

MIXING THE SYSTEMS.

To the Editor of the WRITER :

DEAR SIR.—The question of systems is of little importance to the practical stenographer. It does not matter much to a man who can follow with ease the most fluent speaker, whether he is adhering strictly to the system he adopted at the beginning of his phonographic career, or whether he has introduced certain innovations which to him are advantageous. What he wants is to be able to write and read quickly, or, in other words, the first consideration with him is speed and legibility. With the student it is different. He watches every departure from the correct system laid down in his book and if he is an enthusiastic student he will readily appropriate all improvements and apply them to his own use, but he does not like to see the particular system which he has made his study mixed up with several others, to the detriment of them all. An article appears in the December number of the SHORTHAND WRITER headed, "Practical Stenography," and said to be written in Graham's system. With the exception of a few contractions, and these are generally written out of position, there is scarcely any likeness between this production and "Graham's Standard System of Phonography," as I understand it. In some instances where the writer has thought proper to insert vowels to secure legibility, the vowels have generally been transposed, and what is worse, consonant-outlines, depending considerably on position for their legibility, have been written in the first place instead of the third, and *vice versa*. We cannot expect gentlemen who have their time well occupied with professional duties to be careful in their writing for our benefit, but we can ask them to leave us alone, and not make things worse by mixing everything up and calling it a "system." It is not fair to the student, and it is not fair to the system. I do not claim that Graham's system is any better than the others, but I contend that so far it has not had a "fair show" in the SHORTHAND WRITER, not from any fault of yours, Mr. Editor, but because the disciples of Graham have not come forward with their specimens, as the writers of the other systems have done. Cannot some of the many followers of Graham be prevailed upon to give us a genuine specimen of the "standard system" now and then.

AN OTTAWA STUDENT.

To the Editor of the WRITER :

In "Questions and Answers" in the last number of the WRITER you say stenographers are in demand in Toronto at salaries ranging from \$600 to \$1,000 per year. This has raised the question in my mind, Why do Canadian stenographers come to the States for employment if such is the case? I know two stenographers in Detroit whose salaries are less than \$600, and I am told by one who claims to know, and whom I have no reason to doubt, that there are several in Chicago working for \$35

per month! Very likely their speed is limited to 75 words per minute; but what of that so long as they fill the position to the exclusion of better men? Just as soon as railroad officials, lawyers, merchants, etc., learn that they can get such service at such rates, is it reasonable to suppose they will pay more? To save from twenty-five to thirty dollars per month on one item of expense alone, is it not reasonable to suppose they will be willing to spend a few minutes more of their time each day and gauge their dictation to the capacity of the writer?

I have probably considered this subject more than the majority of my worthy co-workers, and took up the study of shorthand to better my condition as the telegraph ranks were overcrowded. A little more than a year ago a new telegraph company was organized, which filled the telegraph fraternity with joy, as it employed all the idle operators in the country—they were in great demand at good salaries, and many who had left the employ to engage in other pursuits, returned to their "first love," and Peace and Prosperity ruled the hour. A consolidation has recently been consummated whereby hundreds of the men will be thrown out of employment. It will soon be the same with us—our tanks, now full, will, at no distant day, be as overcrowded as the telegraph, and a stenographer outside of the courts will be considered well paid at \$600 a year.

The cry of "students applying for situations when they can take but 75 words per minute is injurious to our interests," is very true, but who is to blame for it? Our own selves. Did we not teach it there would not be so many students to apply, and as the natural result of supply and demand we could command better pay. I do not say a word against those who take up the study themselves and carry it through all its disheartening intricacies to a successful termination without assistance, as they are worthy of the laurels they gain, and will become, each one, an honor to the profession—but I speak of those of our own craft who, for personal gain, teach the art, thus jeopardizing the interests of the fraternity at large, by supplying doubtful goods to a market well stocked with talent. I pray you will not think of me in the connection with "the dog in the manger"—that I want all of this world's goods for myself, as I simply take the position of self-protection. I have a family dependent upon my exertions for support and it is my duty to protect myself and them to the best of my ability. There is not a stenographer in the country but knows these things are as I have said—the daily papers and railroad publications are full of advertisements for situations by men claiming to be experts in the art.

Perhaps I have taken up too much of your space. I will say no more but hope the seed thus sown will bear good fruit, and as you work for our interests would be pleased to have you give your opinion on the subject.

PROTECTIONIST.

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan, Feb. 4, 1881.