May 1922

Better Eyesight

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

May, 1922

RELAXATION FROM FINE PRINT

A BUSINESS card, 3" x 2" with fine print on one side is held in front of the eyes as near as possible, the upper part in contact with the eyebrows, the lower part resting lightly on the nose.
The patient looks directly at the fine print without trying to see. Being so close to the eyes most people realize that it is impossible to read the fine print and do not try, in this way they obtain a measure of relaxation which is sufficient to benefit the sight very much.
The patient moves the card from side to side a short distance slowly and sees the card moving provided the movement is not too short or too slow. The shorter the movement and the slower it is, the better.
Some patients, although the card is held very close, note that the white spaces between the lines become whiter and the black letters become blacker and clearer. In some cases one or more words of the fine print will be seen in flashes or even continuously as long as no effort is made to see or to read the fine print.
This movement of the card should be kept up to obtain the best results, for many hours every day. The hand which holds the card may soon become fatigued; one may then use the hands alternately. Some patients vary this by holding the card with both hands at the same time.
The amount of light is not important.

SOME COLORED PATIENTS AT THE CLINIC
By Emily C. Lierman

One of slavery's obscure brutalities sent a pitiable patient more than half a century later to the great metropolitan clinic where the new science of the eye is relieving scores each week. Read this little document of human pain, and human helplessness, and realize the wealth of fine accomplishment that the ministrations of those devoted to the cause of better eyesight have before them.

FREQUENTLY colored people have difficulty in remembering their ages, especially when they are middle aged or older. But just now we have a colored woman who does not know where she was born. The nurse was making a record of her age, name and address and then asked her where she was born.
"Ah dun know where ah was born. How should ah know? It am so long ago—anyway it was a very hot place, dats what ah knows."
Her eyes do not trouble her for reading for she does not know how to read. But the complaint that her eyes burn like fire and that she cannot see at a distance. Palming helps her. and the sun treatment relieves the burning of her eyes instantly.
An old fashioned mammy negro, age 72, who has been coming to us for about one year is being treated for cataract in both her eyes. When she first came she was fully convinced that we could help her so that she would not need an operation. She was employed by a former patient who was cured by Dr. Bates. At first she could just make out the seventy-tiise at ten feet with each eye. The first treatment improved her vision to 10/40. She was told to do a great deal of palming and swinging every day and now she reads 12/20.
Incidentally I can prove that eye strain caused her cataracts, for one day she was sufficiently relaxed to read some of the letters on the bottom line of the card, 12/10, temporarily.

Sadness Brings Its Strain

And another day she came and I knew she was in trouble of some kind. I love to talk to her because she is so clean and neatly dressed, although very poor. Her manner is so apologetic and she is extremely grateful for the benefit she receives. This day, however, I noticed her eyes were swollen from weeping. She was eager to please me and started to read the card without success. She turned toward me and said: "Mam, I cannot read. The card is all blurred, I cannot see one letter clearly." Then she began to cry softly and told me her trouble.
"Many nights I have not slept," she said, "because my son was sent to prison. He is not bad but he did get into mischief."
She loves her boy very much but she did not tell me the nature of his trouble. But, oh, how she strained and suffered for him! I wish I could have told her boy all about it. I think he would have been sorry. I comforted her while she palmed and reminded her that everything might be so much worse. I observed that she was under a terrible tension all the while she palmed, but after awhile as she became more calm, I saw her relax. As she again removed her hands from her eyes to read the card, she exclaimed with relief:
"My, how the letters clear up! What did you do to me? I feel so much better now."
I told her that she did it all herself. The poor woman had strained so much that it made her cataracts worse.
My mind was greatly relieved because her vision had cleared up. She comes with a smile now almost every clinic day and she is eager to read 10/10 with each eye permanently and I am striving to help her do it.
Another old mammy who remembers the Civil War very well but does not know when she was born, also suffered from cataract in both eyes. Her condition was so bad in the beginning that she could not see anything on the test card at three feet. When she was instructed to palm she looked around the room observing several patients who were also palming and then remarked:
"Good lic, mam, dis here room looks like a prayer meetin' and beleeb me ahs ready to join in too."
She had the saddest looking pair of eyes I every saw in a negro and even as she smiled she looked sad. I found out after we got acquainted with each other, the real reason for her look of sadness. The story she told me was almost unbelievable but I will tell the readers just what she told me.
First I would like to say that her vision improved at the first visit so that she read 12/200 and in flashes read 12/100. This amused as well as pleased her, and she would have it that palming alone did not improve her vision but that I must have done something mysterious to her while she had her eyes closed which caused this wonderful miracle. No amount of explaining to her that day would make her understand that the eyestrain which caused the cataract was lessened by palming. Every clinic day she was there and her vision at the present time is 12/30. She has been coming to us about one year. Now for her story.

A Tragedy of the Past

"Yes know mam, a long time ago ah had a master an he was good and kind. Den came a new master an he was bad to de help. Dey was twenty of us in help and we did work on de plantation. After awhile ah was sick an was becomin' weary 'cause a lil stranger was on de way. De sun was hot in de fields, mam, an' mah back was ackin' powerful bad. De old master would sure hab sent me to bed but de new one he jes tells me to get a move on. One day when ah felt so bad an hungry dat ah falls down on mah knees. Ah jes couldn't get up. De master beat me wid a lash right before de oder niggers to teach dem a lesson an said ah was only lazy. When mah little boy was born he did hab de stripes oh de lash on his back de same as was on mah own back. One night ah ran away with mah baby and dis was jes before de niggers were freed by Lincoln."
She looks very old and I should judge, as does Dr. Bates, that she is about eighty years of age. It is remarkable what a good memory she has. I have asked her several questions on different days to confuse her or to test her but she has always been correct in her answers.
The strain of squint, especially in children, has a great deal to do with their disobedience. I feel quite sure of that because ((I know of several clinic patients who, after they were cured, became manageable and less nervous. The change was so great in their conduct both in school and in their homes, that mothers and teachers would come and tell me about it.
Some time ago in one of our back numbers of Better Eyesight I wrote about a little colored boy named Frisco who suffered from squint in one eye. His poor mother could not live with him, he was so bad. His brothers and sisters continually punished him for the terrible tricks he played on them all. He was finally taken care of by his grandmother who did the very best she knew for his welfare.
She heard of Dr. Bates and our clinic so she came with him, for treatment. Before I had a chance to speak to him, his grandmother told me that she was afraid he was hopeless and that I might not be able to do anything with him for he was never still a minute.
She was anxious to have his eye straightened even though he was a naughty boy. I spoke to him and the only answer he gave me was "I don't want to! I won't!" I ignored his remarks and just said, "All right, you dont need to."

Strain and Behaviour

His grandmother frowned and said she was so sorry he was a bad boy. I paid no attention to him for some time and fortunately there was a little girl in the room being treated for squint so I let him watch the little girl and me. For his benefit I said to the little girl. "You don't want a bad eye, do you? You want two good eyes, don't you? Your good eye is doing all the work; just make your bad eye do some of the work and you will soon have two good eyes instead of one."
When I was ready to treat Frisco he asked with his head and shoulders straight. "Have I got a bad eye? Won't you show me how to make the bad eye do some work?"
"Why of course I will show you," I told him. As I explained in the article I wrote about him, he became a very willing patient then and with his dear grandmother's help at home, Frisco was absolutely cured in six months.
Several months after he was cured I noticed one clinic day a colored woman standing in line smiling pleasantly and when I asked what her trouble was she answered, "Nothing at all, nurse, I just came to tell you that Frisco has returned home to his mother. He is the best behaved of all his family and he receives the highest marks from his school teacher for his studies. He shows no more symptoms of nervousness and plays no more tricks."
This squint case was so bad that one could see only the white of the left eye. Palming, swinging and alternately opening and closing his eyes many times every day, cured this boy.

THE OPTICAL SWING
By W. H. Bates, M. D.

For thousands of years mankind, both lay and professional, has overlooked a seemingly minute but vitally important phenomenon of the human system—the eye's normal inability to see a stationary object. Of the result in the science of the eye of the final observation of this vital matter, Dr. Bates tells in part in this article.

IN this magazine, and in other publications, I have quite frequently written about the swing. The matter is so important that I feel that it should be described and recommended more frequently. The benefits which come from the optical swing are far-reaching and of greater importance, I find at the present time, than I realized even six months or a year ago.
When a person of normal sight regards one letter of the Snellen test card with normal vision, the letter appears to move about a quarter of an inch or less from side to side, continuously and slowly, a little more rapidly than a movement each second. This is what I call the optical swing.
For many thousands of years people of normal sight have regarded small and large objects which were stationary and imagined that they saw them stationary. It can be demonstrated that when the normal eye imagines a letter, or a part of a letter, stationary, that the letter becomes very soon imperfect. Furthermore, the letter has a jerky movement, irregular, and variable, demonstrating that it is impossible by any kind of an effort to keep or imagine a letter stationary for any length of time.

Literal Concentration Impossible

With the eye closed most persons can remember or imagine a letter O with a white center, as white as they like—as white as snow. They can imagine a little black period on one edge of the O and keep their attention fixed on the black period for a few seconds, or part of a minute. Sooner or later, however, they note that the period moves and defies all efforts to keep it stationary; and that every once in a while the period is lost altogether. The imagination of the period fails from the strain. Most patients also note that they lose the O and have to bring it back again. To concentrate on one point of the letter O is impossible for any length of time.
The dictionary defines "Concentration" as an effort to see one thing only, or to do one thing only. I have never met any person who was able to concentrate on a point for any length of time. Concentration is impossible. Trying to do the impossible is a strain; which is the main cause of imperfect sight. For we find that all persons with imperfect sight try to concentrate—try to imagine things stationary. It is much easier and better to let the eyes shift from one point to another than to remember or imagine imperfect sight. To state, strain or try to concentrate is an effort which is followed by not only imperfect sight, but symptoms of discomfort, pain and fatigue.
When one can imagine the letter O of fine print moving from side to side, it is possible to imagine that the card on which the O is printed is also moving from side to side, with the same speed and in the same direction; the hand which holds the card moves; the card and everything on it, including the letter O. When the card moves and the letter O moves, one can imagine the hand moves, the wrist, the arm, the whole body, in short, moving with the O. If we imagine the O printed on the arm of the chair, when the O moves the chair moves. When the chair moves the floor moves; when the floor moves one can imagine the whole room and the objects in the room in turn to be swinging. All objects seen, remembered or imagined move with the letter O.

The Universal Swing

This I call the universal swing, for one letter, or one object, cannot move without the imagination of all other objects moving at the same time. When the universal swing is imagined and one object is consciously imagined to be stationary, the universal swing stops, because it is impossible to imagine one object moving and other objects stationary when they are all connected.
A great many people have told me that they could imagine the letters on the Snellen test card to be moving and the card stationary. To do this requires a strain and, when we analyze the facts, to imagine letters moving and the card stationary, it is necessary to separate the letters from the card. There are an infinite number of ways of doing it wrong, or of imagining the swing under a strain. To imagine a letter suspended and swinging, one part more than another, requires an effort or strain. Some patients have a great facility for doing things wrong, and sometimes my ingenuity is taxed to the utmost to get them back to the right way. Some cases have required many days, weeks, of conversation, before they became able to practice the optical swing in the normal or proper way. It is well to repeatedly call the attention of such people to the fact that the optical swing is an evidence of relaxation, a phenomenon which is always present in normal sight, and that in all cases of imperfect sight the normal optical swing is modified or lost.

The Swing and Memory

Over and over again I have taught people to demonstrate that, when they had a perfect memory of some letter or other object, they could not retain the perfect memory if they tried to imagine things stationary. Patients who were near-sighted, myopic, who were able to read fine print at a near point with good vision, were able to demonstrate that trying to imagine letters stationary made their vision at a near point very poor. By suggesting to them the possibility of imagining the swing at a distance or, when regarding the Snellen test card as well as they could imagine the optical swing of letters at the near point, much benefit usually followed.
About a year ago a patient was brought to me, a young girl aged ten years, with considerable compound myopic—or short-sighted—astigmatism. She was unable to see the large letter on the Snellen test card more than three or four feet away with either eye. This child read fine print with normal vision. She demonstrated that she could not imagine small letters stationary and see them perfectly. When she imagined a letter was moving from side to side, not any wider than the width of the letter, her vision was continuously good, or improved. With her eyes closed the memory of the letter with its swing was not quite as good as when she regarded the letter. When she looked at the Snellen test card at fifteen feet, her memory of the letter with its optical swing was gone.
I had her practice for a while looking at the small letters with fine print at a near point, imagining one at a time with a slow, short, easy swing, and then looking at the Snellen test card for a moment only—less than a fraction of a second. This practice was followed at once by improvement and she was directed to continue the practice at her home; first to regard the same letter of fine print at the near point and imagine it moving, and to do this for a minute or longer and then look at the Snellen test card for not longer than one second.
After three days the child came in and read the whole card with normal sight with each eye. I was very much surprised and I said to the mother. How did this happen?"

Practice Brings Cure

"Oh," she said, "the child is practicing it all the time; she is practicing it at her meals, is practicing it all day long, even when she is in bed; the first thing in the morning, as soon as she opens her eyes, she gets busy."
The optical swing was a cure; not only were her eyes cured, but the mother told me that a great many functional derangements were also relieved. The mother became interested in the cure of her child and asked for treatment of her own eyes for hypermetropia, astigmatism and presbyopia. She was as enthusiastic as the child and was cured in two visits. She became my friend.

NOTES OF THE LEAGUE

THE first regular monthly meeting of the Better Eyesight League was held the afternoon of April 12th at 300 Madison Avenue, New York City. Mr. Ross Varney presided in the unavoidable absence of the presiding officer.
The Secretary's report showed that the names of 500 prospective members had been sent into the League by charter members since the organization meeting held March 8th. Dues received, according to the Treasurer's report amounted to $147.
The meeting was thrown open to suggestions regarding lines of immediate activity for the League. Many phases of activity were discussed, among them work to preserve the sight of factory and shop workers, educational work for school children, educational work among college students and among teachers, and the preparation of educational and expository publicity matter.
The members present agreed to use such educational literature in their own correspondence, and measures for acquainting prospective members of the League with its purposes and with the whole subject of the new ophthalmology were discussed in detail.
The enthusiasm and interest in the work of the League that has become manifest was strikingly shown in the volunteering of a number of those present to address noon hour meetings at factories, explaining to factory workers the menace to the eyes of too close industrial application unless the new scientific measures of prevention are understood and practiced.
A number of other suggestions, all apropos and practical, were made and discussed. It was eventually moved and seconded that Mrs. Mable Potter Daggett, a Director of the League, be authorized to draw up an outline of a publicity leaflet to be printed by the League and furnished to all its members for use in correspondence.
All the suggestions offered and discussed were referred by the meeting to the Board of Directors, and it was further voted that the Directors should work out and present to the second monthly meeting of the League a complete plan of operation to cover activities throughout the remainder of 1922.
THE second monthly meeting of the League will be held in Room 504, 300 Madison Avenue, New York City, at 4 P. M., May 10th. Every member, it is desired, will be there and will bring a prospective member also.
The directors will present there their plan of operation for the balance of 1922. The Secretary will report the progress made in obtaining new members.
Every effort will be made to have this second meeting mark a new record of enthusiasm and practical application to the great cause of better eyesight.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. "When the sight is perfect the memory is also perfect because the mind is perfectly relaxed." "Better Eyesight," November 1919, page 2. I know of a Professor of Chemistry who has remarkably fine eyes and who cannot remember the roads to drive his car home from Boston to Malden.
A. He does not see the roads perfectly.
Q. Do idiots and patients having aphasia never have perfect eyesight? A. Some do.
Q. Am I right in thinking that you consider the reverse of this true?
A. Yes, with exceptions

Second Monthly Meeting
BETTER EYESIGHT LEAGUE
4:00 P. M., MAY 10th
Room 405
300 MADISON AVENUE NEW YORK CITY

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

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