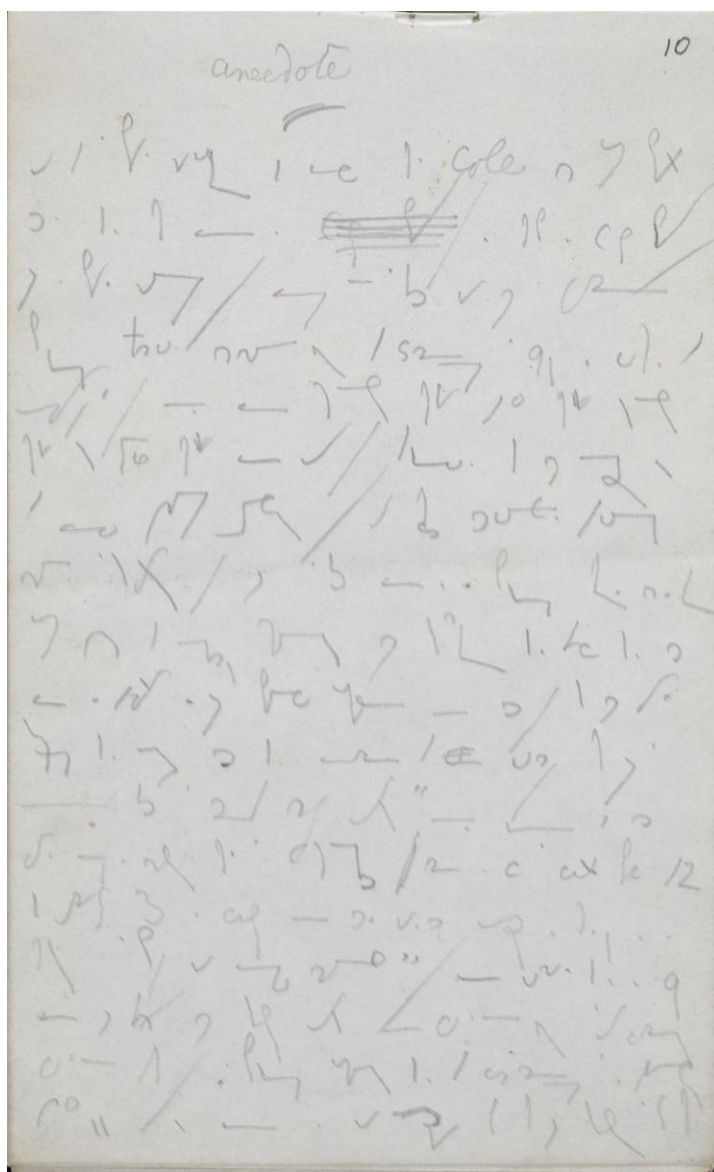
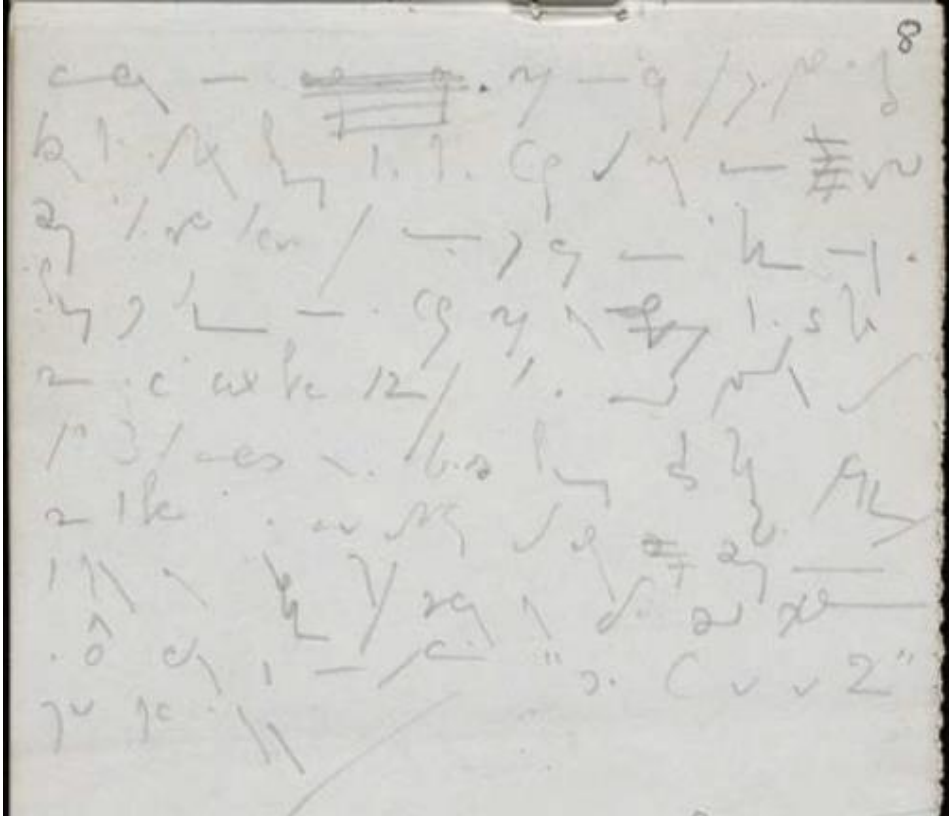


# 'Anecdote' part I and part II transcript

In June and July 2022 our Dickens Decoders focused on parts I and II of 'Anecdote': a shorthand dictation exercise from the notebooks of Dickens's shorthand pupil, Arthur Stone, at the [Free Library of Philadelphia](#).



**Figure 1:** The first page of a shorthand exercise titled 'Anecdote'.  
Image © The Free Library of Philadelphia [ref: cdc5890009]

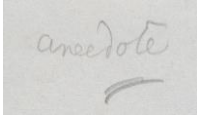
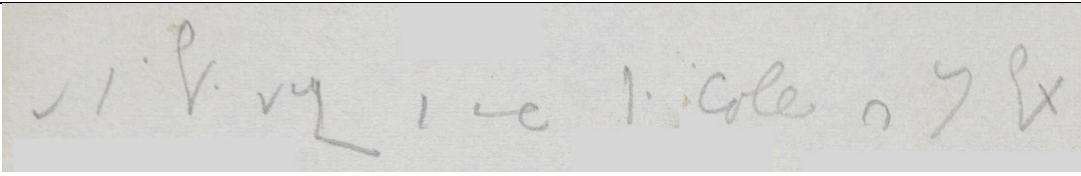

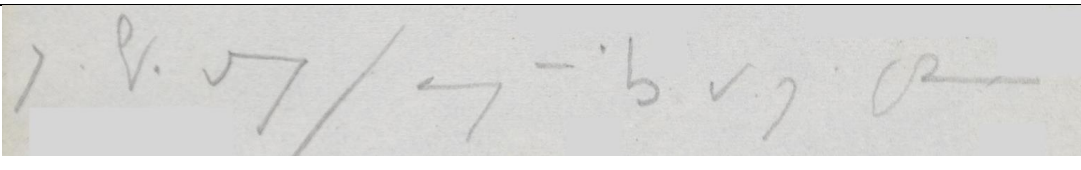
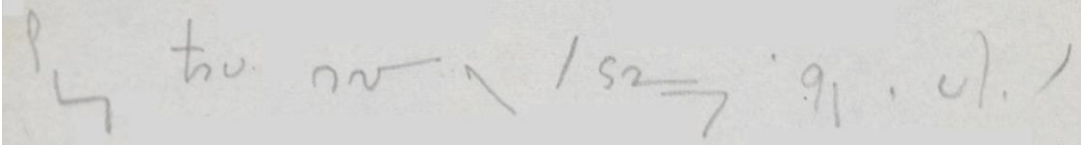
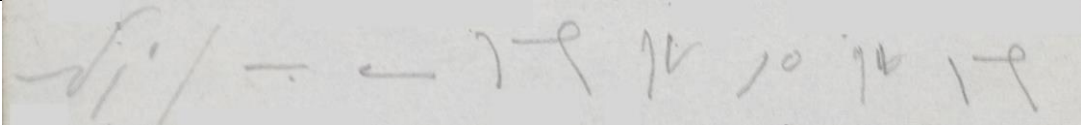
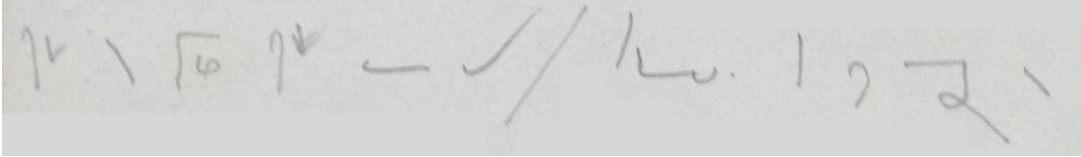


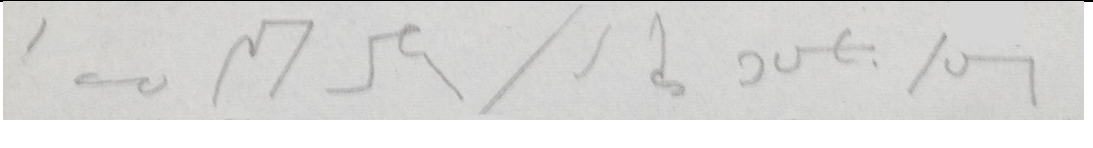
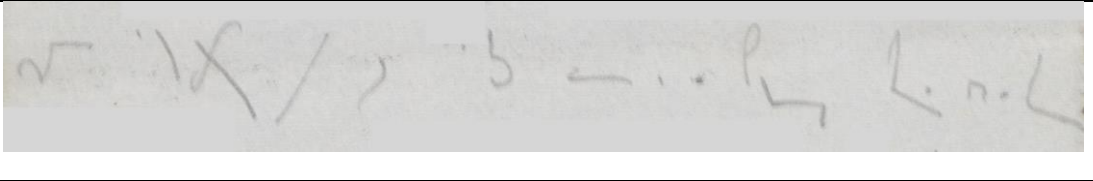
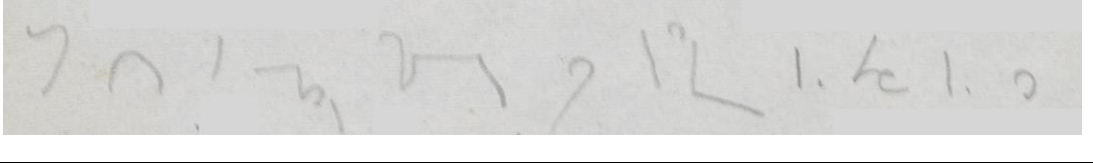
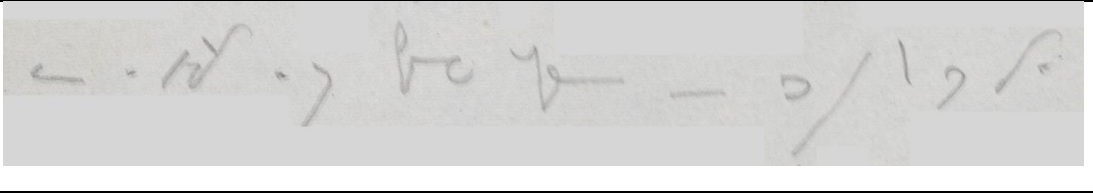
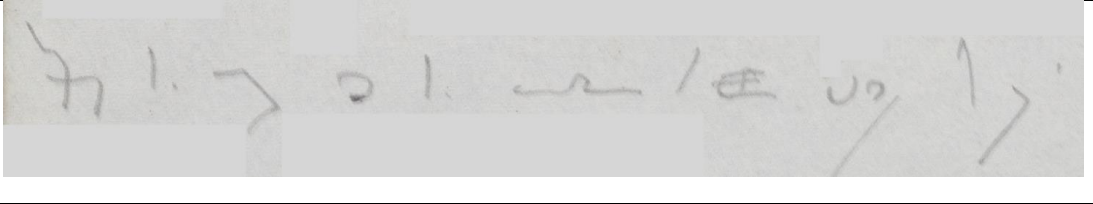
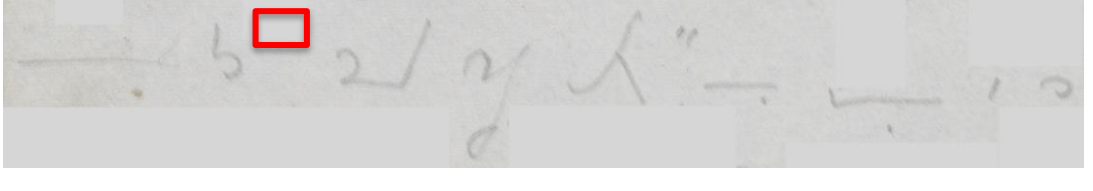
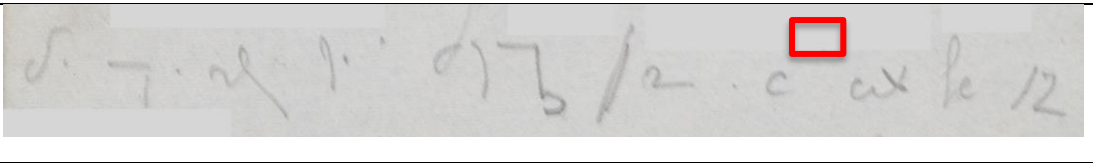
*Figure 2: Detail from the second page of a shorthand exercise titled 'Anecdote'.  
Image © The Free Library of Philadelphia [ref: cdc5890009]*

The response to both of these #SolveItDickens challenges was amazing – both in terms of the quality of the shorthand transcription and the thoughtful and creative suggestions for potential source texts – particularly once the punchline was revealed in part II. Many thanks to everyone who took part! In the process, the Dickens Decoders have **transcribed an amazing 65 symbols for the first time** (40 in part I and 25 in part II). These discoveries are credited on our ['Roll of Honour'](#).

Check out the transcript below.

## Part I transcript

Line no.	
1	
	<p>There is a story related, I think, by Cole* which always strikes** struck</p>
2	
	<p>me to be one of the best of ghost stories.</p>
3	
	<p>Thus the story runs: once upon a time there was a German</p>
4	
	<p>student extremely popular with his companions and quite the life of his</p>
5	
	<p>university. No one fenced better, sang better, danced</p>
6	
	<p>better, did anything better than he. Suddenly it was noticed that</p>

7	
	<p>his whole appearance changed . He became melancholy, silent,</p>
8	
	<p>worn and dejected . After a time, one of the student body who had</p>
9	
	<p>always been his intimate friend was deputed*** to speak to him</p>
10	
	<p>on the subject of this strange alteration in him. It was very</p>
11	
	<p>difficult to induce him to open his lips but after a</p>
12	
	<p>long time and much pressing, he said, " Know then, I am</p>
13	
	<p>every night pursued by a phantom. When the city clock(s) strike(s)** 12</p>

14	
	it emerges from the closet in my room opposite the foot of the
15	
	bed and stands**** there until morning." In reply to the question
16	
	how this spectre was dressed, he said in green, with a high-crowned
17	
	green hat. The student returned to his companions and they arranged
18	
	among themselves that one of their number should be thus dressed and should be

### Professor Bowles's notes on the transcription for part I

Thank you to those of you who pointed out that I mistakenly blanked out a couple of dots. The red rectangles on the shorthand show where they should have been. In line 12, the dot stands for 'and'; most of you realised the 'and' was missing and included it in your transcriptions so well done for that.

The missing dot in line 13 comes after the symbol for 'city'. I'm not sure about this one. It's quite a long way from the symbol and is in fact closer to the symbol on the previous line. If the dot is connected to 'city', it probably stands for the 'y' though I don't see why this is necessary. If the symbol stands for the whole word 'city', you don't need a dot.

\* 'Cole' may refer to Alfred Whaley Cole who was a contributor to Dickens's journals: <https://www.djo.org.uk/indexes/authors/alfred-whaley-cole.html> However, the Dickens Decoders have also identified other possibilities, including

Sir Henry Cole and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. We're continuing to research these possibilities and will credit everyone's suggestions in a future blog.

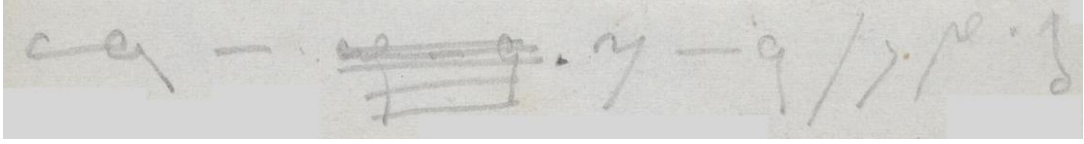
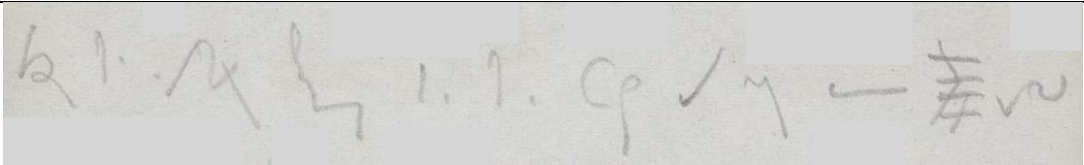
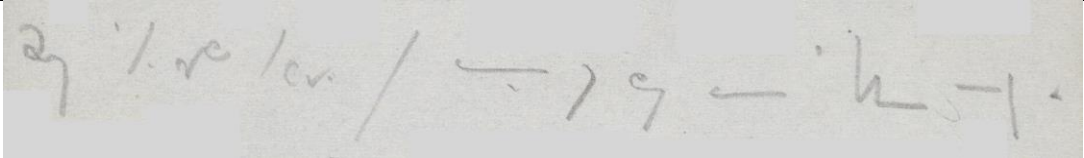
\*\* Bit of a head-scratcher in lines 1 and 13:  
 l.1 - both 'strikes' and 'struck' are possible grammatically; the initial <str> is pretty clear; is the additional stroke across the <r> meant to be an <s> or a <ck>?  
 l.13 - 'struck' is not possible grammatically because Dickens is telling the story in the present tense; 'strikes' seems likely but there is no symbol for the final <s>. Or am I missing something?  
 The character used in lines 1 and 13 is different. So if it is 'strikes' in l.13, then is it 'struck' in line 1?

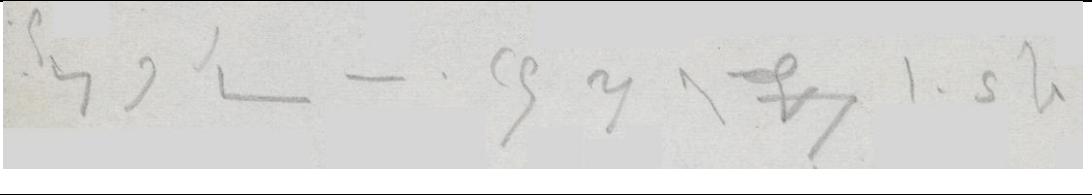
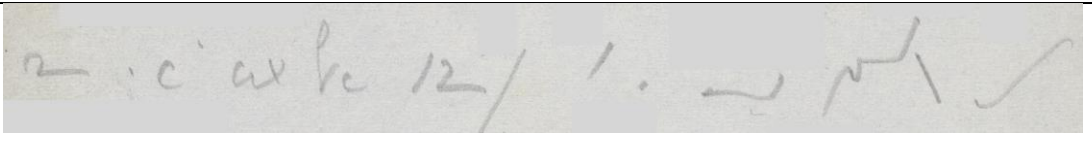
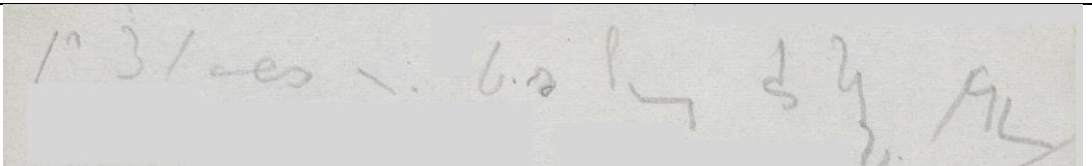
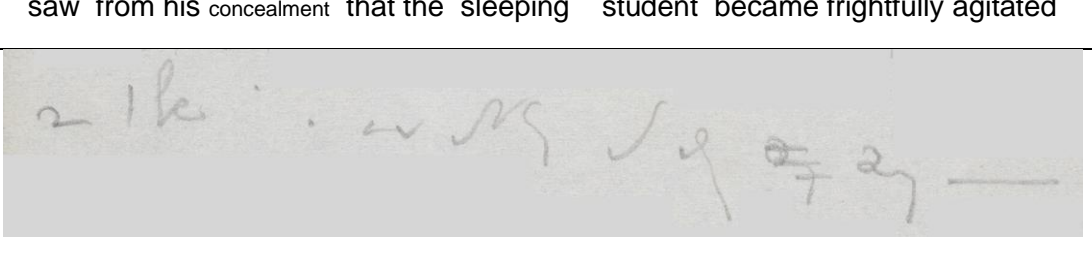
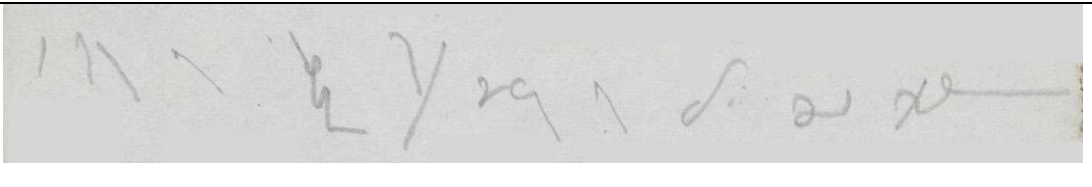
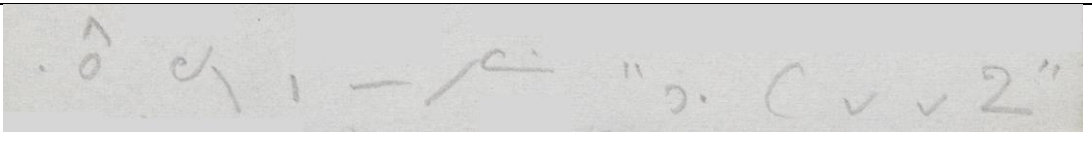

As above, the c symbol in line 13 seems to be an arbitrary character standing for 'city'; I have never seen this usage before but it seems to be the only explanation.

\*\*\* The reading of the shorthand seems to be <dptd>, so the word is 'deputed'.

\*\*\*\* The character can be read either as <stand>+s or <st>+s  
 So the word could be 'stands' or 'stays'. Both make perfect sense.

## Part II transcript

Line no.	
1	
	concealed in the place in question . After appearing and being
2	
	supposed by the afflicted student to be the ghost, he would then reveal
3	
	himself and so work his cure* . Under this guise**, on a certain night, the

4	
	<p>student was hidden in the ghost's place with instructions to come forth</p>
5	
	<p>when the city clock struck 12. As the hour approached, he</p>
6	
	<p>saw from his concealment that the sleeping student became frightfully agitated</p>
7	
	<p>When it struck and the other emerged, he raised himself in/on</p>
8	
	<p>his bed with a distorted face, marked/wracked*** with every possible expression</p>
9	
	<p>of horror****, cried out in agony "My God, there are two",</p>
10	
	<p>fell back and died.</p>

## Professor Bowles's notes on the transcription for part II

- \* The most plausible reading is 'work his cure', but there is a dot at the end of the final symbol that doesn't have a reading.
- \*\* Some of you wrote 'under these circumstances', which is possible, but I prefer the reading of <g>+<s> as 'guise' because the student was disguised as the ghost. The word 'guise' seems more appropriate to the story and less formal than 'circumstances'.
- \*\*\* Two possible readings here: <rkd> = 'wracked' or <mrkd> = 'marked'
- \*\*\*\* Here we have a small circle, which stands for <s>, and a triangle shape at the top. According to Dickens's Manchester notebook, if a triangular shape appears on top of a symbol, it stands for a word ending <r>+vowel+<r>. If it appears underneath a symbol, it stands for a word ending <r>+vowel+<w>.

So here the triangle stands for r+r and the whole word should read s+r+r. But there is no good reading of s+r+r so I think the word is either 'horror' (with the wrong initial symbol and the correct triangle position) or 'sorrow' (with the correct symbol and the wrong triangle position). Either way, I think there is a mistake in the shorthand.

I prefer 'horror' because I think the sleeping student is horrified not sad.