STENOGRAPHY.@@1 The art of stenography, or short writing, was known and practised by most of the ancient civilized nations. The Egyptians, who at an early period were distinguished for learning, at first expressed their words by a delineation of figures called *hieroglyphics.* A more concise mode of writing seems to have been afterwards introduced, in which only a part of the symbol or picture was drawn. This answered the purpose of short-hand in some degree. After them the Hebrews, the Greeks, and the Romans, adopted different methods of abbreviating their words and sentences, suited to their respective languages. The initials, the finals, or radicals, often served for whole words ; and various combinations of these sometimes formed a sentence. Arbitrary marks were likewise employed to determine the meaning, and to assist legibility ; and it seems probable that every writer and every author of antiquity had some peculiar method of abbreviation, calculated to facilitate the expression of his own sentiments, and intel­ligible only to himself. It is also probable that some might by these means take down the heads of a discourse or ora­tion ; but few, very few, it is presumed, could have followed a speaker through all the meanders of rhetoric, and, in a manner legible even to themselves, could have noted with precision every syllable as it dropt from his month. To arrive at such consummate perfection in the art was re­served for more modern times, and is still an acquisition by no means general.

In every language of Europe, till about the close of the sixteenth century, the Roman plan of abbreviating (viz. sub­stituting the initials or radicals, with the help of arbitraries, for words) appears to have been employed. Till then no regular alphabet had been invented expressly for steno­graphy, when an English gentleman of the name of Willis invented and published one.@@2 His plan was soon im­proved, or at least altered. One alteration succeeded an­other ; and at intervals, for a series of years past, some men of ingenuity and application have composed and published systems of stenography, and doubtless have themselves reaped all the advantages that attend it. But among the various methods which have been proposed, and the dif­ferent plans which have been adopted by individuals, none lias yet appeared fortunate enough to gain general appro­bation, or proved sufficiently simple, clear, and concise, to be universally studied and practised. Some systems are replete with unmeaning symbols, perplexing arbitraries, and ill-judged contractions ; which render them so difficult to be attained by a common capacity, or ordinary application, that it is not to be wondered at if they have sunk into ne­glect, and are now no longer known. Other systems, by being too prolix, by containing a multiplicity of characters, and those characters not simple or easily remembered, be­come ineffectual to the purpose of expedition, and are only superior in obscurity to a common hand. Some, again, not only reject all arbitraries and contractions, but even prepo­sitions and terminations ; which last, if not too lavishly em­ployed and badly devised, highly contribute to promote both expedition and legibility ; and though they reduce their characters to fewer than can possibly express the various modifications of sound, yet they make nearly one half of them complex. In the disposition of the vowels there is the greatest perplexity in most systems. A dot is sometimes substituted for all the vowels indiscriminately, and the judg­

ment is left to determine which letter out of six any dot is intended to express ; or a minute space is allotted them ; so that unless they be arranged with mathematical precision; they cannot be distinguished from one another; but such a minute attention is inconsistent with the nature of short­hand, which should teach us to write down in a short time, as well as in small bounds, what we wish to preserve of what we hear. Nor is the plan of lifting the pen and put­ting the next consonant in the vowel’s place, in the middle of words, less liable to objections; or that of representing all the vowels by distinct characters, being obviously ill cal­culated for facility and despatch, and consequently inad­missible into any useful system.

It is to be confessed, that the person who first proposed the omission of vowels in the middle of words,@@3 which it is obvious are not wanted, and invented letters which could be connected as in a running hand without lifting the pen in the middle of the word, made a real improvement on the works of his predecessors. But, in fine, most systems, either in their plan or execution, labour under some capital defect, attended with circumstances highly discouraging to the learner, and which in a great measure defeat the end of their invention, by being too complicated to be learned with ease and remembered with accuracy, or to be practised with the expedition which is requisite ; and so difficult to be de­ciphered, that a man can scarcely read wh.it he has just written. To obviate these defects, to provide against pro­lixity and conciseness, which might occasion obscurity, to exhibit a system founded on the simplest principles, which might be easily learned and read, and yet be capable of the utmost expedition, were the motives that gave rise to the present attempt.

This method will be found different from any yet pub­lished, and superior to all in the disposition of the vowels and the facility of arranging them ; the confusion in placing which seems to detract from the merit of the best perform­ances on the subject ; and it may without ostentation be affirmed, that characters simpler in their form, and more per­fect in their union, have not been applied to the art of ste­nography. As well as it could be determined, the simplest characters are appropriated to the letters most usually em­ployed ; indeed, as far as possible, those which are complex have been rejected ; but as it was an object always kept in view that the writing should be on a line, a few are admit­ted into the alphabet for that reason. The characters for the double and triple consonants are the easiest that could be invented, consistent with perspicuity ; for care has been taken to provide against all obscurity which might arise by adopting letters too similar in their formation ; and with re­spect to the prepositions and terminations, those which oc­cur most frequently are expressed by the simplest charac­ters, which will be found perfectly easy in their application. The arbitraries are few in number, and the arbitrary abbre­viations, as they are entirely from the letters of the alpha­bet, and chosen from some thousands of words in common use, will well repay the learner for an hour’s trouble in com­mitting them to memory.

The last section lays down a scheme of abbreviation, comprised in a few rules, perfectly easy to be understood and practised by proficients in this art ; and we hope it will answer the expectation of the writer, and will be found free from the perplexity complained of in many systems

@@@, The value of stenography is not unknown to the learned; and the care and success with which it has been lately cultivated in these kingdoms will, in all probability, soon render it an object of general attention. No one, however, appears to us to have simplified and improved the art so much as Dr Mavor, author of *Universal Stenography.*

@@@• Mr Locke says, u regular method of short writing seems to be known and practised only in Britain. This is not now the case ; and indeed there is no reason to doubt whether characters may not be invented to express the various sounds or letters employed in any language, either ancient or modern.

@@@1 Mr Byron rejected vowels entirely in the middle of words, as others before him had only done partially. Without critically examining the executive part of his performance, which is very defective, it must be owned that it is above the reach of human ingenuity to exceed his general plan, which for ever must be the basis of every future rational system.