

TO THE STUDENT.

The preceding section completes the presentation of the various principles of the art, and students who have faithfully followed the instructions are now in a position to put their knowledge of the subject to practical use. The principles presented in this series of lessons if put into sufficient practice will enable the student to keep pace with the fastest speaker. The student has now nothing new to learn about the art; he has simply to practice in order to gain speed, as there is hardly any limit to manual dexterity. The student must think in shorthand during the period of his practice in developing speed. While listening to a sermon or a speech he should follow in his mind the shorthand characters for every word uttered, forming a mental picture of each or tracing with his finger the different shorthand outlines.

The secret of expertness in shorthand is the same as in every other line of manual or mental skill. It lies in perfect familiarity with the subject matter, and this familiarity is reached only by wise and intelligent practice. Great skill in any kind of manual craft is reached only by constant and thoughtful practice, a practice which is always on the alert to avoid errors, and to detect and correct them when once made. Haphazard and unthinking practice is productive of more harm than good. One short selection, it matters little what, if practised upon unremittingly until every outline can be made correctly, easily and swiftly, will advance the student much more than weeks of practice from a too rapid dictation of new matter. The correct outlines of the selection should be determined before it is practised upon, and then it should be written over and over again until every phrase is improved upon to the utmost, until each outline is thoroughly familiarized, and until the writing is as legible as longhand.

As soon as the student begins dictation, he should make it a rule to read over everything he writes. This is imperative. He should not allow himself to read hastily or carelessly, but carefully and accurately at every step, and with the utmost painstaking over the smallest and seemingly most unimportant ticks. This habit should be resolutely adhered to throughout his whole practice. The student will find that his notes are always legible if well written, though easy reading requires some experience. It is a mere waste of time and energy to write page after page of shorthand from rapid dictation which the student knows he cannot read easily, and is fearful lest he cannot read at all, but he should write slowly and with a confident feeling of his ability to read his notes fluently.