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PRACTICAL STENOGRAPHY.

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FEW further thoughts as to speed and legibility, at the risk of some repetition, possibly. The first-class stenographer is he who can follow the speaker, no matter how rapid his utterances, and transcribe his notes with accuracy, if need be, or with judgment and sound sense where departure from the real words is essential. To follow the speaker, one should not only be able to write as rapidly as the words are spoken, but from ten to twenty words a minute faster;—for there are times when there is indistinctness, or ambiguity, or a proper name again, confusion in the audience, or something else to throw the reporter back a few seconds, and it becomes necessary to catch up. The ability, then, to write more rapidly than the speaking is of great and decided advantage. Then there are times when persons, who perhaps only the day before were reported with ease, become uncomfortably fast, though listeners will aver they are speaking in their usual way. This is due to a stenographer's physical and mental condition. Nearly worn out by hard nightwork, or many hours of note-taking, the mind acting sluggishly and the muscles protestingly, it is quite readily understood how this feeling will arise. It may be that this painful dragging behind comes from want of practice, or from unfamiliarity with the subject being reported. To overcome this, a few minutes' exercise with the pen from dictation before engaging in the work greatly relieves and gives confidence, especially if the strange outlines to be met with have in a measure been anticipated by the dictation-reading. Daily practice from dictation, even by the most experienced phonographers, is of great benefit where the day has not been spent in actual work at note-taking. If the notes are always read over, in addition, some one holding the original, it is surprising with how much more ease the actual note-tak-

ing goes on a few hours afterwards. Reference to, and practice from some phonographic work, is of benefit even to old reporters. Those in the business who have not tried these plans, will be agreeably and profitably surprised by a practical observance for a month or so.

With all the advantages of phonography, and the great progress made in it for real and valuable purposes, improvements are yet possible, not only in outline of daily recurring words, but speed and legibility. Some outlines made rapidly, (no difference in what system,) it must be confessed, are not what they ought to be to ensure ease of transcription. There are times when the most rapid systems known fail in execution. It is pardonable—perhaps—for some to say that they can read phonography with the same ease they can long-hand; but on actual test there is not one who can maintain that declaration true under all circumstances. Even in the easiest work, there is sometimes necessity for hesitation; and there are kinds of work where, in transcription, if the person averages half the ordinary speed he does well. Admitting that in testimony often one can run along for an hour as rapidly as the testimony was given, there will be hitches now and then; and with not a few there will be mistakes, too. Sometimes the mistakes are slight; but some old and long-experienced phonographers have been guilty (even in their palmy days) of rather mortifying ones. If there were an experience meeting here to-day on the subject of errors, and honest confessions made, and the whole truth told, many a seemingly fair day's record to the public eye might be found to have been not altogether clear of short omissions, or the peculiar art of supply, or possibly some cunning guess-work. With the most expert stenographers this is not so common as those of short experience might infer from their own peculiar troubles in the same direction; but they do occur with all in the course of a year's practice and some years more than others. We are not infallible, nor is the expert stenographer a bungler nor does he work as by chance. He has to deal with all sorts of men, with all sorts of thought and expression, and with every con-