


WHAT A

By W. HAROLD BLEAKLEY

The Echo is grateful to W. Harold Bleakley and Hammermill Paper Company for permission to use this article.



Have you thanked God today that you can see? You will—we'll guarantee you—after reading this talk which Mr. Bleakley recently presented before the Hammermill Safety Committee. The reaction to the talk was so instantaneous and powerful that the Safety Department received numerous requests—including one from Board Chairman Norman W. Wilson—that it be published for all Hammermillites to read. One thing sure. You'll never forget this article—and you'll think twice before gambling with your eyes.

I WAS sitting here thinking. Thinking about the difference between you who can read this article and myself who cannot. You can see. I am hopelessly, totally blind. I think one of the differences lies in the fact of seeing and what seeing does to you—what it enables you to do. You are reading this article because you can see it. I would have to have someone hand it to me, and unless it were printed in Braille, they would have to read it to me also.

Seriously, the fact that you can see is a tremendous thing. Let's look at that a little bit further. You get up in the morning, you come down to breakfast of red tomato juice, yellow eggs and golden brown toast. The sight of that food, just the color of it alone, stimulates your appetite and makes life a little more worth living. After breakfast you climb into your car and start down the road through familiar scenes that you recognize. You pull into the parking lot at work and go into the mill. The faces are familiar. You see where you are going. You go to your department. You see what you are looking at—it's routine. You do it every day you do your job.

After your day of work is over, you climb into your car to go home. You sit down at the dinner table. On the table are white potatoes, brown meat and green peas.

After dinner you turn to the evening paper or maybe you go over to a neighbor's house to play

canasta or bridge. Or, better still, you go to a movie. There you have the privilege of sitting and watching the silver screen for a couple of hours. You come out feeling as great a lover as the movie romeo was and wishing that your wife thought so too—but that is part of life.

You go home. You are ready for bed, but as you turn over to go to sleep, I wonder how many times you just take a moment to thank God that you have been able to live one more day with sight. To you, seeing is routine.

Now let's suppose tomorrow you open your eyes just as you have every morning since you can remember. You come down to breakfast to your red tomato juice, yellow eggs and golden brown toast. After breakfast you climb into your car and go to work.

For some reason you have to go to another part of the mill. Just as you pass a machine something hits you. You never will know what it was. They carry you out.

Now this isn't something that happens once in a while. It happens every day. In Pennsylvania there are 30,000 blind people—and in the U. S. 260,000. Even more important is the fact that there are some 26,000 people in this country who one year from today will be blind. There is nothing wrong with their eyes at all; approximately 75% don't even wear glasses and never have; but still they will be blind one year from today.