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Why, Mary!

"Now, remember, Mary," the teacher said just before the school exercises, "if you forget some of the words when you are singing your song, don't stop. Keep right on. Say tum-tum-tummy-tum, or something like that, and the words will come back to you, and nobody will know the difference. Now don't forget."

On exhibition day, little Mary (What's in a name?) edified her audience with something like this:

"... and she wears a wreath of roses
Around her tummy-tum-tum."

—Everybody's.

The first years of man must make provision for the last.

—Johnson.

The Ingle Nook.

[Rules for correspondents in this and other Departments: (1) Kindly write on one side of paper only. (2) Always send name and address with communications. If pen-name is also given, the real name will not be published. (3) When enclosing a letter to be forwarded to anyone, place it in stamped envelope ready to be sent on.]

I suppose it goes without saying that this is essentially the married women's corner of our paper. Once in a while one of the girls peeps in, but usually the talks, and recipes, etc., are for or from women who have homes and babies and husbands (with the feeding thereof!) to think about. This is, of course, as it should be, considering the numbers of married women in the country. This morning, however, I found myself thinking especially of the women who have never married, and will never marry. I hope you will not mind if my thoughts transfer themselves to paper.

Now, we all know that there are such women, thousands and thousands of them, but sometimes we forget that there are many reasons why they should be, as Wordsworth has expressed it, maidens "withering on a single stalk." (Of course, people wither, all the same, whether the stalk be single or otherwise, but that is neither here nor there.) Too generally it is assumed, or insinuated, that the girl who does not marry "fails to connect" because she "could not get anybody," the implication being either that she is so unattractive that no man will ever look her way, or that she has followed up a long chase only to fall out, defeated, at the end.

Now, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, this is very great foolishness. . . . Possibly, a girl here or there remains "single" because she is so plumb ugly and stupid that she has never had a "chance," but this is not common. Very few girls indeed have not had a proposal or two, "an opportunity of going into the yoke with some sort of Article," as a girl of our acquaintance expressed it; then why not give them the benefit of the doubt, and conclude that the unattractiveness was in connection with the "Articles" rather than with the girls? A nice girl never goes around shouting about her proposals. She realizes that these have been really a compliment to her, and that it would be a breach of confidence, as well as a piece of vulgar indelicacy, to say anything about them. . . . If there are unattractive Jills, there are also unattractive Jacks—do not forget that point.

Again, there are the really attractive girls who have been, as the neighbors say, "too particular"—with a contemptuous intonation on the "too," as though it were a culpable thing to keep possession of one's self rather than mate with an unsatisfactory nondescript. (I suppose this brings us back to the unattractive Jack question again.) But why, in the name of common sense, should such girls not be particular? Why should they, simply for the sake of being married, bind themselves forever to men who arouse not the slightest interest in them, or even, perhaps, a certain degree of repulsion? The girl who marries a man whom she does not love, is false to him and false to herself, and invites only calamity—none the less awful, perhaps more so, because crushed in the recesses of her own heart. "Nobody knows," she thinks—but she knows to her sorrow—unless she be one of the sluggish, bovine kind, to whom plenty to eat and wear, a fine house and lands, can of themselves bring contentment. Aye, and he knows, for the barrier is there mountains high, and must make itself felt. Let her be "nice to him" as she chooses; instincts tell the truth. Let her act the lie as cleverly as she can; he knows, and in his heart of hearts, despises her for the acting.

So the sincere girl often remains unmarried because she has never met the man whom she could wed. Lack of opportunity often accounts for this. In other circumstances, among "many men of many minds," this girl might have found those near enough to her ideal to prove ac-