THE NEW LIGHT-LINE PHONOGRAPHY.

The author of this work* is a comparatively young but rapidly rising member of the stenographic profession, and has had a valuable experience in its various branches. The Light-Line " System " so called, has been used and tested by the members of his firm. It it therefore natural and commendable that Mr. Thornton sh uld feel desirous of giving to the phonographic world the benefit of his experience. Speaking generally, the book does not depart very much from the beaten path of the standard phonographic systems. The author acknowledges his indebtedness to Mr. Isaac Pitman, and thus exhibits a fair-mindedness which prepossesses the reader in Mr. Thornton's favor. The main feature of the Light-Line style of phonography—for it cannot properly be called a "system"—is simply an extension of Isaac Pitman's principle of *indicating* the vocalization of a word by its *position*. The " reporting " style of phonography is distinct from the " corresponding " chiefly on this account—the vowel marks being *indicated* (though not written) by the position of the consonantal outline. Mr. Thornton argues that if the vowels themselves can be dispensed with, so can the sub-vocal elements found in *b, d, j, g,* &c., which are represented by *heavy* strokes—the shading being added for the sake of distinction, in accordance with the analogical principle—" a heavy sign for a heavy sound." " It is but carrying Mr. Pitman's idea a single step further to eliminate the *sub-vocal* along with the *vocal* elements." Mr. Thornton contends that "the real *reading* feature of any phonographic word is the general shape of the consonant outline. The shading or lack of shading no more determines its legibility than the vocalization or non-vocalization. This is so essentially the case that it has become

the experience of the most expert stenographers that outlines which depend upon shading for their legibility are in general unsafe outlines to adopt. Now it has been found in actual practice that the distinction between these light and shaded stems may be substantially done away with in all ordinary reporting ; not but that a few outlines may need shading, as certain other outlines need vocalisation, but in no other way. The great bulk of the words in no way require this distinction to be made."

We presume that the author intends this argument to apply wholly to his own method ; but experience proves that it applies practically to the standard systems— Pitman's, Graham's, and Munson's. For our own part, we have not found that legibility is lessened to any appreciable extent by writing pure Isaac Pitman's style with a MacKinnon pen, the writing point of which is a stubborn *stub* and not a flexible *nib*, so that all is "shade," and "light lines" are impossible. But our experience is not singular, for, as all verbatim reporters know, speed annihilates all mathematical precision, and, as our correspondent, " L. E.," observes, " shading is discarded entirely." This being so, what need has the world for anotl r d a new "system' which claims to do only what reporters are every day doing ? Practically none, as a system , but this book may give rise to discussion and invention which may result in a phonographic revolution. Its appearance is to be hailed with pleasure by all who take an interest in the *science* of shorthand. The basis of the book is phonetic— a strong point in its favor as against the orthographic and elliptic inventions ; for if we are to have a revolution, it must be on the phonetic line.

The engraved phonographic outlines in the book are produced by the wax process, and are admirably clear. If the author had taken another step, and so adapted the geometric forms that they might be " set up " with movable types as our ordinary