What Happens When—
We Go To Sleep

by Frank Lambe

NATURE has made certain rules
which every single person
must obey, and if a person does
not obey those rules, he or she
will die.

Rule No. 1 is that we must
eat. The body is a machine, and
we must keep putting fuel into it
if it is to keep working, just as
you have to put petrol in a motor-
car to make it go.

Rule No. 2 is that we must
spend some of our time in sleep,
just as a motor-car must have a
rest now and again. If a motor-
car was driven hard all the time,
and its engine was never allowed
to rest, it would soon wear out.

That is a simple explanation,
but it must be borne in mind if we
are to understand properly why
sleep is necessary to us. It will
also help us to understand what
sleep is. It means resting and
relaxing.

A great poet called sleep “a
little death.” Of course we do
not die when we go to sleep, but
in sleep we certainly come nearer
to being dead, in a certain sense,
than at any other time in our
lives.

Restoring Last Energy

Nature’s purpose in making us
feel that we must spend a number
of hours out of the 24 hours in a
day in sleep is to enable us to
restore the energy we have lost
during our waking hours. Thus,
to call sleep “nature’s sweet res-
torer” is quite true. Our ner-
vous system is divided into two
main groups for which doctors
have long words. We need not
bother about the long words; we
can simply call these two main
groups “savers” and “spenders.”

When we are awake, especially
when we are working hard at
something, we are busy burning-
up carbon, oxygen and hydrogen.
This burning-up process is the
“spending.” It produces a lot of
waste products which clog the
blood stream and prevent fresh,
clean blood from flowing to the
brain. The brain must be kept
supplied with good clean blood if
it is to work properly. If the
only blood that gets to it is im-
pure, then the brain becomes
sluggish.

You know how you feel after
working hard. You are tired, and
do not want to have to think
about anything. That is an in-
dication that Nature is telling you
that you have been “spending” too
much of your energy, and must
now take some time off to “save
up” some more. In other words,
you must sleep. Then the “saving”
machinery of the body takes
control, while the “spending”
machinery has a rest.

Sparks Cease to fly

What really happens in sleep
is this. The brain itself is a big
nerve with lots of little bits stick-
ing up—little bits of nerves which
you could see only by looking at
the brain through a microscope.
These nerve-endings may be com-
pared to the terminals on an elec-
tric battery, or to the little hairs
that you see on the skin of a
gooseberry.

When they are deprived of
blood, they tend to shrink or
droop, and so cannot properly
send or receive the nervous impul-
ses which, like electric sparks,
jump across the gaps between
these nerves during our waking
state and thereby maintain con-
sciousness, or the ability to think.

When enough of these little
“terminals” shrink or droop, as
when Nature tells us we are tired
and it is time to rest, it becomes
more and more difficult for the
“sparks” to fly about. Thought
ceases, and we go to sleep.

Little drops of Water, little grains of Sand,
Make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land.

Little deeds of Kindness, little words of Love,
Help to make earth happy like the heaven above.

— JULIA A. F. CARNESY, Little Things.