August 1924

Better Eyesight

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

August, 1924

The Prevention of Myopia

THE August number of Better Eyesight is a school number devoted almost exclusively to the problem of the cure or prevention of nearsightedness in school children. The great value of the method as a preventive is emphasized by the fact that the vision of all school children has always improved, and when the vision is improved of course imperfect sight is prevented. It is well to remember that my method for the prevention of myopia in school children is the only one that is a success. It has been in continuous use for more than twenty years in the public schools of New York and other cities. Once daily or oftener the children read the card, first with one eye and then with the other, covering each eye alternately with the palm of the hand in such a way as to shut out all the light without any pressure on the eyeball. Teachers who have studied my book or have been patients find it an advantage to have the children palm five minutes three or four times a day. They claim that palming quiets the children and gives them an improved mental efficiency, which is a great help to their memory and imagination as well as their sight. I believe other children should be taught how to palm, swing, blink and improve their vision of the Snellen Test Card. The method is of great value to young children in the kindergartens, children in the high schools, and should be practiced by students and teachers in colleges and universities. In the military school and naval academy the method should be employed for the prevention of imperfect sight.

School Children
By W. H. Bates, M.D.

MOST school children when they enter school have good vision. After some months or a year many of them acquire imperfect sight, others do not. It is interesting to compare the facts connected with children who acquire imperfect sight with the facts connected with children who do not acquire imperfect sight. It is important to consider the problem of the teachers. It is a fact that some teachers' who do not wear glasses seldom have children acquire imperfect sight in their classes. Teachers who wear glasses or who have imperfect sight, have a large percentage of children with acquired poor vision while under their care. It is not necessary to theorize on this matter. It is sufficient to know that teachers who have imperfect sight are under a great mental and nervous strain. This strain is contagious. After children are transferred to a room in which the teacher has normal vision, many of the pupils regain their normal sight again.
It should be emphasized that teachers wearing glasses or teachers with imperfect sight should not be allowed a license to teach. There is a school of several thousand children in New York where many of the teachers are wearing glasses.
All the children who are unmanageable, whose scholarship is so low that they can not keep up with their grade, are transferred to special classes. The teacher who was able to handle these misfits without any apparent trouble whatever had normal vision and her temperament had a quieting influence on the children. Ten years ago this teacher introduced my method for the cure and prevention of imperfect sight in school children. The results that she obtained are very important. In a few weeks all her children with imperfect sight obtained improved or normal vision. Some of the children had the truant habit. One boy was under the supervision of the Truant Officer three or four days a week. The teacher had him practice with the Snellen Test Card which improved his vision very much and relieved his headaches so that he became able to study his lessons without discomfort. The practice with the Snellen Test Card was a great relief to his nerves and gave him more benefit than running away from school. He became an enthusiastic pupil and his truant propensities were permanently cured.
Many of her children complained that they could not read the letters on the blackboard and when they tried it gave them a headache. After using the Snellen Card the headaches disappeared, their vision improved and they were able to read the writing on the blackboard without discomfort. To me it was a remarkable fact that every one of her children was cured with the help of the Snellen Test Card and the cure of their imperfect sight was accompanied with a cure of their eye and other discomforts.
Some school teachers wearing glasses for imperfect sight were able to obtain a cure without glasses by the help obtained by reading my book. Now it is an encouraging fact that patients soon after they are cured without glasses have a great desire to help others, and the more they try to help others, the greater the benefit to themselves. One teacher was so enthusiastic that she not only cured all the children in her own class but encouraged other teachers to send their children to her, who had imperfect sight. Her practice increased to such an extent and produced such a favorable impression upon the principal that she was allowed four periods a week in which to devote all her time to the cure of the children.
A kindergarten teacher reported some wonderful results obtained in two cases of squint. Both of these children were wearing glasses for the benefit of their eyes but they obtained no decided or permanent benefit. As these children did not know the letters of the alphabet a card was used by the teacher which had printed on it large and small letters E which pointed in various directions. When the children had good sight they were able to tell in which direction each letter E was pointed, either up, down, to the right or to the left. The card was placed about fifteen feet away from the children. Each child would stand, cover one eye with the palm of the hand and regard the chart with the other eye. If the pupil could not see the direction in which the small letters were pointing, with the open eye, this eye was covered also with the palm of the hand. In a few seconds, one hand was removed for a moment, just long enough for the pupil to determine which way the E pointed; but if the child failed, the eye was again palmed for a few moments or part of a minute. This process was repeated until the pupil became able to tell in which direction the letters E on the bottom line pointed.
One time the two children with squint developed measles and were sent to the hospital for two weeks where they did not wear their glasses. It is well known by physicians and others that measles is often hard on the eyes. Some children acquire imperfect sight during an attack of measles and this imperfect sight may continue during the lifetime of the patient The teacher was very much gratified to learn that in spite of this handicap the two children with squint returned to school with their eyes no worse than before.
The teacher held the two heads of each child in turn and had the child look up and swing for a time with her. Then thyl teacher would look at the cheeks of the child and remark on the condition of the redness of the face following the exercise, avoiding any mention of the eyes. The children were led to believe that the exercise was not for the eyes at all but just to see if it gave them a better color in their cheeks. This was quite important because if attention was called to the eyes of the children who had squint, the squint was very apt to become worse. When the eyes were ignored the practice of the swinging always improved the squint and these children were soon cured. The teacher was so encouraged by her results that she recommended the method very strongly to other teachers and to the parents of the children.
When a child first enters school it is well to keep in mind that children in school have a great many new and unexpected things to contend with. They are brought in contact with many other children who are new, strange and different. Their own teachers and the teachers in the other classes have an effect upon the child. Going to and from school, the child meets many strangers and these strangers have an effect upon the mind of the child. Children are great imitators. They learn to walk by watching others walk. They learn to talk and play from the influence of other children. Being great imitators they absorb many bad habits as well as new and strange ones. While it is a good thing for a child to be taught how to practice habits of decency and order at the same time they are absorbing a great many habits which are an injury to them. If a child has a nervous teacher with imperfect sight, who is constantly straining her eyes to see, the child would be very apt to imitate the eyestrain of the teacher. If, on the other hand, however, the teacher has good eyesight and good nerves, the child may absorb or acquire habits of great benefit. It is well to emphasize the bad effect of the strain of a teacher with imperfect sight and nerves upon the mind of the child. We may say that children in schools are exposed to influences both good and bad which are different from those in the home. Sometimes the influences in the schools are more beneficial than what the child meets with at home.

Stories from the Clinic
54: School Number
By Emily C. Lierman

WHILE our clinic at present is not as large as it was at the Harlem Hospital, we have very interesting cases, and some of them are school children.
One little chap, aged seven years, whose name is Fredrick, is one of the brightest boys I have known. His father is one of the carpenters who helped make the partitions in our office. We were treating patients long before our present office building was completed. He therefore had the opportunity to see some of the patients as they came to our clinic, and also saw the patients leave the office after their first treatment. One day he remarked that some cases appeared so much improved after only one treatment, that it seemed as though a miracle had been performed.
He, being a poor man, I offered to help him or any of his family, if they at any time needed treatment for their eyes.
"Oh!" he said, "I have two little boys but they have nothing wrong with their eyes."
But he thanked me just the same and said he would remember my offer.
On April 12, 1924, just a year after I had spoken to him, his son Fredrick, whom I have already mentioned, came with his mother. How I wish I had a son like him, or a couple of them. He was very attentive while I was talking, and his blue eyes looked into mine. I think he was speculating whether I was all right or not. He seemed to feel very much at home with me right from the start, so I had no difficulty in improving his vision. His mother told me that the school nurse had sent him home with a note saying that he needed glasses. His father refused to get them and suggested that the mother bring him to me. As Fredrick answered my questions he looked directly at me and there was no sign of a frown or strain of any kind, but I did notice that he listened without blinking, for more than two minutes or longer. As the normal eye blinks unconsciously every few seconds, I soon realized what his trouble was and that he could be cured in a short time. Dr. Bates examined him with the ophthalmoscope and said there was nothing organically wrong with his eyes, only eyestrain.
The letter test card troubled him at first, so I had him read the card with E's pointing in different directions. As he looked at the card, his facial expression became entirely changed. His forehead was a mass of wrinkles as he tried to see in what direction the E's were pointing. His vision with both eyes was 10/20. With each eye separately he read 10/20 right and 10/30 left. I left him for half an hour after I had told him to palm and to be sure not to open his eyes until I said so. When I returned to him, I tested his vision again and he read 10/10 with each eye separately and blinking after seeing each letter, with no sign of a wrinkle or change in his face whatever. His mother purchased a test card and promised to help the boy with his eyes every day at home, before and after school. She was told to bring Fredrick to the clinic again in a few weeks. On May 3, 1924, I saw him again and he appeared very happy. His mother very proudly told me that his report card showed the highest marks in all his school work. I wondered why Fredrick did not look toward his mother while she was praising him. I did not have to wait very long, however, to find out the reason. She had warned him before they arrived that she would tell me how careless he was with his stockings, and he did not wish me to know. Yes, Fredrick had only one fault. But only one, said his mother. There is not a day passes without his mother discovering holes in the knees of his stockings. Of course, I said this was a terrible crime, but putting glasses on him would have been a worse crime. Fredrick gained a point when his mother smiled on him. The school nurse who had ordered him to get glasses, noticed that Fredrick did not frown any more. He sees the blackboard at any distance now without trouble. My little patient was really cured in one visit.
Two high school girls are also getting good results in the clinic. Their teacher had trouble with her own eyes and had cured herself with the help of Dr. Bates' book. Later she became a student, and took a private course of instruction from Dr. Bates, just because she realized what a great help she would be to her pupils in school. She has been successful in benefiting the sight of a great many school children and feels that it is all worth while. One of the two girls mentioned is named Rita. She suffered with progressive myopia and for two years her sight was steadily getting worse. The whole card seemed gray and blurred to her, the letters were indefinite. After palming for five or ten minutes at a time, her vision always improved. In six months' time she became able to read 12/30 on the test card with both eyes. She also sees the blackboard clearer and better than she has for over two years. When Rita's teacher came with her on her first visit to the clinic, she was much surprised to see her do so well with the test card for the first time.
The other girl named Erma, has divergent squint of her left eye. When she first came, which was six months ago, the left eye was turned decidedly to the left. When she covered her right eye, she could not read the test card very well with the left. It was difficult for Erma to keep her head straight as she tried to read the card. After she had palmed both eyes for ten or fifteen minutes, the letters of the card cleared up and now she reads some of the letters on the ten line, eight feet away from the card. She has become able to keep her head straight when she reads with the squinting eye. Her left eye becomes perfectly straight when she covers her right eye, but it turns out again when reading with both eyes. The squint however is very much better and she is determined to keep on with the treatment until she is cured.

Palming Compositions
By The Pupils of Miss Hansen, Chicago

1. Palming is one of the works that has helped me in room six. While writing a story it would help me in my imagination. When I first came to room six Arithmetic was very hard for me to learn, but now it is as easy as punk.
2. About a month ago I told my sister Annie to start palming. She has glasses and I would not like her to have them any longer. She has started, and it looks like she will soon have eyes that will not need glasses.
3. Palming and the Snellen Card did me a great deal of good. It gave me more strength in my imagination, and I can do my work much better every day. I am not sorry in knowing how to palm, because in the beginning I did not like to put my hands over my eyes.
4. I told my mother to palm, it would help her, but she did not believe me. One day I said, Mother, Palm. She said, All Right. Finally a week later she could see clearly. She said, "I am glad I did what you told me."
5. Palming is a wonderful treatment for the eyes. It has done much during one and a half years. It has strengthened our imagination, rested our eyes, and kept them from wearing glasses.
6. We have a palming lesson four times a day. While we are palming we have a little music to think of something pleasant. It has cured many headaches from some of us. It is spreading everywhere, and we see lots of people doing it now.
7. It is very good for me. It settled my mind. I do not get so excited, and can add my columns easier. I can palm, if I get nervous.

Report of the League Meetings
By May Secor, Secretary

THE June meeting of the Better Eyesight League was held on June tenth, at 383 Madison Avenue. Many of the members had requested further practical work, and this was conducted by Dr. Bates, Miss Hurty and the secretary. The following exercises were practiced: palming, reading the Snellen card, reading fine print, and the long swing.
Miss Hurty offered the following suggestions for reading fine print: Look at the diamond type without trying to read the print; look at the white lines between the lines of print, and at the white spaces between the letters; move the head from right to left; select, on the Snellen card, a small letter which you can see well; close the eyes; when you remember the said small letter perfectly, look at a letter on the small card; see this letter moving just the width of the letter. It is helpful, also, to hold the small diamond type card between the forefinger and thumb of each hand, and, while reading it, to move the card from left to right, a distance equal to the width of one letter.
Dr. Bates spoke of the difficulty that some persons experience in recalling visual images of familiar persons and objects; Dr. Bates has found the drifting swing helpful in these cases. To practice the drifting swing, imagine that you are lying comfortably on your back in a canoe, floating down a stream; float on, and on, and on. This will facilitate visualizing by inducing relaxation. Dr. Bates described the "period" as a "small, perfectly black area which has no special size or form." One does not imagine the period perfectly unless one imagines it moving. The memory of the period has been found helpful in alleviating or preventing pain and fatigue, physical or mental

JULY MEETING

A regular meeting of the Better Eyesight League was held on July eighth, at 383 Madison Avenue. Miss Cecelia Eschbach, a kindergarten teacher of the Brooklyn Orphan Asylum, presented a report of her work with Dr. Bates' method. Miss Eschbach has relieved many cases of eyestrain, and has corrected two cases of squint. She offered the following suggestions for the daily kindergarten program:—
1. Rest periods to be spent palming.
2. Swinging and palming to be combined in a swinging game in which two children join hands and swing (music). Beneficial for all pupils. In cases of squint have children look at the ceiling while they swing.
3. Game with splints. Keep the E or "poe-hook" eye card hanging in the room. Have children sit at a table 10 or 15 feet from this eye card, and facing it. Request children to make a picture with splints of the fourth line (or any other line) of characters on the card. Train the children to palm whenever they have difficulty in seeing the characters on the card.
4. When "reading" this E card the child may indicate which way each "E" points by pointing the open hand in the same direction.
Miss Elizabeth Hansen, a Chicago teacher, also reported her eye work. She is thoroughly convinced that the Bates' Method should be introduced in all schools, because of its great educational value.
Dr. Achorn, vice-president of the League, spoke of the advisability of eliminating strain throughout the body, as well as in the eyes, in order to lessen fatigue. Dr. Achorn believes that permitting a reasonable amount of movement throughout the body, is comparable to blinking and shifting in order to relieve eyestrain. For this reason he advises an "alert" sitting posture.
The resignation of Miss Lillian Reicher, chairman of the program committee, was accepted with regret.

The Fairy Convention
By George Guild

THE fairies were holding their annual meeting in a large wood where many of them perched themselves on the branches of the trees and looked down on a large flat portion of ground covered with nice, soft, cool, green grass. The white fairy was unanimously elected to be the leader and chose for her assistant the black fairy and they both sat on a toadstool in the center of the open space where they could be seen by all. The white fairy made a speech of welcome and recommended that the first order of the evening would be a dance by all the fairies, and then they all danced in time with the white fairy. The white fairy swayed from side to side and whirled around on her toes waving her arms in all directions to all the fairies who danced with her and imitated her to the best of their ability. At first she danced slowly and then as she became warmed up she danced faster and faster until it made one dizzy to see her whirling around. The black fairy was able to keep up with her most of the time and the other fairies did the best they could, but there were none there who could do the things the white fairy performed. She kicked her feet higher than her head in front and smacked her shoulder blades when she kicked backwards and every time her foot hit a shoulder blade you could hear the sound all over the place. As the dance proceeded, one by one the fairies fell to the ground completely exhausted and in time they had all stopped. The applause was considerable, and it was not very long before the other fairies became anxious for fear the white fairy would do herself an injury by her exertions and so they called to her, they pleaded with her to stop and rest, which she finally did. Then the white fairy called on the others to tell in turn some of the good things that they had done during the year. One told how she visited a sick child who was dying from diphtheria and when nobody was looking she danced on the chest of the sick child which stimulated the little one so much that she smiled. When she smiled she began to breathe better and in a little while, much to the surprise of the doctor, the child recovered.
Another fairy told about a drunken father beating his wife and children almost every day. One of his little girls came out to the woods one day and although she did not see any fairies she called them softly and then very loudly to come and help her and so they did. Her father became very much frightened the next time he started to drink a glass of whiskey for he saw on the edge of the glass three red devils who were apparently pouring poison into his whiskey. This worried him so much that he was not able to drink it When he throw the whiskey away the fairies appeared before him, bowed and smiled to him, which pleased and delighted him very much. He finally became a loving father. But when he told his friends about the fairies they laughed at him and said that he must have been drunk or he would not have imagined such things. He had such a good time with the fairies when he behaved himself that he did not care whether he imagined it or whether it was true. He was quite certain that he felt very much better when he pleased the fairies.
Similar stories were told by many of the other fairies and then there came calls for the white fairy to tell what she had done. She told the story of a teacher who was very loving and kind and conscientious who had a hard time teaching her class. Most of the children had poor sight. Many of them had poor memories or suffered from headaches and pain and the teacher did not know what to do. One day she took a walk in the woods and rested her tired eyes looking at the green and almost unconsciously called out:
"Nobody helps me; I wonder if the fairies would help me?" The little white fairy heard and appeared before her, dancing and moving around until the teacher, tired out, laid down and went to sleep, and all through her sleep the white fairy talked to her and told her what to do, and these are some of the things she told her to do:
"When your children are tired, common sense will suggest that they ought to rest. When they stare at the blackboard, the harder they stare, the more they strain the lens they see. Every teacher knows that or should know it. Do not have them stare; let them look from one place to another, keep moving."
And so the next day the teacher had the children close their eyes and cover them with the palms of their hands so as to rest them, and when she tested their sight she found that it was benefited. When the children complained of pain and headaches she would have them close their eyes and palm four times a day. Every day the children would cover their eyes with the palms of their hands for five minutes or longer while the victrola played some popular music. The benefit was great, because all the children obtained normal sight and became able to study their lessons without fatigue, headache or pain. They enjoyed going to school. When the other teachers saw the benefits of this kind of treatment they practiced it and they also got good results.
Then the white fairy appealed to the other fairies and beseeched them to help the eyes and the nerves and the minds of the little children in the public schools and in other schools. All the fairies applauded the white fairy for a long, long time, and she bowed her head, and the black fairy would bow her head and all the other fairies bowed their heads, and every time they bowed their heads down the trees and the things they were not looking at seemed to go up. When they raised their heads upwards the trees and everything moved down. It was such a pleasant sensation to see those trees moving up and down that they kept it up for a long, long time, and I guess some of them are doing it yet. They found that when they looked to the right the trees seemed to move to the left. And when they looked to the left the trees seemed to move to the right This was also a very pleasant feeling. They kept this up also for some time. They became very happy and very enthusiastic and had a beautiful time.

The Eye Class in Erasmus Hall
By George J. Weiss, Pupil

AIDING my fellow pupils in the eye class at Erasmus Hall High School has proved very interesting to me. There is no end to the little demonstrations that are in themselves proofs of Dr. Bates' method.
In one case, a boy who could only read at ten feet the line that is normally read at forty feet, was surprised to find that he was able to read the ten-foot line at ten feet. This came about in an unusual manner. The boy, whose name is Fred, was doing some chart work with me when I noticed him bending slightly forward and trying to see the letters. I knew that it would be useless for him to continue in such fashion, so I had him close his eyes after reading each letter. This eased him a great deal and he was able to read more than he expected. Fred became anxious again and tried to see all the letters on the bottom line without closing his eyes. I knew to let him go on that way would do him more injury than good. He gradually relaxed while I talked to him, and when he accidentally turned to the chart he saw all the letters on the ten-foot line at ten feet. This was a great revelation to him, for he not only proved the statement with his own eyes, but it taught him to stop trying to see.
Nearly everyone who comes to us has some fault which is the cause of his poor sight. This fault is sometimes discovered the first week, and usually no progress is made until the fault is found and corrected, as in the case of Fred. Many of our pupils stare, and as faults are mostly habit, so is staring.
It sometimes happens that they do not realize they are staring, and when they come to the next lesson they wonder why they have made no progress. This fault is always corrected by practicing the exercises regularly and conscientiously. We have found that the pupils who do no are always the quickest to be restored to normal sight.

Reminders for Summer Eye Practice
By Kathleen E. Harty

Miss Harty distributed these instructions to her patients for use during the summer. These are the fundamentals of Dr. Bates' method and are important to bear in mind at all seasons.
Palming—Do this at least three times a day for not less than five minutes each time. Always palm a few minutes just before going to sleep.
In palming best results are obtained when the whole body is comfortable and relaxed. While palming let the imagination play with pleasant scenes and let your mind drift lazily. Never follow a definite train of thought.
Long Swing—Practice this as often as possible. Keep on easy, lazy, rhythmical motion. Things should appear to move in the opposite direction.
Snellen Card—Practice with the card at least twice daily, using the fine print, your memory of a letter, a short swing, blinking, etc., to help you see the letters on the card.
Sun[y]Eat the sun shine on your closed eyelids for short intervals. Choose preferably the early morning sunlight. It is the light rays which benefit the eyes rather than the heat rays. The sun loses some of its effect when it comes through glass.
Blinking—Normal eyes blink constantly. If you have unconsciously formed the habit of staring, practice the quick blinking exercise in order to overcome this tendency. Practice it often.
General Directions—Try to see things moving all day long.
Never make an effort to focus. Let things come to you.
Do not make a task of your eyes exercises. Make a game out of improving your vision.
If you get a chance, teach someone else. It will help you.
Never let a feeling of strain continue. Stop and practice one of the methods of relaxation. Let me hear from you at least once during the summer.

Aim to Cure One Child

FOR the month of August the following School Numbers will be sold for 20c. instead of 30c. The titles of the most important articles are listed below:

* AUGUST, 1920 [link]
The Cure of Imperfect Sight in School Children
Save the Children's Eyes—Editorial
Imperfect Sight Contagious—W. H. Bates, M.D.
School Children at the Clinic—Emily C. Lierman
The Snellen Test Card in Newton—U. G. Wheeler (Supt.)

AUGUST, 1921 [link]
Children May Improve Their Sight by Consciously Doing the Wrong Thing
Sight-saving in the School Room—Edith Gavin (teacher) My Experience in Treating Myopia School Children at the Clinic
Better Eyesight in North Bergen—M. F. Hunted (Supt.)

AUGUST, 1922 [link]
School Children's Eyes
College Men Fitted for the Army
Many School Children are Helped at the Clinic
Work of League Producing Results

AUGUST, 1923 [link]
The Snellen Test Card
Hyperemetropia in School Children
What the Silver Jubilee Omitted
A Game to Cure Stage Fright

* Particularly instructive.

Any reader desiring further information relative to helping the children will write this office. We hope that when school begins in the Fall every reader will have one cured child to boast about. It isn't difficult: Children want to leave off their glasses. They follow instructions without question and their improvement is usually so rapid that it surprises the instructor. Dr. Bates is interested in the children and he is willing to answer questions and give advice through this magazine.

Let us help you to cure them.

Previous Issue
THTWTHTTHP aPrint Issue
THTWTHTWAW To Contents Page