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Better Eyesight

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

December, 1922

THE EASY SHIFT

SOME time ago a man came to me for treatment of his eyes. Without glasses his vision was about one-half of the normal. This patient could not pulm without suffering an agony of pain and depression.[i]He had pain in different parts of his body as well as in his eyes and the pain was usually very severe. The long easing, the short swing tired him exceedingly and made his sight worse. I asked him to tell me what there was that he could remember which caused him no discomfort.

He said, "Everything that I see disturbs me if I make an effort." "I try very hard not to make an effort, but the harder I try the worse do I feel."

When he could not practise palming, swinging or memory successfully I suggested to him that he look from one side of the room to the other, paying no attention to what he saw, but to remember as well as he could a room in his home. For two hours he practised this and was able to move his eyes from one side of the room to the other without paying any attention to the things that were moving or to the things he saw. This was a rest to him, and when his vision was tested, much to my surprise, he read the Snellen Test Card with normal vision at twenty feet. I handed him some diamond type, which he read without difficulty and without his glasses.

Since that time I have had other patients who were unable to remember or imagine things without straining and they usually obtained marked benefit by practising the EASY SHIFT.

No one can obtain perfect sight without constantly shifting, easily, without effort.[i]THE EASY SHIFT is easy because it is done without trying to remember, to imagine or to see.[i]As soon as one makes an effort the shift becomes difficult and no benefit is obtained.

SOME CRITICISMS FROM A PATIENT

By W. H. Bates, M.D.

MANY of my patients who were benefited by my treatment have been kind enough to speak well of my methods.

Recently I treated an elderly lady who was suffering from cataract with a considerable amount of nearsightedness. The cataract was sufficiently opaque to impair her distant vision very much, but strange to say, it did not apparently interfere at all with her ability to read fine print at a near point. She was treated twice with only temporary benefit, bought my book and returned home with instructions to write to me once a week for advice. In her first letter she said:

"Relaxation is not easy if one is part of a strenuous program of living." "Here are some of the items of yesterday's hours." "Before breakfast, I learned of the death by suicide of an acquaintance, and of the possible loss of an item of income which has been mine for years." The mail brought me two letters, one a bill for some work done for me, just one-third larger than I supposed it would be, and a request from a society in which I am interested that I would write a delicate and difficult letter." "Briefly, I decided to shed all responsibility about these things."

"What can be meant by page 127 in your book in which you say, 'It is impossible to remember even such a simple thing as a period, perfectly black and stationary for more than a fraction of a second?' And on page 138, 'A patient .... could remember a period twenty seconds.' And on page 140, 'Most persons become able to remember black for an indefinite length of time?'"

Answer—By referring to page 127 of my book my correspondent has quoted a very small part of what was said about the period. I believe that with the help of some one who has perfect sight the matter can be made clearer to her. Again, I suggest that the patient read more of what was said, especially the connection between vision and the memory of a period.

"On page 140, 'Most persons become able to remember black for an indefinite length of time.'"

Answer—How this is accomplished is described at some length in the book.

Question—"May Central Fixation be illustrated by the following fact?" "When one reads a book, she does not read it word for word, but takes sentences, paragraphs, even pages at a glance." "If there appears a word in another print, or an unfamiliar word, or a misspelled word, that word leaps out, and the rest of the text is ignored for a minute." "Is not this simple and common?" "Central Fixation seems to mean to me that when I regard any detail intently, the remainder of the object is disregarded?"

Answer—The previous paragraph is full of errors. It is impossible to read a whole word, a whole sentence, a paragraph or a page at a glance. It can be demonstrated that with perfect sight one sees one part of a letter best at a time.[i]It is all done with incredible rapidity when one reads a page of these hundred words in a few seconds. It is not simple and it never occurs for the reader to pick unfamiliar or misspelled words without seeing each part of every letter at a time best. The definition of Central Fixation is in the book and the patient has stated it wrong.

"I am trying to supplement your method by all the cure-alls I know; deep breathing, sun baths, new thought, Coue's rosary, Fellow's hypophosphites."

Answer—Imperfect sight is not cured by sun baths, deep breathing, new thought, Coue's rosary or by Fellow's hypophosphites. However, each of these methods may benefit the general health or relieve other troubles, they are of no benefit to the sight, with the exception of sun baths.

"I find that I can do the imaginary exam better than the real ones; for instance, on page 168, exercise 4. I can swing the letters better with my eyes closed or when looking at a blank wall than I can when looking at the test card. I am reminded that when I was a little girl and played with my little dishes, I could get on better with nothing in my little pitcher than I could with water to be called milk. I could imagine milk in the pitcher when I accepted the task of imagining, but when I knew it was water I would not call it milk. I know the letters do not move and I feel foolish when I allow the illusion. The most that I have gained so far is the knowledge that the eye is passive and that nothing is gained by trying to see."

Comment—This last paragraph is very encouraging. Most people can do the imaginary exam better with the eyes closed than with the eyes open. Looking at a blank wall does not disturb the memory so much as when looking at the Snellen Test Card. To be able to remember a black period, a piece of white starch or white snow when looking at the Snellen Test Card with the eyes closed is a cure. It is all right to imagine the letters are moving because this is a physiological fact when the sight is normal because it prevents staring or trying to concentrate. The dictionary defines concentration as an effort to keep the mind focused on a point. It is unfortunate that concentration is taught or recommended so universally because it is impossible to concentrate with the mind or with the eye and the effort to do so is always associated with imperfect sight caused by nearsightedness, astigmatism, cataract, glaucoma, disease of the optic nerve, retina or choroid.

"The remarkable instances of healing in Dr. Bates' book is encouraging to anybody." "But what about those who found no help?"

Answer—It is a fact that when one practices closing the eyes or palming and it is done right the vision is always temporarily improved. Too many people close their eyes without resting them or practice palming with a strain which lowers the vision instead of helping it. One can practice the long swing and produce dizziness, pain and imperfect sight by straining to see things that are moving.

One patient came to me complaining that never in her life had she been able to ride in an elevator without becoming very ill. Her vision for distance was normal and she was able to read fine print without trouble. I at once took a ride with her in the house elevator and told her to look at a bell which was stationary in the elevator and to pay no attention to the floors which appeared to be moving opposite to the movement of the elevator. We rode up and down and had a good time because when she did not strain to see the moving floors she was just as comfortable and happy as she was when she did not ride in the elevator.

The people who found no help were always people who fought me for all they were worth. I remember a physician who came to me for nine months, every day, and devoted from one to two hours trying to prove that I was wrong. Finally after numerous remonstrances I suggested to him that it did not do him any good for me to lick him every time he called, if he desired to be cured. I advised him to try and prove that I was right. In a very short time he was cured.

The people who find no help are the people who do the wrong thing against my advice.

CHRISTMAS AT THE CLINIC

By Emily C. Lierman

THE spirit of Christmas already prevails at our Clinic. For eight years I have watched the happy faces of boys and girls and the smile of pleasure on the faces of tired mothers with sick babies in their arms as every one of them received their share of candies and oranges and toys of every description.

My friends gave so generously last year which made it possible for our room to look very much like fairy land. One medicine cabinet was just covered with very pretty but inexpensive dolls and tables were filled with toys and music boxes such as every little boy enjoys. Cornucopias filled with good chocolates and bon-bons were hung on the curtains and screens about the room. I am proud to say that Dr. Bates himself helped to decorate the room and even though he was very busy he found time to hand each of his patients a gift and to wish them a Merry Christmas.

Before the patients arrived, the doctors and nurses from other parts of the Clinic came to our room and there were shouts of joy and surprise from all. One of our big, good-natured doctors asked me if he might carry one of the dollies to another section of the Clinic, where other doctors were at work. He forgot that he was grown up. He was a boy again. I shall never forget how he admired that doll. He held it as though it were a baby and said, "You are fortunate to have such generous friends." "I have poor boys and girls who visit me but they are not so lucky."

Bridget, the Dispensary scrub woman, who had heard some weeks before that our patients were to have a treat again, decided, all of a sudden, that her eyes needed treatment. Just to please her we prescribed some harmless eye-drops to apply, for there was really nothing the matter with her eyes.[i]She is big, fat and good natured and walks around as though she owned the place.[i] Bridget, however, wanted to be our patient at least until Christmas time, so we allowed her to fool us.

A colored woman brought her little girl that day to be treated for an infection of her eyes and was waiting to be attended to. Instead of being pleased at all the pretty toys she saw she looked very sad and disconsolated. After Doctor had treated the little girl he sent her to me for a dollie. The mother hurried to me and begged me not to give her one, because she had two younger children at home who would not have any Christmas on account of their poverty. The little girl was taken care of by me while the mother was sent home post haste, to bring the little brother and sister. When the mother returned with her brood she had tears in her eyes when a doll was given to each of her girls and a mouth-organ to the little boy. Mother's arms were filled with oranges and candy and then there were no more tears. This little family was always well provided for while the husband and father was living, but he was killed while at work and the mother being in ill health found it very hard to keep her family together. I had to convince this mother, that she was not accepting charity, but to feel that real friends were just sharing their gifts with us at the Clinic. I am proud of my big family there. I love them all and they love Doctor and me.

We have a very queer case, a girl aged twelve years, at the Clinic just now. For the last two years she has been coming to us off and on. She usually turns up near Christmas time. At a glance one would say she was stupid but I know she is not. Just a case of neglect. She has no parents, and if you ask her about them she will tell you she never had any. Neighbors feel her or I should say undefeed her and she never knew from one day to the next just where she would sleep. Sometimes her clothes are clean and sometimes torn and ragged. Her name is Elsie and is a colored child, black as the ace of spades.[i]As she was thrown about here and there it was impossible to keep her at school regularly.

Her vision is near normal at very rare intervals, but if I say very quickly to her, "read the card," she stares and it is pitiable to see how distorted her mouth becomes and she says she cannot see. I do not intentionally frighten her, I forget because of the many cases we have to handle in a very short time. If I speak softly and gently and point to a large letter which she remembers easily with eyes closed, she can read every letter, 12/15, perfectly after palming a few minutes. I asked Elsie if she wished a doll at Christmas time and she replied, "No, I'm too big for a doll." So Elsie will receive either a book or a necklace of some kind. I want to say more about the different cases but as the space is limited, I will stop and again and again wish all my friends a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

By James D. Dillon, Swansea, Arizona

AT the age of six years I had a bad case of granulated eyelids, which was finally overcome by treatment, but left my eyes weak and very sensitive. From that time until I began treating my eyes according to the methods of Dr. Bates—I am now thirty-six years of age—I suffered much discomfort from strain and the glare of daylight. School was more or less a burden to me because of the pain caused by reading.

I have had many prescriptions for glasses at various times but have never received real relief from them. Often I would rebel and fail to wear my glasses, always finding rest and comparative relief when doing so.

Two years ago I was fitted with the most perfect lenses I have ever had, but even these failed to relieve strain and I continued to suffer from the glare of the light. I did not suffer often from headaches but from continual smarting and irritation of the eyes, and from nervous symptoms and bad temper.

In February, 1922, I began to treat myself by Dr. Bates' methods. At that time I was doing hard work with figures. In spite of misgivings at leaving off my glasses, and though I was hard pressed to persevere some days when the struggle, seemed worse, I did persevere and have succeeded.

The first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, and often during the day, I would read the Snellen Test card at various distances with each eye alternately, and then with both eyes together, until I could finally read the letters clear, black and distinct. I would practice looking at a pencil point held close to the nose until it became as easy to look cross-eyed as to look straight ahead. I would practice accommodation exercises by looking at near objects, then at distant objects, alternately. Palming always was a great help. Regarding very small black objects and then remembering them perfectly also helped greatly. In every way I sought to break myself of the habit of straining to see and instead to see without effort. In proportion as seeing became effortless and all fear of light vanished the vision became more perfect. I also found that gazing at the setting sun had a very tonic effect upon my eyes.

In 1920, the glare of the intense sunlight gave me much misery far into the night. Now I not only receive no harm from the light but enjoy it.[i]In fact, I never notice the glare now; it does not disturb me.[i]I have used many more of the exercises and ideas of Dr. Bates, as described in his book, and have much more yet to learn. I find that I greatly enjoy this method of improving my vision still more. Although I can read the ten lines of letters on the card at thirty feet easily I wish to do better. Diamond type I read easily at four inches from my eyes. I have now practically perfect vision and have overcome all the irritation and the nervousness caused by eye strain.[i]During this summer, though extremely hot and trying in this desert country, I have felt better and fuller of life and vim than ever before. I know that this is due to the relief from eye-strain, which had been a great drain on my vitality.

Needless to say, I am exceedingly grateful for this relief and wish to thank the author of the book a thousand times for his great work, which has made it possible for those who suffer from eye strain to obtain real and permanent relief even though they cannot reach him personally for treatment.

I shall be very happy to receive any letters from persons who desire further information, and will be pleased to help them all I can and to cheer them along with all my heart.

THE BETTER EYESIGHT LEAGUE

AT the last meeting of the League held at 300 Madison Avenue on Tuesday, November 14th, there were fifteen persons present.

This was a small attendance for a membership of more than one hundred.

We were pleased to hear from Dr. Brown of Orange, N. J., that a branch had been organized by the friends of Miss Shepard and that their next meeting will be held at 50 Main Street, Tuesday, December 5th, at 8 P. M. Dr. Bates is expected to deliver an address while others from neighboring cities will be there to discuss matters. We believe all persons interested in Better Eyesight are invited. The question was asked about the amount of money which each branch should send to the central organization. This matter could not be handled until delegates from the various organizations at some specified meeting met and considered it. The League has not been in existence long enough to make rules and regulations for each branch. It is very desirable that branches of the League be organized all over the United States and elsewhere to help all persons suffering from imperfect sight and more especially to prevent school children from acquiring imperfect sight and glasses. The publishers of the magazine, Better Eyesight, call attention to the August number in every year which describes the method of prevention and cure.

One member told how she helped an old blind woman by teaching her how to rest her eyes by "PALMING." The patient reported that with its aid she had become able to take a walk unattended and visit a friend.[i]When she became confused the patient would stop and palm for a few minutes when her sight would at once improve for a time.[i]The palming helped her to make the crossings successfully, to find her way and to avoid pedestrians.

There was some discussion about eye strain during sleep. Many people suffer very much from headache, imperfect sight on first rising in the morning and the symptoms may continue for several hours.

A gentleman present related his experience. He obtained much benefit by rising at 6 a. m. with the aid of an alarm clock, when he would practise the "LONG SWING" until relieved. He would then retire, sleep the rest of the night and on rising find the eye strain much less or absent altogether.

A new member started to ask questions such as: "How long does it take?" "What is the cause of imperfect sight?" "Can cataract be cured without an operation?" It is not necessary to publish the discussion of these and other questions because the answers have been repeatedly published; but, those who did the talking and those who listened, learned more than they knew before.

The next meeting of the Better Eyesight League will be held at 300 Madison Avenue, New York City, corner 41st Street, at 8 p. m., December 12, 1922.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Has Dr. Bates' method anything to do with concentration?

Ans.—No, to concentrate is to make an effort. Dr. Bates' method is rest and relaxation which cannot be obtained by concentration.

Is auto-suggestion a benefit to the eye?

Ans.—Dr. Bates has tried it and found that it is not beneficial as it does not relieve the strain.

Can hemorrhage of the retina be cured by Dr. Bates' method of treatment?

Ans.—Dr. Bates has cured many such cases.

Can one be cured of near-sightedness without being examined personally by Dr. Bates?

Ans.—Yes, we have received letters from people who have cured themselves by reading Dr. Bates' book PERFECT SIGHT WITHOUT GLASSES [link].

Can a patient while under treatment with Dr. Bates carry on his daily work just the same?

Ans.—Yes, most patients continue their work just the same without the use of their glasses even though they find it difficult at the start.

Q. Can the vision be improved without glasses after the lens has been removed for cataract?

A. Yes.

Q. Does Dr. Bates approve of dark glasses to protect the eye from the glare of the sun at the sea shore?

A. No. Dark glasses are injurious to the eyes. The strong light of the sun is beneficial to the eyes, although it may be temporarily painful and blinding.

Q. When the pupils become dilated is that an indication of eyestrain.

A. No. A great many people who have dilated pupils have no trouble at all with their eyes.

Q. What causes styes?

A. Infection, which is always associated with eyestrain.

Q. What causes night blindness?

A. It is caused by a form of eyestrain which is different from the eyestrain which causes imperfect sight with other symptoms.

Q. Can imperfect sight in school children be cured or prevented without supervision?

A. No. It is necessary for someone, who does not have to be a physician, to inspect the work once a year or oftener.

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