

SLEEP, GENTLE SLEEP.

BY MEDICUS.



HAVE a habit of thinking about the work of the day while dressing; not a bad one, either, for the mind is ever freshest at early morn, before the little worries

of the day commence.

As I intended, immediately after breakfast, to write the present paper, the heads of my health sermon kept dropping in upon me, one by one, as I proceeded with my toilet, and I could not help laughing as I remembered the old Scotchwoman's receipt given to her daughter-in-law as a cure for sleeplessness.

What would our girls think of Medicus if he were to recommend this cure seriously? But let old Mrs. Grey speak for herself, although she talked in far broader Scotch than he following:—

"Noo, my dear lassie, I'll just tell ye what ye'll dae. Ye'll tak' a handfu' o' ingans"—"ingans"—"and peel them, and then tak' a piece o' good thick twine and a darnin' needle, and string them like beads, and wear them round your neck a' nicht, an' ye'll sleep as sound as a tappie"—top—"my dear, and be as blithe as a lark in the mornin'."

Well, there may be something in it, though the story does not go the length of stating whether or not the daughter-in-law followed the advice vouchsafed.

Another old-wife's cure is the pillow stuffed with hops, the aroma of which one is supposed to inhale. The old wife should keep her pillow to herself, as far as I am concerned. I have no faith in it. Besides—awful thought!—might there not be earwigs in the pillow? I am fond of animals of nearly all sorts, but I don't want to be on the same side of the wall as an earwig.

There are many other old-fashioned remedies for the cure of sleeplessness, or rather for the induction of sleep, which are not worthy of printer's ink. Instead of mentioning these, it will be more to the purpose if, in this paper, I consider briefly the causes of bad rest at night, and give suggestions by which these may be rationally and successfully removed.

Now, everyone, old or young, readily admits that a certain amount of refreshing sleep is necessary for the health. Very few, however, give the matter much thought until they begin actually to suffer from sleeplessness, or from bad rest, the sleep they obtain being disturbed by dreams or startings, so that they awake in the morning with a feeling of tiredness and weariness that tells them that, for all the actual repose they have obtained, they might almost as well have remained up.

But this is not the worst, for such people are nervous and peevish all day long; if they have any work to do they do it with no pleasure or will, and they are just as cross with themselves as they are cross with every creature and thing around them. Towards evening persons like these may brighten up, and only be too bright when it is time to go to bed.

It is impossible, however, for such a state of mind and body to last long without inducing

serious illness; not, perhaps, of an active kind, but chronic. The want of refreshing sleep ages the young, and hurries the aged to the grave. It should be remarked here, notwithstanding, that elderly people do not require so much sleep as the young, but the sleep which they do have ought to be refreshing while it lasts.

One of the commonest causes of want of good sleep is neglect of a proper amount of judicious exercise during the day.

Why is it that exercise conduces to healthful sleep? To answer this question so as to be properly understood, we must consider what is the normal condition of the brain during sleep. It is agreed by all, then, that during natural sleep the arteries and veins of the brain are to a great extent empty of blood. There is enough of the vital fluid passing through it to feed the nerve matter, but not sufficient to cause its waste in the way of thought or action. In sleep disturbed by dreams the blood-vessels are not so free from blood as they ought to be, and as it is only during real sleep that the brain has time and opportunity given it, of making up for waste and loss of tissue, it is evident it must wear itself out if that perfect repose be denied it. Moreover, if there be brain fatigue and brain weariness, the whole body must suffer, and a thousand different feelings—many real, many illusory—be the result.

Well, now, exercise acts upon the brain by withdrawing the blood therefrom which is needed elsewhere, so that it is actually being rested. That is one way in which muscular action does good, but it does so, also, by bringing all the internal organs of secretion, etc., into better working order, and the skin as well, so that a deal of morbid matter is got rid of, which, if retained, would actually poison the blood and produce chronic congestion of the blood-vessels of the brain. If congestion be too strong a word, let me say that the retention of morbid matter in the blood destroys, to some extent, the elasticity of the blood-vessels of the brain, narcotises or paralyses them, so that they have a difficulty in getting rid of the blood sufficiently to permit of wholesome sleep.

If, then, the want of sound sleep can be traced to the neglect of exercise, one has the remedy, or one of the remedies, in one's own hands. It merely becomes a question, What is the best kind of exercise, and when should it be taken? This will, of course, depend upon the kind of duty one has to perform during the day. But whatever that may be, time must be made for a short walk in the morning, and a good long one in the afternoon or evening. In summer this can generally be accomplished easily enough, but during the damp, dull days of winter it is not so easy. But once get into the habit of taking these constitutional walks, and they will do so much good that rain itself will not keep even a delicate girl within doors. If she be afraid of getting cold, let her wear a cloak, but not an indiarubber one, for these keep in the damp and do much harm. As soon as she gets indoors let her change her clothing and shoes. During summer one cannot be too much in the open air, only, if troubled with sleeplessness, we must beware of over-fatigue.

Indigestion in some form or other is a fruitful cause of sleeplessness, and this may exist to a considerable extent without a person being actually aware of it. In fact, it is the custom of many only to apply the term indigestion to that state of ill-health where

the trouble can positively be referred to the stomach, and in which acidity, heartburn, flatulence, pain after eating, etc., exist. Well, these are undoubtedly symptoms of a very disordered state of the digestive organs indeed, but dyspepsia in degree quite sufficient to interfere with rest or sleep at night may exist without any of these. There may be simply some degree of fulness after eating, accompanied with languor and listlessness, not of a pleasant kind, occasional headaches—trifling, perhaps—heat of skin, burning in palms of hands and soles of the feet, heat in the brow and temples, and a dry feeling about the eyes. If, in addition to these symptoms, the system is rather dry and there is slight furring at the back of the tongue in the morning, then be assured that the digestive organs are wholly out of order, and there is good enough reason for restless nights. When I say wholly out of order, I speak advisedly, because it is not then the stomach alone that is in fault, but the liver and other organs as well.

How then should one eat to sleep? Well the great mistakes we do make are, first, the eating of indigestible food; secondly, the eating of more food than is necessary to maintain the body in a state of health; and thirdly, eating at improper times.

Let me, by way of treating this subject in a homely yet taking manner, imagine that a lady has consulted me about sleeplessness. She has been a sufferer for some time, and has all kinds of bad nights; for instance, there are nights and nights that she is troubled with ugly dreams, which make her start and wake and turn in bed. They are not actual nightmares, nothing sits on her breast and tries to choke her, but they are fearful enough nevertheless. At other times, instead of dreams that actually awaken her, she has long, wearying, worrying dreams; she is doing something she cannot easily accomplish; or she is walking in her sleep—in imagination, I mean, toiling along over hills and moors, or on dusty roads, tired and weary and ready to drop.

Still another symptom may be present in this case; the lady, although often lying awake for hours after going to bed, is nevertheless drowsy and apathetic after meals.

Taking this case all in all, it is no wonder that she awakes in the morning as tired as when she lay down, and that during the day she is easily fatigued, if not, indeed, always jaded and depressed, and easily put out of temper. I have known people suffering thus earn for themselves the character of being cross and objectionable, while all the time it was their health that was out of order, and they were more deserving of pity than censure.

Now to prescribe for this lady patient. Exercise I have already spoken about. The diet must be restricted. Nothing must be eaten that is known to be difficult of digestion, fat meat must be avoided, pastry, cheese—except about a square inch eaten alone ten minutes before dinner—potatoes and sugar in any quantity must be avoided, and only the mildest vegetables used. Toast, stale bread, a moderate allowance of well-mashed potatoes and vegetables may be taken, and boiled or roasted meat, fowl or game, may be taken; also the less oily kind of fish. The tea or coffee or cocoa should be weak and not over-sweetened. As regards diet, it is best to be restricted as to quantity as well as quality, but not over-much so. For it is unnatural to stint oneself; the stomach that is unfilled soon degenerates, its walls get weak and thin, and

a kind of dyspepsia is induced that is very difficult indeed to cure.

The lady in question is further recommended to dine early, and have supper three or four hours before going to bed.

A glass of cold water first thing in the morning and last at night will also do her good.

As for medicine in a case of this kind, there is nothing better than a blue pill at night, followed by a large glass of Pullna water before breakfast, and even this will not be required more than twice a week.

The labours of the day, so far as the mind is concerned, should be all over before supper. After this meal, light amusement may be indulged in, and reading and conversation does good; but anything that excites the nerves should be most strenuously avoided.

If it be possible a good long walk should be taken an hour after supper, or two hours before retiring for the night.

The habit of going to bed at a reasonable hour and getting up reasonably early should be adopted. A cold, or, at least, tepid bath, should be taken every morning, and a warm bath once or twice a week before going to bed.

Now, as to the bedroom itself. The larger and more airy it is the better. It should contain as little furniture as possible, and no garments should be left hanging about. It cannot be too well ventilated, and if the windows are left open all night in summer so much the better.

The window blinds should be of a colour to exclude a bright light, and I think nothing beats red holland. There should be no curtains around the bed, and although the room should be tolerably warm, it ought by no means to be hot.

The bed should be easy but not soft; a hair overlay covering a perfectly level woven-wire mattress conduces to the greatest comfort.

Warmth in bed should be maintained in a natural way, that is, by means of a sufficient quantity of bed-clothes, but these must not be heavy. It is better in winter for elderly people to have woollen sheets than cotton or linen ones.

As to a tile or jar of hot water, it often does good, but should not if possible be retained in the bed all night. It is only useful to keep the feet warm, for going into a cold bed often banishes the pleasant drowsiness that has

begun to steal over the senses before retiring. So by far the best plan is to have the bed warmed before going to it, not only in the centre but at top and bottom as well.

A word about what are called "night-caps." One form of night-cap is taken internally, another is used as a covering for the head. As a rule I object to the use of either, for the head should be kept cool, and both forms of night-cap have a tendency to heat it. However, sometimes the state of one's feelings must be consulted instead even of the doctor.

No sort of narcotic, however, is to be taken without the advice of the family physician; opium, chloral, chlorodyne, bromide of potassium, and the new "drug" called coco, can in this country and in the United States of America count their victims annually by the thousand.

Coffee. It is a strange thing that a cup of coffee should in many cases produce sleep, not directly, remember, therefore it is not a tonic, but if taken about an hour before retiring it calms the mind, especially if one has been subjected to mental strain or worry during the day. It will be better if taken without either milk or sugar, both these ingredients having a tendency to produce acidity.

NOTES FOR OCTOBER.



BIRDS migrate during this month more than any other; some are leaving us, and some coming for the winter. It is not only naturalists who study their flight, there are other observant watchers who might perhaps give some hints even to professional naturalists, for October is the month when bird-

catchers are on the alert; and they know the habits of every bird which it is worth their while to study.

Their prey consists of small singing-birds; and great numbers, especially of linnets, goldfinches, and larks are taken. The hen linnets are killed, and sold to the poulterer, but both cock and hen goldfinches are kept alive, perhaps because they are less easily distinguished, and so it is possible to pass the hens off in the large towns as cock birds. Most of the poor little creatures die very soon after they are caught, but if they survive the first few weeks' captivity they generally do well, so the price rises at first according to the length of time since their capture.

The bird-catcher's life is not an easy one. The best time for catching his prey is in the early dawn, so his nets have to be spread, and he must be standing on watch in the fields, while it is still dark; and early risers know how bitterly cold it sometimes is on a "chill October morning." By the time most people are astir his work is done, and he is gathering up his nets, and the tiny cages of decoy birds, and is preparing to trudge back to the nearest town with his load.

The apparatus used is very simple. A spot is chosen as a likely one for the birds to pass over in their flight; the nets are spread out on

the grass at the sides of the field, leaving a bare space in the middle; the decoy birds are distributed at intervals round the hedges; and then the catcher has nothing to do but wait patiently for his prey. Presently a flock of birds passes over head, the decoy birds call to them, and apparently out of sheer curiosity, or perhaps compassion for their fellows in distress, the whole flock pauses, then alights to see what is the matter. Their curiosity is their destruction; in an instant, by means of a cord and pulley, the fateful net is drawn over them, and their doom is sealed.

Bats, as a rule, hibernate during the winter, but in a mild season they may often be seen flying about at intervals all through the winter; probably to their own great discomfort, as there is not a sufficient supply of food for them in the cold weather. In Cornwall it is said they are to be seen all the year round, as long as the temperature does not fall below 50 degrees. Probably the same warm weather which keeps them from sinking into their usual state of torpor, also keeps awake a sufficient quantity of flies to supply them with food.

Bats have often been tamed, though as a rule they do not live long in captivity. They become very tame and affectionate, and make charming pets, with the one drawback of having a rather disagreeable smell. If kept in a cage, the wires must be very close, or they will get through; they can be fed on flies, moths, and scraps of raw meat, and have either milk or water to drink. Describing a pet bat, one gentleman says: "It often crept on the floor on 'all fours,' moving amazingly quickly from place to place, with an odd, hobbling motion. It was a noble hunter, only killing flies when they were on the wing. One evening it caught a large fly, and alighted with it on my shoulder, where it ate it all, save the wings."

Towards the end of the summer the leaves of the sycamore tree often become brown and shrivelled, and on examination are seen to be covered with black, or very dark brown spots. Till the microscope was brought to bear on them, the cause of these spots was very much disputed; some said that drops of rain, or dew,

acted as burning glasses, so that the rays of the sun shining through them caused the spots by actually burning the leaves. Others thought they were the work of insects; but it is generally agreed now that they are made by a fungus, the *Rhytisma acerinum*. The growth of this fungus is very interesting; the seeds are perfected in the old leaves after they fall, and are wafted by the wind on to the young leaves when they burst from their covering sheaths in the spring. When firmly established on the new leaf, the fungus first shows itself as a brownish stain; then little black spots appear on the brown mark, and finally the black specks spread, and form a black round stain, with a lighter coloured border. Looking down on the stain, it appears of an even black colour all over, except the edge; but if the leaf is held up to the light, it will be seen that some parts of it are more transparent than others, showing the different parts of the fungus growth. They are much thicker in the spring than when the leaves fall in the autumn. If the fallen leaves could all be burnt before the fungus has time to ripen, and scatter the seeds on the wind, this unsightly fungus might soon be stamped out.

It is almost a hopeless task at this time of year to try to keep our gardens tidy, when every fresh gust of wind strews the paths with fallen leaves. One may solace oneself, however, by finding many objects of interest in the untidy lawn; notice, for instance, the way worms draw the leaves into their holes. Worms are night-feeders, and the clearest traces of their work are to be found in the early morning.

Some of the spring flowers should be planted now; amongst these are the tuberous-rooted anemone; crocus, hyacinth, scilla, tulip and winter aconite. Most of these look best in clumps and thick lines, but crocuses and snowdrops are very effective on the lawn, or grassy banks. Hardy hollyhocks may be planted now, too, for next year's flowering; but all the tender varieties must have special care through the winter. Old plants which are to be left out, should be cut off near the ground, as soon as the flowers are over, and soil and dead leaves heaped up round the roots.