

in the habit of retiring is of more importance than going early to bed, and certainly when one who has suffered from insomnia has succeeded in overcoming the bad sleep habit he should be slow to endanger his health and happiness by doing anything likely to induce insomnia again.

Change of air is extremely valuable, and for most people of nervous type an outing under canvas in the northern woods of Canada is a sleep producer of the most remarkable kind. I have seen men haunted for years by the demon insomnia go to these woods, and while there develop a sound sleep habit which added years to their life. After the first night at camp sleeplessness is almost unknown. Personally I prefer advising almost anything rather than drug treatment in the common forms of insomnia, and feel satisfied that we are playing with fire when we resort to the use of hypnotics, except as a temporary expedient. Of course, we should not forget in these different forms of insomnia that sleeplessness is frequently something more than a bad habit: it is a symptom of other trouble, and it is necessary to discover and treat the underlying cause.

If neurasthenia is to be regarded as one of the autotoxic diseases—and there is abundant evidence to support this view—in all probability the effect will disappear with the removal of the cause. The same remarks apply to all of the cases of insomnia resulting from toxæmia; and when we get clearer light on autotoxis than we have at present no doubt it will be a simple matter to improve our methods of treatment. In neurasthenia, autotoxis will admirably explain the etiology of the disease, as has been pointed out by Van Giessen and others. With insomnia accompanying surgical operations I have had little experience, but the subject has been deemed worthy of a good deal of attention by those who have had ample opportunity to observe.

G. G. Van Schaick concludes that insomnia, from whatever cause, is an important complication of surgical disorders. Its relief is necessary for the comfort of the patients, improves the prognosis, and naturally assists recovery after operation. Where pain is the chief factor morphine is the only drug that will relieve with certainty, although there is a strong feeling in favour of the use of trional.

In a general way, then, I may say that many writers are impressed with the belief that in the majority of cases of insomnia drug treatment is to be avoided, if other more simple methods of inducing normal sleep are found successful. Certainly the simple methods should be tried before any drug treatment, and in any case the condition of the arterial pressure should be carefully studied and noted before any line of treatment is decided on.