December 1924

Better Eyesight

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

December, 1924

Suggestions

1. Imagine things are moving all the time.
When riding in a railroad train, when one looks out of the car window, telegraph poles and other objects, although they are stationary, appear to be moving. To stop the movement is impossible, and the effort to do so may be very uncomfortable. The greater the effort, the greater the discomfort, and is the cause of heart sickness, headaches and nausea. It can be demonstrated that any movement of the head and eyes produces an apparent movement of stationary objects.
2. Blink often.
By blinking is meant, closing and opening both eyes rapidly. When done properly, things are seen continuously and they always move with a quick jump in various directions. Regarding stationary objects without blinking is an effort, a strain which always lowers the vision.
3. Read the Snellen Test Card at fifteen feet as well as you can, every night and morning.
School children and others are often cured of imperfect sight by reading a familiar card, first with both eyes and then with each eye separately. It is the only method practiced which prevents Myopia in school children.
4. Fine Print.
Read fine print at six inches when possible every night and morning. If not possible, do the best you can. Just regarding the white spaces between the lines of fine print without reading the letters is a benefit.
5. Palming.
Palm for five minutes, ten times daily when convenient.

Palming
By W. H. Bates, M.D.

BY palming is meant that the eyes are covered with the palms of one or both hands with the eyes closed. The object of palming is to obtain relaxation or rest of the eyes and mind. With the eyes closed and covered, the patient does not see. When properly done, the field is black and the patient does not really see anything. Most patients when they palm however, imagine they see a great many things, especially different colored lights, red, green, shades of blue and white lights in a single or multiple form, for various periods of time. Some patients imagine they see these lights so vividly that it is difficult to convince them that they only imagine what they see.
When the patient palms successfully and obtains perfect relaxation, he imagines he sees a perfect black. The number of people who can do this is small, and it can only be accomplished by individuals who have perfect sight
While palming, one does not obtain relaxation by any kind of an effort or a strain. When nothing is done, one does not do anything. It is well to realize that palming may be done properly, or it may be done wrong.
It has been demonstrated that all persons with imperfect sight have a conscious or unconscious strain when they try to see. Palming can only accomplish relaxation when the patient does not try to see while palming. Some people realize that when their eyes are closed and covered with the palms of the hands, it is not possible to see anything, and so they do not try; but other people may strain their eyes to see while palming, although they know it is wrong. In such cases, it is very evident that mental control is lost. They do things that they do not plan to do. Some people can let their minds drift from one thing to another without much, if any effort. Some cases become able to palm more successfully than others.
One of my patients discovered a very simple and efficient method to improve palming. While treating a friend who previously had never obtained any benefit from palming, she told him a story of a black ant This black ant came out of the dark soil and climbed up the stem of a beautiful rose. It was slow work with the ant, but it kept on climbing, going on to the extremity of first one branch and then another, crawling to the extreme tip of every leaf until finally it located the flower. It crawled with great labor over the petals, until it found deep down in the center of the rose, a little white cup filled with honey. The patient could picture the ant carrying off some of the honey, crawling to the top of the flower, and then down back to the stem, finally meeting another ant on the ground, with whom he had a short talk with much gesticulating of heads and feet Then the second ant started off on the same journey.
The patient, while palming, listened very attentively to this talk, which was drawn out for fifteen minutes or half an hour. He volunteered the information that at last he could see black, and when he removed his hands from his closed eyelids, and opened his eyes, his vision for the Snellen Test Card was unusually good. Before he palmed, he was unable to see a single letter and was practically blind. After palming and visualizing the story of the ant, he was able to see his way about the room without being led, and to read some of the letters of the Snellen Test Card.
The story of the ant with its successive mental pictures, suggests other stories of other things with other mental pictures. Some persons are able to let their minds drift while palming. It is normal for the mind to think of many things that come and go without any effort or strain being made. It is quite as art to let the mind drift and think of all sorts of things without any effort or without trying to see one thing in particular. As long as we are awake, it is perfectly normal to think of many things which come into the consciousness without any effort.
A school teacher who suffered from eyestrain with severe headaches, was able to obtain relief almost immediately by imagining herself in a boat which was drifting. She enjoyed drifting down some river of the north, with a scenery consisting mostly of ice and snow. For a change, she would select some tropical river with the tropical vegetation, birds and animals. She had seen a bird of paradise in captivity and enjoyed the memory of its brilliant feathers. Crocodiles seemed very interesting, and the play of the monkeys in the trees was also of interest and gave her mind much to think about. While drifting down these rivers, she became so interested in her imagination of the change in scenery, that she quite forgot her eyestrain and her headaches while palming. When she noticed or thought of her palming, she found that she was seeing a perfect black, which means that she saw nothing at all with her eyes closed and covered with the palms of her hands.
One patient who had great difficulty in palming successfully was very much disturbed by seeing different colored lights. When she tried to get rid of them by an effort, they became much worse, and her discomfort was increased by the palming, instead of being relieved.
I suggested to her that she think of some enjoyable trip she had made going to Europe. She replied that she was always seasick, and the trip did her no good. The only thing that she could remember without discomfort was a walk in the woods, making note of the names of the different birds she saw. She was much interested in Botany, and could tell the names of most of the wild flowers near her home.
Some people while palming can remember the branches of trees or high grass moving in the wind. The running water of a brook can be remembered with benefit, provided no effort is made. A trip to the seashore becomes restful, enjoyable when one imagines the rollers or waves flowing in and out When riding in a rapidly moving train, the scenery observed when looking out of a window appears to be moving and is usually restful to the eyes and mind. When riding in an automobile, the driver imagines the road moving toward the car without an effort and is more relaxed than a passenger who is interested in the moving scenery and strains to see it and tires consciously or unconsciously to stop the movement.
If one makes an effort to see things stationary, a headache, eye pain or some other discomfort may be felt. Palming becomes restful and beneficial when the memory of moving objects becomes perfect or when one can remember the imaginary movement of stationary objects.
By remembering stationary objects apparently moving when palming as well as they can be imagined when riding in a car, one may obtain the desired relaxation.
The memory of false, when palming as well as they can be imagined with the eyes open is also a great benefit. Alternating is a benefit to the sight as well as to the memory and palming becomes improved with a greater amount of relaxation.
Flashing or palming for a brief moment, alternating with the eyes open for a longer time, improves palming and the vision.

Stories from the Clinic
No. 58—CHRISTMAS
By Emily C. Lierman

I WISH everyone who is interested in our clinic, could have been with us last year at Christmas time. We had our first tree. Not only did our clinic patients enjoy it, but, our private patients as well. I fear too, that on more than one occasion, a private patient was kept waiting much longer than be cared to wait, while Dr. Bates hovered around that Christmas Tree. He never takes a vacation because he loves his work so much, but that tree needed his attention he thought, even though he was keeping his patients waiting. His orders were not to purchase anything cheap. His clinic family is precious to him and must have the best of everything. When it came time to distribute the toys and candies to the children, I saw him peeping in at the doorway. The children all love him because he does so much for them. All this added pleasure of having a tree for them did him a world of good.
At the Harlem Hospital we were not permitted to have a tree in our section, but the Christmas spirit prevailed in our room there just the same. Deep down in my heart I wished each year to have a tree in addition to gifts for my big family at the Clinic. With a reserve which was left over from the year before, and also big enough to bring happiness for all, we were able to have gifts and a tree that reached from the floor to the ceiling.
Everyone connected with our office helped to trim the tree. It stood in a corner of our reception room where it could be seen by all. Pretty dolls for the little girls peeped from beneath the lower branches. Games and mechanical toys were placed where every boy could choose the one he liked best. There were toys also for the smaller children and suitable gifts for the men and women and boxes of candy for everyone. One of our patients at this time was suddenly taken away from his wife and two little children. He was suffering with tuberculosis and was sent to an institution. He told me before he left that he did not mind his suffering at all, but he was thinking of the cheerless Christmas his wife and family would have. However, it was not as cheerless as he expected it would be. A friend of mine supplied them with a turkey and our Santa Claus did the rest. You never saw such a happy family. We were doubly repaid for our labor of love, because every patient at the time responded to the treatment. Some were cured before Christmas time, but were invited to come and share in the Christmas cheer. Many of them came.
Something happened which was not at all expected nor planned. The son of a multi-millionaire who was being treated by Dr. Bates at this time, came at his appointed hour. He stood and looked at the tree with great approval. It was aglow with colored electric lights. Then he spied the toys and shouted with joy. All of a sudden he disappeared. He was found later with Dr. Bates, asking the doctor questions that had nothing to do with the treatment of his eyes. Some of his questions were:
"Which toy is mine Doctor? Can I have the one I like best? Did Santa really leave this one or that one for me?"
His aunt who was with him was mortified. She made all sorts of apologies, implying the doctor not to listen to him. "Why," said she, "He has money in his pocket too, to spend as he sees fit."
The doctor apparently paid no attention to her. His eyes were fixed on the little rich boy who could appreciate a toy meant for a poor little laddie. Dr. Bates informed him that the Clinic Santa Claus would be pleased to have him select the toy he liked best, for we really had more than enough to go around.
There were fishing ponds and mechanical boxes, supposed to be Jack Dempsey and his opponent. The latter was a great delight to the little fellow, so we did not have to guess which one he wanted.
A dear old man from the Blind Man's Home was very grateful for a package given him by a private patient.
One little girl, after she had chosen her dolly, said she didn't know Santa Claus loved her so much.
I want to thank my friends who made all this possible and to wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Nervousness
By Emily A. Meder

WE all know that anything that is accomplished under a strain or tension is never done correctly. A good demonstration of this was given in the Central Fixation Office just a few days ago. Dr. Bates entered, with a visitor who wished to help others. Upon testing the man's sight, Dr. Bates was surprised to find that it was very imperfect. He explained that to help others he would first have to benefit his own vision. "To begin with," Dr. Bates said, "Read the Snellen Test Chart every day."
Unexpectedly, Dr. Bates called upon one of the stenographers to read the test chart, standing about 12 feet away. She stopped her work, a little in confusion, and began to read. She reached the twenty line, when she could read no further. This surprised me, because this same girl had previously read the 10 line at 15 feet, better than normal.
In turn, each girl in the office was called. Those who were waiting became nervous, while the first girl's failure left a bad mental effect upon the rest. All in all Dr. Bates was disappointed in the vision of his office force.
But—just as soon as Dr. Bates and his visitor left the office, excuses and alibis were heard from all sides. One girl went up and read the card better at a further distance than she did while she had an audience. This showed that we all were timid of saying the wrong thing, made an effort to see, and saw nothing at all. Another girl remarked that the card hangs before her all day, and she knows it by heart, but even then her nervousness made her forget the letters.

Eye Education

Miss Robinson, a school teacher, and patient of Dr. Bates, has been able to help a great many of her friends, although she herself is not entirely cured. Her own failures enable her to direct her pupil in the right and wrong method. We are publishing a few of her cases which she benefited.

MYOPIA

MISS F., a school teacher, had worn glasses for fifteen years. She said she came from a nearsighted family, and her right eye was very prominent. After removing her glasses she read R.V. 10/70, L.V., 10/30.
In a few weeks of practice read Right, 10/15 and Left 10/10. In a little over a month she started to teach again.
A year later Miss F. reported that she sees 10/10 with each eye and is having no trouble with near or distant vision. The prominent right eye now looks like the other.

EXOPHTHALMIC GOITRE

Mrs. K. had worn glasses for six years. Her vision with both eyes was 10/10. She was discouraged with her eyes, however, because they were very prominent, with dilated pupils. One physician told her she had a goitre disturbance. She could not see the moving pictures without her glasses, had a great dread of bright lights, and her eyes were constantly inflamed.
Mrs. K. had no faith in the new method of treatment, but tried it as a last resort. She did not cooperate very well, but in six weeks she caught the trick of relaxation. Her eyes became more comfortable and she used them for all purposes. Six months later this patient reported that while she had no further trouble with her eyes, she had to practice the palming and swinging every day to keep relaxed.

SQUINT

The left eye of Darwin was injured by instruments at birth. It turned in frequently when he was a baby, and became noticeably worse when he attended school. Darwin was twelve and wore glasses for three years, but the oculist who treated him said the eye was no stronger as a result. The vision after removing glasses was Right 10/10, Left 10/200. Palming improved his sight in flashes, and the squint became less noticeable. At the end of three months he read 10/30 on a strange card. In five months he could read diamond type a little, and ordinary type slowly. His left eye tired quickly, and he didn't have the patience to practice.
The left eye is straight practically all the time, and the boy's appearance is greatly improved. He can read 12/10 on the chart when using both eyes.
Darwin is so comfortable that he has lost interest in practicing further, and the parents are satisfied with the eye straight. For this reason there may be no further progress.

HEADACHES

William, ten years old, had almost constant headaches. He read 10/15 badly on the test card. Type and figures blurred so much in his school books, that it was difficult for him not to make mistakes. He made little progress for about two weeks, and would always report that his headaches were just as bad, and that he could read no better. Then one day he announced that he had one headache at noon, for only half an hour. He also read better, then stopped coming for lessons.
William returned in four months to have his eyes tested and read 10/10 with each eye separately, with no headaches. A year later he visited me again, and his eyes looked splendid. He read 12/10 with either eye, no headaches, read as long as he wished to, and had no trouble with school books, as far as seeing was concerned.

Christmas Fairies
By George Guild

Yes, he was very unhappy. The rich man with all is wealth lived alone in his big house. He sat in an easy chair suffering from a violent headache. It was Christmas Eve, but for him there was no joy, no pleasure. Then came a little white fairy who danced and smiled before him. He was puzzled because all his life long he had never seen a fairy and consequently never believed in their existence. But now he had to believe the evidence of his own eyes. She climbed to his knee and he felt her tiny feet as she finally reached his shoulder and took the glasses off his eyes. For some unaccountable reason, he felt better. The little white fairy was never still a moment She interested him. He watched every movement she made. And then came other fairies, who danced around him on the floor, on his lap, his hands, and his head Their eyes were full of a wonderful kindness and love.
He became more and more interested and finally asked "What can I do for you all?" The little white fairy replied: "Come with us and see the newborn baby."
And then, guided by the fairies, he walked out on the street, through crowds of people until he came to a tenement in a darkened street. He climbed many stairs until they reached a closed door at the top of the building. He opened the door and entered a room where poverty, dirt and sickness were very evident. On a soiled bed lay a sick woman with her newborn child. She was thin, awfully thin, with eyes full of pain and mental suffering. There were five children in the room who looked very miserable indeed; but when they saw the fairies come dancing in, they began to smile and clapped their hands with pleasure.
The rich man looked around the room for a few moments, beckoned to the white fairy and both left the room. They were not gone long, but when they returned they brought with the help of others, a Christmas Tree with all that goes with it, baskets of food, enough to feed them all for many weeks to come. And then there were dolls for the girls, toys for the boys, bedding and clothes for the mother. The men who brought the things arranged the tree with its many ornaments and candles. What a lot of laughter was there. Even the sick mother had to smile. The white fairy fixed the Star of Bethlehem at the top of the tree when all knelt for a few moments, even the rich man knelt and also the men from the stores. The rich man had never been so happy in his life. He kept swinging with the fairies. He tried to dance. It was a happy time for all.
The neighbors became interested in the proceedings. First one and then another child edged to the open door, with that look of fear so sad to see in the eyes of the children of the poor. They were invited to come in and see the fairies dance, and to see them climbing all over the Christmas Tree, arranging everything in some way better, all with a smile and a laugh. It was quite contagious.
It was impossible for the sudden person there to look sad, feel sad or have a grouch of any kind. The fairies had dissipated all the darkness, the evil, the suffering and the pain. One even forgot to notice the dirt. After the children came the grown-ups, the young wives, young mothers, old wives, old mothers with many men, pushing and shoving to get into the room where the fairies were. The festivities continued for several hours, but nobody paid any attention to the time.
After the fairies had gone and the rich man found himself in his chair without his glasses and without his headache, perfectly comfortable, with his sight better than it had ever been before in years, he acquired a lasting smile. He always says, "The fairies took off my glasses and I will never wear them again."

Tension

This patient was told he was an incurable case and needed to wear glasses for the rest of his life. We hope this report will encourage our readers to continue with their practice, even though they fail to see immediate improvement This case is remarkable in that the patient had the perseverance to follow the instructions outlined in the book, in the face of this discouraging verdict.

Dear Dr. Bates:
I TAKE great pleasure in thanking you for the help which I have received from studying your methods of treating defective vision.
On March 20,1924, a family friend, herself one of your patients, brought me a copy of your book, "Perfect Sight Without Glasses." [link] At that time my eyes were in wretched shape. Since birth I had suffered from what some oculists had diagnosed as atrophy of the optic nerve, others as prenatal malnutrition of the optic nerve. There was supposed to be a small area in the center of the retina with normal vision, while the outer portions of the retina were said to be dead. I also suffered from a high degree of myopia, which glasses failed to correct. The left eye turned in. The eyeballs themselves were hard and fixed in a dull stare, and were so sunken and lifeless in appearance that many people thought I was blind.
At various times other oculists in New York and other cities, fitted me to glasses, tested my fields, and said there was nothing more to do.
I had read only a short way in your book when I realized that I was trying to accomplish the impossible. Two days after I began studying your methods I discarded my glasses. I began at once to exercise my eyes by shifting them from point to point At first this shifting required constant effort since the eyeballs had been without movement for more than twenty years (I am now twenty-six years old and had worn glasses since the age of four). Gradually the shifting became easier, until now it calls for no effort It is not yet so rapid as it should be. There must have been almost a paralysis of the rect muscles, and the minor pulsation of the eyeballs, which you describe as occurring in the normal eye at the rate of from seventy to several thousand in a second, is still absent. I look to time to make this condition right.
There has also been some improvement in accommodation. When I discarded my glasses I could not read the largest letters on signs across the street. Now these letters and other smaller ones are clear. I believe that eyestrain, continued through many years, has caused a spastic condition of the muscles of accommodation, and that with the relief of this strain accommodation will become normal. This may take six months or a year, but it will come.
Near-sighted as I am, I am able to see more clearly without glasses than I ever did with them. I have less trouble in getting about, and no longer feel confused in the midst of street traffic. While I was wearing glasses I could never play ball or take part in other sports, so that my friends thought that I was "just naturally studious." A short time after I gave up my glasses I started to play "catch" with a tennis ball. It was hard work at first, and I usually missed the ball. The rapidity with which I improved was amazing. When I can see the ball against a plain background, such as the sky or a blank wall, I can now catch it nearly every time when it is thrown from a distance of even fifty feet or more. You bet I get a "kick" out of it! Within a year I expect to be playing tennis.
In my case eyestrain was accompanied by a rigidity of my whole body. The muscles of my neck, especially, were contracted, and I could turn my head only with difficulty. Whether this condition resulted from or helped to cause the eyestrain I do not know. At any rate, this stiffness in my neck has worn off as my eyes have grown better. About two weeks ago my neck relaxed. Now, for the first time in my life, I can move my head without effort and am no longer conscious of my body at every step.
I shall keep you informed as to my progress. This progress I owe to your book. I hope that it will help others as much as it is helping me.

Sincerely yours,
WM. R. ANDERSON, Jr.

Report of the November Meeting
By Miss May Secor, Secretary

A REGULAR meeting of the Better Eyesight League was held on November 11th at 383 Madison Avenue. Miss Kathleen Hurty, President, presided.
Dr. G. M. Waters, of Newark, N. J., reported cases of the following visual disorders which he has successfully treated during the past year by means of the Bates Method:—myopia, hypermetropia, convergent squint, corneal ulcer, simple glaucoma, atrophy of the optic nerve due to syphilis, and central scotoma.
Mrs. Frederick Scharfer presented a case of myopic squint in which there had been a decided bulging of the eye. Glasses were voluntarily discarded before the first lesson. Twenty-four hours after the initial lesson the bulging was almost entirely relieved. Two weeks' practice noticeably relieved the squint, and improved the vision.
Dr. Bates spoke on the use of his method with children. To cure squint in an infant, Dr. Bates advised the mother to hold the child in her arms, and sway, and also to move the child up and down. If the child is older, one may have him play swinging games, and dance; these forms of exercise are usually more effective if accompanied by music. The necessity for acute vision in the case of the athlete appeals to boys.
The doctor reported a case of central scotoma in which there was no sight in the scotoma eye; parts of the eye were destroyed by disease. Dr. Bates treated the other eye to improve the vision, and at the end of two weeks was surprised to find that sight had developed in the scotoma eye. In this case normal vision was restored in both eyes.
Dr. Bates urged those present to bear in mind that his method is one of eye education. In order that cures may be permanent, it is essential that the patient shall live up to the Bates standard of relaxation, and consequently be free from eyestrain. If the patient permits his eyes to function normally the cure will be permanent.
The meeting was adjourned at the close of Dr. Bates' address.

SUPPLEMENT TO OCTOBER REPORT

Two cases were presented. When seen at the June meeting, these cases were both wearing glasses for general use. Alfred Kessler, age 12; 315 East 87th St., New York City; wore glasses 2 years—close work, 3 years—general use, total—5 years; father, medical physician, removed the boy's glasses early in June, 1924; one hour lesson given to boy by a league member; Mrs. Frederick Scharfer; boy then spent summer at camp, and practiced occasionally; no history of eyestrain since glasses were removed; boy in good health, attends school.
Miss Louise Talma, age 18; 1115 Amsterdam Ave., New York City; pianist; wore glasses 7 years—general use; voluntarily removed glasses June 10, 1924; obtained instruction from Dr. Bates' book, and from officers at league meetings; June 10—read large "c" of Snellen card at 2 feet, and music at 3 inches; Oct 14—reads entire chart at 12 feet, and music at 11 inches. Practice of Bates Method—June—1 hour daily; July, Aug., and Sept—short periods occasionally; enjoys good health, and carries full program of work.

Questions and Answers

Question—When palming and remembering black, is it advisable to keep the image stationary and to keep the same image, or is it just as good to shift from one object to another?
Answer—When palming and remembering black, one should imagine everything remembered to be moving and not stationary. It is necessary to shift from one image or from one object to another.
Question—Would the reading of fine print at four inches be helpful?
Answer—The reading of fine print at four inches is usually helpful.
Question—My little son becomes fidgety while palming. Do you prescribe something else equally beneficial?
Answer—Your little son may become able to palm for a few minutes at a time. Sometimes swaying from side to side helps.
Question—I am presbyopic (old-age sight). How can I improve my vision by reading fine print, when I can not even see it?
Answer—You can improve your vision for reading fine print by alternately remembering the whiteness of snow for a second while looking at the white spaces between the lines of print, then close your eyes and remember or imagine the same white more continuously, better and more easily. By alternating, you may become able to remember the white as well when flashing the card, as you can with your eyes closed with improved vision.
Question—I cured myself by following the directions in your book, but cannot seem to benefit my mother. She is nearsighted and doubtful of good results in her case.
Answer—The fact that you cured yourself by following the directions in my book, makes it possible to cure your mother in the same way. You will waste your time unless your mother has the courage to discard her glasses permanently.

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