

SLEEPING AT THE MAST-HEAD.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

In the twenty-third chapter of the book of Proverbs is a vivid description of a person who is utterly insensible to danger. "Thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth on the top of a mast." This reckless individual is here described as climbing up to mast-head; and while his dizzy perch is swaying back and forth in the gale, he is trying to sleep there! His hands relax their hold. The reeling mast flings him from his perilous elevation into the boiling sea, and he goes down like lead in the mighty waters. It is no easy thing for a seaman who is wide awake to hold on to a mast-head in a gale; but to fall asleep there is certain suicide.

The passage applies in the first instance to the man who has put himself under the delusive sorcery of strong drink. Many a young man has begun to tamper with the wine-cup under the illusion that he could stop when he chose to do so. Everybody else saw his danger, but he was blind to it. His good resolutions snapped like rotten cords, and he has been hurled off at last into the dark abyss of the drunkard's doom.

But this unique passage has a far wider application. It touches the case of every one who shuts his eyes to the dangers that surround him, either from his own wilful sins, or his criminal neglect of duty. Many a parent seems strangely insensible to the inroads of irreligion into his own family. His children are becoming indifferent to the sanctuary and the Sabbath-school; his sons are sliding away into evil company and courses his daughters becoming less heartless as frivolous fashion can make them; they are all scolding at religion behind his back, and yet he is one that sleepeth at the mast-head! Eli was a type of this style of parents—an easy well-meaning man who shuts his eyes to the abominable conduct of his own sons, and was aroused from his careless apathy by the crash of their ruin and his own. In fact that poor old man was a specimen of the most mischievous class of people—that class who have good intentions and good reputations, but have no backbone to face danger, or discharge difficult duties.

But what a picture this text gives of the true condition of all unconverted souls! Every sinner is, in one sense asleep. He, or she is insensible to the sinfulness of sin, to the claims of God, to the beauty of holiness, to the glories of heaven, or the terrors of hell. The more insensible they are to these tremendous realities, the more they surrender themselves to the delusions of the

Tempter. They are *dreaming*. A dreamer has his pleasures; so have you, my impenitent friend! You are under a spell. You imagine that the fleeting and guilty pleasures of sin are *real* and involve no danger; that the glorious life for Christ here and with Him hereafter are *unreal*. You may be hanging to the spider's web, that God is to kind to punish sin as it deserves. Or you may be looking at the faults of some professed Christian, and blinding your eyes to your own heinous guilt. Or you may be dreaming of repentance at some future day, and of huddling up a peace with the righteous God before you die. While you are thus wasting life in the neglect of Jesus Christ, and hugging the delusion that it will "all right" with you in eternity, let me tell you with loving candor, that you are *dreaming*! It is high time for you to awake out of sleep. I have read that when the boiler of a steamship once exploded in the night, one of the survivors relates that he was hurled into air while asleep. His sensation was that of one who being transported swiftly and delightfully through the air. He awoke, and found himself sinking in the waves! Will it not be a terrible thing for you to dream away life under the illusion that you are flying towards heaven; and then wake up to find yourself sinking in the great depth of God's righteous wrath? Awake then, *awake* thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give the light!

To awake is not enough. You must seek light from Christ. He will tell you to renounce your favorite sins, to break with the world and your old wicked self, and to follow Him. Open your whole soul to Him; let Him enlighten your mind and guide your steps, and alter your heart, so that eternal things will be the real things, and your life will be to you as a dangerous and deadly dream. Begin to serve Jesus in the very first thing that comes to your hand. With Christ taken into your heart, you will rejoice to labor for Him, and for your fellowmen, in the sweet spirit of your new Master. You will be broad awake in God's great world, with an open eye to see Jesus as your inescapable pattern, and heaven as your assured inheritance. You will *begin to live*; and as you look back upon your guilty stupor of impenitence, you will be ready to shout your praises to God, that He did not let you die in your sleep!

Just one more application of the mirror of truth to some of our readers who may need it. There are thousands of sleepers within the pale of the Church. They dream that because they are in the Church, all is well with them. They are leading fruitless, graceless, useless lives. Our Lord once