



CHAPTER 16: Sleep

My DEAR COMRADES,

It is said that every machine – nay, that everything made by human hands, or born of human ingenuity – must, if it is to do its work well, have rest for certain periods and at regular intervals. At any rate, it is so with the human machine, and God, in His wisdom, has arranged that this rest should be found in our daily Sleep. Without it strength quickly decays, reason leaves her throne, life languishes and presently expires. Sleep is a necessity.

Every man should endeavour to secure that amount of "Nature's sweet restorer," that very Sleep, which his system requires. Some people find it difficult to Sleep when the appointed hour comes round. Let me give them a little advice on the subject.

1. As you would not desire to take the spirit of nightmare with you to bed, do not indulge in a heavy supper. I have already said that some kind of refreshment, at the close of the day's work, may, now and then, be a necessity with Salvationists; but they should, if possible, avoid anything like a serious meal for an hour or two before the time to retire.
2. Keep a clear conscience. No man should go to his rest under condemnation. If any living soul has sinned against him, he should forgive; and if he has sinned against any living soul, he should, if it be possible, secure the forgiveness of that soul before he sleeps. Most important of all, he should have a clear witness that all his sins against God have been blotted out. Paul's experience is good for all times, and especially for your sleeping pillow; listen to him, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."
3. Commit yourself to the care of God, and obtain the distinct assurance that He has you in His holy keeping, before settling yourself to slumber. Sleep is one of His gifts. Touch the hem of His garment before you close your eyes.



4. Refuse to allow your thoughts to be occupied with any unpleasant experiences through which you may be passing at the time. Exercise your will, and, so far as you can do so, banish them from your mind before you fall asleep, and refuse them admission during any of the wakeful hours that may follow. Happy the man or the woman who can close their bedroom door against the perplexing and painful difficulties with which they may have been contending during working hours! "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Anyway, try to shut it out of your chamber during the night.

5. If engaged in close and confining forms of employment, such as sitting in an office, or in a workroom, take, if possible, some exercise that will more or less tire the whole body. A reasonable amount of exertion in the open air is a valuable health preserver to tens of thousands of our people. I verily believe those of our Soldiers who are faithful to their Open-air duties, live longer, in consequence, than those who neglect them. Weariness is always the most friendly aid to Sleep.

6. Choose some agreeable and profitable subject on which to meditate as you lay yourself down. The run of your latest waking thoughts and feelings will be likely to colour your dreams and visions, if you have any; and, beyond question, Sleep will come more readily, and be more healthy and restful, if you enter upon it in a pleasant and peaceful state of mind.

7. While securing sufficient Sleep, beware of taking more than is required. Here, again, we must be careful not to err. Everyone is, I suppose, familiar with, the old rule, "Seven hours for a man, eight for a woman, and nine for a fool." It is a good rule. For certain highly-strung nervous natures, who lavishly pour out their feelings and energies in their work, it will, no doubt, be difficult to take too much Sleep; but even here, the old adage applies, "Enough is as good as a feast." Too long a period spent in bed is calculated to weaken rather than to strengthen the system. But while Early Rising imparts life and energy to some natures, it weakens, if it does not actually incapacitate, others. Every man must deal conscientiously with himself on this question; and while Salvationists must beware of getting too much Sleep, they must be equally careful to get sufficient. This applies especially to the more anxious among them.