

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARKS OF QUOTATION

BY DOUGLAS C. McMURTRIE

THERE has been but little study or research concerning the history of typography, regarded from the point of view of printers' practice. Most of the histories of printing are biographical or bibliographical in character. There appears to be need of a history which will disclose the origin and development through transitional stages of the features of practice adopted and followed by the printers of to-day.

This would be an ambitious project, but it seems that the first steps in preparation for it would be the investigation by a number of students in various countries of individual features of typographical practice.

The feature which I have undertaken to study and report upon is the origin and development of the marks of quotation. As is well known, the practice of printers in any country in indicating quoted passages differs from those in almost every other country. Thus, the French printers use one type of quotation marks; the Italian printers use another; the Germans a third; the Dutch a fourth. There is even difference in style between the printers of England and the United States.

It will also be found that the practice in any country is not what it was fifty or a hundred years ago, and the evolution of practice in each country is both interesting and illuminating.

As there is practically no information on the subject of quotation marks in the existing literature on printing, the only method of study is the examination of hundreds of volumes

134 *Origin and Development of the Marks of Quotation*

printed at various dates and the record of the style followed in them with reference to quotation marks. Such a study I am now making, and hope to have the results ready for publication within a year.

The object of the present memorandum is to invite any printers, bibliographers, or librarians who may chance to be interested in the history of typography to communicate to me any suggestions which may aid in my research, or any notes on the origin or history of quotation marks in English printing. I am particularly anxious to locate the earliest book printed in England which used these marks, and would appreciate references to early books containing marks to indicate quotations.

Research up to the present date indicates that the marks of quotation had their origin in France some time about 1580-1590, two commas or two turned commas in the margins being used to indicate cited passages. The practice met with favour and was soon adopted in the same or modified form by the printers of other countries.

Communications may be addressed to Douglas C. McMurtrie, Greenwich, Connecticut, U.S.A.

Such assistance will be cordially appreciated, and will be duly acknowledged in the published report.