Which System of Shorthand should we learn?

by

Enoch Barker

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SHORTHAND

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BY

E. BARKER, Toronto.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS is an old title for a new pamphlet. Some ten years ago, the repeated inquiries of students and others about the respective merits of the different systems of shorthand in use, induced me to put into print my own convictions on the subject, which were the conclusions of nearly half-a-century's study and experience. The demand for two editions of the little booklet proved that there was a place for such a publication; and now that these are exhausted, the demand seems equally strong for a third. But the complexion of the shorthand world has undergone a considerable change in a decade; systems formerly in vogue have disappeared from public view, and new ones have sprung up which are now exciting interest. For this and other reasons, the booklet requires to be almost entirely rewritten.

Less attention, or none at all, will be given to those systems that may be counted by the hundred, but which have only a sporadic existence, and show no prospect of ever becoming anything else. They may be used as illustrations only, when this would serve any purpose; they would be unworthy of serious examination.

It is pleasanter to speak of systems than of their authors, especially when need is felt for criticism. If this is not always done, it will be because the two cannot well be separated. In many cases, it is, "Touch my dog, and you touch me." More than ever, it is my desire to write without personal feeling, or unworthy bias of any kind. Sometimes, however, when men will show themselves ridiculously perverse, and regardless of other people's rights or interests, it would be neither human nor divine to manifest no displeasure towards such.

It is hardly necessary to say that this booklet is intended

principally for North America. In Britain, there is at the present time no call for anything of this character, because the question in the title above is not asked, but one system of shorthand being in actual use there. But on this side of the Atlantic, the shorthand field is like our broad prairies, glowing and bristling with an almost endless variety of flowers and weeds in wild confusion. The question is with us still a live one: would that it were otherwise! But though the two countries differ so widely in this respect, the subject is by no means a national one, and patriotism has nothing to do with the decision of the question—especially that spurious thing miscalled "patriotism," which consists as much in ignorant prejudice against everything foreign, as in loyalty to the institutions of our own country, and which chooses an article more because it is a home product than because it is the best. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is hardly the question for a truth-seeker. If we want to get the best, we will take it, whether it comes from England or from America, from China or from Africa.

Look out for misstatements. This is about the first piece of advice that is needed, but it is too often the last to be taken. Even in the higher and sacred sphere of religion, there was need of the warning against those who cry, "Lo here!" or "Lo there!" as false leaders would rise who would "shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." If such things could exist in this higher sphere, it should not be hard to believe that they might exist in the humbler sphere of the shorthand art, and it is not surprising if our "elect" should be deceived sometimes. We need not be quite so pessimistic respecting human nature as Thomas Carlyle, who spoke of the population of Great Britain—not that they were worse than other people—as "about thirty millions—*mostly fools*;" or the old minister, who, after reading the passage, "I said in my haste, All men are liars," calmly surveyed the congregation and remarked, "Had David lived in our day, he might have said this *at his leisure*." Still it is both safe and wise for us to believe in the possibility of deception on the part of rival shorthand publishers, and not take for granted everything they say in their own favor, especially when we find their statements in direct conflict with one another. Had the Pitmanic systems, so-called, been a unit in America as they are in Britain, inferior and worthless systems would have had no better chance here than they

have had there. But, sad to say, many have been brought over here where they have flourished, after they have been killed out there ;—not because they had not liberty in Britain, for there was no law to prevent them : but while the Pitmanites here are quarrelling among themselves, and so divided that no united movement in education, in the press, or in any other way can be undertaken, these useless methods have every freedom and encouragement for their growth.

Generally, there is no difficulty in detecting misrepresentations. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" As a rule they can be detected by the modes employed in propagating them. If these are full of blow and bluster, trumpeting their own merits and decrying all others, keep on the watch. They will have some grandiloquent title, perhaps, such as "Excelsior," "Eureka," etc. ; they will be far the easiest to learn, the most legible, the swiftest, the cheapest ; reporters everywhere will be eagerly catching them up, and throwing away the old threadbare systems ; colleges and schools by the score and by the hundred will be hailing them as a great boon ; experts in other systems will be investigating them and be overwhelmed with delight ; the nobility will be patronizing them ; those too prejudiced to examine them will be old fogies and away behind the times ; in fact, a great revolution will be under way, and the old methods will soon be swept away! If you see a system announced in this way, don't get alarmed. You may be sure there is hollowness there ; truth does not need to parade herself in such garments. The gaily dressed folks are the dudes in society ; it is not under feathers and diamonds that you look for brains. Letters like the following come from sensible men :

"I enclose a letter from a . . . writer. Read it, and then pity the poor man, and a little later when he gets on the market as a full fledged college proprietor, your pity will go out to the public who are being gulled I am rather amused at his reference to my changing systems, or getting left. This threat of the coming of a . . . writer has hung over the heads of many a poor man like a nightmare. I consider it a direct thrust not at the Isaac Pitman system, but at the many Pitmanic forms which are said to be so 'arbitrary that the average student cannot learn them.' Two of these new systems have struck this town within the last five years. They lived here about three months, and the parties vanished. Where the Isaac Pitman system is taught effectively, and there is a certain public sentiment about standards, these simple 'systems' cannot go. Where the public is ignorant, they will swallow anything."

So then, you cannot be too much on your guard. Do not

accept superlative laudations without testing for yourself. Remember, too, that testimonials are cheap. All have them; some are good, others otherwise, and you must judge for yourself. Take the Master's simple rule: "Ye shall know them by their fruits." It will be my part to endeavor to show you the fruits, and leave you to decide for yourselves whether the tree be "good" or whether it be "corrupt."

In the former editions of this pamphlet, mention was made of what was styled

Modern Phonography,

for which there was no little rush for a time in certain parts. It was "so easy to learn;" one or two months was sufficient to gain fitness for a position. It had no shading, and no detached vowels, besides other wonderful features, the most striking of which was the stringing together nearly all the words of one line into a phrase. On asking the author what one of these sky-rockets meant, as the system was more easily written than read, he replied that such a phrase was "no good," and it would be "fired" in the next edition. It was fired, and so was the whole book, the very preface of which was a plagiarism, and that was the best part of it. So, of course, Modern Phonography needs no notice in this edition.

There is another book published, entitled:

"The Natural System of Shorthand Writing,"

by August Mengelcamp, Stenographer, 1889." An extract or two from the Prefaces will show both the aim of the system, and the knowledge of grammar and composition that the author possesses:—

"Other points of merit will readily suggest themselves upon closer examination of the system, above all its comparative great brevity, respectively speed which, owing to the graphic character of its word-forms, absence of shading, connective vowels, great lineality, etc., far exceeds that of any other system extant."

"A good pointed pen or also a medium soft pencil, are equally well suited for class work. For speed exercises, a lead pencil or a good fountain pen will be found preferable."

The ideas in these sentences are not very clear, but one is not so much surprised after reading them that the system of which August Mengelcamp calls himself "the author," and to which he gives the name of "The Natural System," is really "The Roller System," invented by Heinrich Roller of

Germany! The "author" wanted to bind me to give him a two-page notice in this pamphlet; but this is quite enough.

Then we have the

"Sloan-Duployan Light-Line System,"

which appeared first in Britain under magnificent, yet very suspicious auspices. There lies before me as I write a small pamphlet clad in a flaring red cover. On the outside of the front cover, we read in display letters—"THE SHORTHAND REVOLUTION." Under this comes the Royal Arms—a Crown surmounted by a Lion. Then we read again—"Recognized by His Grace the Duke of Fife, K.T., P.C., D.L.; The Right Hon. The Earl of Pembroke; The Right Hon. C. T. Ritchie, M.P., P.C.; Sir Richard Temple, Bart., P.C., G.C.S.I., C.I.E., F.R.S.; And over Forty Noblemen and Members of Parliament." There are some, probably, with whom such a ponderous title-page would have great weight, but it should not take very well in democratic America. Because people belong to the gentry, they may not be the best authorities in Shorthand Literature; they may not know as much about it as their butlers or boot-blacks. It is a common thing, as we all know, for the underlings to give testimonials, etc., to grovelling suitors just to get rid of them, without their masters knowing anything about the matter. But we ought to know that our beautiful art does not depend on blue blood for its nobility and worth. It is rather a friend of the toiling class. After such a flaming introduction, we are not surprised to read a preface like this :—

"Why is it that shorthand, which is so useful and essential to many and so beneficial to all, is acquired (with any degree of efficiency) by such a comparatively small number; and of the many who have fairly left the starting post, scarce ten per cent. have ever reached the wished-for goal?

"The secret to this query is not far to seek. The old systems have been too complicated and artificial. They required for their acquisition an undue amount of mental effort, and hard dry-as-dust practice. They took years to learn, and burdened the memory with multitudes of rules and grammalogues; and were illegible, owing to vowels being omitted, which brought about a state of affairs calculated only to please those who glory in unravelling mysteries.

"But with the introduction of the Sloan-Duployan system, all these difficulties are done away with, and shorthand can now be learned in one-twelfth the usual time. It is no fable but an established fact, that the labor of years is reduced to months, and a few easy lessons will suffice to learn the most perfect system of shorthand extant. Sloan-Duployan shorthand is the system that not only promises, but, as thousands can testify, has accomplished this transformation."

There is a lot of this—*blather,* shall we call it?—about the "ingenious devices," "the great and incomparable services of Mr Sloan," "a new educational era commencing, the results of which had been hitherto deemed impossible;" but I have quoted already *ad nauseam.* The usual number and style of testimonials follow; and after quoting a flattering one from Newfoundland, which place, in the author's estimation, seems to be the hub of the shorthand universe, the pamphlet says :—

"The above clearly shows how the Sloan-Duployan system has taken the place of the old style in Newfoundland. The same change is gradually taking place in the United Kingdom, but of course the transformation will take longer, as the country is much larger; nevertheless, it will not be long before Sloan-Duployan has triumphantly superseded the old style in this country (Britain)."

This prediction was uttered some ten years ago in England, and by this time the promised transformation should have been effected; but judging from the quietness of the "Sloan-Duployan Association" (apparently consisting of one member) at the present in England, and from reliable information furnished by those who are in a position to know, the *transformation* in Britain has changed—like some other systems that we know—to a *transportation* to our shores, thus to increase the "confusion worse confounded" that already prevails here. But for this I would not have occupied so much space with the Sloan-Duployan. It is well that we should know what kind of immigration we are getting. The strange feature of the whole thing, however, is that the *Pernin Monthly Stenographer* charges the *inventor* of these "ingenious devices," with as "bold a literary theft as was ever perpetrated;" and says of the Sloan-Duployan text-book :—"It was an exact reprint of 'Pernin's Practical Reporter,' made possible by the absence of an international copyright law, and a disregard of the eighth commandment!"

And what also is the

"Pernin System,"

so-called? Its text-book acknowledges that it is not original—at least the basic part of it; it admits that its alphabet was originally brought from France in 1887 by Mr Pernin, but asserts that it has been modified from time to time until "but little resemblance can now be traced between the two systems." Mr Sloan, however, retorts by saying :—

"Mrs Pernin really possesses little or no copyright. Over her shorthand

alphabet she prints, ' Pernin's Phonographic Alphabet,' but it is the alphabet of the Rev. E. Duployé. As regards the abbreviations in the Pernin method, we have a letter in our possession received from M. Duployé, in which he states, ' They are nothing but a translation of my work.' "

Leaving the twin sisters to settle their own quarrels, it is evident that neither of the systems is original; they are both trading on the fruits of other men's labors, and calling by their own names what is not theirs. But the Pernin text-book is equally guilty with the other of attempts at misleading by such statements as the following:—

"The body of the contractions in all systems but the Pernin are arbitrary, requiring a constant effort of the memory to keep them in practice."

"One system—the Graham—has a dictionary of 60,000 word-signs to be committed to memory, besides the great variety of other arbitrary contractions upon which the method is based."

"The Cross shorthand employs characters to represent letters instead of sounds as in Phonography, and uses *seven* positions in writing."

"Phonography should be made a school study. Before the introduction of the Pernin shorthand, this could not be done, as all other methods, on account of shading, position, memorizing of so many arbitrary contractions, etc., are entirely too difficult for the comprehension of the children."—*Pernin's Universal Phonography.*"

These quotations need not be multiplied. I do not know any system except perhaps the Gregg, that has so many contractions as the Pernin, and these are, as a rule, exceedingly arbitrary; that is, made without rule. Anyone may know that a dictionary, whether it be a shorthand dictionary or an English dictionary, is not made to be committed to memory. On the contrary, teachers of the Pitman system will not allow their pupils the use of a dictionary until they have nearly completed their course, lest they lean on it for outlines instead of on the rules. The Cross shorthand has only *five* positions, not *seven*. And as to children in the schools not being able to learn shorthand before the Pernin came into use, the writer of that paragraph, unless exceedingly ignorant of shorthand history, must have known that, since 1848, when Oliver Dyer taught the class in Philadelphia High School from which Murphy and McElhone emanated, children by the thousands and tens of thousands have been learning the Pitmanic systems, both in Britain and in America. If the Sloan crime was made possible by a disregard of the eighth commandment, these statements of the Pernin text-book were made possible by a disregard of the ninth commandment!

There was also a form of the Duployan system, *alias*

Pernin, *alias* Sloan-Duployan, taught at Truro, Nova Scotia, and other parts of the Province, under another *alias*, that of

Simple Phonography,

by Mr S. G. Snell. It is but a trifle more modest in its claims, and in its disparagement of other systems. These three borrowed systems all come into one category, the foundation principles of which will be explained shortly under the head of "Hobbies."

This would, perhaps, be the most appropriate place to notice the McKee group of systems, as the peculiar method of introducing them to the public renders it unnecessary to refer at any length to their construction, although about three pages of the former editions of this booklet were devoted to a critique on the construction of one of them. Mr McKee speaks of having invented "a number of systems"—how many he does not say; but, so far as I know, only two were published, the first of which was

The New Rapid.

In a letter from Mr J. G. Cross, author of an "Eclectic System," he says:—"My publishers years ago sued the publisher of the 'New Rapid' for piracy of my system, the 'New Rapid' being mine in a little different form. In the suit, he put in the plea that mine was not an original system, and therefore any one had the right to use it. Second, that his system was not in any sense like mine, and therefore was not an infringement. Finally we beat him, and he put out another system." Certainly, the resemblance is not very close, but such is the charge. But what we would direct attention to particularly is the inconsistency of Mr McKee himself, which completely discredits both his systems, rendering unnecessary, as has been said, an examination of the merits or demerits of the systems as such. In the preface to the "New Rapid" text-book, it is said:—

"The author's former work on shorthand [what was that?] has met with unprecedented success, and proven itself superior to other previously existing methods. But, as was stated in its pages, it was not, in the author's mind the *ultima thule* to which improvement could be carried; and, living in a progressive spirit, we have sought for greater advancement and improvement, and are happy to say that, in 'New Rapid' *we have reached the goal*, having produced by far the most harmonious, complete and perfect system of shorthand ever devised."

Then, after stating the seven fundamental principles that go to make up a perfect system, he adds:—

"These foregoing requirements, which are absolutely essential to make a perfect and complete system of shorthand, are all embodied in 'New Rapid' Phonography. . . . Hence, we have reason to believe that this system will open the eyes of the stenographic profession, though blinded as they are by the intervention of the old systems."

Now, after perfection, what? Though, as stated in my critique, perfection in that line seemed a long way off, yet I was not prepared two years later to find perfection superseded by another system,

The New Standard,

which, without apology or blush, is introduced to a credulous public in the following style :—

"The great advancement that has been made in all the departments of human activity within the past few years renders the systems of former days behind the times in many ways, and incapable of meeting all the requirements of this progressive age. . . . In the *New Standard* shorthand, we have a method which is equally well adapted to all classes of shorthand work. It is so simple that all are able to learn it; so legible that all are able to read it; and so swift that all are able to write it. These three important features—*simplicity*, *legibility*, and *rapidity*—are the three cardinal virtues of New Standard shorthand, and it is the securing of these three in such a high degree of perfection that renders this system of shorthand so far superior to others. . . . This, our latest work, comes as a *settled standard*, in which every writer can repose with confidence in its unchangeableness. It is the author's ideal system . . . and the completeness of the structure is such that the foundation must ever remain the same."

Supposing that, between the litigation of Mr Cross and the condemnation of the author himself, the New Rapid was no more to be heard of, it occasioned me no little surprise, about a year ago, to receive a letter from an educationist in Colorado holding a public position (judging from the headline of his letter), speaking in no mild terms of my old criticism, and declaring that there was no equal to the New Rapid. So it may be alive yet in some dark corners. If so, instead of repeating my criticism, I would simply direct its adherents as I did the one mentioned, to rub their eyes and wake up; the author himself has reminded them that they are "behind the times," and there is nothing so alarming as this. And if the author misled us before, can we trust him now?

The question naturally comes in here—was not the appropriating of the Isaac Pitman system by so many modifiers in this country an act of the same character as those we have mentioned previously—Mengelcamp, Sloan, Pernin, Snell, etc.? There is this important difference, that when the Isaac Pitman system was first propagated, the author gave it away in his large-hearted desire to bring a blessing to the world. He

gave Pearl Andrews the seed which was brought to America and planted here. Those, however, who took the system and made their own changes in it, publishing the whole in their own name, were wronging the author; and that was no small wrong either. The copyright at home prevented a like fate befalling the system there, but that copyright did not extend to this country; pity that it had not! Mr Benn Pitman says very truthfully:—"If ever the true story of these varied schemes shall be written, the display of idiosyncrasy, vanity, and sometimes of shocking dishonesty that will appear, will form a strange chapter in the history of shorthand." He also says in his own defence "The *text-books* were mine, the *system* was not." And again, "The title, 'the Benn Pitman System of Phonography,' is not of my selection; and personally, I never use it." It seems to me that exonerates Mr Benn Pitman—at least so far. But no one else of the many modifiers have said as much. Theyhave severally, though not denying that the system is Isaac Pitman's, acted as full proprietors of it;—have changed it as they liked, have called it by their own names—perhaps with the addition of another, and have copyrighted what they could, so as to retain all the advantages in their own hands. But it is a question whether Mr Benn Pitman should have assumed even the title, "The *American* System," though it was not he who gave it that title at the outset; for it is not even *an* American system, let alone being *the* American system; it is an English system, though its birthplace is a matter of inferior importance. Dr Harris, Commissioner of Education at Washington, was found great fault with for calling the group, "the Isaac Pitman system"; but he was right. If a man either borrows or steals my horse, and then crops and docks it, it is my horse still, and it would be wrong to call it anything else. All the "systems" are the Isaac Pitman; others can claim nothing but the cropping and the docking, and that they are welcome to.

The peculiar mode of advertising some systems must be here noticed. There are phenomenal *records of speed* attained, in incredibly short periods of study, which it is safer to disbelieve than to believe;—at all events, it is always safe to question and demand ocular demonstration. I have seldom or never tried the latter plan without having to discount heavily on the record. "There are tricks in every trade," they say; certainly, there are here. One

could very easily get a pupil, who was perfectly raw, to learn to write 150 words a minute with any system, after only five minutes' practice. The matter dictated may be very familiar and studied, or full of contractions and phrases, such as the Gregg phrase for, "I am in receipt of your letter," which contains only five letters—Im-r-le (an *n* might follow the *m* in the same line, but it would be indistinguishable), and is joined thus  . Such phrases are charming in their brevity, and one could be written consecutively at leisure some forty or fifty times in a minute, which would mean a gait of from 280 to 350 words a minute. And you could learn those five letters in almost as many seconds. Sometimes dictated matter is court evidence, in simple conversational language, not only with an unusual proportion of phrases, but also with a large number of words that are implied without writing at all, such as the Q's and A's for Question and Answer. In the 395 words of evidence which Mr Dement, of Chicago, is said to have written in one minute, there are no less than forty-eight words of the Q and A omitted, besides others that are implied without writing. Such matter, too, is very easily memorized, especially when read back immediately; and errors are not so easily marked as when a transcript has to be furnished. And the writing is illegible—letters omitted, scrawls resembling anything else but the letters intended; it is certain that no one however expert—not even the writer himself, could read the matter if unaided by memory. It is not a test of writing unless others can read it also. Mr Isaac Pitman's tests are certainly the fairest of those generally used:—dictation for seven or ten minutes; matter perfectly new to the writer and of an ordinary style of composition, say, a speech or an editorial; full transcript to be furnished; only two per cent. of errors allowed. It would be a still fairer test of the writing if the dictation lasted for half an hour, and the writing be sufficiently legible for a stranger to be able to make out a transcript: or if it were left to lie for a month or even for months until perfectly "cold." A test is really nothing if the writing itself be not capable of being read, as well as of being written at a certain speed.

Then we have statements published of *converts from other systems*, and *schools rejecting one system and adopting another*; these have to be sifted. Of course, people will change from system to system, but it is often for other reasons than a preference for one system above another. Within my own

observation, teachers have gone for situations and salaries instead of the merit of systems; colleges have added systems, besides those used in the colleges ordinarily, just to attract a certain class of pupils; and many have professed to change when they never had anything to change from. In the list of Shorthand Institutions furnished by the Bureau of Education at Washington for 1890, some of these institutions are entered as teaching "Any modification of Pitman's Phonography;" others, "Graham's, Pitman's, Munson's, Cross's, and McKee's;" others again, "Any of the leading systems." These colleges send for the books of different systems perhaps merely for examination or trial, and immediately they are claimed by each system as adherents and converts. A few years ago the Pernin Publishers sent me a list of the colleges using their system, and among the rest there were two that I knew were using the Isaac Pitman altogether. On enquiry, for further satisfaction, I was informed that they were using none but the Isaac Pitman, and were perfectly satisfied with it. This got into the press without my cognisance, and cost me a hair-pulling from the "Pernin Stenographer;" but the only explanation was that one of the colleges had some time previously ordered some of their books. I know three similar cases with another Light-Line system: and such cases make one suspicious that these are only samples of many.

The little experience, too, that I have had with professed converts from the Pitman to the non-Pitmanic systems, is not any more satisfactory. I have come into actual contact with only one convert from Pitman to Light-Line—a Professor of Gregg in New Jersey—who kindly wrote out for me a list of words, by way of contrast, in the two styles—the one abandoned and that adopted. Out of forty-one words that he attempted, twenty-four are written wrongly in the Pitman style, showing how little he ever knew of Pitman. I give a few samples:—

Gregg ... ... 60 Sarah,  Supplant,  Spinster.

Pitman (as he wrote it)  „ „  etc., „

Pitman (as it should be)  „ „  „

A former well-known teacher and vigorous champion of the Gregg system in an advertisement announces himself as a "Former teacher of Isaac Pitman's shorthand," and gives two samples of the Isaac Pitman, one to

ridicule the positions, and the other to contrast the forms. In the former, of only seven words, he makes three errors—nearly half of the words; and in the other, with only four words, he writes one as no Isaac Pitman writer would write it! An Isaac Pitman writer might have known better after two weeks' study. This teacher, too, is something of a poet; probably the poet laureate of the Gregg style, since Mr Gregg honors his poem of six stanzas with a page of his text-book. In that poem we have this couplet:—

"Oh! why should a shorthand omit all the vowels,
And leave you to guess if 'tis *tells*, *tales*, or *towels*?"

Here again these words, instead of being alike, are all written differently. They differ more in the Isaac Pitman than in the Gregg, thus:—

Gregg:  tells,  tales,  towels.

I. Pitman:  „  „  „

So much for those who have left the Isaac Pitman for the Gregg; if they are fair samples—they are the only ones that I have seen draw a comparison—then inquirers need not be alarmed by the stories told by converts.

There is a class of systems that ride special HOBBIES, which are pushed to the front as if of transcendent importance, and which, it is claimed, give these systems an immense advantage over the older ones, especially the Pitmanic. Some of this class ride one of these hobbies, and some ride more; but **The Gregg System** combines them all, and presents them thus:—

"(1). *No Compulsory Thickening.*—May be written either light or heavy.

"(2). *Written on the Slope of Longhand*, thus securing a uniform manual movement.

"(3) *Position Writing Abolished.*—May be written on unruled paper, and in one straight line.

"(4). *Vowels and Consonants are Conjoined*, and follow each other in their natural order.

"(5). *Angles are Rare.*—Curves predominate."

And here I may say that, when examining the Gregg system for myself some ten years ago now, some difficulties were met with, which I lately submitted to Mr Gregg himself for an explanation, not wishing to misrepresent his system when reviewing it. I sent him a short list of puzzling words—puzzling, at least, to me. He replied that he recognised me as the writer of the pamphlet "Which System," and by way of banter or benevolence (it mattered

not which), he invited me to investigate the system, and offered to give me a complete course of lessons gratuitously, which offer was gratefully accepted. Having completed the course, I can speak with more confidence perhaps than before, especially as Mr Gregg had been kind enough to answer many questions that were submitted to him aside from the regular course. We will examine these hobbies as briefly as possible :—

1. *The Light-Line Principle.*—"No compulsory thickening;" that is, thickening or shading any letter is optional. But the lines are generally light, and hence the name. It was a beautiful discovery by Mr Pitman that the consonant sounds of the English language are nearly all paired according to the force of expression, each of eight pairs having one light and one heavier sound; as p, b; t, d; etc. He made use of this beautiful correspondence of sound by shading the heavier one, thus, ╲ ╲ p b, | | t d, etc. The systems that object to shading double the letters in length instead; thus, ⌒ ⌒ p, b (Gregg); ı | (Pernin). The objections to shading are thus stated in the Pernin Manual (Introduction):—"Leading stenographers admit that this alone detracts at least 25 per cent. from rapidity; besides, in rapid writing, it is impossible to shade accurately, and consequently great illegibility is the result." I do not know who are these "leading stenographers;" but their experience differs widely from mine. It may be a little difficult at first to shade *horizontal* letters; but there are not many of these—only three, and these not the most frequently used. There are no heavy strokes besides these but down strokes, and it is generally more difficult to keep pupils from shading these than otherwise, especially with the pen. In writing a word for me (Trafalgar), Mr Gregg unconsciously shaded in his beautiful hand, not only a down stroke, but even a horizontal one; thus,  ; or abbreviated,  (Trafal.) (The original is given the engraver, that he may produce an exact imitation.) I am not conscious of shading less in rapid writing than in slower and more deliberate writing, and am unconscious of either loss of speed, or neglect of shading in rapid work, and cannot but feel that the objection is a mere bugbear to frighten the inexperienced. Who the "leading stenographers" are that speak of a loss of 25 per cent. in shading letters, many would like to know; that assertion is

certainly stretching a point, and made for a purpose. But whether there be a loss in the shading or no, it is easy to see that there is a great loss in the lengthening of the letter in lieu of the shading.

First, the lengthening process requires the pen to travel over a good deal more ground, and at the same time makes a far worse zig-zag motion than what Mr Gregg complains of in the use of "geometrical" outlines. Compare *babe*, *brave* (Gregg), with (Pitman). And how awkward it would be to have two or three double letters strung along in one line, even though horizontal, as *d-d* in *dead*, *m-m-n* in *mammon*, *m-n-m-m* in *minimum*. Probably some of the vowels would be omitted in these words, as , though we cannot tell without a dictionary what to omit, or how much of a word to cut off altogether (it is Mr Gregg's empty boast that the simplicity of the system makes a dictionary unnecessary, and yet his dictionary at the end of his text-book grows longer with every new edition); the words might be simply *mam* for *mammon*, and *min* for *minimum*. But Mr Pitman would never allow *m-m* or *m-n* to be joined in one line; he is too careful about legibility; the Gregg, however, does it continually, and you must guess whether it is only one *m*, or *m-n*, or *m-m*.

Secondly, the Pitman system utilizes the double length for a very common and powerfully abbreviating scheme, which advantage the Gregg, Pernin, etc. lose altogether, namely, the expression of the whole syllable *-ther*, and its cognates *-ter*, *-der*. For instance, is *mother*; in the first position or above the line, it is *matter*. The Gregg uses the letter *th* for *-ther*, which therefore is ambiguous, because may be either *mouth* or *mouther*, *sooth* or *soother*. Of course, as the author would say, the context would easily determine; but a system is lame that has to lean much on the context. We sometimes get the sense of a sentence only by going some words beyond the doubtful word, and then have to back up and repeat, losing time and bungling. And the Gregg has no sign for *-ter* or *-der*, so that *matter* would have to be written in full or contracted to *mat*, which makes ambiguity again. The Gregg leans on the context continually.

2. The next hobby is the *one slope*—"The Slope of Long-

hand." This is peculiar to the Gregg system. The Pernin does not use it. MrGregg says (Preface to First Edition):—

"I believe that the trend of shorthand progress is towards a more complete identity with our ordinary longhand writing, which in its adaptability to the hand embodies the wisdom of ages."

But what about the vertical method of longhand which is now so strongly contended for by many educationists, and so largely practised in schools? What about the physical argument:—

"A Belgian doctor has been making observations in the schools of Liege on the effect on children of the upright, as opposed to the sloping style of handwriting He finds that fifty-eight per cent. of the children who are taught vertical writing have their shoulders in the normal position, as opposed to thirty-two per cent of those who are taught the sloping style"

It is easily conceived that the effect of sitting with one side to the desk, as is usually done in sloping writing, with one shoulder elevated and the other drooping, might become a permanent deformity, and might even cause curvature of the spine. But we may pass that by. Mr Gregg thinks that the habit of sloping in longhand makes it easier to slope in shorthand. Of course, this has no application where the habit of vertical writing has been acquired; in such case, vertical forms in shorthand would be the easiest. But what does this amount to, if other points of much greater importance are involved? Whether a certain form be harder or whether it be easier, matters little; the great thing to look after is to get the *best*. Lazy folks alone will prefer the easiest.

But here is a strange inconsistency again. While Mr Gregg contends so vigorously for the one slope, almost half the letters of his alphabet have no slope at all, but are horizontal, and two letters slope in the opposite direction to the one contended for namely, ⟍ ⟍ *ng* and *ngk*. This makes really more than half of all excepting the little straight and curved dashes ⟋ and ⟍, that have not the longhand slope! One cannot but question sincerity in such a case. But supposing all were of the one slope, there would be these two difficulties:—

a. So many strokes running in the same direction would cause them to collide and intersect continually, and thus make illegible forms. How can you join ⟋ *f* and ⟋ (up), *t* or ⟋ *th* (up), and put either of the small circular vowels between? How much better when some have the opposite slope, such as ⟍ ⟋.

b. With so little variety to choose from, the alphabet is necessarily very limited. There are twenty-four simple consonant sounds in the English language, and Mr Gregg has only eight, long and short, on the writing slope, except the little dashes mentioned; then he has six horizontals, two letters sloping like backhand, and one dot, making twenty-six in all. In the two diagrams of the Pitman forms,   , twenty-four distinct letters of uniform length, light and heavy, can be contained. You see the contrast at once, and the advantage the Pitman has. Mr Gregg has spoken more wisely than he has acted when he said in his preface:—

"It is almost needless to say that a faulty allotment of the alphabetic characters would have entirely nullified in practice the value of the natural principles which form the basis of the system"

His faulty alphabet nullifies the value of the whole system. It is as though a building contractor was required to construct a building with a scanty allowance of material, and some of this too short and gnarly. He will have an unfinished building, and a poor one at that. When we come to examine the Gregg vowels, we find them worse still. But we have no more time for the one "slope;" does it not seem to be a mere fad?

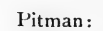
3. The next hobby is *"Position writing abolished."* What is meant by position writing is this. The Pitman system has three positions in which short words may be placed, so as to distinguish them without inserting the vowels; thus,   and  without vowels, are the same as    (*talk, take, took*) with the vowels. The objection to this method is thus expressed by the "poet laureate" already mentioned:—

"Oh! Why should a shorthand fly hither and there?
To write so in longhand, you scarcely would dare
This form written sky-high, the next one below,
You bob here and there like a bear in a show.
'Tis all far from natural, take this as a sign—
They write *one position* in Gregg's modern Light-Line."

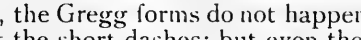
And the same poet illustrates it in this manner, which is more ludicrous than true:—

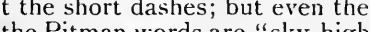
I nice.
say it not
must is

Well, he is certainly humorous. But it is rather "phunny" for an old "Isaac Pitman teacher" (as he declares himself) to make three mistakes of position in this short, simple sentence, as has been observed before. Had he known more about position, his objections to it might have had some weight. We will now compare the two systems in correct form, and you can see for yourselves, even if you know not a letter in shorthand, which "bobs" most:—

Gregg:  Pitman: 

In this case, the Gregg forms do not happen to be the sloping ones, except the short dashes; but even then it cannot be said that any of the Pitman words are "sky-high," though they are in different positions, three of them in the first or highest; and the line is not quite so straggling as the poet's imagination pictured it. But suppose we take a sentence where we have some of the sloping letters in the Gregg style; say the line, "You bob here and there like a bear in a show."

Gregg: 

Pitman: 

Now by drawing lines along at the points that the letters reach above and below, it is easily seen which system bobs most. No one can say this is not a fair comparison, for the extreme positions are represented in Pitman, and it would be very easy getting worse words in the Gregg style than are represented there. The fact is this:—In the Gregg writing, not only are lines used to write upon just as in other systems and a rule for placing letters with respect to that line, as the rule says—"The first consonant (except S when followed by a downward stroke) rests on or starts from the line of writing" (Gregg text-book); but these lines of writing require to be further apart in the Gregg than in the Pitman. By actual measurement, comparing the brief reporting style in *Pitman's Phonetic Journal* with the same style in the Gregg system, there are *eight* lines of the former to *seven* of the latter; in the exercises of the two Manuals there are *five* of the Pitman to *four* of the Gregg; and in the blank note-books gotten up by Mr Gregg for pupils, *five* lines occupy as much space as *seven* or *eight* of those used ordinarily by Pitman pupils. I don't think we should therefore hear any more about the Gregg system using no lines, or having no "zig-zag;" or of

the "bobbing" that the poet sings so sweetly about. It is a pity, however, to spoil the poetry.

4. But the great hobby is "*The Connective-Vowel Arrangement.*" That is, the vowels are written in with the consonant strokes, instead of being detached as most of Pitman's are. Here comes inconsistency again :—

a. These systems all leave out many of the vowels, though boasting of their being inserted between the consonants,—the Gregg especially. Many of the words are as bare of vowels as Pitman's, without the position method of Pitman that indicates the vowel sound, and here they lose in comparison. *Got* is written with *g-t ; progress* with *p-r-g; patronage* with *p-t-r-g*, etc.—no vowel. Awkward vowels, such as are generally omitted, and is changed into o a ; thus the Gregg text-book says : "In writing *might*, for example, it will be sufficient to write *mat*, as 'it *mat* (might) be,' 'in *ma* (my) opinion.'" (Sec. 59.)

b. The great argument for inserting the vowels is, that it is not required to lift the pen in making them, and thus speed is gained. Whereas the fact is that, in both the Gregg and the Pernin, many of the vowels themselves are not complete without lifting the pen ; in Gregg, eight out of twelve of the simple vowels. Thus, *Psalm, same ; red, read ; awed, owed ; full, fool.* Pernin has two such vowels, or rather diphthongs : *trite, trout.* And both of these systems have even consonants requiring dots beside the strokes to distinguish them as *z,* (up) *th* (hard), *ha.* They say that these dots and dashes can generally be omitted; but they cannot be omitted and be as legible as Pitman's writing when his dots and dashes are omitted. Look over a page of reporting style of the two different systems, and see which has the most dots and dashes for which the pen has to be lifted. This argument seems but a hollow pretence.

c. But the loss of time in writing the inserted vowels is the great objection to the plan. Mr Gregg says :—

"In the body of a word, it is usually as easy to include a circle as to omit it, and it frequently happens that by taking away an angle that would obstruct the continuous movement of the pen, the circle actually increases the speed, with which an outline may be written."

Did Mr Gregg ever try that ? If he did he will probably be compelled to come to a different conclusion. You can

write more forms in a minute with the angle alone than you can with the simplest circle added, *i.e.*—more of ⌊ than of ⌊. But Mr Gregg is very careful to say nothing about the more complicated vowels and diphthongs: ⌣ *roll,* ⌢ *fine,* ⌒ *mouth.* Pitman's easy forms for these are ⌒ ⌒. There is a great loss of time, on the whole, in writing the inserted vowels.

d. The great difficulty with these connected vowels is that it is a perfect impossibility to devise a sufficient number of forms to meet the need. Mr Pitman tried it and gave it up long ago. Mr Gregg is still sweating over it, and trying to get new forms for ie, io, ea, etc., etc., by putting "wheels within wheels," dots in circles, such as ⊙ *science,* to distinguish from ⊙ *signs;* ⌣ *lion,* to distinguish from ⌣ *line,* etc. One can imagine what would be made of these little curlicues in a 150 or 200 gait. But the idea of attempting to represent some dozen and more of these diphthongal sounds by connected vowels is preposterous. My correspondence with Mr Gregg commenced by asking his help in writing such words as *Ohio, oyez, Owhyhee,* on the connective vowel principle—one of the bases of the system. There being no consonant forms for *h, w, h,* there was nothing to connect the vowels with. I was told that I knew nothing about the system, and was trying to write difficult words before I knew even the principles; and then came the kind offer of a gratuitous course of lessons, which, as said before, was accepted. As my teacher had not at first answered my questions and given me the outlines I asked for, when the point was reached in the lessons that bore upon these questions, I repeated them, only to get a severe castigation for "desiring to find out what **cannot** be done with Gregg shorthand, rather than what **can** be done with it;" he asserting that he had never heard of the word "Owhyhee," and could not find it in the dictionary; that the system was equal to writing any word, even Owhyhee, and he wanted to know whether it was "necessary to sneeze in pronouncing it!" He then gratified me with this explanation: "All that the stenographer has to do is to write the signs for the sounds as they occur, vowels and consonants following each other in natural order, and draw a line underneath to show they are connected, thus: ⌣ *Owhyhee,*

 *oyer,* *Oyez,* *Ayah,* *O'Hara.*

"This," Mr G. continued, "will no doubt commend itself to you as being more natural than the Nominal Consonant plan of the Isaac Pitman, which always appeared to me a very arbitrary expedient." I had simply to assure Mr Gregg that I had no intention to offend; that I was investigating the system at his invitation, and certainly did desire to know both what the system *could* do and what it *could not* do; that I thought he was anxious to show what it was capable of, and should have been pleased to receive my questions; that "Owhyhee" was one way of spelling Hawaii—once the common way—and was to be found in an Atlas before me—one of the latest published; that the same name in sound—Owyhee—was a familiar name in Nevada and the West, and should have been in every dictionary, as it was in two of mine; that reporters had no time for sneezing, especially if they had to write the letters all separate and add to them a connecting stroke; and, finally, that Isaac Pitman does not use the Nominal Consonant with such words, as he has plenty of *real* consonant forms for the purpose, as *Owhyhee,* *Oyer,* *O'Hara,* *Ohio.* This is not a mere pleasantry, but a simple illustration of the hollowness of the pretensions that insist on a "One Slope" that robs the consonant alphabet of strokes for *h*, *w*, and *y* on which to hang the dependent vowels so often occurring; and that insist also on a "Connective-Vowel" idea where the vowels cannot be connected, but that in the attempt to do so, the vowel alphabet is impoverished to such an extent that about half of the vowel and diphthong sounds of the language cannot be expressed. It seems to me a fad, a farce, a hobby—and a wooden hobby at that—only for child's play. There is another of these hobbies in the Gregg system that must be little more than barely mentioned:—

5. "*Angles are rare,* Curves predominate." Why? Because "curves are written more easily and more quickly." Sometimes they are; sometimes they are not. (up strokes used for) are no doubt written more easily than and ; and more easily than what they represent . But the difficulty is that you will have to depend on the letters or words of the context to know what these outlines are—always a lame expedient; for instance,

 is *t-n, d-n, t-m, d-m* in *contains, condense, contemns, condemns;* but it is only *d* or *t* in  *defy,*  *active.* The same stroke written downward is sometimes *g*, but generally *b*. This makes difficulty in reading, and illegibility. But, in some cases, a curve is much harder to write, and slower than an angle; as  *f-m, f-r* are much more difficult than and . To make such as the former with any kind of grace requires a good deal of that training of the hand that Mr Gregg calls *drawing*. But we cannot, and need not dwell longer on this peculiarity.

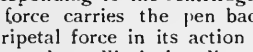
Taking these five hobbies together as the Gregg system attempts to do (none of the other systems takes them all), the foundation is unsound, and the whole superstructure suffers in consequence. By insisting on these hobbies, as we have seen, the whole alphabet is impoverished to an extent that forbids some of the most important qualities of a good shorthand; and what is infinitely worse, the awkward attempts to connect unnecessary vowels forces out the many and beautiful expedients of the Pitmanic varieties for abbreviating words by hooks, circles, loops, halving, etc. Instead of using a simple circle, larger or smaller, for *s, sr, ns, sw*, in different positions; or a loop for *st, str, nst, nstr;* instead of a hook for *l, r, n, f,* and *-tion;* instead of halving a letter to add *t* or *d*;—instead of such simple, yet powerful and ever recurring expedients as these, these light-line and connective-vowel systems are obliged to write all these letters out at full length, or—what is even worse—behead, or betail, or disembowel the words in order to obtain the needful brevity, until they are so maimed or murdered as to be unrecognizable. *S* and *t* () make a poor joining, so the *t* has to be omitted, and *mus* is written for *must*, *mos* for *most*, *bes* for *best*, etc.; *t* and *d* cannot be written distinctly after *r* and *l* ( *t, d,* *r, l*), and so these are left out altogether and *hold* becomes *hole*, *port* becomes *pore*, etc. Omissions are necessary everywhere. There is one lesson on the "Omission of Words," another on the "Dropping of Terminations"; another on the "Omission of Consonants," and a parallel one on the "Omission of Vowels." Then we have more than a dozen "Joined Prefixes," all of which are distinguishable from the single letters only by the context; and two dozen or more "Disjoined Prefixes," and a goodly number of "Compound Joined Prefixes," and "Irregular Compounds," while Pitman needs less than half a dozen prefixes

altogether! We have, in like manner, the "Joined and Disjoined Affixes," with their "Compounds," and some twenty-one "Analogical Abbreviations," which is only another species of Affixes and Prefixes. And thus the words are mixed and mangled (take, for example, *interested*, in comparison with Pitman's simple connected with just as many letters)—until the beautiful promises about "not lifting the pen," "vowels and consonants conjoined," etc., are forgotten. And all this confusion simply because of riding these hobbies! Is not that about riding them to death? As said before, these illustrations are mostly drawn from the Gregg system, because he makes rather more use of these methods than Pernin or any other of the so-called "Light-Line" systems; but it can be easily seen how they would all be affected alike.

Cross's Eclectic Shorthand

has a hobby of its own, which the author styles the "Chirographic Ellipse," and explains thus:—

"In writing, we constantly employ two forces, viz.: the *projective* and the *retractive*. The projective force of the hand, acting on the pen, carries it upward and forward, corresponding to the centrifugal force acting upon the spheres. The retractive force carries the pen backward and downward, corresponding to the centripetal force in its action on the spheres. These two forces combined must produce elliptical outlines, all outlines evolved in the act of writing being more or less affected by the two motions. This is especially true in rapid writing," etc.

Mr. Cross certainly goes to a high source for his theory; but we imagine most people would say that "an ounce of practice is worth more than a pound of theory,"—especially such theory. Ellipses lying in five directions—two sloping to the left, two to the right, and one lying horizontally—with five straight lines in the same directions, form the basis of his alphabet. He abhors perpendicular strokes. The consequence is, as a practical man will observe at first sight, that the sloping letters written so nearly in one direction, and the curves taken from the longer sides of the ellipses being so nearly straight lines, they cannot be distinguished except written very slowly and carefully, as his diagram will show:—  Another weakness which is quite as evident is the use of five positions, thus:—  Both of these defects tend strongly to illegibility. A third weakness leading to the same result is the use of six

different lengths or sizes of the same character to represent different letters; and the author advises thus:—"Practise the following exercise until you can preserve the relative sizes when written rapidly

etc." It is very evident that these would require a good deal of practice, both to write them with the needed distinction, and to get a keen eye to observe the distinction when written. The Pitman systems allow no such indistinctness between letters. This Eclectic also uses the connective vowel plan to a certain extent, but with no better success than other systems that attempt the impossible. The awkwardness of joining such outlines as the alphabet contains cannot but make clumsy forms, which retard the writing as well as interfere with legibility. The huge number of prefixes and affixes, with the method of dividing syllables, is also a peculiar and objectionable feature of this system, of which *contra-ct*, *conce-al* are ordinary specimens. But we can go no further, and there is probably no need to do so. You, my reader, can form a fairly correct idea of the system from what little has been said.

There is no need at this date of dwelling upon such systems as *Lindsley's Takigrafy*, which is more like an abbreviated longhand than shorthand, and is very little in use now; nor the *Scovil system*, nor *Towndrow's*, which are not phonographic but bitterly anti-phonetic, and which are not pushed now; nor *Gabelsberger's system*, of German origin and adapted specially to the German language; nor the *Script*, though an attempt was made to introduce it among us, after a dismal failure in Britain; nor the *Eureka*, the author of which publishes two systems, which he has tried to foist upon some of our school authorities on this side of the "pond," but happily in vain. No wise man would wish to spend his time and money in chasing after Will-o'-the-wisps, when he has light that is evidently more real and reliable.

Isaac Pitman versus the Variations.

The Isaac Pitman was first published in England in 1837. It was brought to this country, as said before, by Mr Pearl Andrews in 1846, and published in the form that the system then had reached. Webster soon after published it when at a little more advanced stage. In 1852, Mr Benn Pitman,

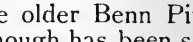
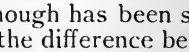
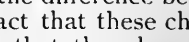
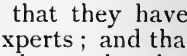
brother of Isaac, brought it to this country, and disseminated it in the still more advanced style then existing in England. This is

The Benn Pitman

of the present day. He says of it later:—"Up to 1857, there was but one form of Phonography used. All suggested changes in, and additions to, the system were amply discussed by the general body of phonographers, and were by them either rejected as worthless, or concurred in as being in the direction of progress, and tending to the best development of the system." That is very true; and what was true of Mr. Isaac Pitman's method then is true still; as the improvements up to 1857 were "amply discussed by the general body of phonographers, etc.," so has it been with all the later improvements, but Mr. Benn Pitman was not willing to follow any further. It is true that some others, like Mr. Benn Pitman, objected to these further changes—and there always will be objections to changes; but the "general body" moved on: and now which is more likely to be correct? To prevent divisions in such cases, Mr. Isaac Pitman was obliged to copyright his system, thus rendering impossible in Britain those inroads upon it that have produced such an unfortunate effect in America, upon not only the Pitman system, but upon the art of shorthand in general.*

This system, also now claiming the title, "The American System of Shorthand," therefore lacks the many improvements that have been made in the Isaac Pitman (pure) during the past half-century. It has still the old vowel scale of the Ninth Edition; that is, the *e* of that edition in such words as *pea* is *ah* now, as in *pa;* and *i* short, as in *pit*, is *a* now as in *pat*. This, of course, reverses the positions of words containing these vowels, making quite a gain, as most phonographers have thought, in both speed and legibility (see Preface to Munson's first edition). Then the Benn Pitman still retains the old forms  for *w*, *y*, and *h*, instead of being put to better uses for *-rer*, *-lr*, and *y*. The "Irregular

* The copyright of the Twentieth Century revision of the Isaac Pitman system is secured by the publishing in America of the "Shorthand Instructor," and all rights reserved. If ordering through a bookseller, special attention should be called to the fact that worthless *piracies* of *old editions* will be refused, and only those bearing the imprint of Isaac Pitman and Sons will be accepted.

Double Consonants" of the Benn Pitman have also now been superseded by others, in the interests of simplicity and harmony; while the newer duplicate forms for *f* and *th* in conjunction with the liquids *l* and *r*, which greatly increase legibility, brevity, and ease of execution, are entirely lost in the Benn Pitman. The initial *sway* circle, too, adopted in 1888, which produces the simple forms  for *sweep, sweet, sweeper, sweeter,* etc., and such convenient phrases as  for *as we have, as we do, as we say,* etc., displace the much longer forms of the older system. The doubling of straight letters for *-ther*, etc., is not only more in harmony with the like treatment of curved letters, as  *surrender, printer* (like  *slander),* but makes easier and briefer forms; this is lost in the older Benn Pitman. There are some other changes; but enough has been said to give any one an idea of the nature of the difference between the two systems. In the face of the fact that these changes have been made after careful tests; that they have been adopted by the general *consensus* of experts; and that they have stood the severest trials in actual practice, it seems idle for a comparatively few—and these parties mostly interested in propagating their own systems—to protest that these are not real improvements. Is it reasonable that any new invention of mortal should stand still for half a century? Or that the great majority of practical business men would hold on to poorer methods while better ones were within easy reach?

But there is a greater difference between the Isaac Pitman and the Benn Pitman than the mere construction of outlines. There is really no comparison between the amount of shorthand literature in the two systems respectively. The Benn Pitman has a monthly publication, containing only a few pages of phonography, the rest being in common print; it would pay to publish it as a mere advertisement of the system, whether its subscription list would support it or not. But no one has ventured to publish a pure Benn Pitman Phonographic periodical simply in the interests of general literature, or as a paying speculation. On the other hand, the organ of the Isaac Pitman system, *The Phonetic Journal*, has a circulation itself of about 33,000, and is a weekly. Then there is *Pitman's Shorthand Weekly*, having also a large

circulation, and filled with general literature, all in shorthand. Besides these, Isaac Pitman writers can have the choice of half a dozen monthly Phonographic periodicals, stored with interesting reading, disconnected altogether from the Pitman propaganda, and some of which have been paying investments for decades!

And while there is nothing worthy of the name of a book published in the Benn Pitman style of shorthand, some two hundred standard literary and religious works in the Isaac Pitman style are put within our reach, from the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress, down to works of history, science, biography, romance, novels, etc. These facts show plainly enough the superior advantages of the Isaac Pitman student, as well as the brighter prospect of this system's becoming in time the universal one.

Most of what has been said about the Benn Pitman system applies to what is generally known as

The Graham System,

called, however, by Mr. Graham himself, "Standard or American Phonography." It is as old, within a year or two, as the Benn Pitman; and like it also, has undergone no change since its first publication. It has the same old consonants and vowels, also double letters; and it lacks all the improvements that the Isaac Pitman has made in its onward march the last sixty years. It started out with a few new devices of the author's, such as a large hook on a certain side of straight letters for the termination *-tive,* which makes an inconvenient outline when an initial hook happens on the same side, and which cannot be used with curves. Its rules for halving letters in the addition of *d* and *t*, with the exceptions, are numerous and complicated, leading to ambiguity, such that the single outline  without vocalization, would represent *broad, brought, bride, bright,* and *breed.* In fact the complaint about his numerous rules and exceptions is so general that a number of modifications of the system have appeared in the direction of simplifying it, and especially of reducing the size of the Manual. It has no more literature than the Benn Pitman, and perhaps not so much as it.

These two have been the leading systems in the United States since they came into the field, and so far they have kept the lead. Both claim precedence; and the methods on

which they base their claims show how easy it is to manipulate figures to prove just what we like. Mr. Jerome B. Howard, the acting propagandist of the Benn Pitman system since Mr. Pitman himself retired some years ago, bases his claim on the tabulated list of Educational Institutions where shorthand is taught, as furnished by the Bureau of Education at Washington for the year, June, 1889-90. To show how poor a basis this furnishes for an accurate estimate, schools are mentioned where not only two, three, four, five, and six systems are taught, but "any of the leading systems," or "any modification of Pitman's;"—schools with 15 teachers for 23 pupils; and to offset this, one teacher for 510 pupils. A pretty well-known Academy of Houston, Tex., returns four Benn Pitman teachers, and no pupils, *and none as ever having graduated from the school.* The Graham publishers base their estimate on the list of "Official Court Reporters of the United States." This list is very partial, including only 30 States and Territories out of 50, and wholly excluding some of the largest cities—such as even Washington and Chicago. We know of one case where returns were sent for publication in this list, namely from Rhode Island; but for some unknown reason, these are omitted.

On such unsound bases as these, is it any wonder that the estimates widely differ? The Benn Pitman statistics reckon 34.7 per cent. of teachers to Graham's 16.8 per cent, or 747 to 363; while the Graham method of reckoning gives that system 48 per cent. to Benn Pitman's 12 per cent., or a proportion of 305 to 77! If the respective parties do not manifest a sufficient sense of shame to induce them to withdraw such data and conclusions, we may well blush for the fraternity. Instead of withdrawing them, however, they are making matters worse by publishing them to the present day, as if the conditions of a decade ago were the same still. In the Benn Pitman statistics, the Isaac Pitman comes fifth in rank; and in the Graham, it is put fourth. They now make no allowance for the fact that, up to 1890, when the Bureau of Education published the list of teachers and taught, the Isaac Pitman system had no business representation in America, but was left to the mere accident of immigration; but since that date, when the firm of Isaac Pitman and Sons opened a house in New York, and the Copp, Clark Co. started an Agency at Toronto, the system has been extending by leaps and bounds, as evidenced by reports from

Colleges, by its exclusive adoption into the High Schools of New York and elsewhere, by the fact that some of the most influential and widely circulated papers (such as *The Christian Herald* and the *American Boy*—the former with a weekly circulation of about 300,000) have published courses of Isaac Pitman lessons in them. Whatever the Benn Pitman and Graham statistics amounted to ten years ago, they cannot speak for to-day, either for the Isaac Pitman system, or for other systems, some of which have faded or died out altogether, and others have improved in circulation.

The Munson System

has probably ranked third among the "variations" in public patronage, since its first appearance not long behind the Graham. In some respects, especially in the newer vowel scale of Isaac Pitman, and the large initial *l* hook on curves, it was in advance of its compeers when it first set out; but it has been, like them, languishing ever since. It has some peculiarities of its own that the author and his followers thought valuable, but they have never gained a wide acceptance, and only served to make another division in the ranks. Mr. Munson publishes no organ, and comparatively no literature, which itself would be sufficient to account for the limited constituency of Munson writers.

It is needless to more than name *Longley's Eclectic*, *The Burnz System*, *The Osgoodby*, *The Thornton*, *The Barnes*, *Eames' Light-Line*, *The Moran*, *The Dement*, *The Day*, *The Gilbert*, *The Allen* ("Universal"), *The Watson*, *The Scott-Browne*, *The Bishop* ("Exact"), *The Haven*, *The Beale* ("Simplified"), *The Robert F. Rose*, and I know not how many other modifications and remodifications, variations and deviations, of the Pitman family. Each author is perfectly confident that he has made improvements—more confident than others seem to be; one thing is certain, however, namely that each "improvement" helps the confusion, and weakens the general cause. If this be the fruit of liberty, there is reason to fear that too high a value has been attached to it when so much blood has been shed on its behalf. If any of these derived systems had really improved the original in its principles, then there would be less occasion for departing from the principles and adopting contracted forms or arbitraries in their stead. But the fact is

patent that the pure Isaac Pitman has a much smaller list of contracted words than any of these variations, and yet it is safe to say that none of the latter has stood severer tests of speed or legibility than the parent system. Not one of them has done the same amount of difficult work, or has been so carefully and fairly attested by formal official trial. About thirty persons have now carried off the Isaac Pitman silver and gold medals for writing at a speed of from 200 to 250 words per minute, for seven to ten minutes, perfectly new matter, and transcribed before examiners, free from any grave errors. Higher rates have been attained for shorter tests, and the writing read off at once, and not written, and specially selected matter; but I have never known any performance that has surpassed or even equalled these, by any of the so-called "improved" Pitmanic systems, and certainly none by the non-Pitmanic ones.

No argument is needed to show the importance of having

One Uniform, Universal System.

Personally, I would like to be a writer of the system that seemed to stand the best chance of reaching that desirable position. And were I occupying a post in which I had any influence upon the schools and colleges of a country, I would use that influence in securing the introduction into these institutions of that system which had the best prospect of gaining the precedence ultimately. From the facts presented, you may judge for yourself, and I think very easily, which system has the advantage in this respect. What superior opportunity has the Benn Pitman to climb to the top everywhere, taking into account its construction, its amount of literature, or its constituency? What the Graham? What any other of the varieties of Pitman? What chance has Gregg, Pernin, Cross, or any of the non-Pitmanic systems to drown out the practice and the literature of Isaac Pitman, or even the Benn Pitman or the Graham? The chances of success on the part of any but the one of these, to my mind, seem slim, but you may see it otherwise; form your own judgment and act accordingly. Looking at the subject from my standpoint of long experience and a somewhat wide observation, and seeking to be divested of any prejudice, it is a beautiful vision that confronts me:—one system of shorthand writing, ever growing in efficiency through the combined wisdom of practical experts, for at least the whole English-

speaking race, having its origin in one continent; and its indispensable handmaid, the typewriter, springing to its assistance from the other continent, both combining to carry their rich blessings to aid in the education, commerce, and religion of humanity generally! May this vision soon become a reality!

DR. WM. T. HARRIS,

(Formerly Supt. of Schools, St. Louis, Mo.

The Commissioner of Education of the United States, said in his Report of 1893:—

"It will be seen, in the chapter giving the statistics of instruction in Shorthand in the United States, **that the system mainly followed is that of Isaac Pitman.** Few inventors within the last two hundred years have been so happy as he in discovering devices that have proved useful in practice, and at the same time called forth universal admiration for their theoretic perfection."—*Extract from "Circular of Information No. 1" (Washington, D.C.), 1893.*

COURT REPORTERS' ENDORSEMENTS OF ISAAC PITMAN'S PHONOGRAPHY.

☞ **The highest authenticated record for ten minutes' continuous writing from new matter in any system is held by an Isaac Pitman writer.** *See particulars in "Pitman's Shorthand and Typewriting Year Book."*

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"I have been a practitioner of the Isaac Pitman system for many years, and believe it is superior to any other. Although I am personally acquainted with many fast and accurate writers among the users of the various Pitmanic systems, I regard this fact as an endorsement for the Isaac Pitman system, because, 'imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.' **I can, however, truthfully say that I am not acquainted with, nor do I know of by reputation** (excepting two veteran Gurney writers), **a single rapid and accurate writer who is not a Pitmanic follower.** It does not follow, of course, that such do not exist, but I do know they are not conspicuous in this vicinity. I am a firm believer in the orthodox manner of teaching and practising Phonography as laid down in the authorized text-book of the Isaac Pitman system, viz.: 'The Complete Phonographic Instructor,' and am decidedly of the opinion that any serious departure therefrom will only produce harmful results."—*Frank D. Curtis, Official Stenographer, U.S. Circuit Court, New York City.*

Compelled to Abandon Light-Line.

"For the past twenty-three years I have been an official court stenographer writing the Isaac Pitman system. In addition to court work, I have reported verbatim political meetings for the Press and a number of Conventions both in Canada and the United States. All the High Court stenographers in Ontario use the Isaac Pitman or modifications of it. My assistant in court work can easily read my notes, and, with her assistance in dictating my notes to typewriter operators, I have transcribed a trial of over 1,300 pages of foolscap in five days. I have yet to meet the court reporter or rapid stenographer who uses a 'light-line' system. I have met several who started out with such systems, but were compelled to give them up and adopt the Isaac Pitman in order to do fast work."—*Wm. C. Coo, Official Court Reporter, London, Ont.*

The System of To-Day.

"I learned the Pernin system nearly five years ago, and used it in office work with rather indifferent results. I was offered the position of court reporter here in Detroit, some three years ago, and found that the Pernin system was about as good for reporting as longhand, and then I could not read it. I finally took the advice of a young court reporter here, and learned the Isaac Pitman system, and I wish to say that I do not think there is a system in existence that can compare with it. I certainly think it is *the* system of to-day."—*L. B. Caldwell, Detroit, Mich.*

Equal to every Emergency.

"I find the Isaac Pitman system equal to every emergency, both as to speed and legibility. It is a notable fact that the entire English staff of the Canadian House of Commons, numbering six, are all writers of the Isaac Pitman system, and that eight out of the eleven English Official Stenographers in Montreal (including the Superior and Police Courts, are writers of this system. I believe the 'Shorthand Instructor' the most satisfactory text-book yet published."—*C. F. Larkin, Official Stenographer, Superior Court, Montreal, Canada.*

Wasted no Time on Modern Fads.

"I have been engaged in official court reporting for fifteen years. I have never used, nor desired to use, any other system than the old original Isaac Pitman, the only system found worthy of notice in the great Encyclopedias. A circle can be made no rounder—a square can be made no squarer—a perfect system of shorthand can not be improved upon—therefore I have wasted no time on modern fads and fakes."—*John V. Mardick, Official Stenographer, Charleston, Mo.*

Is more Legible.

"Although a writer of one of the 'modifications' of the Isaac Pitman system I claim that the use of the later and Improved Isaac Pitman vowel scale (used by all British phonographers since its introduction in 1857) gives me a better differentiation of outlines. For instance, with the present Isaac Pitman vowel scale I can at once (without the aid of context) distinguish between *at* and *out*; *see* and *saw*; *laws* and *lease* (construction of the laws or construction of the lease); *fall* and *fill*; *by-laws* and *bills*, and hundreds of other words which I need not mention at this time. I adopt many of the Isaac Pitman principles, for instance adding *dr*, *tr*, and *thr* after the final hooks, by lengthening the stems."—*Mr. Robert S. Taylor, Official Court Reporter, St. Paul, Min.*

High Speed with Legibility.

"The Isaac Pitman system is an admirable one. Avoiding alike the cumbrous, elementary fulness of some systems, and the grotesque and illegible brevity of others, it strikes the happy medium and combines theoretical perfection with entire practicability. This system can be written at a great speed without sacrifice to legibility—an invaluable quality in court work, where notes have to be read months and even years after they are written."—*Harold Eyre, Official Stenographer, Municipal Court, New York City.*

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"In its present form it will considerably modify the difficulties for the student who should happen to take up the work without a teacher, while for the regular teacher the work is rendered vastly superior by the natural and logical arrangement, accompanied by the expression of thought in sentences from the first. Great care has been taken in correcting some of the awkward outlines which were necessary before, by the introduction of rules similar to that in Paragraph 82. I welcome these changes as fully in keeping with the advance of the times."—*W. T. Jackman, Teacher of Isaac Pitman Phonography, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt.*

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9. It is taught in the Commercial High Schools New York City, Brooklyn, and other large citie

10. The U.S. Commissioner of Education (Dr. W. Harris) says: "It is the **Best** system and o which forms the basis for a hundred or mo modifications."