

filled, and her husband was restored to liberty. The tenor's terms were high, for he had stipulated for the third of her salary, for three years.

Harding amused himself with carving in which art he had become expert. The rose and a little bud bloomed in wood. He delighted to produce grotesque figures of men, busied in various manipulations of handicraft, and quaint unpastoral sheep and oxen. But this art was mere pastime, and, as such, went to frustrate the noble end of being.

Under the sky there is not a sadder object than a man without a definite pursuit,— who has had no call to a specific work. To have no profession which demands the attention of every earnest moment, and engrosses the anxious care of the matured mind, is to be an alien in Nature. "Whatsoever the hand findeth to do," admonishes the author of Ecclesiastes, "do it with thy might."

Harding's position was peculiar. He was haunted by shapes of Beauty, which, out of vision, he could not realize, and, so far, he was no uncommon case. For who can fix the ideal with painter's brush, or sculptor's chisel, or carver's knife? It was strange. The rose and a little bud had done it all. Greek literature, with which he had long been critically familiar, had been without other meanings than the philological one, until this epoch of his life. And all the Arts, and every Science into which he had obtained the merest insight, now became replete with a quite unutilitarian signification. He had attained to the knowledge of the highest bread, but, at present, he sat only at the feast of crumbs. For he had not found his work. Not a little of the evil that is in the world has its origin in this circumstance, that men do not occupy their just position. Nature knows best. Of a certain George Guclph, she made a creditable, it is even said, a clever husbandman, but the Marplot of nature called him George the Third, and lo, a bad King! As a farmer he would have cultivated the good earth, and brought corn out of her liberal stores. As a king, he devastated her fields with sanguinary wars. "Translate," writes Carlyle, "that impossible precept, *know thyself*, into this partially possible one; *know what thou canst work at.*" The breadfinder, as I take it, is he who has attained to that indispensable knowledge,—indispensable to a wise government of himself and the world. Not the material bread, not that which was flour yesterday, and corn at the last full of the moon, is what is meant by BREAD in these pages. But that is bread—the Bread of Life, which brings me into harmony with Nature, and, transcending conventionality and routine, leaves me the undisturbed recipient of large benefits, and lands me on that shore beaten by the Eternal surges,—washed by the tides of the Great Ocean of Being.

I know the strife. I have seen the agony. I have heard the prayer. I have been a witness to the incessant conflict maintained for the quite literal, unbeautiful bread. The combatants in that battle-field fall around us like harvest. Not for the soul's need but for the body's lust have they striven: and the Autumn leaves are rarer than their graves. For them, no poet; for them, no artist; no seer. Yet, even for the lowest and the least of these a deliverance is preparing. The teacher gathers the young thieves from the street, and discourses to them of Duty, and of the Infinitive, lessons, which even Sectarian jargon, and the rubbish of church creeds cannot divest of their importance. A new race shall arise which the Beautiful shall lead to Freedom. In the meantime, let us take courage, let us know what we can work at, and make poverty welcome to our board. He is rich who has few wants.

Harding worked at the wood carving. He knew little of the history of the art, but he was aware that like that of glass-staining, it had gradually forfeited its rank in modern hands, and had become insignificant. He remembered what elaborate specimens he had seen in the metropolitan churches, and other public buildings. Why had the art decayed? Why had skill, genius, creation, flowed into other channels? He conceived the idea of treating in hard oak a fine mythological subject, and he determined to make the attempt.

Notwithstanding the high praises which had been bestowed upon Emma's singing, each rehearsal at the Theatre indicated a loss of power, and of diminution in the compass of her voice. Those who heard her on these occasions shook their heads. Scheffer alone, would not be disheartened. She was nervous, he said, nothing more. Perhaps, in private,

he was alarmed. Emma herself was conscious of falling far short of what had been expected of her, but she feared to tell her husband, and only checked his too ardent anticipations of her success.

"Really," said the manager to Scheffer, on the morning of the last rehearsal, "this will never do. She is feeble, positively feeble; we shall be the laughing-stock of the whole town. I must postpone her appearance. It would be a failure, sir, a dead failure."

"I was never more disappointed," said Scheffer. "I am quite confounded."

"Yes. I shall postpone her appearance. Masson has been here to introduce Madame Cacasi. I shall substitute her for Mrs. Harding. It will occasion a delay of a few weeks, but we shall escape the disgrace of a failure."

"Allow her one more rehearsal," pleaded the alarmed tenor, "You have only to postpone the production of the Opera for a night or two, on the plea of the vast care required in its preparation."

"Well, I have no objection to do that. One more rehearsal, then."

CHAPTER XI.

IT was in an obscure cottage at Deptford, that Grinling Gibbons was engaged upon his celebrated work *The Stoning of Stephen*, when he was discovered by Evelyn, and introduced to the notice of Charles II. It was in the Fleet Prison, that William Harding essayed his skill in bas-relief. He chose for his subject *The Raising of Lazarus*. Gibbons followed Tintoretto. Harding studied the narrative in the New Testament, and sketched his own design. He was on wondrous ground now. It seemed extraordinary that he had never done this before; that he had been so slow to discover his own ready access to the Beautiful. It was as natural to carve fruit or flowers, as to gather them from the living branch or stem. It was as easy too. It was astonishing that he found no difficulty in his work—that Art came to him like a ready friend, and, at the first handling of his tools, made him perfect in the use of them. The same marvel is recorded of Grinling Gibbons, whose earliest efforts were as successful as his latest. It must not be inferred that Harding was another Gibbons, or even a Diivot, a Selden, or a Laurens, Grinling's assistants. But he gave promise of much excellence. And here, let me express a hope, that this ancient and noble art of wood-carving, which, according to Pliny, was antecedent to statuary and painting, may be revived amongst us, and that our artists may be original, and not mere imitators of the Italian style, which is itself imitative, and dates from the discovery of the baths of Adrian. With the solitary exception of Grinling Gibbons, who is said to have been of Dutch extraction, the English have not been celebrated as wood-artists. The splendid and elaborate decorations in oak, lime, maple, and sometimes, but rarely, in box, that embellish our palaces, cathedrals, public and private buildings, were mostly executed by foreigners. With the one exception named, where are the equals of Albert Durer, of his pupil Taurigny of Rouen, of Demontreuil, of a hundred others?

While Harding was engaged in sketching his design, Scheffer was imparting encouragement to Emma. On the issue of the next rehearsal, her success or failure would depend. M. Jean Masson announced on all sides, that Madame Cacasi would be the public favorite, and that *she was his wife*. The singularity of his previous conduct was now fully explained, and Emma was no longer unable to assign a cause for his ungracious behavior to herself. Scheffer learned the whole secret, and communicated it to her. He had fallen in love with his landlady's blooming daughter, who, besides many personal attractions, (maugre, a certain insipidity of countenance, which Maberly had commented on) had a voice that promised to repay cultivation. The poor Signor could not resist her blandishments. Emma might have gained him reputation, but she was a married woman. He had already extolled her as Madame Cacasi, and prepared the public for her future appearance. But her real name was unknown, and it was easy to bestow the appellation he had given her, on another. Besides, Emma's education must necessarily be suspended during his professional absence on the Continent, for he could not remain in