

■ Successful persons sleep but a few hours.

YOU'RE SMART TO HAVE INSOMNIA

During his days of glory, Napoleon slept not more than four or five hours, at the most, out of the 24. His physical and intellectual activities were prodigious. He would at times ride horseback for ten hours at a stretch, then hold conferences with his staff and dictate innumerable letters until late into the night. Yet he never felt tired or sleepy and a few hours of repose sufficed to "relieve his fatigue."

Heads of large businesses work much harder than do most of their employes. Some stay at their desks long after the office force has left, then attend business meetings until late in the evening. If they are interested in the business and are making a success of it, they do not complain of being tired. Nor are they as tired after 15 hours of "free labor" as are their stenographers and su-

bordinates after six or eight hours of routine jobs.

There was another side to Napoleon's story. Later in life, when his dream of world conquest was finally shattered at Waterloo and he was exiled to a remote island, he completely altered his lifetime habit in regard to sleep. At St. Helena he found it necessary to devote eight or nine hours to bed instead of the four or five that were previously sufficient, and this at a time when he had changed from a life of physical and mental activity to one of sloth and indolence.

Does this mean that the more we work the less we should sleep? Psychologists are beginning to think so.

In fact, many of them are quite sure that this apparently paradoxical theory is correct and that insomnia ought to be cured, not by teaching insomniacs how to sleep,

but by teaching them how to stay awake properly.

But, in order for the cure to be effectual, the staying awake must be done under circumstances that absorb the interest of the individual and flatter his ego.

Does this mean that egotistical gratification can take the place of rest? Undoubtedly so. Napoleon's reversal of form under conditions of victory and defeat can be adequately explained on no other hypothesis.

There is on record the case of a gambler who could go for several days and nights without sleep, provided he was winning. After a heavy loss, or even a session in which his winnings were offset by his losses, he needed ten or twelve hours' sleep to put him in humor to face reality again.

Another case in point is that of a neurotic with a strong inferiority complex who was overwhelmed by sleepiness every time he encountered defeat. After a quarrel, or whenever a discussion in which he took part turned to his disadvan-

tage, he was obliged to lie down and "sleep it off."

The old saying that a change of work is as good as a rest was founded on sound psychology. Children "tired" of sitting in a classroom will romp wildly, shout at the top of their lungs, jostle and fight one another, and return to their studies "rested."

A businessman who has attended to the tedious details of his office until five o'clock feels "all in" and goes home "tired." He changes his day suit for evening wear, attends a dinner at which he does a good deal of talking, sits for three hours in a stuffy theater and comes back "rested."

At the end of a "heavy" week this same businessman will gather up his golf outfit and trail for miles in the wake of a small rubber ball. He returns to his office "rested," although he has only exchanged one form of activity for another. Of actual "rest" he has had none.

Mental rest, then, consists in part of egotistical gratification and in part of a complete change of mental or physical activity.

Neither physical nor mental rest of this kind, however, is synonymous with sleep. If we admit that the conquering Napoleon, the successful businessman, and the winning gambler were sufficiently rested by being occupied with activities that flattered their ego and were of their own choosing, is there any common factor that enabled them to maintain their health with less sleep than is usually thought necessary for the average man?

There is such a factor, and it can perhaps be better explained by reversing the question and asking if there is not some definite factor that causes most of us to devote more time to sleep than we actually need. The answer to this question is again yes; and that definite factor is monotony.

Thomas Edison, in an interview, once expressed this opinion:

Nothing is more dangerous to human efficiency than too much sleep. The average man who sleeps seven or eight or nine hours daily is continually oppressed by las-

situde. There is really no reason why men should go to bed at all, and the man of the future will spend far less time in bed than the man of the present does, just as the man of the present spends far less time in bed than the man of the past did.

In the old days, man went up and down with the sun. A million years from now we won't go to bed at all. Really, sleep is an absurdity, a bad habit. We can't suddenly throw off the habit, but we will throw it off eventually.

Perhaps Mr. Edison exaggerated a little, but he had faith in his doctrine and practiced what he preached. He reduced his bad habit of sleep to a minimum.

The amount of sleep needed by various individuals is never proportionate to the amount of muscular or mental effort they expend. Men of intense physical and intellectual activity, like Frederick the Great, Schiller, Humboldt, Mirabeau, John Hunter the English surgeon, and Virchow the great German pathologist, flourished

on an average of four or five hours of sleep daily. Every one of these men had a colorful existence. Their lives were crowded with varied and interesting experiences

The real purpose of sleep is restoration of emotional and sensory tone and not elimination of toxins or repair of waste. It is quite ridiculous to imagine that our bowels or our kidneys or our digestions work better when we are asleep than when we are awake. The exact contrary is true. All these functions are slowed down during sleep, like the rest of the bodily processes.

It is a matter of common knowledge that we have more difficulty in digesting heavy food at night than at noon, and that, if a heavy meal is not digested before we go to sleep trouble is likely to ensue. Normally the bowels and kidneys do not move during sleep, and their activity is promoted by exercise and being awake, not by rest and sleep. The effect of prolonged sleep is to clog and not to clean the body.

The dangers of insomnia have been so widely and

generally exaggerated that the average person becomes little short of panic-stricken when sleeplessness attacks him. Yet the worst insomniacs not only survive, but not uncommonly reach a vigorous old age. The dangers of excessive sleeping after the age of puberty are rarely heard of; yet they are real, and it is indeed quite possible, as Mr. Edison insisted, to sleep too much, despite popular opinion to the contrary.

The best way of combating a tendency to excessive sleep is not arbitrarily to shorten the hours devoted to oblivion, but gradually to accustom the mind, consciously or unconsciously, to act more vigorously and expansively. Widening the mental outlook by increasing the number of interesting contacts with reality seems, strangely enough, to have the dual effect of prolonging it without injury to the organism.

The exact number of hours that should be passed in sleep is a question upon which authorities are not unanimous. It is generally

agreed that the healthy newborn child sleeps during the entire day and night except when it is being nursed and dressed. This period is gradually lessened up to the age of ten or twelve years, when the requirements of sound health do not demand more than nine hours out of the 24.

There has always been a considerable diversity of opinion in regard to the proper adult sleeping allowance. Disregarding considerations of sex, mentality, occupation and idiosyncrasy, it has heretofore been generally believed that in the prime of life seven hours out of the 24 should be given up to sleep, though some individuals do very well on five or six and others seem to require eight or nine to be at their best.

Elderly people, unless senility has produced abnormal drowsiness, find it difficult to sleep as long as those of middle age, and four to six hours is often the maximum that they can endure.

Individuals who possess a diversity of interests, or who concentrate intensely on some single field of

thought, can maintain their health and realize their normal life expectation on much less sleep than these average standards. On the testimony of some who have put a lesser maximum to the proof, a nightly average of four hours' sleep supplemented by four hours' rest is sufficient not only for comfortable living but will even leave a margin for gain in health.

There are few if any insomniacs even among the most afflicted who get less than this amount, although many quite honestly believe they do. All sufferers from insomnia unconsciously exaggerate their trouble, and their statements on the subject must taken with many grains of salt.

Fear causes both their memory and their judgment to be unreliable. And yet this fear is entirely uncalled for. Lying awake at night in a comfortable bed is really never a desperately dangerous performance.

What is the origin of this obsession that we must sacrifice so considerable a portion of our short and pre-

cious lives to the god of sleep?

Popular belief holds that Alfred the Great divided the day into three equal parts and strongly advised that one of these parts be allotted to sleep. Because he was a good king and an unusually wise one, the inference was that, if Alfred said it was, it was so. And for more than a millennium the superstition has persisted.

As a matter of fact, Alfred has been misquoted. What he did say was that one-third of the day should be given to diet, sleep, and exercise — that is, that a man should devote eight hours

daily to sleeping and eating and whatever form of exercise or recreation he preferred. There is nothing to show that Alfred himself spent even six hours a night in sleep.

Ours is the age of the efficiency expert. If the average human being can maintain working efficiency on six hours of sleep or less a day, it ought to be known. Two hours a day saved means salvaging a loss of 90 working days of eight hours each per year. — *By Dr. Robert Kingman from Magazine Digest.*

LONE CHICK

Lonely baby chick taking a look around the electric incubator of unhatched eggs: "Well, it looks as if I'll be an only child. Mother's blown a fuse."
— *Mrs. L. F. Duncan.*