A HINT TO THE PRESBYOPIC RETINOSCOPIST

To the Editor of The British Journal of Ophthalmology.

Dear Sir,—This note deals with a commonplace subject. How does a presbyopic, and especially an astigmatic presbyopic retinoscopist, obtain a sharp view of the shadow and, at the next moment, decipher the number of the trial lens he is using or requires to use, or make memoranda on note book or case-sheet?

My own experience is this. I have worn cylinders since early in professional life, and in due time sphero-cylinders in bifocal form. Eventually it came about that if I employed my ordinary bifocals for retinoscopy the shadow was not sharply defined with either the distance or the near portion and, in addition, the line of junction was constantly coming in the way. If no glasses were worn the case was worse, because neither the shadow nor the lens numbers could be clearly seen, while if a note were possible to write probably it could not be read when required. Some fifteen years ago the combination of presbyopia and astigmatism became so troublesome, at a time when retinoscopy formed a very large part of my work, that I had to get over the difficulty somehow or other. This was done by means of a special pair of retinoscopy glasses. The right lens is single and designed exactly to focus the shadow at my own working distance and is altered in strength as required by the years. The left lens is bifocal for distance and near. One might suppose that this arrangement would prove uncomfortable for all purposes other than retinoscopy, but, in my own case at any rate, this has not been such as to outweigh the great advantages of being able to do the retinoscopy and to see to write and read without changing glasses. Headaches have not been caused to any appreciable extent. Naturally, should it be necessary to examine an eye, or anything else, critically, with binocular vision, one must change glasses but, in the course of say, a morning’s refraction the occasional change required is as nothing to the repeated change which is otherwise necessary.

Yours truly,

Ernest Thomson.

Stirling.