

SLEEP IN THE TROPICS.

FROM "CAPITAL."

ONE of the most trying experiences of the new-comer in the Tropics is the difficulty of obtaining refreshing sleep at night. He is aware that the night air is cooler than that of the day for the thermometer bears witness to it, but he cannot understand why in the early afternoon, the hottest part of the day, he can sleep easily on a cane couch. If he could only discover how to arise refreshed every morning as he probably did in the home country, the day's work would be wonderfully lightened and the heat would not matter. Sometimes he appeals to lime juice to assuage his thirst, and sometimes to the whisky bottle, but neither of them meets his need, and whether he is of a robust or only medium constitution, he feels that he is somehow losing a considerable portion of his daily supply of energy that should be devoted to the performance of his work. The oppression of a tropical climate is felt more or less by all Europeans, and many are the devices resorted to to reduce or modify it. But few people go the right way about in their examination of the subject, and still fewer go to the foundation of the problem. The human body in health produces much more heat than is necessary for the purpose of vitality. If it were not so we could not live in cold countries where clothing has to be worn to regulate the escape of this surplus heat. In India where the mean air temperature is at least 30 degrees higher than in London animal heat does not escape so readily, and when the shade temperature rises to 122° Fah. or 24 degrees above blood heat, as it does in parts of Sind, it is only the very active evaporation of moisture from the skin that keeps the blood down to its normal temperature. In such places the air is dry, facilitating evaporation and such is the cooling power of this process that a wet muslin jacket will lower the reading of a thermometer by 40 degrees. We are all, so to say, wet bulb thermometers, and so well does the skin perform its function that a healthy man varies very little from the mean blood temperature of 98·4 degrees, whether he be in the tropics or in the arctic regions. In a dry atmosphere like that of Nagpur where the air may only contain 6 per cent. of the amount of moisture that would saturate it, perspiration escapes in invisible vapour leaving the clothing dry, but in the moist regions near the coast where the humidity may rise to 80 or 90 per cent. the surrounding air cannot absorb the water vapour fast enough, and it condenses on the clothing. Many people in consequence believe that perspiration is most active in a moist atmosphere, which is not the case. If the wet clothing is suddenly exposed to a current of air sufficient to re-evaporate the moisture serious maladies following chill may supervene.

In the tropical daytime we dress in light clothing with a view to assist the escape of our surplus heat, but at night many people lie on the same thick mattress that they used in a European winter. Above them they may have one sheet or only the customary sleeping suit and thus the lower side of the body is accumulating heat while the upper part is cooling—aided perhaps by a

punkha or electric fan. Authorities say that it is only when the body is at two different temperatures that a person can catch cold. There is certainly no good reason for lying during a hot night upon a thick non-conductor that would serve to protect ice from melting while there are so many convenient forms of bed upon which a blanket and sheet or a piece of matting and a sheet are sufficient bedding. As the temperature falls during the night the air becomes more moist, retarding evaporation from the skin. This is the reason for much of the discomfort experienced during the night and it emphasizes the claim of light bedding which allows animal heat to escape downwards as well as upwards. When the bedding is so adjusted that the sleeper cools equally above and below he may sleep in the current of a doorway with comfort and safety. Prickly heat is more frequently contracted by night than by day. The writer during a period in hospital suffered from it and applied to have his mattress removed so as to lie on the tapes with a blanket and sheet. The tapes are broad 2 inch webbing, close woven, that form the floor of the bed. He argued that if he could lie all night without a sheet to cover him a mattress was unnecessary below him. After some demur the physician consented and in twenty-four hours the irritation had ceased. At 60 degrees in England a ventilating current of more than six inches per second constitutes a draught while in Bombay in May or October a current of 3 feet per second or 2 miles per hour is barely enough to ensure comfort owing to the moisture the air contains in these months.

Much care should be exercised in the choice of clothing and coverings both by night and day, for the climate that really counts is not the one that is recorded at the observatories, but that which lies between the skin and the garments that cover it. This air is very often saturated because the clothing is not porous enough to allow the water vapour to escape as fast as it is produced. These are truths that are not taught in schools and colleges.

(To be Continued.)

HUMOURS OF LIFE IN INDIA.

THE UBIQUITOUS CHIT.

By MISS SHOESMITH.

"MISS SAHIB!" says a voice in a pleading respectful tone outside my room door. "Kaun Hai?"—"Who is there?" I reply, slightly exasperated, for am I not trying to get an afternoon nap—those forty winks so necessary in India, and I was just dropping off into a beautiful slumber.

"Chitti", comes the answer. Oh, those everlasting chits, which descend upon one the moment she arrives in India! I arise, put on a wrapper, and hasten to open the door to receive the note. I glance at the address, and find it is meant for one of the visitors in the house and not for the poor over-taxed worker.

I send the man to the right room, and subduing my indignation compose myself to sleep once more. Another knock! "Chitti Hai" says the servant. By this time I am thoroughly awake and open the door with a flourish, and with a look more eloquent far than words I receive the note held out to me by