October 1926

Better Eyesight

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

October, 1926

Demonstrate

1. That a strain to see at the distance produces near-sightedness. Look at a Snellen test card at twenty feet and read it as well as you can. Now strain or make an effort to see it better, and note that instead of becoming better, it becomes worse.
2. That a strain to see at the near point does not increase near-sightedness, but always lessens it.
Look at a card of fine print at six inches from your eyes and read it as well as you can. Now make an effort to see it better, and note that your vision for the near point is lowered, while the ability to read the fine print at a greater distance is improved.
3. That when a mental picture is perfect with the eyes closed for part of a minute or longer, a perfect mental picture can be remembered, long-used, or seen for a second or less with the eyes open.
Remember a black letters. If your mental picture is gray or an imperfect black with the eyes closed, imagine that you are pouring black ink or black dye over it. Note that the clearness of the mental picture improves.
Look at a page of fine print. Then close your eyes and imagine the white spaces between the lines to be perfectly white. If they appear to be a grayish white, imagine that you are painting the white spaces between the letters, inside the letters, and between the lines, with white paint or whitewash. Then open your eyes for a fraction of a second and note that the white spaces between the lines will appear whiter. If you do not make an effort to see either the black letters or the white spaces.

Lord Macaulay
By W. H. Bates, M.D.

LORD MACAULAY, who wis always hold an eminent place among English men of letters, was born October 25th, 1800 and died December 28th, 1859. Before he was 30 years of age, he became a member of the House of Commons, and later held positions of trust and importance which required him to visit different parts of the world. At one time he wrote a code of laws for the benefit of the people of India and devoted considerable time to the work
Lord Macaulay was said to be the most rapid reader on record, and had the ability to remember perfectly what he had read ten or more years previously, without refreshing his memory by re-reading it. He was able to read a page of five hundred words in one second. Not only could he remember the words that were spelled correctly, but also those words which were spelled incorrectly. He was able to remember the page on which they could be found, the line of the page, the location of the words on the line, and how each word was misspelled. For example, if the word "which" were misspelled, he could remember that it was the fourth word on the fifth line on page 120, and that it was spelled "whiche." This seems a remarkable statement to make, but I have had patients who became able to read almost as rapidly as Lord Macaulay after a course of eye education. This training consisted of central fixation and the imagination of the halos, i.e., the white spaces inside the letters, between the letters and between the lines of letters.
Central fixation is the ability to see best where you are looking and not so clearly where you are not looking. This requires shifting from one part of an object to another part. To have perfect eight, Lord Macaulay unconsciously practiced central fixation. If he had consciously tried to see a letter or to keep his attention fixed on one part of a letter, or if he had tried to see all parts of a letter at once, his vision would have been imperfect. To see the top of a letter perfectly, it was necessary for him to look at and see the top of the letter best, and the rest of the letter not so well. To see each of the other sides perfectly, it was necessary for him to look at and see each side best, and the rest of the letter not so well. Since the average number of letters in each word is five, he shifted four times five, or twenty times, to see each word with maximum vision. To recognize five hundred words, it was therefore necessary, for him to shift five hundred times twenty, or ten thousand times in one second.
In order to see perfectly, it is necessary that one imagine perfectly. Macaulay remembered or imagined the white spaces between the lines to be whiter than they really were. When the white spaces were imagined perfectly white, the black letters were imagined perfectly black, because the white spaces could not be imagined perfectly, without the black being imagined perfectly at the same time. For the same reason, when the blackness of the letters was imagined perfectly, the form of the letters was also imagined perfectly. It has been demonstrated that trying to see the black letters is a conscious strain, or is attended by a conscious strain, and always lowers the vision.
It is a truth that one cannot remember a letter perfectly unless it has been seen perfectly. When the memory for one letter is perfect, the memory for all letters is also perfect. A letter cannot be imagined perfectly unless it has been remembered perfectly. It cannot be seen perfectly unless it has been imagined perfectly. We see only what we imagine we see. The speed of reading is greatest when the vision is perfect.
After a course of eye training, some of my patients were able sub-consciously to remember large letters of the Snellen test card, which they had previously regarded, without being conscious of distinguishing any of the letters. Many of these patients have become able to remember or imagine small letters of the test card at thirty, forty, or fifty feet. I have had some patients glance for a few seconds at a page of diamond type at ten feet or further, without consciously reading any of the letters. With their eyes closed and covered with the palms of their hands, some of them became able to re-member or imagine one or more letters of the fine print. They must have unconsciously seen the fine print to have been able to imagine the letters, because one cannot imagine something not remembered, and one cannot remember perfectly unless one has seen perfectly. Therefore, in order to imagine a letter perfectly, it is necessary that the letter be seen previously, either consciously or unconsciously.
The method of rapid reading practiced by Macaulay is invaluable and should be more widely employed.
In my Writings I have remonstrated against the methods employed to teach rapid reading. The usual procedure was to encourage the student to see all of the letters of a word at once, or to see all the letters of a paragraph of words at the same time. This was accepted as the correct method and very intelligent scholars have recommended it. My research work has proved that there is nothing more injurious to the eyes than to make an effort to see a whole letter or a whole word, all parts equally well. If one looks at the first letter of a word, the last letter is not seen perfectly at the same time. If an effort is made, the whole word becomes blurred and may not be distinguished. The stronger the effort that is made, the more injurious it is to the mind and eyes.
In the public schools of the City of New York, teachers are advised to practice this method of rapid reading with young children. Although the result is unsatisfactory, many teachers still persist in their efforts to teach the impossible. It is interesting to know that children who have perfect mental pictures of letters, or other objects, have a normal memory or a memory that is just as perfect for letters or objects. The scholarship of such children is much better than that of others whose memory or mental pictures are imperfect. A number of school children have told me that at the time of their examinations, they could read a question on the blackboard and have no conception of what the answer might be, but if they closed their eyes and remembered the first letter of the question perfectly, it helped them to remember the answer to the question.
One teacher with a class of children who were mentally deficient, found that the practice of central fixation, palming, and the use of the imagination was of great benefit to the minds of these children. A school teacher in Chicago has made a practice of teaching her pupils how to imagine things perfectly, with the result that no matter how ignorant they may be, at the beginning of the school term, it is not long before they become able to make the same progress as other children in the rapid advancement classes.
The dean of the department of metaphysics of one of our prominent universities came to me and complained that he was suffering with all kinds of mental and eye troubles because he had lost the power of concentration. The strain was so great that he was compelled to give up his work. Glasses were of no benefit. He demonstrated that to concentrate on one letter or one part of a letter it was necessary for him to make an effort, and in a few seconds his vision became very imperfect.
With perfect sight, no effort is made and the eyes and mind are at rest. There is no fatigue, and one can read with great rapidity for many hours continuously, without being conscious of having eyes.

Stories from the Clinic
No. 88: FEAR
By Emily C. Lierman

FEAR is one of the many symptoms which accompanies imperfect sight. This is more noticeable in adults than in children. If pain results from imperfect vision, the fear is much greater. Many of our patients have been to other clinics, or other doctors, and were told that if glasses were not worn, they would go blind. Sometimes they were told that they had an organic disease of the eyes, such as glaucoma, iritis, keratitis, atrophy of the optic nerve, or cataract. The patient has cause to fear. It is my belief that the doctor should tell his patient what the trouble is; but when he is not absolutely sure of his diagnosis, he contains an error in telling the patient something which he himself would be afraid to hear. Such cases are numerous, and Dr. Bates and I both know that they come to us feeling that it is their last hope. Their fear is always noticeable.
A case which is worth mentioning is that of a woman over fifty years of age, who came with little hope of being cured. She had been treated and fitted with glasses by several eye-specialists without any relief of pain or improvement in her eight. Two doctors who had examined her, said that all her pain was caused by glaucoma, which she had in both eyes. She said that she had a constant fear of going blind; and many times had a strong desire to end her life. The effort to conceal this desire from her family, who loved her dearly, produced more tension and strain.
Dr. Bates examined her eyes thoroughly and said that there was no opacity of the lens or other parts of either eye. Both optic nerve and retina were normal. Her vision of the test card, with each eye separately, was 0/40. Although the letters were blurred, she could tell what they were. I noticed that she stared a great deal as she explained her trouble to me. Since palming usually stops the stare with most patients, I taught her to palm, being sure to keep up a steady flow of conversation in order to distract her attention from her eyes.
I knew that she had been studying Dr. Bates' book, "Perfect Sight Without Glasses," and I asked her what she thought Doctor meant in his book by mental pictures. She said that she had no mental pictures while her eyes were closed and covered. I knew then that she made an effort to imagine things with her eyes closed, so I did not mention mental pictures again. However, I did not get away from the subject; but, while talking, I mentioned the color of the dress which she wore, and asked her if she could remember the designs in the trimming of her dress. She explained the designs accurately. Then I asked her which she thought was the whitest white, a white cloud in a blue sky, or a drift of snow. She an. swered that she could think of nothing whiter than the white of snow. All this time, I believe that she had had mental pictures of the white cloud and the snow, as well as the design in the trimming of her dress. While her eyes were still covered, I asked her if she had any pain. She said no, that she had forgotten all about it.
She was then taught to essay her body, while standing with her feet about one foot apart. She did this very gracefully. I told her to keep up a constant blinking of her eyes as she swayed from side to side, getting a glimpse of the letters of the test card ten feet away. She was instructed to look at only one letter at a time and to quickly look away from the card to avoid the tendency to stare or strain. We continued to practice this for ten minutes and in order to keep up her interest, I swayed with her all the time. Her vision improved to 10/20 and she said every letter was clear and distinct.
In treating her again the next day, I used a different test card, the Pot Hooks card with the letter "E" pointing in various directions. She had faithfully carried out instructions which had been given her for home treatment, otherwise she could not have gained as much as she had in so short a time. Her vision with each eye separately was 10/15. Other cards were used, but she did not read them so well. Sometimes this happens, especially with patients as nervous as she.
It is strange that some of us have likes and dislikes, even with an ordinary test card. This fact ought to convince school nurses and doctors, that when children's eyes are being examined with the various test cards, they cannot do so well with some cards as they can with others. A person with an unsympathetic mind would scoff at the idea that a test card could make a difference in the vision, but it is a fact which can be demonstrated.
To vary her treatment, I used a small test card with the fundamental principles of the method, written by Doctor Bates, on the opposite side. The letters on this card are printed in unusually large reading type at the top of the card, and they gradually decrease in size to very fine print, or diamond type, at the bottom of the card. When she first took the pinall card, she held it at arm's length in order to read the largest type on the card. Rather than worry her by telling her to hold the card closer, I took her out in the sunshine, told her to close her eyes, and gave her the sun treatment with the sun-glass. At first she drew her head away, indicating that she did not like it. In a soft tone of voice, which I had used from the beginning, and which I realized helped to alleviate her nervousness and fear, I suggested that she let me try it again. I told her that babies enjoyed the sun treatment, when the sun-glass was used on their closed eyes. I explained how many of our boys, who returned from France, after the war, enjoyed this wonderful sun treatment which Dr. Bates had discovered was so beneficial for all sorts of eye troubles. During all the time that I talked with her, I used the sun-glass on her eyes. I noticed that she responded, because her body relaxed and she settled in a more comfortable nessiess in
her chair. When I stopped the movement of the sun-glass for a moment, she immediately asked for more, so I continued using it on her closed eyes for more than twenty minutes. After this treatment she read three sentences of the fundamental card, at eight inches from her eyes. The type of the third sentence is about the size of book type.
During her third treatment, she smiled most of the time, whereas she had been very sad before. She suggested that I test her sight with a strange test card. By swaying her body from side to side, as she stood twelve feet from the card, she read the ten line letters, one at a time, looking away from the card after seeing each letter.
Having watched her carefully, I noticed that at times she forgot to blink. When she finished reading the card, and complained of a burning in her eyes, I reminded her that she had not been blinking often enough, while reading the test card. She then practiced blinking often, just as the normal eye does.
I believe, she will always remember the next treatment she had. The balcony which surrounds our office is a delightful place on sunny days, and I gave her sun treatment there for almost half an hour. Then we turned our backs to the sun, and I placed my book, "Stories From the Clinic," in her lap. Before she started to read, I took one of the small black test cards, with white letters, and put it on the opposite side of the page which she was reading. By looking at a white letter of the test card, she began immediately to read sentence after sentence of the book. For the first time in twenty years, she was able to read book type without glasses. During her last treatment, she read words and numbers in the telephone book. Her pain was gone; she no longer wished to die, and she is now a happy woman, because she can read her books without the aid of glasses.

Case Reports

We take pleasure in publishing the following letter from a patient of Dr. Bates.
My dear Dr. Bates:
May I take a few minutes of your time to read something very interesting which I am eager to tell you?
It is the case of a smart old lady of 86. She is called "Blind Aunt Kate" and I thought when I met her, that she must be totally blind, as I saw her grope her way along. She was unable to distinguish me from some one else although my face was within six inches from her face. A week ago today, August 29th, I tested her eyes outdoors in the sunlight. At first she was unable to see the large E on the black card; then she read it at eight inches, and later at eighteen inches. After palming for five minutes, she distinguished it at twenty-eight inches and at thirty-six inches; after palming again F and P come out at eight inches, and after palming again, at twenty-six inches. The following day she saw L, P, E, D, at thirty-five inches and the large E at sixty-six inches. Also she was able to see all the rest of the lines at various distances and two letters of the very last line at six inches. Today is dark and rainy, but she showed great progress after one week's work. Indoors, she could distinguish the large E at seventy-six inches; F, P, at sixty inches and T, O, Z came out still more clearly at sixty-nine inches. Also through the rain she could see the barn, a wagon in the yard, the path and road and a stone fence following the road, things which she hasn't been able to see on a bright day for over a year. She also distinguished different faces (including mine), half way across a large room.
She is so happy over her week's improvement, she says if she can see this well for the rest of her life, she won't complain. She is very faithful in her work and would gladly do anything more that I would suggest, but I have been afraid of directing her wrongly, though I have done nothing but have her palm, blink frequently (she has been staring so persistently), swing her eyes horizontally, and see things moving by as she walks.
Her eye doctor here used to call her trouble an enlargement of the eyeball, and said glasses would do her no good. She wore glasses for forty-five years and took them off a year ago. She has not read, even coarse print in four years. She says for the past two months her eyes had failed so rapidly that she was trying to resign herself to utter blindness. She is a very sweet, patient old lady and is quite unhappy from outside influences, so I am very eager to give her all the help for her eyes I can. In almost seems as if my Mother's spirit has led me right to her. If you could give me some special exercises for her to follow, I could help her even more, I'm sure, in the two weeks remaining of my vacation. On a bright day she can see every letter of the black E card. I am just beginning to work with her on the white card but today indoors, she could read the first three lines as far off as on the black card. I did not test her on the rest of the lines.
Hoping I am not asking too much of an already busy man, and thanking you, I remain

The following letter came a few days later.
Dear Dr. Bates:
Your very encouraging letter was received and made both Aunt Kate and myself very happy. I should be very glad indeed to have you publish her story, and she says too, that it would make her so happy if she thought someone else might be helped through her experience.
She has been ill for two days so that I had to discontinue the work on the card. She has, however, kept resting her eyes and at 6 o'clock this evening, when it was very gloomy, we sat at an upper window together and she suddenly remarked: "Now, I can see that old stone wall across the road so plainly"! I hope tomorrow we can resume the work with the card.
I wrote you on September 5th, which was, I believe, a dark day and just one week from the day I first tested her eyes. The next day was sunny again and I tested her eyes with this result, which you will agree was splendid.. The large E she saw at 174 inches; F, P at 136 inches; T. O, Z at 142 inches; L, P, E, D at 78 inches; P, E, C, F, D at 53 inches; E, D, F, etc. at 41 inches. (All but Z, which she saw at 35 inches), D, E, F, P, etc. at 18 inches. The last two lines she made out entirely by holding the card closer to her eyes. So, according to my most careful measurements she saw the various lines at from five to ten and seventeen times the distance she saw them eight days previous.
I am telling you this in such detail so that you will realize there is no mistake in my precious story. I measured the distance so carefully on each occasion. You may also make use of these latest figures in your magazine account of Aunt Kate if you wish.
Sincerely yours,
ALICE AVERY PRICE,
159 So. Broadway, White Plains, N. Y.

Cured in One Visit

A report from Miss Anna Woessner, Teacher of Dr. Bates Method
MADELINE, aged 12, had very poor vision for things up close, and in school was unable to do distinguish figures on the blackboard. Outdoors, all objects at 20 feet or further, were blurred to her. She had worn glasses for a year and they constantly annoyed her. When she heard about the Bates Method of treat-ment, and that I was training patients, she was eager to obtain help from me so as to discard her glasses, if possible. When I met her, the only test card available was a small letter card with the fundamentals by W. H. Bates, M.D. printed on the opposite side. The test card begins with the letter C which can be seen clearly with the normal eye at fifty feet. Madeline could not see even this letter clearly at five feet. While palming I asked her to describe her doll to me. Then she told me about her bicycle and imagined it was moving with her, as she was riding. Before she opened her eyes to look at the card, I put it off at a distance of eight feet and told her to stand, open her eyes, sway her body, and while blinking to look at the card, then at a bird-cage near by. Without a stop she read up to S C, G, O, or the letters, which are seen by the normal eye at fifteen feet. With more practice of this kind, her vision improved from the third to the bottom line at nine feet away. These letters are read by the normal eye at four feet.
Sun treatment was given her which she enjoyed, and this helped to improve her near vision, so that she could read the finest print of the fundamentals on the opposite side of the small test card. Madeline had just one treatment. Greatly encouraged, she promised to practice often every day and not put on her glasses again. One month later I saw her again, but she did not need another treat-ment. Her vision was normal at the near point, as well as for the distance.
Madeline's sister Regina is 15 years of age. She has congenital astigmatism and, although she has worn glasses for ten years, she still "hates them." Without glasses, her eyes were mere slits. Her vision was 10/40 with the left eye and 10/30 with the right.
After impressing her with the importance of shifting and blinking (which she had been very careful not to do), I gave her a short period of sun treatment. At first this was very distressing, as she was unable to open her eyelids for even a moment. After swaying, with closed eyes, this was overcome, and at the end of the treatment she read the greater part of the 10 line.
After several more treatments, her vision became practically normal. She is continuing her treatment under my supervision, and after a few more I feel confident that her vision will be normal.

Anyone wishing to confer with Miss Woessner, can reach her by calling New York, Murray Hill 8446, or by writing her at her home in West Nyack, N. Y.

"The Swing"

All things are in Motion;
  Let's fall into time,
And Swing along with them,
  While chanting this rhyme.
Well keep our swing steady,
  By Grandmother's Clock,
Its pendulum swinging,
  Its measured tick-tock.
In Memory I'm seeing
  A fine old elm tree;
Its low-hanging branches
  Seem beck'ning to me.
A brown bird sits rocking
  On that topmost limb.
I wonder who taught
  The Bates System to him.
With eyes all a-sparkle,
  Face turned to the Sun,
His head ever turning,
  His day is begun.
White clouds float above him
  In limitless blue;
His wee throat is swollen
  With song, the day thru.
Teach us, then, oh brown bird,
  To start our day right;
That our Eyes like yours,
  May be sparkling and bright.
Written by Mrs. A. J. Campbell, patient of Dr. Jean B. Clawson, Chicago, Ill.

Questions and Answers

Question—What causes redness and smarting sensation of the eye even when plenty of sun treatment has been given? Should one continue with can treatment under the circumstances?
Answer—Take the sun treatment frequently for five or ten minutes at a time daily, increasing the length of time until the eyes become accustomed to the sun. The eyes' should always be benefited after the sun treatment, and one should always feel relaxed. When done properly, the redness and smarting should soon disappear. If the eyes are not benefited, it is an indication that you strain while taking the treatment. Alternate the sun treatment with palming or closing the eyes to rest them.
Question—What makes the eyes seem extremely heavy upon rising in the morning?
Answer—Eyestrain while sleeping. See the May number of "Better Eyesight" on Presbyopia.
Question—What causes a white matter to appear in the corner of the eyes after the sun treatment?
ANswER-The white matter in the corner of the eye is produced by infection, and is cured by the sun treatment.
Question—Is it harmful to sit facing the sun, while reading a book in the shade, thus getting sun treatment?
Answer—To sit facing the sun, while reading a book, is not injurious to the eyes, provided the patient is comfortable. Some people become uncomfortable, which produces a strain, and the sun is of little benefit under such conditions.
Question—Does sun treatment have to be continuous to be effective, or can short spells be substituted?
Answer—Sun treatment does not have to be continuous. Short periods are equally beneficial.
Question—Is resting the eyes by palming a more effective cure for smarting of the eyes than the sun treatment?
Answer—This depends upon the individual. Some are benefitted more by palming, while others receive more benefit from the sun treatment.
Question—Should sun treatment be moderated due to the heat of the sun—as in the tropics.
Answer—Take as much sun treatment as you can with the eyes closed while slowly moving the head a short distance from side to side to avoid discomfort from the heat. Should it make you uncomfortable and nervous, lessen the length of time that the sun treatment is employed.
Question—Is smoking in moderation injurious to the eyes?
Answer—Smoking in moderation is not injurious to the eyes.
Question—Should motor goggles be worn as protection against wind?
Answer—No protection is needed against the wind if the eyes are used correctly. Blinking, shifting, central fixation, and the imagination of stationary objects to be moving, should be practiced while motoring, and, in fact, all the time. Motor goggles weaken the eyes and make them sensitive to the sunlight.

Previous Issue
THEWETRTNP ePDF Issue
THEWETRTNWeb To Contents Page