

When a word of very frequent occurrence such as "about" is represented in Phonography by a single alphabetical sign, the word is termed a "sign-word," and the sign which it indicates is called a "word-sign." Two or more of these "word-signs" are often combined to form a "phrase-sign," when "sign-words" follow one another in this manner: "about which," "it can be," etc. This "phrasing" is, under certain conditions, a valuable aid to speed. The instruction books, however, give the student too many "phrases" to commit to memory and incorporate with his practice. I lost much time endeavoring to memorize "phrases," until I conceived the idea that I could, when writing, form at the moment, upon general principles, all the "phrases" that were really essential to speed. Soon after this, in order to perfect myself in Phonography, I entered the office to which I have already alluded. Here, from time to time, I transcribed the notes, taken in court, of three verbatim law reporters, one of them being the official stenographer of the judicial district. These men, of course, all wrote the same system, and yet there was the greatest dissimilarity in their phrasing. Indeed their notes differed as much in character and general appearance as did their handwriting. The temperament and peculiarities of each expressed themselves in his phonography. I therefore ceased to learn "set phrases," and soon found that my phrases formed themselves with facility and without any special effort to make them.

One important element of legibility is commonly disregarded by the phonographic reporter. The legibility of ordinary handwriting depends very much upon the letters being properly formed and joined. The same thing is true of phonography. It is impossible for anyone but himself to read the notes of a phonographer when the characters are distorted. Indeed the writer is too often himself perplexed and puzzled by his own notes, and loses valuable time in the effort to decipher them. His accuracy is, also, affected by his being unable to tell what some askew outline means, which may be supposed to mean one thing, while it really means something very different. The time and labor devoted to acquiring the ability to write phonography symmetrically will be amply compensated by augmented speed, legibility, and accuracy.

There is one point more to which I wish to allude. Nearly all the phonographic instruction books teach first a "correspond-

ing style," and then a "reporting style." The former "style" requires the pupil to insert the vowels and to use two "positions." The latter "style" omits the vowels, and teaches three "positions," besides a quantity of extra "word-signs" and make-shifts. When learning the first the pupil omits a great deal that he could learn at the time. When he advances to the second he has to unlearn more or less of what he has acquired. All this is a serious hindrance to progress. There is no necessity for such a distinction being made in "styles." The learner should be taught the "reporting style" from the commencement, and when he corresponds with a friend he can insert or omit vowels as the circumstances require. In fact the textbooks contain a mass of rules, distinctions and discursive paragraphs that are altogether superfluous, and are utterly disregarded by the experienced verbatim reporter. Phonography, in common with other arts, will improve, but the improvement will simplify the art, and not render it more and more obscure, intricate, and difficult of attainment.

Now, from years of observation, experience, and practice, I have deduced the following conclusions, which, I hope, will prove of benefit to students of the fascinating art of Phonography:

First,—It is only the most constantly recurring words that should be memorized as "sign-words." Second,—No attention should be paid to forming contracted outlines for words that do not frequently occur. Third,—As few ticks, scratches and curls as possible should be used. Fourth,—Except in some special cases, all outlines consisting of three or more consonant signs should be written on the line. Fifth,—The general principles of "phrasing" being mastered, no time should be spent in learning "phrases." Sixth,—A free, bold manipulation of the pen or pencil should be acquired, so that the phonographer's notes may be symmetrical and legible. Seventh,—Let the pupil begin with the "reporting style," and the "corresponding style" will take care of itself.

If the student will be guided by the above conclusions he will save himself two good years of exhaustive drudgery, and countless moments of excruciating perplexity. It was through the practice of these principles that I became a phonographic reporter.

NO YOUNG MAN should omit to make shorthand a study. It will pay him.