

writes to the *Phonographic Magazine*:—"I am reporting for the *South Carolinian* in the Legislature. I am not yet 18, and have studied Phonetic Shorthand not more than a year." Mr. Jacobs beats the writer of this, but not much. Having secured an engagement as Reporter for the *Rochester Daily Tribune* a few weeks after completing our 18th year, our first report—of a speech before the Athenaeum, on the evening of the 24th, by Dr. Solger—was published in the *Tribune* on the morning of the 25th November, 1855. We naturally felt as if we were getting up in the world when the *Tribune* of that morning made its appearance, leaving the first fruits of our many months' study of the beautiful thought-catching art. Ten dollars a week was a consideration, too. That was about two and a half years, as near as we can remember, from when we first saw or heard anything of the art but three months, of six hours a day would, we think, embrace every hour spent in its study, to say nothing of having been obliged, from ill health, to lay it aside for a whole six months in 1854-5 and thus forgetting some of it. When we first commenced to report, as above mentioned, we were able to write the "Speech of Edward Everett" in the Reporter's Companion—after committing the first 150 words of it to memory and writing it over something like fifty times—only at the rate of about 100 words per minute. After getting actually at work, however, we improved rapidly, until, to follow an ordinary speaker, word for word, became but a light task. It might be well here to add—for the encouragement of some who think it almost impossible to acquire a full knowledge of the art without a teacher—that we never had a moment's oral instruction from anybody. We might have had it for the asking, a great portion of the time, when living but a few minutes' walk from the offices of Messrs. A. J. Graham, Henry S. Clubb, S. P. Andrews, Augustus Boyle, E. Webster, and other great teachers in New York City, but we did not require it, everything necessary being laid down in the books. Most, if not all of the difficulties experienced by some in learning the art from the books, arises from their having forgotten a principle inculcated in some paragraph, carelessly read and soon forgotten, a few days previously. Young aspirant, when you get "stuck," just act on the hint here thrown out, and you may have cause to thank us for it for the remainder of your life.

The Art of Writing.

From the earliest times, all civilized races have been able to communicate ideas to one another, not only by means of spoken sounds, but they have also made use of certain methods of "painting thought," and of ren-

dering ideas visible. We may suppose that with the power to relate came the desire to retain, and from the pleasure of conversing with a present friend arose the desire of communicating with an absent one. Hence we find in the earliest ages, that images and pictures of various objects were employed directly or indirectly in representing facts and thoughts, such images being painted or carved on wood, stone, or other substances. But as men's ideas expanded, it was found that this method of representing was too lengthy. They therefore abbreviated these pictures, and instead of the whole of the lamb, the lion or the fox, they painted or carved parts, or merely sketched the outlines, and in the course of time many of these figures were so much abbreviated as to lose all resemblance to the objects they were intended to represent. The characters employed by the Chinese at present afford an illustration of this process. From a mixture of alphabetic and emblematic signs arose the hieroglyphic or emblematic style of writing, of the Egyptians as well as other ancient nations.

The pictorial method of writing, wherein persons and things were represented by their pictorial resemblances, has been confined chiefly to half-civilized races. By this method, a horse was painted for a horse; a lion was sketched to represent a lion; and a tree for a tree. This mode widely differs from the hieroglyphic or emblematic style of writing, wherein ideas and things are represented by their correspondence. The pictorial method was in use in America at the time of its discovery, the King of Mexico had paintings brought to him representing the vessels, horses, arms, and mode of warfare of the Spaniards. Some of these interesting pictures are still preserved in the royal palace of Madrid. But these primitive methods of representing and communicating thoughts and facts, although sufficient perhaps for those nations who had little use for such an art, did not satisfy mankind when their ideas became still more expanded, and when the necessity for a briefer mode of representing thought was felt, the glorious invention of the Alphabet was effected. This mode of writing consists in the employment of signs to represent the elementary sounds and articulations of spoken language in which the ideas of the mind are clothed, and not the ideas themselves.

The alphabetic mode of writing, which, with slight alteration, has been used by all the nations of Europe for many centuries past, has at length attained a great degree of beauty. The forms of the written characters of our alphabet are exceedingly elegant, and, considering their length, may be very rapidly made. But most words are rendered much longer than are absolutely necessary, in consequence of the absurd method of

spelling by which language is at present misrepresented.

The present system of writing, however, is unnecessarily lengthy. No reason can be given why the sounds of language should not be represented by the simplest signs instead of by the somewhat complicated forms at present used, many of which require four, five and six inflections of the pen to produce them. So great is the disparity existing between the two usual modes of conveying thought, namely, by spoken sounds and by written signs, that from seven to ten hours [according to the speed with which we write] are occupied by communicating in writing what could be uttered in one. We convey our ideas to a friend in conversation with fluency and ease, for, when spoken sounds are employed, thoughts are communicated with great rapidity; but when we attempt to "talk on paper," the process is tedious and wearisome. Hence exists the need for a system of expressing spoken sounds, whereby the writer should be enabled to impress thoughts on paper almost as rapidly as they can be expressed by ordinary sounds. So generally has this need been felt, that ever since the days of Timothy Bright, who, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, published the first system of abbreviated writing, by which "with a few characters, short and easy, a swift hand may write orations, uttered as becometh the gravitie of such actions,"—ever since this first and most interesting attempt, system after system has been ushered into existence, till it may be questioned if there are not ten times as many stenographic works lying on the shelves of the libraries of this land, as there are practical every-day writers of the respective systems. Every system of shorthand or stenography hitherto invented has been based upon our present inconsistent method of spelling. Such systems, therefore, necessarily possess all the defects of our present orthography, greatly increased by the constant omission of the vowel sounds. These systems profess to represent a language containing thirty-four primary sounds with about twenty marks or letters! As nearly one-half, therefore, of the sounds of our language are unrepresented, vast numbers of words cannot be correctly written, and so defective is every mere system of shorthand, that whole classes of words, of different sound and different meaning, are indicated by the same marks! Hence arises the great difficulty of deciphering words and sentences when thus expressed; for the context, the memory, and the judgment, must be called in to assist the eye. This is the grand reason which has prevented shorthand from becoming more general, it being impossible that any system incapable of answering the varied purposes for which writing is required, should supersede the common longhand as a general means for communication.