January 1925

Better Eyesight

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

January, 1925

Sun-Gazing

By W. H. Bates, M.D.

IT is a well-known fact that the constant protection of the eyes from the sunlight, or from other kinds of light, is followed by weakness or inflammation of the eyes or eyelids. Children living in dark rooms, where the stuff seldom enters, acquire an intolerance for the light. Some of them keep their eyes covered with their hands, or busy their faces in a pillow and do all they possibly can to avoid exposure of their eyes to ordinary light. I have seen many hundreds of cases of young children brought to the clinic with ulceration of the corneo, which may become sufficient to cause blindness. Putting these children in a dark room is a blunder. My best results in the cure of these cases were obtained by encouraging the patients to spend a good deal of the time out of doors, with their faces exposed to the direct rays of the sun. In a short time these children became able to play and enjoy themselves a great deal more out of doors, exposed to the sunlight, than when they protected their eyes from the light. Not only is the sun beneficial to children with inflammation of the corneo, but it is also beneficial to adults. When the patient looks down sufficiently, the white part of the eye can be exposed by gently lifting the upper lid, while the sun's rays strike directly upon this part of the eyeball. In most cases it is possible to focus the strong light of the sun on the white part of the eyeball with the aid of a strong convex glass, being careful to move the light from side to side quite rapidly to avoid the heat. After such a treatment, the patient almost immediately becomes able to open his eyes widely in the light.

Mental Strain

By W. H. Bates, M.D.

IT can be demonstrated that all persons conscious of imperfect sight have a mental strain. To try to do the impossible is a strain. It is impossible with the eyes closed to remember or imagine a small black area continuously black and stationary. Persons with perfect sight or a perfect memory, when trying to imagine a small black period stationary, notice an effort or mental strain very quickly, in a few seconds or less, while persons with imperfect sight or an imperfect memory may strain for a longer time before they become conscious of an effort. To concentrate the attention on a point for any great length of time usually causes discomfort, fatigue, or pain, in the eyes or elsewhere.

MYOPIA, or NEAR-SIGHTEDNESS, is caused by a strain or an effort to see distant objects. It can always be produced in the normal eye temporarily, or more pre-manently, by trying to see distant objects. With perfect sight the eyes and mind are at rest. All the sensitive nerves of the body are passive. Myopia is never continuous. At frequent intervals, lasting for a fraction of a second or longer, the patient is conscious of flashes of better vision. To test the facts, the retinoscope is reliable. When a patient with myopia looks at a blank wall without trying to see, or remembers something perfectly, the retinoscope, used at the same time demonstrates that there are, periods of time when the eye is normal. This fact an be demonstrated in all cases.

Even patients with thirty of forty diopters of myopia are not myopic all the time. This fact is offered as evidence that myopia, as described by many authors, is not a permanent condition of the eyeball. It can also be demonstrated that when the mind is at rest, and there is no mental strain when the patient remembers or imagines a letter, a color, or some other object perfectly, the myopia disappears. To have imperfect sight from myopia requires much mental effort, time, and trouble to produce it. Every person with myopia has to maintain a mental strain with all its discomfort, in order to maintain a degree of myopia. These facts suggest successful methods of treatment. Since mental strain, or an effort to see distant objects, is the cause of myopia, mental relaxation or rest is followed by benefit. By closing the eyes for five minutes or longer, while letting the mind drift from one thought, or memory, to another, slowly, easily, and continuously, rest of the mind is obtained, and when the eyes are opened, the vision is usually improved for a short time, or for a flash.

Blinking, in which the eyes are opened and closed frequently, is a great help, because the eyes and mind obtain a measure of rest when the eyes are closed, even momentarily. Many patients obtain a greater amount of rest by closing the eyes and covering them with the palms of one or both hands for a few minutes, or longer. We have to consider individuals because, while there are many cases benefited by palming for a half hour or longer, there are others who do better when they palm for a few minutes only, or for short periods of time. Mental strain is usually unconscious. It is a bad habit. When myopic patients learn that they have this unconscious bad habit of mental strain, or when they find out what is the matter with them, it helps in the cure. When patients think it is no fault of theirs that they have imperfect sight, treatment becomes more difficult. To change the unconscious bad habit of mental strain to a habit of relaxation and rest, requires that the patient consciously practices relaxation and rest until the conscious practice by repetition becomes an unconscious habit.

HYPERMETROPIA, or FAR-SIGHTEDNESS. The length of the eyeball is shortened in hypermetropia, which is the opposite of myopia in which the eyeball is lengthened by a mental strain to see at the distance. The cause of hypermetropia is a mental strain to see near objects. When a patient reads fine print with normal sight at twelve inches, with the use of the retinoscope at the same time, it can be demonstrated that the eye is accurately focused for twelve inches. But when the patient fails to read perfectly at twelve inches or nearer, he usually feels the discomfort of mental strain, and the retinoscope demonstrates at the same time that the eye is focused for a greater distance than twelve inches. In all case's examined, the mental strain to see near objects produces not myopia, but just the opposite, hypermetropia.

When hypermetropia is not great enough to prevent reading fine print perfectly at a near point, the retinoscope demonstrates that the eyes are accurately focused for that distance. As occurs under similar conditions with normal or myopic eyes, the hypermetropic eye can. only read perfectly without a mental effort. If the hypermetropic eye fails to read fine print perfectly, the retinoscope always demonstrates that the eyes are focused for a greater distance. The vision of the hypermetropic eye is improved. by the same methods which improve the vision of the myopic eye. Since the cause of hypermetropia is a mental effort, its cure is obtained when the mental effort disappears.

PRESBYOPIA. When the vision for the distance remains good, while the ability to read at the near point fails, the condition is called presbyopia. In most text-books, if not all, on the eyes, the statement is made that presbyopia begins soon after the age of forty, and increases gradually until the ability to accommodate is entirely lost. Most ophthalmologists have observed that

sometimes presbyopia may begin before the age of forty, or it may not appear until a much later date. I have seen patients over sixty years of age, who had normal sight in each eye for the distance, and the ability to read the diamond type at six inches or less with each eye. A popular belief of the cause of presbyopia is that it is due to hardening of the lens, which prevents the lens from changing its shape. I have quite frequently published facts which demonstrated that the lens was not a factor in accommodation, and that the cause of presbyopia was a mental strain when trying to see or read at a near point. Such patients, when they read the distant test card with normal vision, feel comfortable, but when they plan to read the newspaper or fine print at twelve inches or nearer, they are conscious of mental strain or effort, and the greater the mental strain, the less does the patient see. Presbyopia is cured by practising relaxation methods. Closing the eyes and resting them for five minutes or longer, may enable some patients to read fine print at twelve inches or less in flashes. Blinking is a benefit to some patients, but not to all. Very gratifying results have followed palming for an hour, or longer, in some cases, while in others palming was a failure. Any method which secures mental relaxation is always a benefit.

Presbyopic patients are often cured quickly by a perfect imagination of the halos, which are the white spaces between the lines of letters that appear whiter than the margin of the page.

The eyes, when reading perfectly, do not look di-rectly at the letters, but at the white spaces or the halos.

ASTIGMATISM is caused by mental strain, and is cured by relaxation of the mental strain.

Stories from the Clinic

No. 59 Mental Strain

By Emily C. Lierman

AT one time a young man, aged twenty-seven years, came to us suffering from severe mental strain. His large staring eyes would make anyone uncomfortable just by looking at him. I approached him in the usual way asking him what his trouble was. He smiled and said:

"Now, that's just what I am trying to fed out. Nobody seems to want me. Everybody thinks I am crazy."

I answered, "You are wrong. I dort think you are crazy."

Just the same, this poor fellow did make me sort of creepy. I was just a little afraid of him, but did not dare to show it.

He had much to say, but the main thing he wanted me to know was, that he was not insane. When he calmed down a bit, I said, "Now let me say something. I know that you are stating so badly that if you dort stop it, you can easily become insane or blind."

I wanted him to understand that I could not help him, nor anyone else, if he continued staring his eyes out of his head.

I asked Dr. Bates to examine his eyes and to tell me what treatment was best for him. The doctor said there was nothing organically wrong with his eyes, but that he was under a terrible mental strain. I understood very well what was before me when Dr. Rated said, "I think you had better knock on my door if the patient tries you too much."

After I had taken his name and address, I asked him where he was employed. His eyes protruded and he stared without blinking, as he answered, "Didn't I tell you that no one wants me? I cannot get any work. America is at war, does Uncle Sam want me? No, I have been to all the recruiting stations here in New York, and all of them have refused me. I want to fight for my country's flag, but they wort give me a chance." He actually wept, and I could not refrain from crying too. His mind was affected, yes, but when he was calm, all he could think of was Uncle Sam, and how he wanted to fight for him. I was not acquainted with him a half hour when I understood easily enough why the United States could not use him. He demonstrated to Dr. Bates and to me very clearly that one can not have normal vision with a mental strain. I placed him ten feet from the test card and told him I wanted to test his vision. He answered, "I hope you will be able to improve my sight, because I think my nervousness will also improve."

He read a few lines of the card, but when he reached the fifty line he leaned forward in his chair, wrinkled his forehead and his eyes began to bulge. At that moment a small mirror from my purse, came in very handy. I held it before him, and the expression of his face changed immediately from strain and tension, to a look of amazement.

He waited for me to speak, and what I said affected him terribly. He covered his face with his hands and wept. I kept very quiet, but touched his shoulder lightly to reassure him. When he raised his head a few moments later, he said: "Maybe that is why they refused me. I guess they saw what you saw. No wonder they thought I was crazy." I feared more hysteria, so I said that if he would let me help him, no doubt the United States Army would be glad to admit him into the service. He left the office after his first visit, feeling very much encouraged. I could not improve his vision beyond the fifty line that day, and I decided not to test each eye separately. All I could record was 10/50 with both eyes.

One week later he came again. Apparently he had forgotten to practice anything he was told to do. His vision was still 10/50 with both eyes. I directed him to cover his one eye, and read the card with the other. His vision with each eye separately was the same, namely 10/50.

He told me that I had encouraged him so much that he tried again to enlist. I said, "You cannot expect to win out unless you take time to practice. This you must do all day long. When you tire of palming, keep your eyes closed and imagine something perfectly." While I was telling him all this, he had his eyes covered with his hands, and was moving his body from side to side, very slowly. What he did next certainly frightened me at first.

While his eyes were still covered, he asked me in a loud voice, "Do you mind if I sing 'America' while I am reading the card?"

I answered, "No, but perhaps the other patients might object. just wait a moment and I will ask the Doctor."

Dr. Bates said if singing was his way of relaxing, by all means let him sing. That was all that was necessary. This poor fellow sang every word without a mistake. After each verse he would stop long enough to read the card. After the first verse he read two more lines 10/30. When he finished the hymn, he also finished reading the whole card without a mistake, 10/10. He blinked his eyes as he moved his body from side to side, and there came a great change in the expression of his face. I directed him to sing "America" when he practiced reading the test card at home every day. He left us in a very happy mood, and promised to practice as he was told.

We did not hear from him for a whole year. One day there came a letter from him, written in Bellevue Hospital, but mailed by a friend outside. He stated in his letter that he was all right, although he was confined. He also explained why he was sent there. It seems that when he applied at a recruiting station for enlistment, they found his vision imperfect. When he insisted that if they would only let him sing "America," his vision would at once become normal, the officers of the recruiting station considered this statement so absurd that they believed he must be crazy.

He was sent to the insane ward of Bellevue Hospital, where he was promptly admitted. While there, he wrote a play of three acts, all about the doctors, the nurses and patients. It was well written, and after he had persuaded some of the doctors to read it, they recommended his discharge.

He called to see us, and I found his vision was normal, 10/10.

His mental strain was relieved and did not return except temporarily, when he became excited and talked rapidly.

A Teacher's Experiment

By Edith Wood, Allendale, N. J.

(This is a fine example of the results that can be obtained by teachers, parents and others, who have charge of children.)

IN September, while testing the eyes of my pupils, I came across Stephen Brodnar, a boy of ten, who was apparently blind in his sight eye. In testing him, I brought him so close that his nose almost touched the test card, and still he said he could see nothing. I concluded there was nothing to be done. Some days later the pupils were lined in the yard, when an idea came to me. I called Stephen one side so that we would be out from the shadow of the building. I covered his left eye with his cap, and turned his face directly toward the sun. Then I asked if he saw anything. He said, "No, it is all yellow." Next I passed my hand back and forth so that the shadow would pass over his eye. He said, "It gets light and dark." I knew then that there was sight there, so I arranged with Stephen to come to my room at one o'clock the next day.

I fixed a shield for his good eye, and when he came next day, after adjusting the shield, I took him to the window and asked him what he could see out there. He replied, "Nothing." Next I took a manila card four by seven inches. Printed on it were the figures, 6A3. I had not planned to use the printing on the card. I merely passed it back and forth so that the shadow passed over his eye. In swinging the card I began close to his face, and gradually increased the distance, requesting him to let me know when he no longer saw the shadow.

When I got about two feet away from his face, he said he could not see the shadow any more. When I held the card at four feet, he said, "I can see you. You have on a dark dress, and it has light spots on it." I immediately asked him to look out of the window, and he saw the boys and girls moving about. He could also see houses and a tree.

The next day at one o'clock he came again, and we repeated the work of the day before. After a few minutes he said, "There are letters on that card." I held the card still, and asked him if he could tell me the letters. He said there was a 6 and an A, but he could not tell the smaller letter, although he could see it was there. I put the card down, and asked him to look at me, and tell me what he could see. I had a gold watch, suspended from my neck by a black ribbon. He said, "You have a ribbon round your neck" I closed one eye and left the other open, and he told me what I had done. While I was fixing his attention on hey face, with my left hand I brought my watch out. He said, "I can see your watch." I said, "Be eareful, Stephen, or I'll fool you. Isn't that a large yellow button?"

"No, it's a watch, for I see a ring, and a ribbon fastened to it," he answered.

Next he looked out of the window, and he could tell what the children were doing and how many windows there were in the houses. I told him about palming and the long swing, and asked him to do them morning and night, which he said he would do. I remember that he astonished me so with what he could do, that I thought he must be peeking with the other eye. I tried to prevent him from turning his head, but he would do it, so I got behind him and hold his head. He read just the same as before.

I have seen very little of Stephen of late. When I last saw him he could read the whole test-card at eighteen feet, and he could read from a book held at the normal reading distance.

Stephen's progress at the start was so rapid, that it astonished me. After about one week's work with the shadow, I dropped that and confined the work to the test card and the book.

Had any one told me this story, I'm free to say that I would have been sceptical.

Suggestions to Patients

By Emily C. Lierman

WHILE sitting do not look up without raising your chin. Always turn your head in the direction that you look. Blink often.

Do not make an effort to see things more clearly. If you let your eyes alone things will clear up by them-selves.

Do not look at anything longer than a fraction of a second without shifting.

While reading do not think about your eyes but let your mind and imagination rule.

When you are conscious of your eyes while looking at objects at any time, it causes discomfort and lessens your vision.

It is very important that you learn how to imagine stationary objects are moving without moving your head or moving your body.

Palming is a help to you, and I suggest that you palm for a few minutes many times during the day, at least ten times. At night just before retiring it is well to palm for half an hour or longer.

New Year Fairies

By George Guild

A CERTAIN man had much money. One day he gave forty millions to charity, and had a lot left. He invited me to spend an evening at his home. He asked me if I would like to learn how he made his money. I answered, "No."

"What would you like to talk about?" was his next question.

I replied, "Although you seem to be well advanced in years, your hair is not gray and your eyes seem good, because I notice that you are able to read without glasses. How have you been able to preserve your eyesight all those years?"

He smiled and answered, "I do not know unless it was due to the influence of the New Year Fairies." He stopped and waited for me to say something.

All I said was: "Tell me about it."

With his eyes partly closed, I can see him now, smoking his cigar slowly, and letting his mind drift away from me and his surroundings to a time long ago when he was a poor boy living on a farm. He told me that he had many brothers and sisters, all of them now dead. Christmas, one year, had been a very sorry affair. They had very little to eat, and their poverty was extreme.

New Year's Eve, as he sat by the open fire, a small boy of ten, he felt very hungry, very dependent, and very unhappy. He watched the flames of the burning wood, watched them grow larger, grow smaller, change their color, and, as he scatched, a fairy appeared in the light. She had the most beautiful eyes that ever he had ever seen. They were so bright, clear, full of sympathy and love, that he could not look away from them. She seemed to read his mind, and spoke encouraging words to him, which made him feel better. Then another fairy, all dressed in blue, a very beautiful blue, waved her hands to him, threw him a kiss and started to dance. While she was dancing, other fairies came out of the dark and danced with her. It seemed to him that wherever there was a spot of light, there was a fairy, many fairies, all of them with the same sympathetic, loving, blue eyes of the first fairy.

The memory of these eyes has never been lost. He said that he could see them now just as clearly as he did in the long ago. The memory of these eyes brought with it a wonderful feeling of rest, relaxation, and comfort. It seemed to him that these fairies brought a blessing which had helped him to accomplish many things which other people believed were impossible.

After he went to bed in the dark it seemed that he could still see the burning fire, and all those fairies with their sympathetic and loving eyes. When he awoke next morning his attitude of mind was entirely different. He ran to each member of the family, his father, his mother, each sister and brother, threw his arms around them and wished them all a Happy New Year. He tried to dance as he had seen the fairies dance, he tried to smile as he had seen them smile; he tried to be as sympathetic and as kind to everybody as the fairies had been to him. He was all eagerness to be busy. Formerly he had shirked what little work was expected from him, but now he had an uncontrollable desire toiler busy, to do things. He had no feeling of fatigue no matter how hard he worked, or how much he accomplished. His mother was amazed to have him fly around the kitchen, and to help her in as many ways as he possibly could. He brought in more wood for the stove than could be used in a week. He ran to the barn and started in cleaning house. It was the first time in his life that he felt a desire to do something to help the horses, the cows, and other animals. He got busy with a few tools and fixed up the chicken-coop, stopped all the cracks so that the cold air would not blow on the chickens, and all the time he was thinking of those eyes of the New Year Fairies, because the memory of their love did him so much good.

He felt a desire to go to school, and tramped through the deep snow two miles to get there. The teacher was surprised to see him and asked him what he desired.

"I want to go to school. I want to learn things. I want to be a big man. I want to make people happy."

The teacher smiled, give him a desk, some paper, a pencil, and a few pages of a primer, and told him to copy as much of it as he possibly could. He used up a great deal of paper, and before school was out he had done something very wonderful, because he had copied all the pages that had been given him.

He told me that his health was always good, and as for as his eyes were concerned, he never gave them a thought. He knew that he could see well, but he was not conscious that he had eyes more of the time. When he was forty-five he had an attack of the grippe, from which he soon recovered, but when he tried to read the newspaper, he was very much alarmed to discover that his sight was very poor. He at once consulted an eye specialist, who told him that he needed glasses because all persons in middle life, past the age of forty, needed glasses. He had some business to attend to which occupied his time for a few days. During that time he tried to rest his eyes by not looking at the newspaper. After avoiding any use of his eyes for reading for four days, they felt quite comfortable. Later he picked up a newspaper, and was surprised to find that he could read it for a short time. When his eyes tired, he rested them, and he discovered that by reading the paper and alternately resting his eyes, his vision improved to the normal. At subsequent periods in his career he had similar attacks of being unable to read, which were always relieved by rest. He felt that as long as he could improve his sight by resting the eyes, it would be perfectly safe for him not to wear glasses.

"It may sound very queer to you," he said, "but I find that I can obtain perfect relief immediately when I remember the sympathy and love in the eyes of those New Year Fairies."

Report of the League Meeting

By Miss May Secor, Secretary

A REGULAR meeting of the Better Eyesight League was held at 303 Madison Avenue, on the evening of December ninth. Miss Kathleen Hurty, president, presided.

Miss Hurty announced that the annual election of officers will be held at the January meeting. The nominating committee was appointed as follows: Mrs. Wieting (chairman), Miss Agnes Herrington, and Miss Mabel Young.

Miss Hurty gave an exposition of the Bates Method. Miss Agnes Herrington, a teacher in Erasmus Hall High School of Brooklyn, told of the great benefit she had derived from the use of this method. Miss Herrington wore glasses for ten yeah; she has now discarded them, with the exception of occasional use to read very small figures. Dr. Bates advised those who experience difficulty in reading small print to relax by means of palming and swinging; this will relieve eyestrain, and the small print will become legible. Miss Herrington found the following most helpful: sun treatment, blinking, and imagining a white cloud upon which is placed a black "o" having a period on either side.

Mr. George Weiss reported several cases which are under treatment at Erasmus Hall High School. These cases are all showing marked improvement. One case has been cured of insomnia as a result of relief from eyestrain. Mr. Norman Bernat, a member of Miss Hurty's eye group at Erasmus Hall, reported that by means of the Bates Method he has secured normal vision. For seven years he had used artificial lenses—one set for general use, one for reading, and one for "the sun." Mr. Bernat demonstrated the long swing in an unusually pleasing and relaxed manner.

Dr. Bates reported a case in which the patient was unable to see things moving. The Doctor requested the patient to look at the upper left hand corner of the small square of the Snellen card, to sway, and to hold the corner stationary. The patient followed instructions, and a severe headache resulted. after this experience, however, she was able to see things, moving. Dr. Bates explained that it is sometimes advisable to teach a patient how to see his eyes in the wrong way, in order to effect a cure. Another case had occasional attacks of complete blindness. Dr. Bates taught this man how to consciously produce complete blindness; the lesson was a difficult one. The result, however, was complete relief from attacks of blindness. After his cure the man served over-seas, when he returned to New York his vision was still normal.

Dr. Bates treated one case which had been diagnosed by neurologists as insanity. This man had double vision at times, and frequently saw imaginary figures dancing on the top of tall buildings; it sometimes appeared to him, also, that men approaching him took off their heads, and carried them under their arms. In this case a correction of the visual defects removed all apparitions, and the man was recognised as normal. Dr. Bates spoke also of a little girl who attained very high visual accuity by means of central fixation, seeing best a part of each letter. The Doctor stated that floating specks are the result of imperfect imagination, and are a sign of strain. At the close of Dr. Bates' discussion the meeting was adjourned.

Announcement

We are pleased to announce that Capt. C. S. Price, of London, England, will visit Dr. Bates around the latter part of January. He is planning to discuss with Dr. Bates the best methods which are employed for the cure of imperfect sight without glasses. The spread of Dr. Bates' method in England is largely due to Capt. Price's enthusiasm and success in helping others. There are now two clinics, and a Better Eyesight League in England, all reporting favorable results. We are hopeful that Capt. Price will attend the February meeting of the League.

Questions and Answers

Question—What is the difference between the long and the short swing?

Answer—In the long swing, objects appear to move an inch or more. In the short swing, objects appear to move an inch or less.

Question—My hands become tired when I palm. Can I sit in a dark room, instead of palming? Can I cover my eyes with a dark cloth?

Answer—No. I have found this to be a strain.

Question—While palming is it necessary to close the eyes.

Answer—Yes.

Question—When I read and blink consciously, I lose my place.

Answer—This is caused by strain, which prevents one from remembering the location of letters.

Question—How long is it necessary to read the test card before obtaining benefit?

Answer—Some patients by palming, and resting their ayes, have obtained benefit in a few minutes.

Previous Issue
THEWEBTHEWEBPrd Issue
THEWEBTHEWEB To Contents Page