

MR. PRAY'S REPORTING FEAT.

In our September article on "Rates of Speed" we showed that great diversity of opinion exists as to the possibility of a reporter maintaining a speed of 200 words per minute, or any number approximating that, for several minutes at a stretch. But Mr. Thos. Pray, Jun., editor of the *Boston Journal of Commerce*, submits evidence that appears indisputable, that such a feat was accomplished by him. The discussion till now has been carried on by Mr. T. W. Bell, editor of the phonographic department of the *Printer's Miscellany*, St. John, N. B., and "Outsider," who hails from Catonsville, Md. "Outsider" sends us a reply to Mr. Bell, and in response to the latter's request for the authority of a certain statement in dispute, he asks Mr. Bell to turn to page 45 of the July number of the *Writer*, column 1, line 13, where the following words are attributed to Mr. Pray: "Mr. Reed, as we all know, is not a writer of Graham's Standard Phonography, and this in some measure may account for his inability to attain an exceedingly high rate of speed,"—and much more in the same strain. "Outsider" adds: "Mr. Bell affects to discredit my sincerity in eulogising Mr. Pray's unequalled performance. I had not the least ground to doubt Mr. Pray's words, and no one can go beyond me in genuine admiration of his remarkable achievement. Mr. Bell is the one who has thrown old water on Mr. Pray's fame by conjuring up a 'baker's dozen' who can do even better work. Let's have de col' fax, gemmen."

And now we have a letter from Mr. Pray himself, giving the "col' fax," and making the matter quite clear from his standpoint. From personal acquaintance with Mr. Pray, we believe him to be a man of honor, and his famous "feat" was a genuine thing, unless those who timed him on the occasion in question made a mistake in their reckoning. But the other statements made by Mr. Pray would go to disprove any such supposition. Mr. Pray writes:—

"I have nothing to say except to 'Outsider's' reference to me in the upper right hand column of page 56 [August]. 'Outsider' says, 'But Mr. Pray attributes Mr. Reed's supposed defeat, partly, at least, to that gentleman's inability to write the 'Standard.' Now, 'Outsider' is most decidedly misinformed, or else he intentionally attributes to me what I never have said."

"Previous to this note to you, I have never written one word to any person regarding the matter. The fact that I did write 14,300 words in 78 minutes, and probably in five or six minutes less than that, has been circulated by parties who knew the facts in the case without any intervention of my own. I have nothing whatever to say as to Mr. Reed's supposed defeat, and desire you to at least make this correction. It is entirely immaterial to me what 'Outsider' thinks. He may be able to talk about settling down to facts and stop-watches, but it will not in the least change what is already a positive fact, and where parties were

keeping an account of the time without any knowledge of the writer.

"It might amuse the same man, 'Outsider,' to learn that both myself and my Mr. F. G. Morris had the pleasure of reporting the Hon. Benjamin H. Brewster, in the court in Philadelphia, about one hundred years ago, when he ran at more than 200 words a minute for ten or twelve minutes at a stretch, and I would like to see any other system on earth except Graham's, and an expert writer at that, who could keep track of it. I have no objection to other men achieving glory, credit, profit, and emolument, but it does not follow as a matter of course that a second, third, or fifteenth rate writer need attempt to sling mud on Graham's system, which is the only system in the world, or upon men who have an experience of fifteen and twenty years, and have fathered the imitation systems to the extent of finding them valueless where accuracy and speed were required.

"Mr. F. G. Morris, who does much of my own work, as I am unable to give time or attention to it myself, has written for me nearly 200 words a minute for 20 to 40 minutes at a stretch, sitting in my office here, taking technical dictations, which, I presume, would bother the best shorthand writer, who was not experienced in it, to that extent that he could not master 125 words per minute. The notes can be seen upon our office reporter's books, on full-sized foolscap paper, written with a pen, and Mr. Morris is to-day one of the best reporters in this country in technical matter, and has no trouble in obtaining plenty to do when he can give it attention. It is not unlikely that he may become an attache of our paper, and if he does it will be because of the care which he has bestowed upon Graham's system, and the thoroughness and perfection with which he does his work. Stop-watches are not required."

REPORTING ETIQUETTE.

Almost every profession has its rules of etiquette, written or unwritten. The reporting profession ought not to be without similar laws to regulate the conduct of its members *inter se*. Nor is it altogether without such rules; but these have as yet had no definite expression; they are a *lex non scripta*. To reduce some of them to shape, and to throw out a few hints as to professional intercourse, is what I propose to myself in this chapter. It is obviously a reporter's duty to identify himself as much as possible with the journal with which he is connected; but this need not prevent his holding out the hand of friendship and co-operation to his brethren who are associated with other newspapers. As a rule, there is a constant interchange of civilities going on among reporters, and the frequency with which they are brought into contact with each other affords them abundant opportunity of rendering mutual assistance. Now and then one sees