

necessary to describe that useful art. In regard to stenography, a few words of explanation will place you in a position to appreciate the comparison I am required to make. Shorthand consists of a foundation of lines and curves, cut off in suitable sections, upon which is erected a tower of half lengths, double lengths, abbreviations, verbal homicides, dots, dashes, contractions, subterfuges, mutilations, frauds, expedients, hooks, phonographic agonies, positions, geometrical sky-rockets, and orthographical inanities, until the untutored mind is lost in the immensity of stenographic space. With this lucid explanation, you will see at once what a beautiful simplicity there is in stenography.

To this list of characters is attached a system of nomenclature by means of which two stenographers may converse in a language utterly incomprehensible to the average long-hand writer, sometimes even to themselves.

This is theoretical shorthand. In its practical aspect it is sometimes far superior in illegibility to well written cuneiform text; in fact I have in my possession pages of notes which look as if some thoughtless person had fired at them a cannon loaded with lamp-black and sassafras roots. I may say that I have been advised to chain them to a tree to keep them from getting away.

Shorthand is not difficult of attainment if you begin it in youth and grow up with it, as you do with your father's neighbor's melon patch, though a pupil of mine once suggested that a better way is to divide the labor into two generations, having one learn the rudiments and their children put on the finishing touches.

I suppose I ought to say something now about the relative speed of the two systems. Comparatively few people can write in one hand more than forty words a minute, and it takes some lively pen-and ink gymnastics to do even that. Shorthand is sometimes written at the rate of two hundred and fifty and even three hundred words a minute. Extreme modesty retains me from mentioning names. You will see by this that matching one against the other would be about equivalent to backing a mud-turtle against a runaway comet.

Of course the longhand writer, if taking a sermon, might call the preacher's attention to the fact that his gait was too fast, by warning him with a prayer book, but I know that you wouldn't like to get up in a meeting and sling a devotional document at the clergyman every time he began to get away from you, because it might possibly make the congregation uneasy; and then, too, the stock of prayer books within reach might run out before the close of the sermon.

As a matter of fact there is no comparison as to speed between longhand stenography, or if there is, it is about that between nothing and something. What the long-hand writer loses is eternally lost, unless he has a memory like a phonograph, or can exchange what he failed to get for something drawn from the wells of a brilliant imagination. That, however, would be

akin to lying, and it is a well-authenticated fact that reporters never lie. This statement has been disputed, but never by any man with a reputation equal to that of all his neighbors in the vicinity in which he resided. I have heard it stated, though on what authority I cannot say, that there are now whole brigades of reporters lugging leather medals around the New Jerusalem for their heroic adherence to truth on earth.

There are times, however, when even the most expert stenographer wants more time. Not long ago, I saw a reporter taking a lecture on the Abenaki tribe of Indians, in which occurred the name of the powerful sachem Chob-begomgagoochpsmuggin. Just imagine that thing fired off at an unsuspecting American citizen! And conceive, if you can, the mental wreck left behind when that orthographical cyclone rumbled by.

The practice of stenography is the sawing wood of the intellect. It is the cultivation of detail, so that exact words are remembered in their consecutive order, but very often at the sacrifice of ability to grasp the thought contained in those words. There is a dangerous temptation in this direction, because of the difficult of running simultaneously two trains of thought; and if the stenographer fails to fight down this tendency he loses his individuality as a thinking, reflecting human being, and degenerating into a bald-headed, short-hand factory, ready to step into his intellectual grave.

Common sense and general information have about as much to do with accuracy in stenography as in long-hand. In rapid writing characters representing entirely different words will often look very much alike, and the reporter detects notes in little pieces of skulduggery that lead him into frightful mistakes. I have known stenographers, under whose heroic treatment the "Sermon on the Mount" would read like a chapter from "Rattle-snake Dick, the Ring-Tailed Screamer of the Rocky Mountains."

I confess that I myself once reported an eulogistic address in which were the words:

"His brow was enwreathed with celestial wisdom."

And when I came to convert it into long-hand, the notes looked up into my face with impudent rectitude and made the speaker say:

"His bread was enriched with stump-tail-hard-pan."

That was simply a case of similarity of outline.

I suppose the best evidence of the supremacy of shorthand might be found in a little incident which occurred a good many years ago when I was young and enthusiastic in regard to stenography. At that time I was in the habit of attending revival meetings, which were almost always led by a good old deacon named Epaphroditus Gibbs. The old gentleman invariably closed the services with a prayer, which I would write with my finger on the palm of my hand. With a good deal of judgment Uncle Paph had boiled down his supplication