

INSTITUTE OF SHORTHAND WRITERS.

SHORTHAND:

ITS HISTORY AND ITS PROSPECTS.

BY

MATTHIAS LEVY.

[PRINTED BY THE INSTITUTE OF SHORTHAND WRITERS.]

LONDON:

JAS. WADE, 18, TAVISTOCK STREET,
COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

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*A Paper read by the Author at a Meeting of the Institute of
Shorthand Writers, on Tuesday, 14th April, 1885.*

Mr. H. H. TOLCHER, President, in the Chair.

THIS being the first meeting of the Members of the Institute of Shorthand Writers, for the reading of Papers on subjects connected with our profession, it may be convenient that we should take a short survey of the history of the art, its connexion with the law and the law courts, and then consider the past, present, and probable future position of Shorthand-writing as a profession. Before, however, we enter on the consideration of these matters, I confess I should have preferred that our President, or one of our past Presidents, had delivered, what I may call the Inaugural Address, on this occasion—an occasion which, I trust, will be a landmark in our history when, for the first time, Shorthand-writers are assembled to consider and discuss matters of interest to themselves and to all who are concerned in the profession—an occasion which I hope, as it is the first, will be the precursor of many gatherings of our members.

Shorthand-writing is not an invention or discovery of yesterday. It is no new thing. And, although opinions differ as to its origin, all writers on the subject are agreed on one thing—namely, that the first Shorthand alphabet was published in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the

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year 1602, by John Willis. The name of Timothy Bright occurs in the year 1588; but he had no alphabet, properly so called. Peter Bales, in 1590, published "The Order of Orthography," "The Key of Caligraphy," also "The Art of Brachygraphy." But as professional Shorthand-writers we may safely start from 1602 with John Willis, who, as I said, published the first Shorthand alphabet. Comparisons have often been made between the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria. In literature, art, and science, the two reigns present very remarkable contrasts and coincidences, and especially in the matter of Shorthand-writing, for in the reign of Elizabeth it took its rise, and in the reign of her present Majesty Queen Victoria it has reached a very high point of development. The system of John Willis, published in 1602, reached fourteen editions; he taught it to many persons, and in all probability it was the system, or one of the systems, used for the purpose of taking down some of Shakespeare's plays—a subject which I have discussed elsewhere in detail,* and which opens up a very interesting matter for investigation by the rising generation of Shorthand-writers who may be inclined to study the subject. Now what do we find to-day? Schools, classes, societies, institutions, teachers, books, and actually at our street corners we meet with itinerant vendors of penny cards which, we are told, contain a whole system of Shorthand.† There are newspapers and magazines devoted to the interests of Shorthand and Shorthand-writers. Clerks in mercantile houses, clerks in solicitors' offices are engaged for their knowledge of Stenography; and the activity of the present age is well reflected in the vast numbers of Shorthand-writers, and clerks who write Shorthand, who are occupied in endeavouring to gain a livelihood by means of Stenography. Thus we see that the history of Shorthand-writing commences at a very interesting period of English History, when Elizabeth was on the throne, and

* "Shakespeare and Shorthand." London, 1884.

† Mayhew's "London Labour and London Poor," 1861, p. 261, for an account of the seller of the penny Shorthand cards.

when Shakespeare was writing Hamlet. With the details of the system of John Willis, I do not propose to deal, because his book has been most minutely described by all authors who have written on Shorthand—among others, Angel (1759), Lewis (1815), and also by myself in 1862.* Whether the system was used in the courts of law at that time for the purpose of taking down trials we do not know, but there were certainly trials in the days when Hatton and Egerton held the Great Seal of England. The Great Hall of Westminster, more familiarly known as Westminster Hall, built by Rufus about 1097, contained the judgment seats. In 1224, Henry III. ordained that there should be three judgment seats: (1) the Common Pleas, “where civil matters are to be pleaded, especially such as touch lands or contracts:” (2) the King’s Bench, “where pleas of the Crown have their hearing;” (3) “on the left hand or south-west corner sitteth the Lord Chancellor, accompanied with the Master of the Rolls, and with certain other of the eleven men (learned for the most part in the civil law, and called Masters of the Chancery), which have the king’s fee.” Upstairs—or to use the quaint language of Stow—“there are ascendings up into large chambers wherein certain courts be kept,” among others the exchequer.†

In the reign of James I., when the Courts were well established, we find Shorthand books being printed and new systems published; and there is a curious MS. on Stenography, probably of this reign, and which was exhibited by Dr. Baron at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries on the 8th of December, 1882.‡ And in 1623 a play was produced called “The Devil’s Law Case,” by John Webster, in which we find a scene representing a Court of Justice. Now it is an axiom that the dramatic literature of the age reflects the

* See my “History of Shorthand-Writing.” London, 1862.

† “Memorials of Westminster,” by the Rev. Mackenzie Walcott, 1849, p. 253; also “Stow’s Survey of London,” vol. ii., book 6, pp. 49, 50.

‡ *Antiquarian Magazine and Bibliographer*, January, 1883.

manners and customs of that age; in this play we find a scene depicted, with officers busy arranging the Court and making the necessary preparations; and they appear in those days to have been very particular indeed as to who should and should not be admitted, because these officers are told:—

“You must take care that you let in
No brachygraphy—men to take notes.”

Whether that was meant as a satire on the Courts in those days, or whether the shaft was aimed at the Shorthand-writers of that period by the playwright, is a moot point; certain it is that the dramatists of the time of Elizabeth and James I. complained, and I think not without some cause, of the surreptitious printing and publishing of their plays, which in my opinion was accomplished with the help or aid of Shorthand. We do not know of the existence of any transcripts of Shorthand notes taken at this early period; but we find that the debates in the House of Commons concerning the arrest of the five members by Charles I. are said to have been taken down by John Rushworth.* One is induced to pause here and consider the scene which proved to be most eventful. Mr. John Forster is indebted to Sir Simonds D'Ewes for his information concerning the King entering the House of Commons. Charles I. looked around in vain for the five members. Lenthall was in the Speaker's chair, but stepped out to meet the King, who said: “Mr. Speaker, I must for a time make bold with your chair;” then the King went up to the step, but did not sit down. And after he looked round he spoke again. But at this point (says Mr. Forster) there is a break in the narrative; and in a subsequent note he refers to, “what was taken in characters by the Clerk's assistant young Mr. Rushworth,” who was observed as he sat at the Clerk's table busily taking down the words of the King. This occurred on the 4th of January, 1642. The speech was taken down as it was uttered; and the same evening Rush-

* Forster's “Arrest of the Five Members.” (London, 1860.)

worth took it to the King, who corrected it, and it was published the following morning. Mr. Forster has printed the portions in which the material corrections or erasures occur, with the latter printed in fac-simile. Now if this was taken in Shorthand by Rushworth, one would like to know in what system. And this interesting period of our history is well worthy the attention of our members; for I cannot help thinking that Shorthand in those days was very frequently used for purposes similar to those for which it is used now.

We also know that the trial of John Lilburne was taken down in Shorthand in 1649 by Jeremiah Rich, a famous Shorthand-writer in his day, and the author of several Shorthand works. For the information of those who are interested in the literary aspect of Shorthand, I may mention an edition of the trial of John Lilburne, 1649, in quarto, entitled "Truth's Victory over Tyrants," which was sold for seven shillings. There is another edition with a portrait of Lilburne standing at the bar; a copy of this was sold in 1853 for thirteen shillings;* this latter edition was published in 1710 by "Verax."† Locke, in his famous Essay on Education,‡ refers to the system of Shorthand of Jeremiah Rich, and says it is the best-contrived he has ever seen, but at the same time he thinks it might be made much easier and shorter. It was in this system that Samuel Pepys is said to have written his celebrated Diary, which he kept in Shorthand for ten years, commencing 1st January, 1659-60. "The cipher employed greatly resembles that known by the name of Rich's System, which within the memory of man could have been easily made out by many persons, as it had formed part of the regular course of instruction required in the Nonconformist academies to enable students to make notes of lectures and sermons."§

* Lowndes' Bibliographer's Manual, "Lilburne."

† "Gorton," vol. ii., p. 805; and the "Biog. Brit."

‡ Section 161, paragraph 1.

§ "Introduction to Bohn's Edition of the Diary." Edited by Lord Braybrooke. 1858. "On the Cipher of Pepy's Diary." By John E. Bailey. "Papers of the Manchester Literary Club." Vol. ii. 1876.

This fact will probably account for the numerous dissenting ministers and other non-professional Shorthand-writers making Shorthand their study, and writing on the subject. Thus, for instance, Mr. Job Everardt dedicated his book, "An Epitome of Stenography," in 1658, to sixteen gentlemen, whose names he enumerates, including five esquires, two counsellors-at-law, two ministers of the Gospel, one physician, five merchants, and, lastly, Mr. Robert Haynes, whom he describes as "master in the arts of writing and Short-writing." It is also related that Samuel Pepys took down in Shorthand from the King's (Charles II.'s) own mouth his narrative of his escape after the battle of Worcester (October, 1680).* Pepys also accompanied Lord Dartmouth in the expedition to Tangier; he made some notes in Shorthand which were deciphered and published in 1841 from the MS. in the Bodleian Library. In Charles II.'s reign Mr. William Mason flourished. He published several works on Shorthand, his latest being "La Plume Volante; or, the Art of Shorthand Improved," which appeared in 1707, in the reign of Queen Anne. Up to this period many works on Shorthand had been published; various systems had been given to the world, and had met with various success.

Before passing on to consider Shorthand in the 18th century, we must glance at one branch of literature which always arrests the attention of the student of English history—I mean the celebrated trials of famous men. Its interest for Shorthand-writers is this: Within recent years it has been the practice for notes of Shorthand-writers, at the close of the day's proceedings in our Courts of Justice, to be transcribed and sent to the printer the same evening, so that by the next morning printed copies of the Shorthand-writers' notes are delivered to the parties to the cause or other proceeding. This practice also obtains as regards the Parliamentary proceedings before the select committees of the House of Commons and the House of Lords; also in heavy and important witness causes in Chancery, as well as

* "Introduction to Pepy's Diary," page xxv. Bohn's Edition, 1858.

in actions at common law, and in arbitrations, and so on. But it is not new, for about this time the trials of several noblemen and gentlemen were held, and we have verbatim reports of the proceedings. Copies of the reports of various trials are preserved in the Guildhall Library in London and in the British Museum; for instance, there is the trial of William Lord Russell (as well as Walcot, Hone, Rous, and Blagg) for high treason, for conspiring the death of the King (Charles II.), held at the Sessions House, in the Old Bailey, London, on Friday, 13th July, 1683. It is a pamphlet in folio, and Lord Russell's trial begins at page 29; it is all in the first person, apparently verbatim, and exactly similar to our printed Shorthand notes of the present day. Where the speaker is interrupted there are the usual dashes. There is also the arraignment, trial, and condemnation of Algernon Sidney* for high treason for conspiring the death of the King, 1684. Sidney was tried before Sir George Jeffreys, Lord Chief Justice of England, at his Majesty's Court of King's Bench at Westminster, on the 7th, 21st, and 27th November, 1683. Opposite the title-page are the words, "I do appoint Benjamin Tooke to print the trial of Algernon Sidney, Esquire, and that no other person presume to print the same. (Signed) Geo. Jeffreys." This gives the publication an air of authority, as if published by official directions, although I cannot discover in this trial any indication as to how it came to be printed verbatim. One or two short extracts will be appreciated by the Shorthand-writer of the present day:—

"Colonel Sidney: I desire this may be read (showing the same parchment)."

And on another page—

"Colonel Sidney, towards the close of a speech, says:—'I have not written anything to stir up the people against the King'——

"Lord Chief Justice: We are not to hear all this."

This was the arraignment. Then on the 23rd November the trial itself took place.

* "Memoirs of Algernon Sidney," by George Wilson Meadley. 1813.

“Colonel Sidney: Is not this good law, my lord (*holding out the paper*), in italics as well as brackets.

Mr. Dolben opened the pleadings, which are set out in full. Then Mr. Attorney-General made his opening speech, and at its conclusion we find these words:—

“Mr. Solicitor-General: Pray call Mr. West (*who appeared*).”

Then the various witnesses are examined. There does not appear to be uniformity in the printing. In one place it is

“Colonel Romney, sworn;”

in another place—

“Mr. Keiling, called and sworn.”

“The Lord Howard, sworn.”

And again—

“Mr. Trinder was sworn, and testified to it being a true copy of the record.”

On the subject of extracts, they appear to be all set out; in one part there is one extract occupying four printed pages; and here may be added the statistics that there are 49 lines in a page, and the average is 11 words in a line, giving something like 32 folios for that one extract. The interruptions are frequent, which is what might be expected. In one place we find Mr. Justice Wythens* interposing an observation. Then there is Colonel Sidney's address to the jury, followed by the speech of the Solicitor-General. At its conclusion Colonel Sidney asks leave to speak, but the Lord Chief Justice says: “After the King's counsel have concluded we never admit the prisoner to say anything.” Then we have the summing up, all being in the first person.

Thus far we find the trials all set out verbatim, but we do not find a trace of the sources whence they were derived; but we do get a faint indication in the trial of Sir Samuel

* “Judge Wythens seemed to be drunk.”—“Memoirs of Sidney,” by Meadley, p. 269.

Bernardiston for misdemeanour, at *nisi prius* in the Guildhall, King's Bench, before Sir George Jeffreys, the Lord Chief Justice on Thursday, 14th February, 1683. Again, we find the extracts all set out; in this trial there are 40 printed lines in the folio page, with an average of 11 words in a line. Now, in the course of the summing up the Lord Chief Justice says (after reading some extracts from letters):

“And I would have you take notice of it, Mr. Blackerby, for I would have you take warning by these things.”

Then in brackets and italics come these remarkable words :

“Speaking to a gentleman that was taking notes.”

Whereupon Mr. Blackerby says :

“My lord, I have never said nor done anything that should give you occasion to speak this to me.”

Then the judge proceeds with the summing up.

Now, one would like to know who Mr. Blackerby was, and how he came to be taking notes, and what sort of notes he was taking. At that time a great many systems of Shorthand were published; and although our purpose on this occasion is not to dwell too minutely on such points, yet it would be interesting to ascertain if these trials and many others of a similar character were or were not printed from Shorthand-writers' notes.

From Queen Anne's time, and during the reigns of the four Georges, Shorthand made very rapid strides. In 1727, the year of George II.'s accession, Mr. James Weston published his book, “Stenography Completed;” the first of a series of books connected with Shorthand-writing, which certainly made Weston famous. Contemporary with Weston lived John Byrom, although his system of Shorthand was not published until four years after his death (1767). These two men were rivals, and were very jealous of each other; and even at the present day it is very amusing to read of the devices resorted to by the two

Shorthand-writers and their respective partizans. The meetings at the coffee-houses, advertisements in the papers, such as Weston's challenge in the *Postboy*, the charges and counter-charges, the Rev. Phillip Gibbs with his pamphlet, Mr. Macaulay with his new system, which turns out to be nothing more than a copy of Byrom's system, obtained surreptitiously—all this and very much more will show that our predecessors in the profession were very tenacious of their pupils and their clients. But the dispute reached its climax when Weston challenged Byrom to a trial of skill, which, having been accepted, resulted in Weston's defeat. De Quincey says* that Byrom is the author of a very elaborate Shorthand; and the *Athenæum* says:† “Byrom's Shorthand has taken its place beside other inventions notable in their day, but which posterity has improved upon and forgotten.” John Byrom was also a poet, and in a poem entitled “A Hint to a Young Person for his Better Improvement by Reading or Conversation,” he recommends taking down in black and white any “bright passage” that strikes the mind, and at the close of the poem he says:—

“Were it not for the written letter
Pray what were living men the better
For all the labours of the dead?
For all that Socrates e'er said?
The morals brought from Heaven to men
He would have carry'd back again;
'Tis owing to his Shorthand youth
That Socrates does now speak truth.”‡

I would also direct attention to *The Private Journal and Literary Remains* of John Byrom, published by the Chetham Society in 1854-6. Edited by Mr. Parkinson.

And here I hope I may be permitted to read a few lines from my own “History of Shorthand,” published in 1862:—

* “Confessions of an Opium Eater,” p. 34.

† *Athenæum*, No. 1687, p. 198 (July to December, 1858).

‡ *Notes and Queries*, No. 133, May 15th, 1852, p. 463. Collection of Poems by John Byrom, 1773. An edition was published also at Leeds, 1814 (vol. i., p. 59, edition 1814).

"The reiterated 'challenges' of Weston induced Byrom and some of his more famous pupils to form themselves into a society for the encouragement of Shorthand. The object of such a society at the present day would be to obtain for the art a status and position which at present it has not. There are many questions which might be discussed by members of such a society; and although this may not be the proper place to discuss the subject in detail, I cannot refrain from throwing out the suggestion. The society, established by Byrom and his pupils, was addressed by the members in turn. We have Byrom himself lecturing on the antiquity of his art. Dr. Hartley reads a Paper on Shorthand, while others take an active part in promoting the interests of the institution. Constant reference is made to this in the journal; and the moral is, that if Shorthand writers set to work 'heart and soul,' throw aside all petty jealousies, and act together, the thing may yet be accomplished."*

Those words were written in 1861. I am happy to think that it is "accomplished;" that we now have a society, and not the least pleasing circumstance to me is that I have the honour of reading a Paper before such a society.

Here I would mention a book which has not yet been noticed by writers on Shorthand and its History. In 1751 Dr. Gregory Sharpe, LL.D., who had been chaplain to H.R.H. Frederick Prince of Wales, published two dissertations—(1) Upon the Origin, Construction, Division, and Relation of Languages; (2) Upon the Original Power of Letters:† wherein he speaks of swift writing, and quotes Jeake's System, which appeared in the Philosophical Transactions (Royal Society) for 1748. There are several papers in the Transactions, showing that the Royal Society encouraged the promotion of Shorthand, and discussed schemes for a universal Shorthand. Because, prior to this time,

* My "History of Shorthand," p. 75.

† "Two Dissertations," &c., &c. By Gregory Sharpe. London, 1751, pp. 58, 59.

on the 26th of June, 1686, Mr. Francis Lodwick contributed an Essay, submitting a plan for a universal alphabet in which all sounds of all languages were to be represented.*

It was in the same reign, George II., in the year 1753, that Mr. Thomas Gurney published his "Brachygraphy, or Short-writing made Easy." Of the system I do not propose to say more than that it has played a most important part in history, and that the 18th edition was published in 1884. But the house of Gurney occupies a unique position, because it is associated with our Parliamentary proceedings. The first record that can be found is in the Journals of the House of Commons on the 1st of May, 1789, in connection with the trial of Warren Hastings. It would appear that a motion was made in the House of Commons that Mr. Gurney, one of the Shorthand-writers of the notes taken at the trial of Warren Hastings, Esq., in Westminster Hall, should be called in. But on that occasion the motion was defeated by what is known as the previous question. However, on the 4th of May, three days after, a motion somewhat different in its terms was agreed to—viz., that Mr. Gurney be called in to prove that certain words were used by Mr. Burke on the impeachment of Warren Hastings. And accordingly Mr. Gurney was called in and examined. Now the process of what is known as history-making is a peculiar one. A great part of the lives of such men as Sheridan, Burke, and their contemporaries is occupied with the so-called speeches delivered in the course of that very remarkable trial of Warren Hastings. But if you compare the speeches with the transcript of the Shorthand notes a very great difference appears. For Mr. (now Sir) E. A. Bond published, under the sanction of the Government, "The speeches at the trial of Warren Hastings. London, 1859-1861." And in the introduction we are told that every sitting of the court was attended by a Shorthand-writer

* "An Essay towards an Universal Alphabet." Philosophical Transactions No. 182. "Although this my attempt be not new, but what before by others hath been attempted."

from the office of Gurney,* This statement is qualified in a subsequent volume,† where the observation is made that Mr. Gurney himself attended and took the Shorthand notes. Several copies of these reports were provided for the solicitors of the managers, Messrs. Wallis and Troward.‡ A complete set is preserved in the Library of Lincoln's Inn. And now comes a fact of some special interest. A Shorthand-writer attended also on behalf of Mr. Hastings, and his transcript is in the British Museum.§ So that we have two Shorthand-writers attending, one for each side, and apparently each making a transcript. We do not know the name of Mr. Hastings's Shorthand-writer; but Lord Campbell|| is good enough to describe our predecessors as "a set of ignorant Shorthand-writers." He says:—"It is a curious fact that the State trial which, of all that have taken place in England, excited the most interest, is the worst reported. We have no account of it except from a set of ignorant Shorthand-writers, who, although they could take down evidence with sufficient accuracy, were totally incapable of comprehending the eloquent speeches which were made on either side. Burke having observed that 'virtue does not depend upon *climates* and *degrees*,' he was reported to have said, 'virtue does not depend upon *climaxes* and *trees*.' "¶

This is a good joke, of course, but unfortunately I cannot find the words as quoted by Lord Campbell. I have examined the MS. in the British Museum. It is No. 17,074, on brief sheets, with these words at the back of the brief: "February 16, 1788. Fourth day, Continuation of Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq.," and at the foot, "Richard Shawe, Solicitor for Mr. Hastings."

* Vol. i., p. 41.

† Vol. ii., p. 3.

‡ In the "Law Directory" for 1790 we find the entry, under the heading of Solicitors—"Albany Wallis and Richard Troward, 20, Norfolk-street, Strand."

§ Add MSS. Nos. 17,066 to 17,082.

|| "Lives of the Lord Chief Justices," vol. iii., p. 124.

¶ See Bond, vol. i., p. xlii., note.

From MS. in British Museum, page 75, in pencil: page 45, at bottom of brief page.

"We are to let you know that *this Gentleman* has formed a *plain* Geographical morality by which the Dutys of men in Public and private stations are not to be governed by their relation to the great Governor of the universe and by their *relation to one another*, but by *Climaxes such as these.*"

From Sir E. Bond's Printed Edition, vol. i., p. 76.

"We are to let you know that *these Gentlemen* have formed a *plan* of Geographical morality by which the duties of men in public and private *situations* are not to be governed by their relation to the great Governor of the Universe and by their *relations to men* but by *climates, degrees of longitude,*" &c., &c., &c.

The word "trees" does not occur in the passage; and it may be noted here that the MS. in question is a brief copy.

But Lord Campbell was no friend to Shorthand-writers; because in his "Life of Lord Loughborough,"* speaking of his judgments, he says that they are recorded in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th volumes of Vesey Junior. And then Lord Campbell appends this foot-note. "He (that is Lord Loughborough) was unlucky in his reporter. I knew this gentleman well. When near eighty he was still called 'Vesey Junior' to distinguish him from his father Vesey Senior, the historiographer of Lord Hardwicke. He was a very good-natured fellow, and very honest and painstaking, but very dull. He wrote his notes in Shorthand, which never will produce good reporting."

Now in 1881 the Life of Lord Campbell was published. In his early life he was a newspaper reporter; and under date of 1802† he says: "For three sessions I continued to attend in the Gallery of the House of Commons when any debate of importance was expected. I acquired great facility and considerable skill in reporting, and the best speakers were assigned to me. I knew nothing, and did not care to know anything, of Shorthand. Shorthand-writers are very useful in taking down evidence as given in a Court of Justice, but they are wholly incompetent to report a good speech. They attend to words without entering into the thoughts of

* "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," vol. 6, page 237.

† Vol. 1, p. 105.

the speaker. They cannot by any means take down at full length all that is uttered by a speaker of ordinary rapidity, and if they did they would convey a very imperfect notion of the spirit and effect of the speech." And further on he says: "To have a good report of a speech the reporter must thoroughly understand the subject discussed, and be qualified to follow the reasoning, to feel the pathos, to relish the wit, and to be warmed by the eloquence of the speaker. . . . He should take down notes in abbreviated longhand as rapidly as he can for aids to his memory. He must then retire to his room, and looking at these, recollect the speech as it was delivered, and give it with all fidelity, point, and spirit, as the speaker would write it out if preparing it for press." But in the very next page Lord Campbell had forgotten what he had written in the previous page; for, speaking of Mr. Pitt's speech in defence of the treaty of Amiens, he says: "I remember being so much carried away by his lofty declamation that I could not hold my pen with sufficient steadiness to take a note." (Page 107.)

In the *Life of Sheridan*, prefixed to Bohn's Edition of *Sheridan's Works*,* we are told that Moore had a Shorthand copy of Sheridan's speech, which was in the possession of the Duke of Norfolk, then in the hands of Sheridan himself, and afterwards it came to Moore.

Now this transcript of the Shorthand notes of the trial of Warren Hastings in the British Museum is the earliest transcript of Shorthand notes with which I am acquainted. The copy in Lincoln's Inn Library was procured from the late Mr. John Adolphus. But he had become possessed of more than one copy of the reports. He had, in fact, considerable portions of four or five sets, all transcribed from the same draft,† and those copies would, therefore, be alike in every respect; but, as we have seen, a Shorthand-writer attended on behalf of Mr. Hastings, and it is his transcript which is in the British Museum. Those volumes are entitled "*Minutes of the Trial of Warren Hastings*." They run on in consecutive volumes, and are regularly numbered.

* 1848, p. 113.

† Bond, vol. 1, *Introd.* xli. xlii.

I am bound to say, however, that although we are told that "the report of the Shorthand-writer employed by Mr. Hastings is preserved in the British Museum,"* there is nothing on the face of the report to show who the Shorthand-writer was. I presume it is only by comparison and inference that the conclusion is arrived at, that the report did not emanate from Messrs. Gurney's office. Volume 1 contains the beginning of the proceedings; but pages 7 to 196 inclusive are not here; although a counterfoil remains containing MS. observations; possibly in the handwriting of one of the defendant's counsel. These MS. notes evidently refer to the speech of Burke. There are brief sheets, which have been tied together in the ordinary form, as is proved by the holes in the left hand corner of each sheet. Volume 2 contains evidence, and is complete in itself. The volume consists of the Brief Copies, which are endorsed in the ordinary way. Vols. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 are similar, except in vol. 4 the pagination is incomplete. Vol. 8 contains fragments of several days' proceedings, all bearing date in 1791, but bound up as in 1788. No. 17,074 is a volume which contains fragments. In the middle of this volume there is an alphabetical index. No. 17,075 contains a copy, marked in pencil with the word "duplicate" of Mr. Adam's speech, it being the 14th day of the trial. There are several corrections in ink. No. 17,076 contains duplicates. No. 17,077 is Law's (Lord Ellenborough's) opening speech for the defence. In the foregoing volumes there is a variety of MS.; some fragmentary; some complete; but which are Gurney's, and which are Mr. Hasting's Shorthand-writer's reports, it is difficult to determine; because they are mostly written on brief sheets, and have nothing to distinguish them from each other.

The date of the connexion of Shorthand-writing with Parliament, in so far as it relates to proceedings in Select Committees, has not yet been precisely ascertained. I have elsewhere† described in detail the various resolutions and Acts of Parliament on the subject; thus in 1802 an Act was

* Bond, Vol. 1, p. xliii.

† My "History of Shorthand," p. 89—94.

passed (42 George III., cap. 84) relating to Elections, and the 8th section enacts that every such Committee appointed for the trial and determination of any petition, &c., shall or may be attended by a person well skilled in the art of writing Shorthand. In 1868 the Act was passed transferring the trial of Election Petitions to the Judges, and that Act, which is 31 and 32 Victoria, chapter 125, in clause 24, enacts that on the trial of an election petition "the Shorthand-writer of the House of Commons, or his deputy," shall attend and be sworn "faithfully and truly" to take down the evidence, and he is to write, or cause the same to be written, in words at length, and so on.

A passing reference may here be made to Sir Henry Cavendish's Debates of the House of Commons during the 13th Parliament of Great Britain, called the Unreported Parliament, from 10th May, 1768, to 22nd June, 1774. The debates are reported by one person in Shorthand, the system made use of being that of Gurney. There are 48 volumes in MS. in the Egerton Collection in the British Museum. Two volumes have been printed and published: the remainder were promised, but they have not appeared. In the volume I examined there is some evidence given in the form of question and answer.

On the 21st March, 1803, a Committee of the House was appointed to consider so much of the Act of George III. as related to the employment of persons skilled in the art of writing Shorthand, and on the 31st March they reported "that much benefit had resulted to the parties by expediting the business and shortening in a great degree the time of taking the evidence, and thereby considerably lessening their expenses." Many details might be added, but I will content myself with stating that on the 18th May, 1813, on the motion of Mr. Lushington, the House came to the following resolutions:—

"1. That the Clerk of the House do appoint a Shorthand-writer, who shall, by himself or sufficient deputy, attend when called upon to take minutes of evidence at the bar of this House or in Committees of the same.

"2. That whenever the Chairman of a Committee, to whom a private petition or bill shall be referred, shall require the attendance of a Shorthand-writer, the expense shall be defrayed by the party or parties promoting and opposing the same, in such proportion as the said Chairman of the Committee shall direct.

3. "That the charge to be paid to the Shorthand-writer shall be the same as that already directed in the case of Election Committees—viz., two guineas per day to such person for his attendance, and one shilling per sheet (containing seventy-two words in every sheet) for the transcript of the minutes of evidence and proceedings, if required; and that the same shall be due and payable as any other fees are by the orders of the House, and shall be deemed to commence at the beginning of this Session of Parliament."*

On 17th February, 1863, the House of Commons appointed a Select Committee on Private Bill Legislation. The Report and the Evidence were published in a Blue Book, 24th June, 1863. This contains information of very great practical interest to our profession, because Mr. Joseph Gurney, the Shorthand-writer of the House, was examined, and in his evidence, which commences at page 335, he gave full details of his appointment, the mode in which the notes were taken and transcribed, the rates of payment, his receipts and expenditure as regards Private Bills in the House of Commons, and other matters of interest. "The terms of my appointment (as they appear on the Journals of the House, 13th May, 1813, at the time of my father's appointment) are to attend, by myself or sufficient deputy, to take notes at the Bar of the House or in Committees of the same. . . . The appointment, which is made by the Chief Clerk of the House, is during good behaviour, in the same way as with regard to all the other officers of the House."† The charge for the transcript was reduced from 1s. to 9d. per folio of 72 words in 1851.‡ The permanent staff of Shorthand-writers were ten, and the number of extra

* "Commons Journals," vol. lviii., pp. 307—320.

† "Blue Book on Private Bill Legislation," Q. 3,363, 3,364, 3,365.

‡ Q. 3,369.

Shorthand-writers that Mr. Gurney was sometimes obliged to employ in both Houses was "about eight or ten at the utmost."* As to the work itself, "the transcript must be finished before the Shorthand-writer goes to bed at night. . . . The Shorthand-writer's work in the Committee-room is only the beginning of his day's work. The whole evening afterwards, generally up to midnight and often later, is spent in severe application in order to finish his work."† The pressure and strain is very great,‡ and it is necessary to provide and maintain an adequate staff, which it is most important to keep up, especially for Public Committees, which require highly-qualified and efficient Shorthand-writers.§ Mr. Gurney further added, in answer to questions, that no such pressure is found in any other department of the duties of a Shorthand-writer as there is in the Court of Parliament.|| It was, I believe, in consequence of the Report of this Committee that the Minutes of Evidence were printed, instead of the copies being written or lithographed.¶ There are other references made to Shorthand-writing in the Report and Evidence and in the Proceedings, which are interesting to Shorthand-writers, and especially to those gentlemen who are in the habit of taking notes of the proceedings in committees.**

In 1878 a committee was appointed to inquire as to reporting the proceedings of the House—i.e., debates. And from time to time down to the present day Parliament has distinctly recognised the value of Shorthand-writing. In 1817 Mr. Gurney was sent down by the Government from London to take reports of the trials of the rioters at Huddersfield, a fact considered to be of sufficient importance to be noted in Mr. Spencer Walpole's "History of England,"†† and in the Annual Register.‡‡ And, arising out of the celebrated Windham trial, when the Lunacy Regulation Bill was brought in, a debate arose thereon in the House of

* Q. 3,373, 3,386. † Q. 3,370, 3,398. ‡ Q. 3,398. § Q. 3,398.

|| Q. 3,404, 3,405. ¶ "Blue Book," p. x

** See Questions 1,925—1,928; also pp. xxxvi., xxxvii.

†† Vol. i., p. 445.

‡‡ Chronicle, 1817, p. 72.

Commons with reference to the appointment of a Shorthand-writer, details of which will be found in the *Times* of 21st and 22nd May, 1862. So again in the Bankruptcy Acts 1861 and 1883, and the general orders under those Acts, the value of Shorthand is clearly recognised.

In 1779 Mr. Blanchard put forward a system of Shorthand, but it was a failure. This failure seems to have spurred him on to further exertions, for in 1786 he published "*The Complete Instructor to Shorthand*," which was a great success. I mention this book because, in the Introduction, Mr. Blanchard speaks of "the number of professors who are in constant practice in Westminster Hall." And again he says: "I remember to have written in 1 hour and 40 minutes from a speech of the Hon. Thomas Erskine 208 law sheets, each sheet containing 72 words, in all 14,976 words," which would give 2 folios or 144 words a minute. Mr. Blanchard took jointly with Mr. Gurney several trials at law, and they were published verbatim.

In the same year, 1786, there was published a system which is very familiar indeed to Shorthand-writers of the present day—Taylor's system. If there is one man more than another whose name is entitled to the admiration of Shorthand-writers it is Samuel Taylor, for his system has survived to the present day without any adventitious aid. Gurney, Byrom, Mavor, and Taylor, are the principal eighteenth century systems in use among Shorthand-writers at the present day.

System after system appeared during the last and present centuries; and in 1815—1816 Mr. James Henry Lewis published his celebrated "*History of the Rise and Progress of Shorthand*"—a book to which all writers on Shorthand are much indebted for its most valuable information. In 1823, Mr. William Harding published his "*Universal Stenography*," and a new edition appeared in 1860 (London, Van Voorst). In the Preface reference is made to an article in MS. by Mr. Hanbury in connexion with a verse in Ezekiel ix. 4, "And set a mark." The Hebrew expression *Tov* (תו) is familiar to us as the Greek *Tau*. Taken with

the context, the question is what was the meaning of the *Tau* or mark. But verse 2 must be taken in connexion with verse 4, because the man who is to set a mark is described as having "a writer's ink horn" by his side. This only adds to the difficulty, because the inference from the text would be that to "set a mark" meant to write, otherwise he would not have been provided with an ink horn. And it becomes more difficult when it is remembered that the "six men" were to destroy all the people except those who had a mark on their forehead; therefore to the men who had charge over the city (verse 1) some kind of writing must have been intelligible. It is a curious fact, that in the 9th chapter of Ezekiel, whenever this man "clothed in linen" is described, the words "with the ink horn by his side" are always added. But the *Tau* and the Triple *Tau*, and their attendant mysteries and rites, cannot be discussed in this Paper.*

More systems, and yet more systems, were published during the reigns of George IV. and William IV. (1820—1837); but it would be beyond the scope of this Paper to discuss those systems in detail. Thus we have arrived at the reign of Queen Victoria, the third queen who has sat upon the throne of England since a Shorthand alphabet was first invented. And in the year 1837, the date of our present Queen's accession to the throne, there was published a system of Shorthand which has produced a greater sensation than any system known to history. I need hardly say I allude to the "Phonography" of Mr. Isaac Pitman. This gentleman has devoted his life to producing, improving, and perfecting a method of Shorthand-writing, which is known

* "Ceramic Art in Remote Ages." By J. B. Waring, London, 1874. According to Tradition one \square was in ink and another in blood. The ink mark was to be placed on the forehead of the righteous, it being the initial of \square \square \square "thou shalt live;" the mark in blood was to be put on the forehead of the wicked, it being the initial of \square \square \square "thou shalt die." See the "Babylonian Talmud," Treatise Sabbath, section 5, and compare the "Main Principles . . . selected from Yad Hachazakah" by Maimonides. English translation by H. H. Bernard, Cambridge, 1832, p. 146.

throughout the civilized world, and largely practised. The original object was undoubtedly a most ambitious one—a universal language—and whatever opinions may be entertained of the merits of the system of Shorthand or Phonography with which Mr. Pitman's name is associated, let us all recognise the fact of the great ability and energy that have been brought to bear for nearly half a century in connexion with this one system: a system that undoubtedly must take its place in the history of the reign of Queen Victoria. And with this we bring our story of Stenography, as regards its past, to a close. It is a mere outline, of necessity omitting many valuable and important systems, as well as many interesting facts, omitting all detailed reference to Shorthand on the Continent and in America, but not forgetting the names of Stolze and Gabelsberger, whose systems formed a battle-ground in a former generation. One would have been glad also to refer to a case tried before Lord Denman, of some interest to Shorthand-writers.

Turning to another point, the Sessions Papers of the Old Bailey, they contain a great deal of interesting information. The exact date when the Shorthand-writer was first appointed by the Corporation of the City of London has not been yet ascertained, although I believe Mr. Thomas Allen Reed, the President of the Shorthand Society, has given considerable attention to this point. In the "Sessions Papers, Old Bailey, for 1737-38," there is a pamphlet, "Some Observations on the Trial of Mr. Thomas Carr, executed at Tyburn 18th January, 1737."* In the same volume there is "The Ordinary of Newgate's Account of the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words of the Malefactors," and so on.† And at the end of this pamphlet, page 20, there is this advertisement—"The trials at large of Thomas Carr and Elizabeth Adams containing the full evidence on both sides, which was faithfully taken in SHORTHAND from the mouths of the witnesses as it was delivered in Court. Printed for J. Roberts, in

* London, 1737.

† London, 1738.

Warwick-lane." The appointment of Shorthand-writer in connection with the Central Criminal Court continues. On 1st December, 1813, the Shorthand notes were taken by Job Sibley; on 21st June, 1815, by J. A. Dowling, of Clement's Inn; in December, 1816, by Henry Buckler; and November, 1847, is the date when those who now hold the appointment commenced. Any one searching the records of the Corporation of the City of London would discover many interesting facts connected with our profession, especially the date of the first appointment of a Shorthand-writer to take notes at the Sessions House, Old Bailey, as well as the names of those who have held the appointment down to the present time.

With regard to institutions and societies having for their object the interests of Shorthand-writing and Shorthand-writers, it may be here stated that there are stenographical societies on the Continent of Europe as well as in the United States of America and Canada. They watch very closely every movement throughout the world which is likely to affect the welfare of those who are interested, professionally or otherwise, in the art; and as a curious illustration of this I may mention that Lord Palmerston was elected a member of the Stenographical Society at Vienna, on the 21st December, 1859, in consequence of some valuable and favourable observations that he made in a speech at Romsey.

As to the bibliography of Shorthand, I venture to call the attention of our members to the assistance that they have it in their power to render in this important matter. As England was the country that produced the first Shorthand alphabet, so we should all be proud if from England we could send forth a complete bibliography of Shorthand, in other words a complete list of books on Shorthand, Shorthand writing, and all matters connected with stenography. Let me illustrate what I mean by saying that in 1855 Dr. Franz Julius Anders published in German the "History and Literature of Shorthand." He gives a list of 300 names and titles of books of all nations. In 1864 there

was published the Catalogue of the Library of the Stenographical Institute of Dresden. Professor Zeibig also published a valuable history of Shorthand (1873), containing a list of English authors and works, numbering 374. Mr. Anderson in his work also published a list of names, and for the first time included all the Shorthand-writers practising in London, as well as the names of the systems they wrote. Mr. Rockwell has also, I believe, produced in America a work on this subject, but I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing it.

In tracing the history of Shorthand we are struck with one peculiarity—namely, that it has played no unimportant part in the history of England, its law, and its literature. We have seen it in its infancy associated with the plays of Shakspeare; we find it was used to place on record a King's narrative: in the Courts of Law its great utility has been demonstrated; in Parliament it has been recognised by resolutions of the House, as well as in Acts of the Legislature, and we find the names of some of England's worthies associated with it. Gibbon, the author of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire;" Dr. Bentley, master of Trinity, the celebrated scholar and author of the famous "Dissertation on Phalaris;" Leibnitz, the great philosopher and mathematician, who had a favourite scheme for the formation of a "general characteristic"—that is to say, a language of signs as well as an alphabet of human ideas;* John Byrom, the author; Dr. Samuel Johnson, who several times refers to it, as may be seen on reference to Boswell's Life; and many others.

With regard to the names of Shorthand-writers appearing in an official list, the earliest that I can find is in 1789, "Browne's General Law List" for that year, and the names are—

Blanchard William.
Donkin Pye Robert.
Gurney Joseph.
Hodgson Edmund.

* "Leibnitz," by J. T. Merz, 1884, p. 106.

And then we find in the "British Directory for 1790" a "Law Directory" at page 369, with a separate title, "Shorthand Writers," and there are three names—

William Blanchard.

Joseph Gurney.

Edmund Hodgson.

In 1798 "The New Law List" was published, but there is no title of "Shorthand Writers" for that year, or for 1799; but in 1800 we find five names—

H. J. Blanchard.

Jos. Gurney.

Wm. Marsom.

Wm. Ramsay.

Manoah Sibly.

In 1801 the same names occur, and in 1802 the same names except Sibly. In the year 1851 there were twenty-nine names. I note that year because in 1851 an attempt was made to establish a Shorthand-writer's Society or Institute. In the year 1862, when another attempt was made to found an Institute, there were twenty-three names in the "Law List;" in the year 1882, when this Institute of Shorthand-writers was established, there were thirty-one names; and in this year, 1885, there are thirty-one names of Shorthand-writers, treating a firm as one name, for this present purpose.

But of course this does not convey an accurate notion of the actual number of Shorthand-writers now practising in London, because a firm may consist of two or more members, and their name in the "Law List" simply counts for one. But this Institution numbers sixty-four members, and as there are some members of the profession whose names were in the Law List in 1882, when this Institution was founded, but did not at that time join it, we may safely put down the actual number of Shorthand-writers capable of taking notes at about seventy, although not more than thirty-one names of Shorthand-writers appear in the Law List for 1885.

“Names of Shorthand-writers”—that is to say, gentlemen who follow Shorthand as a distinct profession not in any way connected with another occupation with which it is sometimes confused—namely, the reporter. The work each has to do is of a peculiar character; and it may be at once stated that there is a sharply-marked and well-defined distinction between the two; just as there is between the barrister and solicitor, the surgeon and physician. The generic term for barrister and solicitor is lawyer; but the two professions are distinct; so reporter is one who reports, but although the term reporter may have a wider signification than we are apt to apply to it, yet in a popular sense the reporter is a gentleman who is connected with the newspaper press, and whose business it is to give the pith and substance of speeches and a summary of evidence. He condenses; he omits what is called verbiage; he describes the feelings of the audience by the well-known terms of *hear, hear, cheers, laughter*, and so on. But the duty of the Shorthand-writer is the very contrary. He takes down in Shorthand what is said and transcribes the same, and carefully abstains from adding anything or omitting anything. When there are discussions, for instance, at the conclusion of a judgment delivered by the Judge, when counsel mention the question of costs, or the form of order to be drawn up, the Shorthand-writer takes down the discussion; but the reporter is seldom concerned with that; he contents himself with stating the decision of the Judge, giving a bare outline of what has been said. Indeed the reporter has to give an account of what transpires, while the Shorthand-writer simply takes down the very words. And we cannot have a better witness than the most recent writer on “The History of Shorthand,” Mr. Thomas Anderson. On the title-page of his work (1882) he describes himself as “Parliamentary Reporter, Fellow of the Shorthand Society, and formerly Shorthand-writer in the Glasgow Law Courts.” At page 266 he gives a list of “London Newspaper Reporters,” and at page 273 a list of “London Shorthand-writers,” numbering 104. In the list of newspaper reporters sixteen are

described as barristers. It is a curious fact that until the Judicature Act passed we do not find Shorthand-writer's notes mentioned in the Law Books; but since the passing of that Act, and the rules under it, the question of Shorthand-writer's notes has been frequently brought to the attention of the Judges, and has formed the subject of more than one decision, which is reported in the Law Reports established in 1865. Whether the constant recurrence of these questions will be advantageous or disadvantageous to the profession in the future remains to be seen. Certain it is, that if there are more Shorthand-writers than formerly, more Shorthand notes are taken, and in my opinion will be taken, than has hitherto been the case. We know there is a difference of opinion on the subject of Shorthand. Whereas Parliament has recognised it in its own tribunals—Committees and Election Petitions—and has ordered it to be used in Bankruptcy and Admiralty* proceedings—it is not yet adopted as a necessity in Courts of Justice. Some Judges approve of Shorthand notes; others prefer relying on the "Judge's" note. At the same time this applies to evidence. In the matter of a Summing-up, or a Judgment, unless written by the Judge beforehand, there cannot be any complete record except the Shorthand-writer's note; and daily experience in the Courts tells us that Judges constantly ask for such notes. I think experience further proves that the profession will benefit by the great desire there is for a more rapid hearing of causes. The great saving of time and expense by the more general use of Shorthand by professional men taking down evidence will be more and more apparent, and tend to benefit those who adopt Shorthand as a profession. And it must not be forgotten that the Shorthand-writer of to-day, and most certainly the Shorthand-writer of the future, should possess a great deal of general knowledge. He should know something of law, mechanics, chemistry, languages, and geography. At a moment's notice he is called upon to take notes in a case, without having any previous information as to the subject-matter.

* Order 56, rule 6 ("Rules of the Supreme Court," 1883.)

To-day a patent case, to-morrow a Welsh, Scotch, or Irish Railway Bill; now medical evidence; and again a very rapid discussion between three Judges and half-a-dozen learned counsel, each counsel seeking to prove his client is entitled to property under a very complicated and technically-drawn will.

And this brings me to the last point to which I desire to call your attention this evening—namely, the position of the profession or business which we follow. In times past each Shorthand-writer took notes and followed his profession as an individual. And up to almost the time of the great change in the Judicature of this country, 1873-75, there were seldom more than seven or eight Courts sitting at the same time—the Master of the Rolls, the Courts of the three Vice-Chancellors and the Court of the Lords Justices of Appeal in Chancery, and three Common Law Courts in Banc. That was during Term. After Term there were the four Chancery Courts, the Nisi Prius Sittings, and the Exchequer Chamber. But since the passing of the Judicature Acts, and certainly since January, 1883, when all the Courts have been held in the Royal Courts of Justice, as many as fifteen, and sometimes eighteen, Courts are sitting simultaneously, and this has brought about a corresponding change in the conditions under which Shorthand-writers have to conduct their business. The various courts have to be watched; arrangements made for taking the different cases which may come on for hearing in different courts at the same time; a large staff must be kept in readiness; and it necessitates the constant passing and repassing from court to court. This throws an amount of labour on one person, who has to regulate the business, attend to the clients, and see that all cases are properly taken. One man cannot sit in one court and take his own Shorthand notes, and leave the other courts (using a well-known expression) “to take care of themselves.” Hence we find a concentration of business, with a tendency to combination and co-operation. But the profession of Shorthand-writing is, like the law itself, with

which it has been associated for centuries, in a transition state. The regulations which affect barristers and solicitors are now-a-days discussed evidently with a view to modification; and Shorthand-writers cannot escape the influence of the times, nor, I am sure, would they wish to lag behind, but rather be abreast of, or, indeed, in advance of public opinion. But the future of Shorthand-writing will be very much what Shorthand-writers make it; and the problem to be solved is how best to adapt ourselves to the existing order of things. The question has been asked, what would be likely to happen if the world were suddenly to find itself deprived of Shorthand?

It seems to me it is for this Institution to best answer the question by cultivating the art of Stenography, promoting its interests, and developing its advantages. True it is the Shorthand-writer has not yet received any public recognition. The statesman, the soldier, the poet, the philosopher, and the lawyer have been ennobled for services they rendered to their country. Nay, the reporter who begins life in the Gallery of the House of Commons, may find in middle age a seat in that House, while his old age may be solaced by reposing on the Wool-sack in the House of Lords. The sword of the warrior, and the pen of the author, have won for those who wielded them place, power, and position. But Shorthand-writers, whose vocation has existed for three hundred years, have been and are content to continue their useful and unobtrusive work; anxious to raise the status of members of the profession, and to increase the value and utility of Stenography.

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