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On: 07 April 2015, At: 07:11

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

English Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/nest20>

Some remarks on the use of one as a prop-word

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Published online: 13 Aug 2008.

To cite this article: W. A. van Dongen Sr. (1919) Some remarks on the use of one as a prop-word, *English Studies*, 1:1-6, 20-23, DOI: [10.1080/00138381908596372](https://doi.org/10.1080/00138381908596372)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00138381908596372>

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Some Remarks on the Use of *One* as a Prop-word.

I.

One after *Right* and *Left*.

In Dr. Kruisinga's *Shorter Accidence and Syntax* (Second Edition), § 160, we read:

One is also often absent when there are only two specimens of a class: His right foot is larger than his left. The New (read: Old) Testament fills three times as many pages as the New.

In § 547 of his *Handbook of Present-Day English*, Vol. II, the following remark on the use of *one* is found:

It also seems that *one* is avoided when the adjective does not denote a quality (Some sub-committees were appointed, among them a Welsh and a Scottish. Langland stands for the theological conception of life and Chaucer for the sensuous or Renaissance conception).

Perhaps it is for this reason or for the one mentioned in § 546 (Absence of *one* is very common when two adjectives are contrasted) that *one* is never found in the following cases:

My right foot is a little larger than my left.

The Old Testament fills three times as many pages as the New.

The northern half of the world has much more land than the southern.

In Roorda's *Dutch and English Compared*, I, § 44, we find a similar rule:

When one adjective is contrasted with another, *one* is often left out: Everywhere *small* establishments have been swallowed up in *large*. They are virtues which are more common among the parsons of the *old* school than among those of the *new*.

Jespersen, in his *Modern English Grammar*, II, 10.94, says:

It must be considered as a survival of the old freedom to use an adjective alone, when the lighter construction without *one* is often preferred to the heavier with *one*; this is frequently the case with short familiar adjectives, especially if the two groups (the one with a substantive, and the one without) are in close proximity: The old world and the *new*. It is a little kingdom, but an *independent*.

In Poutsma's *Grammar of Late Modern English*, II, p. 1289, it says:

The prop-word is apt to be dispensed with when the adjective in syntactically connected with its contrast or alternative, especially in literary diction. The omission seems to be most frequent after the definite article:

My right hand was in my mother's left (Dick., *Copp.*, Ch. II, 10a).

He was armed with a rapier and a dagger, the rapier he held in his right hand, and the dagger in his left (Mason, *Engl. Gram.* ²⁴, § 126).

The right lobe of his liver is on the left side, the left on his right (Wells, *The Plattner Storie* and others, I, 11).

With reference to the use of *one* after *right* and *left* ¹⁾ it may be observed that Kruisinga's statement: "*one* is never used in cases as *My right foot is a little larger than my left*", is too absolute, though I must confess that one of my former teachers (a well-educated Englishman) used to say that we must always write and say 'The right arm and the left', and not 'the left one'.

So far as I can see, Poutsma hits the nail on the head when he says that *one* in this case is especially omitted in *literary* language (See the examples above).

One very often has a colloquial ring in many combinations, though it is evidently getting more and more common in serious language as well, and will most probably be accepted as standard English before this generation has passed away, seeing how the use of it has been gaining ground in the last fifty years. Poutsma gives, however, no examples of this colloquial use of *one* after *right* and *left*, and I therefore beg to give the following quotations:

1. "Wat is your name?"

"Elinor Woolcot, but they call me Nell", she said, holding out her left hand, since *her right one* was occupied with the plate (Ethel Turner, *Seven Little Austrailians*, in: Schaap and Numan, *Old and New*, I, p. 58).

2. Moreover, Mr. Charterton had very large ears, more particularly was *the left one* large (H. G. Wells, *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, p. 80).

It appears from these quotations that *one* occurs in connection with *right* and *left*, after *possessive pronouns* as well as after the *definite article*. It seems, therefore, that the use of *one* is not in the first place dependent on the kind of adnominal qualifier (*the*, *a possessive pronoun*, etc.), but that it is chiefly a question of style. In literary English the use of the colloquial *one* is often avoided, whereas it may frequently be heard in the spoken language.

¹⁾ It is needless to say that *one* after *right*, when used with a different meaning is frequent. Cf. But how do I know that my ideal is *the right one*? (Neill, *A Dominic's Log*, p. 60). The instinct which guides us to do this is, perhaps, *a right one* (G. du Maurier, *Trilby*, I, p. 66).

II.

One after *Own*.

In Dr. Kruisinga's *Handbook of Present-day English*, II¹, § 543) the following rule is given:

One is not used after *own*, e.g. I am not a tenant of this house; it is my own.

The same rule is given in his *Shorter Accidence and Syntax* (Second Ed.), § 159.

Poutsma, in his *Grammar of Late Modern English*, II, p. 1290, says: *One* is regularly dispensed with after *own*. In all the examples (but two) occurring in the Grammar, *own* is not connected with the propword.

And it is quite true that in the great majority of cases *own* is not followed by *one*, not even when it is the last word of a clause, as in:

1. The faith of his guests even exceeded his *own* (W. Irving, *Spectre Bridegroom*).

2. She looked round, fearing intrusive eyes, but seeing none, she allowed him to embrace her. "My own — at last my own" (Trollope, *Old Man's Love*, p. 274).

3. His vocabulary did not always coincide with her *own*, but she managed to get the gist of it (J. Webster, *Just Patty*, p. 223).

There is, however, a case in which *one* is occasionally met with in combination with *own*, viz. in the phrase *my own one*:

1. God bless you *my own one* — Yours affectionately — John Gordon (Trollope, *Old Man's Love*, p. 258).

2. I had taken his gifts with a full hand. And where were you, *my own one*? Had I a right to think that you were thinking of me? (*Idem*, p. 276).

3. "Can't you keep out of this fight, John?"

"My own one", I answered, gazing through the long black lashes, at the depths of radiant love: "I believe there will be nothing" (Blackmore, *Lorna Doone*, p. 314).

III.

One after a Cardinal Numeral.

The rule, still to be found in some grammars, that *one* is not used after a *numeral*, has since long been given up, as everyone can convince himself that the prop-word is frequently used after *ordinal numerals* ¹⁾, especially in colloquial English:

1. *The first one* of you who sets foot on these steps is a dead man (Orczy, *Tangled Skein*, p. 28).

2. I'm taking a vacation; it's *the first one* I've ever had since I left school (Williamson, *The Scarlet Runner*, p. 318). (But also: Roscoe was *the first* to reach the lever (Sir G. Parker, *Mrs. Falchion*, p. 76).

3. I was hailed in Golden Square by an old lady surrounded by three children, two of them crying and the *third one* half asleep (Jerome, *Three Men on the Bummel*, p. 200).

It has now been replaced by the statement that *one* is not used after a *cardinal numeral* ²⁾, which is much more accurate, as there is hardly any exception to it. For though, in familiar English, *one* may be used in such sentences as:

"Which train shall we go by to-morrow? There is *one* at nine and another at half past twelve". — "We had better take *the nine one* (Sweet), ³⁾

in literary use the prop-word is avoided, and we find either the word *train* added to the time-indicator, or (what happens very frequently) the word *train* is left out and understood:

1. I have to catch the ten-fifty train (*Strand Mag.*, Sept. 1908, p. 259.)

2. I can catch the 10.15 train (Bar. von Hutten, *What became of Pam*, p. 241).

3. When Miss Colt arrived at the station she made the discovery that *the one-fifteen* did not run on Saturdays, and that there was no up-train before four-twenty (*Strand Mag.*, July 1917, p. 90)

4. I suppose they will catch *the one-fifteen* all right? (*Idem*, p. 90).

5. *The six-fifteen* was fortunately twenty minutes late (Jerome, *They and I*, p. 89).

6. "Let me see, what do they say is the time of your last up-train?" — "To London? The last *one* starts away at *the half-past twelve*," said the landlady (Hall Caine, *A Son of Hagar*, p. 75.).

7. I've just time to catch the 11.10 from Victoria (De Vere Stacpoole, *Garryowen*, p. 81).

8. I caught *the ten forty-five* from Liverpool Street, and by one o'clock was talking to Mr. Goyles on deck (Jerome, *Three Men on the Bumel*, p. 17).

Mr. Poutsma suggests that possibly *one* may also be used after a date, but regrets that he had no evidence of this ready at hand when writing on the subject. That he is quite right in his suggestion is proved by the following quotation:

But as Max Beerbohm's caricature — *the 1908 one* I mean — brought out all too plainly, there was in his very animation, something of the alert liveliness of the hunted man (H. G. Wells, *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, p. 199).

It may be repeated that in the two cases mentioned above, the use of *one* seems to be admitted only in colloquial language, and is generally avoided in serious style.

ROTTERDAM.

W. A. VAN DONGEN SR.

¹⁾ See also Kruisinga, *A Handbook of Present day English*, II, § 545, and Poutsma, *A Grammar of Late Mod. E.*, II, p. 1300.

²⁾ See Poutsma, *A Grammar of Late Mod. E.*, II, p. 1300 and Kruisinga, *A Handbook etc.*, § 543.

³⁾ See Poutsma, *A Grammar, etc.*, p. 1300.

Notes on Modern English Books.

II.

W. L. GEORGE. A NOVELIST ON NOVELS. ¹⁾

According to a moderate estimate there are at present about fifteen hundred novelists in the United Kingdom. The astonishing result of this literary census leads one almost involuntarily to speculations about the future of the novel. The multitude of workers in this most modern field of literature will be considered a hopeful sign by those who think with Sir A. Quiller Couch, that "the more there are who practise (a certain art) the greater will be the chance of some one's reaching perfection." And indeed history furnishes us with several examples of the phenomenon 'Q' is hinting at here. We need only remind the reader of the galaxy of dramatists in the time of Shakespeare, of the unusually great number of Dutch painters, preceding and accompanying Rembrandt, of the circumstance that never were so many sonnets written in Italy as when Petrarch perfected this form of verse; and many more similar examples might of course very easily be found. The writer of the book I want to introduce, has less optimistic opinions. The undeniable fact, that simultaneously with the increase of the number of authors, there has been a decided advance in the quality of the average novel, is for him but an additional reason to doubt the advent of the really very great man. Talent, he holds, is the foe of genius and "our period is

¹⁾ W. L. George. *A Novelist on Novels*. 1 vol. pp. 245. 8°. W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. London, 1918, 6/— net.