

Ancient and modern

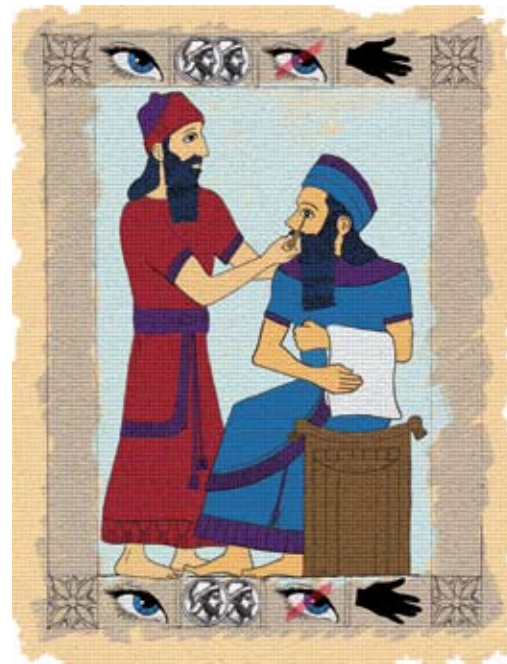
Everyone, in all branches of the optical fraternity, will have built up their own stock of tips, tricks and anecdotes during their working life. No doubt there is an optometrist who still recounts how, some years ago, as a pre-registration student, she was being shown the correct way to adjust a frame side by a newly qualified colleague. His advice of, 'Now don't put too much pressure on...' was followed by a distinct crack as the side came away in his hand. The demonstrator, who also learned an important lesson, is the author – who now presents a miscellany of optical advice and anecdotes.

Cataract extraction is the world's most commonly performed operation. But records exist of cataract operations dating back 3,000 years to Babylonian times. The surgeon could charge 10 silver shekels for operating on a freeman or two silver shekels for a slave, the fees being fixed by law. There was quite an incentive for him to hone his skills, as there were also punishments, fixed by law, for unsatisfactory outcomes. If a slave was blinded, the surgeon had to provide a replacement out of his own pocket; but if a freeman lost the sight of an eye, the surgeon's hand was cut off. The GMC advises that it has no plans to introduce similar sanctions.

Receipt for sore eyes

On the subject of eye disease, Sir Hans Sloane, physician and founder of the British Museum, provided a remedy for a range of conditions which could be a useful over-the-counter product if only someone would market it. Published in *The Lady's Companion* in 1751, 'Sir Hans Sloane's Receipt for Soreness, Weakness and several other Distempers of the Eyes' runs as follows: 'Take of prepared Tutty [an impure zinc oxide] one Ounce; of Lapis Haematites [ferric oxide] prepared, two Scruples; one of the best Aloes prepared, twelve Grains; of prepared Pearl, four Grains. Put them into a Porphyry or Marble Mortar, and rub them with a Pestle of the same stone very carefully, with a sufficient quantity of Viper's Grease, or Fat, to make a Liniment; to be used daily, Morning or Evening, or both

Independent optometrist **David Baker** unwraps a miscellany of optical wit and wisdom in time for Christmas



according to the convenience of the patient.'

Additionally, to deal with ocular inflammations, 'The Doctor prescribes Bleeding and Blistering in the Neck, and behind the Ears, in order to draw off the Humours from the Eyes; and afterwards, according to the Degree of Inflammation, or Acrimony of the Juices, to make a Drain by Issues between the Shoulders, or perpetual Blister. And for washing the Eyes, recommends cold Spring-Water.' If the inflammation returns, 'The Doctor says drawing about six Ounces of Blood from the Temples by Leeches, or Cupping on the Shoulders, is very proper.'

For spectacle wearers, there is good advice from the *Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine* (1833). The first paragraph still has particular resonance with today's optical world: 'The absolute necessity of purchasing glasses under the direction of a qualified person, and of not going into a shop at random and taking just what the shopman gives you, has already been pointed out.

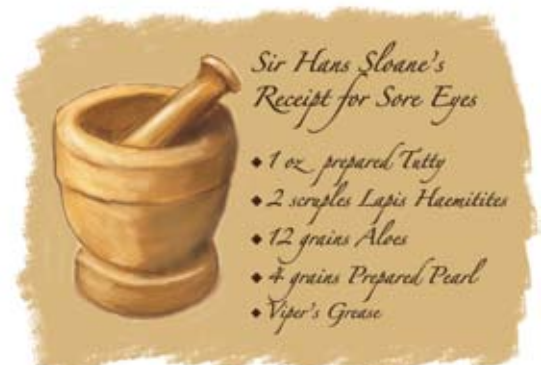
'The frames should be of metal... Steel is probably the best, although some people prefer gold... The nose piece, or saddle, should be carefully

adjusted to fit the nose.

'The lenses themselves may be made of crystal – that is, Brazilian quartz – or crown glass. The crystal is harder than glass, and is therefore less likely to scratch, and is not so liable to get broken. Moreover, it takes a higher polish, and being more refractive, it may be of less thickness than glass. The great difficulty is to get a piece of crystal free from specks and impurities. Dishonest dealers often supply crown glass for crystal. The best way to distinguish between them is to apply a file to the edge of the material; glass cuts readily, but crystal is much harder. Crown glass is very good, and may be used when the spectacles have to be changed often, or when expense is an object.'

One, of course, must have more than one pair of spectacles, and advertisers have long known how to use fashion to promote sales. Aldous Huxley, in his 1923 comic novel *Antic Hay*, satirises the effect of American advertisers on the cultural elite: 'For sport or relaxation, they tell you, as though it was a social axiom, you must wear spectacles of pure tortoiseshell. For business, tortoiseshell rims and nickel earpieces lend incisive poise. For semi-evening dress, shell rims with gold earpieces and gold nose-bridge. And for full dress, gold-mounted rimless pince-nez are refinement itself and absolutely correct.

'Thus we have a law created, according to which every self-respecting myope or astigmat must have four distinct pairs of glasses. Think if he should wear the all-shell sports model with full dress!





'Revolting solecism! The people who read advertisements like that begin to feel uncomfortable; they have only one pair of glasses, they are afraid of being laughed at, thought low-class and ignorant and suburban. And since there are few who would not rather be taken in adultery than provincialism, they rush out to buy four new pairs of spectacles.'

Girl talk

Frame manufacturers considering their next advertising campaign may wish to take note of that passage. The corrective comment to the above, which they probably wish had never been written, is the famous aphorism coined by Dorothy Parker: 'Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses.'

But perhaps it isn't entirely true. Two young women, from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, are on record as sending the following riposte to Parker in 1947: 'The statement is entirely erroneous. We would be willing to wager that a survey made among repairing opticians would show that Monday is a very busy day for straightening girls' glasses.' There is even an old French proverb that suggests that Parker had it back to front. It runs: 'Bonjour lunettes, adieu fillettes.'

There is much debate about the need for foreign health professionals to be able to speak good English. A prerequisite for dealing with patients, surely, but woefully inadequate for those attempting to have dialogue with primary care trusts or their successor bodies. A GP, Gordon



Barclay, who was medical adviser to one of the old Family Health Service Authorities that PCTs replaced, was good enough to provide a lexicon of Trustspeak phrases and their translations in *Monitor Weekly* of March 29 and May 17 1995. Here is a selection (translation in italics):

- Need to get a steer on this – *find people who agree with me*
- Informal sounding board – *I will find people who agree with me*
- I think what you are saying... – *here are my ideas*
- What are the ramifications? – *how much will it cost?*
- No time scale – *never*
- This needs a fundamental review – *no*
- I will get back to you – *forget it.*

Two final thoughts. First, what is the opposite of an optometrist? Here's one answer, from worldofmoose.com (as reported by *Reader's Digest*): 'My optometrist thinks my eyes will probably improve. Unfortunately my pessimistrist thinks they'll get worse.' And lastly, a note of caution as the time draws near for preparing the Christmas feast. There was a recent case of a man who was chopping vegetables when some herbs flew up into his eye. Now he's parsley-sighted. ●

Moving images

High quality slit-lamp images are now possible on the move with Keeler's latest attachment. **Bill Harvey** tries it out

I have been using the Keeler Portable Slit Lamp (PSL) for over a year now. With practice, and knowing where best to place your arms, it is possible to achieve excellent views of the anterior eye (see the review in *Optician* 30.07.10). Only recently it was possible to confirm that the cause of one of my colleague's irritation in the office was a tiny, minimally staining contact lens-induced peripheral ulcer. Keeler has now launched an iPhone holder for the PSL (Figure 1), allowing jpeg still and mpeg movie capture via a smartphone.

The metal attachment into which the phone fits is simply slid onto an eyepiece once the protective rubber sleeve has been removed (Figure 2). A counterweight is inserted in the focusing rod hole to make the whole thing balance better when held. And that is it – you can now take images and

Figure 1



movies of eyes in domiciliary settings (or indeed anywhere where a portable system is needed). The image quality is dictated by whether you have the iPhone 4 (5 megapixel) or the 4S (8 megapixel).



Figure 2

I strongly advise you, if you were to acquire one of these, to set the camera to voice activation mode. When the best view is achieved you then just call 'shoot' at the phone and the image is taken. If this is not done, by the time you have moved your finger to press the 'capture' button, the view has moved. With practice, this is an excellent (and cheap) way of taking anterior images through a slit lamp. I am sure versions for table-top slit lamps will follow. ●

- More details from www.keeler.co.uk