

**QUANTITATIVE PUNCTUATION: A
NEW PRACTICAL METHOD BASED ON
THE EVOLUTION OF THE LITERARY
SENTENCE IN MODERN ENGLISH
PROSE, PP. 1-40 (NOT COMPLETE)**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649260706

Quantitative Punctuation: A New Practical Method Based on the Evolution of the Literary Sentence in Modern English prose, pp. 1-40 (not complete) by J. D. Logan

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J. D. LOGAN

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TO
DAVID SOLOAN,

STURDY CITIZEN ——— EXPERT TEACHER.

MY DEAR SOLOAN :

Nothing is more unoriginal than originality. Our associative processes automatically make novel combinations of old ideas, and forthwith we credit ourselves with genius. The glory belongs altogether to nature. And so, in this little volume, I am merely the instrument of nature, and do nothing more than to show how a teacher of English Composition may transform a traditionally dull and awkward business into a profitable and delightful discipline. To you I dedicate this little volume, both as an appreciation of your sane pedagogic ideals and your great gifts in teaching, and as a memorial of the genial friendship between us, which began twenty years ago under the early half-lights of knowledge in the College by the Sea.

Believe me.

Ever yours faithfully,

J. D. LOGAN.

Toronto, May 2, 1907.

167705

"Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons."

—*Hor., Ars Poet.*

PREFACE.


THE following Method of Quantitative Punctuation is intended chiefly for teachers and students of English Composition. It may be used as profitably by business men in general, journalists, stenographers, and those who make a profession of polite or commercial correspondence. It is thoroughly scientific, but simple, easy of application, and warranted by indubitable success in practice. Best of all, while it does away with the insecurity and humbug of the older, arbitrary methods of punctuation, at the same time it will have a desirable positive effect on one's literary style as such, inducing one to write short, simple, idiomatic sentences.

The method itself had a somewhat accidental origin; and was first stated briefly and applied in my text-book of English Composition, "The Structural Principles of Style: Applied." While lecturing to the undergraduates of the University of South Dakota on the History of English Prose Style, I discovered that as the quantity (length) of the English literary sentence decreased, necessarily the number of points of punctuation under-

went a change in nature and number, until in the best literature of to-day there seldom appear more than *three* points, namely, the comma, the period, and the mark of interrogation. This happens all because the structure of literary English to-day approximates to the quantity and form of spoken English (see Sherman's "Analytics of Literature," pp. 260-280).

Heretofore punctuation had been taught by means of an appalling body of arbitrary rules. But, as it seemed to me, it could be taught much more readily and effectively by ignoring all rules and by making punctuation a *function of the structure* (or quantity) of sentences. And so it turned out. Practice in the class-room soon justified the naturalness and practicalness of my method. The result, in fact, was twofold. My pupils in English Composition not only punctuated with ease and surety, but also wrote their themes with increased literary neatness or "style."

A friendly critic has objected that my method is "not in accord with the practice of our best writers and the custom of printers and typographers." This is simply not true, and even if it were, the objection is puerile and irrelevant. First: my critic does not state the facts. It is true that if one were to write in the style of Samuel Johnson, DeQuincey, or Pater, one would need to apply



ingeniously a large number of rules of punctuation. But it is equally true that if one were to write in the style of Emerson, Lincoln, Fiske, or Drummond, not to mention the style of our best magazine prosemen, one would need to apply in a simple way very few points of punctuation. In fact, it is from the study of such men as Emerson and Lincoln, thoroughly reputable writers, that I have derived my method (not "theory") of punctuation. Secondly: my critic does not seem to be aware that *reform* in the teaching of rhetoric was first and most successfully brought about in America. This manual (or essay) was written as a contribution to pedagogic reform in the department of English Composition. If, then, reform in punctuation is desirable and desiderated, and if it is observed that the quantity of sentences determines the nature and number of points of punctuation that *need* be, or *can* be, used, teachers, writers, publishers and printers alike are under the bonds of expediency and necessity. Finally: to obviate all criticism and to meet the demands both of the conservatives and of the reformers, to the text, which states and illustrates only the uses of the comma, I have added an Appendix in which I explain and illustrate the chief uses of the colon, semicolon, and dash. So that this manual contains the rules governing all the points of punctuation.

As for the Method itself, the worst that can be said about it is that it is an innovation, or that it destroys a traditional pedagogic ideal. Skill in punctuating, as taught by the older methods, came to the young writer only after persistent and painful practice in a very pedestrian way. When a teacher sees how the way may be made less long for the learner, and the speed in learning quickened, it is his or her duty and privilege to show the tyro how it may be done. This, then, is my justification. From the point of view both of the literary and the pedagogic art, my method of punctuation has all the advantages of simplicity, intelligibility and ready application; and, in addition, if practised it will aid one to write with despatch plain, idiomatic English prose.

J. D. LOGAN.

TORONTO, 1907.

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