HOW PEOPLE SLEEP.

Some Interesting Dream Statistics Gleaned by a Russian University.

[From the Boston Medical Journal.]

An interesting investigation upon the above subject has recently been made under the auspices of the University of Dorpat, Russia. Some 500 circulars were sent out with a series of quite definite questions, which were answered with equal detail by 151 students, 113 other males, 142 females. The results for the two sexes were so different that they formed a homogeneous class interesting as a special study. The first problem that was proposed was the relation between the frequency and vividness of dreams. It appears that 62.5 per cent. of those who dream every night dream vividly. 60.5 per cent. of those who dream frequently, and only 26.8 per cent. of those who dream seldom, showing that the vividness of dreams increases very rapidly with their frequency. Next, how is the intensity of sleep related to the frequency of dreams? Of the students who dream nightly 68 per cent. have a light and only 28 per cent. have a deep sleep; of those dreaming frequently, 40 per cent.; of those dreaming seldom, 32.8 per cent. Similiar percentages for the other males are 68.8, 4.21 and 39.3, and for women, 72.46 and 50 per cent. We conclude, then, that frequent dreams are a concomitant of light sleep, though the relation is far from universal. As regards sex, women have 73 per cent. of their number dreaming nightly or frequently, while students have only 50 per cent. and other males 48 per cent. Again, 63 per cent. of the women sleep lightly and only 42 per cent. of the students and 44 per cent. of other males. We conclude, then, that women have a very much lighter sleep than men, and that their dreams are proportionately more frequent.

Another conclusion, the evidence of which is too detailed at present, is that as we grow older our dreams become less frequent, but our sleep becomes lighter, age affecting intensity of sleep more than frequency of dreams.

The author regards the students as in the period of maximum dreaming (20 to 24 years of age. The deep sleep of childhood (hostile to frequency of dreams) is then least counterbalanced by the lessening of dreams due to age.

THE VIVIDNESS OF DREAMS

Shows a similar relation to age and sex, the women dream most vividly; the students being younger than the other men, have more vivid dreams. The power of remembering dreams is also dependent upon vividness and frequency of dreaming; it is accordingly greatest in women, and greater in students than in more mature men. The liveliness of the emotional nature, a prominent feature of women and youth, seems thus to be marked out as the causative agent in the production of dreams. The duration of sleepshould naturally be related to the habit of dreaming, but in the men no such relation can be discovered. In the women, however, it appears that those who dream frequently sleep nearly an hour longer than those who seldom dream. This difference is regarded as due to the fact that men are more under duty to break short their sleep and thus vitiate the statistics. This is corroborated by the frequency with which the men who dream frequently declare themselves tired in the morning, indicating incomplete sleep.

The need of sleep is greater in women than in men, the duration of sleep being longer and the percentage of tired being frequent.