

involving a very large and bulky book, and a proportionately heavy expense for printing and translating the debates into French.

However, the contract was renewed for 1878, with similar results, and Parliament, dissatisfied with the consequences of its own head-strong ignorance, again abandoned *Hansard*.

The present Government found the field clear, but, in reviving the official reporting, returned to the old contract system, which still prevails, and which becomes the more and more unsatisfactory the longer it is tried. Of course, the contractor, Mr. Richardson, is blamed, as almost any one in his position would be; but the blame rests with the House, and the House alone. They adhere to a system which they know to be defective and incapable of producing satisfactory results. Mr. Richardson receives for the reporting of the debates \$6,000 per session, out of which he has to pay at least five reporters, besides assistants to read proofs, etc. One of these reporters must be competent to report speeches delivered in French, and to transcribe them in that language—and the entire staff is expected out of that \$6,000 to earn enough to support themselves and their families for the whole year, other employment, during the recess, being very precarious and uncertain. Not only that, but the contract is for one year only, and may be terminated at the close of a session without notice.

What can Parliament expect from such a system but unsatisfactory results? Without desiring or intending to cast any reflections upon Mr. Richardson or any member of his staff, we ask how can any contractor on such terms and under such circumstances secure a corps of reporters whose work will bear close investigation? The contractor cannot ensure permanent occupation, even though he could offer suitable salaries. But he can do neither, and, unless he is possessed of superhuman virtue, he will employ the cheapest men that he can secure, and make the most he can out of a contract of which he has no certain tenure.

The system is wholly unsuited for the work, and should be radically changed. Parliament must recognize the fact that competent reporters are scarce, and must be offered, not only good salaries, but permanent occupation, to be secured. Congress, after many years of experience, came to that conclusion, and appointed a corps of first-class men, each of whom receives \$5,000. They are about the only officials who are not disturbed by a change of administration. They are recognized as experts, whose places could not be readily filled, and the consequence is that changes only occur when vacancies are created by the death or voluntary resignation of members of the staff. They have no responsibility for the proof-reading or publication of their reports, and they are never required, through mistaken notions of economy on the part of Congress, to condense. Their work is, therefore, entirely satisfactory to the House, as the work of a staff organized and remunerated on similar principles at Ottawa would be to our own Parliament.

ISAAC PITMAN.

A Short Sketch of the Inventor of Phonography.

(See Portrait.)

ISAAC PITMAN was born at Drawbridge, Wiltshire, England, on the 4th of January, 1813. He is the second son of a family of eleven children—seven sons and four daughters. He received the usual rudiments of an English education in the public school of his native town. When he reached the age of twelve years, he took a position as under-clerk in a cloth-mill, of which his father was manager. During his boyish days he was passionately fond of books and music. His father became a subscriber to a circulating library, and Isaac availed himself of the privilege and read extensively. This course of reading gave him a strong desire to do something in literature, but he does not appear to have been very ambitious. Owing to the disadvantages of his early education, and the unphonetic spelling of the English language, he was ignorant of the true pronunciation of a great many words. In order to remedy this defect, he read Walker's Dictionary through and copied out the words he was accustomed mentally to mispronounce. By this plan he made a list of two or three thousand words he had been in the habit of mispronouncing. This showed that thoroughness of purpose and indomitable perseverance which are observable in all he undertakes. The study of the dictionary was the first step towards the production of his system of phonetic shorthand. Little did he think of the great results that would arise from his study of Walker—that from it would spring a system of shorthand that should have a world-wide reputation. At the age of seventeen he was incited to the study of shorthand, by reading a work by Mr. Gawtress, in an improved edition of Byrom's system, transferred by Harding to his edition of Taylor's system. He continued to write Taylor's system, (as improved by Harding,) for about seven years, and after four years' hard practice was able to write one hundred words a minute. About this time he set to work to compile his present system of phonography, which doubtless caused him many, many hours of arduous labor.

Mr. Pitman is a strict disciplinarian. No talking is allowed in his office, except what is necessary; and the silence is unbroken except by the click of the type and the working of the presses. He is tall, spare and muscular, with bright eyes, keen face and rapid motions. He both retires and rises early, in summer and in winter, and generally can be seen seated at his desk at six in the morning. He is completely wrapped up in his work, and devotes all his time and money to its advancement.

Mr. Pitman is worthy of very hearty eulogy. The world owes him a debt of gratitude so great that if its immediate payment were insisted on nearly every living shorthand writer would be thrown into hopeless bankruptcy, and merchants,