July 1924

Better Eyesight

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

July, 1924

Curable Cases

PATIENTS wearing glasses for the relief of imperfect sight may expect better vision after they are cured than they ever had before with glasses. Adults who have good distant vision but require glasses after middle life, for reading, are also curable without glasses. Such patients, although they may read very well with glasses, complain that, as a rule, they must hold the page at one distance in order to read with the best vision. This reading distance is usually about twelve inches. Some cases require one pair of glasses for reading books or newspapers, but cannot see clearly at a greater distance without another pair of glasses. Musicians especially find that glasses that give them good vision for reading books are useless to them for reading music or for playing the piano. To see closer than twelve inches may require still another pair of glasses. To see more distant objects may require still another pair. Some of my patients have shown me numerous pairs of glasses, each one adapted for certain specific distances. It is a great relief to such cases to be cured, because then they are able, not only to see perfectly at the distance without glasses, but they can read the fine print as well at six inches as they can further off. The eye with normal sight is able to change its focus at will for all distances without any discomfort whatever.

Patients with cataract, glaucoma and other diseases of the eyes may not be able to see even with glasses. When they are cured by my methods they become able to see normally in all kinds of light, in a bright light or in a dim light. Pain, fatigue and other discomforts of the eyes are all relieved.

Practical Suggestions

By W. H. Bates, M.D.

MANY people complain that they are so busy they do not have the time or opportunity to practice my methods with the Snellen Test Card for the cure of imperfect sight without glasses. While the Snellen Test Card can be used with benefit, there are other objects which can also be used just as well. One can obtain perfect relaxation, perfect sight, easily, continuously by the use of a perfect memory. A familiar face can often be remembered perfectly when one fails to remember letters perfectly. Stenographers tell me that they can remember the characters of shorthand better than the letters of the Snellen Test Card. They have in this way obtained sufficient relaxation to correct or cure their nearsightedness without glasses. Such patients can practice when riding in a car, when walking on the street or when occupied in various ways.

If one can find some object which they can remember perfectly, whether it be a hammer of a carpenter, mortar or trowel used by a bricklayer, a brush by an artist, an instrument used by a surgeon, familiar things seen frequently, a cure without glasses may be obtained without the use of the Snellen Test Card.

I recall a case of a musician with a high degree of nearsightedness who complained that every time he looked at the Snellen Test Card he was tempted to strain and his vision was lowered. It was a remarkable fact that he was unable to remember a bar of music. He could play nothing whatever from memory but he could remember a very small area of a black note of music, an area as small as a period in an ordinary newspaper. By practicing with this period and nothing else, dodging any improvement in his sight by shifting frequently, his memory of the black period improved. If he imagined his vision for a distant object was improved he was compelled to look somewhere else as quickly as possible or else lose his memory of the period. He had to be very careful in order to keep the memory of a period to avoid testing his sight. When the period was remembered perfectly the relaxation which followed was very pleasant and he enjoyed the memory of the period at all times and in all places. He was a very skillful pianist and played very complicated pieces on sight, and told me that the memory of the period was a great benefit to his playing. He became so interested in his period that he said at no time of the day or night when he was awake did he forget his period; and, instead of being a distraction to him, it increased his efficiency, mental and physical, enormously. He became able to walk out at night, even when it rained, find his way about the streets and return home without trouble, which was something that he had never been able to do while he was wearing his glasses. His myopia was only partially corrected by concave 16 D. In less than two weeks he read the bottom line of the Snellen Test Card at twenty feet. Furthermore there was an astonishing improvement in his memory for music. He told me that he became able to read a complicated score of music, sit down and play it right off from memory, a feat which he had never been able to do previously with the most familiar music.

One patient, a lady with myopia, came to me from a distant Western city. She was very frank and told me that she was employed as a stenographer in an office and her income was very moderate indeed. She felt that her sight was gradually losing her because she required stronger glasses every year. She suffered much from fatigue, pain and other discomforts of her eyes.

Her first words to me were: "Doctor, I will go through any operation or any form of treatment and will do anything that you say in order to get cured quickly."

I tested her statement. While she was holding her glasses in her hand I turned to leave the room, and as I walked toward the door I said to her:

"Get rid of your glasses."

"How?" she asked.

I answered: "Smash them."

Before I reached the door I heard a crash, and turned around and saw that she had taken me literally by smashing the glasses on the arm of the chair.

She was cured in a few visits.

Another patient who did not have as much nearsightedness as the above asked me what she should do in order to get cured quickly. I told her that the most important thing at the start was to stop wearing her glasses and never put them on again even for any emergency. Then she started an argument and asked me all kinds of questions. What should she do when she went to the theatre when she couldn't see the stage? What should she do about her music when she couldn't see the notes without her glasses? She wanted to know, and insisted upon it, just how much time she would have to devote to practicing. She wanted to know if she would have to practice after she was cured. This was several years ago. She is still under treatment. At times she gets flashes of normal vision. Even now she will do things wrong although she knows it is wrong, apologize and promise to do better.

It is not faith that cures, but a proper use of the eyes.

Imperfect sight is not cured by a club. Mrs. Lierman in her Stories from the Clinic has repeatedly emphasized the value of kindness. In one case, a boy ten years of age was brought to the Clinic by his mother, who was very much excited, annoyed, indignant when the school nurse insisted that the boy should have glasses. The mother was out of patience with the boy because he had lost his eyesight. If he had lost his hat or his shoes she could not have been more excited or upset. Her first words to the boy came with a slap in the face.

"Mind what the lady says. Do as she tells you. Try as hard as you can. See those letters over there and don't cry."

The boy said he could not read any of them and his mother shook him to make him see better. He complained that when he looked at the card it gave him a pain. Mrs. Lierman separated the mother and had her sit some distance away. Then she talked kindly to the little boy, asked him where he went to school and was his teacher kind to him.

He replied, "She is all the time scolding me even when I don't do nothing." Then Mrs. Lierman talked to him about baseball and Babe Ruth and asked him if he liked to play baseball in the summer time. He was somewhat suspicious at first but in a little while he began to thaw. He was asked to smile, which he did with some difficulty. Mrs. Lierman was gentle and very kind to him.

All of a sudden he shouted: "Oh, I can read that card over there," which he did to the fifty line. The boy, with a little persuasion, closed his eyes and covered them with the palms of his hands, while Mrs. Lierman told him fairy stories, which were very hard for him to believe. In ten minutes after he opened his eyes he read almost all the smaller letters on the card, and by repeating the palming a few times, at brief intervals, he obtained flashes of normal vision. He left the Clinic smiling and happy, with his mother following after him in a daze.

You cannot force children to see by hardness, and what is true of children is also true of adults.

Stories from the Clinic

53: Shock Causes Blindness

By Emily C. Lierman

ON July 16, 1923, there came to our office a man suffering with blindness caused by a sudden shock. As I stood before him and asked him what his trouble was, his eyes looked up toward the ceiling and immediately I noticed he could not see me. He had been sent to us in the hope that Dr. Bates would be able to restore his sight. Previous to his visit on that day I received a telephone message from a woman employed by the Compensation Bureau of the City of New York. She told me that he was blind and it was the opinion of eye specialists consulted that there was no hope of his sight ever being restored. Dr. Bates examined his eyes with the ophthalmoscope and found that he had atrophy of the optic nerve and that he was under a terrible tension.

With each eye separately he could see the 200 line letter of the test card at one foot temporarily. He could only do this in flashes, because he stared continuously, which blinded him. The variable swing improved his vision to 6/200 and his field was also improved by the swing. He came daily to the office for treatment, and on the 21st of July he read 9/20 after he had palmed his eyes for a long time. Sun-gazing outdoors improved his vision also. His general depression became less and he informed me that he was feeling much better after each office visit. For a long time he did not have very much to say, but after he had become better acquainted with us all he began to talk about his case. He had been working in the moving picture studios for quite a few years and apparently he felt no discomfort in his eyes. This is the story he told me:

"I was standing on the top rung of a ladder readjusting electrical parts used in the studio for taking moving pictures. At the time there was just an ordinary light such as is used in most offices. Without my knowing it, a strong Klieg light was suddenly turned on and I received a sudden shock which caused blindness instantly. I was taken care of, as are other employees in the studio, and then was taken home. Since then I have not been able to work. It seemed as though my troubles were multiplied when my little baby boy took sick and died. I had no money with which to bury him until my wife's parents came to our aid. Christmas came very shortly, with no hope of Christmas cheer for my other child, a little girl just three years old. We were in debt, but I had planned, when I was able to work again, to pay back the money which was used to bury my baby. My wife tried to console me and make me feel that things were not quite so bad, but I saw no hope ahead of me on account of my blindness."

We felt all the more here at the office that our patient should have all the treatment that could be given him in order to restore his sight, if possible, and we worked diligently all through the Fall and Winter with steady results.

During the month of May we had many rainy days with very little sun. This patient has demonstrated to us that the sun is very necessary for the eyes. During all these months of almost daily treatment he has not had such poor vision as he had in the last few weeks. His vision was lowered to 10/50 and he became very much discouraged. After the sun had shone for a day he came to the office feeling light hearted and happy. He was given the sun treatment and immediately his vision improved to almost normal, reading 10/10 at times. Doctor questioned his ability to dodge automobiles at the crossings here in our big city. His answer was that he could get along very well on bright days when the sun was shining, but he still feared the traffic on rainy days. While this conversation was going on the patient was looking very intently at Doctor's face as he stood about three feet away. He did not move an eyelash, but just stared all the while he talked. He had forgotten the very thing that helped him. Blinking. All of a sudden he exclaimed: "Doctor, now as I look at you, you haven't any head."

"No," the Doctor replied; "seems to me the other day somebody told me I did have a head. But you never can tell; some people don't always tell the truth."

Immediately the patient apologized and hastened to say: "Oh! But Doctor, when I come close enough to you I can see that you have a head."

Dr. Bates has always advocated the movies. Whenever a patient states he advises him to go to the movies. Dr. Bates enjoys them himself and goes as often as he is able to.

We owe a great deal to the moving picture artists, for a great part of their work is done under unfavorable conditions. The Klieg light, while it is powerful, is not injurious to the eyes of the actors and actresses when their eyes are properly used. Most of them work under a terrible tension, with the feeling that their eyes will be injured by the strong glare. A great many eye specialists no doubt have treated injury to the eyes apparently caused by the Klieg light. The light would be harmless if those who work in the studios could keep their minds relaxed and if they could also understand and use our method—resting the eyes all day long.

Dr. Bates discovered many years ago the benefit of strong light on the eyes and I have seen many patients cured by the sun treatment alone. Some of these cases were seriously affected because of their inability to stand even the rays of the sun. It is curious but true that this patient has been benefited mostly by a magnifying glass which focused the light on the white part of each eye as he looked down while the upper lid was raised. In the beginning of his treatment the mere mention of light would make him frown and shrink with fear. Now he enjoys sitting in the sun all day long and realizes that it gives him the greatest benefit. He is steadily improving. While he is not entirely cured, he needs the human line of the test card occasionally at ten feet.

He has great hopes of being cured and is so grateful for what has been done for his eyes that he insisted upon my writing to two of our most popular actresses of the screen who are interested in his case. We are striving to cure him so that we can send a note of thanks to those who are interested in him and to try and encourage others, who might be troubled by the Klieg light, to come to us to be benefited as he was.

Nervous Symptoms Relieved

By Edith T. Fisher, M.S., M.D.

ABOUT seven months ago this patient, who is a physician, forty-one years old, first came to me. He had studied his own case thoroughly and I shall present it in his words as he described it to me.

"Since I was seven years old I have worn glasses, and since then I have had attacks of nervousness, accompanied by headaches, which have become more frequent and more severe as I have grown older. My poor vision is due to astigmatism, asthenopia and hypermetropia, and I think all my nervous symptoms are the result of this condition of my eyes.

"About once a week, sometimes oftener, I have an excruciating headache accompanied by great weakness and nervousness. This always begins with a feeling of constriction in my eyes and spreads to my forehead, then gradually develops into a terrible headache. It continues all day and the following day I am completely exhausted.

"In addition to this weekly headache I have the same feeling of constriction in my eyes and across my forehead continually. This comes on in the morning after I have been up about two hours and it makes me very nervous.

"If I read ten or fifteen minutes this sensation of constriction increases and I become so weak that I have to lie down and rest; then I am able to read again for a short time. If I continue to read without resting one of the severe headaches will develop.

"At times for apparently no reason I suddenly feel an overwhelming desire to sleep. This usually occurs when I have been in a bright light or under a strain, as when we are entertaining or being entertained, and I assure you it is extremely embarrassing to fall asleep while conversing with some one. I can overcome this feeling for a short time, but gradually I become so exhausted that in spite of everything I can do I fall asleep. Sometimes I awake in five minutes, sometimes not for fifteen, but I always feel refreshed. This invariably happens if I go anywhere, so I have given up everything and stay at home as much as possible.

"My eyes are very sensitive to the light and I usually wear a pair of dark glasses over my other glasses. Last summer on bright days I wore two pairs of colored glasses so as to protect my eyes as much as possible from the sun.

"I have tried many different kinds of treatment but all without any relief.

"When I heard of Dr. Bates' method of curing imperfect sight without, glasses I tried resting my eyes, but when I close them and try to relax I have a feeling of unreadiness in the eyeball, which is almost a jerking, and this makes me more nervous. So I thought I was probably palming incorrectly."

I asked him if he had tried to imagine or remember anything while he was palming and he answered "No, I just try to relax, and the harder I try the more nervous I get."

I explained to him that by making an effort to relax he was increasing the strain. While he was talking I noticed that he had not blinked. His forehead was deeply wrinkled and there was a constant twitching of the facial muscles on the right side.

With his glasses he read 10/10; without them, 10/15; with the left eye, 10/15, and with the right, 10/50. He was unable to read the diamond type.

First I explained about blinking, but when he tried this he contracted all the facial muscles. After watching me he tried it again, but without success. Then I told him to sit in as comfortable a position as possible, close his eyes and cover them with his hand in such a way as to exclude the light without making any pressure upon the eyeballs. He said, "I've tried this, Doctor, and the unreadiness in my eyeballs makes me very nervous."

I then asked him if he could remember the small black letter "o" that he had seen on the test card, but he could not. I asked him about many different objects, if he could remember or imagine them, but the only thing he could remember was a sunset he had seen last summer. This he could remember if he looked at the sky, then the trees, and then the grass, shifting from one to another and seeing each perfectly. After palming in this way about twenty minutes, I asked him if he could imagine a blue sky with a very white cloud moving across it. This he could do now, but for a short time only, and when he lost it he had to remember the sunset before he could imagine the blue sky and white cloud.

After palming half an hour he read 10/40 with his right eye and half of 10/10 with his left. I reminded him to blink, and though he did not contract all his facial muscles it was still a great effort for him. He said, "I don't think I ever blinked before, and this is the first time I have been able to palm without having that unreadiness in my eyeballs." Then I explained to him that when he remembered the sunset perfectly his eyes were at rest, and when his eyes were at rest all the nerves in his body were at rest.

After palming again for half an hour he was able to imagine a small black letter "o" on the white cloud, but only for an instant. Each time that he lost it he had to imagine first the sunset, then the blue sky with the white cloud, and finally the letter "o," which he was able to imagine longer each time. He could imagine the "o" moving in the opposite direction as he looked from the right side to the left side of the "o," and in this way developed a swing, but he could keep it for a few seconds only.

The sensitiveness to light, I told him, could be overcome by sitting in the sun every day. He seemed to think he ought to wear his dark glasses until his eyes were stronger, but he promised to follow my directions. Before he left the office that day he said, "I can't remember when I have felt so relaxed."

Three days later I saw him again. He had been palming eight times a day, half an hour each time. In addition to this he had been practicing with the test card, swinging, shifting and sitting in the sun. He was very anxious to do everything that would help cure his condition.

His vision had improved to 10/30 with the right eye and 11/10 with the left. He blinked easily now, but still stared at times. He told me, "When I notice that feeling of constriction in my eyes I know I have been staring, then I palm a few minutes and that uncomfortable sensation disappears."

There was now only an occasional twitching of the facial muscles on the right side.

His vision improved slowly, and when I saw him the last time, just three months after I had first seen him, he read 10/10 with the right eye and 15/10 with the left. The diamond type he read easily. All the nervous symptoms had entirely disappeared. Before he left he said, "I have read a book in the last three days that it would have taken me at least six months to read before I discarded my glasses. Of course, I am glad to have my eyes normal, but I can't tell you how happy I am to be free from all those other symptoms."

I have heard from him several times since and he has had no relapse.

Notes from Patients

These paragraphs were taken from some patients' letters. We find that everyone has his own way of palming, swinging, etc. Some patients like to take drifting trips while palming. Others find more relaxation in thinking of black and remembering certain flowers. The way which is most helpful to you is the best to follow.

From a Patient Who Likes to Drift

I think by this time I have floated down every river in the world. I am not sure about those of Persia and Patagonia, but otherwise I have covered them pretty well. Geographically speaking, it has been quite interesting, for one can have at will monkeys leaping from branch to branch along the shore or polar bears putting out a paw at one from large icebergs, and all the time being perfectly comfortable. There are really great possibilities in this method of overcoming pain and in improving the sight. I have not had a severe pain since the first one, and the minute one starts off I float and lose the pain.

From a Book Reader

In early spring here in this desert country the intensity of the sunlight increases with such rapidity that many people are disagreeably affected in their eyes at that time. I have been wearing a broad brimmed Stetson sombrero for its shade. But I also noted that my eyes seemed unduly sensitive to the bright light. Remembering Dr. Bates' rule that light is good for the eyes, not coddling with shade, I discarded the sombrero and now wear a cap, with the result that the oversensitiveness to light is gone.

A Teacher

A girl came into school the other day wearing glasses for the first time. I asked her why she was wearing them and she said that her eyes were tired. The oculist had recommended that she wear glasses for three or four weeks. Her mother had paid him $20 for the examination and the glasses. I watched her carefully to see how steadily she wore them. I think she wore them two or three days, or perhaps a week. After about a month I asked her how her eyes were getting along. She said, "Fine; the doctor says I needn't wear my glasses any more." I said, "It was a rather costly experiment," to which she replied, "I'll say so." I wonder if the doctor knew how little she used the glasses, or whether he cared.

NOVEMBER NUMBERS DESIRED

We wish to procure twenty or more of the November, 1923, issue of "Better Eyesight." If any of our subscribers have one or more copies of these on hand we will be glad to exchange them for a specified back number, the current issue, or twenty cents for each copy.

One of our subscribers desires the August, 1919, and June, 1920, numbers to complete her set. Will any one having these numbers please communicate with this office?

Report of the League Meetings

A REGULAR meeting of the Better Eyesight League was held on the evening of May 13th at 303 Madison Avenue. Anticipating a demonstration of Dr. Bates' method a large audience was in attendance. Miss Katherine Hurty, President of the League, presented Miss May Secor as chairman of the meeting. The latter's experience as a teacher of various grades of the elementary school and as a member of the Speech Improvement Department of New York City's school system enabled her to speak from the teacher's standpoint.

Miss Secor became interested in the method in an effort to find some means by which school children may be relieved of eyestrain. The manuscript she presented was a clinical report, based on the results of her efforts with the eyes of her own pupils.

Miss Secor stressed the value of palming in restoring normal vision. (Reference to Chapter XII, "Perfect Sight Without Glasses," [link] by Dr. Bates.) The meeting then assumed a clinical aspect, Dr. Bates, Dr. Achorn, Miss Hurty, and the speaker assisting the members and visitors to palm; relaxation was secured more readily when the individual was led to assume a happy mental attitude. The speaker advised teachers to train pupils in such a manner that the eye exercises will always be accompanied by a pleasurable emotion. The use of palming by the student of music was also discussed; in many cases fatigue has been eliminated or greatly reduced by palming for a period of five minutes after each twenty minutes or half hour of practice (vocal or instrumental).

The speaker then called upon Miss Hurty to discuss the use of the Snellen chart in the class room. Miss Hurty reported that many pupils in her "eye group" had greatly improved their vision by reading the chart each day. When difficulty is experienced in reading certain letters on the chart, one or more of the following suggestions are offered: Palm, swing, and close the eyes after reading each letter; read fine print, then read the chart; close eyes, open, and look at left side of letter, report its appearance; repeat with right side of letter; then read the letter; walk up to the chart, read the letter, return to former position and read it (imagination of assistance here). The officers of the League then assisted those present in reading the chart.

Dr. Bates was then requested to discuss the long swing. He described and demonstrated the long swing and emphasized its efficacy in securing relaxation and in relieving acute pain. The swing was then practiced by those present. Several class room problems relative to the elimination of eyestrain were discussed. At the close of this discussion the meeting was adjourned.

Questions and Answers

Question—Some days I can read the Snellen Test Card to the 15 line, others only to the 30 or 20.

Answer—When the eyestrain is less the vision is always better.

Question—By following instructions in the book, can cataract be benefited without consulting a physician?

Answer—Yes.

Question—Is memory and imagination the same? When we remember an object do we have to visualize it?

Answer—A perfect memory cannot be obtained unless you are able to imagine that you see or visualize what you remember.

Question—When I try to imagine a black period, it blurs and I get all colors but black.

Answer—When you fail to remember a period with your eyes closed, open your eyes and see it, then close your eyes and remember it as well as you can for a moment, alternate.

Question—I am always conscious of eyestrain in church.

Answer—Eyestrain is caused by a state or an effort to see. Close your eyes frequently and rest them.

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