

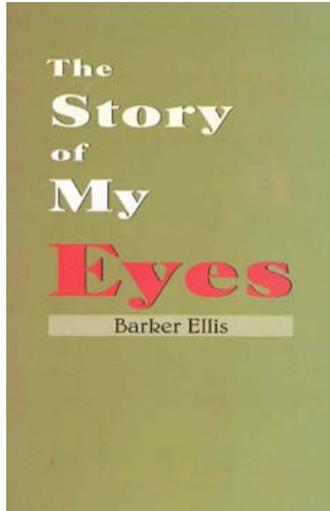
J. Ellis Barker Story of My Eyes

Reading excerpt

[Story of My Eyes](#)

of [J. Ellis Barker](#)

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THE STORY OF MY EYES

THREATENED WITH BLINDNESS

SOME time ago I went to my optician in the West End to have my eyes tested. The usual reading tests were not satisfactory. Following them, the very experienced optician examined my eyes very carefully with the ophthalmoscope, spending, I thought, an unusual length of time. When his examination was over, he looked at me in an embarrassed way and, after some hesitation, said: "I am afraid there is a peripheral opacity in both eyes." " Good God, is it cataract ? " " I cannot quite make up my mind whether it should be called cataract or not but, if I were you, I would see a first-rate oculist." I was thunderstruck. I remembered that my mother had been operated upon for cataract on both eyes with success, that her father had been operated upon for cataract of both eyes, which left him blind in one eye, and that her grandmother likewise had had double cataract, that operation in her case had been a failure and that she died at the age of 93 after decades of complete blindness.

I did not consult a single oculist, but saw five or six who had been highly recommended to me by my friends. The first man told me quite bluntly that I had cataract on both eyes, that there was nothing for it but operation and that it was awkward that the disease was equally strongly developed on both eyes, that therefore, the sight of both would probably fail evenly. He informed me that there was no treatment for cataract except operation, that he could give me eye drops or an ointment or such-like things if I wished for them, but that they were entirely useless. The other specialists told me that I had an opacity, or a cataractal opacity, or a cataract-like opacity, etc., but all agreed that nothing could be done except operation. Last of

HOW I WAS TREATED

A PATIENT who has been given glasses for short-sightedness or some other visual fault often asks the oculist : " Is it really necessary to wear glasses which I dislike intensely ? Is it not possible to strengthen the eyes in some way or other ? " As a rule he will be told : " Your eyes cannot *get* stronger but only weaker and you will require stronger glasses every few years." If the same patient should visit the oculist and complain that one of his eyes had been knocked out and that the remaining eye has a poor vision, he will, as a rule, be comforted with the words : " Never mind, the remaining eye will become stronger and will do the work of two." I have met many men who have lost one eye. In every case the remaining eye had greatly improved owing to the increased work it had to do. However, it is not necessary to have one eye taken out in order to improve the vision of the other. One can strengthen one's eyes by exercise. This important verity is unfortunately not known to oculists and opticians who only too often by means of unnecessary and ever-stronger glasses convert a slight and temporary weakness of vision into a grave, permanent, and incurable defect, or worse.

Weaknesses and defects of vision are frequently due to faulty nutrition, constipation, auto-intoxication, anaemia, etc., which require not glasses but constitutional treatment. Visual defects are aggravated if the eyes are not sufficiently exercised, and glasses are merely crutches to the eyes. If insufficiently exercised eyes are given glasses to be worn permanently, the weakness will, of course, become permanent and it will indeed get worse from year to year and call for stronger and ever stronger glasses.

Our eyes are made on the principle of a telescope for use at varying distances. If a telescope is always used fully pulled out, the apparatus of adjustment will become stiff and unusable. Something similar is apt to happen with our eyes. If we always do close work, such as reading or needlework, the power of focussing at a distance becomes weakened through non-use. If we do not use the muscles which move the eye, they become weakened, the circulation of blood throughout the eye is apt to suffer and the entire structure atrophies. Weakness of vision usually goes hand in hand with weakness of the eye muscles. The new system of eye training gives exercises which strengthen

not only the eye muscles, but the eyesight itself.

How extraordinarily even the poorest eyesight can be improved by the new treatment will be seen from the following letter which I have received :

" DEAR SIR,—I have read your article ' The Story of My Eyes,' and am sure that you and your readers will be interested in my own story which is even more wonderful than yours.

When I was ten years old I found that I was unable to read the black-board at school, large type posters in the streets and the numbers of buses. My mother was horrified. She took me to the Royal Westminster Ophthalmic Hospital. My eyes were carefully examined by Mr. Gimblett, F.R.C.S., I was given very strong glasses for short sight and I was told that I must always wear them. No hope was given of my ever being able to leave them off.

A year later I wished to enter high school. My eyes were again examined. The result was unexpected and frightening. I was told that I could not attend the local high school because my short-sightedness was too great. I wept with disappointment. Later on I heard of a class for very short-sighted children which was to be formed in a Clapton secondary school. It was the first of its kind and I joined it. By this time my eyes had become a great deal worse, although I always wore my glasses in accordance with instructions. At my new school paramount importance was given to my eyes. I was not allowed to read any books. In writing I had to use a black thick crayon and to write letters at least 1 1/2 inches high.

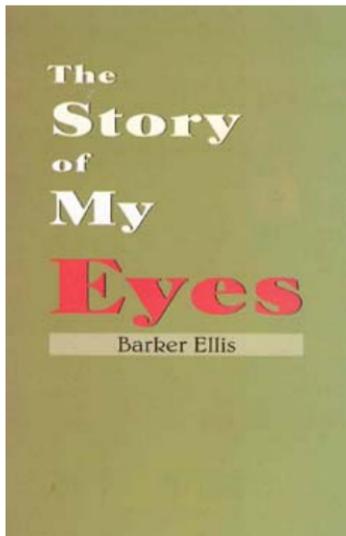
When the time for matriculation came, I found myself in great difficulties. As I was not allowed to read books, I found it very hard to keep up with the other children, especially in languages. Everything had to be committed to memory. Besides, all my studies had to take place in the daylight. I was not allowed to use my eyes in artificial light. The treatment was considered a success. My eyes had not deteriorated during five years. I passed my examination. I did not wish to stay at school any longer as the study of my beloved botany was closed to me, for I had been strictly forbidden to use a microscope.

I left school in search of work. The employment bureaux absolutely refused to consider my application for office work, and I was fitted for no other unless I underwent several years' training which was impossible. I went to the eye hospital and asked the doctor if office work would injure my eyes. He kindly but sadly told me that he could not advise office work, although I might try it for a short time. This information frightened me. I feared to go blind.

For months! tried in vain to find work without eyestrain. Jobs were scarce in winter- 1931. I grew hopeless. I felt that I should never succeed in life because of my defective eyesight. By chance I heard from a friend of a lady in Welbeck Street who improved eyesight not by glasses but by exercises. I was sceptical but desperate and went to Welbeck Street. The lady oculist told me that I might do a great many things with my eyes which had hitherto been forbidden, and she promised me that if I worked

The muscles on the outside of the globe are the very muscles which are permanently immobilized by glasses which bring about their deterioration and atrophy with disastrous results to the wearer. The Bates' method has shown its value in hundreds of cases which I could quote. Bates has done pioneer work of inestimable value. I would recommend the study of the new methods to every oculist and optician, to every doctor and surgeon, and to everyone who values good natural sight without glasses. The vested interests may oppose and deride the Bates' method, exactly as they have opposed and derided every important medical innovation, but truth will triumph in the end.





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