

Better Eyesight



The Complete Magazines of William H. Bates

edited by THOMAS R. QUACKENBUSH

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INTRODUCTION

If words of wisdom are gems, the collected writings of Dr. Bates constitute a treasure chest for persons serious about improving their vision by natural methods. No one before or since this “visionary” ophthalmologist has so effectively distilled the essence of the causes of faulty vision and the correct vision habits necessary for normal sight. It gives me great pleasure to present this material in a modern, accessible format so others can benefit from the life’s work of this brilliant yet strangely neglected eye doctor, who successfully led thousands of patients to improved vision without glasses. Dr. Bates espouses a holistic view of health and vision that was decades ahead of its time and is consistent with present-day approaches to natural health and healing. Bates’ case studies and conclusions remain both powerful and inspiring to us today.

Ophthalmologist William H. Bates, M.D., is the founder of Natural Eyesight Improvement, an educational method of improving eyesight naturally. Dr. Bates self-published his landmark book *Perfect Sight Without Glasses* (a.k.a. *The Cure of Imperfect Sight by Treatment Without Glasses*) in 1920, presenting his research on the causes and solutions to many vision problems, including nearsightedness (myopia), farsightedness (hyperopia), astigmatism, strabismus (e.g. crossed eye), amblyopia (“lazy eye”), and presbyopia. Dr. Bates also reported many serious eye problems improving as a result of his educational work—including cataracts, glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, detached retina, conical cornea (keratoconus), iritis, atrophy of the optic nerve, and even blindness.

Dr. Bates wrote in the June 1923 issue of *Better Eyesight*, “Many people have asked me what I call my treatment. The question was a very embarrassing one because I really have no name to give it, unless I can say that my methods are the methods employed by the normal eye.” The essence of the “Bates Method”—relearning correct, natural, relaxed vision habits all day long—is thoroughly presented in my textbook *Relearning to See: Improve Your Eyesight—Naturally!* More value can be derived from *Better Eyesight: The Complete Magazines of William H. Bates* if this book is read in conjunction with *Relearning to See*.

There are many references to Dr. Bates’ *Perfect Sight Without Glasses* in the present book. The electronic version of *Perfect Sight Without Glasses*, including all of the illustrations, was given to the International Society for the

Enhancement of Eyesight (ISEE) by this author in 1999. At the time of the writing of the present book, *Perfect Sight Without Glasses* (with a few deletions) was on ISEE's website at http://www.i-see.org/perfect_sight/. The modern, "pop" edition of Dr. Bates' book, which was revised and abridged after Dr. Bates' death in 1931, is called *Better Eyesight Without Glasses*. Many people have found both books difficult to understand. Clarification of the Bates Method was a major motivation for writing *Relearning to See* and compiling the *Better Eyesight* magazines.

Dr. Bates wrote monthly *Better Eyesight* magazines to extend his educational outreach to the public. These writings contain outstanding elaboration of the Bates Method by Dr. Bates, his longtime assistant, nurse, and later his wife, Emily C. Lierman (Emily A. Bates), and many other Natural Eyesight Improvement teachers, including doctors. These magazines also include detailed case histories and testimonials of improved eyesight. This author considers many of the instructions and testimonials contained in these magazines of greater value than Dr. Bates' original book.

The present book is a compilation of writings from all 132 of Dr. Bates' magazines published from July 1919 to June 1930. The majority of information from each magazine is included, with only minor editing for redundancy and clarity. For example, duplicated "Questions and Answers" have been deleted. Some material, while repetitive, has been retained in this book because the variations on a particular theme are worth reading.

Some material, especially from the earlier magazines, was removed to avoid confusion. Dr. Bates changed some of his teachings in his later writings. For example, in the earlier *Better Eyesight* magazines, Dr. Bates was adamant that glasses needed to be discarded immediately and never worn again, else total success was not possible. In the later issues, he modified this position and stated that glasses could be used when necessary, although doing so would slow the progress of improving sight. Instead of removing some information, I have added editorial notes for clarification.

I am not aware of Dr. Bates suggesting the use of reduced-prescription glasses. (See Chapter 5, "Reduced Prescriptions," in *Relearning to See*.) Dr. Bates was clearly against the use of full-correction lenses. Many students have improved their eyesight by using reduced-prescription glasses when they are needed. I retained some of Dr. Bates' writings advising the immediate and permanent elimination of glasses to emphasize the importance of never wearing corrective lenses except when essential. It is not essential to completely eliminate glasses immediately to succeed; see "New Eyes for Old" by Grace Ellery Channing in the February 1920 issue, "No Glasses for Quick Results" in the October 1928 issue, and "Discarding Glasses Not Injuri-

ous" by Emily A. Bates in the September 1929 issue. In the November 1924 issue Emily C. Lierman wrote, "I was very much surprised to find that her vision had improved even though she wore her glasses. Dr. Bates and I have been surprised more than once to find a patient get well although they had worn their glasses at times." Dr. Bates writes in the October 1928 issue, "Patients who require good sight to earn a living and find it difficult to discard their glasses while under treatment have been able to make slow or rapid progress in the cure of their imperfect sight by wearing their glasses only when it was absolutely necessary."

In regard to describing lenses, e.g. "right eye, convex 3.00 D. S.; left eye, convex 3.75 D. S. with convex 0.50 D. C. 180 degrees," convex lenses are for farsightedness and presbyopia; D. S. stands for "diopters spherical"; D. C. stands for "diopter cylinder," which is a lense for astigmatism; and there is always an "axis" associated with astigmatism, which indicates the astigmatism's orientation—*not* its magnitude. Concave lenses are for nearsightedness and are also indicated by D. S. For the most part, I have standardized the nomenclature used for describing prescriptions. (For further discussion of lenses, see "Understanding Lenses and Prescriptions" in *Relearning to See*.)

A few of Bates' techniques are no longer used by modern Bates teachers and are not used in an educational setting. These techniques have been deleted.

In Dr. Bates' later writings, he taught only closed-eyelids sunning; references to his earlier versions of sunning have been removed. Never look directly into the sun with the eyelids open under any circumstances.

Many of the titles of the "Page Twos" are missing from the Table of Contents of the original *Better Eyesight* magazines. I have added titles to the Table of Contents of this book. "Page Two" is usually the first article of each magazine and is enclosed within a box. They are written by Dr. Bates, unless otherwise noted. Duplicate "Page Twos" have been omitted.

Most of my editorial comments are in brackets—[abc]. Sometimes I have added a short word, phrase, or comment so that a topic can be more easily located in the index.

The text blocks following "Editor's Note—" in italics are Dr. Bates' writings, not my emphasis. My emphasis is always noted as such. I do not know the author of notes in italics at the beginning of some articles (that are not preceded by "Editor's Note—"). Some may have been written by Emily A. Bates.

Starting with the February 1920 issue, there were other contributors to the *Better Eyesight* magazines. Presumably, all of the articles appearing from July 1919 to January 1920 were written by Dr. Bates and, perhaps, Emily C. Lierman.

I do not agree with all of Dr. Bates' ideas. I have