

**SIR ISAAC PITMAN,
HIS LIFE
AND LABORS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649136209

Sir Isaac Pitman, his life and labors by Benn Pitman

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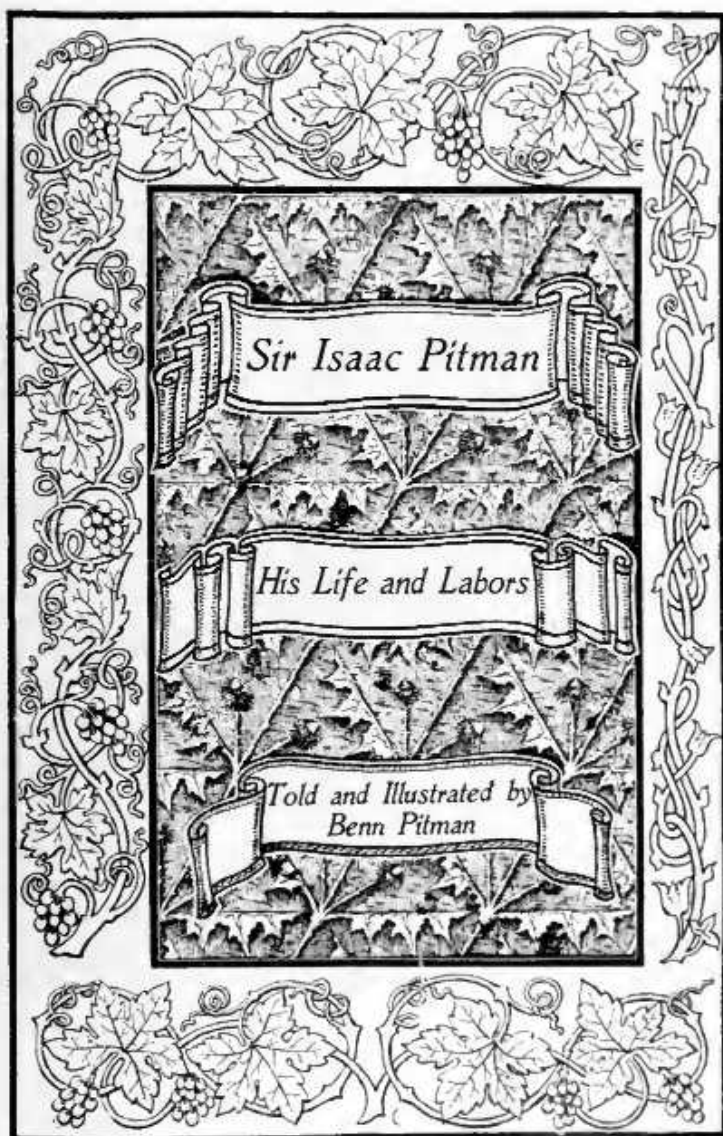
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BENN PITMAN

**SIR ISAAC PITMAN,
HIS LIFE
AND LABORS**





Sir Isaac Pitman

His Life and Labors

*Told and Illustrated by
Benn Pitman*



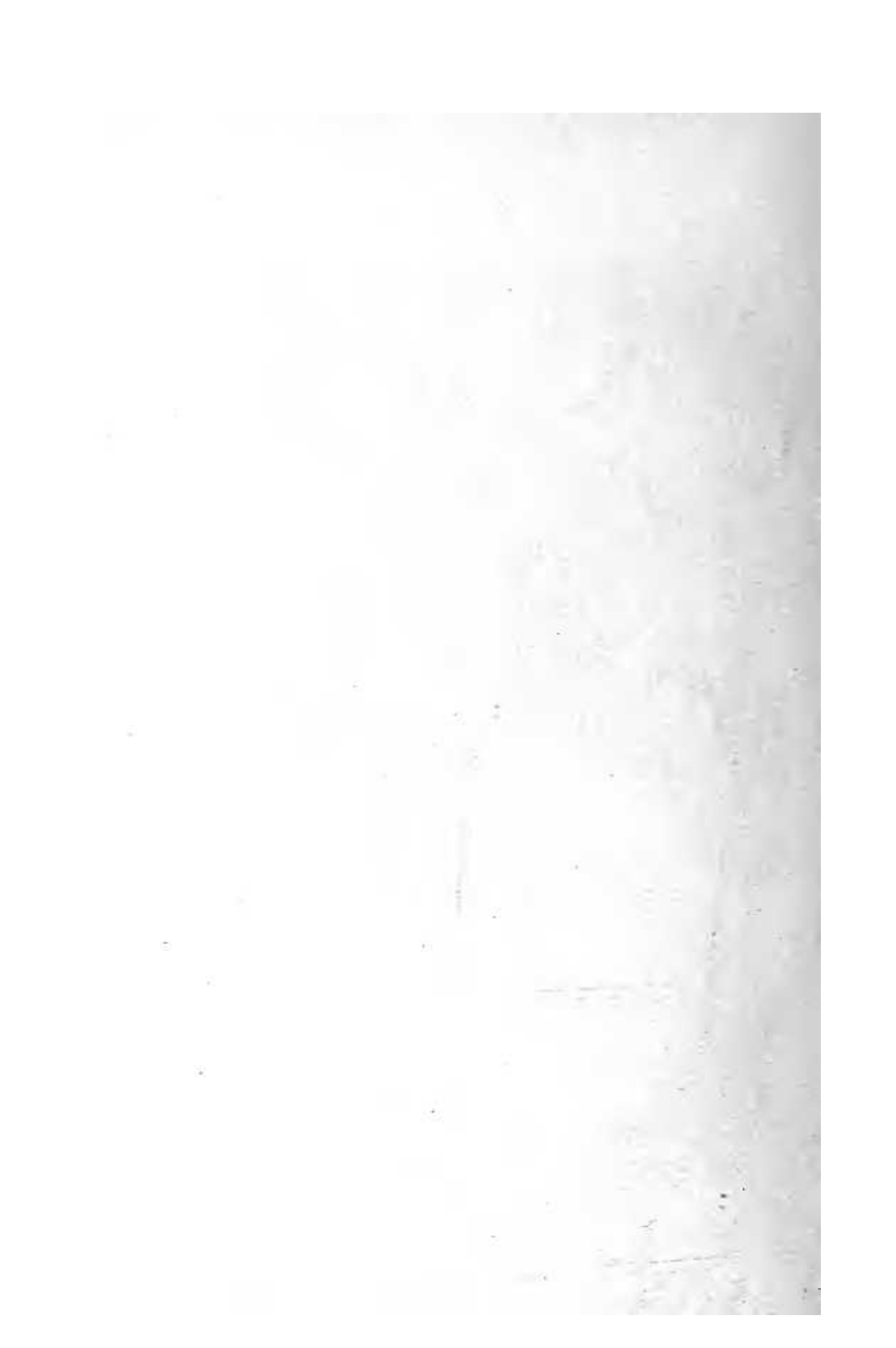
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IN my observation of men in different conditions of life, I have not known another whose unremitting, long-continued and unselfish labors in furtherance of any educational, scientific, religious or social project, would parallel those of my brother Isaac Pitman. I have never known another who devoted the physical and mental energies of more than sixty years of life to the development of one idea. Such devotion, in a limited field of thought, might seem more deserving of censure than praise. But when it is borne in mind that it has taken more than six thousand years to give the world so useful, yet so imperfect, a scheme of alphabetic representation as the present script and typic Roman alphabets, and that the aim of Isaac Pitman was to correct and complete, in stenographic writing, longhand script, and printing, this great instrument of civilization, it may be conceded, what is self-evident to every phonetician and intelligent phonographer, that the development and practical application of the phonetic principle to the arts of writing and printing could only have attained their present comparative excellence and wide-spread

acceptance in so brief a period by the entire devotion of one earnest mind, and the collaboration of tens of thousands of enthusiastic helpers. The project to which Isaac Pitman's life was devoted was so far-reaching in its aims and use, was one involving the discussion of so many thousand questions of detail, in which mind, eye, hand and habit were all concerned, and upon which every intelligent person might have a distinct opinion; was one in which so many subtle, technical difficulties were involved—of which only experts, after years of study, would be qualified to give an unprejudiced judgment,—that it cannot be regarded other than singularly fortunate that one so fitted by study and habit should be found willing and able to give his life to the solution of the problem.

That Isaac Pitman and his thousands of adherents, in the old and new world, have accomplished so much in the extension and use of a philosophic system of writing, is due to the admitted usefulness of the art, and to the intelligence and enthusiasm with which its admirers have labored. That they have, collectively, accomplished so little in inducing the English-speaking race to accept a more reasonable and philosophic script and typic representation of the language, is due to the fact that a new scheme antagonizes the settled thought and habits of people, and to the equally important fact that the reform deals with the representation of human speech, which is, by each individual, necessarily regarded from a different standpoint; while the practical representation of this varying speech will be received with varying degrees of respect and acceptance by each of the different organisms to which it appeals. What is more difficult of scientific analysis than human speech? What could be more evasive than an investigation of the nature, and the classification and nomenclature of the labial, dental and guttural explodents, checks, hisses, buzzes, hums and trills that, with vowels as connecting links, make our rapidly-moving vocal organism the means of expressing thought and feeling? And greatly is the difficulty increased when the attempt is made to picture to the eye each of these debatable sounds, in stenographic, in ordinary script, and in typic form, by the best available signs. It is not surprising, therefore, though it is to be regretted, that what Isaac Pitman esteemed the more important part of his life's labor, should have passed into history as "a failure." Justin McCarty, in his "History of Our