

Communications.

THE QUESTION OF SPEED.

HAMILTON, 20th Jan'y, 1881.

To the Editor of the WRITER :

SIR,—Being only a " fledgling reporter " I should not perhaps find fault with the experiences and opinions of " old stagers," but I cannot forbear doing so regarding Mr. Geo. C. Holland's letter in your December issue.

I have been laboring under the impression that when I would be able to follow a speaker at say 150 to 180 words per minute, I could call myself a good reporter, but that letter just " settled " me. I had very great doubts about the ability of anyone to write 281 words per minute—I thought it rather *fast* ink-slinging so I tried what I would call a very fair test. It is a well known fact that a reader can read a speech much faster than an orator can deliver one. I took up different articles, one on astronomy, another on science, a newspaper editorial, and two or three others on different subjects, and read just as fast as I possibly could without any regard to punctuation or expression, and the following is the rate of the different trials :—1st trial, 256 words per minute; 2nd, 200; 3rd, 256; 4th, 296; 5th, 312; 6th, 275; 7th, 275; 8th, 240; and a few others varying from 245 to 260. Now of one thing I am positive, *there is not a reporter in existence to-day who could have followed me in a single one of those trials.* You will also notice that only *two* of them were equal to or greater than the speed mentioned by Mr. Holland. Now if anyone will take the trouble to read over an article or two at any of the above rates, he will see the absurdity of claiming any such speed as 281 or 240, or even 200, in the matter I read at that rate. It seems to me almost idle to contradict such a statement. But 281 words! why it beats greased lightning. I would like to know what kind of an article, on what subject, and under what circumstances Mr. James Holland made that remarkable speed.

Yours Fraternally,

T. J. GODFREY,
late *Spectator* reporter.

To the Editor of the SHORTHAND WRITER :

DEAR SIR,—I am reported in the *Oshawa Reformer*, and subsequently in the *SHORTHAND WRITER*, as having written 1960 words in a ten minutes' " take." while recently reporting one of Mr. Blake's speeches. As I do not claim such a rate of speed, I wish to correct a wrong impression. On the occasion referred to my hand was considerably out of practice, and I found that it taxed all my skill to keep up with Mr. Blake. In transcribing my notes the " copy " was taken from me sheet by sheet and sent to the printer. The last was a full page, and I thought I would count the number of

words on it to ascertain the rate at which Mr. Blake spoke per minute. I multiplied the number of words on the page by the number of sheets, and the amount was 1960. I was astonished, because I never flattered myself that I had attained such a speed, and when I announced the result the other reporters expressed some doubt about it also. Next day when the printed report appeared and my ten minutes' " take " was counted, I found that it amounted to just 1690 words, or 169 words per minute. Let other reporters sigh for 200 words-a-minute speakers, I have more respect for the orator whose tongue wags under 160.

A. HOLLAND,

Senate Reporter.

OTTAWA, Feb. 1881.

Transcript of T. William Bell's Reporting Notes.

LECTURE BY MR. J. E. B. MCCREADY.

Subject :—" THOS. D'ARCY MCGEE."

Delivered at the Mechanics Institute, St. John, N.B.,
January 24, 1881.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—The men who moved upon the stage of political life in Canada at the date of the Union, have been since passing away one by one. Howe, of Nova Scotia, statesman, journalist and orator, went down full of years and honors. George Brown, of Ontario, whose pen was so mighty, whose spirit so dauntless, whose influence so wide, was struck down untimely by the assassin's bullet. Cartier, the great leader of French Canadians; our own Charles Fisher, Holton, Sandfield McDonald, D'Arcy McGee, are gone. Others of that company, not less distinguished, still live. A century from now our grandchildren will look back and say, "There were giants in those days." To those who are gone we owe at least this tribute of mention, for they are dead, and the dead are soon forgotten. Among them there are few figures more conspicuous than Thos. D'Arcy McGee, the apostle of confederation and its most eloquent defender. Thomas D'Arcy McGee was born in Carlingsford, Ireland, in April 1825, when the " Emerald Isle," afterwards so dear to his heart, was renewing its mantle of green. Forty-three years later, on an April morning, in the city of Ottawa, when the Canadian winter still lingered, the last snow was stained with his life-blood, as he was foully slain. Of the intervening years, twenty were spent in Ireland, twelve in the United States, and ten in Canada. In each of those terms of years, in each of these countries, he had at various times been widely known as a lecturer, journalist and orator. Like many who have achieved greatness, he was not descended from a long line of noble ancestors, but had the fortune to be borne the son of an honest man and a good woman.