

And while all this has full play, unchecked and unheeded, the latent capacities for serving God and man are wasting themselves in uselessness, pressed down by the weight of things. There is something very pathetic in watching the failing brain-power of the girls. Until fourteen or fifteen years they are bright, quick at learning; but then it is like a flower closing, so far as mental effort goes, and soon there is the complaint: “I cannot get hold of it, it goes from me.” Once grown up, it is painful to see the labor with which they learn even the alphabet. Imagination, perception, poetry remain, and resourcefulness for good and evil, but apart from God’s grace, solid brain power dies. Probably in the unexplored question of heredity lies the clue; for at that age for generations the sorrows and cares of married life have come and stopped mind development till the brain has lost its power of expansion as womanhood comes on. Life is often over, in more senses than one, before they are twenty.

The story comes before me of three warm-hearted maidens who a few years ago belonged to our girls’ class: the eldest came but seldom, for she was toiling over shirtmaking for the support of her mother and sister. This sister and a friend made up the trio.

Their mothers were “adherents”—we had hoped at one time MORE than adherents, but compromise was already winning the day: the daughters had