

RATES OF SPEED IN SHORTHAND WRITING.

The several letters which have appeared in the WRITER on this subject have created a lively discussion in our phonographic contemporaries.

Referring to the statement made by Mr. E. E. Horton, that Mr. Thos. Allen Reed "claims as his utmost speed only 185 words per minute," the *Reporter's Magazine* remarks that "as a matter of fact Mr. Reed has never laid claim to any particular speed. The assertion that he claims as his utmost speed 185 words per minute probably arose from a statement he once made that a sermon of an hour's duration which he reported, when counted showed an average of 185 words per minute. That sermon, he said, was the fastest he remembered to have counted."

Another correspondent of the WRITER credited the late Dr. Punshon with a rate "even exceeding 190 words per minute." The editor of the *Reporter's Magazine*, Mr. Ed. J. Nankivell, F. R. H. S., says that he has "often taken Punshon, and can bear witness to the absurdity of such a statement." Dr. Punshon, Mr. Nankivell avers, was too genuine an orator to chatter at that rate. He adds that if the Canadian ideas of rates of speed are all based upon equally trustworthy estimates, his only wonder is that we don't hear of men who have attained a rate of 400 or 500!

Mr. Nankivell evidently thinks that 190 words per minute is pretty tall talk; but what will he say when he reads the statement published in a recent WRITER that Mr. Pray has written technical matter at the rate of 196 words?

And now we have a new fact to add to the literature of this much-debated subject. In the famous "Waubuno" steamship case recently tried in this city, Mr. Alex. H. Crawford, official reporter in the Superior Court, took evidence from half-past one till half past six o'clock of one day, and a computation of the transcript showed that the average rate per minute of the whole five hours was 160 words.

This fact has a very important bearing on the discussion as to speed, on the following grounds: (1) It was a trial of *endurance* as well as speed—and capacity for sustained effort is next to speed in importance to a reporter who has to take notes for several hours. (2) It shows that the rate of speaking which averaged 160 words per minute for five hours must have been frequently much higher than that, allowance being made for delays in calling witnesses, etc.

What have our readers to say about Mr. Crawford's feat?

Newfoundland's Legislative Council has one shorthand reporter, a writer of Gurney's system. The proceedings of the Lower House occupy the services of four reporters, two of whom are Stenographers.

OUR EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

This is one of the "features" of our establishment, and aspiring shorthand writers make no mistake in registering their applications. Frequently shorthand amanuenses are required in haste, and a glance at our register decides at once the whole matter. The present conductor of the WRITER—who has personal charge also of the Bureau—has put scores of shorthand amateurs in honorable positions at good salaries. His services were given gratuitously and gladly for years; but when the WRITER was started, the applications were so numerous that it was found necessary to organize the Bureau, with a registration fee of one dollar. This secures to the applicant the preference for any suitable position that offers. The candidate who thus secures an appointment pays us a commission of *three per cent.* on his annual salary, in return for printing, advertising, time spent, and personal services. This commission amounts to a little over *one week's salary*, thus: three per cent. on \$400 would be \$12—a trifle over what the successful applicant would receive for his first week's work. We reckon that any shorthand writer would be willing to work a week for a situation that will be worth hundreds of dollars to him. We could show by examples that the securing of a situation through our Bureau is an *event* in the life of any ambitious shorthand writer, and that the importance of such event cannot be reckoned in dollars and cents; but business must be done on business principles, and hence we put the percentage at a figure easily understood and very reasonable. We do not share in the fears of some of our brethren in regard to the future of the "craft." We believe good, trusty, competent, steady, ambitious shorthanders will always, and more and more, be in demand; but if at any time the supply should be greater than the demand, we shall at once put another set of our Bureau machinery in motion to *increase the demand*, never thinking to diminish the supply. Every subscriber to the WRITER (except the aristocratic professionals) should be enrolled on the Bureau Register. The initiatory ceremony is not nearly so complicated as that of any secret society, while the prospective pecuniary benefits are much greater. Our connections with business men, railway officials, newspaper publishers, bankers, lawyers, &c., both in Canada and the States, are so widespread that we should not be afraid to guarantee a situation to every really good shorthand writer who is ready for honest work.

NOTES, QUERIES, REPLIES, HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Has any reader of the WRITER used Benn Pitman's system in reporting French? If so, what additional vowel sounds were necessary to adapt it to the foreign language?—R. J. S. Q.—Is phonography taught in any of the schools in Canada, and in what schools?—W. T. S. A.—Yes, in the commercial colleges.