

In common with most people who have an erroneous idea of what is required to constitute a system of shorthand, comparatively easy of attainment and adequate to the needs of the verbatim reporter, I believed that the greater the number of abbreviated outlines of words which I committed to memory the greater would be my speed in writing. The authors of the instruction books that I studied seemed to be aware of this false idea on the part of the tyro in reporting, and they encouraged him in it by presenting for his use an array of fascinating expedients and a multitude of elaborate contractions. The theory was very prepossessing, but the practice was an abortion. In pursuance of my resolution to be as nearly perfect as possible, I endeavored to master all the expedients, contractions and arbitrary signs for words with which the most popular phonographic text-books abounded. I devoted weeks, months, and even years, to the task, but without success; and although I have met many reporters who have attempted the same thing, I never found one who had effectively and completely embodied in his practice the multitudinous abbreviations of the instruction books.

I order that I may be fully understood, I wish to say here, that although in Phonography a word is spelled solely by its sound, yet, owing to the flexibility of the system, a word of more than one syllable may be represented in more than one way, and the greater the number of syllables in a word the more do the outlines that will express it vary. Of these outlines the one that is the briefest to the eye is not always the speediest to the hand. There is, therefore, a choice of outlines, and his ordinary practice not only makes the reporter familiar with those which are the best for his purpose, but enables him to make, on the instant, the most appropriate outline for a word that is seldom used. As the vowels are omitted by the reporter, his word outlines, in order that they may be rapidly written and easily read, should be such as are formed with the utmost facility and are suggestive of the complete words that they represent. Let us suppose that the student of Phonography learns an abbreviated outline—which really amounts to an arbitrary contraction—for the word "subordinate." The contracted outline is not apt to be suggestive. It must, by special practice, be so thoroughly mastered that the hand will write it instantaneously, and the eye will unhesitatingly recognize and read it. If it is not thus completely familiar-

ized it is a cause of hesitation, and is a positive detriment to speed and accuracy. The word "subordinate" is of comparatively rare occurrence. A man may report three months in court, or anywhere else, without hearing it, and if he had never spent time and labor in committing to memory and practising an arbitrary outline for it, he would write its full consonant skeleton as rapidly as he heard the word spoken, and if suddenly called upon to read the sentence containing it he would do so without any hesitation. Now if a student undertakes to learn contractions for six or seven hundred, or more, such words as "subordinate" so perfectly that he will not fail to write them, and also to read them, on the instant, it will be seen that his task is most severe, and is besides actually unnecessary. It is the laboring over contractions of this nature that causes so much time to be spent in learning to write Phonography swiftly, and, what is more difficult still, in learning to read it rapidly and accurately.

It is estimated that of one thousand words of any speech, sermon, evidence, or conversation, about six hundred will be such words as "a," "and," "the," "is," "was," "on," "in," "he," "may," "could," etc. To state the matter briefly: about three-fifths of our spoken language consists of conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and of the most familiar of the remaining "parts of speech." A not very extended list will embrace all the words that occur so frequently that, for the sake of speed, it is absolutely necessary to have contracted methods of expressing them. As the reporter, except in very special cases, omits vowels, words such as "in," "he," and "may," consisting of but one consonant and one vowel, become "sign-words" by simply omitting the vowel, and are readily memorized as specific. To load the memory with an accumulation of words that are not of the most frequent occurrence burdens the mind with a task that can be more easily accomplished by the swift hand, retards progress, and impairs accuracy. By leaving out the multitude of unnecessary "sign-words" with which the text-books are crowded, the pupil saves time and wearying labor. He will become just as rapid a reporter as he who devotes an extra year or two to the toil of memorizing these words and the outlines that represent them, and the balance of accuracy will always be in favor of him who writes a full outline for a word, because he who writes a contraction is ever in danger of forgetting it at the