repaired to one which was nearest at hand. He did not get a seat, however, for there is a fashion in religion, as in other things, and a fashionable preacher officiated at this church. The pews that were paid for were crowded; the few free seats were crowded; the aisles were crowded.

Harding, who, unable to get a seat, had taken his situation at the door, was by degrees forced by the pressure of the crowd into the church, and he found himself, presently, beneath a mural tablet, which demanded his attention as a work of Art. It was dedicated to the memory of a young wife, who had died in giving birth to her first child. There was, most exquisitely sculptured, a rose, just spreading into bloom,—that was the young mother; and there was a tiny, tiny bud, and that was the infant. The parson prayed, the clerk gave sonorous "Amen," but Harding, hearing only the confused buzz of orthodoxy, saw nothing but the opening rose, and the little fast-sleeping bud. He seemed to have awakened to a new existence. Hitherto he had been apathetic on the subject of poverty, and had contented himself with the reflection that his wife had three meals a day, a bed to sleep upon, and a fire to warm her in the cold weather. Their unadorned walls and miserable furniture, their scanty wardrobe, their intellectual famine, had caused him no uneasiness. No books, no pictures, no work of Art that was beautiful or graceful, did their dwelling afford. Not even a vase for flowers; not even—so was Nature slighted—flowers for a vase. Emma's song—and that had been stilled of late—was the only evidence of culture, and not for the sake of procuring the unbeautiful, literal bread. Nothing High, Aspiring, Holy—everything mean, sordid, paltry. Was he to blame for this? He was. He had kept the wolf from the door, but there had his exertions ceased. To be poor, that I may eat virtuous bread, and cherish my soul in purity, is noble; but to be poor because I am too indolent to exert myself for the attainment of aught that does not belong to the physical need of present hours, is base, and this was Harding's baseness