

INDEX IN ACCORDANCE WITH NUMBER OF PRONOUNS USED  
WITH INDEFINITE PRONOUN ANTECEDENTS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

One often hears the statement, "The English language is always changing," made by all sorts of people. Sometimes it comes from the lips of those who have authority and information upon which to base this statement; other times it comes glibly parroted by those who have no information to enforce the statement but repeat only what they hear. However, there does seem to be an almost complete agreement concerning the truth of the statement.

Since the statement that our English language is changing seems to be so generally accepted, the next logical procedure is to determine as nearly as possible how far and in what direction the trend toward change has gone. This problem is so extensive as to seem almost impossible to solve, and it is only as the larger problem is broken down into many small units that it begins to appear in any measure ready to be solved. As a partial solution one very small area of change is presented in this paper. This discussion gives the results of a study conducted in regard to the trend in agreement in number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents.

## METHODS OF PROCEDURE

In this study it seemed wise to make a survey of grammar textbooks and handbooks to determine as nearly as possible how great and how rapid this change has been. For this purpose 108 textbooks and 23 handbooks or handbook sections of textbooks were used, the oldest dating back as far as 1828 and the most modern being copyrighted in 1940. Each book was carefully examined to discover any statement concerning the subject of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents. If no definite statements were made, any material which pertained to the subject at all was sought. This in-

formation has been gathered together in logical divisions and forms a portion of the main body of this paper.

In addition to the survey of grammars it seemed wise to make some sort of survey of the actual use of pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents in order to try to determine what forms are actually being used in specific situations of this kind. For this purpose the drama as a literary form was chosen for use; this choice arose from a conclusion that the drama represented the actual speech, the language of the people, and thus afforded the best opportunity for the study of any certain grammatical form such as the one with which this study is concerned. Consequently, 130 different plays, ranging from some of the most modern to those of the early nineteenth century, were studied in order to find examples of this form in use. Where no such examples were found, the substitutes for this certain form were sought. The results of this search have also been compiled and form another portion of the main body of this paper.

These two kinds of data evaluated together have presented an interesting insight into one area where our language seems far from static. They are discussed fully in the following pages together with other material whenever it has contributed pertinent information other than that found in the two main sources.

#### STUDY OF NUMBER AS TAUGHT IN GRAMMAR TEXTBOOKS

##### Historical Survey

The problem of number is one which faces every student of grammar, whether he is studying English grammar or the grammar of some other language. Agreement in number is a necessary requirement between a pronoun and its

antecedent, but it is usually a simple requirement to fulfill. In the English language it is only as the student is confronted by an indefinite pronoun antecedent that he becomes puzzled by the problem. Then the student often asks, "Should I use a singular or plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent?" The answer to this question is not always the same; it depends upon what authority the conclusion is based and to some extent upon the year in which that authority came to his conclusion.

The originally accepted Rule in regard to most indefinite pronouns was that they are singular and therefore must be referred to by singular pronouns. This is still the rule given in cases where definite regulations are set down and no consideration is given to changing conditions. One typical example of this definite rule is: "Any, each, every, neither, anyone, everyone, someone, somebody, no one, a person are singular and must be referred to by singular pronouns."<sup>1</sup> A typical variation of this rule makes the statement that most indefinite pronouns have no plural and therefore are always singular and must necessarily have singular forms to agree with them. However, this study was undertaken primarily to determine if there has been any change in the attitude toward this set rule and if so what it is.

Among the 102 grammar textbooks which were studied there were found 55 which discussed the problem of number in connection with indefinite pronoun antecedents. The remaining 47 did not discuss the problem at all. Whether it was not considered of enough importance for discussion or whether these authors felt that it was a question open for debate and consequently did not care to make any definite statement regarding it or to enter into any

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Seidel Canby, Frederick Erastus Pierce, Henry Noble MacCracken, and Stith Thompson, English Composition in Theory and Practice (New York, c. 1935), 507.

discussion concerning it is not known. However, it is probable that both reasons had some effect upon those who wrote the textbooks which do not discuss the problem. Among the 24 handbooks used for this study only one lacked some statement regarding number in such cases as these; 23 made quite definite statements in regard to the question.

Included in the grammar textbooks studied were 17 which bear dates earlier than 1900; these dates include 1828, 1866, 1869, 1877, 1878, 1884, 1886, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1897, and 1899. Six of these books made statements or presented a discussion of this problem, but the remaining eleven ignored it. The very earliest, that of 1828, made this very definite statement, "Pronouns such as each, every, and either must be used with nouns of the singular number only."<sup>2</sup>

Some years later, in 1866, Samuel S. Greene hesitated to acknowledge that certain limiting adjectives could ever be used as pronouns or be called pronouns. He made this specific statement; "Those limiting adjectives which may, without the use of the article, represent a noun when understood, are called pronominal adjectives;... When such adjectives represent a noun understood, they are generally called pronouns. They may more properly be called pronominal adjectives used as nouns;..."<sup>3</sup>

In 1866 Gould Brown published his Grammar of English Grammars, which was as comprehensive and complete a work as had been published at that time. He made several interesting statements regarding this problem of number agreement. Some of them are: "Of the pronominal adjectives the following distri-

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<sup>2</sup>Charles M. Ingersoll, Conversations on English Grammar (Portland, e. 1828), 84.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel S. Greene, A Treatise on the Structure of the English Language (Philadelphia, e. 1866), 215.

bution has been made; Each, every, and either are called distributives; because, though they imply all the persons and things that make up a number, they consider them, not as one whole, but as taken separately...<sup>4</sup> "The pronominal adjectives, each, one, either, and neither, are always in the third person singular; and, when they are the leading words in their clauses they require verbs and pronouns to agree with them accordingly; as 'Each of you is entitled to his share.'<sup>5</sup> "A distributive term in the singular number, is frequently construed in apposition with a comprehensive plural; as, 'They reap vanity, everyone with his neighbor.' 'Go ye every man unto his city.' The foregoing examples are plain, but similar expressions sometimes require care, lest the distributive or collective term be so placed that its construction and meaning may be misapprehended."<sup>6</sup> Thus it is plain that these indefinite pronouns were considered to be singular in form, even though sometimes used in apposition with the plural they.

Occasionally a statement made to fit one situation seems to apply equally well to another separate but similar situation. In regard to a discussion of collective nouns and their verb agreement Edwin A. Abbott has written that the explanation of difficulty and inconsistency in this type of agreement lies in the fact that the incorrectness is used to avoid harshness.<sup>7</sup> This explanation, appearing as it does in a discussion of different kinds of agreement, might be applied to indefinite pronouns and agreement with them also. A further notation of this type is found in this statement made by William B. Hodgson in

<sup>4</sup>Goold Brown, The Grammar of English Grammars, with an Introduction Historical and Critical; the Whole Methodically and Amply Illustrated (New York, c. 1800).

<sup>5</sup>Id., 576.

<sup>6</sup>Id., 500.

<sup>7</sup>Edwin A. Abbott, How to Parse (Boston, c. 1870), 206.

1887: "A difficulty arises when both genders are implied in each, every, etc., and according to Professor Bain the plural may then be used. He says (English Grammar, pp 177-8), 'Grammarians frequently call this construction an error, not reflecting that it is equally an error to apply 'his' to feminine subject. Some of the best writers furnish examples of the use of the plural as a mode of getting out of the difficulty.' It may be observed that sometimes both sense and grammar may be preserved by substituting all or both for every or each."<sup>8</sup> Here is the first suggestion discovered in this study that the plural is ever used correctly with any indefinite pronoun. It is also interesting to note that another suggestion was made in the final sentence for surmounting the difficulty without the use of the plural. It is often convenient in writing to use some such device rather than to insist on either the singular or the plural form.

In 1899 E. Oram Lyte made this definite statement: "The adjective pronouns one and other are made plural regularly; as one, ones; other, others. Each, either, neither, and another are used in the singular number only..."<sup>9</sup> In regard to Oram Lyte's statement concerning the pronouns one and other it is interesting to note a criticism made by Gould Brown in his Grammar of English Grammars back in 1865. Mr. Brown criticizes an earlier author in these words: "Dr. Bullions says, 'One and other refer to the singular only.' --English Grammar, page 96. Of ones and others he takes no notice; nor is he sufficiently attentive to usage in respect to the roots."<sup>10</sup>

It has been noted previously in this paper that in the 17 grammars which

<sup>8</sup>William B. Hodgson, Errors in the Use of English (New York, c. 1887), 178.

<sup>9</sup>E. Oram Lyte, Advanced Grammar and Composition (New York, c. 1899), 140.

<sup>10</sup>Gould Brown, op. cit., p. 276.



bear dates earlier than 1900 only one suggestion was found that a plural pronoun is ever used, correctly or incorrectly, in connection with an indefinite pronoun antecedent. Representing the one decade from 1900 to 1910 two grammars were found which gave the suggestion of the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent. However, in neither text was this plural accepted as correct grammatical usage.

To represent the decade from 1900 to 1910 eleven grammars, bearing the dates 1900, 1906, 1907, 1908, and 1908, were studied. Seven of the eleven had no statement or discussion regarding number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents. Two of the eleven, those by William Cobbett<sup>11</sup> and George P. Krapp,<sup>12</sup> contained the usual definite rule with no exceptions given. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler in The King's English made the following statement: "They, them, their, theirs, are often used in referring back to singular pronominals. Our view is that (though it is admitted to be disputable) they, their, etc., should never be resorted to in such cases."<sup>13</sup> Huber Gray Bushler made this somewhat similar statement:

Difficulties in the use of the number forms of personal pronouns arise mainly in connection with such expressions as anybody, everybody, each, either, neither, and nobody. Such expressions, in spite of the comprehensive meaning of some of them, are grammatically singular; and in literary English they are referred to by singular pronouns... If the writer considered reference to sex worth while, he would say, 'If anybody calls, ask him or her to wait.' Ordinarily, however, he would use 'him' only, taking for granted the application to women.

In colloquial English such expressions as anybody, everybody, etc., are referred to by the genderless plurals, they, their, them...

<sup>11</sup> William Cobbett, The English Grammar of William Cobbett (New York, c. 1906), 124.

<sup>12</sup> George P. Krapp, The Elements of English Grammar (New York, c. 1906), 97.

<sup>13</sup> H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, The King's English (Oxford, c. 1906), 67.

This usage is partly an attempt to find a pronoun that will stand for both he and she, and partly a reflection of the comprehensive meaning of anybody, everybody, etc. It is abused by those who have an ear for grammatical accuracy.<sup>14</sup>

To represent the decade from 1910 to 1920 fifteen grammars, bearing the dates 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, and 1917, were studied. Eight of the fifteen discussed the question of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents; the remaining seven ignored this problem entirely. Among the grammars grouped arbitrarily by copyright dates in those for this decade was found the first group of which half or more than half of the books contained a discussion of this question of number.

This very interesting treatment of the problem was found in A. J. Ashton's

Senior English Grammar:

The pronoun, he, she, it, ought to agree in gender and number with the noun to which it refers. But it often happens that it has to be used with reference to the individuals of a class that may consist of both sexes, distributed by means of the singular indefinite pronouns 'each' and 'every', or to either of two singular nouns differing in gender, and connected by the alternative pronouns 'either - or', 'neither - nor'. The difficulty that thus arises is sometimes evaded by using the plural... Some insist that in such cases alternative pronouns should be used... But on the whole, the plural seems preferable, although, of course, it involves a breach of rule. Such a sentence as, 'Each man, woman, and child received his, her, and its share', is intolerably awkward. But the plural should be restricted to cases in which there is a patent discrepancy.<sup>15</sup>

In 1914, one year later, Edwin Herbert Lewis made the following statement: "When the antecedent of a pronoun is a singular noun or pronoun of common gender, like person, everyone, anyone, everybody, anybody, it is best referred to by the pronoun he. In spoken English we may be pardoned if we refer to everyone, everybody, by they, but in strictness such words as one

<sup>14</sup>Huber Gray Duesler, A Modern English Grammar with Composition (New York, c. 1900), 184.

<sup>15</sup>A. J. Ashton, Senior English Grammar (London, c. 1913), 339.

and body are singular grammatically."<sup>16</sup> Also in 1914 Alma Blount and Clark Sutherland Northup in An English Grammar discussed the problem of number and gave examples in the following words: "A distributive singular subject is sometimes followed by a plural verb. Example - Behind him die

Faint and more faint, each hostile cry. - Scott.

A distributive or indefinite word is sometimes referred to by a plural pronoun. Example - Nobody knows what it is to lose a friend till they have lost him."<sup>17</sup> In both of these books published in 1914 the plural form of pronouns used with an indefinite pronoun antecedent was spoken of as acceptable usage, although perhaps not quite countenanced as grammatically correct.

An additional interesting bit of information on the problem of number was offered in certain of these textbooks. Kittredge and Farley in 1913 insisted that personal pronouns must be in the singular to agree with the antecedents each, everybody, etc. However, they allowed none to be represented by either singular or plural.<sup>18</sup> James C. Fernald handled the problem similarly in 1916:

Of the indefinite pronouns, another, each, either, and neither are singular only; any and both are plural only; some and such are either singular or plural; one and other are singular, but form regular plurals, ones and others. None (as a compound of no and one) was formerly held to be singular only, but is now by approved authors used also as a plural. Any was formerly used as a singular and other as a plural without change of form.<sup>19</sup>

J. Leslie Hall in his English Usage made a similar statement giving the information that none might be either singular or plural. Mr. Hall said that

<sup>16</sup> Edwin Herbert Lewis, A Textbook of Applied English Grammar (New York, c. 1914), 302.

<sup>17</sup> Alma Blount and Clark Sutherland Northup, An English Grammar (New York, c. 1914), 104.

<sup>18</sup> George Lyman Kittredge and Frank Edgar Farley, An Advanced English Grammar (Boston, c. 1913), 64.

<sup>19</sup> James C. Fernald, English Grammar Simplified (New York, c. 1916), 49.

nones was originally a singular form but that in the seventeenth century it took on a plural meaning and has kept that meaning down to the present time. However, he said that the word nones has a 'pluristic' sound.<sup>20</sup>

To represent the decade from 1920 to 1930 21 textbooks, bearing the dates 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, and 1929, were studied. Twelve of these 21 contained discussions of this problem, but nine failed entirely to contain any notice of it. It is interesting to note that very little variance was allowed by any of the authors of this period; the decade seems to have been one in which only absolute statements of rule were accepted.

One typical example of the sort of absolute rule given at this time was found in George O. Curme's College English Grammar:

The singular is now the regular form after each one, everybody, everyone, either, since they are felt as presenting subjects separately.

Nones was originally a singular and is sometimes still so used, but it is now more commonly felt and used as a plural. In the singular it is now usually replaced by no one.<sup>21</sup>

It is evident in the foregoing example that nones was accepted as a plural by Curme before he would accept the whole group of so-called indefinite pronouns as plural.

Another typical example is the following, taken from John Edwin Well's Practical Review Grammar, in which the agreement mentioned is with verbs only and not with pronouns.

The pronouns each, everybody, and everyone, and a noun modified by every, take singular verbs.

Nones is generally regarded as always singular but many careful writers and speakers use with it a plural verb when its sense is plural.

<sup>20</sup>J. Lesslie Hall, English Usage (Chicago, c. 1917), 177.

<sup>21</sup>George O. Curme, College English Grammar (Richmond, c. 1925), 115.

'None of the miscellany is good.'

'None of the principals (was, were) present.'<sup>22</sup>

The following example was taken from The Writing of English by Manly, Rickert, and Freeman: "Each, either, everybody, neither, anyone, everyone, are grammatically singular. None is either singular or plural."<sup>23</sup>

Similar definite statements and discussions were found in Mabel C.

Hermann's Studies in Grammar,<sup>24</sup> L. H. O'Rourke's Self-Aids in the Essentials of Grammatical Usage,<sup>25</sup> Jessie L. Wheeler's Grammar at Work,<sup>26</sup> and E. A. Cross's The Little Grammar.<sup>27</sup>

In some cases the authors taught the same precepts but instead of giving a certain rule did the teaching by example. For instance, in A College Grammar, by Mason Long, the following method was used: "Observe the following reference pronominal adjectives:

Everybody has his life to live.

Each of you must head in his own work."<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, C. H. Ward presented this material in his Sentences and Themes:

When we refer to one thing or one person, we must use a singular verb and a singular personal pronoun -- thus:

Neither of you cleans his own shoes.

Everyone is at his own desk.

Each of us has his special job.

If we refer to each person in a class of boys and girls or in a crowd of men and women, we use his.<sup>29</sup>

A little different presentation of the idea of number was found in A

<sup>22</sup>John Edwin Wells, Practical Review Grammar (Boston, c. 1920), 268.

<sup>23</sup>John Matthews Manly, Edith Rickert, and Martin Freeman, The Writing of English (New York, c. 1920), 429.

<sup>24</sup>Mabel C. Hermann, Studies in Grammar (New York, c. 1924), 161.

<sup>25</sup>L. J. O'Rourke, Self-Aids in the Essentials of Grammatical Usage (Washington D. C., c. 1927), 127.

<sup>26</sup>Jessie L. Wheeler, Grammar at Work (Boston, c. 1928), 146.

<sup>27</sup>E. A. Cross, The Little Grammar (Boston, c. 1929), 68.

<sup>28</sup>Mason Long, A College Grammar (New York, c. 1928), 61.

<sup>29</sup>C. H. Ward, Sentences and Theme (Chicago, c. 1920), 375.

Modern English Grammar, by Otto Jespersen. This statement is as follows:

"When the subject is one of the pronouns that have the same form in both numbers, none, any, (n)either, who, which, what, the verb may be in either number, according as the singular or plural idea is uppermost in the speaker's mind."<sup>30</sup> Again this discussion is of agreement with verb and not with pronoun, but in most cases a rule which can be applied in one situation can also be applied in the other.

A different interpretation of the term: indefinite pronoun was found in Our Living Language, by Grottan and Gurrey. They included this discussion in their book:

Pronouns which indicate not one particular thing but any one or more of a class of things, are called Indefinite Pronouns. They are pronouns of general or vague reference.

(1)...

Some of the Personal Pronouns can go over to this category -- for example, They say! Do they say? What do they say? Well, let them say!<sup>31</sup>

This material was of special interest because of the extensive use of the indefinite they. A further consideration of this phase of the question will be found in the discussion of the examples of number taken from various dramas.

Charles Carpenter Fries in The Teaching of the English Language has touched at the core of this number problem and all other problems of English grammar. He has stated the question thus:

The answer to the question, 'What English is grammatically acceptable?'

(1) The only basis for correctness in grammar must be usage, for the schools the usage of those who are carrying on the affairs of English-speaking people.

(2) Where this usage is practically unanimous there is no appeal, but where it is divided no one form or construction is the sole

<sup>30</sup> Otto Jespersen, A Modern English Grammar (Heidelberg, c. 1927), 170.

<sup>31</sup> J. H. G. Grottan and P. Gurrey, Our Living Language (London, c. 1925), 134.

correct one.

(3) In cases of divided usage, a reasonable guiding principle of decision would be to choose that form or construction which is in accord with the tendencies or patterns of English as these can be seen from the history of the language.<sup>32</sup>

Mr. Fries has also made the following statement:

And 'Has everyone handed in their papers?' is held to be an error because it conflicts with the rule that a pronoun agrees with its antecedent in number. The attitude that the conventional rules are the measure of correct English underlies the common grammatical ideas of most people and is the assumption upon which is based much of the educational investigation of the language errors of school children. It therefore deserves the most careful consideration.<sup>33</sup>

In footnote material taken from studies presented in the Sixteenth Year-book of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, pp 88-110, and from Stormsand and O'Shea, How Much English Grammar?, Mr. Fries has named the three most violated rules in the English language.<sup>34</sup> They are

- (1) The verb 'to be' takes the same case after it as stands before it.
- (2) With the auxiliary 'have' or 'had' the past participle must be used, not the form of the simple past tense.
- (3) A pronoun agrees with its antecedent in number.

Since the rules in regard to agreement of pronoun and antecedent in number is one of the three most violated rules in the English language, according to the previous statement made by Mr. Fries the rule cannot be absolute. "Where usage is divided, no one form or construction is the sole correct one." In regard to this question the usage is very definitely divided, so according to Mr. Fries either the singular or the plural form of the pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent would be acceptable.

<sup>32</sup>Charles Carpenter Fries, The Teaching of the English Language (New York, N. Y., 1927), 45.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 2, 7.

To represent the last decade, that from 1930 to 1940, 24 grammars were studied. These bore the dates, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, and 1940. Among the 24 grammars examined were found nine which did not mention or discuss the question of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents and fifteen which did discuss the problem. It is significant to note that such a thorough and eminent scholar as Otto Jespersen did not discuss the question;<sup>35</sup> evidently the importance of it was too slight or the disagreement upon it was too evident to warrant a statement by him in 1933.

Statements were found in books by F. K. Mitchell;<sup>36</sup> House and Harman;<sup>37</sup> Kies, Brockway, Clark, Green, and Gettman;<sup>38</sup> Canby, Pierce, MacCracken, and Thompson;<sup>39</sup> George O. Curme;<sup>40</sup> Searcy and Sugden;<sup>41</sup> C. Rexford Davis;<sup>42</sup> Starbrook and Raymond;<sup>43</sup> and Lawrence, Ehm, Rosa, and Babb;<sup>44</sup> to the effect that indefinite pronouns are always singular and must always be referred to by singular pronouns. This evidence can be used to support the theory held by some students of grammar that definite rules are the only means of teaching certain precepts. However, this theory is not unanimously accepted among students of grammar.

<sup>35</sup>Otto Jespersen, Essentials of English Grammar (New York, c. 1933), 203.

<sup>36</sup>F. K. Mitchell, English Grammar for College Students (New York, c. 1931), 57.

<sup>37</sup>Homer C. House and Susan Evelyn Harman, Descriptive English Grammar (New York, c. 1931), 80.

<sup>38</sup>Paul P. Kies, Valada Brockway, Ella E. Clark, Andrew J. Green, and Royal A. Gettman, A Writer's Manual and Workbook (New York, c. 1933), 22.

<sup>39</sup>Henry Seidel Canby, Frederick Stratus Pierce, Henry Noble MacCracken, and Ethel Thompson, op. cit., p. 307.

<sup>40</sup>George O. Curme, Parts of Speech and Accidence (Boston, c. 1935), 159.

<sup>41</sup>Lucile Searcy and Jean Sugden, Foundation English (New York, c. 1936), 108.

<sup>42</sup>C. Rexford Davis, Toward Correct English (New York, c. 1935), 28.

<sup>43</sup>A. Starbrook and W. R. Raymond, Inductive English Composition (New York, c. 1937), 194.

<sup>44</sup>Nat P. Lawrence, Sherman H. Ehm, Matthew W. Rosa, and Lawrence Babb, A Functional Grammar (New York, c. 1937), 30.



George Curme in his Syntax has given an entirely different idea from that in his Parts of Speech and Accidence and from that given in any other grammar among those studied. His statement follows:

The singular is the regular form after the indefinite or general pronouns each one, everybody,...etc., since they are now usually felt as presenting the subject separately; 'Everyone has his hobby. Neither has a wife.' In English the plural was common here, as the tendency was then strong to give expression to the plural idea logically contained in these words: 'Everyone in the house were in their beds.' (Fielding). This usage survives in loose colloquial and popular speech. After neither, however, the plural verb is still found also in the literary language alongside of the singular. On account of the strong plural idea logically contained in it, the plural verb was common in older English and is still found in good authors. 'Therites' body is as good as Ajax', when neither are found.' (Shakespeare). 'Neither of us are dukes.' (H. G. Wells). None used to be singular completely, but now is often used as plural form with plural verb.<sup>45</sup>

Curme also made a statement later in the same book saying that present day general acceptance is that the singular form of pronouns is correct in referring to indefinite pronoun antecedents, but that the older, literary usage of the plural still survives in loose colloquial and popular speech. He cited Addison, Beaconsfield, Fielding, and Defoe as users of the plural form.<sup>46</sup>

Arthur Kennedy in Current English has allowed some variance from the rule if the logic and meaning of the context explain its use:

The use of none with a plural verb, as in 'None were saved', has often been criticised on the ground that none means 'no one'. Krapp says, 'Usage justifies none also as a plural', and the New English Dictionary states that the plural construction is more common. Few speakers hesitate to use it. If the plural seems illogical, the use of no one, the uncontrasted form, will settle the trouble.

Another kind of grammatical trap catches the unwary speaker when he uses one of the indefinite pronouns, especially one, each,... etc., with a following partitive-genitive phrase, as in 'Each one of the men sitting in the store were hurt'. Grammatically and logically this time, the singular verb was is plainly required.

<sup>45</sup> George O. Curme, Syntax (Boston, c. 1961), 81.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 557.

On the other hand, the noun in the intervening phrase sometimes really governs the number of the verb which follows it, as in, 'He wrote one of the best novels that ever were written', and it is illogical to make the verb singular, as though the clause were a modifier of one instead of novels.<sup>47</sup>

In Form and Style Clark, Beatty, Bowyer, and Neu made this statement:

"Pronouns referring to distributive pronouns like everyone and everybody and to nouns modified by the distributive adjectives like each and every are singular."<sup>48</sup> However, in a note they admitted that colloquially the use of the plural pronoun in such constructions has been doubtfully established, and gave Addison, Galsworthy, and Stuart Chase as authority for their statement.

A statement that the indefinite pronouns are actually singular and should be referred to by singular pronouns was made by Janet Rankin Aikin in her Commonsense Grammar. However, she tempered this first statement with another saying that this rule is often disregarded.<sup>49</sup> Quite evidently the rule is taken merely as a point of departure in such circumstances.

The latest grammar included in this study was the American English Grammar by Charles Carpenter Price. He has been perhaps the most liberal in his statements regarding plural use of pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents of all the authors studied. Several typical examples of his statements are:

Our present practice concerning number concord in respect to the other indefinite pronouns of later formation - everyone, everybody, nobody, anyone, anybody, etc., - parallels that of collective nouns in Old English and of none in Middle English. We never use a plural verb or plural pronoun form immediately following or immediately preceding the singular form of these indefinites, but when other words intervene, especially when these intervening words serve to emphasize the plural idea contained in the indefinite, a plural verb form or a plural pronoun is common. In other words the pattern concerning

<sup>47</sup>Arthur O. Kennedy, Current English (Boston, c. 1935), 497.

<sup>48</sup>David Lee Clark, John O. Beatty, John W. Bowyer, and Jacob L. Neu, Form and Style (New York, c. 1935), 80.

<sup>49</sup>Janet Rankin Aikin, Commonsense Grammar (New York, c. 1935), 174.

the use of number forms in secondary words that has emerged in the development of English is a concord based primarily on the number idea emphasized in the primary word rather than on its form. In nearly all cases, form and meaning coincide and no problems arise. In these instances, however, in which form and meaning conflict, Modern English tends to give meaning the right of way. Collectives and some of the indefinite pronouns such as none have now no restrictions in their use with plural verb forms in accord with the idea uppermost in the speaker's mind, but most of the other indefinites (everyone, everybody, nobody, anyone, anybody, (n)either) that may be singular in form with plural idea take a plural reference pronoun or a plural verb only when other words intervene between the indefinite and the verb or reference pronoun.<sup>50</sup>

Such violations of a formal concord as the use of a singular collective noun with a plural verb or a plural reference pronoun; none with a plural verb; the indefinites everyone, everybody, etc., with a plural reference pronoun or a plural verb separated from the indefinite by other words; a double subject connected by and with a singular verb when the two substantives refer to the same thing or can be included in a single category; a singular subject with a plural verb when words intervening between the subject and verb (or other context) give a distinctly plural meaning to the subject; -- these violations of a formal number concord in order to use the few number distinctive forms of verbs and those of reference pronouns in accord with the actual number of the referent rather than the formal number of the word used as the subject are characteristic of Group I (Standard English) and seldom appear in Vulgar English.<sup>51</sup>

These forms are used with some frequency in Standard English materials.

(a) ...

(b) The indefinites everyone, everybody, etc., with a plural reference pronoun or a plural verb separated from the indefinite by other words.<sup>52</sup>

Their referring back to everyone is an idiomatic usage long sanctioned in Great Britain but is still "bad grammar" by American standards.<sup>53</sup>

A brief summary of the material presented in this historical survey of grammar textbooks shows that the general trend of the attitude of grammarians toward the question of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun

<sup>50</sup>Charles Carpenter Fries, American English Grammar (New York, n. 1940, 50.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>52</sup>ibid., 287.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 19.

antecedents has become increasingly liberal through the years. In the group of grammars dating from 1828 to 1900 only one was found which even suggested the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent; five grammars insisted on the singular pronoun and eleven grammars failed to discuss the problem. From the decade 1900 to 1910 only four grammars were studied which did not discuss the question; of the seven grammars which did discuss it two conceded the use of plural pronouns. Representing the decade from 1910 to 1920 were seven grammars which did not contain any discussion of the question and eight which did contain such a discussion. Among the eight there were three which accepted the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent. To represent the ten years from 1920 to 1930, 21 grammars were studied of which nine did not discuss this question and twelve did discuss it. However, only one made a concession which even suggested the use of a plural pronoun in situations of the kind discussed in this paper. For the period dating from 1930 to 1940, 24 grammars were studied; of these nine did not discuss this question and fifteen did discuss it. Five grammars of this decade recognized the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent.

The trend of attitude toward this number problem is most plainly shown in Table 1. The counter movement which appeared in the decade from 1920 to 1930 might have had some relationship to the first World War. Advancement in this trend made no progress, but a stationary position or even a backward movement can be noticed. However, on the whole, the table shows a changing, more liberal attitude evolving toward this number question.

Table 1. The relationship of the grammars studied to the question of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents.

Period represented.	Number of grammars examined.	Number of grammars which did not discuss the question	Number of grammars which did discuss the question.	Number of grammars which conceded the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite antecedent.
1888-1900	17	11	6	1
1900-1910	11	4	7	2
1910-1920	15	7	8	3
1920-1930	21	9	12	1(?)
1930-1940	24	9	15	5

On the following pages may be found a chronological list of all the grammars which were studied for this historical survey and which were included in Table 1.

Chronological List of Grammar Textbooks Included in the  
Historical Survey.

- 1828  
Ingersoll, Charles M., Conversations on English Grammar.
- 1866  
Greene, Samuel S., A Treatise on the Structure of the English Language.
- 1868  
Brown, Gould, The Grammar of English Grammars.
- 1877  
Swinton, William, New English Grammar and Composition.
- 1878  
Abbott, Edwin A., How To Parse.
- 1884  
Reamer, J., Principles of General Grammar.
- 1886  
Genung, John F., The Practical Elements of Rhetoric.
- 1887  
Hedgson, William B., Errors in the Use of English.
- 1889  
Waddy, Virginia, Elements of Composition and Rhetoric.
- 1891  
Clark, H. G., An Outline of the Elements of the English Language.
- 1892  
Kellner, Leon, Historical Outlines of English Syntax.  
Reed, Alonzo, and Kellog, Brainerd, English Grammar and Composition.  
Sweet, Henry, A Short Historical English Grammar.
- 1895  
Magnusson, Peter Magnus, Some Applications of Logical and Psychological Principles to Grammar.  
Whitney, William D., An English Grammar.
- 1897  
Low, W. H., The English Language; Its History and Structure.
- 1899  
Lyte, E. Oram, Advanced Grammar and Composition.
- 1900  
Buehler, Huber Gray, A Modern English Grammar with Composition.

Kimball, William G., The Structure of the English Sentence.  
Sweet, Henry, A New English Grammar.

1906

Fowler, H. W., and Fowler, F. G., The King's English.

1907

Gardner, John Hays, Kittredge, George Lyman, and Arnold, Sarah Louise,  
Manual of Composition and Rhetoric.  
Huntington, Tuley Francis, Elements of English Composition.

1908

Cobbett, William, The English Grammar of William Cobbett.  
Krapp, George P., The Elements of English Grammar.

1909

Krapp, George P., Modern English, Its Growth and Present Use.  
Morris, John, Organic History of English Words.  
Reed, Alonzo, and Kellogg, Brainard, Higher Lessons in English.

1911

McCarthy, Charles E., Revision of Kerney's Abridgement of Murray's English Grammar.

1912

Bugg, Lelia Hardin, Correct English.  
Hansen, Charles Lane, Two Years' Course in English Composition.  
Morris, Rev. Richard, Historical Outlines of English Accidence.  
Rose, John D., Advanced English Grammar Through Composition.  
Sheffield, Alfred Dwight, Grammar and Thinking.

1913

Ashton, A. J., Senior English Grammar.  
Kittredge, George Lyman, and Farley, Frank Edgar, An Advanced English Grammar.  
Kittredge, George Lyman, and Farley, Frank Edgar, A Concise English Grammar.

1914

Blount, Alma, and Northrup, Clark Sutherland, An English Grammar.  
Lewis, Edwin Herbert, A Textbook of Applied English Grammar.

1915

Boynton, Percy W., Principles of Composition.  
Gessung, John Franklin, and Hansen, Charles Lane, Outlines of Composition and Rhetoric.

1916

Fernald, James C., English Grammar Simplified.

1917

Hall, J. Leslie, English Usage.

1921

Fernald, James C., Historic English.  
Lyman, Rolle LaVerne, English Grammar in American Schools Before 1880.

1922

Slater, John Rothwell, Freshman Rhetoric.

1923

Holt, Lucius N., and Chilton, Alexander W., English Analysis and Composition.  
Holt, Mathilde Edith, Constructive English Grammar.

1924

Hermans, Nabel C., Studies in Grammar.

1925

Curme, George O., College English Grammar.  
Gratten, J. H. S., and Gurrey, P., Our Living Language.

1926

Stanley, Carrie E., Housinkveld, Arthur N., and Hovey, Alma B., A Guide for Freshman College English.

1927

Fries, Charles Carpenter, The Teaching of the English Language.  
Jespersen, Otto, A Modern English Grammar.  
Krapp, George Philip, The Knowledge of English.  
O'Rourke, L. J., Self-Aids in the Essentials of Grammatical Usage.

1928

Long, Mason, A College Grammar.  
McKnight, George H., Modern English in the Making.  
Wells, John Edwin, Practical Review Grammar.  
Wheeler, Jessie L., Grammar at Work.

1929

Cross, R. A., The Little Grammar.  
Manly, John Matthews, Hockett, Edith, and Freeman, Martin, The Writing of English.  
Sheffield, Alfred Dwight, Command of Sentence Patterns.  
Ward, C. H., Sentence and Theme.

1931

Curme, George O., Syntax.  
Huse, Homer, C., and Harman, Susan Evelyn, Descriptive English Grammar.  
Mitchell, F. K., English Grammar for College Students.  
Newfield, J. C., English Grammar Past and Present.  
Shawway, Charles William, Fundamentals of Grammar.

1933

Aiken, Janet Rankin, A New Plan of English Grammar.  
Bloomfield, Leonard, Language.



Canby, Henry Seidel, Pierce, Frederick Trastus, MacCracken, Henry Noble, and Thompson, Stith, English Composition in Theory and Practice.  
 Jespersen, Otto, Essentials of English Grammar.  
 Kies, Paul P., Brockway, Valada, Clark, Ella E., Green, Andrew J., and Gettman, Royal A., A Writer's Manual and Workbook.  
 Ward, C. E., Grammar for Composition.

1935

Clark, David Lee, Beaty, John O., Sawyer, John W., and Neu, Jacob L., Form and Style.  
 Curme, George O., Parts of Speech and Accidence.  
 Horwell, E. W., A Dictionary of Modern American Usage.  
 Kennedy, Arthur G., Current English.

1936

Aiken, Janet Rankin, Commonsense Grammar.  
 Davis, C. Rexford, Toward Current English.  
 Searcy, Lucile, and Sogden, Jean, Foundation English.

1937

Laurence, Nat P., Kuhn, Sherman H., Rose, Matthew W., and Babb, Lawrence, A Functional Grammar.  
 Starbrook, A., and Raymond, W. E., Inductive English Composition.

1938

Herbarger, S. A., Dumble, W. E., Hildroth, W. H., and Hensley, Bert, English for Students in Applied Sciences.

1939

McKnight, George Harley, Haber, Tom Burns, and Hatfield, W. Wilbur, A Grammar of Living English.

1940

Fries, Charles Carpenter, American English Grammar.

## Analysis of Certain Types of Grammar Textbooks

### Handbooks.

In addition to the 102 grammar textbooks which were included in the historical survey in the first part of this paper there were nineteen handbooks studied and analyzed in order to ascertain what information they contained concerning the question of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents. Of the nineteen handbooks which were studied eighteen were found to contain a discussion of number agreement and only one<sup>54</sup> failed to contain such a discussion. Among the eighteen handbooks which contained a discussion of this number question fifteen insisted upon the use of a singular pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent; the remaining three handbooks suggested some other usage might be approved rather than insisting that the only correct usage was that of a singular pronoun in such a situation.

A typical example of the insistence upon the use of a singular pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent was found in Sentences and Their Elements by Samuel C. Earle, Howard J. Savage, and Frank E. Seavey: "When the antecedent of a pronoun or of a possessive adjective is a collective or partitive pronoun, care should be taken to make the agreement in number exact. 'If anyone will volunteer, he may try it'.<sup>55</sup> Another example was found in MacCracken and Sandison's Manual of Good English:

The indefinite substantives here named are invariably singular; the indefinite pronouns another, each, every, either, neither, one, anybody, anyone, and all others ending in -body or one.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup>John Matthews Henly and Edith Rickert, The Writer's Index of Good Form and Good English (New York, n. 1929).

<sup>55</sup>Samuel C. Earle, Howard J. Savage, and Frank E. Seavey, Sentences and Their Elements (New York, n. 1911), 106.

<sup>56</sup>H. H. MacCracken and Helen E. Sandison, Manual of Good English (New York, n. 1921), 69.

The number of a pronoun is determined by its antecedent. Example: 'Each showed his report card at home'.<sup>57</sup>

Sherwin Cody in The Art of Writing and Speaking the English Language, Volume I, wrote the following statement: "We must be very careful in the use of pronouns referring to persons or objects described as each, every, etc., the singular pronoun being required in all these cases."<sup>58</sup> In Volume V of the same work he insisted again that only singular pronouns are at all acceptable with indefinite pronoun antecedents.<sup>59</sup>

Edwin C. Woolley and Franklin W. Scott in 1926 and again in 1928 in their College Handbook made a statement to the effect that each, every, either, neither, some one, somebody, anyone, anybody, every one, no one, nobody, one, and a person are singular and therefore are the subjects of singular verbs and the antecedents of singular pronouns.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, John E. Uhler in A Review of English Grammar made this statement: "The pronoun that refers to indefinites like each, every, either, neither, no one should be in the singular number, because these indefinite pronouns are singular."<sup>61</sup> George Carver in his Sentence Essentials made this similar statement: "A pronoun referring to an antecedent composed of each, each one, every, every one, everybody, any one, anybody, either, neither, no one, or nobody is singular."<sup>62</sup>

This somewhat longer statement was made by Homer G. House and Susan E. Harman in their Handbook of Correct English:

It is a serious blunder to employ a plural pronoun with a singu-

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 60.

<sup>58</sup>Sherwin Cody, The Art of Writing and Speaking the English Language, (Vol. 1, (New York, c. 1923), 64.

<sup>59</sup>Sherwin Cody, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup>Edwin C. Woolley and Franklin W. Scott, College Handbook of Composition (Boston, c. 1926), 169.

<sup>61</sup>John E. Uhler, A Review of English Grammar (New York, c. 1926), 122.

<sup>62</sup>George Carver, Sentence Essentials (New York, c. 1938), 23.

lar antecedent. One, each one, any one, every one, some one, anybody, everybody, somebody, a person, a man, a student, a teacher, every student, every girl, every farmer, etc., are all singular expressions and should not be referred to by the plural forms they, their, and them.<sup>63</sup>

Similar information was given in handbooks by Laird Bell,<sup>64</sup> Greerer and Jones,<sup>65</sup> Caspar P. Harvey,<sup>66</sup> McElfresh and Ingalls,<sup>67</sup> and Sidwell and Siegfried,<sup>68</sup>

In the Handbook of Effective Writing by Walter Key Smart a statement was made as follows:

A singular pronoun must be used with each, everybody, anybody, somebody, etc., or with a word or series of words introduced by every, each, etc.

Even in cases where the antecedent includes persons of both sexes, custom has decreed that the singular masculine pronoun shall be used. If this seems awkward, the antecedent should be changed to one that does not require a singular pronoun, or the sentence should be reconstructed.<sup>69</sup>

In a revised edition of the same work copyrighted in 1951 Mr. Smart failed to suggest any substitute for the singular pronoun; in fact, he failed to discuss the problem of number in regard to indefinite pronouns at all except as to agreement of subject and verb.<sup>70</sup>

Porter G. Perrin in An Index to English recognized that the use of plural pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents was popular colloquially but suggested the following manner of improving sentences where the plural pronoun was used:

Every, everybody, everyone, are singular... Colloquial ex-

<sup>63</sup>Homer C. House and Susan Evelyn Harman, Handbook of Correct English (New York, c. 1928), 39.

<sup>64</sup>Laird Bell, A Handbook of Essentials in English (New York, c. 1939), 60.

<sup>65</sup>Garland Greerer and Wesley S. Jones, The Century Collegiate Handbook (New York, c. 1939), 55.

<sup>66</sup>Caspar Harvey, Practice Handbook in English Composition (New York, c. 1928), 56.

<sup>67</sup>E. McElfresh and E. C. Ingalls, Everyday English (New York, c. 1939), 2.

<sup>68</sup>Paul Sidwell and Russell Grant Siegfried, Handbook of Grammar (New York, c. 1928), 88.

<sup>69</sup>Walter Key Smart, Handbook of Effective Writing (New York, c. 1922), 106.

<sup>70</sup>Walter Key Smart, Handbook of Effective Writing, Rev. Ed. (New York, c. 1931), 151.

pressions like 'Everybody did their best,...' can often be made better English not by making the verb or pronoun singular but by changing the everybody to some more accurate plural or collective expression: 'They all did their best'.<sup>71</sup>

Bryan, Nethercot, and De Voto in The Writer's Handbook made this somewhat more liberal statement:

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number, gender, and person. Three cautions with respect to number are to be especially observed.

(1) Each, every, either, neither, one, anyone, anybody, somebody, no one, nobody, etc., are singular; consequently, a pronoun having one of these words as its antecedent must be singular. Note - Occasionally a careful and reputable writer uses a plural they or their referring to one of these forms, but only rare and unusual conditions justify this abnormal and colloquial use. In order to avoid the awkward he or she, his or her, referring to one of these pronouns, usage warrants the employment of the masculine form alone unless the antecedent clearly implies a number of the feminine sex. On the other hand, if the notion of plurality is strong, the substitution of all for every, etc., will frequently obviate the difficulty in reference. None may be either singular or plural.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the nineteen handbooks which were studied four composition textbooks which included handbook sections were analyzed. The handbook section of Composition for College Students by Thomas, Manchester, and Scott contained this definite statement:

Each, every, everyone, anyone, everybody, either, neither, someone, no one, no body, etc., are singular. Consequently, they are the subjects of singular verbs and the antecedents of singular pronouns.

None (a contraction of no one or not any) is usually followed by a plural verb, but either plural or singular may be used according to the wish of the writer to express a plural or a singular idea.<sup>73</sup>

Similar definite statements were made by Rankin, Thorpe, and Solve in

<sup>71</sup>Porter C. Ferrin, An Index to English (Chicago, c. 1939), 246.

<sup>72</sup>W. F. Bryan, Arthur M. Nethercot, and Bernard De Voto, The Writer's Handbook (New York, c. 1927), 92.

<sup>73</sup>Joseph M. Thomas, Frederick A. Manchester, and Franklin W. Scott, Composition for College Students (New York, c. 1939), 692.

the handbook section of their College Composition,<sup>74</sup> and by Wesley S. Jones in the handbook section of his Practical English Composition.<sup>75</sup>

A slightly more liberal statement was found in The Art of Writing Prose by Louis, Hull, and Robinson:

Each, every, either, neither, and indefinite pronouns ending in -one, or -body, are singular. When one of these pronouns is used as a subject, it must have a singular verb. Pronouns and possessive adjectives referring to any of these pronouns should be singular, except when a singular would be absurd; for instance, Every man went to the class dinner, and while he was at table, his over coat was stolen.

None may be treated either as singular or as plural.<sup>76</sup>

This analysis of nineteen handbooks of grammar and four composition textbooks which contained handbook sections offered evidence that writers of handbooks are not as liberal in their attitude toward the question of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents as are the writers of typical grammar textbooks. Perhaps the reason for this more conservative attitude is that the typical handbook is written to present definite rules and very little space is given to the discussion of these rules. Where space is conserved and only carefully worded rules can be stated it is very difficult to mention a trend away from a long accepted principle; it is necessary to have that trend very definitely accepted as a fact before it can be mentioned at all in such a book.

#### Secondary and Grade School Grammar Textbooks.

Thirteen books which were intended for use in teaching English in the

<sup>74</sup>Thomas Ernest Rankin, Clarence Dewitt Thorpe, and Melvin Theodor Solve, College Composition (New York, n. 1929), 786.

<sup>75</sup>Wesley S. Jones, Practical English Composition (New York, n. 1931), 28.

<sup>76</sup>Roger Sherman Loomis, Helen R. Hull, and Mabel Louise Robinson, The Art of Writing Prose (New York, n. 1936), 570.

junior high schools and senior high schools were studied in the preparation of this paper. Of these thirteen, three did not mention the problem of number in regard to pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents; the remaining ten stated a definite rule or taught by example that the singular form of pronoun was the only correct form to use with an indefinite pronoun antecedent.

Four textbooks were intended for use in teaching English classes in a junior high school. One of these, Elementary English in Action, Book III, by Fressler and Shelmadine made this statement: "Each, every, either, neither, anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody, someone, somebody, no one, nobody, one, many a, and a person are singular."<sup>77</sup> Included with this statement of the number of these certain pronouns was the general rule of agreement of pronoun and antecedent. A similar statement was made by Robert Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf in English Grammar for Common Schools;<sup>78</sup> Igman, Johnson, and McGregor in Effective Communication taught the same rule by example;<sup>79</sup> and Denney, Eleanor Skinner, and Ada Skinner in Our English taught that these indefinite pronouns were singular and must have singular verbs to agree with them, thus indicating that these same pronouns must also have singular pronouns to agree with them.<sup>80</sup>

Of the six high school textbooks one of those studied was a handbook. This handbook, A Primer of Essentials in Grammar and Rhetoric, by Marietta Knight contained this statement: "The indefinite singular pronouns, such as

<sup>77</sup> J. C. Fressler and Marguerite B. Shelmadine, Elementary English in Action, Book III (Topoka, c. 1928), 234.

<sup>78</sup> Robert C. Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, English Grammar for Common Schools (New York, c. 1894), 301.

<sup>79</sup> R. L. Igman, Roy Ivan Johnson, and A. Laura McGregor, Effective Communication (Boston, c. 1925), 312.

<sup>80</sup> Joseph Villiers Denney, Eleanor L. Skinner, and Ada M. Skinner, Our English, Book III (Topoka, c. 1928), 296.

each, either, one, should be used with a singular verb and a singular pronoun, thus; "Each thinks that he can do the work."<sup>81</sup>

Lewis and Hsieh in their New Practical English for High Schools made the following statement: "When a singular indefinite pronoun is used as an antecedent, the singular form of the personal pronoun or the possessive adjective referring to it should be used."<sup>82</sup> This similar statement was found in Correct English Usage by Swain Fribble: "Anybody, everybody, nobody, somebody, each, either, and neither are singular and pronouns referring to them must be singular."<sup>83</sup> Blount and Worthup in Grammar and Usage stated the rule in this manner: "Such an antecedent as one, a person, every, each, many a, requires after it a singular pronoun."<sup>84</sup> Paul and Miller in English Essentials for the Ninth Year taught the same rule by example instead of wording it definitely.<sup>85</sup>

H. W. Davis in his Self-Improvement in English discussed this problem more fully than did the authors of the previously cited texts. The following are several quotations from Mr. Davis's text:

Verbs and subjects, and pronouns and their antecedents must agree in number. This is a very simple rule, but like the rules for case it is often difficult to apply. Trouble arises (1) from a failure to recognize the real subject of the verb, (2) from a failure to determine the real number of the subject, (3) from a failure to associate the pronoun with the true antecedent, and (4) from a failure to determine correctly the real number of the antecedent.<sup>86</sup>

### 3. Failure to associate the pronoun with the true antecedent.

<sup>81</sup> Marietta Knight, A Primer of Essentials in Grammar and Rhetoric (New York, c. 1906), 13.

<sup>82</sup> William Dodge Lewis and James Fleming Hsieh, New Practical English for High Schools (New York, c. 1916), 81.

<sup>83</sup> Swain Fribble, Correct English Usage (Chicago, c. 1928), 159.

<sup>84</sup> Alma Blount and Ulark S. Worthup, Grammar and Usage (New York, c. 1931), 323.

<sup>85</sup> Harry S. Paul and William D. Miller, English Essentials for the Ninth Year (Topeka, c. 1930), 157.

<sup>86</sup> H. W. Davis, Self-Improvement in English (Garden City, New York, c. 1926), 51.



Wrong: Each of my associates lost their job.  
...

The antecedent of their is not associates, but each, a singular distributive pronoun...<sup>87</sup>

4. Failure to determine correctly the real number of the antecedent.

Wrong: Everybody said they could go.  
Everybody, anybody, nobody, each, every, no one, and similar words are regarded as singular and should be referred to by singular pronouns...<sup>88</sup>

In summarizing the information found in the junior high school and high school textbooks the one outstanding observation is that in no textbook was there found even a suggestion that the plural form of pronoun is ever correctly used with an indefinite pronoun antecedent. Unqualified statements concerning agreement were found in each of these texts together with the addition of one explanation of the faulty understanding on the part of some students. Perhaps the conservatism shown by these authors may be explained by the fact that the books were written for young students. It is difficult to state a rule to a young student and then explain that it is possible for him to disregard this rule in certain relationships. If exceptions are suggested, most immature students become inextricably confused and as a result usually do not know how to apply either the rule or its exceptions. Consequently, the author simply states a definite rule and expects the student to follow it implicitly until he is advanced enough to understand its exceptions if such exceptions exist.

#### Specialized Types of Grammar Textbooks.

Among the books which were studied in the preparation of this paper were

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 93.

two volumes which contained rules and information concerning business English. One of these, Business English,<sup>89</sup> by Rose Buhlig did not discuss the question of number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents at all. The other, The Essentials of Business English, by Porter Lander MacClintock contained this unqualified statement: "Anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody,... etc., are singular and must be represented by a singular pronoun."<sup>90</sup>

It can be noted that business English is characteristically terse, concise, and to the point. Consequently, it is typical of a business English textbook that if any mention at all is made of a problem in grammar it is done in as brief a statement as it is possible to use and yet to achieve perfect clarity and indisputable coherence. The statement made by Mr. MacClintock was as brief as it could be and yet present the meaning intended. In a volume written in such a manner no space can be used for additional explanations of tendencies and trends not completely accepted as facts at the time of the writing. Therefore, it is to be expected that if any statement at all concerning this number question is made in a business English textbook it will be made in the manner in which Mr. MacClintock made his statement.

Many of those grammar textbooks which were cited in the historical survey contained in the first part of this paper and which admitted or allowed the use of a plural pronoun in reference to an indefinite pronoun antecedent sanctioned such usage in colloquial English only. Therefore, it is interesting to note that Henry Sweet in A Primer of Spoken English spoke of this type of usage.<sup>91</sup> Mr. Sweet mentioned particularly this representative sentence,

<sup>89</sup>Rose Buhlig, Business English (Chicago, c. 1914).

<sup>90</sup>Porter Lander MacClintock, The Essentials of Business English (Chicago, c. 1915), 28.

<sup>91</sup>Henry Sweet, A Primer of Spoken English (Oxford, c. 1911), 36.

'If anyone calls, tell them I will be back in half an hour', as typifying the kind of English which is being spoken when an indefinite pronoun is used as an antecedent.

If any one type of English is to be considered as the actual English of the people it surely must be spoken English. The average person talks often and at great length but writes infrequently and then very briefly. Consequently, it is only logical to accept what he says rather than what he writes as his representative English. Evidence has been shown in this paper that the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent is becoming much more generally accepted as correct colloquial English than it was several years earlier. Therefore, it can be seen that the authorities who write the grammar textbooks are slowly accepting as correct the usage which is prevalent in the language of people - spoken English.

#### STUDY OF NUMBER IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Most teachers of English are interested in the same problems; one problem which receives attention from all English teachers from grade school to college is that of so-called errors in English. The word so-called is here used advisedly, for it is difficult to state arbitrarily that a certain type of example is in error and another certain type of example is not in error. Often there is disagreement upon the question of whether a certain type of usage is wrong. Even within the comparatively small group of English teachers there is often disagreement upon such a question. A study of the type of English in which some certain expressions might be found was made by S. A. Leonard and H. Y. Moffett in 1927.<sup>82</sup> They based their conclusions upon the results of

<sup>82</sup>S. A. Leonard and H. Y. Moffett, "Current Definition of Levels in English Usage", The English Journal, 16:348, May, 1927.

a poll conducted among 26 American linguists and seven British linguists, and in these results found an element of disagreement.

Of the expression, "None of them are here", the results indicated that 75 percent of both the American and the British judges considered it to be not formal or literary English but to be cultivated, standard English. Both the American and the British judges also considered the expression, "Everyone was here, but they all went home early", as cultivated, standard English. There was a divided opinion among the judges of both groups regarding the expression, "Everybody bought their own ticket", and the expression, "Neither author nor publisher are subject to censorship", some of the judges considering these last two expressions as being part of standard English and some of the judges considering them as being illiterate. If linguists, who spend their lives studying the language, cannot agree on whether a certain expression may be accepted as correct English it is unavoidable that disagreement must likewise arise among other groups.

In a publication dated 1932 Mr. S. A. Leonard again wrote of the same expressions but at greater length.<sup>85</sup> At that time he based his conclusions on a survey in which seven groups of judges of grammar ranked these usages. Among these groups of judges were four groups of teachers and three groups of non-academic judges; among the latter three groups was one group of authors, one of business men, and one of editors. Mr. Leonard ranked the usages as established, disputable, and illiterate. If an expression was ranked as established it was approved by at least 75 percent of the judges and disapproved by not more than 25 percent of the judges; if an expression

<sup>85</sup> Sterling Andrews Leonard, Current English Usage, A Publication of the National Council of Teachers of English (Chicago, c. 1932), 103.

was ranked as illiterate it was disapproved by at least 75 percent of the judges and approved by not more than 25 percent of the judges; if an expression was ranked as disputable it ranged somewhere between established and illiterate in the opinions of the judges.

Concerning the expression, "None of them are here", the ranking was considered as established; the teachers all ranked the expression as established but the other groups considered it as more or less disputable. One editor gave the opinion that it was correct to say "None are here" but incorrect to say "None of them are here".

The expression, "Everyone was here, but they all went home early", was also ranked as established, but the qualification of colloquial usage was added to the ranking. The New English Dictionary was quoted thus: "The pronoun referring to everyone is often plural, the absence of a singular pronoun of common gender rendering this violation of grammatical concord sometimes necessary."

The expression, "Everybody bought their own ticket", was considered as disputable, as was also the expression, "Neither author nor publisher are subject to censorship".

From this evidence it becomes increasingly clear that in regard to the question of the use of a plural pronoun in reference to an indefinite pronoun antecedent there is much disagreement. However, authorities have accepted some examples as correct usage, and the present trend is in the direction of the acceptance of other examples. How complete this acceptance will become is yet to be seen, and it is quite impossible at the present time to predict accurately what the result will be.

USE OF PRONOUNS WITH INDEFINITE PRONOUN ANTECEDENTS

Examples Found in Various Plays

In addition to the study of books relating to grammar, actual examples of plural pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents were sought in order to determine if the trend which appeared in the grammar books toward the use of such plural pronouns also appeared in speech and literature. Since the drama is the one form of literature which better than any other reflects the common usage of the people, it was chosen as the form for study. For this purpose 150 plays, representing 72 authors, were read in search of examples of plural pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents. Of these plays 34 contained examples which pertained to the question in this discussion, but the remaining 96 yielded no material of any use whatever in this study.

During the nineteenth century Oscar Wilde wrote many plays. In none of his plays which were read in the preparation of this paper was there found an example of the use of a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent. However, examples were found which attested to the fact that Mr. Wilde used other devices in order to keep from using either a singular or a plural pronoun in such a construction. Several such examples were found in his play, The Importance of Being Earnest. For instance, in speaking of all men, instead of using everyone, Lady Bracknell said, "A man should always have an occupation of some kind."<sup>84</sup> Jack made this statement, "Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people,"<sup>85</sup> using people as the word which pertains to everybody. However, Mr. Wilde allowed

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<sup>84</sup>Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest, in Plays of Oscar Wilde (New York, n. s. 1908), 68.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 70.

the use of a plural pronoun with none, having the rector, Mr. Chasuble, say, "None of us are perfect."<sup>96</sup> Mr. Wilde also presented this following interesting bit of conversation which contains an unusual reference:

Jack.

... I am a Liberal Unionist.

Lady Bracknell.

Oh, they count as Tories. They drive with us. Or come in the evening at any rate...

A play written quite recently but depicting the time when Charles II ruled England and Morgan was a pirate on the high seas is The Buccaneer by Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings. In this play the following excellent examples of the use of a plural pronoun referring to any judge and of a singular pronoun referring to any crime were both found in the same sentence:

Charles II.

Oh, as to that, any judge on any bench could legalize any crime in five minutes.

Morgan.

Then let them legalize it.<sup>98</sup>

In Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion the Cockney speech of England was spoken by Eliza Doolittle. The following material was taken from her speech after quite extensive training by Professor Higgins:

Eliza.

My aunt died of influenza; so they said.

Mrs. Eynsford Hill.

...

Eliza.

But it's my belief they done the old woman in.

Mrs. Higgins.

...

Eliza.

They all thought she was dead; but my father he kept ladling gin down her throat 'til she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>98</sup>Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings, The Buccaneer, in Three American Plays (New York, c. 1926), 245.

Mrs. Mansford Hill.

...  
Miss.

What became of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is them as pinched it done her in.<sup>99</sup>

In the last speech of the foregoing example the direct reference of them to somebody can be noted, and in the earlier speeches of the example they is used to refer to some indefinite person or persons designated as somebody in the last speech.

In R. C. Sheriff's war play, Journey's End, were found excellent examples of the use of plural pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents. The examples were not restricted in use to any one class of English soldiers but were found in the language of all the types of soldiers represented in the drama. For instance, Osborne answered a question thus, "No, but everybody thought it was a big thing to do... Didn't they?"<sup>100</sup> Occasionally a shift in number was used even though there were no indefinite pronouns present. For instance, Fardy said, "Oh, you each have a cockroach and start 'em in a line. On the word, 'Go', you dig you cockroach in the ribs and steer him with a match across the table."<sup>101</sup> Similarly he stated again about cockroaches, "Well, if you want to get the best piece out of a cockroach, dip it in whisky - makes 'em go like hell."<sup>102</sup> The following interesting example of shift in number was found in the same play:

Stanhope,

... He doesn't see into the earth beyond - the worms wandering round the stones and roots of trees. I wonder how a worm knows where it's going up or down!

<sup>99</sup>Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion (New York, c. 1925), 165.

<sup>100</sup>R. C. Sheriff, Journey's End, in Nelson's College Caravan, edited by Arthur Palmer Hudson, Leonard Burwell Hurley, and Joseph Deadrick Clark (New York,

c. 1936), 80.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 83.



Osborne.

When it's going down I suppose the blood rushes into its head and makes it throb.

Stanhope.

Worms haven't got any blood.

Osborne.

Then I don't suppose it ever does know.

Stanhope.

Rotten if it didn't - and went on going down when it thought it was coming up.

Osborne.

Yes, I expect that's the one thing worms dread.<sup>103</sup>

Robert W. Sherwood in The Petrified Forest had his ace gangster, Duke, say, "The cops ain't likely to catch up with us - not to-night. So we can all be quiet and peaceable, and have a few beers together, and listen to the music - and not make any wrong moves. Because - I may as well tell you, folks - old Ruby there, with the machine-gun - he's pretty nervous and jumpy and he's got the itch between his fingers. So let's everybody stay where they are."<sup>104</sup> Characters who were similarly outside the law were presented in Maxwell Anderson's Winterest. The following example is representative of the language of these peoples:

Garth.

Everybody knew  
Romagna wasn't guilty. But they weren't listening  
to evidence in his favor. They didn't want it.  
They don't want it now.

Marianna.

But was that why  
they never called on you? -

Garth.

So far as I know  
they never'd heard of me, and I can assure you  
I knew nothing about it.<sup>105</sup>

The remainder of the examples quoted in this paper were taken from the

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>104</sup>Robert W. Sherwood, The Petrified Forest (New York, c. 1935), 92.

<sup>105</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Winterest, in Patterns for Living, edited by Oscar James Campbell, Justine Van Gundy, and Caroline Shrodes (New York, c. 1940), 965.

speech of characters representing ordinary people. There is nothing at all unusual about these people nor about the way they speak, and yet here were found instances of the use of plural pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents.

Rachel Crothers made use of the plural form in such constructions in several of her plays, two of which are He and She and Nice People. For instance, in Nice People Teddy said at one time, "If anybody telephones - tell them we're - no - I don't know where we'll be,"<sup>106</sup> using the plural form to refer to anybody. In the same play the same character said at another time, "Nobody ever finds what he wants, anyway,"<sup>107</sup> using the singular form to refer to nobody. From these two examples evidence is shown that the author was not entirely consistent in her choice of pronouns for this character to use. In He and She Miss Crothers used this interesting shift in number:

Ann.  
She's your grandchild, you know.  
Remington.  
I like 'em that way.<sup>108</sup>

Another playwright who made use of the plural form of pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents is Susan Glaspell. In her play, Barnice, she gave this speech to one character:

Laura.  
I'm sorry to be troubling you, Mr. Allen. Certainly you should not be asked to discuss these matters about - arrangements. But really, you and I seem the only people who are capable of going on with things. I must say, I don't know what to make of everyone else. They all seem to be trying to - keep away from me. I think that's a little unnecessary. Of course I know what grief does, and I'm sure I have every consideration for that, but really -

<sup>106</sup>Rachel Crothers, Nice People, in Contemporary American Plays, edited by Arthur Hobson Quinn (New York, c. 1923), 151.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>108</sup>Rachel Crothers, He and She, in Representative American Plays, edited by Arthur Hobson Quinn (New York, c. 1911), 336.

I'm sorry Craig keeps his own sister out.<sup>109</sup>

In her play, Close the Book, Miss Glaspell wrote the following conversation:

Grandmother.

It would be startling, wouldn't it? - if one of them should turn out to be a real gyp and take to this open road.

Mrs. Root.

(Covering her face.) Oh!

Grandmother.

Quite likely they'd do it by motor.<sup>110</sup>

George S. Kaufman is one of the most prolific of modern writers. In collaboration with Marc Connelly, Moss Hart, Merrie Ryskind, and Edna Ferber as well as while acting as an independent writer he has written many stage successes. In Stage Door, which he wrote in collaboration with Edna Ferber, this example was found:

Big Mary.

We've been in every manager's office on Broadway.

Bernice.

Is anybody casting?

Big Mary.

How do we know? We only get in to see one of them.<sup>111</sup>

In the same play Bobby asked, "Anybody get a muffin they don't want?"<sup>112</sup> In these two examples the plural pronoun was used to refer to anybody; in Beggar on Horseback, written by Mr. Kaufman in collaboration with Marc Connelly, the following interesting plural reference to everybody was used.

Neil.

Well, that's fine. We'll show them, won't we?

Gladys.

Who?

Neil.

Oh, everybody.

Gladys.

Can I tell them?

Neil.

Yes, tell them all. Homer and -.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup>Susan Glaspell, Bernice, in Plays (Boston, c. 1920), 208.

<sup>110</sup>Susan Glaspell, Close the Book, in Plays, (Boston, c. 1920), 72.

<sup>111</sup>Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman, Stage Door (Garden City, New York, c. 1928), 180.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>113</sup>George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, Beggar on Horseback, in Contemporary Drama, edited by E. Bradlee Watson and Heinrich Presser (New York, S. 1931), 302.

John Galsworthy, one of the better known reputable English writers, used the plural pronoun their with the indefinite pronoun everybody; for instance, in his play, Strife, Madge said, "Ah! You don't want him beaten. He's your man. With everybody like their own shadows!"<sup>114</sup>

Two examples of themselves used with anybody were found; "Lovers are so damned selfish; they never think of anybody but themselves,"<sup>115</sup> and "I don't think people ought to belong to anybody but themselves,"<sup>116</sup> The first was taken from Caste by Thomas William Robertson, and the second was taken from Street Scenes by Elmer Rice.

This example of a plural pronoun used with nobody was found in My Lady Dressing by Eugene Pillot:

Little Old Lady. (flaring)

And that's why the whole world is going smash. Nobody will do anything for anybody, unless they get something for it, beforehand if possible...<sup>117</sup>

In Zoe Akins's The Old Maid, Charlotte was allowed to say, "Everyone's glad you're doing so well. They always expected you to, and you have."<sup>118</sup> A similar reference to everyone was found in If This Be Treason by Holmes and Lawrence in which Mrs. Bane, a dowager of Washington, D. C., said, "Everyone's being so tastful, aren't they?"<sup>119</sup> These two similar examples were found in Thornton Wilder's Our Town:

Tell Man.

<sup>114</sup>John Galsworthy, Strife, in Contemporary Plays (New York, c. 1924), 106.

<sup>115</sup>Thomas William Robertson, Caste, in A Book of Modern Plays, edited by George R. Coffman (Chicago, c. 1925), 32.

<sup>116</sup>Elmer Rice, Street Scenes, in Twentieth Century Plays, edited by Frank W.

<sup>117</sup>Chandler and Richard Cordell (New York, c. 1934), 120.

<sup>118</sup>Eugene Pillot, My Lady Dressing, in A Treasury of Plays for Women, edited by Frank Shay (Boston, c. 1923), 275.

<sup>119</sup>Zoe Akins, The Old Maid (New York, c. 1935), 10.

<sup>119</sup>John Maynes Holmes and Reginald Lawrence, If This Be Treason (New York, c. 1935), 20.

Is there no one in town aware of social injustice and industrial equality?

Mr. Webb.

Oh; yee, everybody is, - somethin' terrible. Seems like they spend most of their time talking about who's rich and who's poor.<sup>120</sup>

Stage Manager.

Everybody locks their house doors now at night. Ain't been any burglars in town yet, but everybody's heard about 'em.<sup>121</sup>

Another prominent writer of the present time is Noel Coward. In Mr. Coward's Hay Fever Sorel made the remark, "Yes, but people like little attentions. We've never once asked anyone if they've slept well."<sup>122</sup> In the stage directions to Bitter Sweet Mr. Coward wrote: "Parker throws open the double doors at the back and announces supper. Everyone goes in laughing and talking and can be seen taking their places at small tables."<sup>123</sup> Mr. Coward used the following very interesting shift in number reference to public in Post-Mortem:

John.

The demand creates the supply, I think. The civilian public must enjoy its war, and it also has to reconcile it with a strong sense of patriotism and a wise Christian God. It couldn't do that if it had the remotest suspicion of what really happens.

Perry.

Do you think it will ever know?

John.

I hope so, later on, much later, when it's all over.

Perry.

(Violently) Never, never, never! They'll never know whichever way it goes, victory or defeat. They'll smare it all over with memorials and Rolls of Honour and Angels of Mons, and it'll look so noble and glorious in retrospect that they'll all start itching for another war, egged on by dear old gentlemen in clubs who wish they were twenty years younger, and the splendid women of England happy and proud to give their sons and husbands and lovers, and even their photographs.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Thornton Wilder, Our Town (New York, e. 1938), 30.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>122</sup> Noel Coward, Hay Fever, in Play Parade (Garden City, New York, e. 1938),

<sup>123</sup> Noel Coward, Bitter Sweet, in Play Parade (Garden City, New York, e. 1938).

<sup>124</sup> Noel Coward, Post-Mortem, in Play Parade (Garden City, New York, e. 1938),

Instead of using an indefinite pronoun many writers use the pronoun they with no reference, thus making it really an indefinite pronoun. However, since they is plural in form there is no difficulty in number presented. An example of this in Eugene O'Neill's Marco Millions was found in which Marco Polo said, "Died and became God? So that's what they believe about that stone status, is it?"<sup>125</sup> In George S. Kaufman's and Edna Ferber's Dinner at Eight Kitty said, "They say it's getting warmer every winter. It's on account of the Gulf Stream. They say there'll be palm trees growing where the Empire State is."<sup>126</sup> In Maxwell Anderson's Mary of Scotland, Queen Mary said, "It's what they say. Not what they believe."<sup>127</sup> In Noel Coward's Private Lives the following interesting explanation of the indefinite they was found:

Elyot.

You mustn't be serious, my dear one, it's just what they want.  
Amends.

Who's they?

Elyot.

All of the futile moralists who try to make life unbearable.<sup>128</sup>

Concerning these examples of the use of plural pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents and devices to avoid such usage it is safe to state that the evidence has shown a distinct trend toward such usage. However, since it was necessary to read such a large number of plays in order to find these examples, it is safe to say that the evidence shows no more than a trend; complete acceptance of this usage has not yet been attained.

On the following pages may be found a list of all the plays read in the preparation of this paper.

<sup>125</sup>Eugene O'Neill, Marco Millions, in Nelson's College Caravan, edited by Arthur Palmer Hudson, Leonard Burwell Marley, and Joseph Dendrick Clark (New York, c. 1936), 34.

<sup>126</sup>Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman, Dinner at Eight (New York, c. 1932), 286.

<sup>127</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Mary of Scotland (New York, c. 1934), 65.

<sup>128</sup>Noel Coward, Private Lives, in Play Parade (Garden City, New York, c. 1933), 177.

## List of All Plays Read in the Preparation of This Paper

- Akins, Zoe  
The Old Maid
- Anderson, Maxwell  
Both Your Houses  
High Tor  
Mary of Scotland  
Winterset
- Anderson, Maxwell, and Stallings, Laurence  
First Flight  
The Buccaneer  
What Price Glory
- Archer, William  
The Green Goddess
- Barrie, J. M.  
Quality Street
- Behrman, S. W.  
The Second Men
- Benavente, Jacinto  
His Widow's Husband
- Bennett, Arnold, and Knoblock, Edward  
Milestones
- Carroll, Paul Vincent  
Shadow and Substance
- Clements, Colin Campbell  
Columbine  
The Siege
- Connelly, Marc  
The Green Pastures
- Coward, Noel  
Bitter Sweet  
Cavalcade  
Design for Living  
Hay Fever  
Post - Mortem  
Private Lives  
The Vortex
- Crothers, Rachel  
As Husbands Go  
Ma and Pa  
Mary the Third  
Nice People

Davies, Mary Carolyn  
The Slave with Two Faces

de la Roche, Mase  
Whiteoaks

Drinkwater, John  
Cephetua

Dunsany, Lord  
A Night at an Inn

Edig, Evelyn  
The China Pig

Emery, Gilbert  
The Hero

Ferber, Edna, and Kaufman, George G.  
Dinner at Eight  
Stage Door

Galsworthy, John  
A Bit O' Love  
Justice  
Loyalties  
Strife  
The Pigeon  
The Silver Box

Gerstenberg, Alice  
Ever Young

Glaspell, Susan  
Alison's House  
Bernice  
Close the Book  
Suppressed Desires  
The Outside  
The People  
Tickless Time  
Trifles  
Woman's Honor

Goodrich, Arthur  
Mr. Grant

Green, Paul  
Unto Sash Glory

Gregory, Lady  
Spreading the News  
The Workhouse Ward



- Hankin, St. John  
The Last of the De Mullins
- Holmes, John Haynes, and Lawrence, Reginald  
If This Be Treason
- Howard, Sidney  
The Ghost of Yankee Doodle  
The Silver Cord  
Yellow Jack
- Hughes, Hatcher  
Hell Bent for Heaven
- Jacobs, W. W.  
A Love Passage
- Jones, Henry Arthur  
Dolly Reforming Herself  
The Goal
- Kaufman, George S., and Connelly, Marc  
Beggar on Horseback  
Merton of the Movies  
To the Ladies!
- Kaufman, George S., and Hart Moss  
Merrily We Roll Along  
You Can't Take It with You
- Kaufman, George S., and Ryskind, Morrie  
Of Thee I Sing
- Kelly, George  
Craig's Wife
- Kennedy, Charles Ream  
The Servant in the House
- Kingsley, Sidney  
Dead End  
Men in White
- Knox, Florence Clay  
For Distinguished Service
- Kreymborg, Alfred  
Manikin and Minikin
- Lawson, John Howard  
Professional
- Lewis, Sinclair, and Lewis, Lloyd  
The Jayhawker

Mackay, Constance D'Arcy  
Counsel Retained

Manghan, Somerset  
The Breadwinner

McCauley, Clarice Vallette  
The Conflict

Milne, A. A.  
Mr. Pim Passes By  
The Ivory Door

Mitchell, Langdon  
The New York Idea

Morley, Christopher  
Rehearsal  
Thursday Evening

Murray, John, and Berets, Allen  
Room Service

Odets, Clifford  
Awake and Sing  
Eight Music  
Till the Day I Die  
Waiting for Lefty

O'Neill, Eugene  
Before Breakfast  
Days Without End  
Homecoming  
'Till  
Marco Millions  
The Emperor Jones  
The Hanted  
The Hunted  
Where the Cross is Made

Pillet, Eugene  
By Lady Dreams

Pinero, Arthur Wing  
The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith  
The Second Mrs. Tanqueray

Rice, Elmer  
Counsellor - At - Law  
Street Scene  
We, the People

Robertson, Thomas William  
Caste

- Postard, Edmund  
Cyrano De Bergerac
- Shaw, Bernard  
Androcles and the Lion  
Arms and the Man  
Overruled  
Pygmalion
- Sheriff, R. C.  
Journey's End
- Sherwood, Robert W.  
Abe Lincoln in Illinois  
Idiot's Delight  
The Petrified Forest
- Smith, Howard Fernan  
Blackberryin'
- Strindberg, August  
The Stronger Woman  
Motherly Love
- Sutro, Alfred  
A Marriage Has Been Arranged
- Synge, John M.  
Riders to the Sea
- Teller, Ernst  
No More Peace.
- Wilde, Oscar  
An Ideal Husband  
Lady Windermere's Fan  
Salome  
The Importance of Being Earnest
- Wilde, Percival  
Confessions
- Wilder, Thornton  
Our Town
- Williams, Jesse Lynch  
Why Marry?

### Examples Found in Speech and Other Forms of Writing

It is necessary only to listen to the conversation of people everywhere to hear the common use of plural pronouns with indefinite pronoun antecedents. People of influence in various communities, school superintendents, classroom teachers, college professors, ministers, and others who speak often before the public use the plural form of pronouns in such constructions frequently, thus showing the growing acceptance of the plural form in the conversation of most people. Only those who study and who correct their speech very carefully are sure to use the singular form of pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent.

Examples of this usage may be found in other forms of literature in addition to the drama; novels, short stories, and all other forms of literature contain such examples, but not in so large a measure as does the drama. A very interesting example of such usage is the following, taken from the teachers' application form as sent out by the public school system of St. Joseph, Missouri: "A teacher must have a Missouri teacher's certificate before they can teach in the public schools of St. Joseph, Missouri." Such examples are to be found everywhere; all one needs is a quick ear to hear them and a sharp eye to see them.

### CONCLUSIONS

From the evidence presented in this paper it is possible to draw several conclusions. As English is not static, but moving, so the trend in agreement in number of pronouns used with indefinite pronoun antecedents is in motion. There is disagreement at the present time concerning the question of whether the pronoun form used in reference to an indefinite pronoun antecedent must be singular or may possibly be plural. The attitude of the authors

of grammar textbooks written for mature students proved to be increasingly liberal toward the use of a plural pronoun form to refer to an indefinite pronoun antecedent; authors of handbooks were less liberal than authors of grammar textbooks toward this usage; and authors of grade school textbooks were very conservative in their attitude toward this usage.

Where the use of a plural pronoun form with an indefinite pronoun antecedent was sanctioned, the usage was usually given preference in colloquial English only. Evidence was offered through the examples of such usage obtained from various dramas that writers are using this form in conversational English and even in stage directions on rare occasions.

However, it must be clearly understood that this evidence indicates only a trend, and not a complete acceptance of such usage at the present time. Such a trend points toward complete acceptance at a later date, but probably many years will elapse before it is accomplished. Nevertheless, a person may use a plural pronoun with an indefinite pronoun antecedent and know definitely that his usage is sanctioned by some authorities at the present time.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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