



## Shorthand in the Army

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## SHORTHAND IN THE ARMY.

*By Captain J. E. CAUNTER, p.s.c., The Welch Regiment.*

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Wednesday, January 25th, 1897.

Major-General LORD METHUEN, C.B., C.M.G., Commanding the  
Home District, in the Chair.

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I HAVE to thank the Committee of the Royal United Service Institution for this opportunity of bringing before a military audience a subject of so much importance to the Army.

From the earliest times various systems of shorthand have been in existence. Julius Cæsar, for example, is said to have employed one; and doubtless, could we penetrate the veil that envelops the history of his age, and obtain an official account of his campaigns, we should find that his successes were in some measure due to the employment by himself and his staff of this means of communicating orders and despatches. The earlier systems were naturally of very primitive construction, and for the most part consisted merely of abbreviations. It was not until the middle of the present century that the genius of Sir Isaac Pitman recognised that the principle of "sound writing," or phonography, was the only one on which to base a system that could hope to record the utterances of rapid speakers. When we consider the marvellous quickness and dexterity attained by the fingers after a comparatively short training, it does not appear unreasonable to suppose that, given the same opportunities and practice, they would be capable of placing on paper a series of signs representing the sounds emitted by the human voice as rapidly as they could be distinctly uttered by the vocal organs.

The advantages that would accrue from the employment of shorthand in the Army have to a certain extent been recognised, but the principal object of this paper is to bring them more thoroughly to the notice of military men, particularly with reference to the acquisition and use of the art by officers. In doing so I shall endeavour to confine myself to the

practical uses to which shorthand may be put, and to avoid the error, too frequently committed by enthusiastic phonographers, of claiming more for the art than can reasonably be proved by its past history.

It is obvious that the introduction of any system which would enable a staff officer to complete the clerical portion of his duties in a quarter the time that he has at present to give to it, must be an inestimable gain to the efficiency of the Service. Much has been done through the energy of 1st Class Staff-Sergeant-Major McFarlane, Army Service Corps, and others to bring the subject to the front, and during the last few years many non-commissioned officers and men have taken advantage of the opportunities offered them by the establishment of classes in some of our larger garrison towns to qualify as shorthand clerks.

The full value of shorthand, however, cannot be obtained until officers also make themselves proficient in the system.

The following appeared in the *German Army Journal* of the 16th January, 1891:—"It seems curious to us, that at times our attention is drawn to a science which almost seems to be overlooked or forgotten; although we are convinced that the same, on account of its perfection, could well be used in the Army. Such a science, for instance, is shorthand, which has gradually penetrated our Parliamentary and business life. It can to-day be as little dispensed with as steam or electricity. It is, therefore, a surprising fact that shorthand has not long ago become the common property of the Army. First of all *every officer* should make himself fully acquainted with shorthand; afterwards the lower ranks might be taught: first the regimental clerks, later on the non-commissioned officers. Of the latter, at least two in each company ought to be perfect shorthand writers. Only after shorthand has been generally introduced will its value for military purposes show itself to its greatest extent."

Since this was written, much has been done in the German Army to encourage both officers and men to acquire a knowledge of shorthand.

In the Queen's Regulations, we find it stated that "a knowledge of shorthand is of great advantage to a staff officer," and that those who obtain a certificate of proficiency in it will have their names recorded. It is a matter of satisfaction that the utility of shorthand for Army purposes has thus received official recognition; but it should be remembered that an officer must necessarily devote a good deal of time, and some expense, in order to obtain a thorough knowledge of shorthand; and, therefore, some further inducement should be held out to them to qualify. I would, therefore, suggest that shorthand should be introduced as an extra subject at the entrance examination to the Staff College; and that opportunities should be given at the Royal Military Academy and at the Royal Military and Staff Colleges, for those who may wish to do so, to make themselves proficient in the system. What a boon it would be to the student at the Staff College to be able, if necessary, to take down his course of lectures verbatim, instead of jotting down a few disjointed sentences in cumbersome longhand!

I should like to refer, as early as possible, to a point which I consider of most vital importance to the future of shorthand in the Army.

In Army Order No. 2 of January, 1895, it is stated that "The system *recommended* for the Army is Pitman's." This should be amended to read, "The *only* system recognised for the Army is Pitman's." My reason for advocating this change is, that one system, and one system only, should be used for Army purposes. Shorthand will lose 90 per cent. of its value unless it is distinctly understood that all military shorthand writers must be trained in the same system, so that they may be enabled to read and transcribe each other's notes.

Lieut.-Colonel Sombart, in a contribution to the *Stenographic Courier* (Wiesbaden), writes:—"In my opinion the adoption of one system only, for the whole of the German Army and not only for those portions of it which are under the Prussian Ministry of War, is not only desirable, but *absolutely necessary*. Shorthand, though useful in itself, would become a source of danger, if it were doubtful whether the various bodies of troops co-operating in war for the same purpose could understand each other. One system for the whole German Army or better no system at all."

That there is a real danger of more than one system being studied, is shown by the fact that some months ago a circular letter was sent by the military authorities in India, to officers commanding units for the information of officers generally, setting forth the advantages of a system invented by an officer of the Medical Staff.

Now, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, Pitman's system has no rival. It is recommended by the Society of Arts. It has been sixty years before the public, and has been put to every conceivable test. In Great Britain, Pitman's shorthand is used by 93 per cent. of the newspaper reporters, and by 98 per cent. of the shorthand clerks.


In the United States, 97 per cent. of the shorthand writers use Pitman's phonography, or an American presentation of it. The percentage in Australia is 96. It has been adapted to fifteen foreign languages.

It has received the highest awards wherever exhibited. Pitman's system of writing, called Phonography, combines the perfect phonetic representation of the English language, with a selection of signs so simple as to furnish a system of shorthand. It is based on an alphabet which, unlike our common alphabet, provides a distinct sign for each distinct sound in the language.


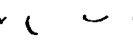

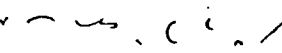
The simplest mathematical signs—the right line, the curve or the segment of a circle, the dot and the dash—furnish the material of the phonographic alphabet. Each sound is expressed by a simple and easy motion of the hand. Only sixteen out of the twenty-four consonants in the English language are essentially different. They are *p, t, ch, k: f, th, s, sh: m, n, ng: l, r: w, y:* and *h*. The articulations in the pairs *p* and *b*, *t* and *d*, *f* and *v*, etc., are the same; but the sound is, so to speak, light in the first and heavy in the second letter of each pair.

The letters of each pair are represented by similar strokes, but that chosen for the second (or heavy sound) is written thick instead of thin, thus \ p. \ b, | t, | d, ( f, ( v, etc., and thus not only is the memory not burdened with a multitude of signs, but the mind perceives that a thin stroke corresponds with a light articulation, and a thick stroke with a heavy articulation. The vowels are arranged naturally in two series, palatal and labial. Each series commences with the most open sound. The short vowels are represented by light dots and strokes, and the corresponding vowels by heavy ones.

These signs, with the addition of judicious abbreviations, the use of a dot for the prefix *com* or *con*, etc., the adding of a small hook at the commencement of a consonant for *r* or *l*, or at the termination of a consonant for *n* or *f* and *v*, or of a large hook for *shon*, etc., and the shortening of a consonant to indicate the addition of a *t* or *d*, are briefly the foundation on which Sir Isaac Pitman has built up his phonetic shorthand; and, while giving the uninitiated an idea of the principles on which phonography is based, are sufficient to show that the system thus developed meets every requirement for the most rapid writing, while its phonetic character renders it as easy to be read as to be written.

As an illustration of its briefness compared with longhand, let us take the word "communication"—a word of frequent occurrence in military correspondence—and compare it as written thus with its shorthand outline, . Here the dot represents *com*, the curve *n*, the line *k*, and the hook *shun*. As there is no other outline in phonography similar to this, no vowels need be inserted, and in rapid writing it is not even necessary to prefix the dot for *com*. As a further illustration of the brevity of the system, I have written out a letter such as might be received any day in a military office, both in longhand and in phonography. The former took just under twenty minutes to write, the latter five minutes.

This ratio of four to one is perhaps rather unfair to phonography. For instance, a very fast longhand writer cannot certainly exceed forty words a minute for any length of time, while a very fast shorthand writer would make light of 160 words a minute. Again, twenty words a minute is a very fair pace to write longhand; yet a phonographer can hardly lay claim to the name if he cannot take at least eighty words a minute.

In phonography speed is considerably increased by the judicious use of "phraseography," or the joining together of the small words in a phrase when there is no chance of the outline, so produced, being confounded with those of single words. Thus "I have the honour to be, Sir," is written  instead of , and "I am inclined to think that you are" , not .

[*Specimen Letter to War Office.*]

SUBJECT:—"Appeal against a Disallowance of Forage Allowance."  
 From The General Officer commanding the Troops, Western District,  
 To The Secretary of State for War, War Office.

HEADQUARTER OFFICE, DEVONPORT,  
 28th August, 1896.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit, and strongly recommend for favourable consideration, the following appeal of Captain George Carey, 2nd Devonshire Regiment, against a War Office disallowance of Forage Allowance drawn by that officer during leave of absence for his horse, which was left at my disposal.

Previous to his appointment as Adjutant, 3rd Volunteer Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, Captain Carey was performing the duties of Garrison Signalling Officer at this station. For this duty he kept a horse, and drew Forage Allowance under authority of War Office Letter No.

<sup>53</sup>  
 Devonport, of the 20th June, 1892. On relinquishing this appointment,

<sup>9992</sup>  
 Captain Carey proceeded on leave of absence until the time of taking up the Adjutancy, but left his horse at my disposal for the use of his successor if necessary. His successor, Captain Jenkins, Royal Marines, used the horse in the performance of his duties for a little over three weeks, but then bought a charger of his own. Captain Carey was duly informed of this, and that the issue of Forage Allowance for his horse would cease. Captain Carey appealed strongly against the discontinuance of the issue, seeing that he was so soon to take up a post carrying with it the issue of the allowance. I then granted the continuance of the issue on the condition that if it were disallowed by the War Office Captain Carey would have to repay the amount.

I should have submitted the matter at once, but thought that Paragraph 142 Allowance Regulations covered the issue, although it did not seem quite clear.

Captain Carey now appeals for a refund of the amount, £4 12s. 6d., which will be found credited to the public in the accounts of the District Paymaster for this month.

The disallowance would bear hard upon this officer, as it would have been suicidal for him to have disposed of his horse, knowing as he did that it would have been necessary to have purchased one within a few weeks for the duties of his new appointment.

I again strongly recommend the refund.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING THE TROOPS,  
 Western District.

The following shorthand letter is written in the Reporting Style, and contractions, especially in Military Phraseology, are freely used, the object being here to show the quickness with which Phonography can be written in comparison with longhand.

For stereotyped official letters this style is convenient, but in other cases it cannot be too strongly impressed on Military Phonographers that *Legibility* must be the first consideration, and that a liberal use of vowels and a corresponding absence of all but well-known contractions are advisable.



Now, it is often said that, provided the clerks in a military office are shorthand writers, and can take down for transcription the matter dictated to them by the staff officer, it is not necessary that the latter should himself be a phonographer; and I should therefore like to point out shortly a very few of the many instances in which a knowledge of shorthand by a staff officer would enable much valuable time to be saved. Take, for example, the ordinary routine in a staff office. The staff officer having previously thoroughly threshed out the subject with heads of departments, etc., and consulted all the regulations bearing on it, brings the matter before his chief for final decision. Under the old system the chief would perhaps dictate to the staff officer his views on the matter, which the latter would take down laboriously in longhand; or he may tell the staff officer to leave the papers with him, and afterwards draft a rough copy of his decision, which must be re-written and again brought to him for his signature. But with the staff officer and his clerks proficient in phonography the chief would dictate his views, which the staff officer would take down expeditiously in shorthand, pass to the clerks, who would at once transcribe in proper letter form, and by the time other correspondence was disposed of, this and other letters in quick succession would be ready for the chief's signature.

That the advantage of conducting business on these lines is recognised in the principal Government offices in Germany is shown by the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer Miquel, who says:—"I could not do my work as it ought to be done without the help of shorthand. Without it I should simply become a clerk and lose a great deal of time (which I need for seeing, hearing, controlling, etc.)."

"When I am disengaged for a moment my adjutant, who knows shorthand, comes into the room. I dictate to him a report in a quarter of an hour which, to write myself, would take several hours, and then I can devote myself to other business. Shorthand is quite indispensable for me."

Then again, a staff officer has frequently to deal with matters of a confidential or semi-confidential nature, which must necessarily pass through his hands alone—such, for example, as the preparation of defence schemes and confidential reports, etc., and in making his rough copies a knowledge of shorthand would certainly save him many hours a week.

When attending his chief at inspections, official visits, interviews, etc., he is constantly called upon to make notes of various points on which, later, reports have to be rendered, and in such cases the few notes he is at present able to take down in longhand are often totally inadequate.

The advantage of a knowledge of shorthand in such positions to officers both on the general and personal staff is indisputable. Every officer on the staff keeps, or should keep, a diary, and the smallness of phonetic characters, in combination with the speed with which they can be conveyed to paper, make them peculiarly suited to this class of work. Staff officers are frequently appointed secretaries of committees, and are responsible for a correct report of the proceedings; much time is at present lost by the inability of these officers to write shorthand.

Again, what a saving of time would result in taking down the proceedings of courts-martial, courts of inquiry, boards, etc., in shorthand !

The small space occupied by shorthand characters, in comparison with those employed in longhand, may be utilised in military sketching. The first requisite of a military sketch is clearness, and in order to secure this we are unable to place on the face of the map information which would often be most valuable for military purposes.

With the small phonetic characters this drawback can to a great extent be obviated, so that without endangering the clearness or obliterating the detail, we can show much on the sketch which would otherwise have to be embodied in a separate report. This peculiarity may also be taken advantage of in making use of the pigeon post, and the necessity of reducing the despatch first by means of photography be dispensed with. The despatch even when very long can be written in shorthand on a very small piece of paper. As an example of what has been done in this direction, I may state that no less than 21,000 words have been written in phonography on an ordinary half-penny postcard.

The importance of the acquisition of a thorough knowledge of modern languages by officers is so well recognised, that it may not be out of place in a paper dealing with phonography, to mention that the system has been used with marked success in teaching these subjects. The fact that by its aid we are able to commit sounds to paper with absolute fidelity, has been utilised to overcome the difficulties of pronunciation. Mr. William Pryor, who has done so much for shorthand in the Army, by the formation and instruction of classes for N.C.O.'s and men quartered at Plymouth and Devonport, whilst on a recent visit to some friends in France took down at their dictation several passages in French; and some days later, although understanding little or nothing of what he had written, read back his notes with such accuracy of pronunciation that his hearers had no difficulty in following the sense of his words.

In the field the employment of phonography would be even more valuable than in the office. The importance of saving every minute on active service, and of the speedy transmission of orders and reports, can hardly be exaggerated. No doubt the field telegraph and telephone would be available in many instances, but cases will be of frequent occurrence in which this means of communication is not at hand. The advantage of sending written orders in place of verbal orders is generally acknowledged; yet the length of time necessary to put the former on paper, frequently causes the employment of the latter. Colonel Henderson, in his lecture on "The Framing of Orders in the Field," cites as an instance, among others, of the unreliability of verbal orders the battle of Gaines Hill before Richmond, at the commencement of which General Jackson sent by his A.D.C. a *verbal* message to his reserve divisions, communicating his plan of attack. The messenger, however, misconceived the General's intentions, and instructed the reserve divisions to await further orders before engaging the enemy. The error was eventually rectified by the chief of the staff; but for two hours the first line had been left without

the support which Jackson had intended should be furnished, and was well-nigh overwhelmed.

Later on, Colonel Henderson says:—"It is a notorious fact that in war verbal messages, as a rule, are more often incorrectly than correctly delivered. Even at peace manœuvres this is the case. In the excitement of battle it is almost impossible to avoid. While, therefore, I quite agree that verbal orders are often the only orders possible, I am, at the same time convinced that practice in giving such orders is absolutely essential, that facility in writing orders will give facility in issuing them by word of mouth, and that wherever possible it is better to reduce all orders to writing."

Now, I maintain that written orders would not only be always possible, but would be invariably employed if our staff officers possessed a knowledge of shorthand, for it would take no more time to write an order than to give a verbal one. For short distances and in open country it is probable that an order written in shorthand and despatched by an A.D.C., or orderly, would reach its destination more quickly than one sent by the field telegraph or by signal, whilst it would undoubtedly be more clear and complete. Another advantage that may be claimed for shorthand messages is this: that though they would be perfectly clear to the person for whom they were intended, they would be more difficult to decipher by the enemy, should they fall into his hands, than ordinary longhand messages. On outpost duty reports could be sent back much more fully and expeditiously than can be done at present. Officers with patrolling or reconnoitring parties invariably experience great drawbacks in not being able to record the results of their observations rapidly; and just at the moment when quick writing would be of the utmost importance, they have to write longhand, and their reports are consequently only too frequently much curtailed.

It will be of great service to officers in such circumstances if they are able to jot down a full message in a moment in shorthand, and send it off immediately and proceed with their reconnaissance, instead of having to stop to make notes in longhand or to trust to their memories. Phonography will be of great assistance in the compilation of reports and histories of campaigns and actions. As each phase occurs its description will be fully and faithfully recorded, so that at the conclusion ample materials will be at hand for a complete history or report. Thus the difficulties that have been experienced in the past of reconciling the conflicting accounts of those who, owing to their inability to write shorthand, were necessarily compelled to trust to brief notes or memory will be avoided. During the manœuvres of 1894 an officer who had been for many years an expert phonographer took down the various statements made by the commanding officers at the conclusion of each day's operations, with the result that at the end of the manœuvres he had a very full and instructive narrative of the course of events, including the ideas and intentions of the different commanders, and the manner in which they endeavoured to carry them out.

"One of the most important functions in war is to *receive orders*. Just

for this purpose shorthand will be extensively used in a future war, and this will be of advantage not only for him who has to do directly with the receipt of the orders, but for the whole army, in consequence of the saving of time thus effected. Let us imagine an army to be on the march. Having swallowed some food in all haste, the aide-de-camp on duty mounts his second horse, or a peasant's cart, and proceeds to the staff quarters of the division, sometimes situated several miles distant, in order to obtain the orders for next day. . . . The orders often fill several pages, and during the evening, or rather during the night, before they reach the battalion or company, they have to be corrected, additions made, and again dictated several times. The saving of time may amount to hours if the orders can be dictated to shorthand writers."—*Stenographic Courier* (Wiesbaden).

No doubt many other instances could be cited of the uses to which phonography might be put, both in the office and in the field; but I think I have mentioned sufficient to show that its introduction generally for Army purposes would shorten considerably the labours of officers and clerks in our staff offices, and tend to increase the efficiency and expedition of reports and messages in the field.

I now turn to the advantages that would accrue to non-commissioned officers and men on leaving the Service, who possessed a thorough knowledge of phonography. Many well-conducted N.C.O.'s and men leave the Service after having received good education, served for years as clerks in our various offices, and earned during their stay with the colours good or exemplary characters, yet are unable to obtain employment in the capacity of clerks in civilian offices merely because they are unable to write shorthand. The first question that is put to a candidate for the position of clerk is, "Are you a proficient shorthand writer?" It will be a great boon to a large and deserving class of soldiers if by encouraging them to master the subject whilst in the Service, we enable them to answer the question in the affirmative.

As to the best manner of encouraging and fostering the study of shorthand among our N.C.O.'s and men, several proposals have been put forward. It has been suggested that phonography should be included as one of the subjects taught in Army Schools, but to this there are objections, the principal being that our Army schoolmasters have already as much work on their hands as they can manage with efficiency to carry through; and the multiplicity of subjects taught in the schools is such that it does not appear practicable to introduce an extra subject, requiring so much attention and instruction as phonography would do. If the formation of classes such as have already done such good work in several of our garrison towns, and at which soldiers are enabled to obtain a thorough knowledge of shorthand on payment of a nominal fee, be extended to all military centres, and facilities given to those outside these centres, should they so desire, to attend, it is probable that the increased pay now sanctioned for clerks who can write shorthand, will induce large numbers of N.C.O.'s and men to embrace the opportunity thus offered of acquiring the knowledge of a subject which will, in all probability, bring them

increased pay during their service, and which will insure them a means of livelihood on their return to civil life.

A small percentage of N.C.O.'s and men from each unit having been thoroughly trained at these schools, the establishment of regimental classes at out stations will naturally follow. It has always been a pleasing feature in the history of Phonography that those who have mastered the art have ever been ready to assist those less advanced than themselves; and military phonographers will not, I am convinced, be behind civilians in this respect. We may, therefore, confidently look for assistance in the formation of regimental classes from those who have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity of acquiring shorthand at garrison schools and elsewhere.

Whilst on the subject of learning shorthand, I should like to dispel, if I can, some misunderstanding that seems to exist, as to the difficulty of mastering it. It is by no means the laborious process that some have imagined. Indeed, I think, those who have defeated what may be termed the "grammar of phonography," and have commenced to write sentences (which stage may very well be reached in a fortnight) will agree with me, that there is something peculiarly fascinating in cultivating what has been well termed the "winged art."

Anyone of ordinary intellectual capacity can learn it sufficiently to write from seventy to eighty words a minute by working two hours a day for six months, but the work *must* be regular, two hours a day ensuring far greater progress than four hours every other day. From my own experience, I can say that four months, working on an average three hours a day, should be quite sufficient to obtain the eighty words a minute certificate. The system can very well be learnt without a teacher by the aid of "Pitman's Shorthand Instructor," but I would advise all who can do so to obtain the assistance of a personal instructor. When one is self-taught one is very liable to fall into errors which are difficult to eradicate later on; besides which, the course of study, and the system on which to study, are both matters on which it is well to obtain good advice.

Great attention should be paid to reading practice. Everything that is written in shorthand should be read back, and, in addition, shorthand literature should be systematically perused. There are several phonetic papers and journals published containing interesting matter, such as reports of important speeches and lectures, short stories, phonographic news, etc. Of these the most useful for learners is perhaps the *Phonetic Journal*, which is published weekly.

Those quartered in or near London cannot do better than consult 1st Class Staff-Sergeant-Major McFarlane, who has been very successful in teaching the system, as to their best plan for commencing the study of phonography.

For officers it may be noted that very high rates of speed are not absolutely essential—eighty words a minute would, for practical purposes, fulfil all requirements. In taking down a letter or report, a staff officer

would rarely find a dictator exceed that speed ; whilst for notes in the field, rough copies of reports, etc., it will be found ample.

It is sometimes urged as an objection to shorthand, that valuable as it undoubtedly is to the man who uses it to make notes for his own perusal, it is doubtful whether phonographers can be depended on to read each other's memoranda. There are, of course, bad shorthand writers, just as there are bad longhand writers ; but it has been stated over and over again by those experts who have given much time and thought to this point, that they would infinitely rather undertake to decipher badly-written shorthand than equally badly-written longhand. However this may be, we can guard against any danger arising on this account by insisting on our military phonographers being thoroughly proficient, both in theory and speed, before employing them in our offices or elsewhere.

A paper on shorthand can hardly be considered complete without some reference to what has been termed the "sister art," typewriting. It forms a valuable adjunct to shorthand in the office. When shorthand has done its work the typewriter steps in, and materially lightens the labours of the clerks and accelerates business. Besides the saving of time, it enables us to take several copies of the letter or order ; while the clearness of type-written matter compared with manuscript is in itself sufficient to justify its introduction into all staff and regimental offices.

Phonography is now in general use, both at the Foreign and Colonial Offices. Business men everywhere have recognised its enormous advantages, and agree that without its assistance it would be impossible to carry on the work in their offices. Moltke has declared that "shorthand is indispensable for an army." Continental armies are utilising it for military purposes. With these examples before us it is surely time that we, too, should endeavour to reap the benefits which would assuredly follow its general introduction into the Service. In advocating such a proposal, we cannot, of course, expect that such a radical change as the substitution of phonography for our present system can be effected at once ; but, with its advantages more thoroughly understood, we may look forward with confidence to the time when all correspondence on military matters will be carried on by the aid of shorthand. If this paper hastens in however small a way such a desirable result, it will more than have accomplished its purpose.

The CHAIRMAN :—I now invite discussion. There are one or two gentlemen here well capable of giving an opinion on shorthand.

Captain W. St. JOHN HORNSBY, R.N. (retired) :—My lord and gentlemen, I think we must all agree that we have had a very interesting lecture ; but at the same time, whilst I shall endeavour, so far as my abilities allow me, to criticise this lecture and the system of shorthand advocated therein, I trust that the remarks which I make will be received by the lecturer in the spirit in which I make them. In the first place I hope that, before the system of Pitman's shorthand is decided upon by the military authorities to be introduced into the Army, care will be taken that other systems of shorthand (which are equally and even more efficient) have a fair trial. I say this because I think that, notwithstanding the beauties of the system of the late Sir Isaac Pitman, it has many great deficiencies. It is probably the most *complicated* system of shorthand that has ever been invented. The basis

upon which it is constructed is, as the lecturer has said, what are called in shorthand heavy and light inflections, heavy and light signs. All shorthand systems, or very nearly all, are formed upon one general principle, namely, dots, right lines, and curves—and Pitman's is no exception. One of the reasons, I presume, that induced Mr. Pitman to introduce these light and heavy strokes, or, as it is called in the shorthand world, the "shaded" system, was, no doubt, because there are not straight lines or segments of a circle enough to allow you to have every letter represented by one of those things. Pitman—I use the word Pitman because I think it is better than saying Sir Isaac each time, as it is the system we are talking about, and not an individual—also introduced the system of putting on hooks and crooks to the *stem* letters, thereby getting greater power or elasticity by making *double* consonants. The lecturer has not gone into that particular part. It is a very good thing in its way, and it shortens the writing; although, on the other hand, it complicates the writing, especially when you come to read it. Pitman's is a very beautiful system when it is written by the great masters of the art, and when it is lithographed; but when it is applied in a practical manner by those who are not brought up to write shorthand from their youth, then these hooks and crooks and small curves confound the writer, and when he comes to read his shorthand he is regularly non-plussed. It takes *three times longer* to learn the system of Pitman than it does any other system, and not only that, but it takes *three times as long to write it out*. The "joinings" in Pitman's system are not so good as represented by those who naturally favour their own system. If the lecturer might use a blackboard here, I should ask him to put the upward R and M together, writing quickly. I doubt whether he could do it clearly in rapid note-taking, unless he is an able and experienced man, because it would be confounded with the L, probably, or some other letter. When a shorthand writer is writing in the Courts on his knee, in a bad light and so on, these multiplications of lines and curves, hooks and crooks, contradict one another; so that when he comes to write them out he is, as I said before, quite at a standstill, and so loses valuable time and makes grievous errors. Pitman's shorthand writers are three times as long in transcribing their notes into longhand as are the writers of any other system. There are other systems of shorthand, notably Taylor's Improved, and Gurney's system. Gurney's system has stood the test of ages, and so has Taylor's. The great beauty of Taylor's system is the peculiar facility of joining the characters, so that when the signs for the different consonants come together they join each other by means of a small circle, and thus the outlines and words they represent join together at once. For instance, the letters M and B in Pitman's shorthand written quickly are very difficult to form together clearly; but if you were to take, I will say for the sake of example, Taylor's system, there would be the M, which is a small round circle on the stem of the horizontal stroke, and then the B, which is another circle and down stroke; so that there would be no clashing of outline when you came to read and transcribe them. In the same way I will take the word "seemed." In Pitman's shorthand it is S-M-D, but the M and the D in writing quickly cannot be formed neatly or legibly, and this causes the greatest difficulty in the transcription of the notes. The same may be said of the upward R and the M; if you are writing the word "room," for instance. In Taylor's the upward R is the same as in Pitman's, but the M is a little circle and a straight line, so that the junction is easily made. The same may be said of the two letters L and M. L and M, written quickly in Pitman's, are very difficult to "outline" properly, and generally look like L and MR (which Pitman calls "mer"), and the L and M written quickly together are really like "L-mer"; whereas in Taylor's system there would be a circle and the upward L, and then a little circle and a horizontal line, and there is no confusion whatever in it. There are other complex things with regard to Pitman's; for instance, the forms for the words "I am" and "of my" are in the "advanced style" *precisely* the same. I could go on a long time pointing out such things as that, but there are other things I

wish to speak upon. With regard to the rapidity of writing, I do not think there is the slightest distinction to be made between them. I believe that a swift writer of any of the systems, either Taylor's, Taylor's Improved, Odell's, Odell's Improved, or Gurney's, can write absolutely the *ipsisima verba* of any speech. It is nothing to say that Pitman's can do it: all the great shorthand writers can do it. The reason why Pitman's system has gone ahead so much—that is to say, why the percentages are high—and I believe they are correct—is that Sir Isaac Pitman took the matter up in a very practical, business-like way, and *advertised* largely, and went very much into Phonography as a *business*. It was his hobby, no doubt, originally, and he kept improving and improving, as he called it, until at last he got it to a certain pitch; but during that period the changes were so great that the practical shorthand writers, who could not keep pace with such constant changes and new yearly editions, formed themselves into a branch, and stopped at what they called the Tenth Edition; and one of the smartest writers of Pitman's system, Mr. Thomas Allen Reed, branched off at the Tenth Edition, and does not write Pitman's system of modern times. He stopped there, and writes the Tenth Edition. The legibility of Pitman's system of writing has been ruthlessly sacrificed to extreme brevity. The hooked letters look very pretty when joined in lithography or by the first-class writers, but it is very difficult to attain facility in writing them when they are written by people who are learning. There is also the cutting off from the full size of letters, and making them of two sizes; it not only complicates the system, but it is illogical in its way; because you subtract, so to speak, from the letter, and yet call it *more*, not less, as it *adds* to the value of the letter and word. The lecturer, at the commencement of his paper, says that Sir Isaac Pitman recognised the principle of writing by sounds. Now, as a matter of fact, sound-writing has always been the gauge of shorthand. All writers of shorthand have written by sound to a certain extent, and Sir Isaac Pitman has only developed it a step further. As far as absolute writing by sound goes, it is really very absurd to make so much of it, because there are no two speakers who speak or pronounce alike. If a Westcountryman is talking you do not put down the sound *exactly* as he pronounces it, as that would be a most extraordinary thing to do. In the same way, if a speaker was a Lancashire man or a Yorkshireman, it would be most absurd to really write by sound. Shorthand writers are not *really* writing by sound, for no two speakers pronounce their words in precisely the same manner. The lecturer told us that in the German Army they encouraged officers and men in the study and knowledge of shorthand, and I sincerely trust myself that the same will be done in our Army.

Major-General Sir CHARLES W. WILSON, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., R.E. (Director-General of Military Education):—We have with us this afternoon Dr. Gowers, a Fellow of the Royal Society, who is, I believe, one of the most skilled phonographers in London. About two years ago he forwarded a memorandum on the use of shorthand in the Army to the War Office; and he has always taken the greatest interest in the steps taken to encourage its study. I believe he has to keep an appointment, and if you would permit him he would be very glad to speak.

Dr. W. R. GOWERS, M.D., F.R.S.:—My lord and gentlemen, I beg to thank you for permission to say a few words upon a subject which interests me greatly. My justification for presuming to do so is that we are endeavouring, not without success, to foster the use of shorthand in the profession of medicine. We have established a "Society of Medical Phonographers," which now numbers nearly 300 members, and which is doing very definite good. I have handed up some of the publications of the society to Captain Caunter, whose instructive lecture we have just listened to. In connection with our efforts there is one point, which I will come to in a moment, which is of considerable importance with regard to the future use of shorthand in the Army—because that it has a future no one who has made use of it in varied work can possibly doubt—and that that future will be the

future of Phonography and of no other system is a matter about which there cannot be two opinions. Taylor's system, of which we have just heard, was the system which the late Sir Isaac Pitman wrote before he invented Phonography; and Gurney's system, once a rival, is now extinct as far as instruction books are concerned, there having been no publication in connection with that system for a long time. Phonography is not only the system by which writing has been done nearly 50 per cent. more rapidly than with any other system of shorthand ever invented; but, far more than that, it is the only approximately perfect system of writing ever devised for any language in the world. It is the only system in which simple sounds are represented by simple signs, allied sounds by allied signs, single sounds for the most part by signs produced by single movements of the hand. If its study is more difficult than that of other systems, its legibility is greater, and so is the educational influence of its study. But this discussion, I conceive, is to be on the question, not of the system of shorthand or of the quality of shorthand, but on the value of the use of shorthand in the Army. It has always seemed to me that there are circumstances—there must be at some time in the future circumstances—in which the value of the use of shorthand by an officer in the Army would far transcend in importance its use under any other circumstances whatever. We who have used it in medicine and science have become acquainted with its influence on observation. If shorthand is written at only three times the speed of longhand—and so written it is as legible as print to anyone who has even a moderate proper acquaintance with it—in a given time there can be recorded twice as much of the facts observed, and therefore twice as much time is left for the process of observation. Now, observation depends largely on record for its value. Unrecorded observation is comparatively unprecise. A man has only to attempt to write down the facts that he is observing, to discover that on this or that point he is vague, uncertain; he has to look again and again as he describes in writing what he sees. The influence of shorthand is less on the quantity of work than on its quality—it enables work to be better done. Am I not correct in assuming that there are circumstances in which a difference in the value, the accuracy, the precision, the fulness of the observations made by a reconnoitring officer, and the fact that he brought them back recorded on the spot when the facts were before him, that these, compared with the less perfect results of observation which he would also retain, less accurately, in his memory, or record less fully and precisely in longhand, might make all the difference between victory and defeat in a succeeding battle? That, of course, would be a rare circumstance, but it surely is possible? Apart from that, for an officer of the Army who has much writing to do, shorthand is of extreme value for all purposes of personal writing, for all note-taking, note-making, for all drafting of reports, and the fact that with uniformity of system—which, as the lecturer has observed, can only at the present day be obtained with Pitman's system—a man's own writing is available for transcription or type writing by any subordinate. I may mention that the most distinguished professional shorthand writer, who writes another system (I am not at liberty to mention his name, and so cannot mention the system) told me that, for general use he did not think it likely that, in the future, the ingenuity of man would devise a better system for general use than Pitman's. I am obliged to be personal because facts have a weight which nothing else possesses, and that which is and has been the actual experience of one, may be, in varying degree, the experience of all. I can speak of the advantages of personal and professional use from my own experience. For more than thirty years I have written nothing for personal use except in shorthand. My notes of cases, taken by myself in shorthand with a fulness and, I believe, an exactness and accuracy which I could not have secured otherwise, are of inestimable value to me. I have used shorthand in all the processes of comparing and analysing these facts and those described by others, in all the processes of composition, and in writing the drafts of articles and books—

the amount of which is a source of some consternation to me, but of which the only complaint I hear is that they are too condensed, not, as might be thought, too diffuse. At the present time I write ten times as much phonography every day as I do longhand, for I think all my letters in shorthand, many of them in a moving carriage in the streets of London, and so written they are perfectly legible; and my clerk, who is not a medical man, typewrites them in the evening with seldom an error, and seldom has to ask me what an outline is, unless perhaps it was written, say, in Fitzroy Square—although I think most of the outlines could be written even in Fitzroy Square between the jolts. The value to the medical man of shorthand is, that it enables him to record the facts that he observes and makes that which would otherwise be vague experience definite knowledge, because the recorded facts are available for future observation, for comparison, and of extreme importance, not only for the increase of his knowledge, but also for informing him with regard to the patient at future times. You will discern, as I cannot, the application of these facts to the exigencies of military service and duty. If I were to say all that I have to say, I am afraid I should occupy more time than the lecturer has done; but he made two statements which I should like, if I may, to venture to qualify. He should have substituted “one hour” for “two hours” in the six months of study. It is a fact which I have taken some pains to verify, that with an hour a day for three months, a man can write shorthand as fast as longhand, and read it with ease; in the next three months he will have gained by use most of the speed he needs, and during the following six months his use of shorthand can save him all the time he gave to its acquisition; so that, at the end of a year, he starts fair again with this time-saving and labour-saving art at his disposal for pure benefit. The second point is, that a student should not attempt to take verbatim notes of lectures. These are too long. But by the aid of shorthand he can take an epitome more perfect and useful than is possible otherwise, and yet give more attention, and retain more of the lecture in his memory than if he took no notes. I used no text-books for my own examinations, except such shorthand epitomes, never transcribed, and passed the examinations, not only without difficulty, but with a good deal more which I need not describe. I found such epitomes, with longhand marginal headlines to the paragraphs, more useful than any text-book. It is thus, and in other ways, as for notes of observed facts, which make the observations so much more instructive and effective, that the student can make shorthand so valuable an aid.

Dr. Gowers desires to add the following statement, to which he referred (as intending to make) at the commencement of his remarks, but was prevented making by the time-limit :—

A petition was presented last year by the Society of Medical Phonographers, supported by the signatures of many eminent members of the medical profession, to the General Medical Council, asking for shorthand to be sanctioned as an optional subject at the preliminary examination which intending medical students have to pass. The examinations that are accepted are numerous, and at two or three, shorthand is already an optional subject, but marks may be given to medical students only for the subjects sanctioned by the Council. In response to the petition, the Medical Council recently passed resolutions that a knowledge of shorthand would be useful, and that a small number of marks may be given for it, as an addition to the examination in English, by those who choose to present the subject. The importance of this is that it facilitates very much the addition of shorthand as an optional subject. To allow a small number of marks to be gained by a knowledge which should be accurate, but which need not be advanced, or involve speed, which would enable it to be of some personal advantage, and serve as a basis for its development by use, is a much less serious thing than the addition of it as a special optional subject involving considerable skill. The fact that shorthand is now taught in almost every public school, except, I think,

Eton and Harrow, makes its introduction in this way not at all unreasonable to candidates; and in those schools it would probably soon be a subject that could be learnt, if this permission were given. It is, moreover, an advantage to promote the use of an uncontracted style of shorthand (the "corresponding style"), by which all its personal use and chief service can be gained, and the employment of which would quickly lead to the disappearance of all objections based on suspicions of illegibility. A statement regarding these facts, in their relations to the preliminary examination for medical students, will shortly be circulated by our Society among the examining bodies and chief schools.

Lieut.-Colonel T. E. BAYLIS, Q.C. (late 18th Middlesex V.R.C.):—My lord and gentlemen, Perhaps it may seem remarkable that after so many experts have spoken I should rise to make a few observations. But first of all, I may say that although so few members are present to-day, the lecturer will yet have the satisfaction of knowing that his lecture, with the discussion upon it, will be circulated by the JOURNAL among the whole of the members of the Institution in different parts of the world. With regard to the title of this paper, "Shorthand in the Army," I think there can be no doubt whatever that there would be advantages if the acquisition and use of it by officers were more general. The lecturer has shown to us that the word "communication," which takes nearly forty strokes in ordinary writing, can be represented in shorthand by three strokes. But there is another element introduced in the paper and discussion as to what system is best, and I think if we go into that question, considering the numerous systems there are in existence, we may talk until to-morrow morning and not arrive at any conclusion. We know the part that shorthand plays in the every-day experience of our lives; we have only to take up our morning papers to see the advantages of it. Nothing has improved more during the course of my life, perhaps, than the practice of shorthand. I suppose the system of shorthand in use by reporters at the present day is as perfect as it can be. We find in our courts of law how accurately everything is reported. A uniform system could be introduced into the Army, and its brevity and legibility would make it extremely useful. I began shorthand as a young man, but I left it off because of the difficulty in reading it. If this lecture can only induce the officers of the Army to believe that the acquisition is not so laborious as is often imagined, that alone will do a great deal of good.

Captain H. A. JONES, 22nd Middlesex (Central London Rangers) V.R.:—My Lord and gentlemen, I do not hold a brief for either Mr. Taylor, Mr. Gurney, or the late Sir Isaac Pitman; but on such an occasion as this, after my professional experience as a journalist, I think it would almost be criminal on my part if I did not say something in reply to the arguments advanced on the subject of shorthand in the Army by Captain Caunter. I make bold to assert that he has made out a case for shorthand in the Army that is no stronger, but which is, if anything, possibly weaker, than that for any civilian sphere of business. I am with him entirely that for purely clerical work in district or regimental offices, shorthand, either on the part of the officers engaged therein or on the part of the clerks, is a decided and thorough-going advantage. In the compilation of reports it would also be of advantage, and possibly to young officers attending classes or courses of instruction, a knowledge of shorthand, together with the faculty of writing and afterwards reading it, would be useful. But when the lecturer goes on to say that for the purposes of taking notes in the field or conveying messages, shorthand would be useful, I am entirely at variance with him. The great object of writing orders at all is that they should be legible; and while I agree that when shorthand is written by professional shorthand experts it may be read by other people, yet when written by those who are not so proficient—and it takes very many years' practice to attain that degree of proficiency—it cannot always be read by other persons. As a journalist of a number of years' experience, and as a phonographer myself, I have been with practical pressmen and shorthand writers in various

parts of the country—some of them the most expert men in my profession—and I have seen occasions arise when practically a conference of war had to be called of the men who had taken notes of speakers to find out what was said, and whether what they had apparently on their notebooks could have been said. Such possibilities as that in the military service, I think, should be avoided; and the introduction of shorthand for the writing of orders or instructions in the field would, in my opinion, be a very serious and dangerous expedient. In my experience, and in the experience of journalists generally, there are very few men indeed who can read each other's notes. The official reports of the Law Courts and of the great arbitration cases are taken by gentlemen who have been brought up to a particular edition and carefully schooled in a particular style of Pitman's, or Gurney's, or Taylor's, or anyone else's system; and under the instruction of one head I grant that it is possible for notes to be transcribed by assistants; but in newspaper work it has been found an absolute failure. I make these submissions, Sir, with very great respect; and before I sit down I would make one further remark, namely, that shorthand to be legible, even to the person who writes it himself, has, in my opinion, to be written far more carefully than longhand has; and I am convinced from my own experience that to write legible shorthand on horseback is an impossibility.

Colonel LONSDALE A. HALE, late R.E.:—My lord and gentlemen, I should like to say a word with regard to this subject. I like to see a man ride his hobby as hard as he can when he mounts one, and I quite agree that my friend has ridden his hobby rather hard when he suggests that outpost reports should be written in shorthand. We have, however, next Friday, in this hall, a kriegsspiel, showing the work of a cavalry screen covering many miles of country. I have just been engaged, as I am in charge of the arrangements, preparing reports which have to be sent in from a special patrol. Those reports from the special patrol will pass through a variety of hands. They will have to be shown to the first patrol that is met in the other direction, and perhaps then have to be shown to the commander of a squadron. They will then go to the patrol of a screen, and will pass through and be read by half-a-dozen men of all ranks and classes before eventually they reach their destination. I therefore cordially agree with Captain Jones that you never by any possibility could introduce (it would be dangerous to do so) shorthand for that class of messages in the field, because you would have to prepare the ordinary Tommy Atkins of the cavalry to read shorthand. Of course, the value of shorthand, kept to the higher branches, cannot be over-rated; but still I think Captain Caunter has ridden his hobby a little too hard when he proposes to carry out what I may call the passing of messages written in shorthand through the hands of the ordinary soldier of the Service.

Captain J. E. CAUNTER, in reply, said:—I do not know that I have anything to add to what I have said in the lecture, but I should like to make one or two observations upon some points which have been raised in the discussion. Captain Hornby went into a long argument as to which is the best system—Pitman's, Taylor's, or Gurney's. Now, it does not matter to me one penny which system is introduced into the Service; but what I say is, let us have one system, and one system only, whether Pitman's, Taylor's, or Gurney's, or anybody else's. At the same time, I think he was entirely answered by Dr. Gowers, and that it is an undoubted fact that Pitman's is the system most in use in the country. What I stated as to the percentages of people using Pitman's shorthand has not, I think, been disputed—namely, that his system is used much more than any other system, and that 93 per cent. of the writers of shorthand write Pitman's. Even on no other ground, if Pitman's were not any better than Gurney's or Taylor's, I should still say introduce Pitman's into the Service, if you introduce any system, because it is so much more in general use. If we have a system at all, let us have one system, and one system only; that is the great point I want to impress upon you.

Captain Jones considers that shorthand is valuable in the office, but is of no use in the field; and to a certain extent Colonel Lonsdale Hale agreed with his views. As far as the case of a soldier having to handle a report or anything else of the kind goes, no doubt shorthand would be of no use; but I take it there are a very small number of cases in which the private soldier has to read reports. Of course, in cavalry scouting he might occasionally have to read such messages, and in that case I am willing to acknowledge shorthand would be of no avail, because we cannot expect to teach shorthand to every soldier. I think if officers did know shorthand they would not find there were very many drawbacks in messages being sent in shorthand on account of men being unable to read them. One thing Captain Jones said I cannot agree with—namely, that shorthand cannot be written in the saddle. Now, if you can sketch a piece of country in the saddle (and beautiful sketches are turned out in that way), surely you can write shorthand. Dr. Gowers can write shorthand even when he is being jolted about in a carriage, except in crossing one particular square. I do not mean that you could write shorthand whilst trotting—you must be still; but I consider that with the greatest ease you can write shorthand, and legible shorthand, whilst sitting in your saddle. Dr. Gowers observed that I gave students too long a time to learn shorthand. The object of my paper all along, though Colonel Lonsdale Hale does not quite agree with me, has been rather to minimise, in my opinion, at any rate, the advantages of shorthand, not to claim more for it than we can substantiate; and, although perhaps a man can learn shorthand working one hour a day in six months, I think the time I have stated would give better results. I took the trouble to get a good deal of advice on the subject from different people who taught shorthand, and I put the time at what I considered was the longest that a man of ordinary intellectual capacity would take.

The CHAIRMAN (Major-General Lord Methuen):—Gentlemen, I think we have had a very interesting lecture, and one that has not claimed too much for shorthand. As far as the subject itself is concerned, I agree with Captain Caunter that he has put the minimum limit on the time required for learning shorthand, so far as I can ascertain. I know nothing personally regarding shorthand, but it has always seemed to me that the great difficulty is the length of time that it takes to acquire it; and when a man is busy he has to think to himself: How shall I make the best use of my hours to day? and two hours a day for six months is a very long time for a hard-working man to give to any one subject. I would urge that schools should be impressed with the value of including shorthand in their course of teaching. Whatever we learn in our youth is far easier picked up and better impressed than it is at a later period of life. As far as the Army is concerned, I think the matter rests a good deal with the authorities. I am not quite so sure that I myself was not instrumental to some extent in getting shorthand brought forward as a subject for the staff clerks, for I think I did speak to Sir Charles Wilson, Director-General of Military Education, about it.

Sir CHARLES WILSON:—Yes.

The CHAIRMAN:—As regards the officers, it is just a question whether it is a luxury, or whether you think it is a subject that is more valuable for the officers than some of the other subjects they are at present taking up for the Staff College. If the authorities think so, the only way to get officers to learn shorthand is to give them some inducement, as in the case of a modern language. If it is worth it, let them be paid so much. But I do not think you will get officers of their own free will to sit down and work two hours a day for six months in order to learn shorthand writing. There is no doubt whatever about the value of shorthand. I had one officer on my staff (Colonel Cox) who was always writing in shorthand, and it was of the utmost value to him and to myself. So also is it with a lawyer. I know of one lawyer in particular, who told

me that he went to his office at eleven o'clock, read his letters and dictated to his clerk the answers, and then he went to his other work, and when he came back he found all his letters written out ready for him to sign. I have no doubt whatever that, as far as staff clerks go, we could make it a *sine quâ non* that they should know shorthand sufficiently well to make a practical use of it in their work. But as regards the officers, it is a very different matter. I quite agree with Colonel Lonsdale Hale as to the impossibility, at any rate the difficulty, of expecting reports to be sent from outposts without the danger of a mistake. The reports from the outposts are not as a rule long—at any rate, I, as a general, hope they may not be so; the shorter the better. The great thing for us is to get a piece of paper on which is written something we can understand in a moment, without having to pick it out as best we can. As to writing shorthand on horseback, that entirely depends, I venture to say, on the number of flies about. Given a quiet horse and a day when the flies are not about, I think you might write shorthand while in the saddle; but I think that both sketching and writing shorthand on horseback is a matter often of considerable difficulty. Before I close, I have to thank the audience for the discussion. Considering the small number present, I am bound to say that the discussion has been carried on for a greater length, and has been much more interesting, than some of the discussions we have had here. We have also to be specially grateful to Captain Hornby and Dr. Gowers for the manner in which they spoke upon the paper—Captain Hornby for pointing out the advantage of one system over another, and Dr. Gowers for giving us his immense experience in shorthand.