To the Bag:

I enjoyed Professor Myers’s careful study of when “the United States” became clearly a singular noun in the Supreme Court. *Supreme Court Usage and the Making of an ‘Is’,* 11 GREEN BAG 2D 457. Along the lines of the saying about progress in science, I believe this article shows that writing styles evolve more through old writers dying off than through living writers changing their habits.

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To the Bag:

The recent article by Minor Myers, *Supreme Court Usage and the Making of an ‘Is’* (11 GREEN BAG 2D 457), depicts in abundant detail how Supreme Court prevailing usage started off to say “the United States are” as if the plural was describing a collection of independent states. That was before the Civil War. The article went on to demonstrate how after the Civil War, although somewhat gradually — and a little more slowly than has sometimes been thought — the prevailing Supreme Court usage in opinions shifted to the singular “the United States is.”