

tremely neat, that I cannot think they could have been written at any great speed. I think this plan, if it should be adopted, would please many more besides myself; as *fac-simile* notes, when we do not know at what rate they were taken, give us but a faint idea of the writer's *actual notes* when he is "pushed."

Yours, by a large majority,

W. M. HAMILTON.

London, April 30th, 1881.

To the Editor of the WRITER:

DEAR SIR,—D. L. Scott-Browne, Esq., I see tries to make his readers believe that I have been "gulling" you. That *his* portrait, sketch and *fac-similes* are genuine and that yours are not. My opinion is that the man must be mad. It is not at all likely that the fraternity are going to accept his statements for the truth in this matter in face of what is going to be published in other phonographic magazines that have some claim to respectability.

Yours always,

T. WILLIAM BELL.

St. John, N. B., April 21, 1881.

THE SHORTHAND PROFESSION.

To the Editor of the WRITER:

DEAR SIR,—I have been much interested in the discussion carried on in your columns concerning shorthand writers, their qualifications and salaries. Allow me to place before your readers one or two points in connection with this question. "Protectionist" feels that injury is being done to the profession by amateurs of limited speed, who take positions to the exclusion of better men. "Aspirant" answers in effect that the man who satisfactorily fills any position is the best man for the place, and has a right to it—if he can get it. With reference to the employment of shorthand writers in my view, as with other professions and trades, the question is one of demand and supply. Shorthand writing is, as yet, a comparatively new thing in practical business life in this country, and without doubt the number of positions to be filled will multiply greatly within a few years; so also will the number of writers, and in all probability the latter will increase in a much greater ratio than the former. Therefore, from this standpoint, shorthand writing offers no greater or more numerous prizes to its devotees than any other profession, and to encourage students to take up the study by placing before them shining examples of men who have secured very remunerative positions through their knowledge of the art, is to do both the student and the profession an injury, because every ambitious young man naturally is led to infer that he may go and do likewise. The fact is incontrovertible that the positions of reporters to Canadian and American courts are already more than filled, as are perhaps, to a

greater extent, the positions as legislative reporters and scribes on the daily press. In this profession, as in all others, the best man wins, with this difference; that in shorthand writing it is "considerably more so." A physician may be able and conscientious, and yet have many patients die, but no one thinks of calling him to account unless there be palpable evidence of mal-practice. A lawyer may mis-manage his case and yet an intelligent jury give him a verdict, or he may lose it by the obstinacy of one jurymen, and no one accuses him of inability. But a court-reporter is allowed no latitude or grace for sins of omission or commission. If, after working for hours, and being pushed to his greatest speed in attempting to keep up with one judge, two lawyers and a valuable witness, all talking at nearly the same moment, the poor scribe fails to read off, without hesitation, some portion of testimony taken perhaps the day before, he is looked upon as incompetent by both bench and bar. And should he possibly mistake the meaning of a form, and give an incorrect translation thereof, it may be said of him "his occupation's gone." I would sum up my remarks in this way:

It is contrary to sound principle to prohibit, or attempt to prohibit, instruction in this branch of education. All who can learn it have a right to do so, and others have equally a right to teach them.

Employers will pay shorthand writers salaries, large or small, in proportion, first, to the capacity of the employee to meet their requirements; second, in proportion to the amount of competition among men equally qualified, who may be seeking the place.

The number of writers capable of filling situations requiring a low rate of speed will always be in excess of the number of such positions open. And the number of positions open to men of high attainments as shorthand writers, will continue to be still fewer in proportion to the number of men capable of filling them. This statement may be disputed, but I find it susceptible of proof. Therefore I maintain that the shorthand profession does not offer inducements to any young men except those who have proved themselves of special fitness for it in many ways, and who have, beside their ability to write shorthand well, a good education and a fund of common sense larger than is necessary for success in most walks of life. There are thousands of youths studying shorthand in every large town, inspired by bright visions of erroneous salaries and easy berths just within their grasp. They are deceiving themselves in this regard, and the only return—and it must be admitted it is a great one—they can expect for their labor in acquiring the art, is the advantage derived from the ability to use shorthand in many ways in which longhand is used, and in many circumstances in which longhand is utterly inadequate to fill their wants.

F. W. WODELL.

Hamilton, 5th April, 1881.