

would only say that the man who does not understand the business, or who is not prepared to stay in the gold regions long enough to learn it, had better keep his money and remain at home."

Frank G. Carpenter

SIR ISAAC PITMAN.

The year 1897 seems to be quite a year of memorials. On the 22nd day of January of this eventful year (1897), in the city of Bath, England, went peacefully to his rest one who, in an unobtrusive way, though not quite "unknown to fame," with a steady purpose in view and with a strong will, has done so much, especially among the youth during the past sixty years, to foster a habit of self-help and useful aim in life, and whose invention has done so much toward that end; and yet, of whose life-work—the "man and method"—the many thousands, perhaps millions, who have at some period of their life taken up the study of his invention, and those who by its aid have been able to achieve a position of profitable employment of their time, so little is known.

The present writer's intimate personal acquaintance with Mr. Pitman, commenced in the early '50s, and extended for a period of between three and four years. Mr. Pitman was born in the year 1813, in the small manufacturing town of Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England, where much of the then celebrated fine woolen cloth was produced. His father held a position as manager of a small factory at that place. After acquiring the elements of education at the grammar school of his native town, he assisted his father in his duties at the factory, and while so engaged his own active mind prompted him to prepare himself, by home study, during his leisure hours, for the position of a teacher in a school, in which occupation he soon became engaged in his native town, whence after a few years he removed to the city of Bath, expecting to there exercise his vocation in a more extended sphere. He had, among his other studies, made himself familiar with a system of stenography (Garnup's, I believe), which now he had occasional opportunity of putting to profitable use in reporting for the press. Ever seeking after improvement, his restless, practical mind conceived the idea, that stenography could better serve its purpose if, instead of the ear catching the sound of a speaker's voice, then the mentality translating that sound into the elements of the world, and formulating a written symbol therefor, the sounds uttered could of themselves suggest the needed formula. Acting on the idea, he invented a system which he named "Stenographic Sound Hand;" and on this foundation all his after improvements were based. The necessity for a more rapid response of the hand to the action of the mind in putting thoughts into words, and a concise, yet legible method, whereby epistolary correspondence could be carried on with less effort, and excerpts made from books, documents, etc., for future reference, also forced itself upon his attention. Gradually was eliminated a system on which these advantages were secured, and, leading up, step by step, by way of contractions, etc., and yet equally clear to

those who should initiate themselves, and not very difficult of attainment, to fulfil all the requirements of jotting down the outpourings of the most impassioned orator.

During the whole of the summer of 1837, every leisure moment, and even his holidays, were devoted to the perfecting of the system and preparing for its publication; and in November of that year it came forth in small pamphlet form of twelve pages, five inches by three, with alphabet, diagrams, etc., on an illustrated sheet, bearing the inscription, "Drawn by Isaac Pitman, stenographer," lithographed by Bedford, Bristol. Four pence per copy (eight cents) was the moderate estimate placed by the author upon his production. The system soon rose into public favor. Steps were taken to get it into still further prominence, by lectures explanatory, in the cities and towns throughout England, by which means its worth was soon acknowledged throughout Great Britain. About the year 1851, Mr. Benjamin Pitman, a younger brother of Isaac Pitman, came to America on a propaganda of Phonography, by which name the perfected system was known, and settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, from which, as a center, it has also spread throughout the United States.

About four years after the issuance of "Stenographic Sound Mind," it was proposed to apply the phonetic system to shorthand writing and printing of books. A disclaimer of any intention to disturb the ordinary spelling, was published in the third edition of "Phonography," in 1840, as follows: "It is, of course, Utopian to hope to change the present form of spelling of the English language, but it is not Utopian to attempt to introduce a briefer mode of writing on the phonetic principle." Then came years of quiet, dogged, but at the same time, enthusiastic hard work. Mr. Pitman, after working at his desk from five in the morning till ten at night, doing all his own work of the office; for he had found it convenient to set up a printing office and bindery, under his own immediate direction, and issues of his publications, and even setting up the type himself.

For more than sixty years Mr. Pitman has been a familiar figure to all the inhabitants of the picturesque city of Bath. Whenever seen on the streets the idea was impressed on the observer of a man of an active, restless nature, mental and physical. Tall, of spare but muscular figure; even when well advanced in years, his rapid, easy motion might even be envied by men many years his junior; and his bright eyes, and firm face afforded ample illustration of those keen, regular habits which formed one of his chief characteristics throughout a busy career. During the greater portion of his protracted life he has been a practical vegetarian, a strict abstainer from every intoxicant, and methodic almost to a fault in the habits and duties which his daily duties required. Every progressive movement of the age has received his co-operation and quiet hearty support; but to the "spelling reform," his almost entire life has been consecrated. In his early years he followed the practical teaching, and accepted the faith of the Wesleyan community; he afterwards became a firm adherent to the religious views promulgated by Emanuel Swedenborg, and for many years officiated as preacher on the Sunday, and a week-day evening, in a small

church erected by that community in Twerton, a small village in the immediate neighborhood of Bath.

As to the merits of his invention, it received the attention of millions. It is impossible to estimate the number of persons who write shorthand. Ninety-six per cent. of the reporters on the daily press use his system; and its capabilities for letter writing are fully appreciated by the tens of thousands who make use of it for that purpose. He lately stated in an interview: "There is no estimate or census of the number of phonographers in the world, but the sale of teaching books, the Phonographic Teacher, Manual of Phonography, and Phonographic Instructor, is now about 50,000 per annum." Its capacity for rapid reporting is proved by the fact that 250 words per minute has been written by his system, as many as can be clearly uttered by a rapid speaker. The system has also been applied to about fifteen other languages, including Welsh, French, Italian, German, Japanese, Spanish, Dutch, Chinese, and Malagase.

In 1887, a Jubilee of Phonography was held, and presentations, testimonials, letters of thanks were showered upon him from all parts of the world. Later, in 1894, the labor of his lifetime met a national recognition, and this "grand old man" received the honor of knighthood. He has passed away, leaving no posterity behind him. The invention of so useful a system of writing is fully sufficient of itself to hand his name down in universal esteem. But there is one small matter which the writer has never yet seen recorded, which should entitle Sir Isaac Pitman to a gratitude more universal and more lasting, if possible, than even the invention of Phonography.

To the present generation the benefits and facilities of a cheap postage rate for letters, etc., is accepted, with scarce a thought ever occurring, of the condition of matters before this boon was presented. The most common, almost the only method in early times to ensure the secrecy of a letter, was to fold it up and insert one end in the other, securing the opening either with sealing wax or a wafer. Later on, envelopes were introduced, and these not being gummed as at present, were secured as the ordinary letters had been; gummed sheets, with small squares, containing mottoes of various kinds were subsequently added for the purpose. The method of payment was for the sender to present the letter to the postoffice clerk, deposit the fee, and see the amount inscribed with pen and ink (usually red) on the face of the letter; which method sufficed for the limited business transacted through the mails—a cumbersome method at the best, and involving much trouble in keeping accounts and auditing the same. The prepayment system was not insisted on, the receiver more frequently paying the fee.

It was a somewhat singular coincidence, that in the same year (1837) that Isaac Pitman put forth his "Stenographic Sound Hand," (the foundation of the Spelling Reform), that Sir Rowland Hill (for a sketch of the life of Sir Rowland Hill, see Juvenile Instructor of 1886, page 17) issued a pamphlet, advocating a cheap and uniform rate of postage. His idea met with immediate approval by the great majority of his fel-