

FROM MARCH TILL MAY.

By W. GORDON STABLES, M.D., C.M., R.N. ("MEDICUS").

"The stormy March has come at last,
With winds and clouds and changing
skies,
I hear the rushing of the blast,
That through the snowy valley flies."



So uncertain is the weather during this month that it is universally dreaded by those who are delicate. Many and many a young girl has come safely through a hard wild winter, only to succumb to the searching, biting blasts of March.

Probably the greatest danger lies in the fact that for days, sometimes, the weather is so mild and

balmy, we can hardly believe it is not summer itself, instead of early spring, and then suddenly it changes, skies lower dark and gloomily, bitter winds rage and roar through the still leafless trees, and the air is filled with whirling sleet or snow.

March may therefore be called to its face a most deceitful month, and we need have no difficulty in proving the charge.

I myself am not much of a man for fires at any time, but a "blink" in my wigwam looks cheerful during the winter months, and my beautiful St. Bernard, Fair Helen of Troy, likes to lie on a bear's skin and warm her nose thereat. But the first few days of March have at times been so delightful, that it was a pleasure to do my writing out of doors altogether, taking a turn now and then through the orchard or the gardens.

"Heavenly weather!" everybody that passed would be saying.

The violets and primroses and the forget-me-nots all around the borders would seem to be making the same remark.

And the early bees and butterflies were singing it, or sighing it.

Tired of brain-work on days like these I have laid down my writing-board, and, whistling on my dogs, who came sweeping around me like a hairy hurricane, I have gone off to the woods for a ramble, just to see how many tender wee wild flowers were gazing with upturned faces, at the fleecy clouds and the sweet ethereal blue of the sky, and to note how buds and burgeons were coming on, and try to calculate how soon the woods would be clad in leaves of drooping green.

Yes and probably before I got home the wind would have changed to boisterous north or colder east, and be moaning drearily among the trees overhead, with here a patch of sleet and there a flying flake of snow.

Well, I attribute the fairly good health I enjoy and the excellent appetite I have for my oatmeal porridge at six in the morning, chiefly to two facts. I am no sooner out of bed than I have my sponge bath. Cold, of course; for

often in winter, hard though my fist is, I have to use a dumb-bell to break the ice. Secondly I wear woollen underclothing, not only in winter, but in summer as well, and I will tell you why. Wool is a non-conductor of caloric, that is, it obstructs the passage of heat. Therefore in cold weather it conserves the body's warmth, while in the summer-time it protects the whole system from the sun's fierce rays.

But treacherous though the month of March may be, we must not speak too unfavourably about it. For March is the month of hope. Shakespeare says—

"The miserable have no other medicine,
But only hope."

Well, a glorious medicine it is, and if March brings the delicate and the weary only this, it is to be forgiven for a great deal. On fine days now a weakly girl, if she lives in the country, can hear the birds singing, such happy, happy songs; she can list to the croodle of the wood-pigeon and loving murmuring purr of the turtle-dove in the ivy or cedar; she can see the blue shy eyes of the violets opening to the light; the primroses in bloom and scenting all the air around, and, by the wayside or in the woods many a wild flower bursting into blossom, and banks snowed over with anemones. To all this her heart must respond, and the hope that leads to health, will find a resting-place within it.

Well, I should like the delicate, even during this uncertain month, to have all the fresh air and all the sunshine it is possible to get.

But nevertheless I would have them avoid all chance of catching cold. How can a girl do so? I shall try to tell her. But I must at once say that she cannot do it by over-coddling.

To begin with she should remember that it is sudden changes from warmth to cold that often works such deadly mischief, especially if the pores of the skin are open, and probably perspiring. Many a strong and healthy girl has not only caught cold, but lung disease, that ended in death by coming out from a warm close ball-room, or even church, and standing for a minute or two in the cold air, instead of keeping walking or moving to encourage the circulation.

Churches, I am sorry to say, are often badly ventilated and over-heated, and after coming out from them on a cold winter's or spring night, and standing for a time bidding friends good-bye, one is very apt to catch a deadly chill.

I repeat that it is the suddenness of the change which works the terrible mischief, not the actual lowness of temperature. It is a fact well known to men of science that plants, and even the lower forms of animal life may be frozen, and recover again if the change from the high temperature to the very low and *vice versa* be very gradual, and it is not quite beyond the bounds of possibility that even a human being might be thus treated, were the freezing process slow enough, and also the reaction.

The reverse of this is true. During my cruises to the Arctic Regions, while making journeys across the great ice-pack, my companion would have an eye to my face and I to his. (N.B. That isn't meant for a pun.) If either of us noticed a white spot on his fellow's cheek or nose, a halt had to be called at once, for that spot was a frost-bite and the halt was called that gradual action might be induced. Now one of three things must take place in

such a case. If the spot were left, there would be death of the part and an ugly ulcer; if a strong stimulant were used to rub with, action would soon be restored, but of so violent a character as to produce a huge blister and ulceration would follow! but if the part were quietly rubbed with snow, the blood would return to the spot so gradually, that neither pain nor any other bad result could possibly follow.

I trust these simple illustrations will render my meaning plain, that one must avoid sudden extremes of either heat or cold, if one would retain health, and avoid lung troubles, which are undoubtedly the greatest drawbacks to this uncertain climate of ours.

But extremes of all kinds should be avoided if a girl is to be well in spring-time. I shall now mention a few of these by way of warning, and be it remembered that I have the delicate in my mind's eye as I write.

A bed-room should be just moderately warm, certainly not hot. If so the sleeper is apt, unconsciously, to toss the bed-clothing off, then about three in the morning the fire goes out, the cold comes and the mischief is done, so that she need not be surprised if she has a hacking cough next morning. Pretty early in the evening the bedroom windows should be opened wide, the fire after this will ventilate the room.

Never go into a very cold bed if delicate. Have it warmed, if only by means of a square stone bottle of boiling water, placed in the upper not lower part of the bed, at first anyhow. Do not press the feet too much against this bottle, especially if they are cold, else the reaction will be much too sudden, the nerves will be irritated, and perhaps the foundation laid for a good crop of chilblains.

If delicate, linen or cotton sheets are most dangerous. Let them be wool by all means. While wandering in my caravan, even in summer, I invariably sleep in rugs, and though windows and even doors may be left open, I never catch cold.

The very delicate should, in March and even in April, have a bit of fire lit in the morning before turning out. If they cannot stand the cold tub which is so bracing, a warm bath should be taken every third night.

Rest is good for those who are weakly, but too much rest in bed will render them weaker than ever.

Too much sleep is also an extreme to be avoided.

Sleeplessness may be treated simply enough by laving the forehead very well with cold water before going to bed; by taking a very hot foot bath, a little supper and a glass of hot water with the juice of half a lemon in it.

Get up pretty early and take the juice of the other half in a glass of pure cold water.

Take breakfast soon, your system wants feeding and is willing to be fed early in the morning.

But avoid extremes in eating. If one breakfasts at eight, and is not hungry for luncheon or dinner at half-past one, it is a sign that too much breakfast has been eaten. Do not eat new bread nor fancy bread for the morning meal, though well-fired rolls may be wholesome enough. Avoid much meat, and fat and all oily fishes. Coffee is best for breakfast if well made and clear—chicory or not, according to taste. The very best of butter and plenty of it. Good milk and oatmeal porridge are excellent. Just one warning about the porridge; do not boil too long, and add salt. Porridge without salt is simply a

poultice, yet I see Englishmen at hotels eating tiny plates of what they imagine is porridge, and with sugar! Porridge should always be made with the best medium oatmeal.

Tea is *not* a cause of indigestion if it be good. I have a pint and a half of strong tea every night at five, but it is the best, and so my appetite is good and my blood as pure and clear as my conscience.

Mind this, you are more apt to catch cold when the body is weak. Never therefore expose yourself when hungry.

Always change the clothing when damp, even from perspiration, but let the fresh under-clothing you put on be warmed.

Avoid an excess of clothing outdoors or in. Heavy clothing not only causes fatigue but weakens the perspiratory system.

I used to recommend silk for summer underwear, but I think that light wool serves equally well, and some say better.

Do not remain in a hot room, when visiting, a moment longer than you can help. People who live in such rooms are ruining their health and getting old before their time. I can tell women of this sort, even on a railway platform. They may not have many deep wrinkles, but the skin of the face is kiln-cracked—if you can understand me, just one mass of tiny wrinkles, moreover there is

evidence that the layer of fat beneath is soft and boggy.

Avoid wrapping up the neck too much by day, but a light comforter should be worn at night.

Anæmic or bloodless girls may use iron in some weak non-constipating form. A pill of carbonate of iron may do good, or an oxide. Or even quinine and iron, but the effects should be watched, and if it seems to heat the blood too much or cause restlessness it should be avoided.

Finally, if you want to get well and strong, or if you are well and want to keep so, look upon fresh air indoors and out as your very best friend, not even second to food itself.

WHITE LILIES

A MEMORY.



MORN-
ING I
h a v e
b e e n
r e a d i n g
a n a r t i c l e
e n t i t l e d
" H o w
t o D i s -
c o u r a g e
Y o u r

Minister." The author is a well-known writer who understands the subject he deals with, and his recipe, briefly put, is something like this: Indifference; aversion to new or improved methods; unkindly and undue criticism; superior

intelligence; cold patronage; lack of sympathy. These ingredients, well mixed with the necessary supply of cold water, and frequently applied, are sure to be efficacious. There is no possible chance of failure. Alas! that many, too many, know by bitter experience how completely successful it is.

I once had the honour to know a man—the memory of whose hand-clasp makes me proud yet after the lapse of many years—a man who "failed." And every time I hear him spoken of in this way, I remember that "some men's failures are eternities beyond the successes of other men."

He was young, and earnest, and bright, with high ideals of life in its joy and sorrow. Life to him was no dream, but a great and glorious thing, solemn in its responsibilities, exceedingly beautiful in its vast resources, a gift from his Father, to be used for the glory of that Father's name. Ay, as I write, I can hear the young voice with that heart-touching quiver in it, which was always there:

"Teach me to live; 'tis easier far to die."

And away back over the years memory goes, and lifts the veil which tenderly cover days that belong to the past.

It was early spring-time, and little green shoots were relieving the sombre brownness of the trees and hedges. On the hillsides here and there a sweet golden-hearted daisy lifted its face to the sun, and crocuses peeped out in the garden borders. The birds sang their spring-time songs; and birds and trees and flowers seemed to give promise of something far more beautiful and melodious yet in store. The glorious summer would follow the spring, and then the golden harvest.

One sun-bright day, when the daisies smiled more sweetly, and the birds sang more gladly, and the clouds were light and fleecy in the sky, a young minister was ordained to his first charge. Of the sacredness of that day to his heart who shall speak? In the evening a large hall was filled to overflowing. The passages were blocked; people were sitting in the window-sills, and never before, nor since, did any minister get such a welcome from that congregation.

I think I see him now, as he stood on the platform, while a lady, in gentle motherly fashion, put the handsome new gown on his shoulders—a slight boyish figure with an earnest, trustful face pale with excitement. Cheer after cheer resounded through the hall; again and again the multitude of people raised their voices in a shout of welcome; and he stood there, his trembling fingers gripping nervously the front of the black gown, trying to find utterance. What! is that a tear in the steadfast blue eyes? Oh, but his heart was full. What would he not do for this people?

Ay, it was a bright beginning. Hope was strong and the prospect was fair. The church, in that village nestling among the hills, was beautiful; the surrounding country picturesquely romantic, with its rivers and glens and heather-clad slopes. The congregation were unanimous in their choice, and the minister was all that a minister ought to be—which is saying much. A bright beginning; and the delicate spring-time would soon merge into the full flush of summer. Was anything wanting to complete the already fascinating picture? Just a trifle; only sympathy with a young, over-sensitive heart. But that little thing, by its presence or absence, is big enough to make or mar a life.

The enthusiasm had been genuine—while it lasted—and then the congregation speedily settled down to their old practical routine. They knew nothing about the lights and shades of a shy, reserved, sensitive nature, and cared as little to try to understand it. They were comfortable and contented themselves, and it never occurred to them that their young minister required or wished for a little encouragement or friendliness. They had appointed him to their church, and it was his duty, and privilege, to shower all his friendship and sympathy on them, together with the outcome of his varied talents. In return for this they paid him a fair salary, attended church regularly, shook hands in a condescendingly-warm manner when they met him—if they troubled to stop at all—and patronised him when he called.

I don't believe they really meant anything by it. It was just their way, and with some of them it was the result of mere thoughtlessness. But my heart aches as I think of many

lonely hours when that young life was longing for a touch of real love and sympathy. What need to enter into details? The breach, hardly perceptible at first, gradually widened by careful adherence to the afore-mentioned recipe. None of the elements were a-wanting, and extras were added judiciously.

Of course, there were a few loyal-hearted folks who loved their minister, and tried to encourage him in the work he was so faithfully endeavouring to perform. But even these few, with all their real sympathy and fellow-feeling, did not see with clear eyes till afterwards, when it was too late. I myself have many regrets. The little action I might have done, the kind word I might have spoken more often than I did—these come back with a sting now. I remember one evening I set out to pay him a visit, taking with me a little gift which I thought he would like. But when a few yards on my way, some strange impulse made me hesitate. "Perhaps he does not wish me to call; he might not care for anything that seemed like intrusion. I had better wait till some other time," and—I am ashamed to say it—I turned back. It's years ago; and yet how sorry I feel when I think of that evening.

In a little note-book of mine he once wrote some verses, I have the page yet, treasured with other things that are very dear to me:—

"Scorn not the slightest word or deed,
Nor deem it void of power;
There's fruit in each wind-wafted seed,
Waiting its natal hour.

A whispered word may touch the heart,
And bring it back to life;
A look of love bid sin depart,
And still unholy strife.

No act falls fruitless; none can tell
How vast its power may be;
Nor what results enfolded dwell
Within it silently."

I thought the verses pretty at the time, but I did not then read between the lines. Afterwards, when my eyes were opened, I understood; and now they ring with mournful cadence, as the cry of a lonely human heart.

The days slipped by. Spring passed, and then the rose-crowned summer, and the golden autumn. Winter's snow covered the hills, and by-and-by it too melted away, and again it was early spring-time, with its little green shoots on the trees and hedges. The church among the hills was just as beautiful as ever, the congregation as flourishing. But—oh! that "but." The strain upon one young heart had been too severe; and at last—after months of discouragement and silent suffering, after