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Better Eyesight

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

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HALOS

When the eye with normal sight looks at the large letters on the Snellen test card, at any distance. from twenty feet to six inches or less, it sees, at the inner and outer edges and in the openings of the round letters, a white more intense than the margin of the card. Similarly, when such an eye reads fine print, the spaces between the lines and the letters and the openings of the letters appear whiter than the margin of the page, while streaks of an even more intense white may be seen along the edges of the lines of letters. These "halos" are sometimes seen so vividly that in order to convince people that they are illusions it is often necessary to cover the letters, when they at once disappear. Patients with imperfect sight also see the halos, though less perfectly, and when they understand that they are imagined, they often become able to imagine them where they had not been seen before, or to increase their vividness, in which case the sight always improves. This can be done by imagining the appearances First with the eyes closed; and then looking at the card, or at fine print, and imagining them there. By alternating these two acts of imagination the sight is often improved rapidly. It is best to begin the practice at the point at which the halos are seen, or can be imagined best. Nearsighted patients are usually able to see them at the near-point, sometimes very vividly. Farsighted people may also see them best at this point, although their sight for form may be best at the distance.

NEW EYES FOR OLD

By Grace Ellery Channing

Editor's Note.—We are constantly hearing of patients who have been able to improve their sight by the aid of information contained in this magazine, or in other publications on the same subject, without personal assistance: The following is a very remarkable example of these cases, as the improvement was made while the patient was handicapped by having to wear her glasses a great part of the time.

There was once a gentleman who attempted to sell new lamps for old ones. And another who tried to exchange, on Waterloo Bridge, perfectly good new shillings for sixpence. In both cases the wares were as advertised, but both fell under suspicion.

It is perhaps, then, not to be wondered at that an offer of new eyes for old should meet with a similar fate at the hands of a public early trained to suspect the worst—in a world where few things are as represented and nothing is to be had for nothing.

In no other way, at least, can I account for the fact that so much of the world is still in glasses, after a brief experience of my own. This is the story:

Something over a year ago, in one of those periodic fits of depression common to those who abuse their eyes and then wonder at their failure. I chanced to take up a copy of the New York Tribune, open exactly at an article on Eyes, in the column devoted to scientifico-medical truth.

I may as well confess at once that I read this column chiefly to scoff: it is a privilege reserved to those born in doctor's families. Moreover the condition of my own eyes at the moment, after years of oculists and opticians, was one to make me particularly from Missouri in my mental attitude towards anything calling itself a new "cure." Still—I ran through the article.

It was brief, a mere review of another which had appeared in the Scientific American, and I grasped but a fragment of the principle—that defects of vision were not necessarily integral, but might result from defectively controlled muscles distorting the eyeball—pulling it out of shape. Hence nearsight, farsight, astigmatism, etc., might be curable through muscle-control. The treatment consisted in relaxation and re-education, intelligently applied.

As I grasped it, not being hampered by scientific pro. possession, the thing appeared so simple that I exclaimed to myself: "How sensible!"—hastily qualifying it with, "How much too good to be true!" For here was something rational—something you could do for yourself. without either being cut up or poisoned. The article mentioned that patients went home and taught their families—it was so simple. There was nothing to prevent one's at least trying it on oneself.

The only detail of treatment set forth—or which I grasped—was that the eyes could be relaxed most conveniently by looking at black, and that by covering the eyes with the palms of the hands ("palming") black could be retained as a mental vision, or memory, during which the eye was at rest. By practice, one could learn to "remember

black" with the eyes opened, at will, and when it was not there. Thus muscular control could be re-established.

It was at least worth trying, and I tried. (Here it is interesting to remark that the moment you look at a black thing, you realize it isn't. A really black object is hard to find, but not necessary to success; the approximate will serve. Later I discovered that a black period—of printer's ink—was sufficient, but I am giving by preference the tale of my first blundering efforts.)

My first discovery was one which anyone may make for himself; it contains the crux of the whole. This is, that after looking at black, "palming," and seeing black with the eyes shut (at first one may see grey or red), and then opening the eyes, there is an appreciable instant of clear vision, in which letters or images previously blurred and hazy come out sharp and definite. For that brief instant I could read clearly; then immediately the old habit of muscular strain set in again and vision lapsed. But that instant was enough. For, if for any fraction of time at all vision could be reconquered, clearly the organ of vision was intact; the trouble was extraneous, functional, might be removable. All that was needed was to make that instant permanent, and that, evidently, was a mere matter of reeducating the exterior muscles of the eye and fixing a habit.

So far as I was concerned that first experiment was final. I was as convinced then as I am convinced now that I, or anyone else in my case, can recover vision virtually whole, with time, patience and training. The demonstration was, for me, complete. Nobody had proved it to me, I had proved it to myself. Relaxed, eyes could return to the normal and see without glasses.

How to take advantage of my discovery was another matter. My days are largely spent in typing; my nights (too lonely) in reading, both in glasses, which of course are framed to perpetuate the errors they confirm, so that every pair of glasses has to be further from the normal than the one before. With a war on, I could neither stop working nor reading newspapers. Yet the first requisite for the new cure I assumed to be the abandonment of the glasses. (I have since heard of cases cured even while in glasses.)

I postponed, then, all hope of my own cure to some date "after Peace." But I was too interested and fascinated to quite let the matter drop. Accordingly I began to play with the small fragment of theory I had assimilated (very inaccurately, I now realize), in the scant leisure of my daily outings. I practiced "seeing black" on the coat-backs of pedestrians, and "central fixation" (which means seeing what you look at where you look at it, and not its edges instead,) on the street signs and advertising bill-boards. My companions began to recognize my "seeing black" expression. As a skeptic, I am something of a trial to them and they enjoyed, perhaps, seeing the biter bit. But I was getting results-undoubting the long-doubted stars, making one moon grow where the proverbial two had grown before. Blurred letters of fantastic height I was reducing to neat, clear rows, half as high; I who had not read a headline, with just eyes, for years, was reading them all. Thence I passed to the higher literature; probably nobody has ever been so stirred by the genius of Mr. Shoom as I, when first I could untangle his lines. Next came the gems of verse in street-car advertisements. Now I read them all alike, indifferently, negligently, as being no great thing, down to the quite fine ones, if the vehicle is moderately light.

The first really startling intimation of gain, however, came to me one harried morning when, taking my mail from the box, I read my letters one after another, on the way to the bus, and only realized later, as I was rolling downtown, that I had read them all without glasses—and without noticing it. It was fully ten years since I had been able to read a line of a letter without glasses, frequently to my extreme inconvenience.

This is as far as I have gone—except that I am still going. Month by month, I recover a little and a little more of my ability to see normally, and meanwhile, as a most important by-product of the gain, I lose the old fatigue and ache which, with its accompanying depression, made my hours without glasses periods of strain. Here I should explain that my eyes are always under a twofold strain—for I knew with them. Only the partly deaf will fully understand this, but it makes the importance of this new treatment, for them, incalculable. And the deaf are as the sands of the sea.

Now, if gains so real and so appreciable can be made in quarter-hour and casual applications of a partially-grasped theory, and while with both hands one is engaged in undoing for the remainder of the hours what one has done in the quarters, is it not fair to believe that a proper, steadfast, continuous application of the theory would work miracles for those multitudes of mankind who suffer every form of disability and handicap now covered by the term "eyestrain"? We are told that pretty much everything from flat feet to baldness can proceed from eyestrain, and for my part I believe it; I know what eastrain can do. We are also assured that children in our schools. suffer, by tens of thousands, from defective vision, and are turned into mutes, invalids and criminals. Almost the largest percentage of physical disqualifications in our Army were optical-and that under an incredibly low standard. Eyes, then, are not an academic but a vital issue. How is it possible that we fail to investigate to the last point any and every possible means of relief from an evil well-nigh universal?

This is the question I have naturally been asking, north, south, east and west, for a year past. It seems time now to ask it out loud—in print. Of course I have found excellent people to tell me that my discovery "isn't so," and other excellent people to tell me that "everybody has always known it" anyway, which does not explain to me why "everybody" is still wearing glasses. I was sufficiently interested myself to go and talk with a few of the cured enthusiasts; their attitude is about what mine would be in their case—that of those who were present at the Pool Bethesda and saw the miracle effected. I also had the curiosity to go and talk with the author of the revolutionary theory that eyes can be cured without glasses, himself—Dr. Wm. H. Bates.

I went to Dr. Bates through streets filled with people wearing glasses, and pass-named at intervals by the signs of oculists, opticians, and makers of optical devices for the near-blind. My own oculist's and optician's offices are usually thronged with a waiting list; it occurred to me that I might find cordons of troops keeping order about Dr. Bates'. I found neither the cordon nor the crowds. Why?

Here is a man who is either an absolute benefactor of humanity, or who makes an unfounded claim. He should be given, not for his own sake but for ours, the widest opportunity and the heartiest encouragement to prove or disprove his theory, pari all possibility of question. It is indeed so extraordinary that he has not been forcibly rammoned to do this before now, by an impatient public, that it can only be accounted for by that ancient disability of the human mind to accept new things if strange—new lamps for old, oval shillings sold for sixpence, or truth that is as simple as a lie. Yet, actually, of course. Truth is always simple—the only simple thing there is.

New eyes for old, ladies and gentlemen! Who wants them?

STORIES FROM THE CLINIC

I. Joey and Patsy

By Emily C. Lierman

Editor's Note.—Mrs. Lierman were glasses for thirteen years. She was cured six years ago, and has since acted as a very enthusiastic assistant in the laboratory and clinic of the editor. She is not a physician, but obtains results, having never failed to improve the sight of any patient whom she has treated—a wonderful record.

Joey is a little Italian boy who was struck on the head a few months ago in an automobile accident, and injured in such a way that he became almost totally blind in the left eye. Patsy is Joey's brother, and from him it was learned that when the accident occurred Joey was at the head of his troops, conducting a strategic retreat after a fierce conflict in which he had been obliged to yield to adverse fortune. His face was to the foe and the automobile was behind him. Hence the catastrophe.

A week later he was brought to the clinic of the Harlem Hospital by his aunt. Dr. Bates examined him and found that he was suffering from optic neuritis and retinal hemorrhages of the left eye, as a result of which the vision of this eye had been reduced to mere light perception.

The child was now brought to me for treatment, and never have I seen a more forlorn little specimen of humanity. I did not know then that a gang of street boys had once looked up to him as their leader, and I never should have suspected it. There was not the shadow of a smile upon his face, and he had not a word to say. Both his face and his clothes were dirty. The latter were also ragged, while his shoes were full of holes. His teeth were wonderful, however, and beneath the grime on his small countenance one could catch glimpses of the complexion of perfect health. I told him to rest his eyes by closing and covering with the palms of his hands, and after a few minutes he was able to see the largest letter on the test card with his blind eye. I told him to do this six times a day for five minutes at a time, and to come back on the next clinic day.

The next time I saw him. he not only had made no progress, but was as blind as he had been at the beginning. His aunt said:

"You scold him. Tell him you will keep him here, because he will not palm or do anything he is told to do at home."

I answered: "You do not wish me to be to him, do you?" Joey looked up into my face, so sad and worried, waiting for me to defend him again, as his aunt replied: "Well, I will leave him here and not take him home again."

"All right," I said. "I live in the country, and perhaps Joey would like to go home with me and play in the fields, and watch the birds build their nests, and learn how to smile as little boys should."

Well now, you should have seen that dirty little face flash up with excitement and pleasure.

"Joey," I said, "you are going to love me a whole lot, because I love you already; but you must mind what I say, because if you don't you will go blind."

Joey then consented to palm for a few minutes, and his sight improved so that he was able to see the large letter of the test card three feet away. He now made an effort to see the next line of two letters, but not only did he fail to do so, but he also lost the large letter. The strain had made him blind again.

Here I wish I had more time to spend on a case like this! But the room was full of patients, and more were coming continually. I had to attend to them. So I asked Joey, very gently, to palm and not take his hands from his eyes until I came back. After ten minutes I ventured and asked what he could see. To my surprise he read five lines of the test card with the blind eye. Much encouraged I sent him home, and he promised to palm six times a day. He stayed away almost a week and I worried about him, for I knew he would forget what I had told him to do. Then one day he turned up with his brother Patsy, who, I believe, is twelve years old. My, how Patsy did talk! Joey had not a word to say, and did not smile until I asked him to. Patsy said that Joey did not practice, and that his Father hit him on the head and threatened him with all sorts of things to make him do so. It was quite evident that he had not practiced. When I asked him to read the card, all he could see was the big letter at the top at three feet.

Poor little Joey I I gathered him in my arms, patted his dirty face, and told him that if he would count six fingers for me and practice palming as many times a day I was sure Santa Claus would have some toys for him at Christmas time. Joey was all smiles, and stood with his eyes covered for a long time. When he again looked at the card he read the fifth line. Meantime Patsy was telling me all about the accident in which Joey had been injured, and also all about the rest of the family. His big brother was going to be married, he said, but not until another brother, eighteen years old, was out of prison: Patsy talked like a man and his voice sounded like a foghorn; but I saw that he had a gentle nature and I enlisted him as my little assistant. I asked him if he would not try to get Joey to palm more, and told him that he must always , speak kindly to him. I also asked him to ask his father not to hit Joey on the head again, because that made the hemorrhages worse and Joey would go blind. Bless Patsy's heart! He promised to help me all he could, and I am sure he deserves much of the credit for what I was afterward able to do for Joey.

After this Joey's progress was steady. He responded to kindness as a flower responds to the sun. But if I ever forgot myself and spoke to him without the utmost gentleness—if I even raised my voice a little—he would at once become nervous and begin to strain. One day I remonstrated with him because he had not done what I had told him, and a few moments later when I asked him to read the test card with his left eye, he said, "I can only see the large letter." I began to pet him, telling him what a great man he might be some day and how important it was for him to see' with both eyes. He smiled and pattered, and in a short time he again read five lines of the card.

At a recent visit he was very conspicuous because he had had his face washed. I could see that he wanted me to notice this, which of course I did, giving him high praise for his improved appearance. He smiled and started to palm without being told to, and his sight improved more rapidly than at any previous visit.

His last visit was a happy one. He saw all of the bottom line at ten feet without palming.

One day Patsy appeared at the clinic wearing spectacles. "Patsy, for heaven's sake, what are you wearing those things for?" I asked.

"The nurse in school said I needed glasses and my father paid four dollars for them—but I can see without them." His vision without glasses was 20/100. After palming five minutes it improved considerably.

"Do you want to be cured without glasses?" he was asked.

"Sure, I don't want to wear them."

"Well, you ask father's permission and I will cure you." Fortunately, father had no objection, and now Patsy sees much better without glasses than he ever did with them. He says that the blackboard looks blacker than it used to, and that his lessons do not seem so hard. His vision is not normal yet, but after he has tested his eyes for part of a minute, simply by closing them, he can read the bottom line of the test card easily at ten feet.

SEEKING A MYOPIA CURE

By L. MESILER

When the Lusitania was sunk I knew that the United States was going to get into trouble, and I wanted to be in a position to join the Army. But I was suffering from a high degree of myopia, and I knew they wouldn't take me with glasses. Later on they took almost anyone who wasn't blind, but at that time I couldn't possibly have measured up to the standard. So I began to look about for a cure.

I tried osteopathy, but didn't go very far with it. I asked the optician who had been fitting me with glasses for advice, but he said that myopia was incurable. I dismissed the matter for a time, but I didn't stop thinking about it. I am a farmer, and I knew from the experience of outdoor life that health is the normal condition of living beings. I knew that when health is lost it can often be regained. I knew that when I first tried to lift a barrel of apples onto a wagon I could not do so, but that after a little-practice I became able to do it easily, and I did not see why, if one part of the body could be strengthened by exercise, others could not be strengthened also. I could remember a time when I was not myopic, and it seemed to me that if a normal eye could become myopic, it ought to be possible for a myopic eye to regain normality. After a while I went back to the optician and told him that I was convinced that there must be some cure for my condition. He replied that this was quite impossible, as everyone knew that myopia was incurable. The assurance with which he made this statement had an effect upon me quite the opposite of what he intended, for when he said that the cure of myopia was impossible I knew that it was not, and I resolved never to give up the search for a cure until I found it. Shortly after I had the good fortune to hear of the editor of this magazine, and lost no time in going to see him. At the first visit I was able, just by closing and resting my eyes, to improve my sight considerably for the Snellen test card, and in a short time I was able to make out most of the letters on the bottom line at ten feet. I am still improving, and when I can see a little better I mean to go back to that optician and tell him what I think of his ophthalmological learning.

MENTAL EFFECTS OF CENTRAL FIXATION

A man of forty-four who had worn glasses since the age of twenty was first seen on October 8, 1917, when he was suffering, not only from very imperfect sight, but from headache and discomfort. He was wearing for the right eye: concave 5.00D.S. with concave 0.50D.C. 180 degrees, and for the left concave 2.50D.S. with concave 1.50D.C. 180 degrees. As his vision were not very frequent and he often went back to his glasses, his progress was slow. But his pain and discomfort were relieved very quickly, and almost from the beginning he had flashes of greatly improved and even of normal vision. This encouraged him to continue, and his progress, though slow, was steady. He has now gone without his glasses entirely for some months. His wife was particularly impressed with the effect of the treatment upon his nerves, and in December, 1919, she wrote

"I have become very much interested in the thought of renewing my youth by becoming like a little child. The idea of the mental transition is not unfamiliar, but that this mental, or I should say spiritual, transition should produce a physical effect, which would lead to seeing clearly, is a sort of miracle very possible indeed, I should suppose, to those who have faith.

"In my husband's case, certainly, some such miracle was wrought, for not only was he able to lay aside his spectacles after many years constant use, and to see to read in almost any light, but I particularly noticed his serenity of mind after treatments. In this serenity he seemed.ible to do a great deal of work efficiently, and not under the high nervous pressure whose after-effect is the desanting scattering of forces.

"It did not occur to me for a long time that perhaps your treatment was quieting his nerves. But I think now that the quiet periods of relaxation, two or three times a day, during which he practiced with the letter card, must have had a very,beneficial effect. He is so enthusiastic by nature, and his nerves are so easily stimulated, that for years he used to overdo periodically. Of course, his greatly improved eyesight and the relief from the former strain must have been a large factor in this improvement. But I am inclined to think that the intervals of quiet and peace were wonderfully beneficial, and why shouldn't they be? We are living on stimulants, physical stimulants, mental stimulants of all kinds. The minute these stop we feel we are merely existing, and yet if we retain any of the normality of our youth do you not think that we respond very happily to natural simple things?"

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