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Advice to a young optometrist:

Preserved in an early American optometrist's (optician's) old clinical record book the Dr. James Leeds collection are two personal letters in very legible but quite faded longhand from Dr. C.H. Brown of the Philadelphia Optical College to optician Samuel Richards of 6 Pleasant Street, South Paris, Maine. Both letters are on rather ornate letterheads which include a complex bit of fine artwork showing a cross-section of the eye, an optical ray diagram, and a pair of pince-nez within each eyewire of which is shown a refractionist examining a patient. The printed legend at the head of the first letter reads as follows:

The Philadelphia Optical College		
A School for Practical Instruction in Optics		
ADDRESS		
ALL LETTERS TO		
DR. C.H. BROWN		INCORPORATED
1820 DIAMOND ST.	<u>CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT</u>	AND CHARTERED

The accurately typed version of the handwritten body of the letter reads as follows:

Philadelphia, Oct. 28, 1892

S. Richards, Esq.
Dear Sir,

Diploma was mailed to your address today and I hope you will receive it in good condition and find it satisfactory. Enclosed find bill for the same.

My intercourse with you has always been very pleasant and I regard you as one of our most valuable graduates. I know you are a conscientious painstaking man, and I am satisfied you are a well informed competent optician, and that you not only do credit to yourself but also to our College, of which we are proud to class you as one of the early graduates of our Correspondence Department. And you have my personal best wishes for the Success which you so well deserve.

I think I sent you one of our circulars, which contains your testimonial letter and also my portrait--did you receive the circular? If not, I will be glad to send you one.

With warmest personal regards,
Yours truly,
C.H. Brown, M.D.

A few months later Samuel Richards apparently wrote to Dr. Brown for some professional advice. The reply came in longhand again in virtually identical letterhead except for the inclusion of a small portrait of Dr. Brown in the upper left corner, as follows:

Aug. 16, 1893

S. Richards, Esq.

My Dear Sir,

In difficult cases, and in cases where the symptoms are persistent, oculists generally use Atropine, that is in the majority of cases. My custom is to instil the drug three times, at bed time, on rising the next morning, and then again an hour before the examination. I repeat the examination 3 or 4 times, and do not prescribe the glasses until the effects of the drug have worn off. Homatropine is a perfectly safe drug for you to use.

There is no quick way to detect the cases you speak of. I would suggest that when you meet with a case that promises to be difficult or troublesome, you should require two or three examinations on as many different days: in this way you are pretty sure to detect the cause of the trouble. Give your patients and the public to understand that you are thoroughly competent to fit any case that can be fitted, but in some difficult cases you must have some time just as an oculist would require it. Never give concave glasses unless you are positive the case is Myopia. Your experience must guide you. Take into account the visual acuteness, the amount of improvement from glasses, the near point, and the effect the glasses have on the near point, and you can generally decide whether it is Myopia or not.

No I would not pay back the fee, but endeavor in every other way to give them satisfaction. You can't afford to pay back the money, neither can you afford to send your patients away dissatisfied. If the laws of your State do not prohibit it (every state has a different law) I would advise your to use the drug when your judgement tells you it is needed. I think I have answered all the points embraced in your letter.

I was very much pleased to receive your photograph: Quite a number of my students have favored me with their pictures, but I shall prize yours above others because I feel a personal acquaintance with you and because you were our first Correspondence Graduate. I shall make use of your letter in my October adv. in Keystone. I have already sent in my copy for September number, and I may have a cut made from your portrait to use in that adv. in which case I will send you the cut after it is used, for your own use.

Very Truly Yours,
C.H. Brown, M.D.

Optometrist Samuel Richards is listed in the earliest Blue Book of Optometrists (1912) and in subsequent Blue Books through 1920 as a graduate of the Philadelphia Optical College in 1890 and of the Chicago College of Ophthalmology in 1891. He listed himself as a member of the Maine, New England, and American optometric or optical associations. Incidentally, the Maine optometry law was not enacted until 1909.

In a separate item in this newsletter Dr. Richards' appointment book will be described.

Beginning with cluants:

In the April 1989 issue of this Newsletter, page 39, we called attention to the availability of Pierre Marly's new book on "Spectacles and Spyglasses," whereupon Dr. Leeds promptly acquired a copy of the English version and loaned it to us for this commentary. It is a beauty, fascinating, readable, and authoritative. It deserves space on the library reference shelf. If placed in your reception room, it should be put under security lest it be stolen.

Supplementing the more than 400 illustrations, mostly from Marly's museum collection, is a somewhat illustration-synchronized text consisting of two historical chapters on spectacles and spyglasses by Marly, an extensive semeiological study of spectacle history by Jean-Claude Margoten, and a philosophical analysis of spectacle wearing and wearers by Paul Bierent. Altogether we learn that what we know about the history of spectacles and their use is derived piecemeal from a wide variety of sources quite independent of the few preserved old but rarely dated spectacles themselves.

A single commentary by Marly on the emergence of the French word "cluants" exemplifies the tone of the book, as follows: The nailing together of two "besicles" (individual crystal lenses retained in wood or horn rims) produced what the French called "besicles clousantes" (nailed spectacles), or "cluants" for short, the original spectacles.

Marly's brief chapter on spyglasses is in compliance with his objective to include only "portable visual aids" in his hobby. Thus he very comfortably excludes that huge field of optics quite remote from vision per se. It is a book that lends itself either to easy enjoyment or to sophisticated study, rewarding in either case.

From a clinical record book:

Hardly a "book," but physically resembling one, is a 204 page 20x25 cm brown clothbound volume with a title page that identifies it as an OPTICIANS' RECORD BOOK by Dr. C.H. BROWN, published by THE PHILADELPHIA OPTICAL & WATCH CO., 916 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA, and "COPYRIGHTED." The two pages immediately following the title page show double columns of ruled spaces numbered from 1 to 100 for writing in the names of patients. A fourth page has a single paragraph entitled "DIRECTIONS FOR USING The Optician's Record Book" in which the basic optometric examination procedure is outlined with advice on the entries to be made on one of the 100 subsequently paired facing right and left pages, a pair of which are reproduced here on the next two pages of this Newsletter.

No. Date. 18

Name Age

Residence Occupation

Condition of eyes ?

How do eyes trouble you ?

Ever had any disease of eyes ?

Ever worn glasses ?

If so, what number and how long ?

Any other remarks

V. R. E. L. E.

Refraction R. E. L. E.

Accommodation n. p. f. p.

With n. p. f. p.

Insufficiency

Astigmatism

Distance, R. E.

“ L. E.

Reading, R. E.

“ L. E.

Ophthalmoscopic appearances :

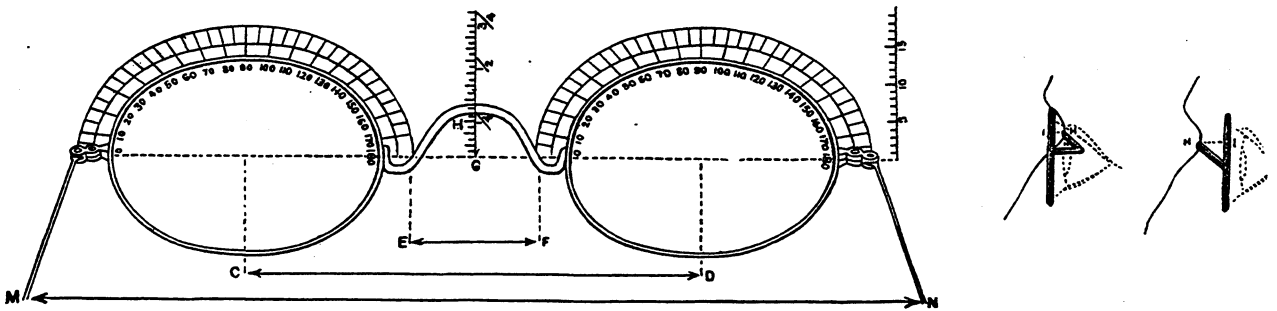
R. E.

L. E.

Diagnosis

Suggestions.....

Report of case.....



Frame

Pupillary distance.....

Depth of bridge

Inclination of bridge

	R. E.			L. E.		
	SPHERICAL.	CYLINDER.	AXIS.	SPHERICAL.	CYLINDER.	AXIS.
DISTANCE.....						
CONSTANT.....						
READING.....						

A few handwritten entries were made on only the first two pair of pages, numbered 1 and 2, the first for a 19-year-old pianist from Bridgton, Maine, on July 4, 1891, and the second for a 36-year-old blacksmith of South Paris, Maine, on August 31, 1893 (two years later!). Together with the scanty written notations in only a few of the spaces the entries suggest that the optometrist, Samuel Richards of South Paris, made only two half-hearted attempts to use this record form and put the book back on the shelf. A third pair of pages, No. 3, has only the date September 14, 1893, with no further entries.

From these it is quite impossible to derive any significant conclusions about Richards' mode of practice other than that which is implied in another write-up involving Richards in this same Newsletter. Quite interesting, however, are four lens power entries, sphere and cylinder, in diopters, and three designated in other numbers, namely, "60," "54," and "60." All Snellen fractions are with numerators of 15, i.e. 15/30, 15/40, etc. The only recorded interpupillary distance is "2 $\frac{6}{16}$ inches." For both patients some oblique astigmatism is noted, and for one eye of one patient "prism 1° Base out" is included in the prescription.

Perhaps more revealing than these entries are two items very carefully inserted with Scotch tape as extra pages just inside the front cover. The first is a page 152 taken from the March 30, 1899 edition (years after the handwritten entries!) of The Optician and Photographic Trade Review, an anonymously authored article entitled, "The DeZeng Refractometer--a Substitute for the Trial Case." Besides giving detailed instructions for determining the sphere, cylinder, and axis of each eye it includes a table of recommended adds for ages above 40.

The second carefully inserted handwritten memorandum reads as follows:

Atropia gr5 (5 grains)
Aqua Dist. z1 (1 ounce)

Sig. 2 to 3 drops into each
eye daily for 6 days--

Allow the eyes to recover.
When the pupil has Contracted
to nearly normal size
Come over and we
will try again with a
prospect of better success.

This treatment should
be carried out under
the Supervision of a good
physician.

You probably have spasm
of the function of accom-
modation and the object is
to overcome the spasm.

On the next bound page, an otherwise blank page, is written the following:

Dr. Isaac Rounds Recipe for paralyzing
the Accommodation in Case of Spasm of accommodation
Atropine gr 5
Aqua Dist. z 1 (1 Oz)
Sig - 2 to 3 drops into Each Eye daily for
six days. Allow the Eyes to recover
When the pupil has Contracted to nearly
normal size test the refraction by test
types at a distance of 15 or 20 feet.

The volume in which these notes were made is in the Dr. James Leeds collection.

The Franklin Papers:

Not less than a dozen times, references to Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) have been made in this Newsletter in connection with such involvements as his invention of bifocals, his assertion of the benefits of spectacles, his experimentation on the light and heat absorption properties of variously colored materials, and a 1738 listing of spectacles among special items of merchandise available from him. In 1922 an American Optometric Association resolution honored him as "a patron saint of optometrists," and at the time of the AOA Convention in Philadelphia in 1969 the Association president ceremoniously placed a wreath on his grave.

Were there other ways in which Franklin may have been identified with the history of optometry during the colonial and early American era? Have all evidences of his multifarious involvements come to light? Read on.

In 1954 Yale University and the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia jointly announced the assembling of a team of editors to begin collating and editing the already accumulated photocopies of 29,000 sets of manuscript letters and documents and 2,200 published letters, a collection still growing at the rate of 100 documents per year and supplemented by 15,000 related books and pamphlets. The initial edited volume of the resulting series appeared in 1959 with 29 additional volumes appearing in the subsequent 32 years, bringing the edited materials chronologically up to the year 1779.

The remaining unedited materials of his last eleven years, the least explored of his career, are so numerous that another 15 to 20 volumes are anticipated to complete the project. Within this huge collection may well be any number of comments further identifying Franklin with optometrically related interests and waiting to be tapped by means of modern electronic indexing techniques.

Naturally, the limiting problem is money. In spite of generous philanthropic grants from numerous foundations, individuals, institutions, and agencies, more funds are needed to maintain the pace to complete the undertaking in reasonable time. To this end The Friends of Franklin, Inc., was organized in 1988 not only to seek donors of additionally needed funds but also to keep earlier editions in print and to make the volumes more available in libraries and more accessible to the public.

Information on The Friends of Franklin, Inc., is available from The Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1194.

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