

The treatise contains a table of about 500 words, with the characters to designate them. Concerning these, the author says, "These words thou art to get by heart and therewith the making of the figure of the character, so as to do it readily and clean; then to be able to join every character to the word pronounced, without book, or set of any pattern before thee. This done, thou art farther to proceed and to learn how to refer either words of like signification, or of the same kind, or contraries, unto those that be called characterie."

Notwithstanding the author displayed considerable ingenuity in the production of his scheme, yet "on account of its obscurity and perplexity, it presented impediments so numerous and discouraging, that nothing but a determined resolution and intense application could master it." To acquire a knowledge of the art sufficiently well to make it practical for difficult reporting purposes was almost out of the question.

The method adopted by Bales was to divide the words into dozens, each dozen headed by a Roman letter, which letter, with certain commas, periods, and other marks placed about it, was to distinguish the words from each other. This method was, of course, extremely burdensome to the memory, and the ability to report a speaker was unquestionably never attained by any one. In 1590 he published an improvement of the system entitled "A New Year's Gift for England."

The next author was John Willis, who published, in 1602, a work entitled "The Art of Stenography, or Short Writing by Spelling Characterie," which he styled, "A new-sprung imp." With this work it may be said that modern shorthand became an accomplished fact, and, although subsequent systems for nearly two hundred years were but a little improvement upon Willis, the reporting of sermons, trials, plays, parliamentary proceedings, etc., became of frequent occurrence. Shakespeare's plays were surreptitiously obtained by reporters and published, which accounts for the various discrepancies existing in the early editions of his works.

We might quote a few expressions of the most noted Shakesperian commentators on this point: Mr. Dyce says: "The quarto edition of 1603 exhibits a text mangled and corrupted throughout, and perhaps formed on the notes of some shorthand writer who had imperfectly taken it down during representation." John