

"I am so thankful," Travers began; then breaking off suddenly he said, "Victoria, Teddie has been telling me all about the unexpected gift of soldiers, and he set me thinking."

"I don't know what he told you," she faltered.

Travers moved across to where she sat and took her hands in his.

"Victoria, my darling, he made me think you cared for me just a little. Is that true?"

Her pretty head drooped. No one would have recognised the proud little beauty in the shy blushing girl whose "yes" was whispered so low that Travers had to bend his head to hear it.

Then he sat down beside her and drew her closer to him, pressing his first lover's kiss on her trembling lips.

"I always loved you," he said, after a delicious pause, "but I never had any hope till the day Teddie was ill; then I thought I might be mistaken about Lawson."

"Did you really care when I was always so horrid to you?" she asked; then she went on, "I think I loved you all the time. You always made me want to be better and yet I was too proud to let you think that you had any influence over me. Was I very dreadful?"

"Very," he said joyously; "only I knew you would be quite different when you loved anyone; but I was sure I should never be that one."

"But now you are quite sure that there is no one like you in all the world, to me at least," she said with a beautiful blush.

"My darling, I can never be thankful enough for this blessed gift of your love. My life will prove how deep mine is for you."

"You must teach me to be more worthy of your love," she said with sweet humility.

"Poor Lawson! How I pity him," was Travers' next remark.

"I don't think you need," she returned. "Of

course it is early days yet, but I cannot help thinking Alice will console him. She is a great friend of his sister's and they see a good deal of each other."

"V.C., you have not gone yet. Why, the doctor seems to hold you pretty tight to prevent your rushing away home. It is all right; cook is going to make some cakes with our names on in currants, and we are to have the jam."

The child looked from one to the other of his friends in surprise. He could not quite make out what had happened.

"Teddie, old fellow," said Travers, drawing the boy close to him, "you made me awfully happy by telling me about those soldiers, for I have found out that your V.C. does love me more than even you do."

"Was that why you cried, V.C.?" asked Teddie, rather awestruck.

"Yes, Teddie, I think that was the reason."

"We must go to town soon when I am better, Teddie, and pay a long visit to the shop where these wonderful soldiers came from, and you must choose some other toys."

It was some time before Teddie could make out why the doctor and V.C. were so very generous to him, but in after-years he always took the credit of their coming together to himself.

In the early spring a grand wedding took place in the garrison chapel. Teddie, resplendent in a Faunteroy suit, carried the bride's train, and was not sure whether he was groom, best man, or what. He only knew that he played an important part and felt himself of great consequence.

Colonel Cross returned to his solitary home, feeling quite happy about his darling's future. No warrior better deserved the bronze cross for valour than did the noble-hearted doctor who had wooed and won his own Victoria Cross.

MY AFTERNOON NAP.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



THE young and healthy are too often ready to denounce and to ridicule the indulgence by others in little luxuries which they themselves despise. They have no thought of the future, and they forget that whenever a custom is widespread there is generally some good reason for its prevalence. I am wishful to say a good word for the much-abused habit of an afternoon nap, and to show its importance in many cases from a hygienic point of view.

Of course, as in many other things relating to personal habits, so in this, every man must be a law unto himself. It does not suit

everybody to doze for a short time in the afternoon. In many instances a feeling of heaviness and lassitude is produced; or headache may result; or it may prevent sound sleep at night. Nor can everybody find time and opportunity to snatch a short nap. Moreover, the young and vigorous do not require it. But others obtain very considerable benefit from the habit; and, as I shall point out later, most benefit is felt by those who are very young, or who are growing rapidly, or who are past middle life, or who are in delicate health.

If we consider for a moment the meaning of sleep, the explanation is obvious. In previous papers I have referred to the physiology of sleep, and have pointed out that it is believed to be associated with a diminished supply of blood to the brain. We can say with certainty that the converse is true—that when the brain is working actively and producing good work it

receives an increased supply of blood. This increase is necessarily at the expense of other organs. We may therefore fairly assume that during sleep there is less blood in the brain and more blood in the other organs, and that during our active waking hours there is more blood in the brain and less in other organs. After a meal the processes of digestion are in active operation, necessitating a greatly increased blood supply to the organs involved.

Consequently, there is a diminution of the blood supply to the brain; we become drowsy, and many of us actually doze. If, on the other hand, the brain is kept hard at work by an effort of the will, the nutritive processes may be hindered, and an attack of indigestion may be induced.

A similar state of things is brought about by taking active exercise immediately after a meal. Here the vigour of digestion is interfered with by the determination of blood to the muscles. Drowsiness is therefore not unnatural after a meal—especially after dinner, the principal meal of the day; and the quietude which it secures helps to more perfect digestion.

As I have already remarked, benefit chiefly accrues to the young and the old. Food is required by the young not only to carry on the ordinary functions of the body, but also to promote growth (which is very rapid at times, and may even outstrip the supply of material). It is obvious, therefore, that in these cases digestion should be as perfect and as rapid as possible if the body is to be maintained in good health and to grow normally.

As the period of most rapid growth is comprised within the first four years of life, it is of advantage to children, during this time at least, to sleep for a while after dinner. We must not forget another consideration. All the bodily functions are capable of having regularity impressed on them in a very marked degree, so that if the habit of regular and perfect digestion is formed in early life, it is likely to persist and add much to the happiness and success of after-life. Every influence which helps to form this habit ought, therefore, to be encouraged by those to whom the care of children is entrusted.

In old age we have quite a different set of conditions to consider. The vital processes have now become enfeebled and the organs of the body meet, only with difficulty, the demands made upon them. Every help should therefore be given, not only by providing suitable food, but also by assisting the processes of digestion. The afternoon nap is Nature's way of doing the second duty, and it is of great advantage in promoting a healthy old age. We must also remember that in old age sleep at night is not so sound and regular as it is in earlier life; so, on the principle that every little helps, the afternoon nap adds to that period of daily rest which is demanded by the body.

It has been stated, with truth, that the habit may

even tend to cause sounder sleep at night. Sleep begets sleep—especially in those who are sleepless from overwork.

When dinner is taken in the evening instead of the middle of the day, the necessity for a short rest after it is still more apparent. The work of the day has caused the whole body to be fatigued and less able to do work. The digestive organs share in this weariness, and therefore the short nap is additionally necessary to enable the processes of digestion to proceed. It is not out of place to remark that the custom of late dinner is not suitable for old people. They either become unduly fatigued by waiting so long for their principal meal, or else they take two dinners, and therefore eat more than is necessary: both events are equally injurious.

Some people will not take an afternoon nap because they have no time to spare. They are in a hurry. This phrase is used oftener than it would be if its full meaning were understood. The word hurry implies confusion and want of concerted action. When anything is done in a hurry, it is generally not done in the best possible way, nor is it always done most expeditiously.

It is a matter of frequent observation that the man in a hurry is not really a busy man. He appears to be busy, but he loses more time than he saves by his hurry. He has no time to eat his dinner leisurely, and frequently suffers from an attack of indigestion in consequence. Thereby his power of work is lessened for fully half a day. Nor does the mischief end there. To keep pace with the man, the heart must hurry too. It has no time to rest, and its action becomes disturbed.

The result is that some day it is unable to respond to the strain put upon it when the man hurries to catch a train, and it stops for ever. More than half the talk about the high pressure at which we live is uttered by people who never did a steady hard day's work in their life; the best of the world's work is done by men who work not at high pressure, but by method.

I mentioned at the beginning of this paper that some people suffer from headache after an afternoon nap, though they would be benefited by it otherwise. A cup of tea, taken immediately on being aroused, very often removes any discomfort which may be experienced. If, however, any lassitude persists, it may be considered that the nap is harmful, and not beneficial. It will be seen, therefore, that the habit must be regulated by the dictates of common sense. Be it remembered that there is no need to be ashamed of the habit when it is necessary.

Many of those who indulge in it are thereby enabled to do better and abler work than is even attempted by those who scoff. The luxury of the nap is one of the small rewards deserved and enjoyed by earnest workers.

