

SHORTHAND: ITS USEFULNESS TO MINISTERS.

THE writer has been requested by the editor of the JOURNAL to send an article on shorthand, for which he suggested as title, "The Minister's Time and Muscle Saved." It is clear that he wanted a thoroughly practical paper, and I shall try to convey as much information as I can within the limit assigned me.

In order to become sufficiently expert in the use of shorthand, to make it of great service, the student should determine to devote a few minutes of every day, for a certain time, to the practice of the art. A year's persistent practice will make almost anyone so familiar with the characters as to enable him to write anything and to read his notes with facility. To master the rudiments of the art demands but little time and money, and no teacher is required. Isaac Pitman's Manual can be bought for about fifteen cents, and it contains all that is necessary for the beginner to know. Half an hour a day for two or three months should suffice to learn all the characters, the method of this combination, and the abbreviated signs used for the words of most frequent occurrence. These abbreviations are not arbitrary, as the phonetic principle runs through the whole system, making it perfectly intelligible and leaving very little to burden the memory with. After this is acquired, the great thing to be kept in view is frequent practice. There is no art, however, that can be so easily and readily practiced as shorthand. The student may begin after the first or second lesson; and whenever he has five or ten minutes leisure, with a scrap of paper and a pencil, he can utilize it by writing words in short hand. One thing important to bear in mind is to read as much as possible what you write. This is what is most trying to the patience. But unless you do this, speed will be of little advantage. When you have got far enough on to be able to form almost any word, then it is a simple matter to write any little piece of prose or poetry either from memory or by copying from any book. But carefully read over what you have written. Occasionally, a good natured friend may be found to dictate, and this is useful for acquiring speed, but speed need not be aimed at; it will come with practice, the great essential is legibility. After six months practice,