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## The Wits' Weekly

Conducted by EDWARD DAVISON

*Competition No. 35.* A prize of fifteen dollars is offered for the most convivial Prohibitionists' Drinking Song. (Entries should reach *The Saturday Review* office, 25 West 45th Street, New York City, not later than the morning of June 25.)

*Competition No. 36.* A prize of fifteen dollars is offered for the best short Ballad (not Ballade) of Book Titles with the refrain, suggested by a recent juxtaposition of publishers' advertisements,—

*Dead lovers are faithful lovers,  
But gentlemen marry brunettes.*

(Entries should reach *The Saturday Review* office not later than the morning of July 2.)

Attention is called to the rules printed below.

### THE THIRTY-SECOND COMPETITION

Three prizes of five dollars each were offered for the best epigrams on each or all of the following subjects: (a) Tunney's lecture on Shakespeare at Yale; (b) the coming Presidential Election; and (c) the death of Thomas Hardy. Edward O. Jackson, of Clinton, Mo., wins the prizes for A and B, and Phoebe Scribble the prize for C.

#### THE PRIZE EPIGRAMS

##### A. On Tunney's Lecture at Yale.

*Tunney again his matchless courage  
proves  
By tackling mighty Shakespeare with-  
out gloves.*

EDWARD O. JACKSON.

##### B. On the Presidential Election

*In freedom let each patriot rejoice  
While trusts and press select the peo-  
ple's choice.*

EDWARD O. JACKSON.

##### C. On the Death of Thomas Hardy

*Till it should falter, Death forebore  
to stay  
A hand so able in the art of truth,  
The poet's courage answered this  
delay*

*By full reclaiming the bright  
power of youth;  
So overcome, the mighty angel then  
Bade Thomas Hardy lay aside his  
pen.*

PHOEBE SCRIBBLE.

The great majority of competitors rightly supposed that verse epigrams were required, although the week brought a large batch of prose attempts. Most of the latter lacked sting and even the best, like Carl P. Rollins's anecdote from New Haven itself, could only be called epigrams by courtesy. "Spring was in the air, Professor Phelps had come back from Florida, and the news had come that Gene was to talk to a Yale class. 'I see,' said a colleague, 'that Billy has been Tunney-fishing.'"

Competition was keenest for prize

A. To the credit of our Wits there were very few sneers at Tunney. The least unsuccessful exception was J. DeLancey Ferguson's offering—

*At Hotspur tackling Hamlet's rôle  
Good sense and taste rebel:  
This Tunney's erudition has  
An ancient, fish-like smell.*

Marshall M. Brice was fairer and more good-natured in his double-edged lines—

*The halls of Yale with gloom are  
packed:  
Enough it is to make them blue;  
For Tunney there has dropped the  
fact  
That Shakespeare was a highbrow,  
too.*

This nearly won the prize. I also liked the entries by Francis M. Currier, Mrs. J. D. Robins, and "Slightly," which are printed in order of authorship below.

JOHN L. SPEAKS

*The old Manassa Mauler is a pitcher  
actor now,  
An' Gene a college echerer—an'  
isn't that a wow.  
Now Sharkey 'll learn embroidery,  
cause he's esthetic too;  
Corbett an' me an' Jake Kilrain—I  
guess our sort is through.  
So let Greenwich Village band show  
how this bunch is wrong*

*By playin' Yale's old masterpiece,  
"The Undertaker's Song."*

FRANCIS M. CURRIER

*Do you think that it is funny  
To sneer at Shakespeare à la Tun-  
ney?*

*Perhaps then you had rather  
Hear the same old classroom blather.*

J. D. ROBINS

To a Certain Author who Sneered at Tunney's lecture.

*If, artless and untrained, yet curb-  
ing fear,  
Dear Prig, you had fought some  
giant of the ring,  
Would Tunney, I wonder, have  
watched you with a sneer  
Or slapped your back? Well, that's  
another thing!*

"SLIGHTLY"

There was less competition for the Election epigram. Five quatrains by Marshall Brice were well-turned but insubstantial. Howard Thompson wrote—

*Since Smith says nothing and Hoover  
rather less  
One will be elected, or I miss my  
guess.*

and Francis Donnersbach, misunderstanding the competition, sent in the English election epigram by Mr. J. C. Squire.

*The battle's set 'twixt Envy, Greed,  
and Pride.*

*Come, Conscience, do your duty;  
choose your side.*

David Heathstone was not brief enough and none of the prose entries merited quotation.

I would have welcomed a better epigram than the best on Hardy's death. Phoebe Scribble deserved to snatch the third five dollars from Mr. Jackson if only because his distich flew in the face of the facts.

*While genius raved from every coun-  
tryside  
We hardly knew when Thomas  
Hardy died.*

It is a long time since a poet's death attracted so much attention as Hardy's. Nobody sufficiently grasped the opportunity to point the irony by which his heart and body found separate graves, though George Jager (in prose) and J. DeLancey Ferguson (in verse) both reached out towards the idea.

*For him who searched life's ironies,  
A last mock is provided:*

*His heart and mind were one through  
life,  
In death they lie divided.*

This misses the mark by vaguely reminding me of Hood.

#### RULES

Competitors failing to comply with the following rules will be disqualified. Envelopes should be addressed to Edward Davison, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City. All MSS. must be legible—typewritten if possible—and should bear the name or pseudonym of the author. Competitors may offer more than one entry. MSS. cannot be returned. The Editor's decision is final and *The Saturday Review* reserves the right to print the whole or part of any entry.

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## The Reader's Guide

CONDUCTED BY MAY LAMBERTON BECKER

Inquiries in regard to the selection of books and questions of like nature should be addressed to MRS. BECKER, c/o *The Saturday Review*. Mrs. Becker's summer headquarters will be at 2 Bramerton St., Chelsea, London.

ONCE again a wave of uncertainty concerning proper names moves across the clientele of this department, starting in Honolulu, where, according to E. B. B., there is debate upon "the delightful first name of Sacheverell Sitwell." "Ever since the year 1197," says R. L. Megroz in "The Three Sitwells" (Doran), when Joline Saultchevreuil divided an inheritance with one whose name does not enter into this discussion, "the Sacheverells have been a family of principal note in Derby and Nottinghamshire. Their beautiful Norman name, disguised as Sent Cheveroll, is to be seen in the roll of Battle Abbey . . ." and I have heard various disguises of it at the present day on the lips of the all-too-knowing, misled, it may be, by the familiar "Sascha" used by his intimates into the notion that the name must be somehow collapsible. But my advice is to take it in four syllables with the stress on the *shee*, and let it ride. The same knowing ones started a rumor last year that Proust was called Proo: people like that having always a positiveness to shake the staunchest heart, one of the editors of this review took the matter to Paris and even there it rhymes with boost—especially there, indeed. In Honolulu the sound of Cabell is still shaky, and as I have found other parts of the world rhyming him with label, let it be known that the sound is as in babble. Bremen is *Bray*-men; as for Koehl, I cannot send an *umlaut* by mail: the ability to produce one being—like the knack of writing deathless verse or the art of moving the ears—something with which, according to Bill Nye, one must have been born: it cannot be acquired. In this class belong also the French *u* and the nuances of the Russian *l*. C. M. F., Ashland, Wis., asks for Maurois, Aricie Brun, Gide, Passavent, Douviers, Saas Fee, Strouvilhon, and Henriot. Can any little boy or girl tell what three books this gentleman has been reading? If the third escapes him, Alfred Knopf will send it for two-fifty, after which he will either curse me bitterly or write me a letter of fervent gratitude. The approximate sounds are Mo (as in Moses)-rwah: Ar-risi Brun with a long *u*. I have always said Jheed; my French is plausible though not altogether convincing, but considering what they do to our proper names, should we struggle too painfully over theirs? So we have Pas-sa-vanh—the last syllable a pathetic effort to spell wind in French,—Doo-vyay, Saas Fay, Soo-vee(l)s onh, and Onh-ree-oh. Those look pretty awful in print, especially the attempt to indicate an *l* as pronounced by the stream of consciousness; I begin to think there is something in Esperanto after all. L. B., Columbus, Indiana, asks for Andreiev, which is And-rye-yev, e as in yes. Rosamund Lehmann, which is Layman; Alice Meynell, which is Men'l.

M. H. B., New York, asks advice on the choice of a birthday gift for a poetry-lover.

"THE Oxford Book of American Verse," selected by Bliss Carman (Oxford University Press), is compact of old and new: for the year past there is "Best Poems of 1927" (Dodd, Mead) by both English and American poets, chosen by L. A. G. Strong. A more accurate title might be "My Favorite Poems for the Year," but such passings-on of preferences often turn out more happily for a wide audience than the pondered judgments of a jury of specialists. These two are conservative choices: if the receiver responds to brilliant, sardonic, and sententious verse, try him on Samuel Hoffenstein's "Poems in Praise of Practically Nothing" (Boni & Liveright) or either of Dorothy Parker's volumes from the same publisher. By definition these are light verse,—light like bombs bursting in air.

If my choice were to be made for several of my own acquaintance, it would be for a type of book neither anthology nor single book of verse, but one of the books of selections made by a sympathetic and discriminating editor from the lifework of a poet. If this life work has been voluminous and uneven, a judicious editor may in this way give him a new hold on posterity. A striking example is the new "Selected Poems of Amy Lowell" (Houghton Mifflin), edited by John Livingston Lowes, author of "The Road to Xanadu." When

her earlier volumes were appearing her very name was good for a horse-laugh from thousands who knew no more of her than her name, and many even of those who read and respected all her books would admit that they bought the successive volumes each for the sake of a few indispensable poems. In this selection from her eleven volumes—more than 650 titles—Mr. Lowes has brought together with rare judgment old favorites and lesser known examples of her art, by all of which the poet will find new friends. Swinburne even gains by such treatment: he lives not by a few poems but certainly by a number that though considerable is yet out of proportion to the number he wrote. A single volume made out of these was published some years ago by Doran: now comes another bringing the selection to even smaller compass, "Selections from Swinburne," edited by H. M. Burton and published by the Cambridge University Press, represented here by Macmillan. It has a brief critical introduction, and is apparently made with modern youth in mind, but as in the case of the pocket-size "Selections from Walt Whitman" (Macmillan) is none the less representative. Walter de la Mare anticipated his executors and has made his own choice, some sixty poems appearing in "Selected Poems" (Holt). Among these may be found most of those by which he is most widely known, excluding those for children. A book of selections like this should not be large, for skimming off of all the cream is not intended, but the offering of a generous and alluring sample to a new reader who may thus be inspired to read more widely. If he read no more than this, it will have given him much.

G. H. C., Newark, N. J., asks what Norwegian or Swedish author of modern times could be added to a reading course that has included Hamsun, Lagerlöf, Strindberg, Bojer, Nexö, and the plays of Ibsen and Björnsen.

SURELY Sigrid Undset, whose historical novels of Sweden have a wild power and persuasiveness that wipes out the centuries and makes the reader one with the people of the period. Begin her trilogy "Kristin Lavransdatter" (Knopf) with "The Bridal Wreath," and it will be difficult to stop before you have finished "The Mistress of Husaby" and "The Cross."

A popular Norwegian novelist of the best-selling sort has just been introduced into English through Andreas Haukland's "The Norns Are Spinning" (Macy-Masius). This presents pre-Christian Vikings and their loves, hates, and habits, of which locking their adversaries into their own houses and setting fire to the roofs seems to have been a favorite game. I never read a novel with so much arson: there is even a genuine suttee, preceded by the sacrifice of any number of animals. Midway of the tale the hero has to take to the wilderness as an outlaw with his baby son, and the chapters in which the two make a home for themselves until the boy becomes a man are proof that the Boy Scouts did not invent resourcefulness. I do not wonder this novel has been popular in Norway: it certainly goes with a rush.

THE correspondents who have been trying to get together a modern bibliography on cursing will find a little help in the chapter on Judas in "The Glorious Company," by Tracy Mygatt and Frances Witherspoon (Harcourt, Brace), which refers to the Judas Curse, Anathema Adalberti. This was often attached to legal documents, deeds, and so on, to force the return of stolen property lest the thief *habeat partem cum Juda*. It should be mentioned that the especial efficacy of the curse was to get back borrowed books—manuscripts in 1583, but the principle is the same. This book says that Asher Taylor, in "Washington University Studies," has an article on "Judas in Charms and Incantations." "The Glorious Company" blends the New Testament, the apocryphal records, and popular tradition in something the manner of Alphonse Séché's "Radiant Story of Jesus" (Century), with the difference that Séché clearly believes all of it and these authors have their preferences. Their work might be called a free fantasia upon twelve themes. St. James Major, St. Thomas of India, and St. Andrew are especially favored in medieval legend, and these sections are the richest.

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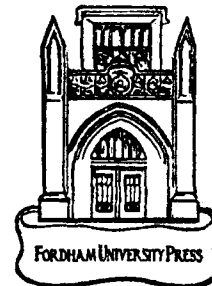
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