

in dignified surprise. "It is not like you to use such a word to me."

"Monsieur Etienne has no longer any wish for my services."

"Has he told you so?"

"No, but his assurance is not needed to make me understand this."

"Since his return, have you offered to assist him in the way you used to do?"

"No," says Damaris, feeling as though every support were failing her.

"Then how can you possibly tell? I, who know Etienne so well, can understand his scruples about asking you, and especially after his fears have been aroused with regard to your health. *Petite*, I am surprised at you. I would not press the matter if I thought it at all injurious to you, but the plan answered so admirably before that I am convinced it will again. I will send for Etienne, and tell him at once how mistaken he has been."

She makes a movement as though to reach the handbell which stands always near, but Damaris springs forwards in terror at the prospect suggested by the words of the old Marquise, and, for one moment forgetting the respect due to her, removes the bell out of her reach.

La Marquise's delicate face lights up with severe hauteur.

"Mademoiselle Damaris, is it necessary for me to remind you of your duty?"

"O forgive me, dear madame, but indeed I cannot allow you to offer to Monsieur St. Just services which he does not care to receive."

"'Cannot allow' are strange words to come from your lips, mademoiselle. Surely I am the best judge of what is fitting upon an occasion of this kind. Give me the bell."

Damaris obeys; then breaks down, sobbing and contrite, at the feet of La Marquise, who is appeased by the sight of her tears.

"*Petite*," she says, bending down over the troubled brown head, and caressing it with her little hands, "I begin to think that Etienne is right—that there is something troubling you which affects both your health and your spirits."

Damaris lifts her head with resolute pride.

"There is nothing, madame." And as she makes that assertion she determines that there shall be nothing—that she will, cost her what it may, regain her old philosophy and take things, even troublesome things, as she finds them without an anxious thought beyond.

"But you are so altered," insists the old Marquise.

"No, madame; it is only that circumstances are altered, and that they call different qualities into play."

La Marquise looks at her keenly, but all her penetration is evidently at fault, so she shifts her ground.

"But about Etienne—we have not settled the question, *petite*?"

Damaris takes a sudden resolution, the extent of which she hardly foresees, but she imagines it will spare her the immediate fear of being taken to task in his presence by La Marquise.

"Will it satisfy you, dear madame, and will you promise not to mention the

matter to him yourself, if I promise to offer to resume my work?"

"Offer to him? Yes, I shall be quite satisfied. Go and do so at once, *petite*; then you can come back and tell me the result. You will find him in the library. He is never hardly anywhere else now."

Damaris had meant to choose her own time for doing so, and is not a little dismayed by the precipitancy of the old Marquise. However, it is perhaps better for her resolution that there should be no delay. She rises reluctantly, putting a heavy constraint upon herself, and goes; but her feet are leaden-weighted, and every proud instinct of her heart rebels.

(To be continued.)

NOTES IN SPRING.

FOR those who take delight in the study of natural objects, there is frequently very much to interest them in the months of March, April, and May. If the weather is favourable, many of the early Spring wild-flowers may be found, even in March—as primroses, violets, several kinds of speedwell, the common coltsfoot, with its golden, star-like flowers, without a single green leaf; the rare whitlow grass, both white and yellow; the golden saxifrage; the lovely little white wood-anemone; and the lesser celandine.

The common primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) is known by every one, and so are the numerous single and double varieties of it, which are commonly found in our gardens, and make them so gay at this period of the year. The sweet-scented violet, too; who does not know it and love it, for its delightful fragrance, and prize it for its early appearance? In every part of Europe it is found; in woods, amongst bushes, in hedges, and on warm banks, and several varieties (some single and some double) are common in our gardens. The dog-violet (*Viola canina*) comes into flower later than the sweet violet (*Viola odorata*), and for two or three months decorates every copse, heath, and shady dell with its paler, scentless flowers.

Of the kinds of speedwell which may sometimes be seen in flower in the month of April, there is first the common species (*Veronica officinalis*), so plentiful on dry, sandy banks, which was formerly much recommended as a substitute for Chinese tea. Then there is the ivy-leaved speedwell (*Veronica hederifolia*). The flowers of both species are blue. The common coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) is very common in moist and clayey soils (of which, indeed, it is a sure indication), the elegant golden-yellow flowers appearing before the leaves, which, in due time, rise on long petioles, and remain through the summer. The plant is bitter and astringent, and contains a great deal of mucilage. An infusion of it has been long employed medicinally, to soothe irritation of the air-passages in cases of asthma and similar complaints. In allusion to the use thus made of the plant the generic name (*Tussilago*) has been given, from *tussis*, a cough. The cotton of the leaves wrapped in a rag, dipped in a solution of saltpetre, and dried in the sun, made an excellent tinder in past times, when we had no lucifer matches. Of the two kinds of whitlow grass which may be found in flower at this time, the most interesting is the yellow alpine whitlow grass (*Draba aizoides*), a beautiful little rock plant, with flowers of a rich golden hue and curiously-fringed evergreen leaves, which may be met with wild on walls and rocks near Swansea, in South Wales.

There are two British species of golden saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium*—from *chrysos*, gold; *splen*, the spleen, a figurative name applied to the plant with reference to its medicinal qualities). Both kinds have notched leaves, and greenish and yellow flowers, but only that with alternate leaves (*C. alternifolium*) is likely to be found in March or April, as the other (which has opposite leaves) does not appear till May.

Few British plants are more chaste and beautiful than the little wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), which is common in woods, thickets, and moist, heathy alpine pastures in most parts of Britain. Its delicate white flowers, slightly tinged externally with purple, expand only in bright weather, drooping and closing on the approach of rain. One poet elegantly describes the flowers of this anemone in the following lines:—

"Nymph of the wood and forest glade!
In thy own fair vestal robes arrayed.
In the calm of the silent sylvan bowers,
'Tis sweet to gaze on thy drooping flowers.
Chaste and pure as the driven snow,
Yet faintly tinged with a purple glow.

Like mountain crests,
On some alpine height,
When the snow-drift rests
In the morning light!"

The leaves, too, are of a very elegant form, and altogether the plant is very suitable for a design for a wall-paper, when the pattern is required to be small.

The lesser celandine, or pilewort (*Ficaria ranunculoides*), has bright, shining, golden-yellow flowers, which to many will appear at first sight to resemble those of the buttercup, though upon examination it will be found that their petals are numerous and sharp-pointed, while those of the buttercup are rounded, and their number never exceeds five. The poet Wordsworth has sung the praises of this little flower in the following lines:—

"Pansies, lilies, king-cups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises;
Long as there's a sun that sets
Primroses will have their glory;
Long as there are violets
They will have a place in story.
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little celandine.

See its varnish'd golden flowers,
Peeping through the chilling showers,
Ere a leaf is on a bush,
In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about its nest,
Thou wilt come, with half a call,
Spreading out thy glossy breast,
Like a careless prodigal;
Telling tales about the sun,
When we've little warmth or none.

Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly unassuming spirit;
Careless of thy neighbourhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face,
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee."

The roots of this little plant are very curious; they are tuberous, and are produced in little bunches. By some they have been compared to very small figs, and hence the plant has received the generic name of *Ficaria*. Others think them more like grains of wheat, and as they lie very near the surface of the ground, and are easily laid bare by a heavy shower of rain, they are supposed to have given rise to the strange stories sometimes told of showers of wheat having fallen, and

(Continued on page 430.)

(Continued from page 427.)

having been seen by the country people in woods and thickets.

The catkins of several of the forest trees are sometimes to be seen in this month, and are very singular and worthy of examination. Those of several kinds of poplar are very conspicuous, especially the large dark-red catkins of the black poplar, looking, when they have fallen on the ground, like great caterpillars.

In our gardens the almond, the apricot, and the peach will generally be in flower; as will the bright and attractive *Pyrus* or *Cydonia japonica*, and several of the ash berries or mahonias. The crocuses, too, and other hardy bulbs, and the hepaticas, will be in full beauty.

For those who take an interest in the feathered race, there will be much real enjoyment, for many of our birds will be again in full song in the hopeful spring months, and actively engaged in building their nests, many of which are most curious and interesting. Of all the British songsters, the common thrush is perhaps the best known, and also the most general favourite; for, of our larger singing birds, it is almost universally regarded as the best, possessing to a greater extent than others a combination of the three important requisites—viz., power, quality of tone, and variety. Not only does the thrush begin to sing early in Spring, but its song may be heard through a considerable portion of the year. The bird is, moreover, elegant in shape, inoffensive in habit, sprightly in action, and engaging by its confidence. It is, too, most useful to us in our gardens, for it feeds on insects, worms, and snails. It is curious to watch this bird cracking the shells of the snails against a stone. An amusing story is told of a tame thrush, on being let out of its cage to fly about a room, took its mistress's pincushion, which was made in a whelk's shell, and hit it as hard as it possibly could against the table, in the hope, no doubt, of finding a snail concealed within the shell.

Of the nests of birds that may be found at this time, perhaps some of the most curious are those of the sand-martins. These may be said to consist simply of holes in the perpendicular front of a sandbank, being sometimes so deep as to take a man's arm up to his shoulder without reaching the bottom. Rennie describes the mode in which the sand-martin makes its nest. He says he has seen one of these birds "cling with its sharp claws to the face of a sandbank, and peg in its bill as a miner would do his pickaxe, till it had loosened a considerable portion of the hard sand, and tumbled it down amongst the rubbish below. In these preliminary operations it never makes use of its claws for digging; indeed, it is impossible it could, for they are indispensable in maintaining its position, at least when it is beginning its hole." The holes made by some of these birds are as nearly circular as if they had been drawn with a pair of compasses. The bird begins in the centre and works outwards, changing its position continually, and it is as often hanging from the roof with its back downwards, as standing on the floor. When the hole is of considerable depth, the bird always scrapes out with its feet the sand detached by the bill; but so carefully is this performed, that it never scratches up the unmined sand or disturbs the plane of the floor, which rather slopes upwards, and, of course, the lodgment of rain is thereby prevented. There is a whole colony of these birds in the sandbanks near Woking, in Surrey; and there are others in various parts of Great Britain, from Devonshire to the north of Scotland.

D. W.

MAIDENHOOD.



THE dew glistening on the daisy-sprinkled meadow, the rays of morning falling on spring flowers, the breeze leaping lightly over the mountain-tops. Such are the comparisons which rise up in our minds when we speak the words "Christian maidenhood." We feel as if we were entering a sanctuary when we approach the subject, as if we were treading almost holy ground; and yet it is a subject on which the broad daylight of everyday life must be permitted to shine freely if we would consider it aright. We want our maidens to have the purity of the early dew, the brightness of the morning, the freshness of the mountain breeze, and yet, added to all these things, we want them to be useful and helpful members of society, not creatures of dreamland and of air. A Christian girl must always have about her something of the shy perfume of the violet, and yet, at the same time, she must have in her nature and character something of the strength of the young trees of the forest that lift aloft their leaf-crowned heads in graceful pride.

One of the most indispensable qualities of true maidenhood, a quality which forms a chief part of the scent of the violet, is a real, inherent modesty of thought and feeling; a modesty which must shine in softened, chastened light in a girl's eyes, and tinge her cheek, and be written in every fold of her very dress. When it gets woven, as it were, into the whole texture of her character, it becomes a shield, which often, almost unknown to herself, is guarding her, making her, with a rapid movement which in its quick, intuitive working is more like instinct than reason, turn away from the companionship, or the book, or the place which might, in the faintest degree, lead her towards miry, uneven paths. It is a quality which mothers and teachers should endeavour to let their girls draw into their being with their earliest breath; it should be taught softly in the very cradle-songs which lull the tiny maiden, should pervade the sights and sounds of her nursery; it is a quality which the Christian girl, as thought and intelligence grow and expand and strengthen, should foster for herself, with courage, with sweet seriousness of bearing, above all with religious reading and earnest prayer.

This modesty of which we speak is not at all a thing that will lower a girl either in her own eyes or in the eyes of others; far from that, it should and does lead on to a gentle, graceful pride. Without a certain touch of pride of this sort maidenhood is incomplete. It is a pride that surrounds our girls with a mild halo, that even when it is most radiant never dazzles, that makes a nameless perfume float around their steps. Maidenhood is a queenly word, and there must be something of queenliness always with it when we find it in its highest perfection of beauty. It is a queenliness which bears in its hand an enchanted, golden sceptre, one wave of which makes the air around pure; it is a queenliness which works with wondrous, elevating power on all the men who draw near her who possesses it. This queenliness has nothing to do with pride in dress or personal attractions, though, where these latter exist, it sets them off in a way that girls are little aware of, or they would, perhaps, strive more to gain it. Fortunate and highly blest are the young men

whose sisters are adorned with this most precious jewel of womanhood; contact with it will raise their tone of feeling and thought as nothing else can do.

Yes, our girls must not forget the royalty of their maidenhood, and must remember that in it they hold a very mighty weapon for God in their hands. By it they can raise the whole standard of opinion and tone in the society in which they move; by it they can banish all things low, and frivolous, and unbecoming from the conversation round them; by it they can help on God's cause, while they are helping on the cause of woman. A girl must never fail to exact a certain amount of reverence in word and outward behaviour from every man with whom she is in daily intercourse, even from a brother. This maidenly royalty, however, when it is developed aright, will have nothing of dulness, and heaviness, and prudishness about it; it will always be accompanied with an airy grace that will charm every mind as with an irresistible spell.

The mention of this grace leads us on to the next most essential attribute of Christian maidenhood, and that is graciousness. There are few things in nature at once more unlovely and more out of place than a sulky girl, or a girl with sharp, haughty words on her lips, and gloom and arrogance sitting, with folded wings, on her brow. A girl should be always sweet-tempered, always ready to oblige in small matters as well as great; always swift, as far as she is able, to minister to the comfort of others. Her bright looks should be the very sunshine of her home, without which father, mother, and brothers feel cold and lost; her voice and rippling laughter the very music of the house, without which the rooms and passages are as the woods in winter-time when the birds are dumb. Maidenhood is all light, all breezy sweetness, and our girls must always remember, with thankful happiness, that one of their chief missions is to bring joy and comfort wherever they go, and that this can never be done so well as by attending to all the small wants, and wishes, and worries, and troubles of those with whom they live. These may seem, at first sight, trivial, prosaic things, but out of such things, cared for in a tender, lofty, Christian spirit, is made life's fullest music.

Maidenhood is never so lowered and weakened as when a girl fancies she can make herself appear strong and bold by adopting the habits, and manners, and talk of men. There is, unluckily, at the present day a tendency for our young women to assume manly words and habits, and even to approach towards manly ways in their dress. Fashion has brought this about, and it is one of the high duties of Christian maidenhood to combat steadily such a fashion. The slang expression; the fiction which holds up as its heroine a bold, daring, free and easy type of womanhood; the attire, which has a certain flavour of manishness about it; all these things should be quietly but decisively avoided by a Christian girl in her walk through life. If a young woman steadfastly sets her face against such things, it is wonderful what a change she may work among her surroundings. Her companions would grow ashamed of displaying an inclination for such things in her presence. Her example would make its way slowly but surely; her influence would help towards the putting away of such ways and practices from among us—ways and practices that injure the bloom, and charm, and power of Christian maidenhood as the caterpillar does the rose. Girls are most grievously mistaken when they think that these fashions in talk, and behaviour, and appearance make them lovely and interesting in the eyes of men. When they adopt them they simply make themselves a subject either of mockery or pity to every man with