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Better Eyesight

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

February, 1922

Test Your Imagination!

WITH the eyes closed remember some letter, as, for example, a small letter o. Imagine the white center to be white as snow with the sun shining on it. Now open the eyes, look at the Snellen Test Card and imagine the white snow as well as you can for a few moments only, without noting so much the cleanness of the letters on the card as your ability to imagine the snow-white center, alternating as before with the Snellen Card.
Another method: With the eyes closed, remember and imagine as well as you can the first letter, which should be known, on each line of the Snellen Test Card, beginning with the larger letters. Then open your eyes and imagine the same letter for a few moments only, alternating until the known letter is imagined sufficiently well that the second letter is seen without any effort on your part.
Third method: With the eyes closed remember or imagine a small black period for part of a minute or longer. Then with the eyes open, looking at no object in particular and without trying to see, imagine in your mind the black period. Should you believe that your vision is improved, dodge it, look somewhere else. This you can practice at all times, in all places, at your work as well as when sitting quietly in your room practicing with the Snellen Test Card. When the period is imagined perfectly with the eyes open, one cannot dodge perfect sight, which comes without any effort whatsoever.

SIXTEEN SCHOOL GIRLS
By Emily C. Lierman

THROUGHOUT the summer of 1921 our morning and afternoon offices were filled with school children, boys and girls, waiting for treatment of their eyes. They came from the Northern, Southern and Western parts of the United States. Watching them waiting patiently for their turn to see the Doctor who would take their glasses from their eyes and cure them, one could read the happy thoughts expressed in their faces. Mothers and guardians were with them to reassure them if they became impatient or the least doubtful while waiting.
To the clinic of the same good and great Doctor in one of New York City's large hospitals, throughout the whole year, there comes a steady stream of school children, just as eager to be cured without glasses. Not always does the boy or girl have a guardian or mother to give reassurance as the different ones are waiting to be treated. Sometimes they come alone and at other times they come in pairs or with three or four other children. At the office the Doctor sees the patient for one-half hour or so, but each child at the clinic can have only five minutes or just a little longer, for the time is short on clinic days.
I am anxious to tell about fifteen school girls, all from one class of Public School No. 90. Their ages range from nine to fourteen years. On January 5th they first appeared. That day Dr. Bates and I had to plead for admission.

Enter, the First Fifteen

There were about thirty adults, besides these school girls, also waiting for treatment and all of them made a rush for us when we arrived. I found that the teacher of the girls, who is very near-sighted, was at the present time being treated by Dr. Bates at his office. The progress she was making inspired her to send those of her class who were wearing glasses to the clinic. All hands went up at once when I asked who came first.
I could see from the start that I would have my hands full. All of them had a strained expression and, because of their actions and their manner, my heart went out not just to them but to that poor near-sighted teacher!
Three out of the fifteen girls have squint and two of the three are sisters. These sisters, Helen, age 10, and Agnes, age 12, both have squint of the left eye. Helen had 14/20 with both eyes, glasses on. Glasses off she read 14/40. After palming and resting her eyes her right eye improved to 14/20, and the squinting left eye improved to 14/30 without glasses. On January 17th she read 14/15 with each eye separately. Agnes, whose squint is worse than Helen's, had 14/70 in the left eye on January 5th, and on January 17th improved to 14/20. The right eye improved from 14/40 to 14/15 from January 5th to January 17th.
Frieda, who also has squint of the left eye, improved from 14/40 to 14/15 in the same length of time. Her right eye has normal sight.
All the rest of the fifteen, I discovered, were near-sighted.

Mary and Muriel

The youngest and best behaved is nine years old. Her name is Mary. She suffered terrible pain in her eyes and head the first day she came, but after she had closed her eyes and rested them for a short time the pain went away and her sight improved from 14/40 to 14/20. The strange thing about Mary is that she did not practice at home resting her eyes as she was told to do, but nevertheless her pain never came back even though her sight did not improve any more than it had on the first day.
Muriel and another Mary had progressive myopia. Muriel became so frightened the first day she came that she ran out of the clinic as fast as she could. She feared that the Doctor would apply drops or make her suffer in some way. Next day at school Mary told her what she had missed by running away and now, after three visits to the clinic, Muriel is running a race with Mary and I believe she has a fair chance of being cured first.
Muriel's sight improved from 14/70 to 14/20. Palming, resting her eyes, did this for her. She practices faithfully at home. Mary's vision was 14/15 with glasses. Without them, 14/50. Now she has sight as good, without her glasses as she did with them before. January 17th her vision was 14/15. She also practices faithfully, and her father has also become interested and helps Mary at home with her chart. The remainder of the fifteen all had about the same degree of myopia and all are eager to be cured. It is encouraging to see them improve after they have rested their eyes for just a few minutes.

Is It a Crime to Help These Children?

As I finished with these cases Doctor called my attention to a girl from the same school who has opacity of the corneas of the left eye. She had had this trouble since she was one year old. Her age now is twelve. She had no perception of light at all on that eye when she came. On her second visit to the clinic she could see light in that eye for the first time. Now she is beginning to see the letters on the test card.
Is it a crime to help the sight of these poor children? Should they be forced to keep wearing their glasses to benefit the man who sells eyeglasses? I am willing and want to devote the rest of my life to this wonderful work, but we need help. Mothers of the children are helping, they are our assistants only in the home. Teachers who are wearing glasses and who are being cured without them are also helping, but the prejudice of some of the authorities, based on ignorance of the truth, is a stumbling block. If they would only investigate the facts we would all be better satisfied.
The second visit of these children to the clinic is one to be remembered. On January 7th Doctor and I arrived a little late. We were greeted by a very much excited nurse. I knew something terrible had happened because this particular nurse has the best disposition of any nurse I have ever known. She is the most faithful, self-sacrificing person I know and I wonder, as does Dr. Bates, why some wonderful Doctor in need of a nurse and assistant has not taken her for his private practice. She is very intelligent and speaks several languages. How my heart did ache to hear her say that never in all her life had she come in contact with such bad girls. One of them invaded a doctor's room and placed herself in the operating chair. A team of
horses could not move her. Others yelled so loud that the doctors could not hear themselves talk. Well, I cannot explain in writing just how I felt. I treated each one, with tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat. I had planned to share between them some test cards to practice with at home, but I sent them home without them that day.

As Are the Eyes, So Is the Girl

But now since I have distributed them, my girls have faithfully practiced and improved not only their eyes but in other ways. I have promised them a day in the country this spring if they continue to behave, and also a house party with lots of goodies to eat. Winter storms have changed to summer breezes and they are working with a determination for better sight without glasses.
On January 14th they informed me that the school doctor said they must put on their glasses again, regardless of the fact that the sight of all of them has improved. The mothers feel quite differently about it, however, and they say that their children will not put on their glasses again no matter what the school nurse or doctor says. Since then my girls are all my willing assistants and are more determined than ever to be cured.
I will be pleased to report from time to time the progress we are making.

This is the twenty-fourth of the series of Stories from the Clinic. Can any mission of helpfulness be greater than that of Mrs. Lierman's to these children of New York's crowded schools? We think not—nor do the other children of the world await any greater blessing than that which she has been fortunate enough to give to these.

READING WITHOUT GLASSES
By W. H. Bates, M. D.

A PATIENT asked me how I discovered so many truths about eyesight. It may emphasize the facts and their value, if I relate the events connected with the discovery of these truths.
P. T. Barnum, many years ago, wrote an essay on "How to Make Money." In the opening sentence he stated that he felt that he was able to write an essay on how to make money because he had made money. Perhaps, similarly, as I have established medical truths I am encouraged to write how it was done.
About ten years ago I was talking to a friend of mine who showed me a letter which he desired me to read. At that time I was wearing glasses, but only for reading and on account of my age, not then knowing any means of doing without them for that purpose. My glasses were mislaid and it took me some time to find them while my friend impatiently waited. Being a friend, of course, he had the license to say things to me in a way he would not to his worst enemy.
Among other disagreeable things he said, and the tone was very emphatic, sarcastic, disagreeable, insulting: "You claim to cure people without glasses; why don't you cure yourself?" I shall never forget those words. They stimulated me to do something. I tried by all manner of means, by concentration, strain, effort, hard work, to enable myself to, become able to read the newspaper at the near-point.
After a few weeks, a few months, it dawned on me that all my efforts were useless. Previously, it had been my custom when I could not do a certain thing myself to look around and find somebody to help me, and so in the present instance I went looking for help. My old friends, the eye doctors, laughed at me and told me that I was crazy to think of the possibility of such a thing. They repeated to me the old established theories that accommodation is produced by change in the curvature of the crystalline lens. In youth, the lens readily changes its form or its ability to focus. With advancing age the lens, like the bones, the cartilages, becomes hard, loses in elasticity or its ability to change its shape and the eye no longer can change its focus from distant to near objects.

Hypnosis, Electricity, Neurology—and Back to Dr. Bates!

I consulted specialists of hypnotism, electricity experts, neurologists of all kinds and many others. One I called on, a physician who was an authority in psycho-analysis, was kind enough to listen to my problem. With as few words as possible I explained to him the simple method by which we diagnose near-sightedness with the retinoscope. As I looked off at the distance, he examined my eyes, and said that they were normal, but when I made an effort to see at the distance he said that my eyes were focused for the reading distance, near-sighted. Then when I looked at fine print at the reading distance and tried to read it he said that my eyes were focused for a distance of twenty feet or farther, and the harder I tried to read the further away did I push my focus. He was convinced of the facts, namely: a strain to see at the distance produced near-sightedness, while a strain to see near produced a far-sighted eye.
Then I told him what I desired: "Will you kindly suggest to me a line of investigation by which I can become able to focus my eyes for reading just as well when I am looking at the near-point where I desire to see, as I am able to do when I strain to see distant objects?" He answered, "Come back in a month." At the end of three months I returned for his opinion. He said to me: "After consulting with a number of neurologists ophthalmologists and others it is my opinion that there is only one man that can solve your problem." I eagerly asked, "Who is he?" He answered, "Dr. Bates."
And so I had to go on with my work without his help.

Stumbling on the Truth

The man who finally helped me to succeed or the only man who would do anything to encourage me was an Episcopal minister living in Brooklyn. After my evening office hours I had to travel for about two hours to reach his residence. With the aid of the retinoscope, while I was making all kinds of efforts to focus my eyes at the near-point, he would tell me how I was succeeding. After some weeks or months I had made no progress.
But one night I was looking at a picture on the wall which had black spots in different parts of it. They were conspicuously black. While observing them my mind imagined they were dark caves and that there were people moving around in them. My friend told me my eyes were now focused at the near-point. When I tried to read he said my eyes were focused for the distance. Lying on the table in front of me was a magazine with an illustrated advertisement with black spots which were intensely black. I imagined they were openings of caves with people moving around in them. My friend told me that my eyes were focused for the near-point; and, when I glanced at some reading matter, I was able to read it. Then I looked at a newspaper and while doing so remembered a perfect black of my imaginary caves and was gratified to find that I was able to read imperfectly.
We discussed the matter to find what brought about the benefit. Was it a strain or what was it? I tried again to remember the black caves while looking at the newspaper and my memory failed. I could not read the newspaper at all. He asked: "Do you remember the black caves?" I answered, "No, I don't seem to be able to remember the black caves." "Well," he said, "close your eyes and remember the black caves," and when I opened my eyes I was, able to read—for a few moments. When I tried to remember, the black caves again I failed.
The harder I tried the less I succeeded and we were puzzled. We discussed the matter and talked of a number of things, and all of a sudden without an effort on my part I remembered the black caves and, sure enough, it helped me to read. We talked some more. Why did I fail to remember the black caves when I tried so hard? Why did I remember the black caves when I did not try or while i was. thinking of other things? Here was a problem. We were both very much interested and finally it dawned on me that I could only remember these black caves when I did not strain or make an effort.
I had discovered a truth: a perfect memory is obtained without effort and in no other way. Also, when the memory or imagination are perfect sight is perfect.
That great truths are always simple truths, and that simplicity and humor frequently are akin, have been remarked before. But how often has one the experience of finding sense of humor—such as Dr. Bates'—in a scientist's reports of his experiments and discoveries?

THERE SHOULD BE A
BETTER EYESIGHT LEAGUE!
By Roberts Everett

I RECENTLY had the illuminating experience of an hour's intimate talk with Dr. Bates in his laboratory. It was my fortunate privilege to learn at first hand of the wonderful discoveries of Dr. Bates, his incalculable service to the poor of vision and the triumphant persistence of his methods in the face of indifference and opposition. There was a double interest in my attention to Dr. Bates as he talked to me. There was the personal interest of my memory of a time when I had worn glasses—had had to wear glasses, I had been told—and of a time when, tired of much experimenting, of this less replacing that one and this treatment following another, I had simply and determinedly discarded glasses and their ills. And successfully had done so.
But there was another interest as I listened. I realized that I was in the presence of a man and of a work that meant a definite blessing to the world. Dr. Bates, like scientists of earlier and less enlightened eras, was the discoverer and the missionary of healing methods that mankind needs. His truths of physical vision should be, by right, the property of every class and every people—as much a part of civilization's common property as the knowledge that the world is round or that mosquitoes spread disease.
And as I listened to the simple, yet for so long unacceptted, fundamentals of his discoveries and methods, it was this second, broader interest that became the overwhelming one. I felt that it became the duty of those who know of his discoveries or have been benefitted by them to spread the knowledge of them everywhere.

The Idea of a League

So as I listened there came the idea—I believe it is a practicable idea—of a disinterested organization to carry this good word of improved vision to all who should be told of it: to the American public. An organization disinterested in all except its purpose to promulgate a healing truth, an alleviatory knowledge for the lack of which the suffering of the world today is enormously augmented and its darkness, of the spirit and of the light of days so terribly increased.
As I learned more and more of the methods and the cures of Dr. Bates and of the needlessness of glasses this idea became stronger and more clarified. It has been my opportunity to see certain organizations, disinterested in the larger sense but directly and enthusiastically interested in some one philanthropic or industrial truth, carry on works of education that have benefitted the country or important groups or territories of it. And surely no "cause" could be more worthy of advancement; no information more worthy of promulgation, than that which will bring perfect vision and renewed faith to thousands, children and mature men and women alike.
Since that illuminating hour in Dr. Bates' laboratory I have thought much of the necessity of spreading the knowledge of the possibility of the prevention and cure of imperfect sight without the use of glasses. To those who have been benefitted by the discoverer of this possibility it is a duty to so spread this knowledge, one way in which they owe it to themselves to make their lives count in the betterment of others.
So I propose to all the readers of this magazine that this work definitely be started. The sightless, the maimed of vision, those denied of Nature's freely-offered share of light and color, ask it of them with an unescapable appeal!

How the League Can Be Formed

I propose the organization of an active Better Eyesight League, devoted to the promulgation of the knowledge that the prevention and the cure of imperfect eyesight without glasses is a scientific possibility and that the man and the demonstrated methods for its achievement are at the disposal of mankind.
I propose that this Better Eyesight League be organized by readers of this magazine, by those who have been benefitted by the methods of Dr. Bates, and that it be formed immediately, by those who first respond to this suggestion and are the nearest in time and distance to New York.
I propose that its membership be open to all those, beyond the readers of this magazine and those who have been helped by Dr. Bates, whose pleasure and zeal it is to help their fellow men and lessen suffering.
I propose that this Better Eyesight League be formed not with the aid of Dr. Bates, if that should not be offered; but without that aid if necessary, to give the knowledge of his many cures, as well as of great discoveries, to the world. He has already within his means and to a consequently limited public told these same results and laid his knowledge of the possibilities of better eyesight open to the eyes of others. I propose that the Better Eyesight League convey this knowledge to tens and hundreds and thousands as compared to every one that Dr. Bates has reached.

Each Reader Can Become an Organizer

To this end I suggest that every reader of this magazine the day his eye discovers this proposal write in his name and his approval of a Better Eyesight League to the office of the magazine. The envelope in the corner can be marked with the initials "B. E. L." to make sure it is read immediately. It is not necessary that Dr. Bates should ever see the letters or the names, unless that is desired. When all the letters are received there will be some means found, and word of it communicated to each name received, effectively and expeditiously to organize the League.
There should be a few weeks from now an actually functioning Better Eyesight League! Who will be first to start its organization?

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Q. Do the rays from the Snellen Card at 20 feet enter the normal eye approximately parallel?
A. Yes.
Q. I am not absolutely clear in my mind about the use of the word relaxation.
"The eye possesses perfect vision only when it is absolutely at rest." Page 107, "Perfect Sight Without Glasses."
"Near, vision although accompanied by muscular action." Page 101.
A. Read further.
Q. What is the function of the ciliary muscle?
A. I do not know.
Q. How do you account for this muscle and the changes in the curvature in the lens which never occur? (I have lost the page reference where you cited cases of a flattening or increase in convexity of the lens.)
A. I do not account for the presence of the ciliary muscle and never stated the lens changed its curvature.

Doctors are needed all over the world to cure people without glasses.

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