

put on his hat and went out.

Just at nightfall an express wagon drove up to the door, and Mr. Conard's portly form hove into view at the corner. Mrs. Conard ran, more like a sleepy, happy child than a woman, out to the steps, to meet the men carrying in a sewing machine.

"I am quite willing, Ellen," said her husband, "to indulge you in any reasonable whim, but a parlor organ was a little too absurd. I propose that you shall give up teaching, for which you must see you are totally unfitted, and take in sewing. Indeed, I have already engaged work. Mrs. Strumpf, at the saloon, says she will send you up some pantaloons to make for her boys, and see what sort of a tailor you are."

When I went to number 311, a fortnight afterwards, I found a little tin sign at the door, "Plain Sewing for Ladies and Gents."

Mr. Conard stood on the steps brushing a new beaver hat with his arm.

"Rather neat that!" he said, "Practical; to the point. I composed it. Couldn't promise fine work. Fact is, Ellen's not capable of it. Her ability is mediocre throughout."

I found Mrs. Conard at work at the machine, a pile of cloth beside her, the children skirmishing over the floor. She was the same gentle, affectionate, anxious little creature to them and to her husband; but she seemed, somehow, to have lost all vitality. I do not remember that I ever saw a smile on her face after that disappointment.

"I do not think that I shall ever be able to help the children as I wished," she said. "But Hetty will do it. Hetty has entered the high school. In two years she will be ready to teach. Then she can help Mr. Conard support the family."

"And you?"

"Oh! yes—I—I had forgotten that I would be here," with an inexplicable expression on her face.

Silly and weak as she was, she had been able for a year to keep secret a wearing disease. She thought then that she would not live to see Hetty graduate.

The murderous sewing machine rapidly developed the weakness.

This is an absolutely true story, and not a cheerful one. I see no reason, therefore, for dwelling on the details of how one little woman died with her reasonable, pure hopes unfulfilled. Many women who read these words will die with their work half done, and I really do not believe her story will help them one whit to finish it. But there is a reason for telling Hetty Conard's story, and I wish to do it as plainly as I can.

She was a girl (like the majority of school girls) of very moderate mental ability. She had a weak power of verbal memory and no mathematical talent. But she had a vivid imagination and a firm hold upon ideas, when once they were gained. She had, like her mother, an energetic, loving, loyal soul; and, like her father, a firm will, all of which would have made her useful to children in the world, either as sister, teacher, or mother.

A year's skillful training by a teacher who understood the girl would have fitted her for this life work. Instead of this, she was put into a machine. Her father entered her at the High School.

"Our object," said the principal, "is to fit the pupils to take places as instructors in the public schools. There is great competition for these places. Constantly the standard of scholarship is regulated by the ability of the brightest pupils. We acknowledge that. Dull girls have no chance. No time for pulling them up here, Mr. Conard. Down they go in the race."

"I have no idea that my girl will go down, sir. In fact, she can't afford to go down. She has her own living to make."

"Yes. This is the system. Our examinations are searching. It depends upon the grade which the girl receives whether she can receive an appointment as teacher or what kind of an appointment. In short, her future position and

salary depend on her examinations. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly. Do you understand, Hester?" sharply.

"Yes, Father."

Hetty had never been reckoned a clever girl by any teacher, and she knew it now. She discovered that her chances of helping her mother depended on her cleverness. The girl cared for nobody in the world but her mother. They stood alone, together. She resolved to do this thing, "if there was life enough in her body to do it."

She brought home that day 13 text-books. They were literally text-books, which she was to teach again. There was no meaning in history shown to her; no principle in any study made clear; no line of thought opened to her in them; no development for her of character, taste, judgment, or even intellect; nothing but a mass of uncomprehended facts, which she was to commit verbally to memory. There was, incredible as it may seem, not a single effort made by her teachers to train her mind or even to explain these facts. The lessons were simply recited at school and studied at home. Sharp girls, who had the ability to remember words and cared little for ideas, accomplished the task with comparative ease; but Hetty worked at them until late at night, slept dreaming of them, woke to begin them again, her brain heated, strained.

When the two years drew to a close, her mother's health was broken, and Hetty had discovered the cause. It seemed to her as if, in the breathless race she was running, she had not even time to weep.

"You will have to take my place, Hetty," said her mother. "You can do more for the children by teaching than I can at the machine."

"I'll try, mother." She was on her knees, with her head on the dear little breast. The machine had stopped for a moment.

"You're sure to pass, Hetty?"

"Oh! I must, mother! Nobody has studied harder than I."

The examination day came. She did not pass.

"Do you mean to say," blustered Mr. Conard to the principal, "that she has no chance of an appointment?"

"None whatever."

"What is she to do?"

"Try for another year, if you choose."

A whole year!

"I cannot last so long," thought Mrs. Conard, as she worked the treadle harder than ever.

Hetty began again. She sat up in her garret room until two and three o'clock in the morning; and then could not sleep, the vessels of her brain were so gorged with blood. She had no time for exercise. The girl had no appetite and ate little; but she began to grow enormously stout.

Every week girls, manifestly her inferiors in character, in manner and in intellect, passed her in the struggle. It was a race in which hardihood, shrewdness and the lowest quality of memory won; and in which every other power which would make a man or woman useful in life was crushed down and held in abeyance.

Two months before her final examination her mother died. The timid little woman seemed to have no fear in going out of the world; neither of the fate which waited for her beyond nor of that which waited for her children here.

Old Mr. Vaughan, sitting by her bedside, looked around, dismayed at the rough, disorderly crew.

"Have you made any arrangements for your children, Mrs. Conard?" he asked. "Who will take charge of them?"

"Hetty, perhaps, though I am not quite sure," she said feebly. "But I prayed for them all the time—all the time. He will remember."

When she was gone Hetty worked with an unnatural energy. She "passed" through with but moderate credit. A situation was promised her in a few months, but before the time came the girl was dead of an hereditary disease of

the lungs, developed by the excessive nervous strain and over-work of the last two years.

This happened four or five years ago. Young girls and boys are going through the same milling process in the public schools of most of our cities.

"Only the toughest and sharpest will stand it," is the testimony of one of the principal teachers. "The rest are thrown aside as refuse. Whether we have learned the first principle of education is yet an open question."

I met Mr. Vaughan a few days ago in the little cemetery where Hetty and her mother lie side by side.

"Conard, did you know," he said, "married a woman with property, who has no children of her own, and has adopted his and taken them well in hand. She is a little vulgar; but kindly, thrifty, and honest—a managing woman, in fact. She bought a farm in Iowa, took them all out to it, drove Conard to plowing, to signing the pledge, and, they do say, into the church. However that may be, he is now a most respectable, decent, hen-pecked man. The children are well taught, industrious, and obedient. They will never be of the same class as their mother was; but this woman has developed the good material that was in them far better than their mother could have done. The work is finished, you see, whether we do it or not, and the order and justice in every life comes to light some time."

In Conard's and his children's, yes, perhaps. But in her's?

The calm, dateless sunshine resting on the two quiet graves gave the only answer.—*Rebecca Harding Davis, in N. Y. Independent.*

BIBLE TALKS BY A WOMAN.—The New York correspondent of the *Springfield Republican* writes. In the religious world we are having a fashionable sensation of an exclusive sort, in Mrs. Bottoms's Bible Talks. They were begun in an up-town parlor two years ago with 20 people; at the last meeting the parlors of one of the largest Fifth-avenue houses would not hold the audiences. Ladies filled the hallways and covered the stairs. Among her audiences are noticed such ladies as Mrs. E. S. Jaffray, Mrs. H. M. Schieffelin, Mrs. C. De Peyster Field, Mrs. James W. Girard, Mrs. William E. Dodge and Mrs. Willis Post. Mrs. Bottoms is a good-looking, middle-aged lady. She dresses plainly and speaks sweetly, but very distinctly so that she is heard without difficulty; and she sits in an arm-chair, talks with simple, fervid, majestic earnestness, putting pertinent anecdotes and pleasing similes in her addresses, and using language sometimes homely and sometimes poetical, but always fresh and to the point. She is the wife of a Methodist clergyman who has been stationed at Tarrytown, on the Hudson, and it was there that she began these informal addresses. They have proved very popular there, sometimes the street being lined for a long distance with carriages. She has one son, an Episcopal curate in England, and another in college. Her success in interesting ladies, and making a real impression on them, shows what an earnest woman with talent can do without cant, and without turning the world upside down either. Her husband is to be stationed in this city this spring.

ERRORS.—It is a popular sanitary error to think that the more a man eats the fatter and stronger he will become. To believe that the more hours children study, the faster they learn. To conclude that, if exercise is good, the more violent the more good is done. To imagine that every hour taken from sleep is an hour gained. To act on the presumption that the smallest room in the house is large enough to sleep in. To imagine that whatever remedy causes one to feel immediately better is good for the system, without regard to the ulterior effects. To eat without an appetite; or to continue after it has been satisfied, merely to gratify the taste.