



NELSON ARNOLD

# THE YOUNG OPTICIAN

BY

NELSON ARNOLD

*Fellow of the British Optical Association; Fellow of the  
Institute of Ophthalmic Opticians*

---

COPYRIGHT

---

BRISTOL: JOHN WRIGHT & SONS LTD.

LONDON: SIMPKIN MARSHALL LTD.

---

1933

PRINTED IN ENGLAND BY  
JOHN WRIGHT AND SONS LIMITED  
BRISTOL

DEDICATED WITH AFFECTION  
AND GRATITUDE TO  
MY MOTHER,  
THE BEST A YOUNG OPTICIAN  
EVER HAD

## P R E F A C E

THIS little work has been written during the spare hours spent in the consulting-room of a newly established practice.

I have endeavoured to relate the experience gleaned during the years spent in our profession.

I have addressed the title to the young opticians just commencing their careers, as I was fifteen years ago. At the age of 34 I consider myself a veteran, not perhaps in years, but in experience, for I have passed through many trials and tribulations, and, I hope, learnt many lessons. My sincere thanks are due to a well-known leader in the optical world who has been good enough to read the proofs and make some valuable suggestions. Also to the publishers for their courtesy.

NELSON ARNOLD.

BOURNEMOUTH,  
*August, 1933.*

# THE YOUNG OPTICIAN

---

## CHAPTER I

WHEN a young man leaves school the world beckons to him ; he feels somewhat like a prisoner released ; he is free to make his own way and is inspired by the spirit of adventure. When it is decided to become a qualified optician, the pros and cons will have been duly debated by the family, so I need not go into them.

I am addressing the young man who is just planting his foot upon the ladder, and I want to help him. I desire to extend greetings to my friend, and to tell him some of the things which I have learnt, and which I wish I had known when leaving school. The Great War thrust me into optics, for although I am the son and grandson of an optician, I was intended for the Law, for which profession I was actually studying when I joined H.M. Forces. After the Armistice I found my views somewhat changed, and began to feel I wanted to make money at once, and not wait two or three more years before a start

could be made. Optics, of course, opened up the prospect I was looking for, and I decided to begin immediately.

It is assumed that the reader is in a similar position, so I advise him first of all to take one of the several excellent courses of instruction, in preparation for one of the recognized examinations. I did this, but I could not wait for the diploma. I went into business on my own account right away, studying the while. *I do not advise you to do likewise.* You are young, and the next year or so is best spent making sure of your certificate, and will give you a better earning capacity at the end of it.

I shall never forget the first 'test' I ever undertook. I was attired in a light brown suit with cream socks and brown shoes, and wore a cream tie with red spots! I used the ophthalmoscope, but it conveyed nothing to me. I got a 35s. order. I was then tempted to subscribe to certain institutions which gave me the right to use certain letters after my name. This I thought a commercial asset, and when I filled in my entry forms for my examination I stated proudly these mystic 'letters'. During the examination I was called before one of the officials, who asked me what exactly was meant by this suffix, and when I told him he replied that it was rather a pity I had entered it upon the form! I may mention that I had now adopted a different

mode of dress. I was wearing a morning coat complete with 'wing' collar and silk hat! This dress I wore daily for over twelve months—but then grew out of it. I did not pass the whole of that examination; I was not prepared for it; I knew my knowledge was not sufficient, and I was foolish to sit.

I can, and do, advise you to devote your energies to your study, and to obtain the diploma before all else. There are now several most helpful clinics you can attend, and get first-hand experience of actual conditions existing in the ordinary optical practice. There are many well-written books you must obtain; these will be a great help to you throughout your career.

Here I will add a few remarks and observations which, although they will not apply until you are established in business, should be of interest from the very beginning. The first concerns the title or style you are going to adopt. Opticians are called all sorts of names (some deserve them!), from 'opti-can' to 'oppertishian'. I do not think the mere word 'optician' properly describes us; the dictionary definition is "one who makes spectacles, etc." 'Refractionist' is a good word but not known well enough yet. 'Optical practitioner' is very good, but I can't help thinking 'Sight-testing Specialist' is the true and correct title for us to use. Such a description is absolutely correct and truthful;



## The Young Optician

it is sometimes thought to savour of quackery, but I contend a qualified optician is a specialist if ever there was one, and I advise you always to bear this in mind.

The care of people's eyesight is to become your concern—probably your *only* concern. The sale of 'over-the-counter' goods does not interest me; I should always fail at it. I look upon my sphere as in the testing-room, using my knowledge to help mankind to better vision. I would do away altogether with counter and shop if I had my way. *Never* refer to your place of business as a 'shop', and I don't like 'surgery'. Call it your 'consulting-room', or even 'office'.

A few remarks now on professional etiquette—a very important subject and one I have always tried to keep well to the fore. You will find there are certain of your clients who will, for some reason or other, go to another optician, perhaps in another town, and he will test their eyes. I am sorry to say it may often happen that this other optician will say the glasses you have supplied are 'quite wrong', 'doing your eyes injury', etc., etc. I have to admit this is frequently done, probably in the endeavour to get an order. Please don't do it. If such an occasion happens to arise, and it often will, test the person's eyes and compare your results with the glasses he is wearing. If you find a

difference, just say this, " You need new lenses now, your eyes must have changed since these glasses were made ; they do not suit you now." Even if the glasses are very badly ' out ', do not throw mud at a colleague ; it will do the profession no good if you do. Never say to a client, as I have known *qualified* opticians say, " It is a fortunate thing you consulted me ; you would have gone blind, etc., etc." You know full well that glasses cannot prevent blindness, neither can they cure it. Conduct yourself in a strictly professional manner, it will pay very high dividends.

*CHAPTER II*

WHAT will you do now that the coveted diploma is yours? This question will be solved probably by the financial resources available. As a qualified optician you can open a new practice, purchase an already established practice, or accept a situation. If you have had little or no experience in salesmanship, I advise the latter course, at any rate for a time, as a very wise move, but use caution regarding the methods of your prospective employer. You must keep an open mind about the business routine you will be required to follow. I have found one or two large firms of opticians whose methods in practice are a little behind the times, and some pay too much attention to the salesman side of the question, neglecting to some extent the professional aspect. Assistants whose first experiences are in such a practice are apt to follow these methods through their careers, and, although they may make money, they will not enhance optics as a profession to a very great extent.

Regarding the question of salary, do not accept too small a wage, do not put a low price

upon your true value ; the employer, if you do, is inclined to underestimate your ability. I was recently talking to the head of a well-known retail firm of opticians about a certain manager on his staff. He made this remark : “ What can you expect from a £4 a week man ? ” If that same man had been earning £6 weekly the employer would have respected him much more. It will be to your advantage to make up your mind as to your commercial value to an employer, and do not fail to ask for an increase should you be successful in your branch.

Now you are a fully fledged optician, you must make up your mind for a more or less humdrum existence ; many will be the hours you must be ‘ shut up ’ alone in your glory waiting for clients. The head of a well-known firm once told me that he could not understand, when he visited his branches, how his employees could possibly stand the life, which, he declared, would be intolerable to him. I know full well the strength of such an observation, for even if you are busy, you must, in retail optics, have a great deal of time to spare. This, I contend, can be spent reading or writing to advantage, and you can almost always find some re-test letters due for dispatch, some frames to polish, the window to dress, and so on. Don’t go to sleep ; if you do, the unexpected test will arrive, and you will not be ready. Don’t stand at the

door or in the porch for hours on end ; by so doing you are advertising to the world that practice is quiet and that you, the sight-testing expert of that particular district, have nothing to do—a bad reputation to make.

Please take my advice regarding your personal appearance and the condition of your apartments. You must look well-groomed, watch your fingernails and be most particular of a smart clean collar and shirt, with well-tied necktie, and *clean* shoes or boots. A shabby suit cannot always be avoided, and will be excused if neck and feet are smart. Do not eat onions, you know what it is when the *patient* does. Your appliances, even if simple, must be clean and free from dust. There is no excuse for a smeary mirror even. You can attend to these details yourself each day. When testing, do not hold a cleaning cloth in one hand and polish each lens as you drop it into the trial frame. You would not expect to see a surgeon clean his instruments before he operates, and remember it is taken for granted your trial lenses *are* clean. Keep the frame in a sterilizer cabinet if possible ; it impresses and is safe, but keep the glass shelves of it free from dust ! These words of advice apply to assistant, manager, and proprietor alike.

If you decide to open a new practice, remember to get a long lease on the premises or an option on them. I have known men afraid to sign a

twenty-one years' lease, but it is a very great asset, and you must have it. There is no need to spend a fortune on decorations. I once made that mistake, and after the £500 shop front was fitted, I began to find people were afraid to come in for fear I would charge them too much! You can always improve premises as you go along, and provided the atmosphere is right, the general public will not care if the chairs do not match each other.

I have had no experience of purchasing a practice, having always opened my own, but I realize it is a great advantage to those in the position to do so. If you buy a goodwill, don't destroy it. In your anxiety to see your name on the fascia don't delete the other fellow's until time has enabled you to get a grip on his clients. Remember they don't know *you*, and if a stranger has to be consulted, old clients may easily go elsewhere. I witnessed the wholesale murder of a splendid goodwill in this way a few years ago; it cost the ill-advised purchaser several thousands of pounds.

I cannot conclude this chapter without mention of the morals of a young optician. You have to conduct yourself very carefully. I have known men, good refractionists, spoil themselves by unguarded and foolish personal behaviour. It is *not* wise to visit a local hostel during the lunch hour. I do not say a glass of beer is harmful,

I do not deny that business is done at the bar, but I contend that a business man, and more especially a professional man, must not indulge at midday. Apart from the danger of certain clients seeing you enter these places—however harmless it may be—there remains the fact that you will show traces during the afternoon, and this may do you untold harm. I realize as fully as anyone the importance of ‘mixing’ socially in your district, and I know that a few hours spent in a hotel or at a club can do your practice actual good; but there is a time for everything, and that time is *not* at midday. Do not make too many female friends, act with caution in this respect, and do not entertain the fair sex in your consulting-rooms. I advise you not to smoke a pipe on your premises, and if you smoke cigarettes, open a window, or use a spray, *before* a client comes in for testing.

## CHAPTER III

A GREAT deal depends upon the manner in which you deal with your clients in the *first* place. When they are seated in the testing-chair, take sticks, umbrellas, and baskets and place them on a *table* or *chair*, then take the name and address and other particulars. After that speak to the client by name—Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so. See that the patient's feet are resting upon the floor, if not you should adjust the chair. If a lady ask for her hat to be removed, place this carefully on a chair or in some safe place. Then darken your room and carry out the tests by transmitted lights. Make your notes regarding special features of the fundi, etc., then carry out the subjective test in a business-like and thorough way. Never hurry a test, even if the obvious result is a poor order. Test for muscular imbalance whenever necessary, and always, of course, test carefully for astigmatism.

The result obtained, you take on the mantle of a salesman. Ask your client the style of glasses desired. In many cases this will be left to your advice. You can then suggest the frames you really recommend for the particular case and



point out the reasons why. By this time you will have a good idea of the means of your client, and must act accordingly regarding price. It is most unwise to attempt to sell too expensive an article; this will be compared with the glasses of a friend who gave much less, and dissatisfaction is sure to result. *Remember one dissatisfied client talks louder than many satisfied ones.*

If you sell curved lenses, bifocals, or solid gold, etc., impress upon the client the advantages, give him something to argue about when his friend tells him he has 'been done'. It is best, I find, to quote such prices in all cases as will provide evidence that you do supply a reasonable article. There are several excellent demonstrators for curved lenses on the market. I can boast that I have never failed to sell curved after using one of these appliances. After testing the sight (and when making the sale) you are in the strongest possible position to sell the client two pairs of glasses. You can point out the absolute necessity for a spare pair, which need not be of the same style or value as the first choice. When the glasses are needed only for presbyopia, it is important to explain to the patient that vision will only be clear through them for about 2 to 3 feet. If you do not, you will find, in many cases, they will return and complain they cannot walk about or see across the room as Mrs. Jones can. You will then have to point out that Mrs.

Jones's case is quite different ; she is under forty years of age and one pair of glasses answers every purpose for her.

Don't expect your clients to know anything about their eyes. I assure you they do not ! I always explain the cause of the defective vision ; I tell them what hypermetropia, myopia, and astigmatism mean, and show diagrams. This is wise, as the client will, in turn, explain his condition to his friends, who will almost surely consult you. Do not promise the glasses too quickly, in case there may be unexpected delay ; impress they have to be made specially. They will be appreciated all the more.

I will now deal briefly with the dissatisfied client who has the decency to come back and air his grievance. I like him. It is very important to do everything necessary to satisfy him completely. Often, although he complains about the lenses, you will find it is the *frame* he does not like. Exchange the frame for a different style whenever you suspect your client is not really pleased. Make any and all alterations necessary to the lenses. When you have done all in your power to satisfy, that in some cases is not enough. There are people you will *never* be able to please. Should you return their fees ? Most decidedly I say *NO*. I know of large retail optical firms who always refund money to dissatisfied clients upon demand. I cannot agree

with this. To my mind it is an admission of being in the wrong. I have never done it. The method I have employed has always been to refer the client to an oculist, if necessary pay the fee yourself, or offer to pay half of it. Glaze the spectacles with the oculist's prescription free of further cost, and usually you will find that the further advice has made the patient feel that you have done your best.

*CHAPTER IV*

SALESMANSHIP and showmanship often go hand in hand. A successful optician must be really good as a salesman, and you will often find a little original showmanship in his methods. Elsewhere I have admitted that I consider myself first and foremost a sight-testing specialist. I have stated that 'over-the-counter' sales do not appeal to me. Naturally I am deeply interested in the sale of eyewear in my consulting-room, and I think I may claim to hold my own with most opticians in that respect.

First we will deal with showmanship so far as it concerns our profession. The way you furnish and equip your rooms, and the style of your advertising and window dressing will form a personality of their own. It is your job to impress your clients. We take it for granted you always do your utmost to serve them, but sometimes that is not enough for success. In the world to-day there is a growing desire for new ideas and fresh methods. People realize the strides made in science since 1914; they expect and demand up-to-date methods and equipment. If

you consider the successful professional and commercial men you know to-day, you will find they have something, or do something, others have not, or do not. There is a dentist I know who has a splendid practice. In his surgery are many electrical 'gadgets', most of them, he admitted, but seldom used in practice. Not only do these methods bring patients to the professional man, but they give him a name in his district which could not be bought by mere advertising. I do not want you to confuse these remarks with ordinary 'stunting'; that is a different matter and needs most careful handling. As far as the sight-testing optician is concerned, showmanship may be indulged in, to a limit of course, with success.

It is advisable to purchase as many 'gadgets' for the testing-room as you can afford, and *use them*. There are some very excellent instruments on the market to-day, which you will find most interesting. There was a time when I made a test for colour blindness in every case—not necessary, I agree, but I knew the value of it. Muscle test also should, of course, be taken. Always darken your testing-room before you commence operations. I have had my consulting-rooms painted a dull camera black, ceilings and walls, and black lino on the floors—white enamel furniture and appliances with this, and a clean white coat, will always impress. You

should be careful with regard to the testing-chair. If possible obtain one of the very fine ophthalmic chairs on the market. They are worth every penny they cost, and will do more to advertise you than anything else. If possible have a small porcelain wash basin fitted in one corner of the consulting-room with running water and clean towel. Wash your hands before each test ; this cannot be called 'stunting', but it will have a big effect upon the client.

When the test is over you come to the most important part of the procedure—from your point of view. You become a salesman, and it is for you to extract the best order you can without the possibility of causing dissatisfaction afterwards. I have mentioned elsewhere the demonstrator I have used for torics. If this is not obtainable there is a very simple and effective remedy. Have a rimless finger piece or specs. glazed planos, one eye flat and the other meniscus. The advantages of curved lenses over flat ones are easy to see when shown in this form, and will almost always convince. There is an effective demonstrator for Crookes' lenses (I believe Messrs. Chance Bros. supply it) consisting of an electric carbon lamp and showing how the Crookes' lens absorbs the violet ray. When anti-glare lenses are advisable this demonstrator would probably always sell them.

One point I would impress here : You have

an excellent chance when your client is choosing glasses, and has never worn them before, to sell him a duplicate pair. If properly handled most people will at once see the absolute necessity for a spare pair of glasses. These should be of a different style from the first; you can produce something likely to suit and explain the advantages. At the moment of writing this I find it extremely difficult to sell *one* pair, but this is 1933, and the depression will not last for ever! In past years I have very often sold a duplicate pair after a test.

Referring again to my dislike for 'over-the-counter' sales. A traveller once showed me a preparation for preventing condensation on lenses. I ordered one dozen. This particular traveller called again in three months' time and noticed the box of condensation preventers on my sideboard with only two missing. He pointed this out to me and I admitted I never tried to sell it. I made up my mind from that very moment that I would see if I could sell the article to my clients—really more for fun than anything else. After that day I showed the little tablet to each client when fitting their new glasses, and as they were about to pay for them. I explained what it did and how useful it was, etc., and, believe it or not, I never once failed to collect the extra shilling!

I have attempted in this little work to hand on the benefit of ideas I have tried out, but I remain always steadfast to the firm belief that opticians, qualified by examination, have one sphere only, and that is the testing-room. Sometimes you may be tempted to dabble in side-lines. I have done it, my friend. My advice to you is stick to the trial case, and leave all other considerations to the shopkeepers.



## CHAPTER V

THERE must be many opticians in business on their own account and in a small way who cannot afford to employ assistants. This is all the more unfortunate, as the poor optician in question must spend so many weary hours in his own company. If this lonely gentleman could get an apprentice he would not only relieve himself of the everlasting tie a one-man business entails, but he would bring grist to his mill at the same time. It is an excellent idea. There are always to be found most suitable young men who desire to become opticians. I have passed several apprentices through my hands, and find it a most interesting and helpful procedure. The first step will be to place a properly worded advertisement either under the 'Personal' column or 'Situations Vacant'. I have obtained good results from this.

"Opportunity for splendid career. Qualified sight-testing optician has vacancy for *articled pupil*. Thorough personal tuition and preparation for Exams. Small premium, partly returnable as salary..... Box...."

This advertisement, placed in London dailies, has never failed me. You are entitled to take one hundred guineas premium ; I have never taken less. Your solicitor will draw up a simple form of agreement, for which the apprentice or his parents or guardians will pay half the costs. The term of the apprenticeship can be either two or three years. The salary should be ten shillings per week. When the details are settled and you have your pupil, you must do your utmost to teach and help him. Take his hand and lead him from the very beginning, lecture him in the form of daily talks and make the subject as simple and interesting as you can from the commencement. Obtain an exercise book and give him a daily set of questions, correcting his answers to constitute a record. When his answers are wrong, explain the matter and make sure the lad understands. Give him all the lessons and experience you can in salesmanship, and window dressing, get him on the typewriter and clerical routine.

Soon the boy will be a valuable asset to you, especially when able to undertake small repairs and interview clients. Do not attempt to teach him sight-testing for some months, and then in very easy stages. He will long to do it, but you should hold actual testing at a distance as an objective to be worked for. Allow your pupil necessary time daily for reading, and if he is

taking a recognized course of instruction, allow him time off when necessary to attend college or clinic. I would mention that optical apprenticeship is by no means confined to the male sex. You will find many young ladies just as capable and just as keen to qualify—in fact I have sometimes added the words ‘either sex’ to my advertisements.

I have space here to deal briefly with a different subject—the question of politics. Your general views upon local and national government have got to be considered. Should the optician lock all these in his bosom or should he expound his views? I know there is difference of opinion, and one must, of course, be diplomatic. Personally I have never hidden my political views. I have shown favours in my windows at election times, I have served on committees, and even spoken at meetings. I cannot trace that such a policy has done me any harm, but I do know of much good received by it. There is always the question of offending someone. I grant that, but if clients or prospective clients are so narrow-minded as to boycott you because of your views, one thing *is* certain—the followers of the side or party whose cause you are helping will patronize you all the more. I don’t think you can lose by it. Local government is similar. I will give you an idea here of an advertisement to use at election time. It is an old one of mine,

and should appear in your weekly paper the Saturday before the poll.

ARNOLD'S GLASSES	X
EYESTRAIN	
HEADACHES	

### VOTE RIGHT

Consult :—

NELSON ARNOLD,  
F.B.O.A., F.I.O.,  
*Qualified Optician,*  
BARNES, S.W.13.

and Vote against  
Eyestrain and Headaches.

May I just touch on religion? I would avoid the topic, but I feel I ought to offer advice. There are, most unfortunately, business men and women who will use their religion for commercial gain. I despise them. I have been told, not once, but many times, that I "ought to go to church" to become known and obtain patronage. Isn't it dreadful to contemplate? An individual once told me he visited three different places of worship, of different denominations,

on alternate Sundays for *business reasons*. I do not deny that business *is* to be obtained by such methods, but I prefer to be without it. I go to church, when, and where, I like. To me it is absolutely personal, and very sacred. I would not for one moment allow religion to enter my business for personal gain, neither would I 'hunt with the hounds, and run with the hare'. People's natures vary, you may be different from me, but if you cannot steer a straight course in the commercial waters, and win through upon merit, you have, I contend, chosen the wrong profession.

## CHAPTER VI

I AM going to write a few words about the window of your premises. It is a very important subject. Do you fully realize why premises in good positions are of much higher rental than those 'round the corner'? It is because so many more people pass and because the window has such a much larger field of activity.

When a stranger looks into an optician's window (and they sometimes do!), he should be able to visualize behind it the personality and ability of the man he will entrust his sight to should he walk in for new glasses. It is very vital to dress the window in a proper manner, to create constant attention, and to maintain it. The man who overcrowds his advertisement space will very probably do the same with his window. Everything will be on view, but nothing will be seen. It is best, I am sure, to create a centre of attraction and display there something different and something likely to appeal. Round this some personal advertising or show cards will look nice, but do *not* overcrowd it. Make constant changes and wage frantic war on dust, it is your greatest enemy!

Remove at once soiled or faded articles and keep the whole contents at sparkle pitch.

I advocate placing glazed frames in the window. Opticians, I find, are too fond of empty fittings, but I contend that lenses greatly improve the samples and show them off to better advantage. If you want to gain new clients, you have to impress upon the minds of passers-by the advantages *and style* of the eye-wear you are showing. If you show only 'bread-and-butter' lines such as every optician sells, you cannot expect to sell a duplicate pair for *style's sake*.

I have done very well with attractive electric window signs of the moving or animated variety. They arrest attention, then the contents of the window should hold it. If you have a large window with a fairly low bottom, you might to great advantage engage an attractive lady to be seated in a small chair, with table and reading-lamp by her side, reading a book and wearing nicely fitting glasses to suit. Upon a small easel to one side can be placed a card worded something like this: "This lady is reading in perfect comfort, free from headache and eyestrain, with Brown's specially adapted glasses." Another day the lady can wear a rimless pince-nez and the notice can state: "This lady is able to read and see at a long distance by the aid of Brown's specially adapted bifocal lenses." Another day

our lady friend can sew or knit, each time with a suitable message on the easel. You will find this a very valuable attraction and it will be much talked about, especially if the subject is attractive and does her part well.

Regarding the pricing of the frames you exhibit. Some opticians are against this ; of course in some localities it is not advisable, but generally speaking I advocate it. A neat price ticket, printed in black upon a gold card, will often bring a client inside. The public are rather shy ; many people do not like to inquire the price of an article in a shop window, fearing it will be too expensive to purchase. I certainly advise you to price at least some of the lines you show, and also to give them a name, and when they are solid gold or real shell, say so.

Your window is the bait on the line, through its medium you can induce inquiries, then salesmanship enters into the story, but you must get the people inside first.



## CHAPTER VII

REPAIR work is of the utmost importance to the successful optical business. One can go so far as to say (and I have proved it): "Repairs are the foundations upon which a new business is built."

When a client comes into your premises for a new 'wing' or 'leg' to his or her spectacles there appears before you a future client you may hold for all time. However small the matter may be, treat it always in a business-like and serious way, and *do not overcharge*. You will come against many difficulties, as I have done. You will find some people very hard to please, and at times your patience will be tried to the utmost.

Allow me to quote one or two experiences I have had. A stranger called for a new F.P. spring. He wanted it done at once, and I agreed. I took off the placquet—it was a built-in fitting—thoroughly cleaned all parts, fitted the spring and then removed each lens to adjust the straps, replacing and setting up again. I was about twelve minutes on the job, and really it was nicely done and a credit to me. I handed

it to the client, who carefully inspected my work and inquired the charge. As soon as I requested one shilling and sixpence this man completely lost his reason. He used all the most unnecessary remarks, including 'robbery', and said the piece of wire used was not worth threepence. So fast was his patter I could hardly get a word in; but, after explaining what I had done, I calmly took his F.P. and retired again to my work bench. Then I took off the new spring and returned to the now highly enraged client. I pointed out that I had charged a very fair price, but, as he was not satisfied, I had removed the spring and no harm was done. I then offered him the spring for threepence, adding that the extra one and three was for 'knowing how to put it on'. I do not, of course, advocate this treatment to any client, but I relate it to point out how utterly unreasonable some folks are, and how impossible it is to please them.

There are times when the very spirit of youth within you will rise in anger and disgust at the remarks you will hear from this kind of person. You will have inquiries for the cost of a new lens to replace a broken one; you will quote, whereupon a most terrific "What?" will be hurled at you, and the prospective client will say he can get it so much cheaper elsewhere. This presents an almost everyday problem to

the optician. What should you do? No doubt you are prepared to reduce the estimate by a shilling or so, but how can you do so and retain your dignity?

Another point to bear in mind, if you reduce the charge below your usual one to this stranger, is that he may very easily tell some of your regular good clients, and it will become a password in the district that you will always reduce your charges if pressure is brought to bear. In such cases I have tried to be diplomatic. I have pointed out that the replacement I have just quoted for would be of the best class obtainable and that any lens supplied at a lower price must be an inferior one, also that I can supply a cheaper lens, but certainly not of the standard necessary. In many cases this explanation will succeed, but when the person continues to abuse you, make this little speech, which I have often done. "You asked me for an estimate, I have given you one. If my price is too high, or if you can get the lens elsewhere cheaper, there is no need to argue about it—good-day."

Remember this—the person who will speak to you in the manner indicated above is often better off your books and you are not the only business man he 'knocks down'. If he tells everyone you are expensive or independent, it will probably react as a good advertisement for you. You will be asked to do a lot of minor

repairs and adjustments. There is great scope here. In past years I have always done these jobs free of charge ; I have tightened, straightened, and adjusted the frames and fittings and then cleaned them and placed a lens-cleaner (named) in the case. I consider this a real advertisement. In some cases people will insist on paying. When that happens pass the hospital box and leave it to them.

When taking in repairs such as sides and springs or anything you can do on the premises, never do them at once unless you are really compelled. It is better to ask for even an hour than to rush a job. Also there will be times when you are actually too busy to do these repairs 'on the spot'. Always treat a repair with the greatest respect, and turn it out to the best of your ability.

I have just room here for a little humour. Yes, even optics has its funny side ! You will come across the person who wants a quarter diopetre sphere replaced immediately because he is 'blind without them'.

A recent experience of mine is hard to beat. I had in my window a new line of rather smart shell spectacle cases. A lady, a complete stranger, called and asked to see them. I showed one to her, placed her own spectacles in it to demonstrate, and stated the price. The dear lady then said she had just had her eyes

tested by 'her oculist' in Harley Street and glasses made by 'her optician' in Bond Street; she liked my cases and did I think 'her opticians' would give her one. I said no doubt they would, whereupon, rather to my astonishment, the lady actually asked me to lend her one of the cases to take to Bond Street to show 'her optician'. She promised its return by 'five o'clock', but need I say that case took no bus ride in that old dear's pocket!

I must give you one other warning before I close this chapter. It concerns the person who has a new lens fitted, usually to rimless eyewear, and comes back a few days, sometimes weeks, later, and tells you the lens was found broken in the case the very same day you repaired the glasses. Sometimes these nice truthful people will say the lens actually fell off, broken, when the glasses were on the nose! To avoid such trouble always ask a client to examine a job you have done before he takes it away, and impress upon him that it is in perfect order. The opposite to this client are the very truthful ones who will return and explain what bad luck they have had in breaking their glasses again so soon. I have always admired these people, and they deserve a substantial reduction for the second repair.

### CHAPTER VIII

LITTLE things make big impressions ; small details lead to large till slips ! You will have spare time in which to put into action the many ideas that are sure to present themselves to you ; please remember anything is worth trying—once. When a client recommends a friend, a little courteous acknowledgement of your appreciation will be noted with good results. In such cases I have always forwarded a card the same day. This takes the form of a good quality court card, nicely printed, as follows :—

To M.....

Please accept my sincere thanks for your courtesy and kindness in referring M..... to me.

Yours very truly,

— — —,

F.B.O.A., F.I.O.

BARNES, S.W.13.

This card to be personally filled in by you, not typewritten, and signed. Place in a good

quality envelope and seal; address in your own handwriting. The effect of this upon your client is obvious. In the first place, at first glance, I intended it to appear as an invitation to some function. It is bound to be read and sure to be appreciated. One very good client of mine told me one day he was 'collecting' these cards and that he had already over a dozen of them. Send them to medicos who recommend in the same way as to other clients.

Another 'little' thing that means a lot is the case into which you place the glasses just going out into the world to act as permanent ambassadors for you. It is surely very important to give a case worthy to bear your name, and something the client can expose in public with just a little pride. For a number of years I used chamois lined cases only, in a grey colour. They were unique and distinctive. I am sure money spent upon a really good case, nicely finished, will be a fine investment. Real leather varieties are cheap enough, and for the few extra shillings cost they bear your name with much more dignity and are likely to be envied by friends of your clients. I have also added a label inside every case bearing the Rx number of the client. I can vouch for the usefulness of this. Many times lost spectacles have been returned to me and I have always been able to restore them at once to the owner.

Lens-cleaners are an excellent advertisement if carefully chosen and worded. I most highly recommend their free use both to clients and prospective clients. Place a lens-cleaner in the case of every repair job when you hand it out.

You will find that most of your clients during the daytime are ladies. You will agree with me that people *very* seldom make up their minds on the spur of the moment to have their sight tested. Is it likely that a lady will stop suddenly at your door and decide to enter for a test without having a fixed intention to do so? You will observe the fair sex are almost always prepared to consult you. Noses are carefully powdered and eyelashes and brows well groomed. Even a working woman usually dons her best attire before she enters your portal.

Men are by no means so particular. I have known many keep pipe or cigarette in their mouth alight during a test, and make no attempt to remove headgear. To these you must always address the firm request to remove their cap or hat, while the handing of an ash tray should be a sufficient hint to suspend the furnace; if it is not taken, you must ask them—nicely of course—to put the smoke out.

You are going to hear some wonderful stories, my friend, from some of your clients. I believe a good deal of my own success was due to the patience with which I have listened to all sorts



of family affairs. You will be so frequently told by the patient that his sight would never have 'gone wrong' but for a certain happening. You know perfectly well that his condition is normal presbyopia and could not have been avoided, but do not tell him so; be diplomatic.

Often, especially after a trying day, your patience will be severely tested. There is the client who *will* reply to the question, "Please read the smallest line you can" with the answer, "I can't see it!" Don't bark at him, put your request in an even more simple form. Remember we are not all given equal quantities of grey matter! Some folks like to read the *whole* of the near types aloud. If it pleases them, just endure it; after all there may be parts you do not know off by heart!

## CHAPTER IX

TRAVELLERS are often looked upon as a nuisance. I have known opticians give the instruction "Say I'm out" *very* often when a Knight of the Road calls. My friends with the heavy bags—and sometimes hearts as heavy—cannot accuse me of such action. I can assure you optical commercials are a very decent lot; amongst them to-day one finds many qualified opticians who have taken to the road.

I strongly advise you to see these gentlemen and have a friendly chat; that, at least, costs you nothing. Look at their samples, too. Often this pays well. New lines cannot be seen if you turn the travellers away. I have found it a good policy to look at the samples and make notes of various lines of unusual interest. The success of any business is buying in the right market, and optics is no exception to the rule.

My 'pet' traveller of yester-years would often not open his bag. We would have a long chat together about things in general, and perhaps a cup of tea. One afternoon I well remember this worthy representative of the wholesale department burst forth into song, and gave me

three splendid airs from the testing-chair! Please remember that a traveller is a human being, that they call upon you to be of service, and that courtesy costs nothing.

I advise you to order only what you require; it is a great mistake to overstock; it is better to order up frames at prescription rate than to turn grey when the end of the month comes.

Pity the poor jobber too! His life is not a bed of roses. Just imagine receiving hundreds of 'jobs' by the morning's post, and most of them demanded for the next day! I think the Rx departments are really wonderful places. Look round one when next in Clerkenwell. Make your requirements clear to the jobber and don't ask for the impossible. I used to use a tie-on tally for every job, and so avoid very possible confusion; a cheap manilla bag or envelope is as good, but I can't understand some of those Rx books with sheets of paper only large enough to fold an F.P. in.

I regard the jobbing departments in such high esteem that I say you only have to make your requirements clearly known to receive the exact article you want. You will, of course, check the lenses when the job returns. This is almost unnecessary when dealing with any of the well-known houses. Every job received in my establishment over a period of eight years was checked, either by myself or a member of

my staff. It is amazing to relate that, out of so many thousands, only once did we find a prescription not according to orders. If you become as efficient as that, I shall be proud of you!

It is very wise to have a soldering plant, and most necessary to be able to use it—properly. You cannot expect people to wait two days for a solder repair. If, for any reason, you have no facilities for these jobs, it is a wise move to make arrangements with a jeweller near at hand. You may be fortunate enough, as I was once, to hit upon a really excellent mechanic who will save you no end of work and worry.

I close this chapter with the warning to you, if and when you become principal or manager of an establishment, to inspect personally, and carefully too, every repair before it goes out. Always remember what I have already said—a good optical practice is built up on repair service, and recommendation.

*CHAPTER X*

I HAVE often thought that a beard would be a great commercial asset to me ! A young optician, especially when in practice on his own account, suffers often because of his youth. I do not look so young now, but when I started, I looked even less than my years. Many times people came to me and asked to see Mr. Arnold. When I gently indicated that they were addressing that person they did not disguise their astonishment. " But you are so young " was a common remark for me to hear in those days. It could have become a real drawback ; no doubt it was to a certain extent, but I did my best to adopt elderly ways ! I used to reply that we must all be young at some period of our lives and I was not so youthful as I appeared, also that I was fully qualified by experience and examination to do my job.

I have felt since, on several occasions, that my client was somewhat nervous at trusting the care of his eyes to such a young man. In these cases I have always made the test more carefully than usual, and employed all the gadgets and

showmanship at my command. I have put myself out of the way to convince these clients absolutely that they were safe in my hands, and that my advertising was no idle boast.

To be frank, I do not blame people for taking such a view when a mere youth attends to their refraction. Possibly I should feel the same; the impression comes as a natural impulse that youth must be inexperienced. In the style of your attire and the mode of your operations you can do much to eliminate such an impression.

The best way is to take your work seriously and to make up your mind, from the very outset, that you will show each and every client your actual worth and give of your very best.

You will be at a discount when first you begin unless you have served an apprenticeship. There are many cases of opticians gaining their full qualifications without ever having sold a pair of glasses. Your foremost endeavour must be to inspire confidence and earn appreciation and the recommendation that always comes with it.

I will relate an experience I have never forgotten. Shortly after I opened my consulting-rooms a lady made an appointment by telephone for a test. When she arrived I detected some agitation in her manner, but managed to get her to the testing-chair and take down the particulars.

I was just about to commence the test when she stood up and told me quite frankly she preferred not to go through with it. She explained that her sight was complicated and begged me to understand that she could entrust it only to an experienced man, offering to pay my fee just the same.

I can truthfully say I thought of this incident every day during the next three years, and wrote the lady a courteous letter every six months. One day, just over three years later, I found the lady's name on my appointment book and when she arrived she asked me if I remembered her. She then told me of the excellent accounts she had heard of my ability from numerous of her personal friends and had now no hesitation in asking me to undertake her case. This brought much pleasure to me, and the ultimate result was a good family appointment and a very kind written testimonial from my lady friend, besides much valuable recommendation. It will thus be observed that I had overcome the handicap of youthfulness in this case, and merited patronage, even from the most sceptical person.

When dealing with children and atropine is necessary, it is a wise move to refer them to a local medico, requesting him, on a written note, to administer the drug on your behalf. This not only releases you from responsibility but

## The Young Optician

49

creates good feeling between yourself and the local practitioners. Often also you can refer a case for medical advice, even when you know that a dose of calomel would in all probability put the matter right.



*CHAPTER XI*

THERE exists to-day a vast new community ; we will call them the 'New Poor'. For the most part these people are well-educated gentle-folk, robbed of the luxuries and even some of the necessities of life by the world storm. If you consider the vast number of people who live upon dividends received from investments, and realize how these dividends have dwindled, and in some cases dried up altogether, you will understand the plight of the New Poor.

Such people have got to be catered for. Their education and refined senses would have revolted against the purchase of cheap ready-made clothing and eyewear a few years ago ; now they are driven to patronize the cheapest market, even when needing new glasses. Spectacles and eye-glasses are obtainable at a certain well-known stores. I have spent a good deal of time in watching what happens, and can assure you that I have seen many and many a genuine two-guinea order slip from some optician in these stores. I have handled and inspected the goods supplied, and I am bound to say the value is really high. Most of the lines exhibited

are made in England, and the lenses, of the periscopic variety, are in many instances quite good. Spectacles of every pattern can be purchased, complete with case.

I do not blame the directors of the concern in question and I have no axe to grind with them. Until the day arrives when our legislators wake up to the fact that optics *is* a profession and *must* be placed on a proper status, we can do nothing to prevent the sale of these optical goods.

There is no doubt that the stores I have in mind do affect the business of almost everybody in their area; I am positive of that. People enter with no fixed idea of purchasing any one article. They come out having obtained goods that should be sold them by the grocer, confectioner, ironmonger, stationer, chemist—and optician.

How are we, the qualified opticians of to-day, going to combat this evil? I think I can advise the only, or at least the most effective, means. Your greatest asset is your training and knowledge. This comes far in advance of the quality of the goods you sell. Never forget it, ram it home on every possible occasion. You must rely almost entirely upon your ability to supply specially adapted lenses, specially made to rectify a defect of refraction. You must always point out that cheap ready-made glasses contain

two lenses of equal values, but that few people have two eyes exactly alike. You must explain astigmatism and tell the listener there is no allowance in ready-made glasses for this defect, which is found in 90 per cent of the cases you examine. Certainly it is wise to mention the quality of the goods, and compare cheap eye-wear with the lines you stock which *look* similar. Mention the effect cheap gold-filled or metal frames can have upon the skin and how poison can be taken up by the blood-stream and cause serious trouble. Mention the inflammable nature of the 'horn' spectacles and the possible defects in the lenses, which are probably made of bottle glass. Explain how the optical muscles, always so willing to do their best, are called upon to overcome these defects and thus place an even greater strain upon themselves.

If you will adopt these suggestions, I believe you can educate the public in your locality to the right way of thinking, and you will be doing yeoman work for your profession as well as yourself.

It is fairly well known that I am of the fixed opinion that the wholesale optical trade ought to take part in a national advertising campaign to help the retail opticians throughout this country. I advocated such a step over three years ago, and did my best to induce the leading firms, through their association, to do so, but

with negative results. I am even more convinced to-day that optical sales could be greatly helped, and the long-awaited boom be brought about, if such a scheme were put into operation. Not only could the advertisements tell the public of the great advantages of a proper examination of their eyes by a qualified optician and of the dangers of wearing glasses not actually made up for them, but they could also illustrate and explain the *styles* in modern eyewear and thus create a demand for new lines.

Such a plan, if properly carried out, would help the wholesalers as much as the retailers and surely the optical industry as a whole is big enough and powerful enough to organize itself for the sake of better business and a clearer understanding? Does it not seem remarkable that spectacles and eye-glasses are about the only things one never sees advertised in the great national daily and weekly press to-day? If such commodities as garden gates and dog foods are worthy of national advertising, I am sure spectacles and eye-glasses, used in every household, lend themselves to publicity. Sight-testing opticians have a *lot* to grumble about!

*CHAPTER XII*

THE life of a sight-testing optician is at times very monotonous. When you are busy the time passes quickly, but during the slack hours you will often look out at the sunshine and wish to be released, even for a short spell, from the atmosphere of your consulting-rooms.

It is the same with almost everyone in business. Think of those countless thousands of city workers who leave their suburban homes in the early morning and return in the late evening. They call the place they live in their 'home', but it often impresses me more as a dormitory. The bread-winner sees very little of it; for years he goes every day by the same train, his life is one long routine, and he is almost mechanical. When he reaches home he is often too tired to do more than eat his meal and fall asleep in his chair. Apart from the week-ends, there are thousands of men living like this for fifty out of the fifty-two weeks in the year. Their grateful employers allow them leave of absence for two weeks in the summer season. Thousands carry on like this, at barely a living wage, until youth and middle age have given

place to the winter of life, and, when it is too late, they are pensioned off (if they are lucky) to end their days in retirement.

I think of these problems very deeply and am convinced that such a life is wrong. We were not made to spend the best years literally imprisoned, with little or no time to indulge in those things which would bring happiness and gladness to our souls.

The optician is more fortunate—if he is in practice on his own account. If employed, he is in a very similar plight, and in some cases dare not ask even for a half-day 'off'. This is another reason why the recently qualified optician should exercise great care when choosing his employers. I have one firm in mind which I know to be just and humane. Employed here, a man need not shut the door on the outside world, the conditions are friendly, and the good fellowship always felt. The principal of that firm is a human being. He started in practice in a small way; he used to get up early in the mornings and clean out the premises, even scrub the floors; and in the evenings, after closing, he used to deliver circulars himself. Now that he has reaped the harvest of honest endeavour he remembers his early days, and has compassion on his employees. But there are others, and I know of a firm just the opposite.

I advise young opticians who happen to drift

into employment where their life is demanded as well as their services to revolt against it immediately and seek new positions. Time has a habit of passing very subtly; to-day you are but twenty, to-morrow—as it seems—you are thirty. The good things this life has to offer, and the harmless recreations which make you happy, are yours by right and no man should deprive you of them.

If you are your own master, you can, in optics, find several ways of breaking the tie to your practice. A few years ago I was very run down; pressure of work and ill-health in the home caused a great deal of worry. This is the advice a doctor friend gave me: "Get out every morning from 9 o'clock until 11 or 11.30. Walk, motor, play golf—do anything, but *get out*." I found it was quite easy to do so, for appointments are not usually required or expected in the first part of the mornings.

If you have a reliable assistant or apprentice, you can quite safely leave him in charge until 11 o'clock, at least for two days per week. No sight-testing practice has ever been more personal than mine was; every test was made by myself, and almost every client seen personally. I was able to take my friend's advice and I lost no patients by so doing.

I have always contended that people should acquire the habit of making an appointment to

see their optician ; I have strictly abided by that rule, and it pays well. I was really too busy for many years to see people on the spur of the moment, and in all but exceptional cases I always booked an appointment, or my secretary did for me. When this is done, the address should be taken as well as the name, and I always handed a card with the date and time of the appointment duly filled in, of which I kept a copy.

I had the advantage of living above my consulting-room. This, however, has its drawbacks—for example, one is so apt to rise late in the mornings, and health suffers through missing the journey after breakfast. In many respects, however, a resident optician is fortunate, and I shall never regret deciding to occupy the upper part of my premises. If you do likewise, I recommend you to draw the line between practice and home, just as you would do if miles separated them. When you go upstairs at night forget the practice, and don't open any letters arriving by the last post. Keep well away from the consulting-room on Sundays, try to forget it is so near !

If you reside above your rooms, you will be able to patronize the local shopkeepers. This is very important. I was once talking to a gentlemen's outfitter outside his shop when a man passed the time of day to him. " That's Mr.



Jones," said the outfitter, "and he's got one of my shirts on!" Mr. Jones was a prominent local solicitor, and the outfitter was obviously proud to tell me he enjoyed his custom. It is very wise to deal with local tradesmen, and, more than that, to make yourself known to them generally, and take an interest in the affairs of the town.

To revert to the object of this chapter, I will outline another way by which you can get away from your practice and make good profit by so doing. I refer to country branches. I have had a good deal of experience in this direction, and pass it on for your consideration. I know several opticians disagree, but my own practice proves without question that country branches can be a great success. For eight years I absented myself from my practice every Monday. It became generally known that I could not be seen on that day, but I returned always by 6.30 p.m. and could see any urgent appointments after that time.

I carefully selected little hamlets not more than thirty-five miles from London and made sure they were far enough away from a town to be fairly isolated. I am speaking of a few years ago, but now, I admit, most of these places are served by regular bus routes—more's the pity.

In my own case I selected two villages, both

with populations under 3000, in which I had family connections; this, of course, helps a good deal. I arranged to hire the church room for one day every fortnight, alternate Mondays. I had a board written with a slot to insert a card bearing the date of my next visit. Later I placed a small showcase on the outside wall. I then obtained copies of the voters' list and sent circular letters to every householder. Advertisements were placed in the local paper and Church Magazine. I attended from 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the outcome was a steady average profit of £5 weekly from each place over a period of ten years. In one of these villages I took over £40 in cash between 2.30 and 5 o'clock in 1925, and records show that I never once had a blank day

Apart from the commercial value of these establishments, there is the interest of the visit, the journey by car or train, the lunch at an old inn, and a walk through the beautiful countryside afterwards. You are thus taken from the routine of your practice one day each week, and you will find yourself looking forward keenly to it, and benefiting by the change of atmosphere.

If I could be accused of playing truant every Monday, I can excuse myself by the late hours I spent in my consulting-room every week-day. More often than not it was past 9 o'clock when

I locked up. The best hours were always between 5 and 8 o'clock, as is generally the case in the suburbs and provinces. I realize conditions are very different in the cities and West End of London. Opticians working in these parts may be quite unable to absent themselves in the mornings. I am sorry for them, but still contend that even in these localities, a man may soon discover the really slack periods and take advantage of them by leaving his assistant or manager in charge.

We must apply the old maxim 'Sauce for the goose, etc.', before leaving this subject. An occasional half-day or even a few hours 'off' will be very greatly appreciated by your assistants. There will be times when there is really nothing particular to be done, the sun will be shining and you will not want to go out. Send your assistant or apprentice off for a few hours, tell him to inhale the scent of the turf into his nostrils and allow the ultra-violet rays to reach his forehead. If your assistant is a football 'fan', try to be human; whenever possible give him a couple of hours off duty to shout his team home.

I was blessed with a very exceptional assistant, and to him I owe so much of the success my business attained. I always tried to consider him, and he reciprocated in a manner which often amazed me. Many times this young man

stayed until past 10 p.m. working and helping me, and I never had a complaint. After some years I took him absolutely into my confidence, and never had cause to regret it. The vital rôle of an employer should be to study human nature, to put himself in the other fellow's shoes, and make conditions as happy and amicable as possible. The respect, even affection, to be obtained by these methods very highly repays, and such personal satisfaction is not to be bought.

If I were the principal of a large optical practice, with dozens of branches, I would pay regular visits to the staff for the express purpose of discussing their own personal affairs. On these visits I would not dwell upon business, but would seek their confidence respecting their own little troubles and worries, and give advice and help whenever possible. I would thus hope and expect to make my employees happy at the very sight of me, instead of their experiencing that dread which I know is felt in many quarters when the 'boss' is expected.

There are principals of large concerns who visit their managers for one purpose only—a general 'blowing up'. They do not express pleasure or satisfaction when things are right, but dive into all matters which have been unfortunate, and make their employees generally miserable. They never ask a single question

regarding the personal affairs of the staff, or even inquire about their health. Such employers can never gain the full amount of service from the staff, and they lose altogether that fellowship and respect which they could so easily enjoy. Moreover, they are failing miserably in their duty to mankind, and their selfish outlook, although it may enrich their pockets, will not gladden their souls or add one iota to the happiness we could all share, even if one of us is more fortunate than the other.

## CHAPTER XIII

You will spend many hours, my friend, as I have done, sitting at your desk—waiting. You will see the people going past your door. You will realize that some of them need your services while you will badly need their orders. What is the link between you, the qualified sight-testing expert sitting there in your consulting-rooms, and these people with defective vision now passing by? Advertising—that is the link. I have had a great deal of experience in this respect, I have learnt much, and I feel qualified to offer advice.

We agree upon the important fact that you *must* advertise. Let us look into the science of it, and, believe me, it *is* a science. The obvious methods will be easy to follow; newspaper displayed advertisements are very, very common. You buy space, be sure you *use* it to the best advantage. I believe in newspaper advertising for opticians. I have done much of it, in all possible forms. I submit to you the *personal* appeal as the best. A few simple facts will be more use to you than a space overcrowded with details of everything you sell and all you can do.

I will illustrate here two types of advertisements, the first is from the man, obviously inexperienced, who desires to make full use of his four inches double-column space.

P. J. SMART, X.Y.Z., R.S.V.P., etc., etc.,  
*Larkville's own Optician.*

Spectacles of every description at low prices. Reading glasses, barometers, repairs done on the premises.

*Note.*—P. J. Smart is the *only* qualified optician in High Street, Larkville. Make him your eye man. Note address : 6, HIGH STREET, LARKVILLE (Opposite Jones's Furniture Stores).

---

Artificial Eyes in Stock.

Now this Mr. Smart is a bit too smart. Probably he *is* a good optician, but would his advertisement appeal? He advertises all he can do and all he can sell, gets one in on the opposition (most undesirable) and gives a free advertisement to the business opposite! Suppose Mr. Smart had used his space thus :—

Eye-strain causes headaches. Small errors of refraction are often responsible. Scientifically adapted glasses correct the cause and cure the complaint. Consult :—

PERCY SMART, X.Y.Z., etc.,  
*Sight Testing Optician*  
*(by examination),*

6, HIGH STREET, LARKVILLE.

---

Accuracy assured.

Here we have a clean-cut statement, something definite to impress. This is followed by the name and address, and please note the christian name in full, not merely initials. This is a valuable point. If you always use and sign your christian name, it will have a most advantageous effect. If your christian name is unusual, so much the better ; but let us have it, even if it is William or Henry. The public will not commit initials to memory, but the full name will always be stated and thought of if you impress it.

The advertisement outlined above would be made still more impressive by the insertion of a block, which in this case might depict a person with hand to forehead. I am a great believer in illustrated advertisements, and have always employed blocks whenever necessary.

If newspaper displayed advertising is to be employed, you *must* be consistent. It is useless to take a space of varying size and shape every now and then. If you cannot afford a regular weekly space, take it fortnightly or even monthly, but be regular and change the copy. You have much to say, but do not say it all at once. For instance, one week you can mention bifocal lenses, with block ; another week the advantages of shell eyewear, and another you can give publication to a testimonial, etc., etc. Keep a scrap book, and paste *every* advertisement in it



with date and name of press. Try to introduce style into your advertising, keep off the beaten track as much as you can, be original, but be truthful!

You will be offered dozens of other mediums for your advertisements; my advice is to consider the possible results very carefully before you take space. I admit I have wasted a lot of money by being 'talked into' a space, sometimes against my better judgment. It is always good to keep your name before your public, but many of the mediums offered to opticians are absolutely useless.

Circulars are our next consideration. Some optical firms rely almost entirely on the distribution of circulars by men employed for the purpose. My opinion of this form of advertising is rather an open one. I know, from personal experience, that it *does* bring results, and in some cases could be claimed as the life blood of a business. All depends upon the style of the 'bill'. My ideal circular is printed on a semi-art paper in two colours with an illustration, and on *one side only*. The wording must be short and sweet. An overcrowded circular cannot appeal. We must not expect a householder to pick a 'bill' off the mat and sit down to read it carefully word for word. We must get our impression at first glance, and if that is arresting, it *may* be read.

My objections to circulars are as follows : (1) The difficulty of finding really reliable distributors ; (2) The obvious fact that many never get past the housemaid ; (3) The absence of a personal touch ; (4) The fear of 'clashing' with many other circulars so frequently in the running.

A really reliable billman was recently delivering for me. He brought me back dozens and dozens of other circulars, from furniture stores and from another optical firm which he had found just lodged between the letter-plate, hopelessly 'screwed' up and ruined ; in many cases several were found in the same house.

This reminds me of a 'funny' story, but not so funny from the advertiser's point of view.

First neighbour : "That's a good bonfire you have, Mrs. Brown."

Second neighbour : "Yes, my husband has a job delivering circulars !"

I now come to the circular letter—to my humble mind by far the best medium possible for opticians to employ. I write from experience. Some years ago, when my capital was smaller than my ambition, I used to write, in freehand, dozens of personal circular letters with pen and ink. Here follows a suggested form :—

*Dear Sir,*

*May I be permitted to beg a personal favour? I realize that you may be requiring the services of a qualified sight-testing optician at some date in the immediate future. I want to ask for an*

*opportunity to examine your eyes, and permission to undertake the correction of any errors existing at the present moment. It is of the highest importance that only those fully qualified by examinations and experience should be entrusted with the care of such a precious possession as the organ of sight. I offer myself to you as such a person. I have made a complete study of my profession and hold the Diploma/s of \_\_\_\_\_ which is/are the hallmark of optical efficiency in this country. My equipment, including as it does the most up-to-date appliances, is at your service. May I look forward to the pleasure of an early visit when we can fully discuss the present needs of your eyes, and the best means of supplying them?*

*Assuring you of my personal attention at all times.*

*Yours faithfully,*

---

Now what would be the impression upon a person receiving such a letter? You must *always* look at that aspect. The letter is a personal one, addressed to a particular person in pen and ink, stamped, and sealed. It cannot be ignored. You are absolutely certain, if that person is alive, he will open your letter. Since it is hand-written he *must* read at least the opening sentence. The effect upon the reader of such a letter, I contend, is a most impressive one. Is it not most unusual for a man to write personally a circular letter? Does it not assure *absolute* personal attention and care? This method is slow, but *very* effective.

I am convinced the postman is the best advertiser you can employ. If funds do not permit of the sealed letter, send the halfpenny one by all means, with a card or some *personal* literature enclosed.

Have you ever realized that your client's interest in you is greater when he receives his new glasses than at any other time? If he has never worn glasses before, there is the novelty of it; in any case the new glasses will be very much in his mind. Two days after a new client has called for his glasses, send a letter, a short one, either typed or hand-written. Begin it with the hope that he is finding comfort and assistance from your work and express the pleasure you have had in fitting him. Point out that your interest does not end when the account is paid, but goes on afterwards, and state that your service includes all adjustments to the frames and re-examination of the sight, etc. End with the appreciation you will feel by his kind recommendation. Enclose an account, receipted if paid. This I have always done, and I firmly believe in it. People keep receipts.

Word it like this:—

*John Smith, Esq.,*

*Professional attendance and pair London made  
real Tortoiseshell Spectacles, fitted with specially  
adapted Meniscus (curved) lenses, for Presbyopia,*

£5 5 0

*With compliments and thanks.*

If the account is unpaid, a cheque should soon follow. You may think all this entails too much clerical work. I have been a worker, you can be the same—you *must* be. In business nothing should be too much trouble. Your day-book and till slips will tell their own story and your labours will be richly rewarded.

Why should I tell you these closely guarded 'stable secrets'? My friend, my object is really to help you. I feel, although still a young man, I may have passed the zenith of my career. I have been caught up in the world storm. It is 1933, we live in a new era, conditions have never been like this before. I have been happy, very happy, in my practice. I desire to show you the way to such happiness, in the hope you will never encounter the misfortunes I have met, but that the future will hold forth prosperity and will see the advancement of the profession I love so dearly and have tried to serve with all my zeal.

To you, the young optician of to-day, we pass the banner of our dignity. Carry it high before you; your forefathers have done much spade work, the ground is fertile now for your seeds. May your harvest be a golden one!