

'Easter Nonsense' aka 'All privileges...' transcript

Our #SolveItDickens challenge for March-April came from the notebooks of Dickens's shorthand pupil, Arthur Stone, at the [Free Library of Philadelphia](#).

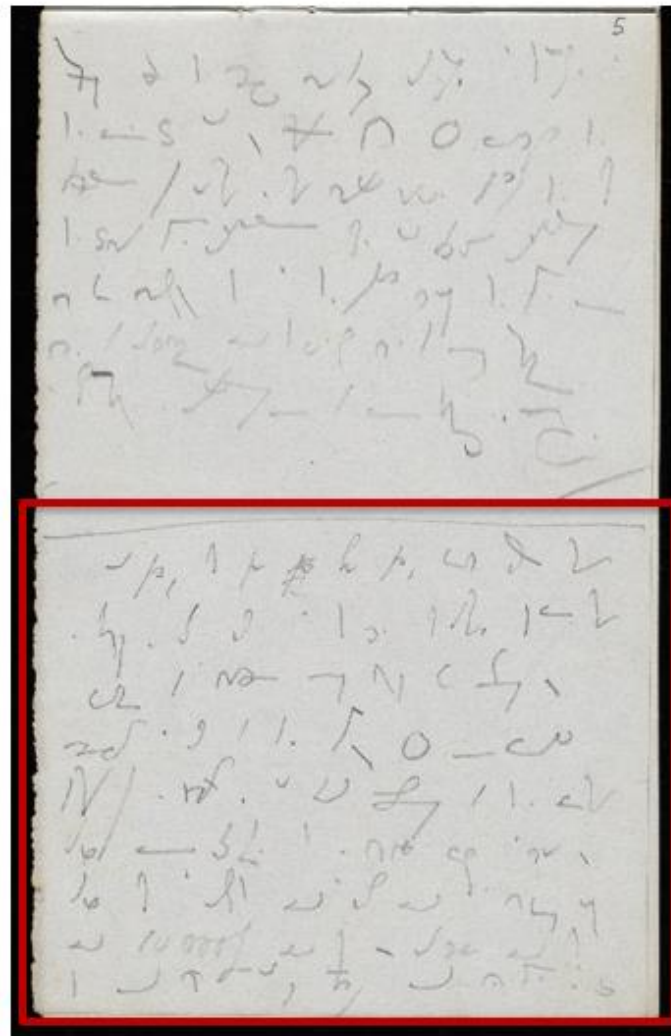


Figure 1: A page from Arthur Stone's Notebook A. Image © The Free Library of Philadelphia. The top half of this exercise is the last part of 'Sydney Smith', which has previously been deciphered.

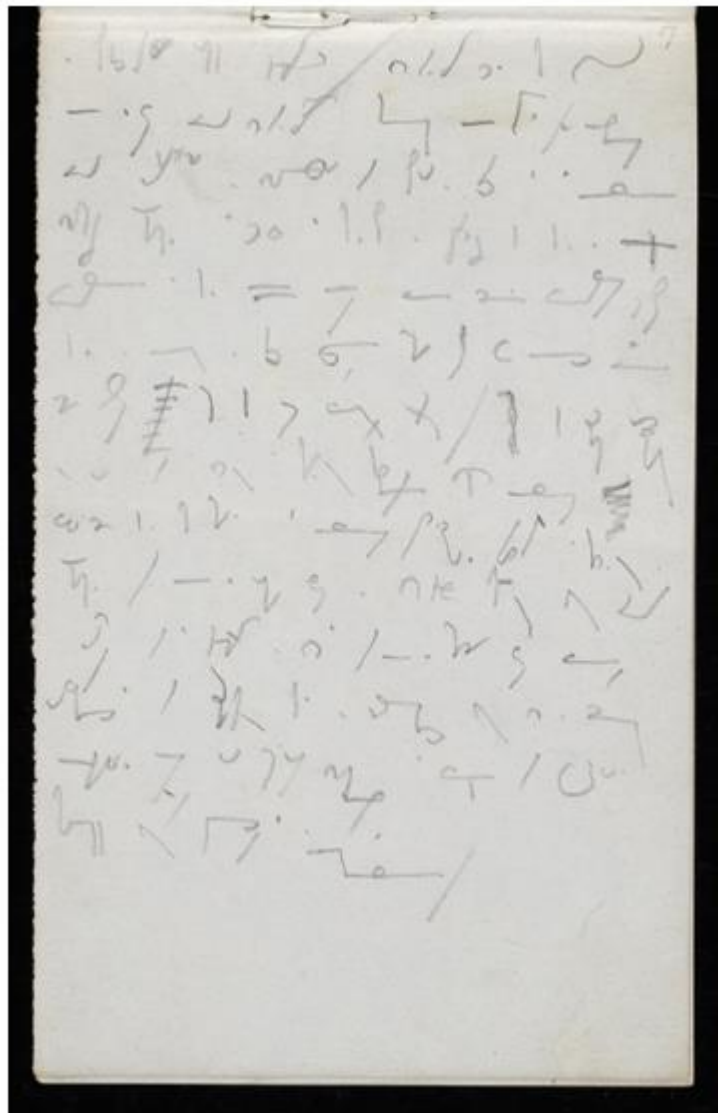
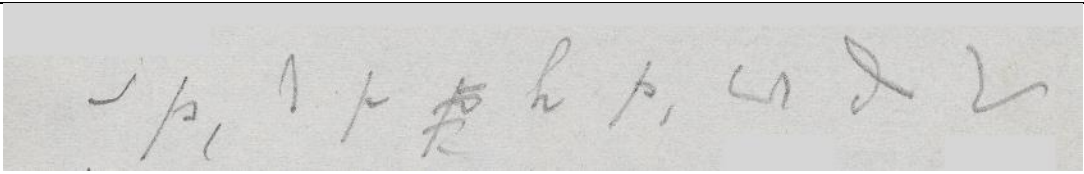
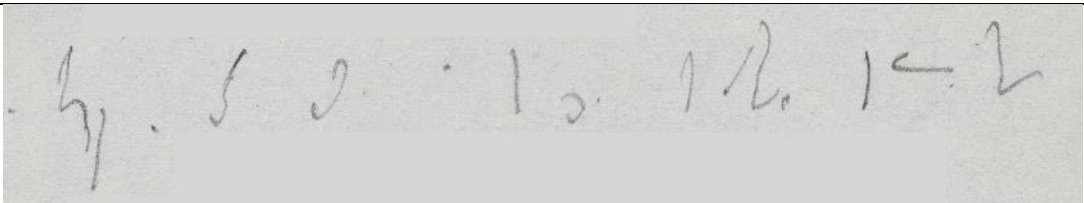
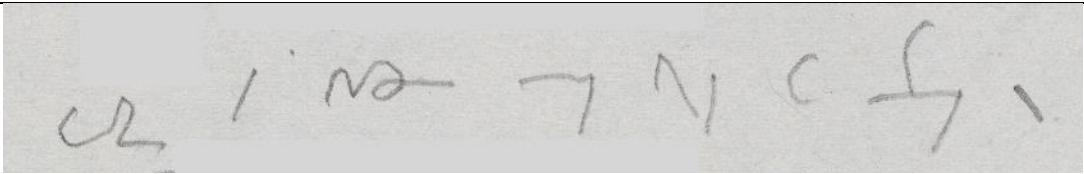
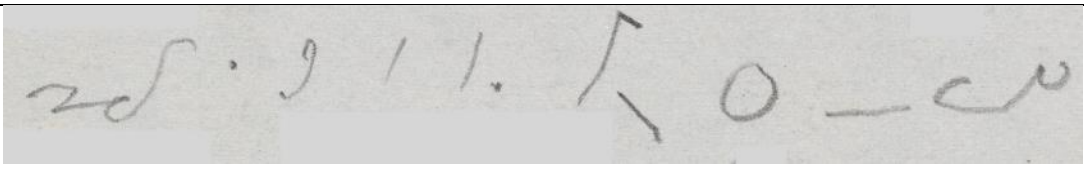
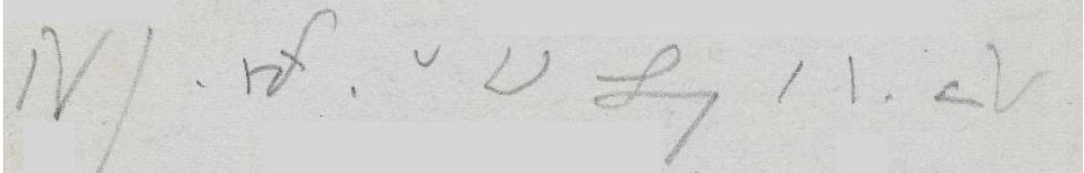



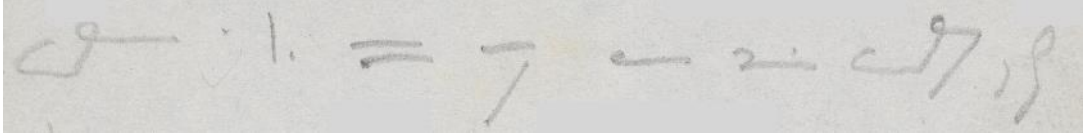
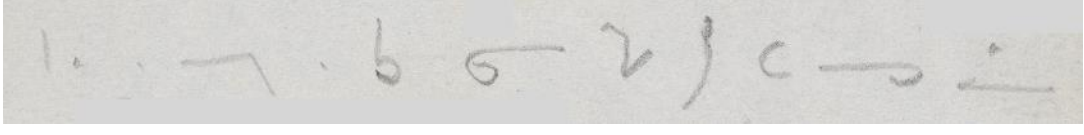
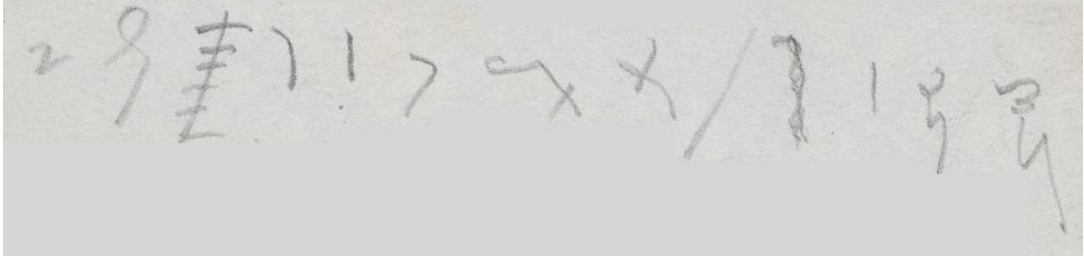

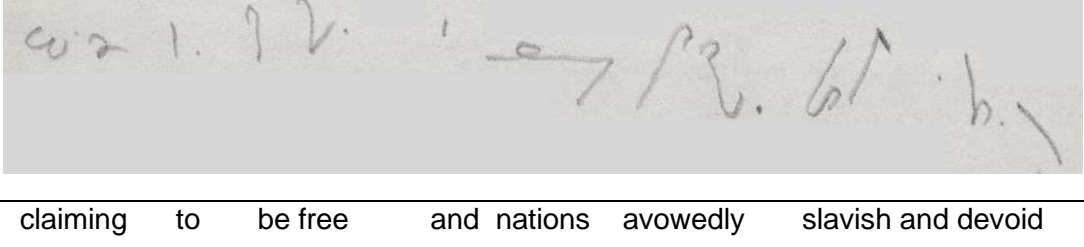
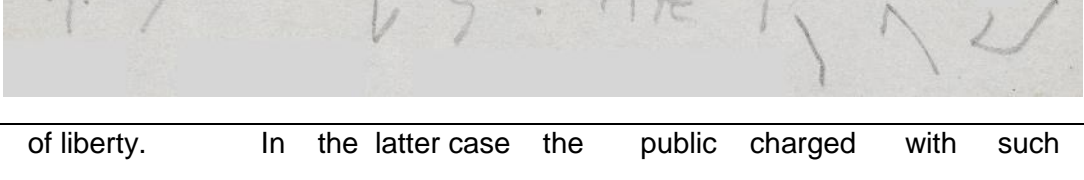
Figure 2: A page from Arthur Stone's Notebook A. Image © The Free Library of Philadelphia.

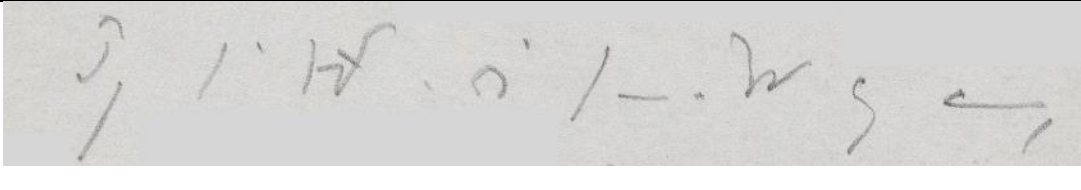
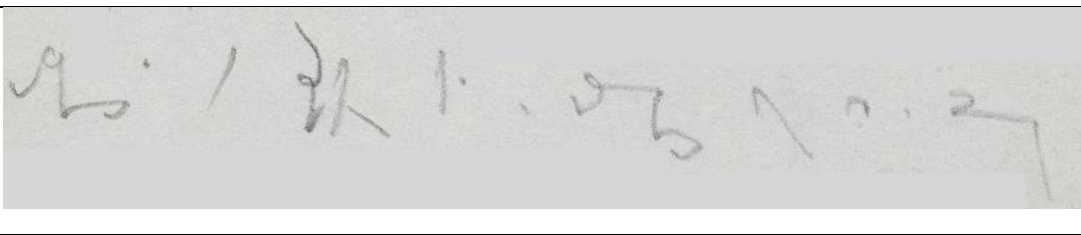
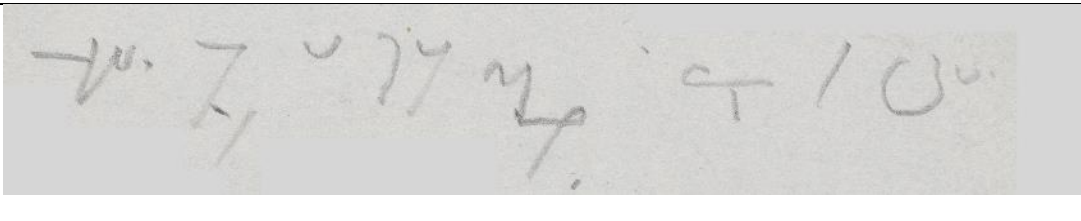
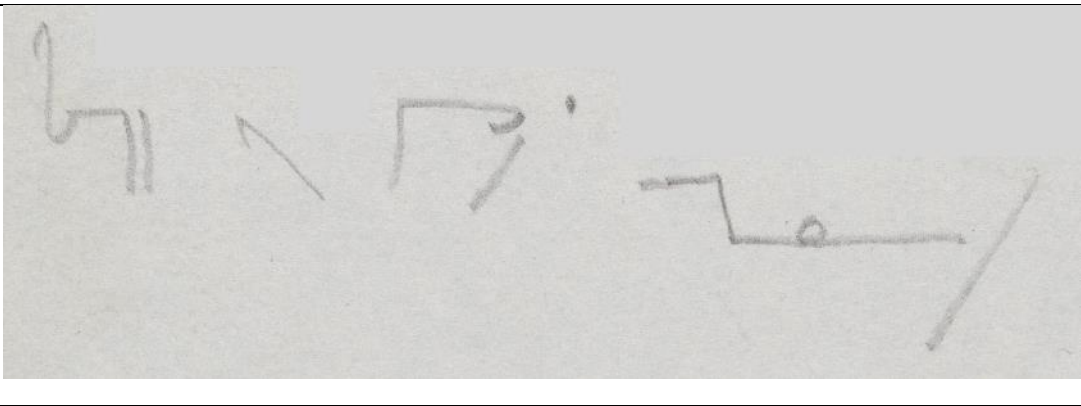
Huge thanks and many congratulations to the brilliant Dickens Decoders, who produced a complete solution, transcribing **40 new words** for the first time in the process. These new discoveries are credited on our [Roll of Honour](#).

You can find a line-by-line transcript below, along with Professor Bowles's notes on the transcription.

'Easter Nonsense' aka 'All privileges...'

Line no.	
1.1	
	All privileges ¹ , but particularly hereditary ² privileges, have been established for
1.2	
	the benefit of some individual ³ and it may be safely taken for
1.3	
	granted as a proposition not without good grounds that
1.4	
	whenever an individual is so advantaged, the world in general
1.5	
	suffers. The object of all such institutions is to confer
1.6	
	something ⁴ on somebody at the public ⁵ cost and whether that

2.5	
	generation and to heaven knows how many generations afterwards
2.6	
	to the end of time depends/is dependent ¹⁰ for its good name on
2.7	
	mere words if it thus conducts itself . It must be remembered
2.8	
	that there is a wide and broad distinction between nations
2.9	
	claiming to be free and nations avowedly slavish and devoid
2.10	
	of liberty. In the latter case the public charged with such

2.11	
	errors is an object of pity ¹¹ . In the former case one's
2.12	
	equanimity is disturbed by the resentment with which the mind
2.13	
	naturally receives ¹² all false pretenses and contempt is largely ¹³
2.14	
	blinded/blended ¹⁴ with animus/animosity ¹⁵ and indignation/intention ¹⁶ .

Professor Bowles's Notes on the Transcription

¹ The Roman letter 'p' stands for 'particular' and 'privilege' in the Manchester notebook; this first line seems to be a test of how Roman letters are transcribed.

² The Roman letter 'h' stands for 'hereditary' in Henry Dickens's shorthand notebook.

³ The Roman letter 'l' stands for 'individual' in the Manchester notebook.

⁴ This symbol is repeated in the next line and I think 'something' is the best fit for both; however, it is badly written; I read the first symbol as an 's' with the symbol for 'm' being omitted. The correct symbol for 'some' is under 'somebody' later in the line.

⁵ I think 'public' is correct, though the loop for "l+c" is missing. It is written much more clearly in 2.10.

⁶ This line seems to be giving Arthur practice in transcribing legal terminology in relation to land and property (estate, easement, pittance writ); I read this as 'easement' (e+s+ment); an easement is a right to cross someone's property.

⁷ Congratulations on finding this (I failed); according to Wikipedia, a pittance writ is a charter granting income on land.

⁸ Most of you think that 'high mark' is the correct transcription; I agree, though it seems a strange phrase to use.

⁹ Well done to those of you who spotted that the symbol for 'all' is in the previous line; sorry about that!

¹⁰ This symbol stands for 'dependent' in the notebooks; since there is only one symbol here, it could either mean 'is dependent' (without the shorthand for 'is') or 'depends' (using the symbol for 'dependent' to stand for the verb).

¹¹ 'pity' makes sense but the 't' is missing in the shorthand.

¹² The consensus here is 'receives', though the 'r' is not very clear.

¹³ This is definitely an adverb but how do we interpret the first symbol? You have suggested 'largely', 'roundly', 'wholly' and 'cruelly'! I think 'largely' is right. A cup shape is used in the notebook as an arbitrary character for 'large' and here perhaps it is 'written large' to emphasise the meaning.

¹⁴ Both 'blinded' and 'blended' seem to be possible here.

¹⁵ The reading of animus/animosity seems to depend on how you interpret the dot; it is either 'and' ('animus and') or 'ity' ('animosity') with a missing dot for the next 'and'.

¹⁶ 'intention' looks right according to the shorthand (n+t+n+s+n) but doesn't make much sense; 'indignation' makes more sense but the 'g' is missing in the shorthand - n+d+(g)+n+s+n.



The Dickens Code is supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council

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