

PHONETIC PIONEER.

ed to learn it. After I returned from Dublin I wrote to my friend, whom I may mention to you was the Rev. William G. Lyster, curate of Kilskeary, near Enniskillen, to enquire whether Phonography was easy to learn and easy to read, and whether it would do for writing sermons in, and for contractions, to mix with ordinary longhand. He answered that he wrote his own sermons in Phonography and found it perfectly safe and legible, that he thought it would answer my purposes completely, that it was considered very easy to learn, and he thought that in about a year I should be able to write my sermons in it altogether, and at the same time he sent me your address. Some years ago, when I was a boy, I tried very hard to learn Mavor's system of shorthand, but did not succeed. Since I entered the Church four years ago, and have been engaged in writing sermons, I have felt the great inconvenience and labor of being obliged to use longhand. I tried to remedy this by contriving for myself some arbitrary contractions. They, however, were very cumbersome, and quite independent of each other. I felt this very much, but could not do better. From my experience of Mavor I knew that the common systems of shorthand were utterly useless for my purpose, otherwise I would have gladly learned one of them in order to be able to form for myself a consistent and connected system of contractions. I thought that all systems were as difficult and uncertain as Mavor's, and did not know that in Phonography I should have found a system superior to all other systems in a far higher degree than the Arabic writing surpasses the Chinese. As soon as I received this very satisfactory answer from my friend Mr. Lyster, I wrote to you for the "Phonographic Instructor," which I got on the 12th of January last. With your usual kindness and considerate forethought you had enclosed in the parcel a number of phonetic publications. Greedily I then set vigorously to work to learn the system. I had no teacher, no one even to take an interest in my occupation, or who would try to learn it. I kept to it almost without intermission for nine days, reading and writing it every spare moment, and sometimes far into the night. During this time I mastered the "Instructor," and also began to read the "Exercises," which I got about the 18th. I found a good deal of difficulty in making the characters properly, and derived great advantage from a practice which I have never seen mentioned anywhere. I wrote the unmanageable forms repeatedly, and then went over them carefully with my pen and corrected them. By this means I gradually got my hand in the proper motion. Another useful practice I found was to form in my mind before writing it, a perfect representation of its outline, with its vowels. On the 20th January I was interrupted in my studies by a letter which I received just as I was sitting down to begin practising the "Exercises." I was obliged that very day to set off on a long journey to a distant part of the country, where I had other things to attend to besides Phonography. However, I had not only made a beginning, but obtained such a knowledge of the system that I was enabled to write my journal and copy letters in it, although in a very rude and primitive style. In short, in three days I knew much more of phonography, and could read

and write it with far greater ease and pleasure than I could Mavor's shorthand after three months' assiduous practice.

I was unable to resume my phonographic studies until the end of February. I had by that time got the "Manual of Phonography," and as I had left my other books behind me, I had, as it were, to begin again *de novo*. I well remember the first evening I tried to read "The Advantages of Shorthand,"—how I was puzzled by the numerous and strange grammalogues, and the numberless ways of packing consonants together as if by hydraulic pressure, and the triumph and satisfaction with which I conquered each successive difficulty. I did not, however, wait over to finish the Advantages of Shorthand, but plunged bodily into the chaps of the "Phonographic Correspondent" for 1856. I found now difficulties here. Unvocalized outlines, reporting grammalogues and contractions, often puzzled me horribly. But patience, perseverance, and constant application, and an ardent desire to learn the art, which I clearly saw would be of inestimable value to me, carried me triumphantly through my difficulties.

The first day I tried to read the "Correspondent" I just turned the first page and did not even understand the half of that. By the first week in April I had finished the volume, and was able to read from 12 to 16 pages a day. In fact I read much more than I wrote, and therefore could not write as well as I should have done. You warn beginners to read as much as they write. I required a warning to write as much as I read. After the "Phonographic Correspondent" for 1856 I read the "History of Shorthand" and the "Phonographic Teacher," of which in each day I read 60 pages. During this time, about three months, my chief study was Phonography, for I was most anxious to know it perfectly as soon as possible, that I might be able to employ it for useful purposes. Since that time I have not been able to give up much time to it. About the middle of February I began to use it for contractions in my sermons, and have continued to use it ever since, steadily increasing the amount of Phonography in my sermon each week, as I became better acquainted with the system, and familiar with a greater number of outlines. Nothing should be introduced into a composition, intended to be read in public, which cannot be read at a glance, without effort, and almost unconsciously.

At first I never used two phonographic words together, or began a sentence with one, or used one in writing my text, or the first page of my sermon. So the amount of phonography in my sermons was at first necessarily inconsiderable. By degrees, however, I observed these rules less strictly. In May, about one word in four was phonographic, in July one out of three, in August every second word, at present nearly two out of three. By the beginning of the new year I hope to be able to dispense almost entirely with longhand. My improvement is slow, but it is sure and steady. I can now write a sermon in half the time, on much less paper, and with far greater ease and pleasure, than before I began to learn Phonography.

P. A. L.

—*Ed. Irish Phonetic Journal.*

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