

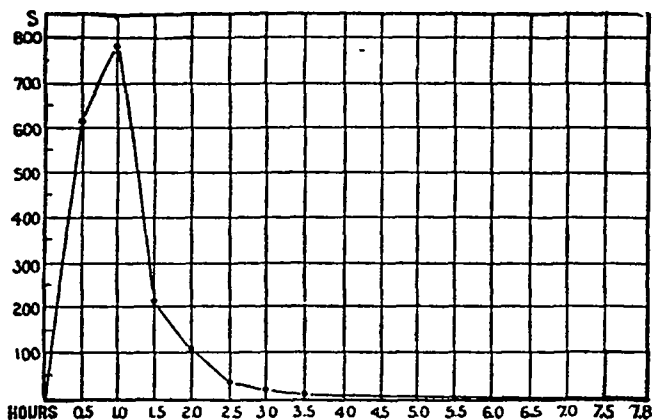
COMMUNICATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS.

THE MID-DAY NAP.

One year while I was at Yale, I approached the physical director, Dr. Seaver, on a balmy April day and asked him to prescribe a tonic. He looked me in the eye, and the following conversation ensued:

"What is the first thing you do after dinner?" "I go to work—study." "Are you a gentleman?" "I am trying to be." "Are you a Christian?" "I am trying to be." "A Christian gentleman, and take no rest after dinner!"

I took that rest tonic as prescribed, have continued to take it, and have had no need of any other. It has assumed the form of a fifteen-minute mid-day nap, my principal meal coming at noon. Realizing the great benefit in this, I have been interested in casting about for a psychological justification of it.



This I find chiefly in the curve of sleep. The curve of sleep, as measured by the relative strength of stimulus required for awakening a sleeper at different stages of the sleep, is shown in the accompanying figure (Kohlschütter). The numbers at the bottom indicate hours

of the sleep; the height of the curve shows the height, in centimeters, from which a ball must be dropped upon a metal plate in order to awaken the sleeping person. The curve shows that the normal sleeper falls immediately into a profound sleep which reaches the maximum at the end of the first hour, then becomes lighter very rapidly during the second hour, and remains light for the rest of the night. Quantitatively, the sleeper gets more needed rest out of the first one-fourth of the night than out of the remaining three-fourths.

This relative form of the sleep curve has been verified for various conditions. The feature which concerns us is that the greatest benefit from normal sleep, night or day, comes from the very first part of it. From this we may derive a principle of mental economy: *Cut short the long light sleep of the late morning hours and substitute a short sleep at some favorable time during the work day.* Fifteen minutes of sleep after the heaviest work and the main meal of the day will count more for efficiency than five times fifteen minutes of sleep in the morning. The curve of day sleep has the same form as the curve of night sleep: but is usually very much smaller. From ten to twenty minutes would cover the period of deepest sleep in the day rest of a normal brain worker.

But several conditions enter. Many persons cannot fall into sound sleep in such a short time during the day. The ability to go to sleep is, however, largely a matter of habit which most persons may readily acquire by reasonable persistence and favorable conditions. The nap must be so taken that it shall not interfere with the night's rest; the most favorable duration of the nap varies with different individuals, but it should not be long under any circumstance. It must be so taken that it shall not result in stupor at awakening; the best precaution is to take the nap in a cushioned easy-chair, with the body slightly reclining. This position will prevent the rush of blood to the brain. The advantage of sleep is that it gives the most adequate relaxation of body and mind. The advantage of an after-dinner cigar is that it furnishes relaxation and repose; but the feeling of restfulness after a quiet smoke is due in part to the artificial stimulation while the restfulness felt after a nap is the natural feeling of restoration.

Brain workers seldom die of brain disease. They, ordinarily, die of stomach trouble or related organic disorders, and in most cases this

is due to the fact that there is no cessation in the brain work during the day and the stomach suffers in competition with the brain for vital energy. The nap serves two purposes after dinner in that it rests the brain and gives the stomach a chance.

In the coming fight for health and natural living, the demand for economic periods of effective relaxation will be a feature. And for effective relaxation, when circumstances permit it, I know of no more efficient form than the mid-day nap.

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The department of psychology of the University of Minnesota has organized a free clinic for the study of mental development. Dr. H. H. Woodrow, who has immediate charge of the work, is conducting a course in mental retardation. Dr. Woodrow will have the assistance of Dr. J. P. Sedgwick, of the College of Medicine, who will superintend the physical examination of the children, and of Mr. W. M. Duke, a specialist in the correction of stuttering and stammering, who will take charge of the training for the correction of speech defects. A special investigation of speech disturbances will be made.