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INSOMNIA THE SUBJECT OF REV. DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.

SLEEP THE SOUL'S VACATION.

A Divine Narcotic—The Righteous and Unrighteous Sleeps—Slain by Public Life—Words of Consolation for Sufferers—The Last Sleep.

Washington, Jan. 7.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage treats of a style of disorder not much discoursed upon and unfolds what must be a consolation to many people; text, Psalms lxxvii, 4, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking."

Sleep is the vacation of the soul. It is the mind gone into the playground of dreams; it is the relaxation of muscles and the solace of the nerves; it is the hush of activities; it is the soft curtaining of the eyes; it is a trance of eight hours; it is a calming of the pulses; it is a breathing much slower, though far deeper; it is a temporary oblivion of all carking cares; it is the doctor recognized by all schools of medicine; it is a divine narcotic; it is a complete anaesthetic; it is an angel of the night; it is a great mercy of God for the human race. Lack of it puts patients on the rack of torture or in the madhouse or in the grave. Oh, blessed sleep! No wonder the Bible makes much of it. Through sleep so sound that a surgical incision of the side of Adam did not waken him came the best temporal blessing ever afforded to man—wifely companionship. While in sleep on a pillow of rock Jacob saw a ladder set up, with angels coming down and climbing. So "he giveth his beloved sleep," soliloquized the psalmist. Solomon listens at the door of a tired workman and eulogizes his pillow by saying, "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet." Peter was calmly sleeping between the two constables the night before his expected assassination. Christ was asleep in a boat on Galilee when tossed in the eurocydon. The announcement was made to Joseph in sleep, and death is described as only a sleep and the resurrection as a glorious wakening out of sleep.

On the other hand, insomnia, or sleeplessness, is an old disorder spoken of again and again in the Bible. Ahasturus suffered from it, and we read, "In that night could not the king sleep." Joseph Hall said of that ruler, "He that could command a hundred and seven and twenty provinces could not command sleep." Nebuchadnezzar had insomnia, and the record is, "His sleep brake from him." Solomon describes this trouble and says, "Neither day nor night seeth he sleep with his eyes." Asaph was its victim, for he complains in my text that his eyes are wide open at midnight, some mysterious power keeping the upper and lower lids from joining, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking."

Insomnia, which has troubled all nations and all ages, has its widest swing in our land, because of the push and speed of all styles of activities, as in no other land. Where there is one man or woman with equivoque of nerves there are a dozen with overwrought and tangled ganglion. At some time in life almost every one has had a touch of it. It has been called "Americanitis." Last night there were, as there will be tonight, millions of people to whom the words of the text are appropriate utterance, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking."

Wonderful is that law which Ralph Waldo Emerson called the "law of compensation," and it has been so arranged that, while the hardworking populations of the earth are denied many of the luxuries, they have at least one luxury which many of the affluent of the earth are denied and for which some of them would give millions of dollars in cash down—namely, capacity to sleep. The most of those who toil with hand and foot do not have to send out invitations to sleep. They require no bromide or valerian or sulphonal or trioval to put them to nightly unconsciousness. In five minutes after their heads touch the pillows they are as far off from the wall they were building, or the ditch they were digging, or the wheel they were controlling, as heaven is from earth. About 3 o'clock in the morning, the body at lowest temperature and its furnaces nearly out, what a complete quietude for the entire physical and mental structure! All night long, for such, sleep is busy with its enchanted anointing of every corpuscle of the arteries and every molecule of the entire physical organism, and the morning finds the subjects of such sleep rebuilt, reconstructed and touched of God into a new life.

Of course there is an unrighteous sleep, as when Jonah, trying to escape from duty, slept in the sides of the ship while the Mediterranean was in wrath because of that prophetic passenger; as when Columbus in his first voyage, exhausted from being up many nights, gave the ship in charge of the steersman and the crew, who, leaving the management of the vessel to boys, went asleep and allowed the ship to strike on the banks of St. Thomas; as when the sentinel goes to sleep at his post, endangering the whole army; as when the sluggard, who accomplishes nothing the day before he went to sleep and will accomplish nothing the day after he wakes, fills up Solomon's picture of him as he yawns out, "a little sleep and a little folding of the hands to sleep." But sleep at the right time and amid the right circumstances—can you imagine anything more blessed? If sleep, according to sacred and profane literature, is an emblem of death, the morning to all refreshed sleepers is a resurrection.

Remark the first: If you have escaped the insomnia spoken of in my text, thank God. Here and there one can command sleep, and it comes the minute he orders it, and departs at the minute he wishes it to go, as Napoleon when he wrote: "Different affairs were arranged in my head as in

drawers. When I wish to interrupt one train of thought, I close the drawer which contains that subject and open that which contains another. They do not mix together or inconvenience me. I have never been kept awake by an involuntary pre-occupation of mind. When I wish for repose, I shut up all the drawers, and I am asleep. I have always slept when I wanted rest and almost at will." But I think in most cases we feel that sleep is not the result of a resolution, but a direct gift from God. You cannot purchase it. A great French financier cried out: "Alas! Why is there no sleep to be sold?"

Do not take this divine gift as a matter of course. Your seven or eight hours of healthful unconsciousness is a blessing worthy of continuous and emphatic recognition. Praise the Lord for 365 resurrections in a year! Artificial slumber can be made up by the apothecaries, but natural sleep is a balm, a panacea, a catholicon that no one but God can mix.

Remark the second: Consider among the worst crimes the robbery of ourselves or others of this mercy of slumber. Much ruinous doctrine has been inculcated on this subject. Thomas Moore gave poor advice when he said, "The best way to lengthen our days is to steal a few hours from the night." We are told that, though they did their work at night, Copernicus lived to be 73 years of age and Galilei 78 years and Herschel 84 years. Yes, but the reason was they were all star hunters, and the only time for hunting stars is at night. Probably they slept by day. The night was made for slumber. The worst lamp a student can have is "the midnight lamp." Lord Brougham never passed more than four hours of the night abed, and Justinian, after one hour of sleep, would rise from his couch. But you are neither a Justinian nor a Lord Brougham. Let not the absurd apothecaries of early rising induce you to the abbreviation of social life. Lack of sleep assassinates social life. A reformation is needed, and if the customs of the world could be changed in this matter and the curtains of social life could be rung down at a reasonable hour of the night 20 per cent would be added to the world's longevity.

Remark the third: All those ought to be comforted who by overwork in right directions have come to insomnia. In all occupations and professions there are times when a special draft is made upon the nervous energy. There are thousands of men and women who cannot sleep because they were injured by overwork in some time of domestic or political or religious exigency. Mothers who, after taking a whole family of children through the disorders that are sure to strike the nursery, have been left physical wrecks, and one entire night of slumber is to them a rarity, if not an impossibility. The attorney at law who through a long trial in poorly ventilated courtrooms has stood for weeks battling for the rights of widows and orphans or for the life of a client in whose innocence he is confident, though all the circumstances are unfavorable. In his room he tries the case all night long, and every night, when he would like to be slumbering. The physician, in time of epidemics, worn out in saving the lives of whole families and failing in his attempts to sleep at night between the janglings of his door bell. The merchant who has experienced panics, when the banks went down and Wall street became a pandemonium, and there was a possibility that the next day he would be penniless—that night with no more possibility of gaining sleep than if such a blessing had never touched our planet. Ministers of the gospel, in time of great revival, all their powers of endurance drawn upon day by day and week by week and month by month—sermonic preparation neighborhood visitation, heartbreaking obsequies, sympathetic help for the anxious, the despairing and the dying. It is wonderful that ministers of the gospel have any nerves left and that the angel of sleep does not quit their presence forever.

But I hear and now pronounce highest consolation for all those, who in any department have sacrificed their health to duty. Your sleeplessness is as much a wound as you can find on any battlefield and is an honorable wound. We all look with reverence and admiration upon one who has lost an eye or an arm in the service of his country, and we ought to look with admiration upon those who, through extreme fidelity to their life work, have lost capacity for slumber.

Remark the fourth: Insomnia is no sign of divine displeasure. Martin Luther had distressing insomnia and wrote, "When I wake up in the night, the devil immediately comes and disputes with me and gives me strange thoughts, until at last I grow enraged beyond endurance and give him ill words." That consecrated champion of everything good, Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, Sr., in his autobiography, says that he thinks he would sleep at night were it not for the fact that he had not slept the night before. One of the greatest English clergymen had a ~~good~~ ^{bad} night sleep side of his bed, so that he might read nights when he could not sleep. Horace Greeley ~~had~~ ^{had} in 15 years. Charles Dickens ~~understood~~ ^{understood} London by night better than any other writer, because not being able to sleep he spent that time in exploring the city.

Wakefulness may be an opportunity for prayer, opportunity for kindling bright expectations of the world, where there is no night and where slumber will have no uses. God thinks just as much of you when you get but three or four hours of sleep as when at night you get eight or nine hours. One of the greatest prayer meetings ever held was in a pebble house at 12 o'clock at night, where Peter and Silas could not sleep. The ~~text~~ ^{text} says they prayed and sang praises to God. They had cured an ~~idiotic~~ ^{idiotic} girl of her trouble, and for that they were imprisoned. They were ~~robbed~~ ^{robbed} of their liberty, but not of their psalmody.

Have you ever thought that sleeplessness may be turned into a rapture, a communion with God, a preparation for heaven?

Remark the fifth: Let all insomniacs know for their consolation that some people sleep more rapidly than others, as much in one hour as others do in two, and hence do not require as long a time in unconsciousness. In a book on the subject of health years ago I saw this fact stated by a celebrated medical scientist: Some people do everything quick; they eat quick, they walk quick, they think quick, and of course they sleep quick. An express train can go as far in 30 minutes as a way train in 60 minutes. People of rapid temperaments ought not to expect a whole night to do the work of recuperation which slow temperaments require. Instead of making it a matter of irritation and alarm be a Christian philosopher and set down this abbreviation of somnolence as a matter of temperament. An antelope ought not to complain because it was not an ox nor an eagle because it can go faster than a barnyard fowl.

Remark the sixth: The aged insomniacs should understand that their eyes are held waking they do not require as much sleep as once they did. Solomon, who in knowledge was thousands of years ahead of his time, in his wondrous description of old age recognizes this fact. He not only speaks of the difficulty of mastication on the part of the aged when he says, "The grinders cease because they are few," and of the octogenarian's caution in getting up a ladder or standing on a scaffold, saying, "They shall be afraid of that which is high," and speaks of the whiteness of the hair by comparing it to a tree that has white blossoms, saying, "The almond tree shall flourish," and speaks of the spinal cord, which is of the color of silver and which relaxes in old age, giving the tremor to the head, saying, "The silver cord be loosed." But, he says of the aged, "He shall rise up at the voice of the bird"—that is, about half past 4 in the summer time, an appropriate hour for the bird to rise, for he goes to his nest or bough at half past 7 in the evening. But the human mechanism has been so arranged that after it has been running a good while a change takes place, and instead of the almost perpetual sleep of the babe and the nine hours requisite in midlife six hours will do for the aged, and "he shall rise up at the voice of the bird."

Remark the seventh: Insomnia is probably a warning that you had better moderate your work. Most of those engaged in employments that pull on nerve and brain are tempted to omit necessary rest, and sleeplessness calls a halt. Even their pleasuring turns to work, as Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great painter, taking a walk with a friend, met a sunbrowned peasant boy and said, "I must go home and deepen the coloring of my infant 'Hercules.'" The sunbrowned boy suggested an improvement in a great picture. By the time most people have reached midlife, if they have behaved well, more doors of opportunity open before them than they ought to enter. Power to decline, power to say "No," they should now cultivate. When a man is determined to be useful and satan cannot dissuade him from that course, the great deceiver induces him to overwork and in that way get rid of him.

Remark the eighth: All the victims of insomnia ought to be consoled with the fact that they will have a good long sleep after awhile. Sacred and profane literature again and again speak of that last sleep. God knew that the human race would be disposed to make a great ado about exit from this world, and so he inspires Job and David and Daniel and John and Paul to call that condition "sleep." When at Bethany the brother who was the support of his sisters after their father and mother were gone had himself expired, Christ cried out in regard to him, "He is not dead, but sleeping." Cheering thought to all poor sleepers, for that will be a pleasant sleep, induced by no narcotic, interrupted by no frightful dream, disturbed by no harsh sound. Better than any sleep you ever took, O child of God, will be the last sleep.

Most people are tired. The nights do not repair the day. Scientists, by minute calculation, say that every night comes a little short of restoring the body to where it was the day before, and so every seventh day was put in for entire rest, to make up in reparation for what the nights could not do. But so restless will be the last sleep that you will rise from it without one sore nerve, without one tired limb—rested, forever rested, as only God can rest you. O ye tired folks all up and down the world, tired with work, or tired with persecutions, or tired with ailments, or tired with bereavements, or tired in the struggle against temptation, clap your hands with eternal glee in expectation of that sleep from which you will never need another sleep or even another night. "There shall be no night there," because there will be no need of it by quieting influences.

So, my hearer, my reader, "Good night!" May God give you such sleep to-night as is best for you, and if you wake too soon may he fill your soul with reminiscences and expectations that will be better than slumber. Good night! Having in prayer, kneeling at the bedside, committed yourself and all yours to the keeping of the slumberless God, fear nothing. The pestilence that walketh in darkness need not cross your doorsill, and you need not be afraid of evil tidings. Good night! May you have no such experience as Job had when he said, "Thou scarest me with dreams and terrifies me through visions." If you dream at all, may it be a vision of remissions and congratulations, and, waking, may you find some of them true. Good night! And when you come to the best sleep, the blissful sleep, the last sleep, may you be able to turn and say to all the cares and fatigues and bereavements and pangs of a lifetime, "Good night!"

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