

**THE REPORTER; OR,
PHONOGRAPHY ADAPTED
TO VERBATIM REPORTING**

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The reporter; or, Phonography adapted to verbatim reporting by Isaac Pitman

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ISAAC PITMAN

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R E P O R T E R ;

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REPORTING.

BY ISAAC PITMAN.



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THE REPORTER.

1. In the consideration of the great, the national, and altogether unexpected advantages of a Reformed Orthography, which the practice of Phonetic Writing in the short-hand character is steadily bringing about, and the universal blessings that will necessarily follow, in the ultimate adoption of the phonetic principle for representing *all* languages, we are apt to overlook the lesser personal good of a practical acquaintance with the stenographic art to individuals in all situations of life, but more particularly to literary men. This subject has, however, been a favorite theme with many writers, who, by using the "winged words" of stenography, either in reporting for the press, or in their ordinary writing, for a course of years, have thereby attained a mental elevation far beyond what would have been possible under any other circumstances. The names of ED-MUND BURKE, Sergt. TALFOURD, CHARLES DICKENS, and a numerous array less known to fame, may be fairly considered as being indebted to their engagements with the periodical press as reporters, in early life, for no inconsiderable portion of their distinction in the literary world.

2. For the following eloquent enumeration of some of the advantages arising from the practice of the art, even when based upon the imperfect *a, b, c* alphabet, we are indebted to the pen of Mr. GAWTRESS, the publisher of an improved edition of "BYROM'S" system :—

"Short-hand is capable of imparting so many advantages to persons in almost every situation of life, and is of such extensive utility to society, that it is justly a matter of surprise that it has not attracted a greater share of attention, and been more generally practised. With a view to excite a livelier interest in its progress, and to induce those who have leisure to engage with ardour in the study of it, we shall point out a few of the benefits resulting from it.

"In England, at least, this art may be considered a National Blessing, and thousands who look with the utmost indifference upon it, are daily reaping the fruits of its cultivation. It is scarcely necessary to mention how indispensable it is in taking minutes of public proceedings. If all the feelings of a patriot glow in our bosoms on a perusal of those eloquent speeches which are delivered in the Senate, or in those public assemblies where the people are frequently convened to exercise the birthright of Britons—we owe it to short-hand. If new fervour be added to our devotion, and an additional stimulus be imparted to our exertions as Christians, by the eloquent appeals and encouraging statements made at the

anniversaries of our various religious Societies—we owe it to short-hand. If we have an opportunity, in interesting judicial cases, of examining the evidence, and learning the proceedings, with as much certainty, and nearly as much minuteness, as if we had been present on the occasion—we owe it to short-hand. In short, all those brilliant and spirit-stirring effusions which the circumstances of the present times combine to draw forth, and which the press transmits to us with such astonishing celerity, warm from the lips and instinct with the soul of the speaker, would have been entirely lost to posterity, and comparatively little known to ourselves, had it not been for the facilities afforded to their preservation by short-hand. Were the operations of those who are professionally engaged in exercising this art to be suspended but for a single week, a blank would be left in the political and judicial history of our country, an impulse would be wanting to the public mind, and the nation would be taught to feel and acknowledge the important purposes it answers in the great business of life.

“A practical acquaintance with this art is highly favourable to the improvement of the mind, invigorating all its faculties, and drawing forth all its resources. The close attention requisite in following the voice of the speaker induces habits of patience, perseverance, and watchfulness, which will gradually extend themselves to other pursuits and avocations, and at length inure the writer to exercise them on every occasion in life. When writing in public, it will also be absolutely necessary to distinguish and adhere to the train of thought which runs through the discourse, and to observe the modes of its connection. This will naturally have a tendency to endue the mind with quickness of apprehension, and will impart an habitual readiness and distinctness of perception, as well as a methodical simplicity of arrangement, which cannot fail to conduce greatly to mental superiority. The judgment will be strengthened and the taste refined; and the practitioner will by degrees become habituated to seize the original and leading parts of a discourse or harangue, and to reject whatever is common-place, trivial, or uninteresting.

“The *memory* is also improved by the practice of stenography. The obligation the writer is under to retain in his mind the last sentence of the speaker, at the same time that he is carefully attending to the following one, must be highly beneficial to that faculty, which more than any other owes its improvement to exercise. And so much are the powers of retention strengthened and expanded by this exertion, that a practical stenographer will frequently recollect more without writing, than a person unacquainted with the art could copy in the time by the use of common-hand.

“It has been justly observed, “this science draws out all the powers of the mind;—it excites invention, improves the ingenuity, matures the

judgment, and endows the retentive faculty with those superior advantages of precision, vigilance and perseverance.'

"The facility it affords to the acquisition of learning ought to render it an indispensable branch in the education of youth. To be enabled to treasure up for future study the substance of lectures, sermons, &c., is an accomplishment attended with so many evident advantages, that it stands in no need of recommendation. Nor is it a matter of small importance, that by this art the youthful student is furnished with an easy means of making a number of valuable extracts in the moments of leisure, and of thus laying up a stock of knowledge for his future occasions. The pursuit of this art materially contributes to improve the student in the principles of grammar and composition, while studying the rules of abbreviation and connexion: while tracing the various forms of expression by which the same sentiment can be conveyed; and while endeavouring to represent, by modes of contraction, the dependance of one word on another, he is insensibly initiated in the science of universal language and particularly in the knowledge of his native tongue.

"The rapidity with which it enables a person to commit his own thoughts to the safety of manuscript also renders it an object peculiarly worthy of regard. By this means a thousand ideas which daily strike us, and which are lost before we can record them in the usual way, may be snatched from destruction, and preserved till mature deliberation can ripen and perfect them.

"In addition to these inestimable advantages, *Science and Religion are indebted to this inestimable art* for the preservation of many valuable Lectures and Sermons, which would otherwise have been irrecoverably lost. Among the latter may be instanced those of Whitfield, whose astonishing powers could move even infidelity itself, and extort admiration from a Chesterfield and a Hume; but whose name would have floated down the stream of time, had not short-hand rescued a portion of his labours from oblivion. With so many vouchers of the truth of the remark, we can have no hesitation in stating it as our opinion, that since the invention of printing, no cause has contributed more to the diffusion of knowledge and the progress of refinement, we might also add, to the triumphs of liberty and the interests of religion, than the revival and improvement of this long-neglected art.

"Such are the blessings which short-hand, like a generous benefactor, bestows indiscriminately on the world at large. But it has additional and peculiar favours in store for those who are so far convinced of its utility as personally to engage in its pursuit. The advantages resulting from the exercise of this science, are not, as is the case with many others, confined to a particular class of society; for though it may seem more

immediately calculated for those whose business it is to record the eloquence of public men, and the proceedings of popular assemblies ; yet it offers its assistance to persons of every rank and station in life—to the man of business as well as the man of science—for the purpose of private convenience as well as of general information.”

3. If so much can be said in praise of this art, when based upon the common English alphabet, that furnishes but half as many letters as there are sounds in the language—and we can aver, from our own experience, that the half of the beneficial results flowing from the practice of the art are not here enumerated—how much more to be commended is a PHONETIC system, that secures perfect legibility, and a higher degree of brevity !

4. “The only impediment to the universal adoption of this invaluable accomplishment,” observes the late Mr. MOAT, in his *Short-hand Standard*, “is not altogether in its ‘not being regarded as an object of general attention,’ but in the want of a system which shall at once command the utmost degree of *brevity, simplicity, perspicuity and facility* ; so happily blended with each other, that nothing of the value of either may be sacrificed for the more extensive application of the rest ; and thus laying down a fundamental principle, or ground-work, which *must* lead to the desired perfection.

“Numerous as have been the attempts to attain the desideratum of the art, it is a matter of surprise, that the science of Stenography, in this enlightened age,—in this country where it was first reduced to alphabetical rule, and where the peculiar genius of its language is best calculated of any on earth (the Latin tongue, perhaps, excepted) for that purpose, should be still so very far from complete.

“It is pleasing, however, to observe, that some few have made considerable improvements, which principally consist in discarding the uncouth symbolical and hieroglyphical characters in common use among the earlier writers on the art ; and that, at least, the last half century is not wholly barren in the advancement of the science.

“There can be no doubt that this science will arrive at a much higher degree of perfection : and we may be assured that some future author will be crowned with that success which shall entitle him to the deserved appellation of ‘*Universal Stenographer*,’ whose work shall be reduced to that elegant simplicity which must characterise its worth, and ensure its general adoption and lasting establishment. When such a system shall appear, it will be the nation’s honour (as it must be its pride), which gave it birth,⁴ to foster it with parental care, and make it generally useful, by introducing it as a necessary branch of modern education.”

4. Stenography was first introduced to Alphabetical Rule in the reign of Elizabeth.

5. That no one can deserve the title of "UNIVERSAL STENOGRAPHER," who does not adopt the phonetic principle of writing as the basis of his system, will now be admitted as an indisputable axiom. Whether the short-hand alphabet identified with the present attempt at a Writing and Printing Reformation, solves the problem of combining "the utmost degree of brevity, simplicity, perspicuity, and facility; so happily blended with each other, that nothing of the value of either may be sacrificed for the more extensive application of the rest," time and experience alone can fully determine. The high appreciation of the system of "PHONOGRAPHY" here presented, by the public, and more particularly by teachers and short-hand writers, as manifested in the extensive sale of the "Manual" of the art, now in its seventh edition, and of which above twenty thousand copies were sold during the past year (1845), affords us some ground to hope that the problem is solved. It has been said by men of high standing in literature, and intimately acquainted with Stenography and Phonology, that "The alphabet of Phonography cannot be shaken till a new Geometry is discovered." The course of experiments we have deemed it advisable to prosecute in connection with the subject, has led us to the same conclusion.

6. The short-hand alphabet of Phonography is capable of three modes of application, forming three styles of writing, which are thus discriminated in the "Manual of Phonography," paragraphs 125—127:—

"The FIRST style is that in which every word is fully expressed by the several phonographs that represent its constituent sounds. This is PHONOGRAPHY or PHONETIC WRITING in the proper sense of the word.

"The SECOND style may be termed PHONETIC SHORT HAND, or PHONO-STENOGRAPHY, being a *Short Hand based upon Phonetic Principles*. In this short hand, a hundred words of frequent occurrence are represented, each by one of its (single, double, or treble) component letters. This style is suited for business purposes and letter writing. It would be too laborious to write all the letters of the constantly occurring words *the, and, of, to, in, that, &c.*; nor would they be more legible, when written at full, than when expressed by a single letter. Words thus abbreviated are called GRAMMALOGUES or LETTER-WORDS.

"The THIRD style is termed REPORTING, being Phonography adapted to verbatim reporting, by extending the number of grammalogues, by generally omitting the expression of the vowels, by contracting long words, and by a very extensive use of phraseography."

7. This THIRD, or most abbreviated style of Phonography, it is the object of the present work to explain. Before entering upon the study and practice of it, the reader should become perfectly familiar with the Second Style, as contained in the "Manual of Phonography," and should

be able to write 80 words per minute, without any other abbreviations than those there furnished.

8. The average time necessary to qualify a person who can write long-hand in a flowing style, to follow a speaker by means of the system of short-hand here presented, (including the time spent in learning the Second Style of Phonography,) may be stated at twelve months, by practising one hour per day, or five months at two hours per day, or three months at three hours per day. Some phonographers have, by less than one hour's practice per day, for six months, attained the ability to take down a moderate speaker verbatim; but in these instances, the writers were very expert at long-hand.

9. It must be borne in mind, by all who aspire to this eminence in the phonographic art, that the amount of practice, here mentioned, must be kept up unremittingly. Everything depends upon this. The loss of a day would retard the writer's progress as much as he would be able to recover in two days' additional writing.

10. The whole secret of reporting may be said to consist in two words—Practice, and the use of Phraseography. The student must himself give the first requisite, and we have here furnished the most efficient help for the second which our own experience, and that of many phonographic reporters, can supply. Of these two essentials, the greatest is PRACTICE, by dint of which alone, in the Second Style of Phonography, a person may write 100 words per minute. As the great Grecian orator, when applied to for information as to the most important requisite in elocution, said, "pronunciation," (meaning thereby not merely the correct utterance of single words, but also attention to emphasis, tone, inflections, pauses, &c. ;) and when asked what was the next essential, replied "pronunciation;" and still gave the same answer to the query as to the third essential in the art; so we may say of "that much-coveted art by which the orator's eloquence is to be caught in its impassioned torrent, and fixed upon paper, as a picture of his rich and glowing mind," the first, the second, and the last essential is, *practice*, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.

11. There may be, however, a practice that will hinder the Phonographer, instead of forwarding him: we allude to a careless formation of the letters, which will prevent the manuscript from being read. The young Phonographer should never let his desire to write *swiftly*, exceed his determination to write *correctly*. It is the same in short-hand as in long-hand: he that first learns to write well, will, in the course of time, write both well and quickly; whereas he that dashes away at the commencement, before his hand is habituated to *truth of form*, will never write *well*; and, though he may write *quickly*, he can never read what