

THE STENOGRAPH.

(From Browne's Monthly.)

THE Stenograph is a little mechanism designed to take the place now occupied by Pitman and his now almost countless progeny. It is the invention of Mr. M. M. Bartholomew, an old shorthand reporter, for many years official stenographer of St. Clare county, Ill., and adjacent counties, but who is so sanguine of the success of his machine, that he has resigned his court practice and taken quarters in a commercial college at St. Louis, where he is training operators on it.

In appearance the Stenograph very much resembles an old-time "paper" (telegraph) instrument. It consists of ten keys, four for each hand, one key for the thumbs, and a spacing key, mounted on a square surface less than a foot in length and about eight inches in width. The writing, or printing, is produced by the single alternate or combined depression of these five keys (the four on the left hand being but duplicates of the four on the right hand, and the thumb key being used by either thumb), which depression causes a marker, or blunt needle, on the opposite end of the key, to strike upwards against an ink ribbon, printing a dot, or a series of dots, varying, of course, with the combination employed, across an endless paper ribbon of half an inch in width. The manipulation of the keys causes both the ink and the paper ribbon to move; while a depression of the spacing keys moves the paper a double distance. With case and all, the Stenograph weighs upwards of three pounds.

Briefly stated, Mr. Bartholomew claims: that the machine is capable of printing over 600 letters per minute; that, in consequence, it will equal, if not surpass, the most rapid pen stenographer; that it is absolutely legible, there being but one character for each letter; that it makes use of about 50 word-signs, and has less than half a dozen rules for its practical operation; that it can be learned in less than half the time required in the study of phonography; that different operators can read each other's notes; that, the fingers of the reporter being constantly in position on the keys, he can follow the speaker with his eyes as well as his fingers, and can copy a document without removing his eyes from the book or paper from which the extract is being made; that it is practically noiseless, and can be used in the dark; that he himself has reached 130 words per minute, and that his pupils have averaged 50 words per minute after a month's practice.

Three vital questions present themselves to the mind of the profession as they read the above description and the various claims urged by Mr. Bartholomew in behalf of his invention: First, will the Stenograph interfere with the stenographic profession? Second,—with the student—shall he give up his Pitman, or whatever system he may have selected? Third,—with the would-be student—which is the better system, Pitman or Bartholomew?

The first of these queries is readiest answered. It being manifest that the end of all stenography is *verbatim* reporting, the means employed to attain that end will make no essential difference.

As to the second, we have no hesitation in saying that we advise no one to give up his textbook—not on any narrow, prejudiced view of the matter (for we regard Mr. Bartholomew's machine as simply another system of shorthand, and as such he enters the field as a competitor with every other author), but for the reason, first, that the machine has been in use but a few months. This is not, of course, an insuperable objection. Secondly, because neither the inventor, who would quite naturally bend all his energies to increase his speed, nor his most proficient operator, have passed the speed of 130 words per minute. This also may be obviated in time, if there be some lady (outside of New York) who will run the machine at a speed of 307 words. But, finally and chiefly, because we do not believe that there will ever be a machine designed and constructed, worked by single, alternate, or combined depression of separate keys for separate letters, with the addition of half a hundred word-signs, that can equal the rapidity of phonographic line-strokes. We have not gone into the mathematical niceties of this question, have not figured out how many times the fingers can depress a key with sufficient force to make an impression on paper, nor how many times more rapidly the third and first fingers can strike their allotted keys than the second fourth, and *vice-versa*; but what we affirm is this: that no letter which requires the depression of more than one key can be written as rapidly as with a single switch of the pen; that no word which requires the depression of more than one key, or one combination of keys, can equal the speed of the pen. The claim of increased legibility will not be borne out by the facts. It is quite true that if the operator strikes his combinations accurately, he will be able to read them, or anyone else; is not this also true of phonography, or, in fine, of any kind of writing? But if this operator is caused to follow "the lightning Judge" for half an hour in a "sea-syccurrence" case, will he not forget his combination, and let his fingers wander as aimlessly over his keys as the phonographer does his pen when he is writing for "recreation"?

As to the third, much of the statement contained in our last answer will apply to this query, with this addition: that if the student will venture on an uncertain path, on the various promises held out to him by Mr. Bartholomew, he makes such choice at his peril.

For office-work, such as correspondence, dictations, and the like, this machine may find a place. We understand it has been in use in one large business house in St. Louis, but we do not believe that it will ever equal the speed of Underhill, Holland, Murphy, Ritchie, and a dozen others of our stenographers who have made America famous for its stenographic ex-