

ELKANAH BREWSTER'S TEMPTATION.

I WAS always of opinion that the fruit forbidden to our grandmother Eve was an unripe apple. Eaten, it afflicted Adam with the first colic known to this planet. He, the weaker vessel, sorrowed over his transgression; but I doubt if Eve's repentance was thorough; for the plucking of unripe fruit has been, ever since, a favorite hobby of her sons and daughters, — until now our mankind has got itself into such a chronic state of colic, that even Dr. Carlyle declares himself unable to prescribe any Morrison's Pill or other remedial measure to allay the irritation.

Part of this irritation finds vent in a great cry about "legitimate ambition." Somehow, because any American *may* be President of the United States, almost every American feels himself bound to run for the office. A man thinks small things of himself, and his neighbors think less, if he does not find his heart filled with an insane desire, in some way, to attain to fame or notoriety, riches or bankruptcy. Nevertheless, we are not purse-proud, — nor, indeed, proud at all, more 's the pity, — and receive a man just as readily whose sands of life have been doled out to suffering humanity in the shape of patent pills, as one who has entered Fifth Avenue by the legitimate way of pork and cotton speculations, if only he have been successful, — which I call a very noble trait in the American character.

Now this is all very well, and, granted that Providence has placed us here to do what is best pleasing to ourselves, it is surely very noble and grand in us to please to serve nothing less than our country or our age. But let us not forget that the English language has such a little word as *duty*. A man's talents, and, perhaps, once in a great while, his wishes, would make him a great man, (if wishes ever did such things, which I doubt,) while duty imperatively demands

that he shall remain a *little* man. What then? Let us see.

Elkanah Brewster was going to New York to-morrow.

"What for, boy?" asked old Uncle Shubael, meeting whom on the fish-wharf, he had bid him a cheery good-bye.

"To make my fortune," was the bold reply.

"Make yer fortin? You're a goose, boy! Stick to yer work here, — fishin' summers an' shoemakin' winters. Why, there isn't a young feller on the hull Cape makes as much as you. What's up? Gal gin ye the mitten? Or what?"

"I don't want to make shoes, nor fish neither, Uncle Shub," said Elkanah, soberly, looking the old fellow in the face, — "goin' down to the Banks year arter year in cold an' fish-gurry, an' peggin' away all winter, like mad. I want to be rich, like Captain Crowell; I want to be a gentleman, like that painter-chap that give me drawin'-lessons, last summer, when I stayed to home."

"Phew! Want to be rich an' a gentleman, eh? Gittin' tu big for yer boots, youngster? What's yer old man du but go down t' the Banks reg'lar every spring? You're no better 'n he, I guess! Keep yer trade, an' yer trade 'll keep you. A rollin' stun gethers no moss. Dry bread tu home's better 'n roast meat an' gravy abroad."

"All feet don't tread in one shoe, Uncle Shub," said young Brewster, capping the old fellow's proverbs with another. "Don't see why I shouldn't make money as well's other fellers. It's a free country, an' if a feller wants to try suthin' else 'sides fishin' uv it, what d'yer all want to be down on him fur? I don't want to slave all my days, when other folks ken live in big houses an' ride in 'kerriges, an' all that."

"A'n't yer got bread enough to eat, an' a place to sleep? an' what more's any on 'em got? You stay here; make yer

money on the old Cape, where yer father an' grand'ther made it afore you. Use yer means, an' God 'll give the blessin'. Yer can't honestly git rich anywheres all tu once. Good an' quickly don't often meet. One nail drives out another. Slow an' easy goes fur in a day. Honor an' ease a'n't often bedfellows. Don't yer be a goose, I tell ye. What's to become of Hepsy Ann?"

Having delivered himself of which last and hardest shot, Uncle Shubael shouldered his cod-craft, and, without awaiting an answer, tugged across the sand-beach for home.

Elkanah Brewster was a Cape-Cod boy, with a pedigree, if he had ever thought of it, as long as any on the Cape,—and they are the longest in the land. His forefathers had caught fish to the remotest generation known. The Cape boys take to the water like young ducks; and are born with a hook and line in their fists, so to speak, as the Newfoundland codfish and Bay Chaleur mackerel know, to their cost. "Down on old Chatham" there is little question of a boy's calling, if he only comes into the world with the proper number of fingers and toes; he swims as soon as he walks, knows how to drive a bargain as soon as he can talk, goes cook of a coaster at the mature age of eight years, and thinks himself robbed of his birthright, if he has not made a voyage to the Banks before his eleventh birthday comes round. There is good stuff in the Cape boys, as the South-Street ship-owners know, who don't sleep easier than when they have put a "Cape man" in charge of their best clipper. Quick of apprehension, fertile in resource, shrewd, enterprising, brave, prudent, and, above all, lucky,—no better seamen sail the sea. Long may they keep their *prestige* and their sand!

They are not rich on the Cape,—in the Wall-Street sense of the word, that is to say. I doubt if Uncle Lew Baker, who was high line out of Dennis last year, and who, by the same token, had to work himself right smartly to achieve that honor,—I doubt if this smart and thoroughly

wide-awake fellow took home more than three hundred dollars to his wife and children when old Obed settled the voyage. But then the good wife saves while he earns, and, what with a cow, and a house and garden-spot of his own, and a healthy lot of boys and girls, who, if too young to help, are not suffered to hinder, this man is more forehanded and independent, gives more to the poor about him and to the heathen at the other end of the world, than many a city man who makes, and spends, his tens of thousands.

Uncle Abijah Brewster, the father of this Elkanah, was an old Banker,—which signifies here, not a Wall-Street broker-man, but a Grand-Bank fisherman. He had brought up a goodly family of boys and girls by his hook-and-line. and, though now a man of some fifty winters, still made his two yearly fares to the Banks, in his own trim little pinky, and prided himself on being the smartest and jolliest man aboard. His boys had sailed with him till they got vessels of their own, had learned from his stout heart and strong arm their seamanship, their fisherman's acuteness, their honest daring, and child-like trust in God's Providence. These poor fishermen are not rich, as I have said; a dollar looks to them as big as a dinner-plate to us, and a moderately flush Wall-Street man might buy out the whole Cape and not overdraw his bank-account. Also, they have but little book-learning among them, reading chiefly their Bible, Bowditch, and Nautical Almanac, and leaving theology mostly to the parson, on shore, who is paid for it. But they have a conscience, and, knowing a thing to be right, do it bravely, and against all odds. I have seen these men on Sunday, in a fleet of busy "Sunday fishers," fish biting all around them, sitting faithfully,—ay, and contentedly,—with book in hand, sturdily refraining from what the mere human instinct of destruction would strongly impel them to, without counting the temptation of dollars,—and this only because they had been taught that Sunday was a day of rest and worship, wherein

no man should catch fish, and knew no theological quibble or mercantile close-sailing by which to weather on God's command. It sounds little to us who have not been tempted, or, if tempted, have gracefully succumbed, on the plea that other people do so too; but how many stock-speculators would see their fellows buying bargains and making easy fortunes on Sunday morning, and not forget the ring of Trinity chimes and go in for dollars? Or which of us denies himself his Monday morning's paper?

Elkanah had always been what his mother called a strange boy. He was, indeed, an odd sheep in her flock. Restless, ambitious, dreamy, from his earliest youth, he possessed, besides, a natural gift for drawing and sketching, imitating and constructing, that bade fair, unless properly directed, to make of him that saddest and most useless of human lumber, a jack-at-all-trades. He profited more by his limited winter's schooling than his brothers and fellows, and was always respected by the old man as "a boy that took naterally to book-larnin', and would *be* suthin' some day." Of course he went to the Banks, and acquitted himself there with honor,—no man fishing more zealously or having better luck. But all the time he was dreaming of his future, counting this present as nothing, and ready, as soon as Fortune should make him an opening, to cast away this life, and grasp—he had not settled what.

"*I* dun know what ails him," said his father; "but he don't take kindly to the Banks. Seems to me he kinder despises the work, though he *does* it well enough. And then he makes the best shoes on the Cape; but he a'n't content, somehow."

And that was just it. He was not contented. He had seen men—"no better than I," thought he, poor fool!—in Boston, living in big houses, wearing fine clothes, putting fair, soft hands into smooth-fitting kid-gloves; "and why not I?" he cried to himself continually. Year by year, from his seventeenth to his twenty-first, he was pursued by this demon of "ambition," which so took possession of

his heart as to crowd out nearly everything else,—father, mother, work,—even pretty Hepzibah Nickerson, almost, who loved him, and whom he also loved truly. They had almost grown up together, had long loved each other, and had been now two years betrothed. When Elkanah was out of his time and able to buy a share in a vessel, and had made a voyage to the Banks as captain, they were to be married.

The summer before this spring in which our story opens, Elkanah had stayed at home for two months, because of a rheumatism contracted by unusual exposure on the Banks in early spring; and at this time he made the acquaintance of Mr. James Graves, N. A., from New York, spending part of his summer on the Cape in search of the picturesque,—which I hope he found. Elkanah had, as I have said, a natural talent for drawing, and some of his sketches had that in them which elicited the approval of Graves, who saw in the young fellow an untutored genius, or, at least, very considerable promise of future excellence. To him there could be but one choice between shoemaking and "Art"; and finding that young Brewster made rapid advances under his desultory tuition, he told him his thoughts, that he should not waste himself making sea-boots for fishermen, but enter a studio in Boston or New York, and make his career as a painter. It scarcely needed this, however; for Elkanah took such delight in his new proficiency, and got from Graves's stories of artist life such exalted ideas of the unalloyed felicity of the gentleman of the brush, that, even had the painter said no word, he would have worked out that way himself.

"Only wait till next year, when I'm out of my time," said he to Graves; and to himself,—"*This is the opening for which I have been waiting.*"

That winter—"my last at shoemaking"—he worked more diligently than ever before, and more good-naturedly. Uncle Abijah was delighted at the change in his boy, and promised him great things

in the way of a lift next year, to help him to a speedy wedding. Elkanah kept his own counsel, read much in certain books which Graves had left him, and looked impatiently ahead to the day when, twenty-one years of age, he should be a free man,—able to go whither he listed and do what he would, with no man authoritatively to say him nay.

And now the day had come; and with I don't know how few dollars in his pocket, his scant earnings, he had declared to his astounded parents his determination to fish and shoemake no longer, but to learn to be a painter.

"A great painter,"—that was what he said.

"I don't see the use o' paintin' picters, for my part," said the old man, despairingly; "can't you learn that, an' fish tu?"

"Famous and rich too," said Elkanah half to himself, looking through the vista of years at the result he hoped for, and congratulating himself in advance upon it. And a proud, hard look settled in his eye, which froze the opposition of father and mother, and was hardly dimmed by encountering the grieved glance of poor Hepsy Ann Nickerson.

Poor Hepsy Ann! They had talked it all over, time and again. At first she was in despair; but when he laid before her all his darling hopes, and painted for her in such glowing colors the final reward which should come to him and her in return for his struggles,—when she saw him, her love and pride, before her already transfigured, as it were, by this rare triumph, clothed in honors, his name in all mouths,—dear, loving soul, her heart consented, "ay, if it should break meantime," thought she, as she looked proudly on him through her tears, and said,—*"Go, in God's name, and God be with you!"*

Perhaps we might properly here consider a little whether this young man did well thus to leave father, mother, home, his promised bride, sufficient bread-and-butter, healthy occupation, all, to attempt life in a new direction. Of course, your man who lives by bread alone will "pooh!

pooh!" all such folly, and tell the young man to let well enough alone. But consider candidly, and decide: Should Elkanah have gone to New York?

On the whole, *I think, yes.* For,—

He had a certain talent, and gave good promise of excellence in his chosen profession.

He liked it, felt strongly impelled towards it. Let us not yet scrutinize too closely the main impelling forces. Few human actions originate solely in what we try to think the most exalted motives.

He would have been discontented for life, had he not had his way. And this should count for something,—for much, indeed. Give our boys liberty to try that to which their nature or fancy strongly drives them,—to burn their fingers, if that seem best.

Let him go, then; and God be with him! as surely He will be, if the simple, faithful prayers of fair, sad Hepsy Ann are heard. Thus will he, thus only can any, solve that sphinx-riddle of life which is propounded to each passer to-day, as of old in fable-lands,—failing to read which, he dies the death of rusting discontent,—solving whose mysteries, he has revealed to him the deep secret of his life, and sees and knows what best he may do here for himself and the world.

But *what, where, who*, is Elkanah Brewster's world?

While we stand reasoning, he has gone. In New York, his friend Graves assisted him to a place in the studio of an artist, whose own works have proved, no less than those of many who have gathered their most precious lessons from him, that he is truly a master of his art. But what are masters, teachers, to a scholar? It's very fine boarding at the Spread-Eagle Hotel; but even after you have feed the waiter, you have to chew your own dinner, and are benefited, not by the amount you pay for it, but only by so much of all that with which the bounteous mahogany is covered as you can thoroughly masticate, easily contain, and healthily digest. Elkanah began with the soup, so to speak. He brought all his Cape-Cod

acuteness of observation to bear on his profession; lived closely, as well he might; studied attentively and intelligently; lost no hints, no precious morsels dropping from the master's board; improved slowly, but surely. Day by day he gained in that facility of hand, quickness of observation, accuracy of memory, correctness of judgment, patience of detail, felicity of touch, which, united and perfected and honestly directed, we call genius. He was above no drudgery, shirked no difficulties, and labored at the insignificant sketch in hand to-day as though it were indeed his masterpiece, to be hung up beside Raphael's and Titian's; meantime, keeping up poor Hepsy Ann's heart by letters full of a hope bred of his own brave spirit, rather than of any favoring circumstances in his life, and gaining his scant bread-and-butter by various honest drudgeries which I will not here recount.

So passed away three years; for the growth of a poor young artist in public favor, and that thing called fame, is fearfully slow. Oftenest he has achieved his best when the first critic speaks kindly or savagely of him. What, indeed, *at best*, do those blind leaders, but zealously echo a sentiment already in the public heart,—which they vainly endeavor to create (out of nothing) by any awe-inspiring formula of big words?

Men grow so slowly! But then so do oaks. And little matter, so the growth be straight.

Meantime Elkanah was getting, slowly and by hardest labor, to have some true conception of his art and his aims. He became less and less satisfied with his own performances; and, having with much pains and anxious prayers finished his first picture for the Academy, carefully hid it under the bed, and for that year played the part of independent critic at the Exhibition. Wherefrom resulted some increase of knowledge,—though chiefly negative.

For what positive lesson is taught to any by that yearly show of what we flatter ourselves by calling Art? Eight hun-

dred and fifteen new paintings this year, shown by no less than two hundred and eighty-one painters. When you have gone patiently through and looked at every picture, see if you don't wish the critics *had* eyes, and a little common sense, too. How many of these two hundred and eighty-one, if they live to be a hundred, will ever solve their great riddle? and once solved, how many would honestly go back to shoemaking?

Why should they not paint? Because, unless some of them are poorer men than I think, that is not the thing they are like to do best; and a man is put into this world, not to do what he may think or hope will most speedily or effectually place him in the list of this world's illustrious benefactors, but honestly and against all devilish temptations to stick to that thing by which he can best serve and bless——

Whom? A city? A state? A republic? A king?

No,—but that person who is nearest to, and most dependent upon him. Look at Charles Lamb, and then at Byron and Shelley.

The growth of a poor young artist into public favor is slow enough. But even poor young artists have their temptations. When Elkanah hung his first picture in the Academy rooms, he thought the world must feel the acquisition. Now the world is a notoriously stupid world, and never does its duty; but kind woman not seldom supplies its omissions. So it happened, that, though the world ignored the picture, Elkanah became at once the centre of admiration to a coterie of young ladies, who thought they were appreciating Art when they flattered an artist, and who, when they read in the papers the gratifying intelligence (invented by some sanguine critic, over a small bottle of Champagne cider) that the American people are rapidly growing in true love for the fine arts, blushingly owned to themselves that their virtuous labors in this direction were not going unrewarded.

Have you never seen them in the Academy,—these dear young ladies, who are

so constantly foreseeing new Raphaels, Claudes, and Rembrandts? Positively, in this year's Exhibition they are better worth study than the paintings. There they run, up and down, critical or enthusiastical, as the humor strikes: Laura, with big blue eyes and a loud voice, pitying Isidora because she "has never met" that dear Mr. Herkimer, who paints such delicious, dreamy landscapes; and Emily dragging everybody off to see Mr. Smith's great work, "The Boy and the Windmill," which—so surprising is his facility—he actually painted in less than twelve days, and which "promises so much for his success and the future of American Art," says this sage young critic, out of whose gray eyes look the garnered experiences of almost eighteen summers.

Whoever desiderates cheap praise, let him cultivate a beard and a sleepy look, and hang a picture in the Academy rooms. Elkanah received it, you may be sure. It was thought *so* romantic, that he, a fisherman,—the young ladies sunk the shoemaker, I believe,—should be *so* devoted to Art. How splendidly it spoke for our civilization, when even sailors left their vessels, and, abjuring codfish, took to canvas and brushes! What admirable courage in him, to come here and endeavor to work his way up from the very bottom! What praiseworthy self-denial,—*"No!! is it really so?"* cried Miss Jennie,—when he had left behind him a fair young bride!

It was as though it had been written, "Blessed is he who forsaketh father, mother, and wife to paint pictures." But it is not so written.

It was as if the true aim and glory of every man in a civilized community should be to paint pictures. Which has this grain of truth in it, that, in the highest form of human development, I believe every man will be at heart an artist. But then we shall be past picture-painting and exhibitions. Don't you see, that, if the fruit be thoroughly ripe, it needs no violent plucking? or that, if a man is really a painter, he *will* paint,—ay, though he were ten times a shoe-

maker, and could never, never hope to hang his pictures on the Academy walls, to win cheap wonder from boarding-school misses, or just regard from judicious critics?

Elkanah Brewster came to New York to make his career,—to win nothing less than fame and fortune. When he had struggled through five years of Art-study, and was now just beginning to earn a little money, he began also to think that he had somehow counted his chickens before they were hatched,—perhaps, indeed, before the eggs were laid. "Good and quickly come seldom together," said old Uncle Shubael. But then a man who has courage commonly has also endurance; and Elkanah, ardently pursuing from love now what he had first been prompted to by ambition, did not murmur nor despair. For, indeed, I must own that this young fellow had worked himself up to the highest and truest conception of his art, and felt, that, though the laborer is worthy of his hire, unhappy is the man who lowers his art to the level of a trade. In olden times, the priests did, indeed, eat of the sacrificial meats; but we live under a new and higher dispensation.

II.

MEANTIME, what of Hepsy Ann Nickerson? She had bravely sent her hero out, with her blessing on his aspirations. Did she regret her love and trust? I am ashamed to say that these five long, weary years had passed happily to this young woman. She had her hands full of work at home, where she reigned over a family of brothers and sisters, *vice* her mother, promoted. Hands busied with useful toils, head and heart filled with love and trust of Elkanah, there was no room for unhappiness. To serve and to be loved: this seems, indeed, to be the bliss of the happiest women I have known,—and of the happiest men, too, for that matter. It does not sound logical, and I know of no theory of woman's rights which will satisfactorily account for the

phenomenon. But then — there are the facts.

A Cape household is a simpler affair than you will meet with in the city. If any young marrying man waits for a wife who shall be an adept in the mysteries of the kitchen and the sewing-basket, let him go down to the Cape. Captain Elijah Nickerson, Hepsy Ann's father, was master and owner of the good schooner "Miranda," in which excellent, but rather strongly scented vessel, he generally made yearly two trips to the Newfoundland Banks, to draw thence his regular income; and it is to be remarked, that his drafts, presented in person, were never dishonored in that foggy region. Uncle Elijah, (they are all uncles, on the Cape, when they marry and have children,—and *boys* until then.) Uncle Elijah, I say, was not uncomfortably off, as things go in those parts. The year before Elkanah went to New York, the old fellow had built himself a brand-new house, and Hepsy Ann was looked up to by her acquaintance as the daughter of a man who was not only brave and honest, but also lucky. "Elijah Nickerson's new house"—as it is still called, and will be, I suppose, until it ceases to be a house—was fitted up inside in a way which put you much in mind of a ship's cabin, and would have delighted the simple heart of good Captain Cuttle. There was no spare space anywhere thrown away, nor anything suffered to lie loose. Becketts and cleats, fixed into the walls of the sitting-room, held and secured against any possible damage the pipes, fish-lines, dolphin-grains, and sou'westers of the worthy Captain; and here he and his sat, when he was at home, through the long winter evenings, in simple and not often idle content. The kitchen, flanked by the compendious outhouses which make our New England kitchens almost luxurious in the comfort and handiness of every arrangement, was the centre of Hepsy Ann's kingdom, where she reigned supreme, and waged sternest warfare against dirt and disorder. Hence her despotic sway extended over the pantry, an awful

and fragrant sanctuary, whither she fled when household troubles, or a letter from Elkanah, demanded her entire seclusion from the outer world, and of whose interior the children got faint glimpses and sniffs only on special and long-remembered occasions; the west room, where her father slept when he was at home, and where the curious searcher might find store of old compasses, worn-out cod-hooks, condemned gurry-knives, and last year's fishing-mittens, all "stowed away against time-o'-need"; the spare room, sacred to the rites of hospitality; the "up-stairs," occupied by the children and Hepsy Ann's self; and finally, but most important of all, the parlor, a mysterious and hermetically sealed apartment, which almost seemed to me an unconsecrated spot in this little temple of the homely virtues and affections,—a room furnished in a style somewhat ostentatious and decidedly uncomfortable, swept and dusted on Saturday afternoons by Hepsy Ann's own careful hands, sat in by the Captain and her for an hour or two on Sundays in awkward state, then darkened and locked for the rest of the week.

As for the queen and mistress of so much neatness and comfort, I must say, that, like most queens whose likeness I have seen, she was rather plain than strictly beautiful,—though, no doubt, her loyal subjects, as in such cases commonly occurs, pictured her to themselves as a very Helen of Troy. If her cheeks had something of the rosy hue of health, cheeks, and arms, too, were well tanned by frequent exposure to the sun. Neither tall nor short, but with a lithe figure, a natural grace and sweet dignity of carriage, the result of sufficient healthy exercise and a pure, untroubled spirit; hands and feet, mouth and nose, not such as a gentleman would particularly notice; and straight brown hair, which shaded the only *really* beautiful part of Hepsy Ann's face,—her clear, honest, brave blue eyes: eyes from which spoke a soul at peace with itself and with the outward world,—a soul yet

full of love and trust, fearing nothing, doubting nothing, believing much good, and inclined to patient endurance of the human weaknesses it met with in daily life, as not perhaps altogether strange to itself. The Cape men are a brave, hardy race; and the Cape women, grave and somewhat silent, not demonstrative in joy or grief, reticent mostly of anxieties and sorrows, born to endure, in separation from fathers, brothers, lovers, husbands, in dangers not oftener fancied than real, griefs which more fortunate women find it difficult to imagine,—these Cape women are worthy mothers of brave men. Of such our Hepsy Ann was a fair example,—weaving her rather prosaic life into golden dreams in the quiet light of her pantry refuge, happy chiefly because she thought much and carefully for others and had little time for self-brooding; like most genuine heroines, (except those of France,) living an heroic life without in the least suspecting it.

And did she believe in Elkanah?

Utterly.

And did Elkanah believe in himself?

Yes,—but with certain grave doubts. Here is the difference: the woman's faith is intuition; the man must have a reason for the faith that is in him.

Yet Elkanah was growing. I think a man grows like the walls of a house, by distinct stages: so far the scaffolding reaches, and then a general stoppage while the outer shell is raised, the ladders lengthened, and the work squared off. Now I don't know, unhappily, the common process of growth of the artistic mind, and how far the light of to-day helps the neophyte to look into the indefinite twilight of to-morrow; but step by step was the slow rule of Elkanah's mind, and he had been now five years an artist, and was held in no despicable repute by those few who could rightly judge of a man's future by his past, when first it became very clear to him that he had yet to find his *speciality* in Art,—that truth which *he* might better represent than any other man. Don't think five years long to determine so triv-

ial a point. The right man in the right place is still a rare phenomenon in the world; and some men spend a lifetime in the consideration of this very point, doubtless looking to take their chance of real work in the next world. I mean to say it took Elkanah just five years to discover, that, though he painted many things well, he did yet put his very soul into none, and that, unless he could now presently find this, *his* right place, he had, perhaps, better stop altogether.

Elkanah considered; but he also worked unceasingly, feeling that the best way to break through a difficulty is to pepper away at its outer walls.

Now while he was firing away wearily at this fortress, which held, he thought, the deepest secret of his life, Hepsy Ann sat in her pantry, her serene soul troubled by unwonted fears. Captain Elijah Nickerson had sailed out in his stanch schooner in earliest spring, for the Banks. The old man had been all winter meditating a surprise; and his crew were in unusual excitement, peering out at the weather, consulting almanacs, prophesying (to outsiders) a late season, and winking to each other a cheerful disbelief of their own auguries. The fact is, they were intending to slip off before the rest, and perhaps have half their fare of fish caught before the fleet got along. No plan could have succeeded better—up to a certain point. Captain Elijah got off to sea full twelve days earlier than anybody else, and was bowling merrily down towards the eternal fog-banks when his neighbors were yet scarce thinking of gathering up their mittens and sea-boots. By the time the last comers arrived on the fishing-ground, one who had spoken the "*Miranda*" some days before, anchored and fishing away, reported that they had, indeed, nearly *wet her salt*,—by which is meant that she was nearly filled with good, sound codfish. The men were singing as they dressed their fish, and Captain Elijah, sitting high up on the schooner's quarter, took his pipe out of his mouth, and asked, as the vessel rose on the sea, if they had any news to

send home, for three days more like that would fill him up.

That was the last word of Captain Elijah Nickerson's ever heard by men now living. Whether the "Miranda" was sunk by an iceberg; whether run down in the dark and silent watches of the night by some monster packet or swift hurling steamer, little recking the pale fisher's light feebly glimmering up from the surface of the deep; or whether they went down at their anchors, in the great gale which set in on the third night, as many brave men have done before, looking their fate steadfastly in the face for long hours, and taking time to bid each other farewell ere the great sea swallowed them;—the particulars of their hapless fate no man may know, till the dread day when the sea shall give up its dead.

Vainly poor Hepsy Ann waited for the well-known signal in the offing,—daily walking to the shore, where kind old Uncle Shubael, now long superannuated, and idly busying himself about the fish-house, strove to cheer her fainting soul by store of well-chosen proverbs, and yarns of how, aforesometimes, schooners not larger and not so stout as the "Miranda," starting early for the Banks, had been blown southward to the West Indies, and, when the second-fare men came in with their fish, had made their appearance laden with rich cargoes of tropical molasses and bananas. Poor Hepsy Ann! what need to describe the long-drawn agony which grew with the summer flowers, but did not wane with the summer sun? Hour after hour, day after day, she sat by her pantry-window, looking with wistful eyes out upon the sand, to that spot where the ill-fated "Miranda" had last been seen, but never should appear again,—another

"poor lone Hannah,
Sitting by the window, binding shoes,"—
cheeks paling, eyes dimming, with that hope deferred which maketh the heart sick. Pray God you never may be so tried, fair reader! If, in these days, she had not had the children to keep and comfort, she has since told me, she could

scarce have borne it. To calm their fears, to soothe their little sorrows, to look anxiously—more anxiously than ever before—after each one of her precious little brood, became now her chief solace.

Thus the long, weary days rolled away, each setting sun crushing another hope, until at last the autumn storms approached, the last Banker was safe home; and by this time it was plain, even to poor Hepsy Ann's faithful heart, that her dead would not come back to her.

"If only Elkanah were here!" she had sometimes sighed to herself;—but in all these days she wrote him no word. And he—guessing nothing of her long, silent agony, himself sufficiently bemired in his slough of despond, working away with sad, unsatisfied heart in his little studio, hoping yet for light to come to his night—was, in truth, so full of himself, that Hepsy Ann had little of his thoughts. Shall I go farther, and admit that sometimes this poor fellow dimly regretted his pledged heart, and faintly murmured, "If only I were free, *then* I might do something"? If only the ship were rid of her helmsman, then indeed would she go—somewhere.

At last,—it was already near Thanksgiving,—the news reached Elkanah. "I thought you'd ha' been down afore this to see Hepsy Ann Nickerson in her trouble," said an old coasting-skipper to him, with mild reproach, handing him a letter from his mother,—of all persons in the world! Whereupon, seeing ignorance in Elkanah's inquiring glance, he told the story.

Elkanah was as one in a maze. Going to his little room, he opened his mother's letter, half-dreading to find here a detailed repetition of what his heart had just taken in. But the letter was short.

"MY SON ELKANAH,—

"Do you not know that Captain Elijah Nickerson will never come home from the Banks, and that Hepsy Ann is left alone in the world?

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

That was all.

Elkanah sat on his stool, before his easel, looking vacantly at the unfinished picture, as one stunned and breathless. For the purport of this message was not to be mistaken. Nor did his conscience leave him in doubt as to his duty. O God! was this, indeed, the end? Had he toiled, and hoped, and prayed, and lived the life of an anchorite these five years only for this? Was such faith, such devotion, so rewarded?

But had any one the right to demand this sacrifice of him? Was it not a devilish temptation to take him from his calling, from that work in which God had evidently intended him to work for the world? Had he a right to spoil his life, to belittle his soul, for any consideration? If Hepsy Ann Nickerson had claims, had not he also, and his Art? If he were willing, in this dire extremity, to sacrifice his love, his prospects of married bliss, might he not justly require the same of her? Was not Art his mistress?—Thus whispered the insidious devil of Selfishness to this poor, tempted, anguished soul.

"Yea," whispered another still, small voice; "but is not Hepsy Ann your promised wife?" And those fatal words sounded in his heart: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife."

"Lord, inspire me to do what is right!" prayed poor mazed Elkanah, sinking on his knees at his cot-side.

But presently, through his blinding tears, "Lord, give me strength to do the right!"

And then, when he awoke next morning, the world seemed another world to him. The foundations of his life seemed broken loose. Tears were no longer, nor prayers. But he went about slowly, and with loving hands, packing up his brushes, pallets, paints, easel,—all the few familiar objects of a life which was his no longer, and on which he seemed to himself already looking as across some vast gulf of years. At last all was done. A last look about the dismantled garret, so long his workshop, his home, where he

had grown out of one life into another, and a better, as he thought,—out of a narrow circle into a broader. And then, away for the Cape. No farewells, no explanations to friends, nothing that should hold out to his sad soul any faintest hope of a return to this garret, this toil, which now seemed to him more heaven than ever before. Thus this Adam left his paradise, clinging to his Eve.

It was the day before Thanksgiving when Elkanah arrived at home. Will any one blame him, if he felt little thankful? if the thought of the Thanksgiving turkey was like to choke him, and the very idea of giving thanks seemed to him a bitter satire? Poor fellow! he forgot that there were other hearts to whom Thanksgiving turkey seemed little tempting.

The Cape folk are not demonstrative. They have warm hearts, but the old Puritan ice has never quite melted away from the outer shell.

"Well, Elkanah, glad to see you, boy!" said his father, looking up from his corner by the stove; "how's things in New York?" Father and son had not met for three years. But, going out into the kitchen, he received a warm grasp of the hand, and his mother said, in her low, sweet voice, "I knew you'd come." That was all. But it was enough.

How to take his sad face over to Elijah Nickerson's new house? But that must be done, too. Looking through the little sitting-room window, as he passed, he saw pale-faced Hepsy Ann sitting quietly by the table, sewing. The children had gone to bed. He did not knock;—why should he?—but, walking in, stood silent on the floor. A glad, surprised smile lit up the sad, wan face, as she recognized him, and, stepping to his side, said, "Oh, Elkanah! I knew you'd come. How good of you!" Then, abashed to have so committed herself and him, she shrank to her chair again.

Let us not intrude further on these two. Surely Elkanah Brewster had been less than man, had he not found his hard heart to soften, and his cold love to warm, as

he drew from her the story of her long agony, and saw this weary heart ready to rest upon him, longing to be comforted in his strong arms.

The next day a small sign was put up at Abijah Brewster's door:—

BOOTS AND SHOES
MADE AND MENDED
BY
ELKANAH BREWSTER.

It was arranged that he should work at his trade all winter. In the spring, he was to have his father's vessel, and the wedding would be before he started for the Banks.

So the old life was put on again. I will not say that Elkanah was thoroughly content,—that there were no bitter longings, no dim regrets, no faint questionings of Providence. But hard work is a good salve for a sore heart; and in his honest toils, in his care for Hepsy Ann and her little brood, in her kind heart, which acknowledged with such humility of love all he did for her and all he had cast away for her, he found his reward.

The wedding was over,—a quiet affair enough,—and Elkanah was anchored on the Banks, with a brave, skilful crew, and plenty of fish. His old luck had not deserted him; wherever he dropped anchor, there the cod seemed to gather; and, in the excitement of catching fish and guarding against the dangers of the Banks, the old New York life seemed presently forgotten; and, once more, Elkanah's face wore the old, hopeful calm which belonged there. Art, that had been so long his tyrant mistress, was at last cast off.

Was she?

As he sat, one evening, high on the quarter, smoking his pipe, in that calm, contemplative mood which is the smoker's reward for a day of toil,—the little vessel pitching bows under in the long, tremendous swell of the Atlantic, the low drifting fog lurid in the light of the setting sun, but bright stars twinkling out,

one by one, overhead, in a sky of Italian clearness and softness,—it all came to him,—that which he had so long, so vainly sought, toiled for, prayed for in New York,—his destiny.

Why should he paint heads, figures, landscapes, objects with which his heart had never been really filled?

But now, as in one flash of divinest intelligence, it was revealed to him!—This sea, this fog, this sky, these stars, this old, old life, which he had been almost born into.—Oh, blind bat indeed, not to have seen, long, long ago, that this was your birthright in Art! not to have felt in your innermost heart, that this was indeed that thing, if anything, which God had called you to paint!

For this Elkanah had drunk in from his earliest youth,—this he understood to its very core; but the poor secret of that other life, which is so draped about with the artistic mannerisms and fashionable Art of New York, or any other civilized life, he had never rightly appreciated.

In that sunset-hour was born a *painter*!

III.

It chanced, that, a few months ago, I paid my accustomed summer visit to an old friend, living near Boston,—a retired merchant he calls himself. He began life as a cabin-boy,—became, in time, master of an Indiaman,—then, partner in a China house,—and after many years' residence in Canton, returned some years ago, heart and liver whole, to spend his remaining days among olden scenes. A man of truest culture, generous heart, and rarely erring taste. I never go there without finding something new and admirable.

"What am I to see, this time?" I asked, after dinner, looking about the drawing-room.

"Come. I'll show you."

He led me up to a painting,—a sea-piece:—A schooner, riding at her anchor, at sunset, far out at sea, no land in sight, sails down, all but a little patch of storm-sail fluttering wildly in the gale, and heavily pitching in a great, grand, roll-

ing sea ; around, but not closely enveloping her, a driving fog-bank, lurid in the yellow sheen of the setting sun ; above her, a few stars dimly twinkling through a clear blue sky ; on the quarter-deck, men sitting, wrapped in all the paraphernalia of storm-clothing, smoking and watching the roll of the sea.

"What do you think?" asked Captain Eastwick, interrupting my rapt contemplation.

"I never in my life saw so fine a sea-view. Whose can it be?"

"A Cape-Cod fisherman's."

"But he is a genius!" cried I, enthusiastically.

"A great, a splendid genius!" said my friend, quietly.

"And a fisherman?"

"Yes, and shoemaker."

"What a magnificent career he might make! Why don't you help him? What a pity to bury such a man in fish-boots and cod-livers!"

"My dear ——," said Captain Eastwick, "you are a goose. The highest genius lives above the littleness of making a career. This man needs no Academy prizes or praises. To my mind, his is the noblest, happiest life of all."

Whereupon he told me the story which I have endeavored to relate.

MAGDALENA.

I WOULD have killed you, if a breath
Freighted with some insensate death,
Magdalena,

Had power to breathe your life away,
To so exhale that rose-hued clay,
Magdalena,

That it had faded from my sight,
Like roses in a single night,
Magdalena!

I could have killed you thus, and felt
My will a blessed doom had dealt,
Magdalena!

Ah, would to God! then I had been
Unconscious of your scarlet sin,
Magdalena!

Ah, when I thought your soul as white
As the white rose you wore that night,
Magdalena,

I wondered how your mother came
To give you that sin-sullied name,
Magdalena!

Did some remorseless, vengeful Fate,
In mockery of your lofty state,
Magdalena,