March 1924

Better Eyesight

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE PREVENTION AND CURE OF IMPERFECT SIGHT WITHOUT GLASSES

March, 1924

Mental Pictures

MANY patients with imperfect sight complain that when they close their eyes to remember a white cord with black letters, they usually fail and remember instead a black cord with white letters. The vision of these patients is very much improved when they become able to remember a white cord white, with the black letters remembered perfectly black. Imperfect memory, imperfect imagination, imperfect sight are all caused by strain.
One patient could not remember a white pillow, but by first regarding the pillow and seeing one corner bent and all the other corners worse and shifting from one corner to another he became able, when closing his eyes, to remember one corner in turn bent, and obtained a good mental picture of the whole pillow. One cannot see a pillow perfectly without Central Fixation. To have Central Fixation requires relaxation or rest. One patient who could not remember a large letter C of the Snellen Test Card, with the eyes closed, was able to remember the colors of some flowers, and then he was able to remember a letter C. In order to remember a desired mental picture one should remember perfectly some other things. This is a relaxation which helps to remember the mental picture desired. It is well to keep in mind that one cannot remember one thing perfectly and something else imperfectly at the same time.
In my book is described the case of a woman with imperfect sight who could remember a yellow buttercup with the eyes closed, perfectly, but with her eyes open and regarding the Snellen Card with imperfect sight, she had no memory of the yellow buttercup.

Illusions of Normal Sight
By W. H. Bates, M.D.

AN illusion is defined by the dictionary to be something which does not exist. Illusions are not seen, they are imagined. One cannot have perfect sight without illusions.
CENTRAL FIXATION.—When the sight is normal one is always able to demonstrate that things regarded are seen best while those not regarded are always seen worse. With Central Fixation if one recognizes or sees a letter correctly, all other letters are seen worse. With the best vision that can be obtained it can be demonstrated that one cannot see a letter or any other object perfectly without seeing one part best. No matter how large or how small the letter or object may be, it is impossible to see it perfectly without Central Fixation. Many people believe that when they look at a small letter or a small period that they see it all at once; but, when you notice the facts, one finds that to see or to try to see a letter, a number of letters all per-fectly, the vision becomes muddled or imperfect. Some persons with unusually good vision can read the Snellen Test Card so rapidly that they have the impression that they see all the letters perfectly at the same time. It requires, in some cases, considerable trouble to demonstrate that this is impossible. In some obstinate cases it has required not only some hours but some days to prove that this is a fact. The letters of the Snellen Test Card are equally black. To see one blacker than the others, or a part of a letter blacker than the rest of it, is seeing something which is not so. The large letters and the small letters are printed in the same ink and all are equally black and although one cannot read the letters unless they see them by Central Fixation it is still, nevertheless, an illusion. One should emphasize the fact that it is possible to have illusions or that one cannot see perfectly unless the illusion of Central Fixation can be demonstrated.
SWINGING.—When a small letter of the Snellen Test Card can be seen perfectly and continuously it can be demonstrated that the letter is moving from side to side about its own width or less or that it is moving in other directions. To look fixedly at a letter and try to imagine one point of the letter is seen continuously, can be demonstrated to be impossible. One cannot obtain perfect sight by stating or trying to see things or imagine things as stationary. I have never seen this truth stated in any publication. It is just as important an illusion as is CENTRAL FIXATION in order to have perfect sight continuously. It can be demon-strated that all persons with imperfect sight strain, concentrate or try to see letters stationary. The illusion that the letter is moving, when the sight is normal, is brought about by the normal eye to avoid the state and the strain of seeing things imperfectly. The point of fixation changes continuously, easily.
When one looks to the right of the letter, the letter is to the left of where you are looking. If you look to the left of a letter the letter is to the right of where you are looking. Every time your eyes move to the right, the letter moves to the left. Every time your eyes move to the left the letter moves to the right and by alternately looking from one to the other side of a letter one becomes able to imagine the illusion that the letter is moving from side to side. When reading rapidly one does not have time to demonstrate that each individual letter is moving. Here again the imagination is respon-sible for the illusion of the swing. The letters do not really move, we only imagine it; and, unless we can imagine a letter moving continuously we are unable to see it with normal sight continuously. This is a truth; it has no exceptions. It is a necessary part of normal vision, and yet it has not, to my knowledge, been pub-lished in any book or periodical. People who write works on physiological optics have much to learn. So many of my patients who have been benefited by my methods have asked me: "Why didn't Helmholtz, Donders and all those other authorities publish the truths that you have discovered?" Nearly all ophthalmologists put glasses on people because that is all they know. I can recall the time when that was all I knew. If a patient left the office without a prescription for glasses it was not my fault. Now when persons with imperfect sight, wearing glasses, become able to practice CENTRAL FIXATION and the OPTICAL SWING in the right way, their vision becomes normal without glasses.
HALOS.—When the sight is normal and when one regards a letter of the Snellen Card with a white center, the white part of the letter appears whiter than it really is and whiter than the rest of the card. I see the word Holes for this illusion. This is an illusion which can be demonstrated quite readily by covering over the black part of a letter with a screen with an opening slightly smaller than the white part of the letter, which permits the center of the letter to be observed. When this is done the white center of the letter is the same shade of whiteness as the rest of the card. Some people can imagine the illusion when it is described to them. When reading fine print the spaces between the lines appear whiter than the rest of the card, but only when the vision is good. As a general rule when one can imagine these white spaces between the lines are whiter than the rest of the card, Holes, the black appears more perfectly black and the letters can be read with normal vision. Halos are imagined, not seen. Imagination of the illusion of the Halos is a quick cure of myopia and astig-matism, as well as other cases of imperfect sight.
I am annoyed with myself when I realize how many years it required before I had brains enough to notice the Halos. It seems to me that I must have been awfully stupid to have failed to have noticed them for such a long time. All persons who have normal sight are always able to demonstrate the Halos. All persons with imperfect sight are cured, temporarily or permanently, when they become able to imagine the Halos.
BLINKING AND RESTING THE EYES.—By blinking is meant frequent closing of the eyes. It is usually done so rapidly that it is not conspicuous. Many persons with normal sight have the illusion that they do not blink. They believe their eyes are always at rest and that their eyes are continually open all the time. When their attention is called to the fact it is usually readily demonstrated with persons with normal vision. In one case the patient was able to distinguish a small letter on the bottom line at twenty feet, 20/10. He was positive that he saw the letter, continuously. It was found by observing the movements of his eyes that he did two things. First: He closed and opened his eyes frequently, without being conscious of the fact. Secondly: He looked some distance away from the letter and back again and did it so quickly that he was not aware that he did it. The facts can also be demonstrated, perhaps more accurately, with the help of moving pictures. In all cases where the sight was normal, blinking occurred almost every second. In some seconds the eyes were opened and closed five times. Blinking occurs more frequently with the normal eye when the light is imperfect or when the conditions are unfavorable for perfect sight. When the light is good or the conditions most favorable for good sight, blinking occurs at less frequent intervals. Persons with imperfect sight do not rest their eyes as often as those with normal vision. When they are encouraged to blink more frequently their sight usually improves.

Stories from the Clinic
49: The Blind Girl
By Emily C. Lierman

LAST month I wrote about Anna, the blind girl becoming able to obtain relaxation of her whole body and the muscles of her throat by practicing the swing, with the blinking, which prevented the staring [link]. When I first handed her a test card and asked her if she could see a letter on the card, she answered: "I cannot see letters, I do not know the alphabet. I can only read and write by the sense of touch with the Braille System." Here was another problem. Of course, there was the test card with large and small E's pointing in different directions, which could be used to test the sight, but I had other plans. I wanted Anna to learn to read and write and give up the Braille System entirely. Her sister was called upon to help me. She was directed to cut out of cardboard, letters about the size and thickness of the big C on the test card. Then she was to paint them black and bring them with her next time she came.

Her sister had good news for me when I saw them again. She had taught Anna some of the letters by the sense of touch. For instance a letter T had a straight piece of cardboard at the top and another straight piece through the center. A letter C was round with an opening to the right.

We had made a good start I thought, on this, her fourth visit. I handed her a test card, blank side up. At first she could not tell whether there was print on the card or not, because she was very much excited in telling me how quickly she was learning the alphabet. This made her nervous and she strained. I got her busy with palming and while she was doing this, I told her a story. I find that all patients enjoy this, especially when they visualize or follow me closely in what I am saying. I want to say right here that I am a poor story teller but anyhow I do the best I can. If I remember a good short story from a magazine, I tell that, or I might tell about a patient treated by me who had obtained good results. After she had rested and relaxed for ten minutes, I asked her to remove her hands from her eyes and look at the card. She remarked: "It looks all white to me. There seems to be no print on the card at all." I told her she was right. I then turned the card right side out, and as she did the long swing of her body, moving her head with her shoulders from side to side and blinking her eyes with the movement of her body, she pointed to the 200-line letter on the card in her hand and said: "That's a letter C." Can any one imagine the extent of my happiness?

For twenty-five years she was blind, born that way. Never had more than a slight perception of light. Her sister forgot where she was and screamed, "My sister can see." Anna and I cried with joy. We did not talk, just held each others hands. I whispered in her ear: "Anna, thank God with me, will "you?"

"Yes, you bet," says she, "I'm doing that now."

We got busy again, and this time I told her to move the card from side to side, and imagine her body swinging opposite. She kept this up for several minutes and then she saw the R and B of the 100-line of letters.

On September 9th, 1922, after one month's treatment, her vision had improved considerably for the test card. She had to hold the card about an inch from her eyes in order to see the letters. She was directed to place her finger under the letter which she tried to see, then to move her head slowly from left to right and in this way she saw the letters of the 70 line, one at a time. Before Anna left the office that day she said she had wonderful news for me. While walking in the street with her sister she saw moving objects for the first time in her life. In Brooklyn they have Hobble Skirt trolley cars with an entrance in the center of the car. Others have an entrance on one end only. Anna was able to see the difference from the sidewalk and told her sister when a car passed by, just what kind it was. She actually saw a letter-box fastened to a lamp-post and walked towards it without assistance, to place a letter in the box. Later, Anna's sister cut out figures from one to ten, of cardboard, and she learned to tell them by the sense of touch.

On September 16, 1922, she began to read the 50 line letters of the test card at one inch from her eyes. The first on that line is a figure five. Anna puzzled over that for awhile and then she said: "The first one does not look like a letter at all, it looks very much like a figure five sister has made of cardboard for me."

I cannot express in writing, how happy she felt when she realized that she had seen the figure five correctly. I placed myself in the sun and immediately she saw a beaded medallion on my gown and also remarked how my beaded necklace sparkled in the sun.

The next thing was to teach her colors. As she never had more than a slight perception of light, the difference between bright red and bright green meant nothing to her. One day while walking with her sister, Anna stopped in front of a store where electrical supplies were displayed. In one section of this shop window was an electric heater and in the center of it was shown a red light. Anna drew her sister's attention to this and remarked: "Isn't that an angry looking thing?" When she related this to me she said: "I can get a pretty good mental picture of Satan now, since I saw that angry light."

By September 30th, she had learned all the letters of the alphabet and all the figures. Her sister very patiently taught her various colors, so we had many things to work with in helping Anna to restore her sight. I owe so much of our success in her treatment so far, to her dear little-sister Ella. (To be continued.)

Preventing Imperfect Sight in School Children
By Elizabeth Hansen

[Editor's Note.—The future of our country is in the hands of the children. The future of the children is in the hands of the teachers. I wish there were more teachers like Miss Hansen. She has solved a problem in her school of the prevention of myopia in school children by my methods. How she overcame the usual prejudice of the Board of Health and the Board of Education is interesting.
I recommend her methods not only to all teachers, but also to all parents.
The following letter from Miss Hansen is worth while:]

308 North Prospect Ave.,
Park Ridge, Ill.
Dear Dr. Bates:
I knew you would be interested in the children's compositions—they are wonderful, and the children were just as alive as their compositions.
Four times a day, immediately after the opening of school in the morning, two recesses and noon, the school victrola is rolled in. classical music by piano, violin, orchestra or the principal song from the broadcasted opera is played. The disc chosen is played all week. They were taught to palm and why. Sometimes they are to use their imagination on the music and weave that imagination into a three-sentence paragraph. Sometimes the memory is brought into play and we have created on paper, sunsets that were as impressionistic and brilliant as any of that class of painters could produce.
Another time "Crack the Whip" was used. The papers were full of life and motion. Anything that they are interested in and touch with their daily activities, brings the best results.
Ten or fifteen minutes at noon we wanted to see how well they could read the Test Card, and the few who could stand 30 to 36 feet away and read the 10-ft. line were very proud of their eagle eyes, as they called them.
We kept a record of the improvements. Their own stories tell more plainly how much they enjoyed it, what it did for them and others. These children are now in another room and palm when they feel the need of it. The effect is wonderful.
Less Blanche was most resentful when she first came to the room, about palming. She would-do very little work, she had severe pains in eyes and head. Would not palm because it hurt worse when she tried, but with much persuasion she DID try. She couldn't imagine anything at all, couldn't bring to mind a story or flower or—well—nothing. I asked her what she liked to think about when she closed her eyes. A mourning veil, belonging to her mother—she was morbid to the last degree. Still the feeling between us was strained. This, of course, could not go on. We had a quiet talk, when she told me that she didn't intend to give up her glasses and believed that was what I wanted her to do. After much talking she finally believed and remembered that such a thing as glasses was never spoken of except to ask the children not to wear them when palming. But the thing that gave her faith in me was when I told her that her imaginative powers in her story work were improved a 100%, and that if she would keep up the palming in school (not at home) until June, wear her glasses by all means; they were hers and she had a right to them, that I would bet her a quarter she would believe in me. The case was dropped. I just noticed that she palmed and looked happier.
In the early part of June we were at the Art Institute when she sidled up to me and asked if I had noticed anything. I said, "Well, yes, you look more cheerful—you haven't your glasses—are they broken?" She took my hand and confided to me that she did not need them any more. We tested her the next day and she was right—she could see normally. What is more-she has taken two prizes for composition work. One of $2.50, a "Thrift Essay," and the other of $100.00 from the Herald-Examiner on the Spark Plug contest and composition.
Now this stuff is just scratched off hurriedly and if you wish to use it, I will be glad to make it more intelligent.
Most cordially yours,
ELIZABETH D. HANSEN.

[These we the compositions of which Miss Hansen spoke. We picked a few of the most interesting from the fifty submitted. They are copied exactly as written, and we know they will appeal to our readers the way they did to us.]

SELECTED ESSAYS ON PALMING BY SCHOOL CHILDREN

Palming has helped me a great deal in my studies and has given me my beautiful imaginations come to me when I am palming. If we did not have palming four times a day I would not get a hundred in numbers from our principal.
The first time Miss Hansen told us about palming I went home and I let my mother palm for thirty minutes and she did it every day and hasn't any glasses to wear, and I sure was happy to see my mother without glasses. It was just like wearing crutches on the eyes.

My eyesight is as strong as electricity, I could see very far in the distance and what do you suppose did it. Palming; which my teacher taught me a year and a half ago in room seventh. Palming is the best to do for your eyes so as not to wear glasses.

I have strengthened my imagination and vision by using the exercise of palming. It has helped me in many of my studies which were very hard for me to learn. I have won a prize in the Noel State Rank Compositions. It is all I ever to palming.

Palming has done to me a great deal. My eyes are better than they were two years ago. Miss Hansen is the only teacher in the Carpenter School teaching palming.

I taught my mother to palm. One day she said, "Peter go and buy me medicine for the eyes," and I said, "You don't need any medicine, do this, put your two hands to your eyes and shut your eyes and only see black." She did that and I went out. After one hour I came back. I saw her still palming. I said, Ma, how are your eyes? She said, "They are all right now and so I didn't buy any medicine."

While I was palming I was thinking how to do my English. I was wishing for my passing mark. I was willing to try my best For the'next grade. We made many mistakes in our English. The Snellen Test Card made our brain think a little better by palming. I thank you, Mr. Bates, for the Snellen Test Card and the palming that the teacher taught us to do.

Palming has increased my eyesight every time I palm. It has made my brains stronger. Whenever I am tired or my head aches I just have to palm and think pleasant thoughts when I am all right.
My father who is not so well is not strong. Last night my father's eyesight was so poor that he had to wear glasses even though they are his enemies. I came home and told him how to palm. He has palmed five minutes every night and now he can see plainly and is much stronger.

Palming is a great helper to me. When I came to room six our teacher Miss Hansen taught me how to palm, and to this day I don't have to wear glasses any more.
One day my uncle told me his eyesight was getting weaker every day and I told him about our teacher how she taught me how to palm. He did the same and his eyesight improved.

Miss Hansen is the only teacher that gives palming in the Carpenter School. Since I have been in Room six my eyes are better. Miss Hansen tested my eyes a few times and I improved a great deal.
My mother had a headache. I told her to put her hands before her eyes, and not let any light get in. She did this and she felt better. My elder sister was wearing glasses, I told her to palm for twenty-five minutes. She did this for one week. She went to the doctor and he was surprised because her eyes were cured and he said, "You don't have to wear glasses any more."

Palming has improved my imagination and eyesight. It also helps me clear my mind, which I call "Making my mind a file and not a pile." What I mean is that it helps me not to forget. Before I knew anything about palming my eyesight was very poor and I had to strain if I wanted to read. From this straining I had many headaches, but now I even can read fine print and I don't know how a headache feels like.
[Editor's Note.—Mrs. Lierman, Dr. Bates' assistant, was so impressed with Miss Hansen's letter and so touched to think that there were teachers who did take an interest in the school children's welfare, that she immediately sat down and wrote the following letter to Miss Hansen:]
Feb. 12, 1924.
My dear Miss Hansen:—
When I came to my office this morning Dr. Bates told me about your wonderful letter and asked me if I would like to read it. I want you to know that I feel just as he does about that letter. It is the most wonderful letter I have ever read in my life. Perhaps you do not realize it but there are a million words in between the lines of your letter that I understand very well. They are in your heart and you are able to give what a child needs so much, your wonderful love and understanding.
Your letter reminded me of a little girl of long ago. She was a sickly little girl and while her grandmother, who loved and cared for her, was in the home, she was happy but after the grandmother had left her home, she was a very lonely little girl. She had three brothers, one older than herself. She also had a stepfather who did not understand children at all. Her mother, while she was very tender and self-sacrificing, had to neglect her children a great deal in order to be the bread-winner of the household. This little girl knew nothing but an Industrial School where there were five teachers altogether and a Principal. Every one of these teachers loved her as well as did the Principal. When this little girl graduated from this day school she became panic-stricken as she walked into the big Public School to the first grade of the Grammar. She was sickly but did not complain much because one little stranger after another kept coming into her home and that meant more burdens to bear.
With a great deal of difficulty this little girl went on from the first to the second grade of the Grammar and as she was forced to care for the babies after school hours and also in the morning before she left home for school, she did not have the time to do her home studies as other children did. There was no one complaining because she was afraid her stepfather would scold and she feared him very much. She failed in the second grade and had to stay there another term and in both terms she had the same teacher. This teacher was just your opposite, very short in her words, very strict and very unforgiving. She wore glasses and she would stare out of her. eyes in such a way that most of the children in her class, strained as the little girl did.
Her last recollection of school days was a lesson in History. Two girls used one history book to read from. The little girl who held her book with her pinched her forearm as she sat very close and instead of the little girl crying out loud with pain, she giggled. The teacher asked who laughed. She immediately raised her hand. The teacher ordered her to the front of the class and told them how stupid the little girl was and as an ex-ample to the rest she sent the little girl out to the Principal. The little girl had to wait outside on a bench where she was entirely forgotten, until the janitor found her and let her out after five p. m. She told the truth at home and another punishment awaited her by her stepfather. The little girl never went to school again.
She was next sidled to a family of ten children and whenever a new baby came she was appointed mother to the next youngest child. As the little girl grew up she knew very little else but to mother the little ones who loved her so much. There is much to tell, but this little girl never knew that she could do anything worth while outside of giving her love to little ones, until she had grown to womanhood and married and then some-one told her that she could really do something worth while. As a patient, she came to Dr. Bates and after he cured her imperfect sight and other troubles, he inspired her to help him in this wonderful work. He has been her teacher, not only in Better Eyesight but also to study other things as well. The little girl I started to tell you about, is myself.
How I wish I could be near you every day and watch you as you give your love and your life to the children in your change.
You cannot understand now just what you are doing for those children but later on in life they will think back to you and remember all tfp wonderful things you did for them and how you cured their imperfect sight. Is there anything more wonderful in this world than to make people see? You are not only curing the children's eyes but you are instilling,in their minds more wonder-ful things than better sight. I cannot say too many times to you, God bless you.
When you come to New York please come right straight to me because I love you.
Sincerely yours,
EMILY C. LIERMAN.

Minutes of the January Meeting
By May Secor, Recording Secretary

THE January meeting of the Better Eyesight League was held at 383 Madison Avenue, on January eighth; a discussion of the various phases of the Bates Method was followed by the annual business meeting of the league.
Among the clinical cases reported were two of special interest. A high school boy who was suffering from myopia was relieved, after one treatment, to such an extent that he was able to dispense with three pairs of glasses which he had been using. An acute case of divergent squint, in a high school girl, was noticeably relieved in consequence of two treatments. Dr. Achorn spoke of the important rifles which relaxation, memory, and eclipsing play in restoring normal vision.
Dr. Bates suggested:
A. Methods for the elimination of myopia in school children, without the use of glasses.
1. In each class room have a Snellen card hanging where it will be plainly visible to the pupils.
2. Have each pupil read the Snellen card several times daily.
3. Have the pupils palm and swing daily.
4. Since perfect sight is contagious, and imperfect sight is contagious, consider it your duty as a teacher, to acquire normal eyesight without the use of glasses.
Note:—Nurses, osteopathic physicians, and medical physicians will find that the acquisition of normal eyesight without the use of glasses will render their work more effective.
B. Points to be considered by all readers.
1. Imperfect sight is the result of hard work; effort produces strain; perfect sight is attained with ease; lack of effort produces relaxation.
2. Tension indicates imperfect relaxation; stare, effort, trying to see—these interfere with perfect vision.
3. Under strain one cannot imagine, remember, nor see perfectly.
C. To read diamond print:
a. Hold the print not more than twelve inches from the eyes; then move it closer.
b. To eliminate staring, move the head and eyes while reading; also, move the card or book.
During the annual business meeting reports were presented by the treasurer, Mrs. Marsden, and by the secretary; both reports were encouraging, and urged the members to just forth, during the coming year, even greater effort to advance the work of the league. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, Miss Kathleen E. Hurty; Vice-President, Clinton E. Achorn, D.O.; Recording Secretary, May Secor; Corresponding Secretary, Mr. Nicholas A. Weiss; Treasurer, Mrs. William R. Marsden

Next Meeting of League

Miss Secor s report is very interesting and encouraging. Much benefit and helpful suggestions are received from these meetings, and the officers do their utmost to make the meetings pleasant.
The March meeting falls on the 11th, and we incite everybody to turn out, to make it the usual success.

Announcement

Due to a typographical error the January and February issues of the Better Eyesight Magazine quoted the bound volumes as being sold for $3.00. This should have read $3.50.

Previous Issue
THTWTHTWTapPrd Issue
THTWTHTWAll To Contents Page