

SUGGESTIONS FOR STENOGRAPHERS

BY NELLIE M. HANBY



Y office is situated in a sunny nook in the reading room of one of the most prominent hotels in Michigan, right down among the "lords of creation." I have occupied the same office for two years, and have found

the gentlemen who frequent the hotel uniformly courteous, but a stenographer's life has its difficulties, and I feel that my experience may be of use to others who may be about to go and do likewise.

In the first place do not expect more than you are willing to give, and you will never be disappointed. You will no doubt be nervous at the outset—this seems to be the fate of all stenographers—but the next thing is to rid yourself of that bugbear. The only way I have ever found to do that is to forget self entirely and think only of the dictator, or the work in hand. It is, I think, the hardest lesson a stenographer has to learn.

Then, too, never by any means sacrifice accuracy for mere speed. Speed will come in good time. When a man comes to you to request you to take his dictation, do not hurry, and thus do yourself and your dictator an injury, but quickly (there is a great difference in "quickly" and "hurriedly") get together your note book and pen or pencil, as the case may be, and then signify your readiness to begin. If you find your customer is talking too fast, kindly but firmly request him to talk a little slower; thus you will be able to transcribe a clean, accurate copy. Most gentlemen will thank you for thus intimating your desire to do good and accurate work.

Another thing you will find of great benefit, try to do a little more than you promise. Make all your own corrections. A man, as a rule, does not care how he makes a correction, and I have known some men to take a malicious pleasure in mutilating good copy. Do not allow him the chance to correct.

Never copy from manuscript verbatim (I will make an exception in law work, of course), unless your manuscript is entirely flawless. Make your copy as much better as you can, both as regards the language and punctuation. Get your copy up in the very best style you possess. In such a case you will never fail to win a pleasant "Thank you" from your customer, and what is more, his future work.

In a little while, by strict attention to some of these small details, you will find yourself gaining rapidly in confidence, and also increasing your store of knowledge. Use your eyes and ears; hear and see all you can without seeming to do so. Guard against betraying confidence in even the smallest matters.

Study your customers; in fact, make your business a study of human nature. Be able to tell a crank the moment you put eyes upon him, and then work harder than you ever did in your life to please that crank. I remember making a very cranky man say "Thank you, madam!" He was a gruff, surly, two hundred pound man, and I suppose thought that no one on earth knew as much as he did. But before he knew it he had actually said "Thank you" and "Good-day, madam." I think that made me feel well for a week.

Keep a dictionary near you, as you will certainly need it more than once, or I am very much mistaken. When you feel your need of it, take it up openly and find your words (even a stenographer is not expected to know everything)!

Perhaps the most important thing I have left until the last, the absolute necessity of keeping your typewriter clean, as you cannot expect to get the best results from your labor from an unclean machine. Learn the mechanism of your instrument so that you can adjust it yourself, or take it apart and put it together again. I mean this literally. I often hear stenographers say, "I can't do good work when I have such a miserable machine." Just look at your machine again and see if you have always kept it absolutely clean and free from dust; see if you have allowed it to become gummed with oil, etc.

Learn, also, to "time" your work, so that if it should accumulate you will be able to tell each customer exactly when he can have his work, and then see that you keep your promise. Finish your work exactly on time if possible. You will find that customers will learn to depend upon you, and it will materially add to your profits.