

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

A number of correspondents have asked us to answer the following questions, and we will reply to them collectively.

Q.—“What speed does a person require to attain to in order to procure a situation?”

A.—Professional reporters should have a speed of 150 words per minute as their minimum rate, and be able to extend that speed when occasion requires to 160 or 170. The test rate of admission to a majority of the Stenographic Associations of the States and England ranges from 140 words per minute upwards. Of course, for amateurs work a less rate would suffice, but we are of opinion that an amateur shorthand writer should not accept any position in which his knowledge of shorthand is likely to be used unless he can write and keep up a speed of 120 words per minute. Nearly every business man will rise to that speed and often go beyond it in dictating letters to his shorthand secretary, and if that secretary, can only write 100 he has to trust to Providence to be able to read the characters he flings on his note-book when thus pushed. Incompetency to meet the requirements of a position by the exaggerated estimate the occupant has put upon his shorthand ability, serves to bring the art and the use of it into disrepute among those who are likely to need its services.

Q.—“What salaries are paid to shorthand writers?”

A.—Court reporters in Canada receive salaries of about \$1,200; in the United States courts they vary considerably, ranging all the way from \$1,000 to \$6,000. The latter figure is only reached by a few of the most expert and accomplished in the art. In Canada, shorthand clerks in wholesale houses and large establishments receive on an average about \$600 a year; the same figure would also apply to writers in law offices. Private secretaries range higher; the Government writers receiving about \$1,000 a year.

Q.—“Is there a demand for shorthand writers in Toronto?”

A.—We can answer that there is, but this demand has given rise to an evil, and that evil is that mere students who cannot write over seventy-five words a minute apply for these positions that require a speed of 120, as we have pointed out in our answer to the first question. While there are a large number of applicants who allow their zeal and energy to outrun their ability to fill these offices, first-class writers, who, in addition to a thorough knowledge of shorthand, possess the other necessary qualifications that go hand in hand with phonography, such as good penmanship, a sound education, and a fair knowledge of commercial business—find no difficulty in procuring positions at salaries of from \$600 to \$1,000 a year.

Q.—“On page forty-two of Isaac Pitman's ‘Manual’ the position of words in reporting is

determined by their vowels, as *ah, a, e, av, o, oo*. These are the long vowels. Does the same rule hold good for the short vowels? A. E. F., Simcoe, Ont.

A.—It refers to the short vowels as well. See for example the grammalogues “other,” “that,” “particular,” “put,” etc.

Q.—“What other qualifications do I require to enable me to hold a situation at a salary of \$800 or \$1,000, besides being competent to report a rapid speaker verbatim? I am desirous of working my way up to be a reporter.”—A. J., Bowmanville.

A.—In order to become a successful reporter on a daily paper, a sound education, embracing a knowledge of every subject that he will likely be required to handle, is requisite, in addition to being an able phonographer. Physical qualifications are also necessary, to enable the reporter to stand the wear and tear of night work on his system and on his brain.

FAST REPORTERS.

CATONSVILLE, Md., Jan. 20th, 1881.

To the Editor of the WRITER:

“Mr. Moody utters 200 words per minute, but I can report Mr. Moody, therefore I write at that rate.” This is how it was put by a crack reporter to a friend of mine recently. Mr. T. A. Reed is certainly not going to continue forever to be the fastest reporter in the world, but those one minute tests, the matter of which a person might readily memorize, are not to be compared to his 185 words done in the course of his reporting practice. Mr. Holland's statement, though brilliant, by no means settles this question. Who else, besides Mr. Reed, has reached to a certainty 185 words per minute by the half-hour? We hope to hear of at least *one* on our side of the water.

OUTSIDER.

REPORTING IN THE LAW COURTS.

QUEBEC, Jan. 1st, 1881.

To the Editor of the WRITER:

In the last number of the WRITER there is a very good article on “Reporting in the Law Courts.” The writer suggests that in taking evidence both question and answer be written. This has always been done in our Courts in Quebec, and it has been found to work well, time being saved, and the reporter's work being made much lighter. It is true that the judges of the Supreme Court have taken objection to the great number of useless questions and answers that appear in depositions, but that defect is being fast removed as lawyers become better accustomed to our mode of reporting. As an example of the great amount of time saved by this system, I may state that I have on one occasion reported 53,000 words in one day from 9.15 a. m. until 8 p. m.; no discretion having to be exercised by the reporter, the attorneys having asked that everything be taken down.

JOHN CAREY.