

BENGOUGH'S
COSMOPOLITAN
SHORTHAND WRITER.

Conducted by THOMAS BENGOUGH, Official Reporter, York County Courts.

VOL. III.

TORONTO, JULY, 1882.

No. 3

THE SUPREME MOMENT.

The work of a shorthand reporter is unique among the art-sciences. The labor of years must be concentrated within a space as brief as that in which the long, many-syllabled words are written. The resources of the mind, the brain, and the hand must be called into action at a moment's notice, and held in the most complete subjection, under the greatest tension. Not only must the brain be trained to send with electric speed to the nimble fingers the forms which represent uttered sounds, and not only must the fingers be trained to nimbleness in writing these, but the ear must acquire a sensitiveness which can only come of training. This organ is neglected more than it should be. The student-phonographer does not usually take into sufficient account the important fact that upon a fine discriminating sense of sound will depend, to a large extent, his success as a reporter; for it is a peculiarity of our comprehensive English language that the same sound may represent words of diverse or similar meaning, and by an exasperating combination of similar sounds, a sense may be conveyed which is entirely different from that which the speaker intended. Illustrations of this will occur to every experienced phonographer. One may be given: the phrase, "we can test his evidence," might be construed into "we contest his evidence," and thus an entirely different meaning can be conveyed by the same sound. By this similarity of sound, but variation of sense, ludicrous and dangerous errors creep into transcript; thus the phrase "the testimony of the census" may be readily translated, through inaccuracy of hearing, into shorthand characters representing "the testimony of the senses." But while the sound is almost identical, and would not be distinguished except by a trained ear, the meaning of the two phrases is so different as to alter the sense of the sentence.

The work of the stenographer is pecu-

liar. In the crowded court-room, or political assembly, he sits alone, unaided. The testimony of a garrulous and rapidly-speaking witness may seal the fate of a prisoner, hence the reporter must give the exact words-and, as nearly as possible, the accents of the witness testifying; yet in this arduous task he could receive no assistance, he could appeal for no help. If his previous training has been deficient in any respect he will suffer the loss of reputation and standing, and the trying nature of the ordeal will not be recognized, because not understood, by those who sit in judgment upon his work. Every one of the other actors in the court scene are more fortunate than the stenographer. The barrister conducting the case, or his opposing counsel defending the prisoner, may be assisted by junior counsel, who will help him out of the difficulty. The judge himself, though he may not be able to follow the evidence or argument completely, has equally the aid of both counsel. If he make a slip of the tongue, in his charge to the jury, he is promptly corrected by counsel or stenographer. Individual jurymen may not apprehend the points of the case; but they have the assistance of their fellow jurors.

The unskilful physician at the bedside of his patient dying of a complicated disease, may administer a fatal drug and cause the death of the sufferer, but, by the use of technical terms, he can hoodwink the relatives of the deceased and exculpate himself. An unscrupulous lawyer may bolster up a poor case by incorrectly citing precedents. The preacher may cover up ignorance of the truth by metaphysical dissertation.

In all these cases, stupidity, or wilful ignorance, or deceit, may pass unpunished; but in the case of the stenographer, stern justice metes out the severest penalties. The transcript of the stenographer, prepared and delivered in plain print, cannot be manipulated so as to conceal his igno-