THE art of ſtenography, or ſhort writing, was known and practised by moſt oſ the ancient civi­lized nations. The Egyptians, who were diſtinguiſhed for learning at an early period, 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 iatials, 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 affiſt 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 noted with preciſion every ſyllable, as it dropt from his mouth, in a manner legible even to themſelves.

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 16th 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 @@(b). His plan was ſoon altered and improved, or at leaſt pretend­ed to be ſo. 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 that have been propoſed, and the different plans that have been adopted by individuals, none has 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 @@(c). 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 arbitrages 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 judgment 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 ſhort-hand, which ſhould teach us to write down in a ſhort time, as well as in ſrnall 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 diſpatch, and conſequently inadmissible into any uſeful ſyſtem.

It is to be confessed, that the perſon who firſt pro-

@@@[m]\* Vide Buxtorf, Diog-Laertius, Plutarch, &c.

@@@(a) 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,* who has liberally permitted us to preſent our readers with a complete view of his ſcheme. To thoſe who wiſh to become proficients in Short-writing, we earneſtly recommend his entire publication (print­ed for Cadell and Davis, Strand, London), which in many ſchools of the firſt reputation now forms a deſerved claſs book.

@@@(b) Mr Locke ſays, a 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 founds, or letters, employed in any language, either ancient or modern.

@@@(c) A list of writers on ſtenography. Mr Addy, Aldridge, Angell, Annet, Blandemore, Blosset, Botley, Bridges, Byrom, Coles, Croſs, Dix, Everardt, Ewen, Facey, Farthing, Gibbs, Græme, Gurney, Heath, Holdſworth, Hopkins, Jeake, Labourer, Lane, Lyle, Macauley, Maſon, Mavor, Metcalfe, Nicholas, Palmer, Rich, Ridpath, Shelton, Steele, Tanner, Taylor, Thicknesse, Tiffen, Webſter, Weſton, Williamſon, Willis, B. D. and Willis, &c.