

N.B.—The matter to be read is marked off by thick lines into sections, each of which is to occupy a minute, and also by thinner lines into smaller sections, each containing the number of words to be read in a quarter of a minute.

PASSAGE FOR DICTATION.

[The passage takes 10 minutes.]

Before me lies an old octavo volume, now only to be found in libraries or picked up on the stalls of secondhand book vendors. Yet it had its fashionable days when William the Fourth was king. The copy in my possession is the fourth edition, and it was published by Smith, Elder, and Co., Cornhill, just one year before Queen Victoria ascended the throne. It is called "Random Recollections of the House of Commons, from the year 1830 to the year 1835," and it therefore covers the end of the unreformed and the beginning of the reformed House of Commons. Moreover, the proceedings, as recorded, were enacted in the old House of Commons, which was burned down in 1834.

"I shall not soon," says the narrator, "forget the disappointment which I experienced on the first sight of the interior of the House of Commons. I had, indeed, been told that it but ill accorded with the dignity of what has been termed the first assembly of gentlemen in the world, or with the importance of the subjects on which they were convened to legislate. But I was not at all prepared for such a place as I then beheld. It was dark, gloomy, and badly ventilated, and so small that not more than four hundred out of the six hundred and eighty members could be accommodated in it with any measure of comfort. When an important debate occurred, but especially when that debate was preceded by a call of the House, the members were really to be pitied; they were literally crammed together, and the heat of the House rendered it in some degree a second edition of the Black Hole of Calcutta. On either side there was a gallery, every corner of which was occupied by legislators; and many, not being able to get even standing room, were obliged to lounge in the refreshment-rooms adjoining St. Stephen's until the division—when they rushed to the voting-room in as much haste as if the place they had quitted had been on fire.

"The ceiling, the sides, and the ends of the House were lined with wainscot. The floor was covered with a mat, and the seats of the members consisted of plain benches, well cushioned and covered with leather. From the floor backwards to the walls each seat was from twelve to fourteen inches higher than the one fronting it. The front row of benches on either side was within three feet of the table. The row on the right of the Speaker was invariably occupied by the members of the Government and their most influential supporters, and that on the left by the leading individuals of the Opposition. The table of the House was within five or six feet from the chair; in length it was six feet and in breadth four. . . . The Speaker's chair was raised twelve or fourteen inches from the floor of the House, and measured nine feet in height. In form it somewhat resembled our modern easy-chairs, but had solid sides, and was covered over at the top. It stood a few feet from the furthest end of the House, which was only fifteen or twenty yards from the Thames. The Speaker always entered by a door exclusively appropriated to himself at the end of the House next the river; while all the members entered by a door at the other end, in a straight line with the chair. Immediately above the place where the members entered was the Strangers' Gallery, and underneath it were several rows of seats for friends of members. To these seats there was no mode of admission except that of being taken in by one of the members. To the Strangers' Gallery a note or order from a member or the payment of half a crown to the door-keeper would at once insure admission. At the furthest end of the passage, after we had entered the House, were several rows of benches, which extended on either side from the walls to the passage. They were always occupied by members who professed to belong to no party—to be neither the friends nor opponents of the Government, but who stood on perfectly neutral ground, judging of measures only by their abstract merits or defects."

Gone are the cross benches, and if they remained there are none left to occupy them; for who now professes to "judge of measures only by their abstract merits or defects"?

Two references only mark the progress of the world. "There are," says our guide, "a few members belonging to the extreme Radical party who never change their seats, whatever ministry may be in power, because no men sufficiently liberal for them have ever been in office."

Shorthand.—For Civil Service Senior. Time allowed: One hour and a quarter.

INSTRUCTIONS TO SUPERVISORS.

1. Inform the candidates before the time for taking up this subject that a candidate may use pen or pencil as he pleases for taking notes, which should be written in a ruled book, but that he must transcribe those notes into longhand with pen and ink in one of the ruled foolscap books provided.

2. Inform them also that the clearness and accuracy of the shorthand notes (which must in every case be handed in together with the transcript) will be taken into account by the examiner.

3. Inform candidates that when once you have begun to dictate you cannot stop until the passage is finished.

4. Dictate the passage at the rate of 130 words a minute.