

*Plum* puzzled many people. "It must be the name of a cap," said one. "The author intended to write nonsense," says another. "No," says Collier, "the shorthand writer, finding the letters *p l m* in his notes, hastily concluded that it meant *plum*, instead of *plume*—pinned a plume in his forehead."

One more reference from these authors and I will not bother you with further examples of the incompetent shorthand writer of nearly three centuries ago. It is from one of the plays by the same authors:

"You are an ass.  
You must have all things construed,  
And *pierced*, too."

When the sensible shorthand writer would have transcribed it, "You must have all things construed, and *parsed*, too."

As we have said, Willis' system was published in 1602, and as some of these plays of Shakespeare and others were printed in the following year, you can see how rapidly a knowledge of the art spread, unless, indeed, they were reported in some other system of which we have no knowledge, for it is hard to believe that they could have been so accurately reported if Bright's or Bale's systems had been used.

Willis' system was based upon the orthographical principle—that is, having a character to represent each of the letters of the alphabet, and by joining them together be able to spell words. This you will readily understand was a vast step in advance over having an absolute character for each word. It, however, lacked one of the essential elements of a practical system, namely, the representation of the various vowel sounds of the language. On account of this deficiency in his, and subsequent systems, it became necessary to introduce symbolic or arbitrary characters to represent words and phrases. The first inventor of these symbols was reduced to the necessity of employing them by reason of the awkward and lengthy manner in which many important words were necessarily expressed when written according to the system.

Notwithstanding the difficulty which attended the learning of these systems the authors were not of that opinion. We will refer to a few of their roseate views, to show their extravagant claims, egotistical and self-laudatory commendation.

Bright, in his preface, says: "Thou hast here, gentle reader,