

THE FACTORS OF  
SHORTHAND SPEED

*By David Wolfe Brown*

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THE FACTORS  
OF  
SHORTHAND SPEED;

OR  
HOW TO BECOME A STENOGRAPHIC  
EXPERT.

A Book of Practical Aids and Suggestions to the Student,  
the Teacher, and the Young Reporter.

BY  
DAVID WOLFE BROWN

Late Official Reporter, U. S. House of Representatives;  
Author of "The Mastery of Shorthand," "The Learner's Needless  
Burdens," "The Hand and Its Handicaps," "What Has  
Half a Century Done for Shorthand?" "The  
—Rationale of Phrasing," etc.

42700

1910  
THE GREGG PUBLISHING COMPANY  
New York Chicago

"We are making in office and court and legislative hall, the reputation and the future of shorthand and reporters. If we do well, we shall be honored and well paid; if not, the reverse. Whatever adds to our skill and encourages us all, is desirable. Friendly contests in skill keep alive that 'enthuslastic perseverance which is often mistaken for genius.' I believe in all things which make us better reporters and educate people as to what a stenographer ought to be able to do."—Fred Irland.

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"The race of the accomplished stenographer after, or rather with, the rapid and cultivated speaker, is one of the most interesting spectacles which can engage the attention of the mind. There is an indescribable exhilaration in the contest. *Ce n'est pas la Victoire que fait la joie des noble coeurs; c'est le Combat.*"—Eugene Davis.

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

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“The Factors of Shorthand Speed” has long been regarded as a shorthand classic. Since its author died, the book has been in great demand, and copies of it have been at a premium. We consider ourselves fortunate in having been able to purchase the copyright from the heirs of Mr. Brown, thereby being enabled to place this helpful and inspiring book in the hands of students and writers of shorthand.

While much of the advice contained in “The Factors of Shorthand Speed” applies to the peculiarities of the style of shorthand most in vogue at the time Mr. Brown acquired the art, and, in fact, up to the time the book was first published, there are enough helpful suggestions of a general nature to well repay perusal by writers of any system. Not a line in the original book has been changed, and the only addition is in the form of occasional footnotes containing comments of an explanatory nature.

THE GREGG PUBLISHING COMPANY.

*New York, June 1, 1910.*

5-13-28  
BM  
Sackel, 15, 1923





## INTRODUCTORY.

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### "The Speed Secret"

It is a sad fact that many a student, after devoting months to the study of an art which temptingly offers itself as a system of swift writing, finds himself unable to use the art with even the rapidity of longhand. Other students, somewhat more successful, fail after long continued efforts to obtain amanuensis speed. Still others, possessing for months or years the skill of the office stenographer, find themselves constantly baffled in their attempts to follow some of the easiest of public speakers. The young shorthand writer, aspiring to "speed," and perhaps working hard to secure the much-coveted prize, feels often as if there must be some "secret" which others have found, but which has eluded his own patient search.

Appealing to this eager desire for the "speed secret," there appear from time to time men who are ready "for a consideration" to communicate some "short and easy" method of re-

moving the ponderous obstacles that block the young stenographer's path. While I write, there lies on my desk a pamphlet purporting to come from an "official reporter," and attractively styled "The Speed Secret." A part of the precious information which this pamphlet offers to the world for the paltry sum of fifty cents, is the following:

"Good speed practice for the hand is to write the figure three as rapidly as possible. You will be surprised to find how few threes you can make the first minute, and equally surprised to find how quickly practice increases speed. The sustained precision of hand required to make a couple of hundred threes rapidly is just what is required for shorthand."

But the "speed secret" is not always offered at so low a price as fifty cents. There lies before me another version of the "speed secret," which (though comprised in two typewritten pages) has been sold to many a "speed" seeker for five dollars. The author's advice in this case covers but two points: First, copy over and over again and then repeatedly write from dictation, some of the published specimens of the author's shorthand; second, take care that the dictation is al-

ways about five words a minute slower than the rate at which you can write!

Another author undertakes to show "how great a gain may be realized by writing shorthand with both hands simultaneously!" "It is evident," he says, "that if we can write 100 words per minute with the right hand, and 90 with the left, we can write 190 words per minute, provided we can unite the capacity of the two hands. That is accomplished by employing each hand to write each alternate word of a passage. For example, 'To be contents his natural desire.' 'To' may be written with either hand; but we will suppose it is written with the left hand. A little in advance 'be' may be written with the right hand; and in advance of this, 'contents' with the left; then 'his' with the right; 'natural' with the left hand; and 'desire' with the right hand."

Unfortunately this author does not state that he or any one else has ever been able to reduce this scheme, so beautiful in theory, to actual practice.

Sometimes the shorthand student, disappointed again and again in his efforts to write rapidly, says to himself, "My hand will move only so

fast, and not fast enough; I must make my head save my hand; I will learn more word-signs and other contractions." Accordingly he sets to himself the task of cramming his memory with hundreds and hundreds of arbitrary abbreviations. And too often the result is only renewed disappointment and discouragement. Or he may say, "I do not phrase enough; phrases are great time-savers; I must apply myself untiringly to the study of phrase-lists and phrasing rules." So he eagerly buys, and patiently tries to master, any collection of "lightning phrases" that may be alluringly offered to ambitious students like himself. But too frequently, after industrious weeks and months devoted to the study of phrasing, the longed-for increase of speed does not appear.

At another time the student may say, "My shorthand system is not brief enough; I must discard it and learn another." Or, reduced to a still more despairing condition, he may reproach himself with the reflection, "I have no natural adaptation for learning shorthand; stenographic success may be reached by others, but not by me. I may as well abandon the study on which I have expended so much time and effort."

In view of such difficulties and discouragements, is it any wonder that weary months and even years are frequently spent by the aspiring young stenographer, with very little result in the way of speed gained, although he spares in the pursuit neither study nor labor? In attempting the by-no-means-easy task of dealing with these various phases of the student's perplexity and disheartenment, I have no pretentious "speed secret" to impart as a simple and sovereign solution of every student's difficulties. In order to become a rapid writer, the young stenographer must comply with a number of conditions which cannot be communicated in a few sentences, or a few pages. Mistaken methods of study and practice are to be pointed out and corrected. Good habits are to be cultivated, bad habits to be unlearned. Tasks are to be undertaken which may involve much time and labor. There are, too, matters apparently trivial to be pressed upon the student's attention, because nothing can be trivial which contributes to his final success. If this book shall serve its intended purpose, it will enable many a baffled and desponding learner to discover the "secret" of his failure, and will place his feet on the path

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that leads to the coveted goal. It will seek to set guide-posts along his course, so that he need not go astray. It will point out prevalent mistakes and wrong habits. It will give direction and advice for their avoidance or correction. It will seek to anticipate and fully answer every question that an eager, ambitious learner might wish to ask. In short, it will aim to teach him how to attain—not without labor, but with no wasted labor—the highest speed that his education and natural faculties fit him to reach.

### “Can I Ever Become a Speedy Writer?”

I am not charlatan enough to promise to every reader of these pages a speed of 200 or 250 words a minute. In the shorthand profession, as elsewhere, Pope's words are true:

“Some are, and must be, greater than the rest.”

But every learner who will faithfully follow the methods here pointed out, may expect a decided *increase* of shorthand speed. To what speed-altitudes the pursuit of these methods may finally carry him depends partly upon his dogged perseverance as a student, and partly upon his natural adaptation for the stenographic profession. In this, as well as in other branches of study, the student's capacity can be deter-

mind only by a fair trial. Such a trial he should be willing to give, in justice to himself and the subject. And the period of this trial must not be too short. The final measure of his success cannot be judged by the progress attained during a few weeks or months. And even though a particular student may not have that natural adaptation which will qualify him to become a "shining light" in the reporting profession, is it not worth his while to gain all attainable speed by learning to do in the right way things he has been doing wrongly—by learning to practice according to the best methods, instead of the worst? Supposing he can write at present but 80 words a minute, is it not worth his while to attain 120, 140 or 160, even though he may never reach 200, 225 or 250? Should he not use reasonable effort to make out of himself as a shorthand writer all that can be made? In the fruits of this effort, he may find the satisfaction of a reasonable ambition, as well as a decided increase of his wage-earning capabilities.

### **"What Shorthand System Should I Learn?"**

The most important prerequisite for becoming a speedy writer is that the shorthand system selected shall be capable of high speed.

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While theorists and pretenders are flooding the market with "new and easy" methods, many of which are not fit for amanuensis work, much less for reporting, the peril of a mischoice on this point overhangs every learner. In rare cases a man of extraordinary talents may do excellent reporting by means of a poor shorthand system; but this simply shows the power of genius to do its work with tools intrinsically imperfect. The ordinary stenographic student cannot afford to apply himself to the study of an inferior system, with the probability that his time and labor will be saved.

It is highly important that the learner should select a system which he may contentedly write without change for the remainder of his life. Many shorthand students take up one system after another, thus wasting precious time, and necessarily failing to become rapid writers; for rapid writing depends largely upon well-settled habits. The learner should choose a system that he can "tie to." The safe rule is to select a system which is written by a large number of practical reporters, and the text-books of which emanate from practical men. In essaying a well-trying system, expounded by men who have successful-



ly used it, the learner can scarcely go astray. He should be especially on his guard against systems invented by mere theorists, who have never demonstrated by their own practical work the value of their inventions.\*

In deciding the merits of rival systems, all arguments founded on theoretical considerations should be discarded. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The touchstone to be applied to a shorthand system is comprised in the questions, Has its author successfully reported with it under difficult and exacting conditions? Have any considerable number of others ever used it in the same way? It must never be forgotten that the successful use of a shorthand system by one man or a few men, does not prove its adaptation to successful use by the generality of students.\*

And a wise aspirant to shorthand skill will give no weight to the certificates, however numerous, of persons who testify to the marvelously short periods of time within which, by the practice of a particular system, they have quali-

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\*In all fairness it should be noted that the system written by Mr. Brown was invented by Isaac Pitman, who was admittedly "a mere theorist." The "safe rule" and the "touchstone" recommended by Mr. Brown, if applied to the Pitman system when it was published, would have excluded it from consideration.—*The Publishers.*

fied themselves for amanuensis work. A system brief enough for taking ordinary office dictation may be far too cumbrous for anything like rapid reporting. I have met some unfortunate stenographers who, having entered upon the practice of an amanuensis system in office work, have found themselves afterward in this sad plight: with an ambition to become reporters, they must either regretfully renounce that ambition, or they must for a considerable time give up their daily source of income, while they laboriously forget an amanuensis system, and, beginning shorthand afresh, learn a system adequate for keeping pace with rapid public speaking. For a person who hopes ever to become a reporter, it is the poorest kind of economy to spend time upon any amanuensis system, however glittering its promises of speedily giving amanuensis skill.

Especially should the student beware of systems which are attractively offered as "new and easy." Their pretended novelty is generally the revamping of ideas that have been long ago tried and discarded. Their "ease" arises from the meagerness of their material and their insufficiency for the work of verbatim reporting. Any shorthand system that promises to the pupil success in a remarkably short time is *prima facie* a fraud. No human being ever acquired with very little labor the art of stenographic reporting.

## PREPARATORY SHORTHAND TRAINING.

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A proper system having been selected, it is all-important that the student should make no mistake in his methods of study and practice. If possible, he should seek the guidance of a thoroughly competent teacher, who will stimulate and encourage him, and save him from erroneous habits or methods. The associations and surroundings of a good school are vastly helpful.

But the would-be learner of shorthand should be carefully on his guard against teachers who promise to accomplish wonderful results in a very short time. If unable to secure the services of a competent, conscientious teacher, the student should, if possible, induce some friend or friends to pursue the study along with him. In this way interest will be better maintained, and improvement more rapidly made, than by solitary application.

**The Foundation Must Be Well Laid.**

A serious and often fatal mistake made by the majority of learners is that, in their eagerness to reach the advanced portions of the system—"to write as reporters write"—the rudimentary principles are studied too hurriedly and superficially. If the fundamental abbreviating rules, in accordance with which a majority of the words of the language are always to be written, should be skimmed over in the "hop, skip and jump" fashion of too many learners, the result cannot but be disappointing. By dwelling upon these word-building principles until they become instinctively familiar, the learner is not delaying, but is hastening, his acquisition of reporting speed. A person is a good or a bad stenographic student, and ultimately a good or a bad reporter, in proportion as he masters, or fails to master, these fundamental abbreviating rules. There may be many things in his text-book that he can afford to "skip," but none of these foundation principles must be slighted. The prime qualification of a good stenographer is that, when pressed for speed, he shall be able to write readily, and with at least approximate correctness, any ordinary English word, though it may be of

difficult construction and he may never have written it before. The ability to do this arises from a thorough familiarity with those principles to which the student is introduced during the first few months of his study. Startling as it may seem to some who think that the whole or the principal strength of a shorthand system lies in its "advanced reporting expedients," I affirm that when the student, by faithful elementary study, has acquired the power of promptly writing new words according to principle, the most laborious and the most valuable part of his reporting equipment has been acquired. The matters that remain to be learned—a certain number of logograms, a certain number of distinctions between words by differences of outline or position, a certain amount of phrase knowledge—these will require far less application, and, so far as not acquired, may be more safely dispensed with, than any part of the fundamental knowledge and ability which have thus been mastered. It is this familiarity with fundamental word-building principles that enables the accomplished reporter to write new and strange words without loss of time and without getting "rattled." These new and

strange words he is constantly liable to meet till the last day of his reporting life.

### **Some Things "Speed Practice" Cannot Do.**

Let it be remembered that misnamed "speed practice" has no magical power to fill gaps in rudimentary study. Rules never mastered singly can never be applied promptly when called for in combination. Nor can "speed practice" give agility of hand so long as a hesitating and half-recollecting mind cannot promptly supply the hand with the material upon which agility might be developed.

The student must be especially warned against slighting or omitting those principles of the system which, as he may think, will be rarely called for. If called for at all, however rarely, they need to be as familiar as any other part of the system. The failure to have them at one's fingers' ends may at some critical moment cause a mortifying "break-down."

Teachers and pupils too often content themselves with a superficial study of the "vowels." Misled by the fact that the "reporting style" is largely an unvoalized style, that the vowels, being rarely needed by the reporter, will be at a

certain stage of practice dropped in large degree by the learner, teachers and pupils too often assume that a slight or hesitating knowledge of "vocalization" will suffice. There can scarcely be a more lamentable and disastrous error. The experience of every reporter in regard to "vocalization" is similar to that of the Texan in regard to his revolver: "he does not often want it, but when he wants it, he wants it bad." Every reporter knows that, though he seldom inserts vowels, he must be able to insert them instantaneously when new and strange words require them. The stenographer, however diligent, has only half mastered his task, if he has not mastered the art of instantaneous vowel-placing.

#### **Neat Writing an Imperative Need.**

It hardly need be said that the student should aim from the start to write neatly, and especially to observe the distinction between light strokes and heavy. This distinction, which is so great a help toward legibility, can be kept up even in rapid writing, if the habit of observing it be established by careful practice in the beginning. However hard it may be to restrain the premature eagerness of the pupil for

“speed,” and however difficult to induce him to execute his characters slowly enough to insure their correct form, inclination and thickness, this is a requirement which cannot be waived, if, when he becomes a practicing stenographer, he is to read his notes with facility and certainty.

**“Make Haste Slowly,” But Don’t Dawdle.**

Yet, while undue haste is to be discouraged, especially the haste which induces superficial, instead of thorough, study of the rudiments, it is important that the student should not acquire during his early practice a sluggish habit of hand and mind. The maxim, “Make haste slowly,” so often pressed upon beginners in shorthand, may be seriously misunderstood and misapplied. There being in the student’s early exercises no pressure for speed, he feels that, with abundant leisure, he may take his own time in pondering and hesitating. Thus there may grow up a dawdling habit of mind, unless even the beginner is urged, not to a hasty, but a prompt decision. So, too, being instructed to shape his characters carefully and to “think nothing of speed,” the student too often acquires, if I may



so express it, a drawling style of execution. Each stroke is traced or drawn with painful slowness. Thus there may be too much of leisurely deliberation in thinking what is to be written, and too finical or over-scrupulous care in writing it. It is therefore in many cases advisable, or even necessary, to put a live coal on the back of the tortoise—to remind even the beginner that shorthand is an instrument for writing fast, which implies mental and manual quickness. The teacher, while seeking to make accurate shorthand writers, must not allow learners to acquire a dawdling habit of mind and hand—a deliberateness, stiffness and preciseness of style entirely out of place in following a speaker.

### **Off-Hand Word-Writing.**

As a means of averting sluggish habits of mind and hand, and as a most important discipline in other respects, nothing can be more beneficial to the student than to write off-hand from dictation, words upon which he has had no previous practice, but which can be correctly written in accordance with the principles he is learning or is supposed to have mastered. These exercises cannot be too copious, if the words be

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properly chosen. The student of course should not be called upon to write any word whose proper outline is constructed according to principles yet to be acquired, or any word for which a word-sign is subsequently provided. As the learner proceeds with the study of the principles, these dictation exercises should be adapted to the successive stages of his progress. The words dictated may call into play, not one principle alone, but several principles already familiarized. Sometimes a single word may illustrate two or three abbreviating rules.

### **Reporting Habits Should Begin Early.**

If all the common words which may be written by the application of the given principle be introduced under that principle as practice-words, the student, besides mastering the principle, acquires a prompt command of many common outlines, and thus gradually and with little effort he accumulates a "reporting vocabulary." Moreover, this species of practice, early begun and faithfully continued, cultivates the faculty of prompt decision, and prepares the student from the start for what he is finally to do—to hear and write simultaneously. It nurtures, too,

the spirit of self-reliance, pricelessly valuable to the stenographer, who should be so educated that when an uncommon word is to be written, he may attack it fearlessly, not stopping to inquire hesitatingly and helplessly, "What outline does my text-book or my shorthand dictionary give?"

This dictation practice upon each principle in its turn should be so thorough that any word calling for the application of that principle, may be written without a particle of hesitation, though it may never have been written before. Indeed, unhesitating promptitude of execution within the domain of the principle undertaken to be acquired, should from the start be the test as to whether the principle has been mastered, and whether the student is making healthy progress.

Of course, in thus writing words off-hand from dictation, the student must not allow himself to be pushed into executing the shorthand characters badly. At this stage he is not to expect of himself much manual facility. The object to be sought is the prompt action of the mind, with ready (not necessarily rapid) action of the hand—the avoidance of that serious loss from which

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beginners and even advanced students so commonly suffer—the painfully-prolonged gap between hearing and writing—the time-consuming pause while the hand awaits the decision of the mind.

This dictation practice should by no means dispense with the more deliberate writing of words from ordinary print, or the copying of symmetrical shorthand in order to train eye and hand to correctness of form. Words previously written from dictation may be carefully written without dictation pressure, in order that errors committed in dictation practice may be corrected, and that the student may not form the habit of writing carelessly and illegibly.

It is desirable that the writing of disconnected words or any other single line of practice should not be carried to such a point as to become monotonous. Specially-constructed sentence-exercises should be introduced as early as practicable; and the memorizing of useful word-signs may proceed gradually from the start.

In these preliminary stages of his shorthand education, the student should aim to acquire those correct writing habits—the proper holding of the pen, the right position at the desk, etc.

—upon which his ultimate speed as a writer may largely depend.

### Memorizing of Word-Signs, Etc.

It is highly important that, whatever the student undertakes to memorize, should be memorized thoroughly. From half-recollection comes hesitation; and from hesitation comes loss of speed. In order that everything undertaken in the way of memorization may be thoroughly done, the student should make it a rule not to attempt to learn more than a little at a time, and to learn that little well. Especially in the study of the word-signs, most students undertake to learn too many at once. It cannot be too often repeated that in shorthand, whatever needs to be memorized at all, needs to be so mastered that it may come instantly to the mind and fingers whenever wanted. If too many word-signs are undertaken at one time, the memory is confused, and the student's progress retarded.

As the best method of learning the word-signs, Mr. Bernard De Bear, the well-known English reporter and teacher, has suggested the following:

“Take a double sheet of foolscap and fold it

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over into folds which will give about twelve divisions in all. Copy from the text-book neatly and carefully the signs you are about to learn, one on each line. Having thus filled the first column, close the book, and endeavor at once from memory to transcribe into longhand in column two. The words having only just been copied, this should prove no difficult task; but any blanks should be filled in from the key and underlined, to denote that the signs were not remembered. This done, fold under column one, so as to leave only the longhand words in column two visible, and transcribe those into shorthand in column three, so nearly as the memory will allow. Gaps can now be filled in from column one, which, however, should not be resorted to until the attempt has been made to work through the entire list. Then retranscribe the shorthand lines on column four. And so on to the end—shorthand into longhand, and *vice versa*. It may be guaranteed that by the time the twelve columns have all been filled in the manner indicated, that particular set of words or phrases will have been almost thoroughly mastered. I have tried this plan with the dullest of pupils, with those whose memories seemed

to be an altogether unknown quantity, and I have rarely known it to fail. I have since used it in other than phonographic studies, and always with equal success."

In learning abbreviating principles, word-signs, or any other portions of the shorthand "system," the learner must not overlook the importance of constant review. However well, as he may think, his previous tasks have been mastered, the need of unremitting review is imperative. It is too often assumed blindly that what was known last week or last month must as a matter of course be well known to-day.

#### **Repeated Copying of Correct Shorthand.**

When the principles of the system and a reasonable number of word-signs have been learned, an important step in preparing for "speed practice" is to copy over and over again matter carefully written or printed for the student's use in the "reporting style," and when a page or two have become fully familiarized, to write the matter from dictation in exact conformity to the original and with as much rapidity as may be possible without writing illegibly. In thus copying from the shorthand original—not from

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ordinary print or from the student's own notes—the eye, the hand, and the memory are simultaneously trained. The learner unconsciously imitates the symmetrical characters from which he copies. He also stores his memory with the best outlines for those common words and phrases which are to form a large proportion of his future writing. Thus he is in great measure relieved from tedious study of text-book lists of word-signs, phrases, and words of peculiar outlines. By writing from dictation at steadily-increasing speed the matter thus memorized, he acquires also a constantly-growing facility of hand, which cannot be cultivated by the slow methods of manipulation ordinarily indulged before “speed practice” begins.



## “SPEED PRACTICE.”

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Speed, or at least the semblance of speed, may be purchased at too high a price. The student entering upon “speed practice” should determine that he will not sacrifice in the pursuit of speed other desirable things, without which mere speed will be of little value. As has been well said by an accomplished phonographer and most instructive writer (the late Fred Pitman), “It is a misfortune to a phonographic writer when speed is attained apart from other excellencies. Its acquisition ought to progress simultaneously with the development of other powers. A whole phalanx of excellencies should advance together. Accuracy of form; a good, smooth method of writing; facility in reading notes; the ability to transcribe notes neatly, quickly and with scrupulous fidelity; the capacity, when pressed beyond one’s pace, to catch the sense and record it, at the possible risk of losing a few words, or possibly some fine phrases—these and many other attainments ought to advance abreast.”

### When Should "Speed Practice" Begin?

A most serious mistake is very commonly made in entering upon "speed practice" prematurely. Very often the student who says, "Oh, I understand the principles of the system, and all I want now is speed practice," is in such an ill-tutored condition that "speed practice" can do him no good and may do him much harm.

In warning the student against premature "speed practice," I do not include in my warning every kind of writing from dictation. To write from dictation copious lists of separate words (suitably selected) as a means of mastering the rules which they illustrate, has already been strongly recommended as an exercise which should commence almost with the student's first lesson, and should be ceaselessly continued until each abbreviating principle can be unhesitatingly applied in every appropriate case. To write rapidly from dictation, sentence-matter in "the reporting style," which has been thoroughly memorized by repeated copying from correct models, has also been strongly recommended. Both these methods of practice are highly important as a preparation for "speed practice," which term, for the sake of convenience and

clearness, I confine to dictation practice upon letters, speeches or other sentence-matter, absolutely new and untried.

In order that "speed practice," thus defined, may be beneficial, the student should in the first place understand so well, not in theory alone, but in practice, the abbreviating principles of the system, that he can write in some legible way (not necessarily the very best way), and with but slight, if any, hesitation, any word of only ordinary difficulty, though he may never have written it before. If he cannot do this, the rudimentary principles of the system have not been in the proper sense of the term mastered, and the student, instead of indulging the delusion that all he needs is "speed practice," should at once turn back to those abbreviating principles which he has evidently gone over too slightly (the principles included in what is commonly called "the corresponding style" of shorthand), and should not leave them till he has them, not simply in his head, but literally at his fingers' ends. Irksome as this discipline may be, it is absolutely essential to the making of a rapid writer.

In the second place, before beginning "speed

practice," the student should be able to write all the frequently-recurring words of the language (including all the common word-signs), with their best outlines, and absolutely without hesitation. This prompt knowledge of ordinary outlines (complete or contracted) should have been acquired, not mainly, if at all, by the tedious study of repelling word-lists, but by the recurrence of these common and necessary word-forms in the well-selected "reporting style" matter which we suppose the student (before entering upon "speed practice") to have memorized by repeated copying, and to have written over and over from dictation.

Before entering on "speed practice," the student should also be able to write with no less promptness all those every-day phrases which no reporter fails to use (whatever his abstract views on the question of phrasing)—such phrases as "you are," "it is," "I am," "it may be," etc. These common phrase-forms the learner should have acquired from the copying and dictation practice just mentioned, not by the study of vastly-extended phrase-lists or by the exercise of his own inventive powers operating under the guidance of fine-drawn and over-elaborated phrasing rules.

The student's preparation ought to be such as to enable him to begin "speed practice" with a speed of at least sixty or seventy words a minute. Usually, if he undertakes "speed practice" at a lower rate than this (as, for instance, as is very commonly done, at thirty or forty words a minute), he is attempting to learn from "speed practice" things that he should have learned before entering upon such practice—things that can be far better learned in other ways, and that indeed mere "speed practice" can never teach. If there are those who doubt the possibility of acquiring a speed of sixty or seventy words a minute without dictation practice, let them turn to the "Phonographic Magazine" for March 1, 1896, where they will find Mr. A. J. Weeks testifying: "I took my first position without ever having had a word dictated to me save when I applied for the position, having gained my speed by copying and recopying [the shorthand] from the "Phonographic Magazine."

#### **Repetition Practice Must Not Be Given Up.**

Even after dictation upon new matter has begun (and of course much practice upon new matter is needed by the student, for it is new matter which he will be required to take fear-

lessly when he enters upon actual work—not matter previously memorized or on which he has been previously “coached”), repetition practice upon memorized matter should be persistently continued. The benefits of such practice, in training the eye and the hand of the learner to correctness of form, in giving him large contributions to his “reporting vocabulary,” and especially in cultivating that facile movement of the fingers, hand and arm, without which the highest speed can never be attained, have already been pointed out. In writing from dictation matter already memorized, he can “get up speed,” as he cannot upon matter written for the first time; for so long as there is constant and anxious thought as to word-forms, phrase-forms, etc., the hand lags and lingers at a pace far slower than it is capable of attaining. Agility of hand can only be attained when the mind by prompt conceptions urges the hand to do its best. Moreover (and this is a most important consideration), when the writer is able to withdraw a large part of his attention from the matter written, he can watch his own writing habits, and can thus observe and correct his faults of manipulation, which otherwise must escape his attention.

**“The Fingers Move Mechanically to the Sound.”**

One of the older stenographic authors, Samuel Nelson—who published his “Parliamentary and Forensic Shorthand Writer” in 1836, just one year before Isaac Pitman issued the first edition of Phonography under the title “Sound-Hand”—has aptly remarked that, in acquiring shorthand, “the fingers are learning a new language”; and for this reason, he says, the student should “never omit repeating or rewriting what has been previously written, until the fingers move mechanically to the sound.” This language most happily expresses the goal for which the young shorthand writer is to strive. Until his “fingers move mechanically to the sound,” he must inevitably write laboriously and slowly.

That prolific and acute shorthand author, the late Andrew J. Graham, has recommended in one of his early works that the student commit some exercise to memory and write it speedily hundreds of times. “This practice,” he says, “will give ease and celerity of movement to the hand.”

**“Teach the Hand How to Move Along.”**

Another most accomplished stenographer and shorthand author, already referred to—Mr. Fred

Pitman—in emphasizing the same idea, has gone so far as to say, “The speed realized in writing one sentence at a tolerably rapid pace will gradually influence the pace of all that the student writes; the speed thus gained gives the mind the right idea, and teaches the hand how to move along.” The fact that dictation practice upon matter previously memorized “teaches the hand how to move along” is one of the strongest reasons for urging it upon the aspirant for speed.

Expressing in still another form the same thought—the value of indefinite repetition as applied to dictation practice—that eminent Congressional reporter, Mr. Fred Irland, has remarked: “There is forever the plain, straight road which will lead to success: write and re-write a correctly-expressed exercise, say, one thousand words (like the testimony of a witness or an extract from a political speech), until the patient friend who reads it is a fit candidate for the lunatic asylum. Repeat it five hundred times, if need be; and the general speed will be found to increase.” Mr. Irland further says: “We write too many different exercises at first. Get the hand in the way of writing some exercise



in shorthand as readily as longhand is written; then try something else; and soon one will find that he has become familiar with all the common words of English speech, and that he can write them with no more effort than is required in the lifting of the pen."

### **A Distinguished Congressman Testifies.**

Similar testimony is given by Hon. R. R. Hitt, now a distinguished Member of Congress, but in earlier life eminent as a reporter, having reported before the late war the famous debate between Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. After telling how he acquired his first knowledge of Pitman's Phonography, how it helped him at college, and how it secured him a very attractive offer of employment from a New Orleans newspaper, Mr. Hitt says: "Having leisure at the time, I at once gave systematic attention to practice, aiming chiefly to attain accuracy and the perfection of every character; writing from dictation an hour at a time without any pause or hurry; repeating the same dictation until every character was familiarized by a hundred repetitions—leaving speed to come when it would."

Many a zealous shorthand student would much earlier become a rapid writer, if he were content while pursuing right methods, to "leave speed to come when it would." Wherever remarkable shorthand speed has been attained, it will generally be found to be due to some such practice as Mr. Hitt and Mr. Irland have so well described.

#### How a High-Speed Certificate Was Won.

Take, for instance, the case of Mr. George W. Bunbury, of England, the young man who holds the Isaac Pitman certificate for a speed of 250 words a minute.\* Having first secured a certificate for 230 words a minute. Mr. Bunbury aspired to still higher speed; and he tells us how he attained it. Here is his language: "When I had won the 230 words certificate. I set about practicing again, my object being to obtain a 250 words certificate. From the end of April to the

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\*Since this was written it has been shown that the Isaac Pitman "Speed Certificates" referred to by Mr. Brown are utterly worthless. The Scottish Phonographic Association, which was described by the late Sir Isaac Pitman as "first in the Kingdom for the vigorous propagation of Phonography," issued a report explaining why it had discontinued holding examinations for the "Speed Certificates." An investigation by a committee appointed by the association had shown that the certificates were granted by Isaac Pitman & Sons even when candidates had failed to pass the test. Nevertheless these alleged high speed records based on the "Speed Certificates" granted by Isaac Pitman & Sons are being used for advertising purposes.—*The Publishers.*

end of August, I practiced steadily without regard to speed, in order to form the characters regularly. The matter I had then dictated to me consisted of the 'Strand Magazine,' books of adventure, etc. At the beginning of September I began working for the 250 certificate; and the method I employed, with successful results, was as follows: Having taken a leading article or speech from a paper or book, I counted out ten minutes or perhaps more at the rate required; I then had it read to me in the time, after which I proceeded to transcribe or read what I had written, circling each outline or phrase which I had formed badly or which looked shaky. These outlines and phrases I carefully noted in a small book which I carried about with me for that purpose; and, when an opportunity presented itself, I wrote and re-wrote them until I acquired the greatest possible facility in forming them. The next night I was able to take the same piece with much greater ease, and to make my notes much better. The following night I increased the speed slightly, bearing in mind, of course, the advice not to sacrifice legibility for speed. I had the same piece dictated night after night for a week, and sometimes two weeks, if the

matter was of more than average difficulty; for I am confident there is nothing like repetition for increasing speed. With regard to reading my notes, I have always made it a rule to read everything I write, and have adopted the following plan: When a fresh piece was dictated to me at a certain speed, I read it through first, and I read it over again each time the speed was increased. I continued practicing, never missing a night (except Sundays), and sat for examination on the 8th of December, 1893, but failed, having more than the maximum percentage of errors in my transcript. This failure did not discourage me in the least; in fact, it gave me more energy and a stronger determination to accomplish my object. I still kept practicing as hard as I could, and on the 30th of December again presented myself for examination. This time, however, the passage selected for the test was read at the rate of 260 words per minute, owing to a hitch in the timing, and therefore I did not attempt to transcribe my notes. This might be considered another failure, but still I was undaunted. I once more set to work, but not so hard, as I found I was losing my retentive powers from over-practice and brain exertion. I

again sat for examination on the 10th of January, and was then successful."

### **Selection of Dictation Matter.**

In selecting matter for dictation practice (which, as already implied, should alternate between old matter and new), the first aim of the student should be to familiarize himself with the commonplace words and phrases which constitute the stock of every-day converse. Later the dictation should cover a variety of subjects. Narrow dictation practice—that practice which confines itself constantly to the same class of matter—is to be especially avoided. Nothing but practice upon a variety of topics will give the student that invigorating training which he needs as preparation for actual work. Nor should the student forget to give preference always to matter which, while affording good shorthand practice, will increase his stock of useful, up-to-date information. For instance, a freshly-delivered Congressional speech on currency, or bankruptcy, or the Pacific Railroad system, gives better practice (other things being equal) than a musty Parliamentary oration on "the Nabob of Arcot's debts," or "the abolition of the benefit of clergy."

### How Fast Should the Dictation Be?

It scarcely need be said that the dictation should be carefully accommodated to the skill of the writer, growing more and more rapid as his mental and manual facility increases. Mr. Graham has aptly described the proper dictation speed when he says that "it should be such as to require considerable effort to keep up, but not so fast as to require illegible or incorrect writing or to induce a confused and hesitating movement of the hand."

### "Keep On."

In writing from dictation, it should be an invariable rule never to allow one's self to pause when a difficult or doubtful word or phrase is encountered. It should be understood that whenever the rate of dictation (whatever it may be) has been settled, the reader shall mercilessly proceed at that rate, and shall be no more indulgent of the writer's occasional slowness than an actual speaker would be. Nothing can more surely lead to "a sluggish mental process" or more surely delay the acquisition of speed, than for the writer to indulge the habit of pausing and pondering upon every uncommon word, or what

is still worse, suspending the dictation in order that his doubts as to an outline may be settled by reference to a dictionary or a text-book. "Keep on" should be the inflexible rule for writer and reader. If the preparatory discipline recommended in previous pages has been followed, the writer should be able to get down the difficult words somehow, without "making a break"; and if not, better a hundred times that there should be an absolute hiatus in his notes than that he should be humored by allowing him to pause and ponder—a habit which, if indulged, must disappoint the hope of ever becoming a rapid writer. How the difficulties connected with the off-hand writing of hard words may be mastered will be fully treated of in a subsequent chapter. Suffice it to say here that pausing and pondering upon hard words, while the dictation is accommodatingly retarded or suspended, will never teach one how to write such words when the speaking goes right on.

### **The Word-Carrying Faculty.**

Unless the regular rate of dictation is somewhat retarded (as it should not be) when a hard word is encountered, the young writer, while

“tackling” the difficulty, will necessarily fall somewhat behind, as even the accomplished reporter will often do in a similar situation. It is desirable, then, that “speed practice” should train the young stenographer to write, when necessary, a number of words behind the speaker. A prominent business educator (Mr. S. S. Packard) has said: “There is one practice which we enforce in the study of shorthand that would be valuable to anybody; and that is the fixing of long sentences in the mind, so as to recall them automatically. A reporter who can do this has almost any speaker at his command; for while the speaker stops for breath or to collect his thoughts for a new start, the pen of the ready writer, through the aid of a trained memory, is bringing up the rear.”

For the purpose of cultivating in the young stenographer the faculty of carrying a number of words in his mind while engaged in the act of writing, a portion of each day’s dictation should be given in clauses of at least twelve or fifteen words at a time. As the writer’s memory gains in word-holding power, the length of the clauses may and should reach twenty or twenty-five words, without causing confusion of



mind or hand. Each separate clause should be read without any pause; but after each clause there should be a sufficient pause to allow the writer to "catch up," or what is better, *almost* "catch up." An ordinary reader, in accommodating himself to a slow writer, usually punctuates the reading thus:

"In the few minutes that remain before this fore this bill is voted upon [pause] I wish to make [pause] as briefly and concisely as I can [pause] an explanation of its principal provisions [pause] in order to satisfy the House [pause] that it should be passed [pause] in its present form [pause] without any modification or amendment."

Clauses as short as these are too short even for a writer just beginning dictation practice. They do not call for any vigorous action of what may be called the word-carrying faculty. This faculty would be much better cultivated by allowing even to the inexperienced note-taker more sparsely distributed pauses, as indicated in the following:

"In the few minutes that remain before this bill is voted upon [pause] I wish to make as briefly and concisely as I can [pause] an explana-

tion of its principal provisions in order to satisfy the House [pause] that it should be passed in its present form, without any modification or amendment.”

The writer who will steadily practice, day after day and week after week, from the sort of dictation here recommended, the clauses gradually lengthening till they reach twenty or twenty-five words each, will soon be surprised at the growth of his word-carrying capacity, and will ultimately acquire the priceless art of writing composedly, without hurry or flurry (and therefore making uniformly well-written notes), although the speaker may indulge in speedy “spurts” and “jerks” most vexatious to the writer not thus trained.

### Who Are the Best Dictators?

In order to receive the full benefit of this exercise, it is highly desirable that the dictation be done by a shorthand writer, who, watching the writer's pen, can after each pause, resume dictation before the clause just dictated has been entirely written. In other words, while there must be pauses in the reading (and in the beginning of the practice, long pauses, varying

with the ability of the writer), it is highly desirable that the writing shall proceed without pause; that the pen shall never come to a standstill; that the writer shall never "catch up" with the reader, but be constantly on a chase after him.

When, as often happens in speed classes, a number of stenographers whose rates of speed vary are following the same reader, who generally accommodates the rate of dictation to the slowest of the class, the more rapid writers are of course missing one of the main advantages which "speed practice" should furnish—the constant pressure upon the writer to do his best. The greatest improvement from dictation practice is obtained when the writer constitutes "a class of one," and the reading is accommodated to him alone. To enjoy the advantages of such dictation, no better plan can be adopted than for two stenographers to seek mutual improvement by reading to each other. As intimated in a previous paragraph, a reader who is himself a stenographer, able by watching the writer to tell how far the writing is behind the reading, can be far more useful than a reader ignorant of shorthand, who usually pauses between the

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clauses until he sees the writer's pen stop. This constant pausing of the pen is what should be especially avoided. A writer is getting the best training for speed when the reader never, or very rarely, allows him to "catch up." In this way the reader, as it were, pulls the writer along. No chance is given for lagging or loitering.

## MORE ABOUT "SPEED PRACTICE."

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### Fatigue as a Schoolmaster.

There seems to be particular benefit to the young stenographer from writing up to and past the point of muscular fatigue. Shorthand writing long continued at a single sitting, with no let-up when the writer has become thoroughly weary, appears to limber the writing machinery as nothing else will. There are reasons why this should be so. Whatever people undertake to do involving muscular exertion—walking, swimming, bicycle riding, etc.—is at first performed with an excess of effort. In this excess of effort, there is needless expenditure of mind and muscle. The surplus beyond what the act requires is wasted. Where rapidity is an object, this waste of effort and strength holds us back. Almost every shorthand writer in his early practice throws into his work too much muscular effort—much more than the act of writing requires. He works under intense mental strain, with eager determination to keep up if he can;

and this mental strain engenders by sympathy a muscular strain. This can be seen in the set expression of the face, and the tightness with which pen or pencil is grasped. From this overstraining, this surplus of effort, there comes generally such a stiffening of the muscles as forbids the best work. For surplus of effort, the writer needs to substitute economy of effort; and for muscular tension, muscular relaxation.

Fatigue is a grand school to teach a person to do anything in the easiest way. Mind or body, when required to continue effort past the fatigue point, works along the lines of least resistance. The easy, swinging gait with which the veteran soldier accomplishes long marches at the cost of but little weariness, contrasts strikingly with the stiff, self-conscious movement of the holiday soldier, who has not learned in the school of fatigue to economize muscular effort. The young stenographer must learn from tiresome practice to get the maximum of result from the minimum of effort. This idea has been compressed by Mr. Irland into a single sentence: "Write from dictation until your arms are ready to fall off—until your friends (whom

you have conscripted as your readers) fly at the sight of you." I think it will be found a rule without exception that extreme speed has never been attained by any one until he has passed through spells of note-taking continuing hour after hour and day after day—continuing when excessive weariness would have made him delighted to stop. The writer who is thus compelled to "keep his nose" to the reporting "grindstone," the grindstone turning vigorously all the time, is the writer who learns to write easily, who gains enviable speed, and who finally almost defies fatigue.

### **Weary Work Wins.**

If a young writer has really reached a point (which so many falsely imagine themselves to have reached) where "all he needs is speed practice," then, if he wishes to see his "speed practice" bear fruit promptly and profusely, let him every day or night for a single week, write from dictation for one hour, absolutely without a moment's pause or let-up, the reader holding him constantly at the top of his speed. During the next week let him continue the same discipline

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for an hour and a half daily. The following week let each day's dictation last for two hours. During each day's period of discipline, let there be absolutely no pause, no "breathing spell" of any kind. Though the writer may feel at times, in the language of Mr. Irland, as if his arm were ready to drop off, let him keep right on. If, because of extreme weariness, he stops to rest before his task is done, he loses the crowning benefit of this highly invigorating discipline. If he has the resolution to submit to this severe regimen, he will at the end of the third week (possibly much earlier) feel a gratifying consciousness of increased speed and will write with far greater ease than ever before. The stooping posture which caused his back to ache so much, the vise-like grip of pen or pencil which so severely wearied the muscles of hand and arm—these and other bad habits which helped to fatigue him, while at the same time hindering him from keeping up, will have been partially or wholly abandoned. The whole writing machinery, mental and physical, will have been limbered and relaxed, and thereby fitted to move smoothly and rapidly.

The shorthand student, if qualified by sound



stenographic training to enter upon such practice, may reasonably expect in even so short a time as three weeks, a gain of twenty to thirty words a minute. No more helpful injunction can be given to the young stenographer than this: If time allows, keep up each spell of dictation practice till you are thoroughly weary. The longer you practice at one time, and the wearier you are when you stop, the sooner and the more surely will you become a rapid writer. The stenographer who never writes from dictation for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a stretch deludes himself if he fancies that such easy-going discipline is really worthy the name of "speed practice."

A veteran reporter once told me that he never knew a stenographer to amount to anything till he had passed through "a demnition grind." The persistent practice of shorthand under dictation pressure, up to and past the fatigue point, is the "demnition grind" which more than any other one thing constitutes, in my judgment, the solution of the "speed" problem. If any young stenographer who flatters himself that he is "ambitious to become a reporter," regards such severe discipline as involving "too much hard

work," then he must content himself without the high speed which nothing but hard work can give him.

### **Practice Must Be Regular.**

There ought not to be occasion to say that practice, to be in the highest degree improving, must be ceaselessly continued from day to day—a regular quantity of practice at a regular time. Some students who fancy they are "practicing shorthand," give to the study, for example, half an hour one day, and fifteen minutes the next. Then comes an interval of two or three days with no practice at all; then a day when, to "make up for lost time," practice may occupy perhaps forty-five minutes or possibly an hour; then utter suspension of practice for perhaps a week or more. Such irregular or intermittent practice is of little or no value for the cultivation of speed. Where shorthand practice is merely a "side issue"—where simply odds and ends of time are devoted to it—little advancement can be expected.

### **How Much Daily Practice?**

Three or four hours daily, in some cases five or six, are not too much for the various branches

of shorthand practice, if the zealous student is fortunate enough to command that much time. Where a large amount of time can be daily given to the acquirement of shorthand skill, the different branches of study and practice may be diversified in accordance substantially with the following schedule:

1. Careful copying from correct shorthand for the purpose of acquiring or preserving a symmetrical and legible style (which constant writing under "speed pressure" tends to impair and destroy), and for the purpose of accumulating gradually "a reporting vocabulary." This copying may embrace separate words properly selected (including word-signs, contracted forms, etc.), sentence-matter, or phrases.

2. The writing of this memorized matter from dictation as rapidly as it can be done correctly.

3. The writing of new matter from dictation, it being borne in mind that the reader should not pause to enable the writer to construct or recall the outline of some difficult word. A portion of this dictation should be directed to cultivating in the manner already described the word-carrying faculty.

4. The reading back of considerable portions

of all dictated matter, it being remembered that this reading back should always include some matter written on a previous day.

5. Writing off-hand from dictation new and difficult words, with the least possible hesitation, so that the student may learn not to be staggered when called on to write a word which he has never written before.

#### **The Office Stenographer's Peril.**

Some writers expect an increase of speed because they are daily using shorthand in taking office dictation. Experience shows that such practice offers but little improvement; and often, where the conditions of office dictation are easy and unexacting, the writer almost unconsciously becomes, as time goes by, less and less speedy, and less and less fitted for anything except his daily routine. In the first place, the office stenographer writes too little shorthand. All told, he has perhaps an hour or an hour and a half of daily practice—too little for rapid improvement—too little to satisfy any ambitious writer. Besides, the dictation is in many cases so slow as to induce loss of speed, instead of gain. And the dictation, what-

ever its rate, does not grow more rapid from week to week and from month to month, as genuine "speed practice" may and must. Then the topics of office dictation are of limited range, covering the routine of a single business. More than that, the writer who takes daily the dictation of but one man or a few men, gets no such practice as the would-be reporter requires in following a variety of voices and a variety of verbal styles.

A Washington correspondent of the New York Mail and Express tells a story which emphasizes the office stenographer's peril—the peril of losing gradually and almost perceptibly in an office position the shorthand skill with which he entered it: "I know a young man up in the Treasury Department who, until a few months since, held a \$1,800 position. When he first entered the Department he was one of the best stenographers in the country. As ill-luck would have it, he was assigned to the private secretaryship of one of the chiefs of the Department. This gentleman was a slow thinker and talker. For several years those two worked in harmony, and thoroughly understood each other. But unconsciously, the stenographer drifted backward.

Not long ago the chief was 'fired' on short notice. The man that took his place came out of the West, and was full of nervous energy. He started in with a rush on his dictation, and, in the language of the profession, 'put it up the back' of his stenographer, though the speed was such as the young man would have smiled at when he entered the Department. The chief fumed and fretted at the stenographer's breaks and mistakes; and in one week's time the latter was relegated to a \$1,000 position."

"The only trouble," the writer continues, "with the force in the Department is that in a great many cases their work is so light that they almost unconsciously slip backward. Then comes a time when their ability is tested, and their weakness brought out. There are hundreds in this class, and the danger of slack work has become a menace to the profession."

### **Practice From Actual Speaking.**

Dictation is at best a mimicry of public speaking, and, because it is but mimicry, must always lack some of the essential qualities of what it imitates. The mere writing of dictated matter,

however judiciously managed the dictation may be, can never fully prepare any one for the every-day work of the reporter. The art of reporting public speeches can only be effectually learned from reporting public speeches. The young stenographer, when dictation practice with its measured monotone has reached a certain point, must accustom himself to follow the cadence of natural speech, with its rises and falls, its rushes and pauses. He must accustom himself to follow a variety of voices, different in their tones and articulations. He must accustom himself especially to that sort of utterance which does not humor his shortcomings as a writer. So, when the proper time comes, the would-be reporter must lose no opportunity to take notes from the lips of actual speakers. Sermons, lectures, court proceedings, business meetings, etc., are the material upon which he is to try his "prentice hand," and which are to give him practical training for his chosen profession.

### **When Should Speech Practice Begin?**

When should this practice begin? As soon as the rate of a very slow speaker—say, ninety or one hundred words a minute—has been at-

tained. There are many ministers of the Gospel, and even some lawyers and rostrum orators, who do not exceed this rate of utterance. Equipped with a bona fide speed of 90 or 100 words a minute, the young practitioner will find no difficulty in discovering speakers who will not overtax his powers. Let him miss no opportunity to take down these slow speakers. As the task becomes easy, let him select for practice some speaker or speakers of greater speed, but not too fast for him; for it should be borne in mind that the best practice for the increase of speed is that which keeps the writer constantly straining to keep up, but never (except in occasional "spurts of speed") leaves him discouragingly in the lurch. As he proceeds with his practice, he will find that very often he can successfully take the whole of a sermon or address, except possibly a few passages (perhaps only the peroration), in which the orator, warming with his subject, goes beyond his average pace. These losses of occasional passages must not make the young writer despond. Nor must he, as soon as the speaker becomes too fast for him, drop his pencil or close his note-book. When the more rapid passages come, let him keep cool, and re-



cord as many of the words as he can, in legible characters and in the form of complete sentences, even though these complete sentences as recorded may lack some clauses of minor importance.

In both the earlier and the later stages of the young writer's training, he should, if possible, practice upon different speakers, rather than exclusively upon any one man. Practice in a court room is excellent when one has attained something near the average speed of legal proceedings. But, unfortunately, court rooms do not generally furnish hospitable accommodations for the amateur practitioner. Reporting a course of law lectures will afford excellent practice. Even if one's primary aim is to be "only a stenographer," not a lawyer, the fee demanded for attendance on such a course will be far more than repaid by the opportunities for shorthand practice and by the legal knowledge incidentally acquired, which must prove highly useful to the young reporter, whose business will of course call him frequently into the courts.

**Avoid Speakers Who Are Much Too Fast.**

The young writer should be especially warned

against practicing habitually upon speakers whose regular rate is much too fast for him. If, when such a speaker is encountered, the young practitioner can remain cool, and keep his wits about him—a hard thing for a novice to do when the speaker in the course of every sentence completely outstrips him—he may succeed in condensing the rapidly-uttered passages as they proceed, and thus making a readable and connected, though not a complete, report. Such a method of “reporting” may be invigorating as a mental exercise; it may indeed have its value as practical training for much of the work that a newspaper reporter is often called upon to perform. But it must not be forgotten that this species of note-taking cannot count for much as “speed practice,” because no person can carry on the dual operation of simultaneous condensation and note-taking without falling considerably behind the speed he might attain if his sole attention were concentrated on his shorthand.

Besides, if a young writer shows great self-possession when the speaking is too fast for him, it is sometimes a dangerous sign. If, with speed as yet undeveloped, he can coolly

and with passable success substitute verbal condensation for verbatim note-taking, there is danger that he may learn to content himself with taking down less than is actually said. If he yields (as there is peril he may do), to the tempting and too flattering delusion that so many words as he can get down are the really important parts of the speech, and the clauses which he is compelled to omit are non-essential—if he accustoms himself to think that something less than the words actually uttered may really pass acceptably for a "verbatim report," he may commit the sad error of prematurely persuading himself that he is "a reporter." If he should ever enter the reporting profession with any such delusive idea, woe to his standing as a "reporter," and woe to the speakers who may be committed to his audacious but unskillful hands.

#### **Fred Pitman's Sad Experience.**

But when the young writer habitually undertakes to follow speakers whose regular rate is much too fast for him, the mischief that most generally happens is that, yielding to the temptation to get down or try to get down a mark, however illegible, for every word, he contracts

a loose, careless, illegible habit of writing, which it may cause him much trouble ultimately to get rid of. Mr. Fred Pitman, one of that famous band of brothers, with the inventor of Phonography at their head, whose names are so closely associated with the development and dissemination of phonetic shorthand, has told in the following striking language how he was seriously delayed, and for the time being foiled, in his efforts to attain reporting skill, by seeking speed at the expense of accuracy:

“The writer of this paper has, to use a familiar phrase, gone through it all. He can look back almost half a century, and can vividly recall the sensation of attempting laboriously to write a short passage in phonography from a newspaper or book; he can remember how at times he worried over his blunders; how he chafed at his slowness, groaned under the difficulty of constructing good outlines; and how, at a subsequent period, he writhed at the apparent impossibility of overcoming the *vis inertiae* of his pen. Looking back over the long vista, he can now perceive that speed came only too soon. Possessing a moderate amount of natural quickness, his study and practice enabled him in a

short time to write at a speed of from 100 to 130 words per minute. At this juncture he became anxious to acquire a verbatim speed that should qualify him to follow a swift speaker; and with praiseworthy assiduity, he reported the discourses he heard on a Sunday. The preacher happened to be a literary man, who composed sermons of a somewhat difficult character. He was also decidedly rapid in his delivery, so that the reporter's imperfect speed not only prevented him from keeping up, but he sometimes failed even to grasp the meaning of what was uttered. He, however, strove so zealously to 'get it all down,' that he soon acquired the ability to follow this fluent speaker with only an occasional loss of a word. Alas! he was not aware of the imperative importance of reading over his notes; he did not attempt any regular method of testing his accuracy by writing from dictation, then transcribing, and afterwards comparing his transcript with the printed book. He did not see the desirableness of undertaking the labor of transcribing a large portion of his writing practice. He gained speed, but not a good style. Thus was laid the foundation of faults which it required much subsequent study and care to

eradicate. When afterwards he became a professional reporter, he was sometimes chagrined at misreading his notes, and discovering, perhaps too late for remedial measures, that the hidden meaning of his symbols has not been detected.”

### The Beginner's "Stage Fright."

When the young writer first attempts to take notes in public, whether on the platform or at his seat amid the audience, the newness of the undertaking, his eager wish to succeed, and his fear of not succeeding—his apprehension that the eyes of the audience are fixed upon him and that the observers are making their estimate of his success or failure—all these things, creating a novel and most trying environment, will doubtless embarrass him greatly, causing him in his early attempts at public note-taking to accomplish far less than upon fair trial he is really able to accomplish. A distinguished English reporter, looking back from the standpoint of a veteran to the boyhood period when he first attempted to take notes of a sermon, describes thus vividly his discomfiture:

“I tried my best to conceal my emotions; but

my heart was beating all the way to church. As to the preliminary service, I understood as little of it as if it had been read in Cherokee. I stood when I ought to have knelt, and knelt when I should have sat or stood. I demeaned myself like a youth whose religious education had been sadly neglected. At length the clergyman entered the pulpit, and I took my sheets of paper from the Bible in which I had concealed them, and my pencil from my pocket. If I did not feel, like Bonaparte's soldiers, that the eyes of posterity were upon me, I devoutly believed that every eye in the church was directed to my notebook. The color mounted to my cheeks, and my whole frame trembled."

For what Thomas Allen Reed thus suffered, and what many a stenographic novice must suffer, in his first attempts at public note-taking, there is no cure but to "brave it out." Let the unfledged note-taker resolve that he will master his embarrassment and self-consciousness; let him courageously repeat his public attempts at reporting as often as occasion offers. Gradually, as he becomes more and more accustomed to his environment, his task will become easier and easier, until finally he will be able to take

notes as well under the eyes of an audience as if he were in the seclusion of his little room at home.

In getting his reporting practice, the novice must not grumble if often his accommodations for note-taking are bad. If he is obliged to write on his knee, if he is obliged sometimes to write while standing, or sometimes on a desk or table which is jarred at intervals by the pounding of the orator's fist (as often happens at political meetings or in court), let him console himself with the reflection that he is getting in good time an essential part of his education as a reporter; for the reporter in the practice of his vocation is obliged frequently to conform himself cheerfully to "rough and tumble" conditions.

#### **Dictation Practice Must Still Go On.**

When the young writer begins to take notes of public speaking, his dictation practice is by no means to be suspended. While practice from public speaking has its advantages, of which every young practitioner must avail himself—advantages which mere writing from dictation cannot supply—there is connected with dicta-



tion practice one peculiar advantage so valuable that the shorthand writer can never afford to give up such practice entirely until he has attained all the speed to which he aspires. The young writer, while developing his speed, finds that some speakers upon whom he experiments are too slow, others altogether too fast, and only a comparatively few are just rapid enough to realize the ideal of speed practice as defined by Mr. Graham—"requiring considerable effort to keep up, but not so fast as to require illegible or incorrect writing, or to induce a confused and hesitating movement of the hand."

In order, therefore, that the student who has begun to practice on public speakers may still secure a sufficiency of that invigorating practice which, while constantly putting him on his mettle, never entirely baffles him, dictation at a steadily-increasing pace adapted to his steady advancement in speed, must go on from day to day and from week to week. As this dictation practice goes on, steadily nerving the student to higher and higher attainments, the reporting of public utterances will grow easier and easier, and the difficult or impossible speakers will gradually become fewer and fewer.

**How to Insure Legible Notes.**

One danger of persistent speed practice—the acquirement of an illegible style of writing—must not be overlooked. The best safeguard against contracting an illegible style, or at least a sure warning when illegibility is making its encroachments, is the persistent and habitual reading of one's notes. Let it be understood that all notes are to be regarded as illegible which cannot be read with reasonable fluency. If the writer finds himself obliged to “wrestle” with his notes because the characters are badly formed, so that perhaps several hours are required to “decipher” what he has taken down in the course of twenty or thirty minutes, speed, if gained at all, is being gained at the expense of accuracy, and no real progress is being made.

But it is to be remembered that practice, however industriously pursued, in reading one's own notes, has no magic power to make bad shorthand good. Reading may disclose faulty forms—faulty in conception or in execution—which speed practice has developed or is developing; it may cultivate, too, a certain facility in reading shorthand thus faulty. But the faculty which the student should seek is not the faculty

of deciphering with effort shorthand badly written. His aim should be to acquire that facility in reading which comes from writing notes that can be read without difficulty because of their intrinsic legibility—not because the writer has habituated himself by long practice to reading with painful struggles his own misshapen shorthand forms, as unintelligible as Chinese hieroglyphics to everybody but himself.

There is one simple recipe for maintaining an intrinsically legible style in spite of persistent speed practice, either upon actual speaking or from dictation: let the student, without suspending his speed practice, devote some portion of every day to writing, with no thought of speed, and not necessarily from the voice, a reasonable quantity of shorthand with all the symmetry and neatness that he can command. This will insure him against the dangerous tendency of speed practice (an almost unavertible danger if speed practice be exclusively pursued) to wear away habits of neat execution which may have been formed, and to bring the writer into the condition so vividly described by Mr. Fred Pitman in the extract already quoted. One of the most noteworthy points in Mr. Bunbury's course

of training, as described by himself on a previous page, is that, even while drilling for a most exacting speed-test, he resolutely devoted a portion of this time to practicing with no thought of speed, and with the object merely of making legible notes. The shorthand student should never forget that it is entirely practicable to carry into reporting work a neat, symmetrical style of writing; and to do this should be a distinct object of his ambition.

## HOW TO WRITE THE "HARD WORDS."

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### **The Student's Bewilderment.**

The young shorthand writer, when undertaking to follow dictation or public speaking, is often tempted to exclaim, "If it were not for these hard words which now and then bother me and break me all up, I could get along pretty well." This vexed and bewildered state of mind has been vividly described by that widely-known reporter, Mr. H. C. Demming, of Harrisburg, Pa.: "Just where the greatest speed is necessary—to write the consonants and then put the vowels in their proper places—is just where the most hesitation is liable to be. First, time is lost in getting the true sound of the word; secondly, comes the quickly-to-be-disposed-of thought how to write the consonants the best way, and which vowels to put in, and how many. All this in less than a second! By that time the outline has been made with such spasmodic jerks that intended full-lengths are half-lengths, and intend-

ed half-lengths twice as long as they ought to be; or an intended hook has been made into a circle, or a circle into a hook. Some stenographers make a desperate dash in the beginning to write the troublesome word in longhand. Then the longhand may be harder to read than if it had been in shorthand. Or, if made originally in shorthand, one of the vowels may have been thrown into the wrong position. These things are almost distracting to some stenographers of short experience.’\* †

When, after the harrassing encounter with a “hard word,” the difficulties thus described have been overcome, and the desperately-sought out-

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\*In my essay on “The Mastery of Shorthand,” I attributed this language to an English author. Later, I found that it was part of an essay read by my friend Demming, some years ago, before the New York State Stenographers’ Association. The English author borrowed the passage without giving due credit.

†In July and August, 1908, the Typewriter & Phonographic World published a symposium on “What Should Constitute the Best System of Shorthand?” The question was addressed to many well-known authors and reporters with the stipulation that each answer should not exceed fifty words. The writer of the extract quoted above, Col. H. C. Demming, of Harrisburg, replied to the question as follows:

“Permit me to state—from an experience of more than forty years—that that system should constitute the best system of shorthand which is the most rapidly and easily written, and which can be read without hesitation or mistake. To reach this result, it seems to me that the forward line movement is the ideal; and there would be an improvement if the forward lines could be written without reference to shading or position.”

This was written by Col. Demming eleven years after the extract given above was quoted by Mr. Brown.—*The Publishers.*

line has been finally fixed upon paper, the writer finds that he must make up for lost time, must strain his energies to write perhaps ten or fifteen words in the time usually required to write six or eight. The struggle with the refractory outline has left his mind flurried and worried; and it does not easily regain its ordinary composure. Thus the "hard word" not only has its own sting, but it leaves "the trail of the serpent" behind it.

### **Will the Bother Ever Cease?**

Smarting under such a vexatious experience, repeated far too often, the young writer is driven to ask, "Shall I ever reach a point where all the words will be as easy as some are now?" No, my young friend, the point will never be reached where all words will be written with equal ease. Continued practice will make many outlines easy which at first were troublesome; the "hard words," so far as ordinary matter is concerned, will become fewer and fewer. But, after writing shorthand for years, the writer will still be liable from time to time—in technical matter, possibly dozens of times a day—to jostle up suddenly against some strange word never

before written, and perhaps never before heard, but which must be written on the instant, legibly and briefly. To do this requires, of course, a masterly command of stenographic resources; yet it is possible for the stenographer so to educate himself that this encounter with "hard words" shall lose its terror, that the ordeal shall no longer be feared, because he will have at his command the resources for meeting it successfully.

#### Wide Verbal Knowledge Helps.

The difficulty will grow less and less as the reporter enlarges his familiarity with his mother tongue, and as he becomes acquainted with the terminology of the different subjects about which he is to write. When a word has been seen or heard, though never before stenographically written, its outline is much more promptly fixed upon paper than when the word is strange, not only to the hand, but to the ear. If, for instance, *anthropomorphism* (a word not uncommon in theological and metaphysical discussions) should fall upon the ear of the reporter as an utterly strange term, he would probably fail to write it, however distinctly it might be



spoken, because he would fail to understand it. But if the word were already somewhat familiar to eye or ear, the difficulty of writing it in shorthand would not be appalling; and even if written incorrectly, it would still be correctly read. Hence, if the young reporter familiarizes himself in advance with merely the sounds of any technical terms which he is likely to meet in reporting, he has shorn the "hard words" of much of their terror. It is when ear and hand are both puzzled that the bother is greatest. This is well illustrated in the following incident, narrated by a well-known stenographer, Mr. A. O. Reser:

"An eminent Bible lecturer told me the other day that he was lecturing last summer at Mount Eagle, Tenn., on the genealogy of the Bible. He started out with Adam and passed down past Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Mr. Levering, the lecturer, said that after he had commenced, he noticed that the audience was amused at something, and he did not know what it was. After the meeting was over, he asked some of the members of the audience what amused them. They told him they were laughing at the herculean exertions of the reporter, who for ten min-

utes tried to report, but at the end of that time threw down his pencil and gave it up. He simply could not do it; not from inability to write, but largely because of inability to hear and understand the words used."

### **Common Outlines Must Be Memorized.**

While it would be an impossible task to learn in advance the shorthand forms of all the "hard words," every young writer should become acquainted as quickly as possible with the outlines of all the common words, including all ordinary word-signs and every-day phrases; and for this purpose his reading and writing exercises, if rightly chosen, should be made thoroughly familiar by continued repetition. In learning the common words, he is learning the principles upon which the uncommon words must be written. Besides, he is qualifying himself to "catch up" more quickly when a "hard word" has thrown him back; and then, too, because he can readily write ordinary words, he is not so far behind when a "hard word" strikes him. Thus the stenographer helps himself to write the "hard words" by thoroughly mastering the easy ones. It may here be remarked incidentally that

the liability at any time to meet a "hard word" is one strong reason for cultivating the habit of writing as little behind the speaker as necessary. A "hard word" has the writer at a great disadvantage when it finds him already lagging, holding in his mind eight or ten words still unwritten.

### **Fundamental Abbreviating Principles Must Be Mastered.**

To write promptly a new and complex outline requires a thorough knowledge and ready command of the abbreviating principles of the shorthand system. I speak of "abbreviating principles" as distinguished from word-signs and other arbitrary contractions. How and when circles, loops, hooks, half-lengths, and double-lengths, may or may not be used, is a species of knowledge which, though often despised as a part of "the corresponding style," is indispensable not only to the learner but to the advanced reporter. "Reporting expedients," as they are called, can never supply the place of these simple abbreviating principles. With the latter at one's fingers' ends, a new outline, however complex or difficult, may generally be constructed

without serious delay. It does not matter for the moment if an outline which, in the midst of hurried speaking, must be written hurriedly or not at all, be not the same as that given in the student's text-book or dictionary. The different consonants, if combined somehow, with a fair regard to rudimentary principles, will form a legible outline. The one thing above all others which distinguishes the stenographic athlete from the stenographic weakling is the readiness with which the athlete, amid a torrent of language, writes a "hard word" which he has never written before. And this readiness comes largely from a thorough mastery, not merely intellectual but manual, of radical principles. Mere intellectual mastery of a principle counts for almost nothing in an art like shorthand, which depends largely upon manual skill exercised with almost inconceivable promptness.

### **Should We Write "Hard Words" in Longhand?**

It has been suggested that "a reporter may take time occasionally to write a hard word in longhand." But longhand, as a makeshift substitute for shorthand, is never the refuge of a thoroughly-trained stenographer. To fix beyond doubt the spelling of a proper name, to make a

possibly dubious word plain to his transcribing assistant, or for some similar purpose, the accomplished reporter may occasionally write a word in longhand, but never because he is staggered in the application of shorthand principles, and cannot devise for an uncommon word a suitable stenographic outline. A word nervously and hurriedly written in longhand, because the stenographer is staggered, involves generally the loss of succeeding words, and, besides, proves often undecipherable.

### **Get It "Down Somehow."**

One of the most valuable habits for the young stenographer, and one which he should assiduously cultivate in taking dictation as well as in reporting, is that of attacking promptly and boldly an uncommon or difficult word and getting it down somehow. If the writer be well schooled, the outline thus promptly achieved will generally violate no principle, although it may not be the briefest form possible. And even though a shorthand rule be for the moment violated, this is far better, if the outline be legible, than that time be lost in hesitation. Sometimes the reporter, hard pressed to keep up, must get

a word down "by hook or by crook," even though the "hooks" and "crooks" may be somewhat at variance with the canons of his system. Of shorthand it is distinctly and emphatically true that "he who hesitates is lost." An accomplished reporter, and a phonographic author of no mean standing (Mr. George C. Thornton) has said that we should "make it a rule to write proper forms; but we must violate this rule ruthlessly, rather than run the risk of falling farther behind than can be done with entire safety." "It is better," he says, "to write an outline in the fullest possible manner, rather than hesitate for even the most trifling period of time for the purpose of recalling the text-book forms."

### **"The Faculty of Keeping On."**

The habit of coming to a standstill because a word is uncommon and somewhat difficult to write is one of the most fatal that a young stenographer can acquire. Many a learner practicing for speed interrupts the dictation again and again so that he may settle nice questions in regard to dubious outlines. Occasionally time is taken to look up the doubtful word in a shorthand dictionary. Those who indulge this dan-

gerous habit should ponder well the following advice of Mr. Fred Pitman: "Stopping to consider the form of a word while following a speaker is almost sure to result in the loss of some words which follow. When the reporter meets with complex or long words, he should avoid hesitation, and exercise the faculty of keeping on. This is a faculty which must be carefully cultivated in one's writing from dictation. How to deal promptly with perplexing words is a problem which must be mastered by anyone who would become a verbatim reporter. One hard word, if the writer allows himself to pause and hesitate, may cause the loss of a dozen words following it."

#### **Don't Seek the Briefest Outline.**

The staggering hesitation of the young stenographer when called on to write a new word, arises often from an undefined notion that he must, though writing the word for the first time, get down the briefest and best outline that the system will allow. It is of vital importance that such a notion be dismissed. A long outline for a new or strange word is something that no stenographer should be afraid of. Frequently, in

the hurry of note-taking, a long outline which suggests itself readily, is more quickly written than a shorter one which requires the writer to stop and think. Indeed, many reporters prefer to write a new word very fully the first time it occurs. They believe that in such cases a full outline is more likely to be readily legible. If the word occurs again and again, the outline may gradually be more and more abbreviated. Thus a difficult technical term, newly encountered, may be written one way at the top of the note-taker's page, another way at the middle, and still another way at the bottom.

#### **The Bugbear of "Position."**

The task of the young writer, on meeting a new and difficult word, is made all the more perplexing, if he has unfortunately been misled into the belief that every outline, long or short, frequent or infrequent, ambiguous or unmistakable, must be written in the position corresponding with its accented or leading vowel. If thus mis-schooled as to the requirements of the "reporting style," he must not only think out the whole outline before starting to write it, but, with the outline mentally suspended, must de-



side which of perhaps half a dozen vowels (heard possibly none too distinctly) is the one which should determine the "reporting position" of the outline. I pity the thousands of young writers who to-day are being educated into a habit which thus makes needlessly difficult the acquisition of speed. I meet such mis-educated young writers from time to time. I ask them to write some word, not very difficult, but which they have never written before; and they hesitate painfully. The pen seems unwilling or unable to touch the paper. Mind and hand appear paralyzed. "What boggles you?" I ask; and they reply, "Oh, I can write the outline, but I am trying to think of the position!" This is often their pitiable plight after they have been writing shorthand for months and months! They deludedly fancy they are being educated to write "as reporters write"; but alas for any reporter (I do not personally know any such) who has acquired, among his "reporting habits," that of pondering about the "position" of a new and difficult word before putting it upon paper!\*

### "Divide and Conquer."

Whatever may be the dicta of certain teach-

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\*These remarks do not apply to systems which are written without the "Bugbear of Position."—*The Publishers.*

ers and text-books on this subject, a vast majority of the practical reporters of the country do not thus understand "the reporter's rule of position." In dealing with a new word of considerable length and difficult construction, these writers (following the long-settled canons of standard text-books and recognizing no such spurious "rule of position") meet the difficulty in a simpler way than by first thinking out the consonant outline; then, with the outline mentally suspended, running over all the vowels to ascertain the accented or leading one; and then placing the outline in such a position as that vowel is supposed to require. These writers, when they meet a long and rare word like *perspicacity*, *tergiversation*, *paradoxicalness*, *supererogatory*, *duplicative*, follow the maxim which applies often in shorthand as elsewhere, "Divide and conquer." Thinking nothing in the first instance of the vowels—thinking nothing even of the consonants, except the initial stroke, simple or compound—these writers, as soon as the word falls upon the ear, place the pen unhesitatingly upon the paper, and, starting the word in the second or neutral position—the easiest, the natural position—they proceed to think out the outline, if

need be, syllable by syllable or stroke by stroke as they write. Mind and pen do their work simultaneously and in concert. In the word *imperceptible*, for instance, the different parts might be thought out, and written step by step, thus: *Im-per-cept-ible*. In this way, each syllable becomes, as it were, a separate little word; and an outline which, taken as a whole, would seem appallingly long and difficult, proves comparatively easy when thus resolved into its several parts. The exact syllabic divisions which may be adopted in thus writing a word for the first time under speed pressure, are comparatively unimportant. Nor is it essential in the first writing of a word that the consonants of each syllable be expressed in absolutely the briefest way.

Ordinarily, with a practised writer, the mind will keep pace with, if it does not outrun, the hand, so that between the syllabic parts of the word the pen need not pause. But suppose an expert writer, following this method, may occasionally pause, with pen upon paper, at the end of a syllable or a stroke, until the succeeding one is thought out; is not this far better than a staggering and possibly unsuccessful attempt to pre-

construct by a single grasp of the mind, the whole outline of a difficult word, before even beginning to write it?\*

### Vowel "Indication" Often a Delusion.

If it be said that this method of writing a difficult word piecemeal, and without thinking in the first instance of "position," makes no provision for "indicating" omitted vowels, I answer it is far better, when a strange word is met with, that the "indication" of the omitted vowel be not attempted than that the writer, by pondering hesitation, should fail to fix upon paper the consonant outline, or, while slowly determining both outline and "position," should lose essential words which follow. I answer further that, in many cases the prompt writing of the outline will leave time for the actual insertion of the leading vowel, which, with a new or rare word, is far better than any imperfect, and, at best, vague "indication." I venture to affirm that all practical reporters, when writing for the first

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\*The method here described of "tackling" rare or difficult words is practiced, I believe, by the majority of experienced reporters; but I do not know that I have ever seen it described in print, except in a magazine article of Mr. A. J. Barnes, the well-known author and teacher of St. Louis, Missouri, some of whose ideas and expressions I have taken the liberty of using, with this acknowledgement.

time any out-of-the-way word, aim to express, if possible, the characteristic and significant vowel, rather than trust to any mere "indication" of it; for "indication" in many cases means simply that, when the word is to be deciphered, not only must one of four, five or six possible vowels be fixed upon by guess, but the syllabic place of the accented vowel in a word of perhaps five or six syllables must also be guessed at.\*

While putting a word promptly upon paper in the manner I have described, the writer inaudibly, and perhaps unconsciously, pronounces each syllable to himself; and having thus, while writing the consonant outline, rehearsed incidentally the vowels with the consonants, the essential vowel is generally clear before his mind as soon as the outline is finished, and can be instantly inserted if time allows. Thus an outline, which, ignoring artificial rules of "position," is so vocalized as to express the essential vowel, will often be written in less time than an unvocalized outline carefully placed in "position," which, theoretically, is supposed to "indicate" the omitted vowel, but whose "indication" is,

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\*The difficulties mentioned in this passage are peculiar to Pitmanic shorthand.—*The Publishers.*

for an unfamiliar word (such as a proper name), generally vague, unsuggestive, and practically useless. There is a "reporter's rule of position" by which a few hundred brief and common outlines are saved from the need of habitual vocalization by resorting to the *exceptional* device of three different positions, while thousands of other words of unmistakable outlines—a vast majority indeed of the words of the English language—are written in the second and easiest position, without reference to accented or leading vowels, and are readily recognized by their consonant outlines alone. The genuine "rule of position," as thus practiced, will be found fully explained in most of the standard instruction-books. It needs no further discussion here.

#### **Some Minor Difficulties to be Met.**

In writing a word for the first time, medial hooks or loops should be used very sparingly, because often they seriously retard the flow of the outline. If, for instance, in hurriedly writing *penetration*, the n-hook should be introduced in the syllable "pen," the next part of the outline, "tr," could not be written in the only proper way, with the r-hook. Thus an awkward, unsuggestive outline would result.

Sometimes, when a hard word as uttered is entirely strange or unfamiliar, the writer may be in doubt whether the sounds which reach his ear constitute one word or more than one; in which case, without stopping to ponder upon the question, he may, upon the impulse of the moment, write the combination of sounds either as one word or as several. The word or words intended may often be precisely ascertained afterward from books of reference or by personal inquiry.

It ought to be added that, in writing "hard words," a thorough familiarity with the vowel-signs, so as to use them without the least hesitation, is often absolutely indispensable. When a word, because unfamiliar, is indistinctly understood, the vowels are generally more clearly heard than the consonants, and though the consonant outline may be incorrect, a clearly-expressed vowel may be so wonderfully suggestive as to settle beyond doubt the word intended.\*

### Special Practice Upon "Hard Words."

But "how to write the hard words" must be learned practically. The mere reading of rules

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\*Writers of a connective vowel system will appreciate this strong endorsement of the importance of the vowels.—*The Publishers.*

on the subject can give one nothing more than theory. The student must learn how to "tackle" a difficulty by "tackling" it. If he would learn to write "hard words" off-hand, he must from time to time practice the writing of such words off-hand. To attack "hard words" boldly, as soon as heard, and instantaneously to originate some legible outline, is something quite different from attempting to creep around the "hard word" mountain by memorizing outlines which have been constructed by some one else. If the student would acquire the art of writing "hard words" without needless loss of time, a part of his daily drill should be to write from dictation a certain number of such words—words not so rare as never to occur in practice, and not so common as to be a part of one's every-day vocabulary. As each difficult word is dictated to him, he should, without stopping to deliberate, begin at once to write it, and proceeding with as little pause as possible, he should go on and finish it. Such an exercise might be so arranged that the words introduced shall gradually become harder and harder.

Practice of this sort will develop in the writer what has already been spoken of as "the



faculty of keeping on," the faculty of grappling a hard word promptly and unflinchingly, and at once achieving *some* outline—brief and correct, if possible, but at any rate legible. Under this sort of practice, the habit of stumbling and staggering whenever a new word is met should finally disappear. If such practice, when attempted, should show—as in some cases it may—that the student has had insufficient drill on the abbreviating principles—if, for instance, he sometimes writes an l-hook instead of an r-hook, or an n-hook instead of an f-hook—if he fails sometimes to make the circle, the loop, the half-length or the double-length where plain principle demands them—then he is unprepared for anything in the nature of "speed practice"; and if he is wise, he will turn back to those rudimentary rules which neither the veteran reporter nor the stenographic tyro can ever dispense with, and will never leave them until they are mastered.

## THE SPEEDY HAND

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For the most rapid stenographic writing, there must of course be considerable agility of hand. The lack of this does not show itself in the beginning of the student's practice, because at that stage he cannot think out his shorthand fast enough to keep even a slow hand busy; the hand, however inexpert, awaits the slow action of the mind. Nor does this lack of manual facility show itself decidedly during the amanuensis stage, because for the speed of the amanuensis very little special training of the hand is needed, if in ordinary writing a fairly easy and free command of the pen has been acquired. But for the attainment of high reporting speed much manual facility is indispensable. Where exceptional executive power is sought, special manual discipline is as important to the student of shorthand as to the pianist.

It may be true, as a writer in the "National Stenographer" (May, 1896) remarks, that "a naturally slow hand will never develop sufficient

speed for verbatim reporting"; but no one has a right to accuse himself of having "a naturally slow hand," while the fact may be that his hand is simply untrained or mistrained. A "naturally" agile hand can be so mismanaged, so handicapped by bad habits, so held back by poorly-learned and poorly-remembered shorthand, that its natural agility cannot show itself. Many a shorthand writer who reproaches himself with slow-handedness could move his hand freely enough if he could think promptly what to write.

If any slow writer of shorthand wishes to decide whether his slowness has its cause in the hand or in the mind, he can easily adopt a trustworthy test. Let him have read to him a limited quantity of new matter—two or three hundred words, and let him note the exact speed with which he is able to write it. Then, after carefully correcting his errors, let him copy the same matter in its corrected form twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty times. After thus familiarizing himself with the matter so as to write it without a particle of hesitation, let him have it again dictated to him. He will probably find that on this last trial he can write it from dictation twice as

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fast as at first. As many strokes are written, and manual motions made, in one-half the time required at first. Why? Not because the hand has developed in half an hour or an hour a doubled capacity for rapid movement. The simple explanation is that the mind no longer hesitates; the hand is no longer held back by slow shorthand thinking; the writing has become automatic. Such a trial will demonstrate to any writer the real speed capacity of his hand at the particular time of making the trial—not necessarily the limit of its speed capacity after it shall have undergone proper discipline; for there may be unconsciously to himself bad manipulative habits which need to be removed and methods of manual training which he needs faithfully to pursue.

### **The Longhand Twist.**

In the shorthand writer's manual discipline the first step is to get rid of certain habits often acquired in writing longhand, and which, unless corrected, must make high stenographic speed a physical impossibility. It may be desirable, for a time at least, that longhand practice be as

far as possible suspended, so that a new set of manual habits may be the more easily acquired.

One of the habits which shorthand students need especially to overcome arises from the peculiar slant of the longhand characters. In order to give these their ordinary forward inclination, the fingers and the hand are usually twisted to the right, with the penhandle pointing to the shoulder, or sometimes to the breast. But as the shorthand characters are written in almost every direction—probably more of them with a backward inclination or with a horizontal motion than with a forward slope, the hand and fingers, in being educated for shorthand writing, must be emancipated from the fixed position to which they have been accustomed in longhand. For shorthand writing the penholder should generally, though not constantly, point in a line with the forearm, so that, without changing its position, a phonographic *d* or *b* can be readily made.\*

### Aerial Pen Twirling.

It scarcely need be said that the shorthand writer must absolutely discard the habit in

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\*These remarks apply only to geometrical systems. It is not necessary for writers of a system, founded on the same elements as longhand is, "to get rid of certain habits acquired in writing longhand which, unless corrected, must make high stenographic speed a physical impossibility."—*The Publishers*.

which some longhand writers seem to take pride—a useless and ridiculous fashion of lifting the hand an inch or two from the paper, and wiggling or twirling it in mid-air as a preparation for the writing of a word or a letter. These pen-pirouettes, whatever purpose they may serve in connection with longhand (and I believe the most rapid longhand writers do not indulge in them), have certainly no magic power to aid in the correct, symmetrical or rapid shaping of shorthand characters. This preparatory twirling or poising of the pen (indulged in by so many longhand writers) seems to be an incident of the much-lauded “arm movement,” or “muscular movement,” and is to my mind a confession of the unsteadiness and inexactness of “the arm movement” as a letter-forming movement. I do not disparage the great importance of a free arm in order to transport the hand smoothly and pauselessly across the page; but any movement which in longhand requires that the stroke to be written must be rehearsed and prepared for by a species of aerial gymnastics, while the writing is momentarily suspended, and before the pen touches the paper, is evidently unsuited to shorthand writing. This preparatory

poising of the pen is thus approvingly described by one of the writing masters:

“Practice the movement with the pen in the air; then take a good aim and fire to hit the mark. The same rules will in a measure apply to writing with ‘the muscular movement’ that apply to rifle practice; namely, a steady, nervy movement, a keen eye, and true aim.”

The aerial rehearsal of the strokes about to be written—the preparatory shaping of the characters “in the air” before the pen touches the paper—is evidently what this master of the “muscular movement” means by “taking aim.” But for such “taking aim,” the shorthand writer has no time. He must fire without waiting to “take aim.” So long as he habitually stops to steady his rifle and deliberately “take aim,” he will not bag any stenographic game.

### **Pen-Gripping.**

Another of the bad habits which the student may need to get rid of, is too tight gripping of his pen or pencil. As Thomas Allen Reed says, “Some writers grasp their pen or pencil so tightly that an easy and flowing style is never acquired.” This is a common fault with

both longhand writers and shorthand writers. With beginners in stenography, it may be either caused or aggravated by the concentrated mental strain attending the mastering of a new system of writing.\* This pen-gripping, involving as it does needless muscular effort, tends to promote an inartistic style of writing, interferes with the acquisition of speed, and induces undue and premature fatigue, saying nothing of the ultimate danger of pen paralysis from the unnecessary, excessive and long-continued muscular strain.

### Finger Action.

The habit of pen-gripping has this further disadvantage: it prevents the free flexing of the two writing fingers and the thumb, which should be pliable and supple in order to contribute their share to neat and rapid shorthand. This tight grasping of the pen or pencil seems to arise in many cases from a mistaken effort to write entirely "from the arm." The free action of the writing fingers is still further obstructed if (as

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\*By a "new system of writing" we suppose Mr. Brown means the geometrical style of penmanship to which he referred in speaking of the "longhand twist." It is also important to note that absence of distinctions between light and heavy strokes helps to overcome the tendency to grip the pen.—*The Publishers.*



is too common) the penhandle or pencil is allowed to rest fixedly below the knuckle—in the crotch, as it may be called, between the knuckle and the thumb. If, avoiding this position, the pen is held so that it may roll, as it were, upon the side of the knuckle as the fingers are extended or contracted, a wonderful sweep of finger action may be obtained, unspeakably useful in the shaping of many of the shorthand characters. Some of the writing masters have so great a horror of what they call the “finger movement” (I do not favor a *vicious* finger movement any more than they do) that they give no attention to cultivating the flexibility of the fingers and thumb, saying to their pupils that “the fingers will take care of themselves,” “you are sure to use the fingers enough.” Without stopping to dispute the infallibility of the writing masters within their special province (the teaching of longhand), I affirm, from personal observation of many a shorthand writer attempting to write rapid stenography with inflexible fingers, that in shorthand the fingers unfortunately do not “take care of themselves.” I affirm further that, for the purpose of promoting ease of movement, for the purpose of securing an easy lift-

ing of the pen (which is best accomplished by a mere extension or lifting of the fingers without any lifting of the hand), and for the purpose of accomplishing a facile formation of the shorthand characters, the fingers and the thumb should be entirely flexible, ready to do their proper share in the act of writing.

In these days when we hear so much about "writing from the shoulder," about "the arm movement," "the muscular movement," etc., it should not be forgotten that those nimble little instruments, the fingers, so highly valued in every other manual art because of their adaptation to quick and delicate movements, can serve as important adjuncts (I do not claim that they should be the sole machinery) in symmetrical and ripad shorthand writing. Some of the most rapid stenographic penmen, including one of whom it has been said that "in the making of shorthand notes, no human hand was ever more artistic and skillful," have been remarkable for the magnificent sweep of their deft fingers. (See remarks of Eugene Davis, in "The Missing Link in Shorthand," upon Joseph E. Lyons, deceased.)

In defense of a vicious "finger movement," as described by a writing master of my acquaint-

ance, I have nothing to say. "Place the hand," he says, "on the desk, resting firmly on the side of the little finger and side of the palm of the hand. Now, without the least movement of the hand, write one, two or three letters; then slide or drag the hand along to a new resting place, and repeat the writing of several letters before again changing the position of the hand. This is what writing masters condemn as the finger movement." Of course there is a vast difference between a vicious finger movement, as thus described, and that free and natural play of the fingers without which shorthand writing cannot be done with artistic ease, and with no premature and unnecessary fatigue.

#### **The Gliding Movement.**

The proper management of the fingers, the hand and the arm (upon the combined action of which the best shorthand writing depends) cannot receive from the ambitious shorthand writer too much attention. While the fingers should be allowed to yield themselves flexibly and gracefully to the motions of the pen, any attempt to write exclusively with the fingers must result in a cramped and slow movement. The

hand should learn to carry itself smoothly across the page, with as little pressure as possible, the little finger resting lightly upon the paper from the beginning to the end of the line, so that the hand, propelled by the forearm, may deftly glide along without hitch or hesitation. With many writers, however, the hand bears so heavily upon the paper as to forbid anything like "gliding," so that as soon as a few characters have been executed, the hand, by a comparatively slow and laborious movement, must be restationed. When the fingers can be stretched no farther sideward, the little finger, upon which, as on a fixed prop, the hand has heavily rested, is either completely lifted, carried an inch or two forward, and replaced upon the paper; or, without leaving the paper, it is dragged an inch or two toward the right, to remain in its new position until required to make another laborious little journey as soon as a few more characters have been written. During each of these hitches, of course, the writing is completely suspended until the hand can be restationed.

In the movement which the student must seek to cultivate, the hand, resting lightly on the outer edge of the little finger, glides (no word can

better express the proper movement) steadily over the paper. Until the end of the line is reached, the little finger is not lifted; so that the writing goes on without needless interruption. The wrist does not touch the paper. The hand receives the slight support it needs from the little finger, whose main function, however, is not so much to support the hand as to steady it. The light, smooth, regular, continuous, gliding motion here described and insisted upon, seems to be absolutely necessary for the highest shorthand speed. The wretched "stepety-step" movement, in which the hand rests heavily upon the paper, except when, after every few words or phrases, it is with effort lifted or dragged along, will never permit rapid writing.

No reasonable effort should be spared to acquire this gliding movement, as it has been termed, this free lateral movement of the hand. But if, after persevering trial, it cannot be acquired, so that the writer still finds himself unable, as he thinks, to carry his hand lightly across the whole breadth of a foolscap or letter page, he may compromise with his own infirmity and evade rather than overcome the difficulty by dividing the note-taking page into two or

more columns, filling, as he writes, first one column, and then another. This method has been practiced and recommended by some writers of high standing, one of whom has said: "By writing in columns, the motion of the hand across the page is saved, as the fingers will extend the pen across the column without moving the hand in this sideward direction; and the only motion of the hand required is down the page; and even that may be saved by sliding the paper up with the left hand."

#### **"A Light Touch."**

The habit of writing with no undue straining of the muscles, with an easy grasp of the pen or pencil, with but slight pressure upon the paper, and with a graceful gliding of the hand across the page, constitutes what is called "a light touch"—a most valuable acquisition to any one who aspires to be a rapid shorthand writer. "A man" (says Mr. Fred Pitman) "who possesses a fine touch will write smoothly with little apparent effort, even at a high rate of speed." This lightness of touch, he adds, is "so important a thing that great speed can scarcely be attained without it." More than that, it en-

ables the writer to continue his work for a much longer period and with less fatigue than would be possible with a heavier hand and greater muscular strain. "Where the pen is tightly held," says Thomas Allen Reed, "a couple of hours continuous writing is felt to be a toil, producing in the case of rapid note-taking a sense of considerable fatigue." On the other hand, he remarks, "a man who holds his pen lightly and is perfectly familiar with his shorthand, will write for half a day or more without any laborious exertion or sense of weariness. I have myself taken shorthand notes for ten hours continuously, with an interval of only a few minutes, filling more than two hundred closely written pages, each containing about five folios; and I could have gone on without much difficulty for an hour or two longer. I take no credit to myself for this. Having naturally a light touch, I have simply tried to cultivate it, as many others have done with the same result."\*

A reporter of my acquaintance who has had great experience in taking notes for many hours daily during many successive days, has told me

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\*This is more applicable to a system requiring shading than to one in which all the writing is light. The absence of shading in writing gives a sense of freedom which is productive of a light touch.—*The Publishers.*

that, being threatened with pen paralysis, and compelled to resort to every expedient to economize the muscular effort of writing, he derived the greatest possible aid from cultivating extreme lightness of touch. This, he said, had proved in his own case an unmistakable aid to rapidity, a protection against fatigue, and a safeguard against the greatest peril of the hard-working stenographer—penman's palsy.

The cultivation of a light touch should be one main purpose of the shorthand writer from the very beginning of his practice. Unless cultivated in the beginning, its acquirement may later be very difficult, if not impossible; for it has been aptly remarked, "No habits are retained with more permanence than those pertaining to the operation of the muscles."

In aiming to acquire a light pressure of the pen, it may be well for the student to bear in mind the words of Mr. Reed: "The only pressure on the pencil or the penholder which is needed is just enough to give the fingers a perfect command over it, so that the forms may be traced firmly and clearly, but not stiffly. A happy and judicious combination of firmness and lightness is the goal at which every young shorthand writer should direct his efforts."



An eminent American reporter, who inclines to the use of the pencil in preference to the pen, has said in one of his publications: "If you have a heavy hand use a pencil"—which seems to me equivalent to saying: "If you have any faulty method of writing, humor it, and don't seek to overcome it." I would rather say to the student, "If you have a heavy hand, strive to get rid of it by using an instrument which requires you to write lightly; get the softest pen you can find, that it may compel you to hold your naturally heavy hand in check." For the shorthand writer who wants a light touch—that is, who wants to write with no needless pressure—there can scarcely be such a thing as a pen which is too soft.

In aiming to acquire that much-to-be-desired boon, "a light touch," the shorthand student should constantly aim to throw as little weight as possible upon the right arm. To lean forward, and, as it were, crouch over one's notebook, is not only an ungainly habit, but one which, by throwing extra weight upon the writing arm, interferes with ease and speed.

A sadly vicious habit, too often indulged, even in some schools of penmanship and short-

hand (as shown in the photographs of their well-filled class rooms), is to place the right side of the body toward the desk and write with the weight of the body thrown upon the right arm. On this point, I am glad to quote with hearty concurrence the language of that well-known "speed writer," Isaac S. Dement: "Now we have got the weight of the movement off the arm, let us take the weight of the body off from it and throw it on the left arm. Then it is perfectly free. What have you got? Your hand is in perfect condition to do exactly what you wish it to do. Of course, if there is no cramping, the rapidity is assured."

## **“THE LITTLE FOXES THAT SPOIL THE VINES.”**

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One of the striking characteristics of the speedy hand is that it loses no time in waste motions. An ingenious writer has estimated that the time necessarily lost during pen-lifts by the most experienced and expert stenographer under the most favorable circumstances, is equal to forty per cent of the whole time occupied in the writing. In other words, there is sixty per cent of written product to one hundred per cent of time consumed. This estimate seems to me much exaggerated; but it is doubtless true that the ordinary writer, with whom of course the non-productive consumption of time is greater than with the expert, loses while his pen does not touch the paper—while he is passing from word to word, from phrase to phrase, from line to line, from page to page—while, strictly speaking, no writing is being done—more time than he occupies in the shaping of the shorthand characters.

A certain amount of loss during the pen-lifts is of course inevitable. But how can this loss be kept down to the lowest possible point? Doubtless with many young writers a large part of the loss occurring during pen-lifts proceeds from mental hesitation—indecision as to how the successive shorthand outlines should be written. The cause and cure of this infirmity will be the subject of a later chapter. But when mental hesitation has largely passed away, there often remain many time-wasting habits which do their fell work, unconsciously to the writer, while his pen is lifted—habits many of which, taken singly, would scarcely be worthy of notice except in connection with an art in which literally every moment is precious. These time-wasting habits, while the writer is unaware of their existence, rob him of the speed he might attain. They are “the little foxes that spoil the vines.”

#### **How Good Phrasing Helps.**

When we seek to minimize the losses by or during the pen-lifts, an obvious suggestion is, reduce the number of necessary pen-lifts by good phrasing. By good phrasing, I mean, of course, phrasing which does not, while pretend-

ing to save time, sacrifice it by inconvenient or awkward junctions, or by an habitual pondering upon the phrasability of all the various verbal combinations which present themselves in following a reader or a speaker. But when good phrasing has dispensed with every unnecessary pen-lift, the pen must still be lifted again and again during the course of every line; and if at every pen-lift time is needlessly lost, the possibility of high speed is defeated, because the “little foxes” are stealthily doing their work.

### “Quick Transitions.”

Time may be lost during the pen-lifts, not only by unnecessary motions, but by performing necessary motions in a sluggish way. The movements of the hand in passing from word to word, from line to line, from page to page, may be performed in the right way, but not with sufficient alertness. “Quick transitions” should be the watchword of every writer who aims at speed. While the pen is lifted, let all sluggishness and dawdling be avoided. Let the pen, when necessarily lifted, get back to its work with no waste motion or needless delay. Let the hand be carried from the end of one line to the be-

ginning of another with lightning-like celerity. Let the turning of the leaf be always properly prepared for, and then at the right moment, be done "with a whiz." Let all the movements of fingers, hand and arm, while the pen does not touch the paper, be hurried to the last extreme. If these movements, in which no amount of hurry can do harm, be performed "with a rush," time is gained for carefulness where it is often needed—while the pen is actually making its record. Even the beginner (too often indulged in sluggish movements and methods) should habituate himself as soon as possible to "quick transitions."

#### **The Pen-Lift Must Not Be a Hand-Lift.**

But during the pen-lifts the writer's motions are too often not merely sluggish, but superfluous. Time is lost in doing what need not be done and ought not to be done. Sometimes, for instance, the pen-lift which (except at the end of a line) should be accomplished by a mere extension or lifting of the writing-fingers, becomes a hand-lift. In such cases the little finger, on which the hand should glide from the beginning to the end of the line without leaving

the paper, is lifted at the end of almost every word or phrase, and carried forward, to be restationed a little farther on. When this happens, not only is there a loss by the needless lifting of the hand, as well as by its return and readjustment, but the hand, especially when hurried, can scarcely return to the paper, after one of these lifts, without a sort of jar, necessitating a little pause until the pen steadies itself; or, if this steadying pause be not made, the character of the writing suffers. Sitting beside a writer who habitually substituted hand-lifts for pen-lifts, I have felt the jarring of the desk two or three times in the course of every line, as his hand heavily returned to the paper. This habit of hand-lifting is no doubt in many cases a legacy of longhand-teaching. The writer unconsciously clings to the notion, already referred to, that the twirling of the pen “in the air” before it touches the paper—“taking a good aim,” as the writing master calls it—aids in the shaping of the characters.

Many writers who avoid the error of making a hand-lift instead of a pen-lift, lose time by lifting the pen too high. Let it be remembered that a mere breaking of the contact between

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pen and paper is all that is necessary, and "whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." With some of the most rapid writers I know, the pen, except at the end of a line, can scarcely be seen to leave the paper, the lifting being often so slight as to show upon close examination a faint track left by the pen or pencil upon the paper in passing from word to word or from phrase to phrase. This I have noticed particularly in the writing of those masterly stenographers, Mr. Andrew Devine and Mr. Fred Ireland.

### Wasteful Spacing.

Another case of lost motion is when the hand, while passing from word to word, travels farther than it needs to do, and makes the intervening spaces too large. Many persons adopt so loose a style of writing as to get only five or six words on a line which might easily contain three or four times as many. In this "scattering" style of shorthand, there is a loss both direct and indirect. The direct loss, occasioned by the distance which the hand needlessly traverses between the words or phrases, entails an indirect loss by compelling the hand to pass



oftener from line to line than a compact style of writing would require. From the mere substitution of a compact for a scattering style, I have seen in many students an almost immediate gain of speed. On this subject I take pleasure in quoting the testimony of a well-known and long-experienced teacher, Mr. G. S. Walworth: "I frequently tell my students to keep the pen close to the paper, to write rather small outlines, and to leave little space between the words and phrases. Students in whom faulty habits in these respects are very pronounced, usually make a great jump in speed as soon as they rid themselves of them."

### **Pencil Moistening.**

What shall I say of the inexcusable habit (which I have seen practiced by both men and women) of putting the pencil to the mouth as often as it may seem to be necessary, to supply to the lead the moisture required for a clear stroke? This habit should not be tolerated for an hour. A pencil that constantly needs to be moistened is not adapted to shorthand work.

Many of the wrong habits pointed out in the last few pages are practiced unconsciously, and

can scarcely be corrected except through the vigilance of some person other than the writer himself. Let the student who suspects himself of any of these habits invite the keen watching of his teacher or dictator. He should also do what he can to watch himself, when engaged in writing memorized matter which requires only a limited share of his attention.

#### **Expeditious Leaf Turning.**

To avoid one of the most serious losses of the young writer, it is important that he should, from the beginning of his practice, aim to turn the leaves of his notebook readily and quickly, and to make the doing of it so habitual as to require but little attention. I have seen some otherwise accomplished writers, in turning a page, interrupt the writing while taking hold of the lower corner of the page with the right hand. Thomas Allen Reed gives a method of leaf-turning which is practiced by many English and American reporters:

“While writing on the upper half of the leaf introduce the second finger of the left hand between it and the next leaf, keeping the leaf on which you are writing steady by the first finger

and thumb. While writing on the lower part of the page, shift the leaf by degrees till it is about half way up the book; when it is convenient, lift up the thumb, and the leaf will turn over almost by itself. \* \* \* The finger should be introduced at the first pause the speaker makes, or at any other convenient opportunity that presents itself.”

Another excellent method is, while writing on the upper half of the page, to take the lower left-hand corner between the thumb and the forefinger of the left hand, and then push the page upward, a little at a time, selecting for this purpose those intervals when the speaker pauses or while the pen is shifting from line to line. The effect of thus pushing the page upward is to curl it, thus giving an opening for the introduction of the finger. This curling of the page will not interfere with the writing, if one or two fingers of the left hand are used to press down the part of the page on which the writing is being done, thus keeping it flat and firm. This pushing of the page upward is not only a preparation for turning the leaf, but it makes writing on the lower part of the page much more convenient, as the supporting

fingers of the right hand are not thrown entirely off the book.

Any writer who, after faithful practice, finds difficulty in acquiring either of these methods of turning the leaves, may profit by the suggestion of Miss Hattie A. Shinn, a most accomplished stenographer, who (writing in the "Exponent" for March, 1885), declares that it "requires nothing short of jugglery to turn the page after writing to the bottom of it, so quickly that nothing is lost by the time the top of the next page is reached." She therefore says to young writers, "Do not attempt to do fast writing in books folded at the end." Instead of these, she recommends side-folding books, in the use of which "the left hand, resting upon the page on which you write (and taking hold of the upper right hand corner), can readily have the page half turned by the time the bottom of it is reached. There is then nothing more to be done than to move the writing hand to the top of the next page, without the loss of a single movement."

As the pages of a new note-book have a tendency to adhere to one another, thus increasing the difficulty of turning the leaves, the writer will find it an advantage to go through the note-

book page by page before using it, and carefully separate the leaves.

### **The Speedy Hand Is Not Showy.**

In asking the student to avoid all waste motions and acquire in its genuine form a speedy hand, I am asking him to forego the applause of those (and they are many) who think that the hand which appears to be dashing in wild haste across the paper, or which in other ways makes a great show of motion, is writing fast. The person who, in writing, allows his fingers their proper play, who keeps his pen, even when lifted, close to the paper, who makes small spaces between words and phrases, who avoids large and sprawling characters, who turns the leaves of his note-book deftly but quietly, will not make much show of motion even in the most rapid work, and will thus miss the plaudits which many unthinking lookers-on are ready to give to the "pen-slinger" who, with great parade and pretense of fast writing, is, in fact, losing time by wasted motions which do not help speed, but hinder it. A gentleman thoroughly versed in the reporting profession (Mr. Henry C. Demming), has shrewdly observed: "Let a per-

son go into church during service, throw himself around wildly, slash and dash terrifically, and turn his leaves over with a snap; and nearly everybody within eye and earshot will inwardly say, 'What an excellent reporter he must be!' All this and more, while the manipulator of pen or pencil is not getting one-third of the discourse."

Such writers no doubt have the reward which they seek. But the stenographer who has imbibed the prime principle of rapid writing, that to economize movement and economize space is to economize time, and who has acquired that substantial blessing, the really speedy hand, the hand that makes no false show of rapidity, but simply keeps right on and "gets there," may well content himself with the celerity and accuracy of his note-taking, without envying the false glory of charlatans and pretenders.

## PEN OR PENCIL?

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The question whether the pen or the pencil should be preferred for stenographic writing, must naturally be of great interest to every shorthand student. This question has been among reporters a subject of much dispute. I believe that, as the result of the discussion, and more especially as the result of continued experience with the two instruments, a large majority of the reporters of the country consider the advantages decidedly in favor of the pen; and many who from force of early habit are obliged to continue the use of the pencil, do so regretfully, and look with envy upon the users of the pen.

### **Twelve Reasons in Favor of the Pen.**

Twelve reasons may be stated, which, in my opinion, should induce every young writer to educate himself from the very beginning of his practice to do his stenographic writing with the pen, whenever circumstances will allow him to do so:

1. The pen requires less muscular exertion for its management. Hence the pen-writer works for long periods with less fatigue than the pencil-writer. Stating the result of years of experience, and concurring with the general opinion on the subject, Mr. Geo. R. Bishop, the distinguished author of "Exact Phonography," has said that he "can write four hours with the pen with less fatigue than one hour with the pencil." The management of the pencil is a heavy tax upon the muscles and the nerves. This muscular and nervous strain, apart from the immediate fatigue, tends to bring on "writer's cramp." Mr. James E. Munson some time ago suggested that pen-paralysis, so-called, is generally pencil-paralysis, resulting from muscular overstraining which the pencil entails. An article in the "Shorthand Review" for August, 1891, exhibits vividly the extent of this overstraining. "We have," says this writer, "frequently examined the notes of recently-graduated stenographers, and find that the hand-pressure employed in writing leads to some very astonishing results. In many cases the pencil makes an impression through two or three pages of the note-book. It is needless to say that under such circum-



stances fast writing is impossible. Such an unnecessary expenditure of force cannot be employed with the pen."

The testimony of that long-experienced and widely-known reporter, Mr. A. P. Little, of Rochester, N. Y., is well worthy of recital here. Addressing his professional brethren of the New York State Stenographers' Association, Mr. Little says: "I do not believe an instance can be cited where writer's cramp has been caused by the use of a flexible-point pen in writing shorthand. I believe that it is almost entirely produced by the use of a pencil, which, in my opinion, no first-class stenographer ought to use in court or elsewhere; or else it is caused by using a very stiff pen. The use of the pencil requires the use of all the muscles to so much greater extent than the use of a flexible pen that they are over-exerted and thus become over fatigued; and in consequence of this over-exertion, one contracts writer's cramp. I do not take the ground that there are not first-class stenographers who put themselves to the extra trouble of using the pencil, or that there are not some stenographers that use a very stiff pen and 'get there' just as satisfactorily as anybody else. It is

very difficult for one unaccustomed to a stiff pen or pencil to use a very flexible pen. They are often entirely unable at first to control a flexible pen, that is, to make it go where they want it to go, and to make it do what they want it to do; but if they persevere, they can subsequently write more rapidly and easily than with a stiff pen. To sum up what I have endeavored to say, it has been, and still is, my belief that, if stenographers generally would discard the use of the pencil or stiff pen and adopt a medium coarse-pointed, flexible pen, they would never have writer's cramp."

2. The pen permits and promotes a lightness of touch which, with the pencil, is out of the question; and this lightness of touch conduces largely to speed. The pen does not allow that undue pressure which the pencil invites, if it does not cause. This undue pressure with which many persons are disposed to write is highly incompatible with rapid note-taking.

3. The pen, with its yielding nib, is far better adapted than the pencil to express readily and clearly the distinctions between light strokes and heavy. The writing which best preserves these distinctions is, other things being equal, the

most legible. One of the most conspicuous advocates of the pencil, that accomplished reporter, Mr. Geo. H. Thornton, the author of "The Modern Stenographer," has, by inventing and publishing a "light line" system of stenography, admitted in the most emphatic manner the unsuitability of his favorite instrument, the pencil, to make those distinctions between light strokes and heavy which are a fundamental feature of Pitmanic phonography. Writers who have not adopted any "light line" system of phonography must distinguish their heavy strokes from their light ones, if they wish the writing to be legible; and for this purpose they need an instrument like the pen, suited by its peculiar construction to make these necessary distinctions.

4. Pen-notes are better adapted for preservation than pencil notes, which even ordinary handling tends to blur. Anything that is to be filed away as a record should not be written with a pencil. Mr. Thornton, in advocating some years ago the use of the pencil, made an important concession in favor of the superiority of pen-notes for record purposes. "Notes taken with a pencil," he said, "are as easily transcribed in after years as those written with a

pen, *if they are not handled.*” (Proceedings of N. Y. State Stenographers’ Association, 1882.)

5. It need scarcely be said that pen-notes are more legible, especially when they must be read at night, than pencil notes. The strain of reading the latter by artificial light (and much of the professional reporter’s work must be done at night) is terribly trying to the best of eyes. The young stenographer, looking forward to coming years, should preserve his sight carefully as a part of his business equipment, and should realize that he cannot afford to abuse the only pair of eyes he will ever have.

6. Neater notes can be made with the pen than with the pencil, the latter tending to generate a habit of scrawling. The scrawling writer is nearly always a pencil writer. Some of the neatest writers in our profession use the pen constantly.

7. Pencil notes, in consequence of their intrinsic illegibility, can seldom be transcribed (as pen-notes constantly are) by other persons than the writer. Such transcription by assistants is an immense advantage to many a hard-working reporter.

8. The old objection, based on loss of time by

pen-dipping, and on the inconvenience of carrying round an ink-stand—an objection the force of which was always overrated—has of course been made obsolete by the introduction of the fountain pen.

9. The general opinion of almost every reporter whose early habits have not prevented him from giving the pen a fair trial, is decidedly in its favor. All the official reporting of the United States Senate for forty years has been done with the pen. Of the five official reporters of the House of Representatives, four take notes with pen, two having discarded the pencil within a year or two past. If the pen can be used successfully in the perambulating reporting of the House of Representatives, there ought to be no difficulty in using it anywhere. The "Short-hand Review" for August, 1891, states that "out of 65 of the best known shorthand writers in the country who were interviewed regarding their pen or pencil preference, 40 stated that they used the pen, 14 the pencil, and 11 both."

10. When, on rare occasions, the reporter's environment absolutely requires the use of pencil, the habitual user of the pen finds little difficulty in adapting himself to the emergency. It

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may be remarked incidentally that a reporter, though habitually a user of the pen, should never be without one or two good well-sharpened pencils in his pocket, for use in case of accident or emergency.

11. But the pen, if its advantages are to be enjoyed, must be held in the right way, and its proper management must have been acquired by sufficient practice. A person who has written shorthand with a pencil for months or years must not decide against the pen upon a trial of five or ten minutes. Those who say they "can't write shorthand with a pen" have never given the pen a fair trial. In most cases they have never learned to hold the pen in the peculiar position which shorthand writing requires—a very different position from that which is taught in connection with longhand, and which is adapted only to strokes written in a single direction. It is important that the learner of shorthand should use a pen from the start. When pencil-writing has become habitual, a change to the pen always requires considerable patience and self-conquest. Many a pencil writer is unwilling or unable to give the necessary amount of practice to overcome the habit he has formed.

The longer the use of the pen is postponed, the harder it will be to make the change.

**"I Generally Break My Pencil Point."**

12. But this question must not be disposed of without noticing one consideration of overwhelming force—the liability of the pencil point to break treacherously at a most critical moment. This liability is conceded by two of the most conspicuous advocates of the pencil, Mr. Dement and Mr. Thornton. Mr. Dement, while in attendance at one of the annual meetings of the New York State Stenographers' Association, to take part in the celebrated "speed contest," made this statement: "We reporters of the West use the pencil and use the light line; and when I use a heavy line, it is generally wrong, except in the word 'defendant,' when I generally break my pencil point."\* (Proceedings of 1887, page 138.) How candidly Mr. Dement concedes the treacherousness of his favorite writing tool! At the same meeting, Mr. Thornton, referring to the notes taken in the "speed

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\*The testimony of this eminent Pitmanic writer and author as to the value of light lines will be gratifying to writers who do not use shading. In Pitmanic shorthand the word "defendant," to which Mr. Dement alludes, is represented by a vertical shaded stroke.—*The Publishers.*

contest," said that "Mr. Dement would be very glad to now read over the notes which he had taken of the matter dictated to him, to show that he had taken it in good faith, and that he could read it all, with the exception of one or two places where his pencil broke." (Page 94.) Many reporters who may envy Mr. Dement's speed as a shorthand writer, will yet prefer to do their work with a tool which in an emergency will not thus betray them. Who can say how much better a record even Mr. Dement might have made in that contest if he had been armed with a better weapon?

### What Pen to Use?

If, to the satisfaction of the young writer, my case has been made out in favor of the pen, the question naturally arises, What kind of a pen should be used? This must be largely a matter of individual preference. A gold pen, which many writers prefer, others cannot become accustomed to, especially when in a "fountain" holder. Of steel pens, Gillott's 303, Spencerian No. 1, the Moheta pen, the Falcon pen, and Pery's three pointed pen (with the latter almost all the note-taking in the United States Senate was



done for a number of years) have their respective champions. In this matter every writer must make experiments for himself. If he desires to cultivate a "light touch," a fine-pointed and very flexible pen will be chosen. He should also discover by his own experiments the paper and the ink which suit him. On this point no special suggestion is deemed necessary.

#### **A Beginner Needs the Best Materials.**

In closing this topic, it should be remarked that there can be no greater error than to assume in the matter of materials that "anything is good enough for a beginner." On the contrary, a beginner is entitled to the best; for he is more subject than are experienced writers to the discouraging influence of little difficulties and annoyances. Besides, he should early become accustomed to such materials as he is finally to use, and should early learn to exercise his judgment in selecting them.

## CAUSES OF HESITATION

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“Frequent hesitation as to the proper forms of words takes away very much from the facility of writing.”—ANDREW J. GRAHAM.

“Speed depends chiefly upon the ability of the writer to make the various outlines of words without hesitation.”—JAMES E. MUNSON.

### To Write Quickly, Think Quickly.

Hesitation is the arch enemy of shorthand speed. Thousands of young stenographers, who are longing for a “speedy hand,” mistake the cause of their trouble. Their failure to attain reasonable rapidity is because the mind, not the hand, works too slowly. He who would learn to write quickly must learn to think quickly. Would-be shorthand writers, who are wondering why they make no progress, are, in many cases, attempting to carry in their heads more shorthand than they can get promptly from their heads into their fingers. Facility of hand, natural or acquired, avails nothing, unless the mind, by prompt conceptions, allows the hand a fair chance to do its work. As the words fall upon the stenographer’s ear, there should be no appreciable pause between hearing and writing.

Shorthand thinking reaches perfection when it is so promptly done as to seem automatic. If the shorthand flows freely from mind to hand, even an ordinary hand, moving not rapidly, but steadily and pauselessly (which prompt thinking of the shorthand enables it to do), can write a good many words in a minute, even though the "system" written be not extremely brief. He who has discovered how to write shorthand without hesitation has gone far toward discovering the "speed secret."

#### **Hesitation Mistaken for Slow-Handedness.**

The disease often diagnosed as slow-handedness is in many cases not slow-handedness, but hesitation. Many a young shorthand writer, whose average speed is but 80 or 90 words a minute, reaches, during a part of every minute, a pace of 160 or 180. This pace he could easily keep up but for the fact that two or three times or oftener during every minute, his hand is brought to a standstill, while he hesitatingly decides how a particular word or phrase should be written. If these deadly pauses, during which the eager hand waits upon the lagging mind, could be overcome—if the young phonographer could

only write *all* words as promptly and rapidly as he can write some—how smooth his pathway would be!

### **Hesitation Entails Illegibility.**

This hesitating habit affects legibility as well as speed. A boggling mind causes a jerky, spasmodic movement of the hand. When an outline upon which the writer is obliged to hesitate has thrown him back eight or ten or a dozen words, there follows a scramble to catch up. The hand struggles forward with nervous, spasmodic haste. Like a railroad train belated by lingering too long at a particular station, it rushes on, to make up for lost time. And shorthand, thus written with hurried hand and flurried mind, proves often undecipherable.

### **The "Reporting Vocabulary"—How Acquired.**

One of the most common causes of hesitation is that the writer has failed to familiarize himself (as he should do before undertaking "speed practice") with the well-established outlines for all ordinary words. In all dictation and reporting work, a limited number (but only a limited number) of outlines must be devised off-hand as the words are uttered. These impromptu out-

lines, though they become fewer and fewer as the writer's practice becomes more and more extended, never disappear altogether; for no mind is capacious enough to master by rote-memorizing all the words that a stenographer must write. Outlines which require to be invented at the moment of writing are, as compared with familiar outlines, time-losers. If frequent, they sadly reduce the average of speed. Even with the learner just beginning "speed practice," they should be but a small percentage of the words written. If they form a large percentage, either the matter undertaken is of undue difficulty, or "speed practice" has begun too soon. Until a reasonably large "reporting vocabulary" has been acquired, "speed practice" is premature and of little benefit. The pre-acquired "reporting vocabulary," even of him who is just beginning "speed practice," should be large enough to save him from hesitation about all ordinary words. The outlines of these ordinary words are to be familiarized by writing again and again the exercises under the various abbreviating rules, and also by copying over and over again correctly-written exercises in "the reporting style."

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By faithfully copying correct "reporting style," the student will learn, not only the fully-expressed outlines of most of the common words, but also many common and useful word-signs, with which he should familiarize himself before beginning "speed practice." It is highly important that every word-sign he attempts to learn should be learned thoroughly. Word-signs imperfectly learned are one of the commonest causes of hesitation. Recalled hesitatingly and doubtfully, word-signs cause to many writers a far greater loss of time than could the most cumbrous outlines written promptly. In no other art is the instantaneous action of the memory more essential than in shorthand. Whatever a stenographic student undertakes to memorize, he must memorize more thoroughly than he ever memorized the multiplication table or the Lord's prayer.

With many shorthand writers, the memory works treacherously because it is overburdened; and this is more likely to occur in connection with word-signs than with any other part of the system. Hours and hours, day after day, are spent in conning and re-conning, writing and re-writing, arbitrary contractions too numerous

ever to be mastered. Many of the words upon whose arbitrary signs time is thus spent, occur so rarely in actual work as never to pay for their laborious acquisition, even if they be well memorized. If not well memorized, they often work direct mischief just where they are expected to be a benefit. When a special and arbitrary abbreviation representing some uncommon word like *inclemency*, *misconception*, *undiscoverable*, etc., has been, as the student supposes, learned, his actual practice does not call for it often enough to keep it fresh in his memory. The recollection of it grows dim; but, alas! it does not fade out altogether. At some unexpected moment, in the midst of hurried note-taking, the out-of-the-way word is uttered, and the supposed-to-be-memorized word-sign, if instantaneously recalled, might be useful; but, sad to say, there comes to the mind at this critical moment, not a clear, prompt recollection, but a tardy, vague, elusive, tantalizing reminiscence; and while the writer is deciding whether the arbitrary contraction or the full outline should be written, precious time is lost.\* Thus the attempted "cramming" of "more contractions"

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\*This point cannot be emphasized too strongly.—*The Publishers.*

(often undertaken as a sovereign cure for slow-handedness) results frequently in loss of speed, instead of gain. Total ignorance of any contraction is bliss compared with its uncertain or tardy recollection. No writer should forget that imperfectly-learned word-signs (and they must be imperfectly learned if too many are undertaken), especially word-signs of rare occurrence, are one of the prime causes of hesitation.

#### **Impromptu Outlines.**

But, however well all common outlines may have been familiarized by reading and copying, however thoroughly all ordinary word-signs may have been memorized, there must occur (as already intimated), in the practice of every writer, words whose outlines require to be devised on the spur of the moment—to be built up in the midst of rapid speaking by a quick, masterly application of word-building principles. These outlines thus constructed off-hand, will, as a matter of course, be written less readily than memorized outlines; yet if these impromptu outlines give the young writer very great trouble, something must be wrong. If he hesitates in determining on which side the *l* hook or the *r* hook should be written—if he fails to make a half



length or a double length stroke where the rules require it—if he turns a medial *s* circle inside the angle of two adjoining letters, instead of outside—if he confuses the *f* hook with the *n* hook—if, in fact, he commits any glaring stenographic solecism, or if he hesitates where to place the vowels which a new outline may need in order to make it safely legible, he is not yet ripe for “speed practice.”\* He must turn back to his elementary lessons, and by the diligent and repeated writing of numerous examples under each rule, must master those principles of the unjustly despised “corresponding style” which he, and perhaps his teacher, have been too eager to skim over for the sake of plunging with undue haste into “the reporting style.” If the young writer is ambitious to “write as reporters write,” let him remember that it is by having these fundamental abbreviating principles at his finger-ends that the reporter of widest experience is saved from breaking down many a time every day.

#### **Invariability of Outline.**

Another cause of hesitation with many a young stenographer is, that he allows himself to write a word sometimes with one outline and

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\*The causes of hesitation referred to in this passage are peculiar to Pitmanic shorthand.—*The Publishers.*

sometimes with another, so that often, when he is pressed for time, several conflicting outlines suggest themselves for the same word; and among these he must make a hurried and hesitating choice. Invariability of outline is one prime factor of speed. The writer should not lengthen his accustomed outlines because the speaker is slow, nor try to make them unusually brief, because the speaker is fast. On the slowest speaker the stenographer's briefest "reporting style" should, if possible, be used, for the sake of maintaining uniform habits. On this subject, Andrew J. Graham has well said: "You should have settled forms for the more frequent and effective words. If you allow yourself to express a given word by two or three different outlines, there will always be some effort, and more or less loss of time, in deciding in each particular case how you shall write." Again he says: "Writing a word in full part of the time, and part of the time by a word-sign, tends to cause hesitation."\*

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\*The emphasis laid upon this point may not be clear to readers who are not familiar with Pitmanic shorthand. On account of the numerous ways in which letters may be represented in the Pitmanic styles—three forms for R, three for L, etc.—most long words can be written in several "possible" ways. The difficulty is to choose the best of a number of possible outlines; in other words, to arrive at "invariability of outline."—*The Publishers*.

**The Phrase-Seeking Mania.**

Another common cause of hesitation is undue anxiety to invent phrases. Any young writer who finds that his mind is consciously and constantly occupied during note-taking in deciding whether word-outlines can be joined, is writing more slowly than he need do. This remark does not imply that phrases are never useful, and therefore never to be written. It means simply that facile, prompt, time-saving phrasing is the finishing accomplishment of the shorthand writer; that the mere novice (in which term I include every writer who has not attained at least a hundred words a minute) is incompetent to undertake impromptu phrase-construction. I do not mean that until a speed of 100 words a minute has been attained, each word should be written separately, but that in the student's early practice, before he has learned to write separate words unhesitatingly, he cannot profitably give any part of his attention to off-hand phrase-invention. At this stage he should confine himself to two or three hundred common and useful phrases, which he has not invented for himself, but which he has memorized from good models—such phrases as *it is, they are, may be, I*

*am, you are, shall be, will be, etc.* The student, even at the beginning of his practice, should not write these common and useful phrases by separated outlines; for the habit of doing so might afterward be hard to correct. Hence, at a stage when attempts at phrase-invention would be premature and harmful, he may well spend time in memorizing from correct models a limited number of common and highly useful phrases.

#### Phrasing "Rules" Over-Rated.

There is nothing more unprofitable, and nothing more likely to make a slow writer, than the premature study of phrasing rules, and the premature attempt to apply them in impromptu phrase-construction. The memorizing of a limited number of correctly-formed and constantly-useful phrases will do more to give the student a practical and instinctive insight into the art of phrasing than all the numerous *musts* and *must-nots* of "phrasing rules." Under the misguided advice of certain teachers and text-books, the premature effort to improvise phrases begins often before the circles, the hooks, the loops, etc., of elementary phonography have all been mastered, or even undertaken. The phrase-

seeking mania, thus contracted during stenographic infancy, is, I sincerely believe, doing more to raise up a race of inevitably slow writers than any other single cause. The time which an immature writer may occasionally save by the invention of a properly-formed phrase (hit upon, if at all, by accident rather than good judgment), is vastly more than counterbalanced by the time lost in making, with hesitating, painful effort, awkward, clumsy, and illegible junctions, or in pondering upon junctions which, after time has been wasted in deliberating, strike the mind of even the beginner as inadmissible or impossible. Thus, in the case of many beginners, it is doubtful whether more time is lost upon the phrases which are not made, or upon those which are. I have met many young writers who have become such pitiable victims of the phrasing disease as almost to forbid the hope of their ever attaining the most modest and moderate speed.

#### **When Should Impromptu Phrasing Begin?**

But it may be asked, when should the young reporter begin to form phrases for himself? Adopting in part the language of Thomas Allen Reed, I answer: When one has acquired a

reasonable facility in writing, and a moderate degree of speed; when all the word-signs have been familiarized; when all the common word-forms come readily to the hand; when there is no longer any effort in thinking out the outlines of words; when, instead of the hand waiting for the mind, as formerly, the mind outruns the hand; when words to be written as a group can be grasped by the mind as a group before the pen begins to write the first word of the combination; then, if the young reporter should feel a craving to get down on paper more quickly the word-forms as they crowd upon his mind, he may permit himself to do what has been well said to be a characteristic of the accomplished reporter—"to catch words by the handful." The author of this happy expression (Mr. Fred Irland) has not said that any *beginner* can thus "catch words by the handful"; nor does he recommend that beginners should try to do so. At an advanced stage of shorthand study, when, by the ordinary abbreviating principles of the system, and by the use of a few hundred well-memorized word-signs and phrases, a moderate speed has been attained, the art of phrase-invention, to whatever extent desirable,

can be practiced without running into ruinous channels—can be practiced in such a way as to be an aid to speed, not a hindrance. The experience which the student has by this time acquired will enable him, in making phrases for himself, to proceed wisely and profitably. And at this stage, he will have but small need for fine-spun “phrasing rules.” Having learned phrase-making from practical examples, he will have little occasion for abstract precepts. His memorized phrases will have familiarized him with every useful principle of phrasing; and the writing of good phrases will have become to him almost an instinct. He will have learned that pen-lifts are saved at too great cost where their avoidance entails an ever-present hesitation. He will have acquired in reference to phrasing what Mr. Reed has called “the cultivated instinct.” By a sort of intuition he will avoid unnatural and awkward joinings. He will feel none of the misinstructed tyro’s eagerness to string words together in combinations of immoderate length. His experience in writing and reading will enable him to avoid phrases which may be confounded with single word-forms. Legitimate, time-saving phrases will drop from his

pen with easy flow and without painful seeking. And thus the much-mooted phrase-problem will have been solved in the easiest, the safest, the best, the only practicable way.



## HOW DO REPORTERS PHRASE?

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That phrasing, rightly studied and rightly practiced, is a most valuable reporting aid, conducive alike to legibility and speed, can scarcely be considered an open question. Carried to a wild extreme, as the phrasing propensity too often is, it no doubt becomes a hindrance, not a help; yet the fact remains too plain for argument that modern shorthand systems give constant opportunities for writing words without a pen-lift so as greatly to increase speed without loss of legibility, often with gain in legibility; and these opportunities cannot be neglected by any stenographer who aspires to be a master of his art.

Though on certain aspects of the phrasing question there have been wide differences and warm disputes, and though, as a matter of fact, some expert stenographers phrase much more freely and frequently than others; yet I believe the actual word of practical men shows as close a practical agreement on this subject as can be

expected where so much depends upon personal peculiarities of mind and hand. Waiving all abstract questions connected with this subject, I shall undertake to show, for the information of the shorthand student, when, how, and to what extent expert stenographers actually phrase in work demanding high speed.

#### **Memorized Phrases and Extemporized Phrases.**

It is my belief that, while expert writers differ as to the number of phrases which they employ in rapid work, they substantially agree as to the classes of phrases which they find useful and possible. The phrases used in actual reporting by experts fall naturally into two classes, the memorized phrase and the extemporized phrase. The memorized phrase may have been learned as a set task or may have been memorized unconsciously. Its characteristic is that it is not originated during actual reporting. The reporting notes of every rapid writer show a vast, and I believe a preponderating, proportion of phrases which have not been constructed upon the impulse of the moment. Every stenographer stores up as a part of his stock in trade a goodly number of frequently-recurring phrases, such as

“it is,” “which is,” “there is,” “I think,” “I am,” “we are,” “do you,” “are you,” “there are,” “must be,” “can be,” “are there,” “in there,” “did not,” “do not,” “had not.” These and other simple phrases which every reporter’s notes disclose, are phrases which he cannot be supposed to have originated on the spur of the moment. They are such as he must have written over and over again hundreds and thousands of times. By reason of their simplicity and frequency, they have so worked themselves into his mind and fingers that they drop from his pen without conscious thought. He may have learned them ready-made from the phrase-lists in his text-books; or he may at some long-past period have performed for himself the very simple labor of their construction; or he may have imbibed them unconsciously from the shorthand he has read or copied.

Let it be particularly observed in regard to this large class of phrases found in the work of practical reporters, that they are the phrases of common, every-day speech. They recur again and again. Because the word-groups which these sign-groups represent are pat on the popular tongue, they have become pat to the re-

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porter's pen. Other phrases which he may have memorized have been forgotten, because rarely required, for, as says the "Phonetic Journal" (July, 1892), "A phrase, however good it may be, if it be one that the writer does not have occasion to use frequently, will not come to his mind [in speedy writing] with sufficient celerity to be available." But these common, every-day phrases have been stamped upon the reporter's memory in such a way that they have become, as it were, a part of his very nature. And most fortunate it is that repetition thus makes familiar to the reporter's pen those words and phrases which, because frequently uttered, are rapidly uttered.

But we also find, scattered through the notes of accomplished reporters, phrases which have been extemporized as the speech proceeded. The extemporized phrase defines itself. The reporter in the act of writing brings together two or more words which he has never been taught to join and which he has never joined before. He has formed a new combination, and has done this off-hand. The extemporized phrases which appear in the reporting notes of an accomplished writer are often most happy and apposite,

indicating thorough training of mind and hand. But the cold truth must be told that, as the speaking becomes more and more rapid, the invention of phrases upon the spur of the moment becomes for most writers less and less easy, and consequently the extemporized phrase grows rarer and rarer, until, when rapidity has reached its acme, the extemporized phrase disappears almost entirely. There are very few reporters—I do not say there are none—who can evolve from brain and hand, *impromptu* phrases when the spoken words are speeding on with almost lightning-like rapidity.

### **Rapid Writing Shows Few Impromptu Phrases.**

The remark of the "Phonetic Journal" (July, 1892), in an article already quoted (presumably from the pen of Isaac Pitman), that "almost all the great feats of fast writing have been accomplished with a very small use of phraseography," is true in this sense: that such feats bring into play very few phrases except such as have been thoroughly memorized. These exceptional exhibitions of fast writing show no phrases, or scarcely any, invented on the spur of the moment. Many a student who is laboring hard to acquire

the art of phrase-invention, as if the secret of swift writing consisted in the evolution of shorthand phrases on the spur of the moment, will be startled to learn that impromptu phrases—phrases invented as the speaking proceeds—are not the phrases that help the reporter over the hard places. With an overwhelming majority of even expert writers, it is undeniably true that when high speed begins, phrase invention ends. I think I might challenge any one to show me a specimen of notes written at as high a speed as two hundred words a minute, in which any extraordinary or peculiar combination of words, meeting the writer for the first time on that particular occasion, has been phrased.

In the stress of rapid speech the memorized phrase is the reporter's mainstay. If well memorized, it comes into play as fully and freely as in slower utterances, demonstrating more and more its indispensable utility. It is constantly and pricelessly useful. It is crowned by two special merits. Representing, as it always should, a frequently-recurring word-group, it pays for its adoption over and over again, day after day and year after year. More than that, it helps where help is especially needed, because words

or word-groups which frequently recur are spoken with more than average rapidity.

### **Catching Up "With a Bound."**

In praise of phrasing, the remark has been frequently repeated that the reporter, when pressed by a rapid speaker, who threatens to leave him in the lurch, is often enabled to bring himself up "with a bound" by means of some apt and timely phraseogram. For instance, Thomas Allen Reed speaks of phrases which, "like some good fairy, have helped him over the ground when running a hard race." But mark the illustrative phrases which he mentions. They are not phrases constructed for the first time amid the stress of rapid speaking, but such phrases as "in point of fact," "as a matter of fact," "do you mean to say," which he had doubtless been writing habitually for years. The welcome relief which phrasing affords at critical moments, when the reporter is lagging behind the speaker, comes not from impromptu phrasing. I doubt whether any practical reporter—Mr. Reed or any one else—can name a case in which he was helped over a hard place by extemporizing a phrase-sign for an unfamiliar

word-group, meeting him for the first time in the midst of rapid speaking.

### **Recurrent Word-Groups.**

Another class of phrases written sometimes by the practical reporter should not be overlooked. Though, as already remarked, the reporter in rapid writing very rarely combines in a phrase a group of words which he is called upon to write for the first time, yet a word-group unfamiliar to the writer when the speaker first utters it—peculiar perhaps to a given subject-matter—may, when once introduced, recur again and again; and though the reporter does not phrase it when he first hears it, yet the recurrent word-group naturally suggests, before many repetitions have occurred, an appropriate sign-group. This sort of phrase-invention is with most reporters quite common, and is not in conflict with the fact already stated, that a phrase-sign is rarely extemporized during hurried speech for a word-group *newly* encountered.

### **The Practice of Reporters Summarized.**

The practice of reporters in general with respect to the subject of phrasing may be summed up in the following propositions:



1. A vast majority of the phrases which the reporter writes are memorized phrases, which, if well memorized, are as freely used during rapid as during slow speaking.

2. During moderate speaking the reporter exercises to a limited degree, in some cases to a large degree, the faculty of phrase-invention upon word-groups encountered for the first time.

3. During extremely rapid speaking, he does not invent, or very rarely invents, sign-groups for absolutely new word-groups.

4. During rapid speaking he sometimes, indeed frequently, invents sign-groups for recurrent word-groups.

### **The Book-Maker's Phrase.**

Besides the classes of phrases already described (all of which are found in the notes of practical reporters), there is a third class of phrases, never discovered in genuine reporting notes, but found only in the carefully elaborated specimens of so-called "reporting style" appearing from time to time in certain magazines and text-books. These are phrases concocted laboriously in the mind of some theorist, who, sitting

in the quiet of his library, wielding no reporter's pen and pressed by no reporter's exigencies,—intent only on illustrating the phrasing capabilities of a particular "system"—can take all the time he chooses to invent methods of joining words which cannot come together perhaps more than once in a lifetime, and which, if encountered for the first time in actual speaking, would not and could not be written by any reporter in the manner in which the theorizing constructor of "reporting exercises" takes so much pride. These forced and unnatural combinations may be called "book-maker's phrases," because on the pages of text-books they shine in all their glory; or "excogitated phrases," because in their far-fetched intricacy they are the products of a state of mind unknown to the reporter. Note the characteristics of the "book-maker's phrase": first, the word-group selected for phrasing is extremely rare; second, the method of representation is generally overstrained and unnatural, such as could not be devised off-hand amid hurried speaking. Here are some examples of such phrases—not manufactured by myself, but culled from text-books or "reporting style" exercises representing various authors and sys-

tems; for alas! the mania for inventing these "fearfully and wonderfully made" combinations is not confined to a single author or a single "system":

"A scientific fact that the,"

"A single sandwich,"

"Before he ventured to speak of it,"

"In his imperial anger,"

"Of sacrificing their own rank,"

"As his master is,"

"When we receive their permission,"

"Is said to have forced,"

"Let their future course decide,"

"Murder their own families,"

"How many times will you receive this notice,"

"Having observed the ebb and flow,"

"Can stand in Washington street,"

"To plow your lands,"

"For all you know we may receive,"

"From the vile mire,"

"Smites its victims,"

"I know that I am not going to be applauded,"

"His spirited speeches,"

"Is essentially distinct,"

“Before a system of grammar,”

“In one of his many passages.”

It scarcely need be said that phrases of this kind, representing nothing desirable or even possible in reporting work, are most dangerous models for imitation; and if the student aims to achieve in his own writing, phrases based on models so vicious, he hopelessly handicaps himself, and speed is out of the question. Yet strange to say, such phrases seem to have for certain minds a peculiar fascination. They are accepted by thousands of students as specimens of what reporters are doing in their every-day work and what the student must learn to do if he would attain reporting speed. Inspired by such vicious and deluding examples, one zealous young writer once showed me boastfully, as a praiseworthy achievement in the art of phrasing, the wonderfully useful (?) combination, “cut to the exact size of the coin,” which he had written without lifting the pen (“to the” and “of the” being of course implied).

The mischief done and doing by circulating specimens of spurious “reporting style” which no reporter does or can write, has spread too far and wide for any words of mine ever to

reach a tithe of its deluded victims. I can only make this earnest protest against these artificial, far-fetched, impracticable methods of phrasing, and appeal to practical reporters of every "system" to sustain the protest.

Such phrases as those just exhibited, when once accepted by the student as models, are not only misleading but highly discouraging. When he finds, as he must, that he is unable to achieve any such ingenious combinations under speed pressure—when he finds that the writing in which he most studiously and laboriously phrases is his slowest work—he naturally concludes that anything like reporting skill must for months and years be beyond his reach. And well may he so conclude, if reporting skill depends upon achieving in practice the outlandish, overstrained and unnatural phrases which are placed before him as examples for imitation.

#### **An Object Lesson in Phrasing.**

"Young stenographers," says the "Phonetic Journal," "are astonished when they come across a fac-simile of notes taken at a high speed and discover that there is no such abundance of phrases as they expected." In verification of

this remark and to show how few and simple are the phrases by means of which rapid writing is accomplished, I invite the reader's attention to the text of three extracts from speech matter, written at high speed by three English stenographers. The magazine ("The Reporter's Journal," London) from which these extracts are taken, publishes along with them fac-simile reproductions of the original notes. The words phrased in the original notes, I have indicated by parentheses. Let the reader observe the character of the phrases achieved under extreme speed pressure. Let him also note the word-groups which are not stenographically phrased. Let him note the fewness of the sign-groups in comparison with the number which the ambitious beginner would suppose absolutely necessary for the attainment of high speed. Let him observe, too, the utter absence of that strained and unnatural creation of theorists and their followers—the excogitated phrase. Let him observe that scarcely one of the sign-groups actually used can be supposed to have been invented on the spur of the moment. Practically every phrase occurring in the written notes is the product of memory, not invention—is such

as the writer must have been thoroughly familiar with before he took up his pen to write the passage.

The following, written by Frank A. Williams at the rate of 210 words a minute, contains 26 phrases in 235 words:

(Mr. President), (Ladies and Gentlemen): I (very much) wish to say a few words (on this subject) of possible speed. (I do not know) (that it comes) with (very good) grace (from myself); but (I am going) to trust myself to your kindness which you have shown to a stranger in a strange land, to bear with me who deserves (so little), because I want to say something on behalf (of some others). (I suppose) (that this) whole business (with reference) (to this) contest arose (out of) the letter that (I had) the misfortune to write two (years ago) (to the) secretary of the International Shorthand Writers' Association. (In that) letter I tried to say that I thought that when certain teachers and text-book writers ridiculed the idea of high speed—(I thought) (that it was) something which all stenographers ought to pay a little more attention to, because wherever (there is) a (shorthand-writer) who can get a hundred

(words a minute) on paper, (he is) very apt to foster and countenance the idea that anything above that (does not count). (In that) letter I made use of perhaps an injudicious expression. (It was) this,—that (I believe) (there are) several men in Michigan—and I used the term Michigan merely incidentally—who could write 250 (words a minute) (in court) when reporting. That was taken up and discussed.”

The following, written by George W. Bunbury at the rate of 220 words a minute, contains 50 phrases in 283 words:\*

(Lord Salisbury), (on rising) (to reply), (was received) with prolonged cheers. Having returned thanks (for the) unanimity (with which the) resolution was carried, he proceeded to (point out) that constituencies (such as those) of Sussex (and London) and other boroughs which he might mention, which had long been endowed (with the) franchise (and which) had always been keenly interested (in the) political facts of the country, had almost without exception remained Conservative, whereas the constituencies not long (exercising the) franchise were (more or less) (at the mercy)

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\*As to these figures, see footnote on page 38.



of agitators seeking opportunities (of making) political capital (for themselves) (and their) party. Continuing (he also) said: As to (what the) issue of the impending election (may be) (I am not) careful (to speak) (to you). Though (I have) the firm belief that (it will) issue in a manner agreeable (to our) (own hopes), I still think (that we have) even larger issues (to regard). One of the preceding speakers mentioned (that the) experience of all parliaments (since the) (Reform Bill) (has been) (against us). (I do not think) (that is) entirely the case. (As far as) (I remember), (there has only) been one parliament (that has) gone through six years (under the) same ministry; (and that) parliament—Lord Palmerston's Parliament—when (it was) dissolved, issued in a strong majority (for the) Government of the day. The (Prime Minister) died immediately afterwards, but (I hope) (I am not) to consider that among necessary events. Individual ministers come and go, but the Conservative cause lives. After a brief reference (to the) untroubled condition of foreign politics, (he also), referring (to the) labor problem (at home), continued, (we can not) look abroad (into the) territories (which are) occupied."

The following, written by Harry Toothill at the rate of 276 words a minute,\* contains 41 phrases in 276 words:

(Mr. Goschen) said: (I do not know) (how many) (of you) (in this) room I may address as brother electors of the Rye division of Sussex. (I am) here to-night (in my) capacity as an elector (for this) division, and (I am) here to congratulate (this association) on having taken an early opportunity of showing (that the) southeastern parts of the (United Kingdom) (are not) behind the rest (in their) strong interest (in the) great controversy (which is now) being waged throughout the length and breadth of the town. (We are) sometimes told that (in the) southeastern and southern parts of the (United Kingdom) (we have not) advanced (to the) political intelligence (which is) displayed in Lancashire (and the) northern constituencies. (Let us do) what (in us) lies to disprove the charge. The south of England has lost some (of its) representatives, (and the) numbers thus saved (in the) representation (have been) distributed among more populous neighborhoods. (Let us look) (to it) (that we)

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\*As to these figures, see footnote on page 38.—*The Publishers.*

make the best use of the representation left (to us). (I do not know) (that there has been) any more momentous time (in the) political history (of this country) than the present. (Not only) has there been a new extension of the franchise, (but the) electoral divisions (have been) readjusted and a process (has been) going on in politics which might be likened (to the) breaking up of the regimental system (in the) army. Still we (must not) exaggerate. Much is said about a transfer of power (to the) masses. I prefer to speak of the re-partition of power, because power must remain and I trust will remain."

Each of the specimens of the original notes of the foregoing text is accompanied in the "Reporters' Journal" with a shorthand key, which, having been prepared by the editor at his leisure, shows far more profuse phrasing than the hard-pressed reporter had time to think of. There could scarcely be a better demonstration than is thus furnished of the fact that "the mind when pushed works by the easiest methods"; and that phrase-invention cannot take place to any considerable extent under extreme speed pressure. In the language of the

“Phonetic Journal,” “A phrase, however useful it may be, if it be one that the writer does not have occasion to use frequently, will not come to his mind when under examination [for speed] with sufficient celerity to be available. \* \* \* In very rapid work there is no time for thought, no time to recall useful devices, no time to do anything except to write down as mechanically as possible that which is heard. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is true that the more slowly one writes, the more easy it is to use phraseography freely. The mind has more leisure to think, and the hand more time to form intricate combinations neatly and carefully.”

## “THE MOST INFERNAL MISTAKE THAT WAS EVER MADE.”

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Though, as has been shown, the impromptu invention of phrases cuts little figure in the stenographer's most rapid work, thousands of young stenographers in all English-speaking countries are toiling to acquire the art of inventing shorthand phrases off-hand. They are taught to believe that this art is “the secret of rapid writing”—the indispensable accomplishment of every person worthy the name of a reporter. And the student is invited to begin the study of this art almost as soon as he has mastered the stenographic alphabet. By one author the subject of phrase-invention is introduced in the eighth lesson of the text-book; by another, in the fourth; by another, in the third! The student, it seems, is not to content himself with learning carefully-constructed and fully-tested phrases, as set down for him by an experienced author or teacher. With no better equipment

than his own crude and immature notions, he must plunge in and construct phrases for himself. He must be ever on the alert lest some phrase combination admissible by the rules of phrasing may escape him. "In all his practice," says the well-known stenographic author, Mr. W. W. Osgoodby, "the student should carefully watch for and study every opportunity for useful phrasing that may be afforded by the matter he is writing." And he must not be discouraged, if he finds himself losing time in his attempt to construct for himself those supposed time-savers—extemporized phrases. Says Mr. Fred Pitman: "Let him (the student) sedulously look for phrases which are of value and employ them. If it is necessary for him to write slowly in order to secure the use of phrases, then without question it is proper that the student in a considerable portion of his daily practice should write slowly. \* \* \* This will confirm him in the habit of finding phrases, of making phrases, of using phrases—a habit, we aver, which should be cultivated in the highest possible degree by those who desire to write with great swiftness." Thus by bad precept is the bad example of the excogitating phraser reinforced.

Dissenting, as I do most decidedly, from such teaching as that just quoted, I cite with pleasure the words of an eminent reporter of long experience, Mr. A. P. Little, of Rochester, whose emphatic condemnation of phrasing is, as his language shows, directed, not against those common phrases which every reporter has, and must have, at his pen's point for constant use, but against the misguided and fruitless attempts to achieve high speed by impromptu phrasing:

“Teachers of shorthand are urging pupils to phrase. Authors are putting in their books, ‘Just as soon as you get the elementary principles of this system of shorthand into your noddle, go to work and phrase.’ The most infernal mistake that was ever made by authors and teachers of shorthand! \* \* \* All the teachers from Maine to San Francisco say, ‘Just as soon as you learn the principles of shorthand, sit down and learn to phrase; you will have to, if you wish to write rapidly.’ I defy any one to do it to any great extent in rapid work. There are old stereotyped phrases which almost all stenographers use, which represent words that coalesce as easily as water and whiskey; and that is the phrasing which can

be done with readiness—which does not retard speed.”

Let me state some of the objections to the study of the art of extemporaneous phrase-invention, as commonly practiced.

#### **The Learner's Incompetence.**

1. In the early stages of stenographic study, when phrase-invention is too often undertaken, the attempt to practice this art is particularly mistimed, because the student has then too many other things to think of. At this point his mind is largely taxed by the effort to learn or recall the common logograms, and to devise proper forms for other frequently-recurring words. He needs to have the unconnected forms of ordinary words fixed in his mind as to both outline and position. But in phrasing, the normal position of many words is constantly varied. To the advanced stenographer, this offers slight embarrassment. He can phrase “you may think,” “you are aware,” “our rights,” without disturbing in his memory the normal location of “think,” “aware,” and “rights” as isolated words. But such things confuse the learner. He has another trouble. Not only accustomed position, but accustomed outline is, in phrasing, per-



mitted to be varied. The commonly-recognized practice by which, as one author expresses it, "many words are lengthened in order that they may be joined in certain phrases," requires stringent limitations at the hands of even the advanced stenographer. But even if it be not true that "invariability of outline is one prime factor of speed"—even if it be assumed that variability of outline can safely be indulged in by the experienced writer—the mere learner cannot afford to have word-forms thus unsettled. Who can doubt, for instance, that the too-early writing of *t-m* in a phrase for the word "time" must delay or defeat the mastering of *t* in the first position as a logogram?

2. In the early stage at which phrasing is usually undertaken, the student is incompetent, with all the guidance that much-vaunted rules can give him, to distinguish good phrases from bad. If encouraged or allowed to invent phrases for himself, he will invent many more bad ones than good ones. "Beginners," it has been well remarked, "take much longer time in thinking out inconvenient and illegible joinings than would be occupied in writing the words separately"; they undertake to "join every word

that is physically capable of uniting with another.”

The stenographic beginner (and in this term I include every one who has not attained a speed of 80 to 100 words a minute) is no more competent to invent phrases than to invent word-signs. No one proposes to set the learner adrift to invent his own word-signs; yet as between the invention of phrases and the invention of word-signs, the former is much more difficult. For phrase-invention many indefinite, abstruse, elaborate rules are deemed necessary; but the whole science of word-sign invention might be compressed into this single sentence: Let the word for which a word-sign is sought be a common word of long and difficult outline; and let the sign adopted be brief, unambiguous and easily written. Why should not the learner, who is assumed to be able to undertake the difficult task of phrase-invention, be set to work with this simple rule to construct his own word-signs?

What is the character of the phrasing rules which the shorthand student, with an experience of a few weeks or months, is expected to apply for himself? He is enjoined, for instance, to avoid phrases which involve awkward junc-

tions; but his immature judgment is not competent to determine whether a particular junction is awkward enough to be condemned by the rules. He is enjoined not to make phrases too long; but how many words make a phrase "too long," he can not tell. He is told not to write any phrase which might possibly be confounded with a single word-form or with another phrase; but his familiarity with other word-signs and other phrases is too limited and narrow to enable him to apply this rule intelligently.

In his early and misjudged attempts to make phrases for himself, the student, despite the most careful study of phrasing rules, makes and tolerates phrases, whose awkwardness and necessary slowness he is incompetent to recognize—phrases which no reporter would or could use. Thus his judgment is so vitiated and blunted that in many cases the art of making good phrases is never acquired. That "cultivated instinct," which later ought to enable him to distinguish intuitively between good phrases and bad, has no opportunity for healthy growth.

3. By reason of the pauses which he constantly makes to decide whether given words should or should not be joined, he contracts a

slow, jerky, spasmodic movement of the hand, inconsistent with that steady, pauseless motion which has been described in a previous chapter as the characteristic of the speedy writer. Says a stenographer of the widest experience and soundest judgment: "I have seen young reporters laboriously stringing words together, not flowingly and easily, but by a series of uncomfortable jerks and twists that were painful to contemplate, and seemed to threaten an attack of writer's cramp."

#### **The Phrase-Seeking Mania.**

4. In these early attempts at phrase-invention the student is in peril of acquiring the phrase-seeking mania—that state of mind which constantly inquires, as the pen passes from character to character, whether there lurks in them some possibility of being joined. There can be no more deplorable state of mind for any would-be stenographer than a ceaseless anxiety to discover, as words are uttered, opportunities for phrasing. This habit of mind, once acquired, is extremely difficult to eradicate, and if not eradicated, is fatal to speed. It might almost be said that the question whether a person is

to attain even moderate speed depends largely upon whether he acquires or escapes the habit of phrase-seeking.

The loss of time which this habit entails is almost incalculable. Word-groups which do not admit of any equivalent sign-groups are far more numerous than those which do. The phrase-seeker, as he proceeds, must give some measure of thought to each impracticable or undesirable joining that may occur to him; he must take time in deciding, with more or less thought, that it is impracticable or undesirable. Of course, a writer who thus loses time must write slowly.

5. The phrase-seeker, though aiming to acquire, is not acquiring, a correct reporting style. He is not learning to think as reporters think or to write as reporters write. Phrase-seeking is not a reporting habit. The reporter uses phrases, few or many, varying according to his personal peculiarities and education; but the successful reporter is never a phrase-seeker.

6. By the waste of time upon the study of phrase-invention, the student's final attainment of amanuensis or reporting skill is always delayed, often defeated. The time wastefully and fruitlessly spent by young writers in the study

of phrase-invention accounts largely for the fact that so much labor in shorthand study shows generally so little result in speed acquired. Many a student, because the phrase-seeking habit fastens itself upon him, becomes for all time a slower writer than he might have been if he had never known there was such a thing as phrasing.

7. The phrase-seeking habit prevents that automatic, or almost automatic, action of mind and hand which must be thoroughly established before high speed can be attained. Instead of cultivating the habit of anxiously searching for phrases, the young writer, if he would become a reporter, must aim to banish, during his attempts at speedy writing, all anxious thought or effort, remembering that the acme of stenographic success is not attained until, in the apt language of Mr. Irland, "shorthand becomes only a swifter longhand, as plain and as effortless—when the fingers become automatic recording agents, making as perfect a record, with as little effort, as the pencil of a self-registering wind-gauge."

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ABOUT PHRASING.

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### Memorizing Phrases.

1. As the stock of phrases which the writer is to use will consist mainly of the common-place, every-day phrases of ordinary speech, he must contract at the beginning no habits which may interfere with the ready use of such phrases. The beginner must not allow himself, nor must he be allowed, to write separately words which ultimately he should write constantly together. To this extent he not only may, but must, phrase. There are certain commonplace phrases which no reporter ever writes as separate words, and which, therefore, no student should ever thus write. If in the early stages of his shorthand education he writes "I do," "you may," "will be," etc., as separated words, the habit of doing so may later prove very hard to eradicate. In learning from the start to write for such common word-groups their accepted sign-groups, the student accumulates gradually that goodly stock

of every-day phrases which is to stand him in good stead during every future hour of his reporting experience.

2. But, instead of depending upon incidentally meeting the phrases which he is to memorize as a part of his stock in trade, he should have placed before him in special lists and in reasonable quantity, from day to day and from week to week, that limited number of phrases which experience has shown it to be worth every student's while to memorize. The gradual storing of the memory with a limited number of useful phrase-signs is just as reasonable and necessary as the memorizing of useful word-signs. The phrases selected for this purpose should be those which occur most constantly in all kinds of matter, and will, therefore, be the most useful to the amanuensis or the reporter—"those stereotyped phrases which all reporters use, which represent words that coalesce as easily as whiskey and water." The useful phrases which are thus to be memorized I would not permit the student to invent, or even select, for himself. His imperfect stenographic education and his immature judgment disqualify him for deciding what phrases are useful enough to be worth memorizing.



The aggregate number of phrases which the student will need to memorize as a necessary part of his shorthand equipment is not formidable; on the contrary, I believe the number will be found surprisingly small—perhaps not more than four, five or six hundred, all told. They should be such as, when learned, will be kept fresh in the writer's memory by constant recurrence. As the editor of the "Phonetic Journal" has remarked in words already quoted, "A phrase, however good it may be, if it be one that the writer does not have occasion to use frequently, will not come to his mind [when needed] with sufficient celerity to be available." To undertake to memorize phrases by the thousands is a sad mistake, because such elaborate lists can never be memorized thoroughly; and as already urged, the imperfect memorizing of anything which is to be of use in shorthand is always worse than never undertaking to memorize it at all. Overloading the memory is one of the most common and most natural errors connected with the study of shorthand. Certain advertisements offer to the student "five thousand lightning phrases," the memorizing of which, as the author of the book alluringly

promises, will have an almost magical effect in making the student a reporter. The innocent purchaser of such voluminous collections of phrases does not know that no living reporter has ever memorized five thousand phrases.

### **Premature Phrase-Invention Forbidden.**

3. If the tyro is to escape the dangers of the phrasing mania, he must not permit his mind to be occupied while he writes, with a straining effort to join words which come together rarely and casually. Immature writers do themselves great harm by premature attempts to originate phrases. The phrasing habit which is to be cultivated as a preparation for reporting is the writing of familiar phrases with the very greatest rapidity—not the invention of phrases on the spur of the moment. When the proper stage has been reached, the fortunate writer who may possess the faculties requisite for successfully practicing the art of off-hand phrase-invention, will find that graceful, safe, time-saving phrases will literally suggest themselves. A “cultivated instinct” will guide mind and hand promptly and unerringly, though abstract phrasing rules may never have been learned.

**Spurious "Reporting Style."**

4. The learner should be especially on his guard against the misleading and corrupting influence of artificially-constructed specimens of so-called "reporting style," abounding in far-fetched and (in practice) impossible phrases, gotten up at leisure by text-book makers and "system" mongers. The student, in aiming to join words which occur together only once in a lifetime, is not cultivating reporting habits; he is undertaking to do what no reporter (unless an individual of very exceptional genius) does or can do in rapid writing. As already pointed out, the commonest, and, in very rapid writing, almost the only phrases used by the reporter are those representing the over-and-over-again combinations of every-day speech.

5. The student should without ceasing strive to abandon, if he has contracted it, the habit of phrase-seeking. Throwing to the winds such advice as that already quoted, let him *not*, "in all his practice, carefully watch for and study every opportunity for useful phrasing that may be afforded by the matter he is writing." Let him pay no regard to the injunction, "If necessary to write slowly in order to secure the use

of phrases, then, without question, it is proper that the student, in a considerable portion of his daily practice, should write slowly." Let him avoid especially one common incident of the phrase-making mania,—voluntarily falling behind the speaker in order that phrases may be thought out.

#### **"Playful Stenographic Gymnastics."**

6. Nor must the student be misled by some remarkable phrases which he may occasionally discover in bona fide reporting notes, taken very slowly or at only moderate speed. Such notes, while showing (if from the hands of an expert) natural and artistic extemporized phrases, show also occasionally some outlandish, inartistic phrases, which would not be indulged in if the speaking were rapid. It sometimes happens that, merely to relieve the tedium of a slowly-uttered speech, the reporter, in a spirit, as it were, of playfulness or caprice, resorts to phrasing expedients which his own deliberate judgment would not sanction and which he would be the last one to hold up as models for imitation. Speaking of the whim that sometimes tempts a reporter to indulge in these fantastic and abnor-

mal phrasings, Thomas Allen Reed remarks: "I have sometimes tried my hand in actual reporting at writing these long phraseograms, not because I approve of the practice, but simply for amusement; and my note-books accordingly contain here and there some of the most appalling characters that ever met the eye. Note-taking is generally too serious business to admit of indulgence in this kind of entertainment; but it is not, perhaps, surprising that one occasionally endeavors to relieve the monotony of a long and dull speech by some playful stenographic gymnastics. Such phrases are anything else than aids to speed, and would not be written by any man in his senses, except as a matter of amusement."

7. While in general the student should make no attempt at phrase-invention, he should be on the alert for what have been described as recurrent phrases. If he finds that, in any particular line of work or practice, certain words occur together frequently, let him join them, if they admit of ready junction. No one should fail to make the phrases which his daily work invites him to make. It is important that recurrent word-groups, which are usually spoken with

more than average rapidity (the different words of the phrase being blended like the syllables of a single word) should be represented by facile sign-groups. The essence of practical phrasing has been well expressed by a veteran reporter in this language: "Whenever two or more words occur in juxtaposition frequently and can be joined without an effort, I make a phrase."

#### **Phrasing Rules Overvalued.**

8. The student should not expect to acquire the art of phrasing by the mere study of phrasing rules, most of which, as already shown, are so general, or so abstruse, or so variable as to give very little practical aid. I do not believe any accomplished reporter who phrases judiciously and aptly, ever acquired any considerable portion of his skill by the study of phrasing rules. Nothing but study and practice of normal phrase-models, selected by practical men from practical work, can give one that "cultivated instinct" which will almost intuitively adopt good junctions and unhesitatingly avoid bad ones.

#### **The Law of Automatism.**

9. To achieve phrases by varying established word-forms or elongating established word-signs,

violates what I believe should be accepted as a maxim,—“Invariability of outline is a prime factor of speed.” To allow one’s self to write a word in several different ways to gratify a momentary whim or to achieve some tempting phrase, entails, whenever the word is to be separately written, a certain degree of hesitation, which must postpone or defeat that happy condition—the most favorable condition to high speed—when mind and hand shall work, as it were, automatically. In this matter there is found a strong analogy between shorthand and longhand. In the latter no one attains great speed so long as he is compelled to think about the spelling of the words, the distinctions between capitals and small letters, the proper use of punctuation-marks, etc. That great desideratum, automatism—“the absolute disengagement of the mind, so far as consciousness is concerned, from the process of writing”—cannot be attained or approximated except by cherishing in every way uniformity of writing habits. Without fixity of practice, there cannot be automatism; and without a large degree of automatism, there cannot be speed. Absolute automatism may not be attainable; but the nearer the

writer approaches it (other things being equal) the greater the rapidity he will reach.

One of the ways in which uniformity of outline is commonly sacrificed is by writing for phrase purposes a full outline instead of an accustomed word-sign. For instance, the word "number," ordinarily expressed by a logogram, is by some authors elongated exceptionally, in order to make possible the phrase "this number." So, too, we read in one of the standard phrase-books: "When 'belong' is joined to a preceding stem, it should be written in full, because its abbreviation *bl* in such cases would conflict with 'believe.'"\* The momentary gain, if any, by writing phrases which thus violate uniformity of outline, is much more than counterbalanced by the writer's inevitable hesitation when he undertakes to write separately, with its briefer sign, the word which for phrase-purposes has been elongated. The usual result is that he finally comes to write the longer form under all circumstances. And thus a useful word-sign is obliterated from his system.

Uniformity of word-outline is, in the second place, violated when a full outline of excep-

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\*These remarks apply to Pitmanic Shorthand only.—*The Publishers.*



tional construction is substituted for the outline which usage has established as the best. For instance, in order to achieve the phrase "in his letter," some authors write the last word of the phrase (contrary to the settled form of the separate word) with downward *l*. So, too, in order to make possible or convenient the phrase "in this life," the downward form of *l* is used in the word "life," in place of the accustomed upward form.

One author violates the law of uniformity, and consequently the law of automatism, by giving for phrase purposes three different methods of writing the frequent word "him." If we follow his authority, this very common word is to be written, according to circumstances, either with a hook, a tick, or a full consonant stroke. Here is the author's language: "If for any reason 'him' cannot be conveniently indicated by the *m* hook, it should be written with 'hay'; but where the preceding stem bears a final hook, it may sometimes be indicated by a final tick, struck at an acute angle." Another author gives four different methods of expressing the very common word "to": 1, By the stem *t* in the third position; 2, by halving the stem of

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the preceding word; 3, by changing the *s* circle at the end of the preceding word to a small loop; or, 4, by dropping the form of the succeeding word one-half the length of the *t* below the third position of the same word. It seems to me too obvious for argument that an attempt to write by variable methods common words like "him," "to," etc., must, with any ordinary writer, cause hesitation and loss of speed. Unless one's methods of writing be reduced to settled and uniform laws, automatism, with the promptness, ease and rapidity which attend it, can never be attained.

### **Needless Vocalization.**

10. As another means of establishing uniform habits and cultivating automatism, the student should make it a rule never to use in a phrase a form which, thus used, requires to be vocalized, though when standing alone it needs no vocalization. The expected gain from avoiding a pen-lift becomes utterly delusive when the avoidance entails an extra movement, frequently a backward movement, for the insertion of a vowel. In most cases the final effect of indulging in such phrases is that the word is con-

stantly vocalized, even when standing alone and when vocalization is unnecessary. Thus for the sake of an occasional phrase, time is lost in perhaps hundreds of instances by needless writing of vowels.

11. If a given word-group has assigned to it a given sign-group, let that sign-group be used uniformly. To write words sometimes as a phrase and sometimes with their separated forms, interferes with uniformity of habit and nurtures hesitation.

#### **Don't Sacrifice Safety for Speed.**

12. Still further seeking fixity of practice, the student may wisely omit to learn or practice phrasing expedients which are recommended to be used or not used, according as the context may make them safe or unsafe. I extract from various text-books illustrations of these undesirable expedients:

“ ‘Was it’ may *generally* be written with the half-length *zd* in the first position, the same as ‘as it,’ with which it does not *often* conflict.  
\* \* \* To avoid the possibility of conflict, some reporters always write ‘was it’ in full, which interferes with fluent phrasing.”

“ ‘Other’ may be added by lengthening when it would not be mistaken for ‘there.’ ”\*

“ ‘Had’ and ‘do’ may generally with safety be written *d* in any part of a phrase; but if there should arise any conflict, ‘do’ should be disjoined, leaving the field to ‘had.’ ”\*

“ ‘Us,’ when added by a circle to verbs, will sometimes conflict with another form of the verb, as ‘give us’ with ‘gives,’ ‘put us’ with ‘puts,’ etc., and should, therefore, be used *cautiously*, and when in doubt as to its safety, the writer should employ the stem *s*. ”\*

“The omission of ‘to’ when it precedes a stroke to which it could not properly be joined, may be intimated in the reporting style by commencing that stroke at the line of writing, *provided* that the word so written would not be liable to be mistaken for some other word in the third position.”\*

By such expedients as these, the young reporter is invited to seek brevity by dubious and dangerous methods. He should firmly steel himself against the temptation. Methods of writing which are sometimes unsafe must be avoided always. Few writers can in the midst

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\*These remarks apply to Pitmanic Shorthand.—*The Publishers.*

of rapid note-taking depart from their ordinary habits. And even if the writer's mind be so alert as to give the danger-signal whenever an accustomed method of writing would prove hazardous, the general habit cannot be given up in a particular case without hesitation, with loss of time which may be fatal.

#### **Example is Better than Precept.**

13. After zealous study the student may, and doubtless will, find that his efforts at speed writing show fewer phrases than similar matter in his text-book. But this should not dishearten him. It has been remarked by the most eminent of English stenographers that some of the best reporters within his acquaintance indulge in phrasing very sparingly. It is far better to phrase too little than too much; and let it never be forgotten that phonetic shorthand, though written with a limited infusion of phrases, is in apt hands capable of great speed.

14. In order that the student may deeply impress upon his mind the conservative methods of accomplished reporters in respect to phrasing, and realize how far they fall short of the excessive and extreme methods of phrasing so often

exhibited in text-book specimens of "the reporting style," let him lose no opportunity to study the speedily-written notes of leading members of the reporting profession.



# Gregg Shorthand Wins International Shorthand Speed Contest



**The MINER MEDAL**  
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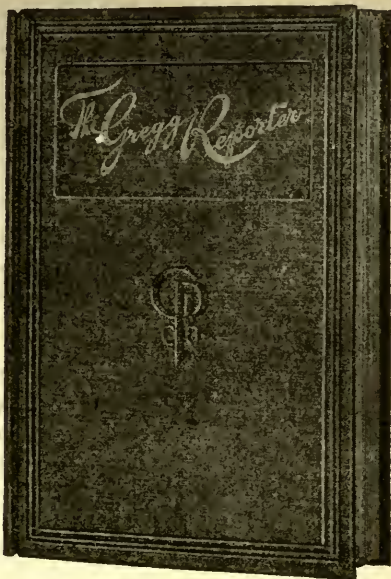
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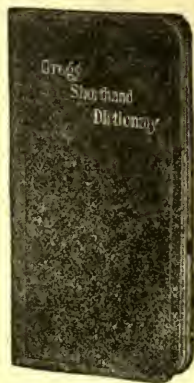
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