March 1920

Better Eyesight

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

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INFLUENZA—A QUICK CURE

When the muscles of the eyes are perfectly relaxed all errors of refraction are not only corrected, but abnormal conditions in other parts of the body are also relieved. It is impossible to relax the muscles of the eyes without relaxing every other muscle in the body. When people have colds or influenza the muscles that control the circulation in the affected parts are under a strain, the arteries are contracted, and the heart is not able to force the normal amount of blood through them. The blood consequently accumulates in the veins and produces inflammation. Hence any treatment which relaxes the, muscles of the eyes sufficiently to produce central fixation and normal vision will cure colds and influenza. When one palms perfectly, shifts easily, or has a perfect universal swing, not only the muscles which control the refraction, but the muscles of the arteries which control the circulation of the eyes, nose, lungs, kidneys, etc., are relaxed, and all symptoms of influenza, disappear. The nasal discharge ceases as if by magic, the cough is at once relieved, and if the nose has been closed, it opens. Pain, fatigue, fever and chilliness are also relieved. The truth of these statements has been repeatedly demonstrated.

The Editor is very proud of this discovery which is now published for the first time.

Editor's Note.—The writer of this article, a young man of twenty, was wearing, when first seen, the following glasses, prescribed three years earlier: both eyes, concave 6.50 D. S. combined with concave 3.00 D. C. 180 degrees. He also brought with him, from the Mayo Clinic, a later prescription—right eye, concave 9.00 D. S. combined with 4.50 D. C. 180 degrees; left eye, concave 8.00 D. S. combined with concave 3.00 D. C.—which indicated that there had been a very rapid advance in his myopia. The progress Je made in the brief period of six weeks was very unusual.

PROGRESSIVE MYOPIA RELIEVED

By E. E. Agganoow

I was only eight years old when the teacher told me that I couldn't come to school if I didn't get glasses. So, of course, I had to get them, and of course, I hated them. They kept me out of all the games that a boy really likes, such as baseball, and they made me terribly self-conscious.

Every little while I had to get new and stronger glasses. They were changed eight times in the course of the next nine years, by the end of which time I had what the specialists pronounced to be a very bad case of progressive myopia. After that I refused to make any more changes, for I Had lost faith in glasses and wasn't interested in trying new ones.

Although my eyes kept getting worse all the time, and the specialists said there wasn't a chance of a cure, I always felt sure that sometime I would find a cure, and I tried and investigated everything that seemed to offer any hope of relief. One specialist said that while I couldn't be cured, it would help me to live out of doors. So I gave up my job as a telegrapher, went West and got work in the open air. It didn't do me a bit of good. Then I went in for physical culture; but, while this improved my general health, it didn't help my eyes. I tried osteopathy and chiropractic, but they didn't help either. I read all the literature on the subject that T could final, and the invariable assertion of the authorities that my condition was hopeless did not shake my conviction to the contrary. I even made a trip to Rochester, Minnesota, for the sake of visiting the famous Mayo Clinic, where I expected to find all medical wisdom concentrated. All I got was a prescription for a stronger pair of glasses and a confirmation of the statements of my previous medical advisors, and of the medical books, that myopia was incurable. I remained unconvinced, however.

I now happened to run across an article in the Literary Digest about a method of curing shortsight by squeezing the eyeball, said to have been used successfully in Paris. I wrote for further information but was told that the article was merely a reprint from La Nature and that the office knew nothing more about it. The editor suggested, however, that I write to Dr. Bates who was making a special study of this problem. I had already heard of Dr. Bates through another source, and I lost no time in following this advice. He assured me that my condition was curable, and as I did not want to go to the expense of going to New York I asked him if he could treat me by correspondence. He replied that while he had cured many patients by correspondence, such treatment was slow and at a little uncertain, and in a case so serious as mine had better not be relied upon. As soon as I was able, therefore, I gathered together all the money that I had and went to New York, in spite of a tremendous amount of opposition and no encouragement whatever. Every doctor and every layman to whom I mentioned my purpose said I was crazy to suppose that shortsight could be cured, when all the books said it was incurable. My brother, who is an optician, was so strong in his opposition that I don't think I should ever have got to New York if I hadn't pretended that I was going for some purpose other than the real one—and even after I got there and was able to write to him that my sight was improving, he kept urging me to come home, telling me that any man who pretended to cure shortsight must be a quack, and that if I imagined I was getting any benefit it was because I had been hypnotized.

I arrived in New York on December 17, 1919, and went at once to Dr. Bates. When my eyes were tested with the Snellen test card, I found that at twenty feet I could see only the large letter at the top. I could read large print at five and a half inches, but could not read it any nearer or any farther, and could not see diamond type distinctly at any point.

I put in six hours a day at the office, practicing constantly with the Snellen test card, and at first found it rather discouraging and tiresome. When I tried to palm I saw all the colors of the rainbow instead of black. As I could not see anything perfectly, either at the near-point or the distance, I could not remember anything I saw perfectly. Even my own signature I was unable to visualize. Neither could I imagine that the letters on the card were moving when I shifted from one to another, or from one side of a letter to another.

At the end of a week, however, I succeeded in getting the swing, becoming able to imagine not only that the letters on the card were swinging, but that my body and everything that I thought of was swinging also. This universal swing soon established itself so thoroughly that I was unable to stop it and the Doctor had to tell me how. I did it by stating at a letter of fine print for a few seconds. After this things began, to go better. As long as I imagined the universal swing I could see black when I palmed and remember it with my eyes open. When I imagined it on the street it was as if a fog had lifted, or the sun had come out from behind a cloud. My sight improved rapidly, and I began to find the practice extremely interesting. I never got bored or sleepy, and, in fact, never had such a good time in my life. Besides improving my sight the swing did many other things for me. I had never done any running before coming to New York, but I now began to experiment with that, form of exercise, not expecting in the least to distinguish myself. In a week, however, I was able to run eleven miles, without fatigue or loss of breath, and without even feeling sore or stiff afterward. This I attributed to the swing, which I kept up all the time I was running. When I did not do this, I quickly became tired. One day I had to visit a chiropodist to have an ingrowing nail treated. The first touch was excruciatingly painful. Then the chiropodist turned away to get an instrument, and I began to swing. When he resumed work I felt no pain, and the operation was finished painlessly. Even loneliness seemed to flee before this imaginary rhythmical movement, and it has now become so necessary to my existence that I would even be willing to go back to the hated glasses rather than be without it.

When I left New York on December 31 I was able to make out some of the letters on the bottom line of the test card at twenty feet and to read diamond type ½ from four to eighteen inches, while my eyes, which had previously been inflamed and partly closed, were clear and wide open. Incidentally my memory, which had previously been so poor as to cause me great inconvenience, and for which I had taken several memory courses in vain, had improved as much as my eyesight.

STORIES FROM THE CLINIC

2. A Case of Cataract

By Emily C. Lierman

One day as I entered the clinic I found a little white-haired woman waiting patiently to be treated. I had not seen her before, and did not know what her trouble was. The usual crowd of patients was waiting for Dr. Bates and myself, so when he said to me, "See what you can do for this woman," I did not ask any questions, for I knew that whatever the condition of her eyes relaxation would help her.

I placed her four feet from the test card, at which distance she read the forty line (read by the eye with normal vision at forty feet), and told her how to rest her eyes by palming and how to avoid straing by shifting from one side of a letter to another. These practices helped her so much that before she left she was able to read the thirty line.

Later I learned that she had first seen Dr. Bates in March, 1919, and that she had incipient cataract of both eyes. In October, 1916, she had visited another dispensary where an operation was advised when the cataracts were ripe. I also learned that in spite of her seventy-three years she worked hard every day for her living, being employed in an orphan asylum where she mended the children's clothes. The fact that she was very deaf I saw for myself, of course, at the first interview, for I had to scream to make her hear. Her courage and cheerfulness under circumstances that might have daunted the bravest spirit were amazing. Her face was always radiant with smiles, and she was so witty, and so appreciative of everything that was done .for her, that each one of her visits to the clinic was a pleasure to me.

"I have so much to be thankful for," she said one day. "I know I will see all right again. They are waiting to operate at the ahler dispensary, and I am waiting to find them."

The orphanage is about two miles from the clinic, and often she walks the entire distance rather than bother waiting for a car. She insists after these feats that she isn't a bit tired. One day there were no cars running and the walking was so bad that a friend urged her not to go out unless she was prepared to swim. She came just as usual, however. Why should she stay in, she asked, because other people were afraid to go out. She wasn't tired either, and she hadn't even got her feet wet. She just dodged the snowdrifts.

Most patients frown when they cannot see a letter, but my little cataract patient smiles instead and remarks cheerfully, "That's the time you got me."

One day she did not do as well as usual, and I found that the people in the place where she worked had been saying unpleasant things. I told her she must try not to let things of this sort disturb her, because that made her strain and made the cataracts worse.

"Well," she said, "it is mighty hard not to worry; but I'll try not to."

At a recent visit she explained that she wouldn't be able to do very well because she hadn't had time to practice.

"Never mind," I said. "Just do as well as you can." Without her knowing it I placed her two feet farther from the card than usual. Then I told her to palm, and after a short time I pointed to a small letter on the bottom line and asked her if she could see it. She recognized it immediately. Then I pointed to another, but she was so eager to see it that she tried too hard and failed. She closed her eyes for a few minutes without palming, and when she opened them she read the whole line. I then told her that she was two feet farther away from the card than she usually was. She was very happy about this and said, "That's the time you fooled me."

She has since because able to read the bottom line at ten feet, and one day she read' it at eleven feet, without knowing it and without having done any practicing at home. On sunshiny days she can read the "W. H. Bates, M.D." on Dr. Bates' card, and for over a month she has done all her sewing without glasses. There is no doubt that she is going to fool them at the other dispensary.

Along with the improvement in her eyes has gone a considerable improvement in her hearing. Noises in her ears which she describes as a "singing and singing" are promptly relieved by palming, and she says that the relief, which at first was only temporary, is now becoming more constant. She also says that she hears conversation better than she used to.

HOW I WAS CURED

By Victoria Coolidge

Editor's Note.—This is the first of a series of articles by the same author. Next month she will felt us how she cured other people. Owing to her high degree of hypermetropia, her own cure is particularly interesting.

When I went to see Dr. Bates I had been wearing glasses for twenty-six years. A prescription for glasses given to me in 1899 read: right eye, convex 5.00 D. S. combined with convex 0.50 D. C. 180 degrees; left eye, convex 5.00 D. S. combined with convex 1.00 D. C. 180 degrees. Another given to me in 1917 read nearly the same. I had consulted five different eye specialists, some of them several times, and they all told me the same thing—very poor sight caused by malformation of the eyeball and no possibility of cure.

Fortunately, I was only a child when I first put on glasses, and these statements, instead of discouraging me, made me feel that I was very important and should by the envy of all my schoolmates. As I grew older, however, I began to have headaches; so I had my glasses changed and my home study was reduced to one hour. As the changing of my glasses meant, at that time, a trip out of town, both parts of the treatment were very pleasant—more pleasant than effective, for the headaches continued

Each time the eye specialist gave me stronger glasses, and gradually my vision for distant objects became worse and worse. When I went to the theatre I could not see the faces of the actors distinctly unless I sat as near as the fifth or sixth row from the stage; and when I discussed the play with the persons who accompanied me, the accuracy with which they could describe the features and expressions of the actors, without the aid of eyeglasses or opera-glasses, seemed unbelievable. The feeling of depression which I experienced on these occasions, however, was only momentary, and on the whole I was resigned to my fate.

But resignation was not so complete as to dull entirely my sense of ocular deformity; and, especially when I had had some fresh reminder of it in the shape of a headache, or inability to finish a book because of tired eyes, I searched the magazines eagerly for discoveries about the eye. I felt sure that science had not said the last word about that subject. In January, 1915, my attention was called to an article entitled New Light Upon Our Eyes, in the Scientific American, and I lost no time in reading it, you may be sure the article stated that Dr. Bates, who was already well known to the scientific world as the discoverer of adrenalin, had made a series of experiments on animals, the results of which struck at the very foundations of the present method of treating errors of refraction. They indicated, in short, that the lens is not a factor in accommodation, and that the deviations from the normal in the shape of the eyeball which produce errors of refraction are caused by a strain of the extrinsic muscles. As soon as the strain is removed, by perfect relaxation, the eyeball resumes its normal shape and there is no error of refraction. The remedy, therefore, was not to put glasses before the eyes, but to remove the strain which caused the abnormal action of the outside muscles.

The morning after reading the article I took off my glasses, and tried to knit, but put them on more quickly than I had taken them off, for my sight was so poor without them that I made several mistakes and experienced a feeling of nausea. I believe that I had never until that moment realized how very poor my sight had become. I began to leave off my glasses whenever I had no close work to do, in spite of the fact that I had been warned by one eye specialist never to let them leave my nose during waking hours, and I determined to see Dr. Bates the very next time I came to New York.

The following August I called on Dr. Bates. I was prepared to make any sacrifice, or to spend any amount of time—five years, ten years—it didn't matter, if my eyes were only getting better all the time instead of worse. The only thing that troubled me was the fear that he might tell me that my case was hopeless. This thought was so prominent in my mind, in fact, that I told him at once that I was afraid he could do nothing for me. I wanted him to know that I was prepared, so that if I must bear by doom I might bear it without delay.

After making a careful examination of my eyes, Dr. Bates asked me what was the lowest line that I could read on the test card. I found that I could read the thirty line at a distance of fourteen feet. Then he asked the if I could see anything on the line below. I said I could see the hollow square. Then he directed me to close my eyes, remembering how the square looked. I was able to do that, and he next directed me to look at the blank wall, still remembering the square; while I was doing so, he examined my eyes again with a retinoscope and found them normal. When the strain was removed from my eyes by remembering the square perfectly and looking at the blank wall without trying to see anything, my vision became normal. The impossible had evidently been accomplished. For a few moments, at least, the lopsided eyeballs with their consequent errors of refraction had been miraculously rounded out. Dr. Bates now asked me to close my eyes, and then left me for about fifteen minutes. When he returned, he handed me one of his professional cards and asked me if I could read anything on it. It seemed to me, I remember, a very foolish question, because I had previously told him that I could read nothing Without glasses. A newspaper looked like a big gray blur, and the harder I tried to see it the more blurred it became. However, I took the card and tried to read it, but, as I expected, without success. So he asked me to close my eyes again, this time covering them with the palms of my hands, and thinking of the blackest thing I could remember, which happened to be black paint. I did this for perhaps twenty minutes. After this he gave me the same card again, and directed me to hold it close to my eyes, about six inches, and to look alternately at the top and bottom of the letters. Much to my amazement and joy, a "B" came out clearly enough for me to recognize it. I kept on in this way, occasionally closing my eyes, until I could see "Bates," "Dr. W. H. Bates," and finally the telephone numbers printed in small type. I felt as if I were in a dream, or as if I must be some one else. I lived in the clouds for the rest of the day, but somehow managed to get in some palming and some practice with the Snellen card.

The next day I did better, and I have kept on improving ever since. The best of it is that every gain is permanent. Dr. Bates told me that I would never have to wear glasses again, but I kept them near me for two or three weeks in case of emergency, just as Dr. Manette, in Dickens' Tale of Two Cities, used to keep his shoemaking tools and bench at hand in the event of his relapsing into his disordered state of mind. I never had to use them, however, and about six months ago I sold them for old gold. My vision is now 20/20 in a good light and 20/30 in any light, and I can read diamond type at six inches.

AFTER GLASSES FAILED

By Florence Miller

I began to wear glasses when I was fifteen years old, and wore them unchanged for seven years. Then I went to another specialist who gave me new ones—stronger, I suppose. I wore these for a year, and then, not feeling quite comfortable in them, I consulted a third specialist, who changed them again. These lenses I wore for four years, by the end of which time I had begun to have constant though not severe headaches. I went back to the third specialist a second time, but he said he could not improve upon the lenses I was wearing; and I went on having the headaches, which gradually became worse until sometimes I had to go to bed with them.

One day my son, ten years old, came home and said that the teacher had told him that he needed glasses. Naturally I did not wish to see him wearing spectacles if there was any way of avoiding it, and as my husband, who is a physician, had recently heard Dr. Bates read a paper at a medical society on his method of curing errors of refraction without glasses. I took my boy to see him. Dr. Bates not only assured me that the child could be cured, but improved his sight markedly at the first visit. Then he turned to me and said:

"I can cure you, too."

"But I couldn't possibly go without glasses," I said; "I get such awful headaches when I do."

"Do you want to be cured very much?" he asked.

"I would do anything in this world," I said, "to be cured."

"If so," he answered, "I can cure you, and you will be able to go without your glasses without getting headaches."

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"I want you to take off your glasses," he said, "and come and see me every day for a while."

I took the glasses off, and have never worn or wanted them since. Just what became of them I don't know. My impression is that I gave them to the doctor and that he put them in a cabinet where he deposits treasures of that kind. He says he told me to throw them in the 'ash-can, and that I afterwards said I had done so. At any rate I am sure that I never put them or any other glasses before my eyes since that day.

This' was on July 14, 1914, and my vision, as tested by the Snellen test card, was 20/200 in each eye. The doctor said I had compound myopic astigmatism and that my glasses were concave 6.50 D. S. combined with concave 1.50 D. C. 180 degrees.

It was troublesome and tedious learning to see. For two months I went to see Dr. Bates nearly every day, and he spent half an hour or more with me. For another two months I went twice a week. Since then I have continued to practice more or less regularly with the test card. But the results have been worth all the trouble.

Most of the practice time I spent simply resting my eyes by closing them, or by covering them with the palms of my hands, then looking at the test card for a moment and resting again. The doctor told me that when I looked at a letter on the test card and did not see one part of it better than the rest I was immediately to look away and rest my eyes. He also recommended me to imagine that I saw one part of a letter best with the eyes open and closed alternately. In this way I finally became able to look at each and every letter on the card and see one part of it best, when my vision became normal, and even double what is ordinarily considered normal.

On July 20, less than a week after I began to take the treatment, I was able to read most of the letters on the bottom line of the test card at twenty feet (20/10), and in two weeks I could read all of them. At first I was able to do this only temporarily, but gradually I became able to hold the letters longer. On August 12 I was able to report that for the first time in years I had not had a headache for a whole week By September 2 I was able to read and sew as much as I liked without any discomfort in my eyes. When I wore glasses the theatre and movies had always hurt my eyes terribly, but instead of advising me to stay away from these places, Dr. Bates urged me to go to the movies and look at them just as I did at the test card—that is, by alternating vision with rest. I was to look first at the corner of the screen; then off to the dark, then a little nearer the center, and so forth. In this way I soon became able to look directly at the pictures without discomfort.

For the last five years my sight has steadily improved. My form of astigmatism was such as to positively obliterate all horizontal lines. To see such lines at all I had to turn my head, or the object. Lines of music would hold only a minute or less. I have gradually become able to hold these lines longer and longer, and now I never lose them. unless very tired. As for headaches I have had none at all during these years that could not be accounted for by indigestion or neuralgia, and very few even of these.

Last Spring I went to see Dr. Bates about an ulcer on my cornea. He tested my sight and found it, even under these conditions, better than normal.

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