KICKSHAWS

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New York, New York

Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

We

Mark Twain, or somebody, wrote that no man (or woman, we suppose) could legitimately refer to himself (or herself, we suppose) in the first person plural, unless he (or she, we suppose) was (a) an editor; (b) a king (or queen, we suppose) or (c) host to a tapeworm (either he or she, we suppose). We are neither royal nor (to the best of our knowledge) infested, but for the first time in our life, by God, we are an editor, and we are going to take advantage of our prerogatives. We hereby disavow, cancel, render null and void Philip M. Cohen's edict (which we assume was meant only for himself anyway) that the editorial we be banished from this column. We intend to exploit we to the limit, and we'll include us as often as we please us. Where we seems inappropriate we'll substitute wee, and if wee doesn't work either we'll turn to wea, a dialectical version of woe, or Wea, one of a tribe of Algonquins, originally a band of the Miami. We concede that wea and Wea are not pronounced quite the same as we and wee, but it is the idea that counts. When all else fails we'll refer to ourself as Wede, which is close enough, and after all is our nickname.

From Ames to Anna

We told in An Almanac of Words at Play how Paul Hollister used to thread the abbreviations on the spines of the Encyclopaedia Britannica into a Gregorian chant. In the same entry we quoted "The Passionate Encyclopaedia Britannica Reader to His Love", a verse by Maggie which begins

"As And to Aus, and Aus to Bis;
As Hus to Ita, and Ita to Kys,"

and ends

"As Ref to Sai and Sai to Shu:
That is, I hope, how I'm to you."

Instant Acme

Martin Graham's Hamilton's age庆典, L Y D I A K A N E
To the prov
scription first
scribbler
who achieved the
run in Ten
RIDER
horse.
Surely
She admires
in the Ten
cookbook.
There are variations on the theme, but Faith Eckler is the only person we know who has expanded it to include the designations on the drawers of the card-file at the Morristown Library. Inspired by an encyclopedia spine that read TRANCE to VENIAL SIN, she stormed through the following drama:

"What to have for dinner," MOTHER MUSES, "AMES, ANNA and their friends will be arriving shortly and nothing is started. Should I STEAM STEW," she wonders, "but that isn't really a company meal. GIGI -- GODDAM her hide -- is coming, too, after the BANK BASH."

Anna is about to become a BRIDE. BROTHER Patrick will perform the ceremony, and she hopes it will be impressive. The church, of course, is all picked out. It is full of SOUL -- SPIRE reaching toward the sky -- and whenever she goes there she seems to sense the SPIRIT STEAL over her.

Mother hopes the marriage will last. LONG LOVES seem to run in the family. Uncle Harvey in South BEND, BESS Hamilton in Terre Haute and several others of her scattered kin had celebrated their 50th anniversaries before they died. Then there was the Aunt who WAS WEB-footed; she had made it to her 60th. Surely that was an impressive feat.

The happy couple will go to England on their honeymoon. Mother hopes they will see the KING, KNOW the thrill of the changing of the guard and the splendor of Westminster Abbey. She's heard, though, that the King is growing feeble. His speeches often run to PATTER. PEON clerks do most of the writing. When he makes his rare public appearances a solitary RIDER -- ROBE flowing in the wind -- is detailed to lead his horse.

Suddenly Mother interrupts these random thoughts. Such musings will not solve the problem of what to have for dinner. She admonishes herself sternly: "Before the sun sinks any lower in the WEST, WHISK yourself down to the library and take out a cookbook."

**Instant Acrostics**

Martin Gardner called our attention to the August 1842 issue of Graham's Magazine (Philadelphia), which eulogizes one Alexander Hamilton Bogart, a master acrostician who in 1826, at the budding age of twenty-one, died in his native city of Albany, New York.

To test the singular rapidity with which Mr. Bogart could improvise, he was once asked to write a nine-line verse, the first letters of each line making the name "Lydia Kane," described as "a lady distinguished for her beauty and cleverness, who died a year or two since, but was then just blushing into womanhood." The name was written vertically, as given at the left.

A stanza of Lord Byron's "Childe Harold," also consisting of nine lines, was then selected at random. Mr. Bogart was
to start his first line with the first letter of Miss Kane's name, his second line with the second letter, and so on. Each line had to end with the last word in the Byronian equivalent, which ran as follows:

And must they fall? the young, the proud, the brave,
To swell one bloated chief's unwholesome reign?
No step between submission and a grave?
The rise of rapine and the fall of Spain?
And doth the Power that man adores ordain
Their doom, nor heed the suppliant's appeal?
Is all that desperate valor acts in vain?
And counsel rage, and patriotic zeal,
The veteran's skill, youth's fire, and manhood's heart of steel?

Within ten minutes (the period fixed in a wager), Bogart had composed the following lines:

| Lovely and loved, o'er the unconquered brave, | reign! |
| Y our charms resistless, matchless girl, shall | reign! |
| D ear as the mother holds her infant's grave | Spain! |
| I n Love's own region, warm, romantic | appeal, |
| A nd should your Fate to courts your steps | ordain, |
| K ings would in vain to regal pomp | vain, |
| A nd lordly bishops kneel to you in | vain, |
| N or Valor's fire, Law's power, nor Churchman's zeal | Spain! |
| E ndure 'gainst Love's (time up!) untarnished steel. | steel. |

We suggest that in some future evening of word puzzling you test your skill at instant acrostics against that of Mr. Bogart.

-dous

We have prided ourselves on reading Word Ways thoroughly; the volumes prior to 1977 are bound in buckram on our shelves; we refer to them as regularly as our grandparents referred to Genesis, Leviticus, or Epistle to the Romans. Yet when we refreshed our minds on Kickshaws in order to edit this column, we were astonished to find that as long ago as February, 1976, guest editor Ralph G. Beaman had thrust an unerring dart into our vitals. In a book called The Game of Words we had accepted overhastily the assurance of some lexicographer that the English language contained but three words ending in -dous: hazardous, stupendous, and tremendous. We referred to this oddity on one of those radio shows that take telephone calls. The switchboard lighted up like a Christmas tree; Mr. Espy, scores of listeners wished to be first to say, had made a horrendous error. The moral is: check, recheck, and check again. Our criterion was intended to be "words ending in -ndous," which would have eliminated hazardous at once while making way for horrendous, pudendous, and others if there are such. Mr. Beaman reported that standard dictionaries include at least 125 -dous words -- leaving us, as he implied, apodus -- that is, without a leg, or even a foot, to stand on.
Boris Randolph of Los Angeles submits, inter alia, several formidable puns on operatic compositions and composers. With his permission, we have scattered these conceits through the ballade below.

Except for two, involving the operas Norma and Carmen. To force these into so Procrustean a verse form would have required more brute strength than we command.

Do not be deceived -- we are devotees of Manon and Manon Lescaut. The crochets hereunder are a demonstration of poetic license -- the sort of thing a wife should take into account when she stumbles over the manuscript of an unexplained love poem among her husband's private papers.

The regrettable infusion of French in the verse was forced on us. We had to rhyme Manon, and knew no English words (except immigrants from France) that end in matches for the piglike, nasal grunt in French -on, -ons, -ont, and so on.

MANON? MAIS NON!

A Punning Ballade

How you trick me into attending an opera written by Puccini (or was it Massenet?)

Aida relish cymbal-smack,
Horn-sweetness, shrill of piccolo
(To savor these, how Offenbach To Bach and Offenbach I go!) ... 
Or don't. I hate Manon Lescaut.
(You said, "Lescaut to hear Manon.
I've Boito tickets, second row ... ")
Manon Lescaut a mauvais ton.

How I doze and dream at Manon (or was it Manon Lescaut?)

I go. Of Korsakov, and hack,
As old men Lakme must; I blow
My nose, and doze. I'm in the sack
From Faust plucked string to last bravo.
I dream I'm Chopin up that shmo Puccini; c'est un sale cochon.
Most art (Mozart, say) leaves a glow; Manon Lescaut a mauvais ton.

How I reflect postludally on these matters ...

Manon is Verdi vulgar pack
Hangs out. If Massenet should throw
A Mass in A, I'd lead the claque.
(Giovanni hear Giovani? So
Do I. It's not quite comme il faut,
But Gudenov. Alors, allons!)
Indeed, I only hate one show:
Manon Lescaut a mauvais ton.
And the moral
I draw.

Envoy

Prince, best of Gluck! ...

One final mot:

Though opera is mostly bon,
For Bizet folk, there's one de trop:
Manon Lescaut a mauvais ton.

Is There a Doctor in the House?

Comments Virginia R. Hager, of Normal, Illinois: "The English language has many words beginning with DR, whose definitions would help doctors select a suitable new name. If they selected one of the following, the layman could more easily locate someone who could diagnose the ailment."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctor</th>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Doctor</th>
<th>Specialty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ives</td>
<td>Motorists</td>
<td>Dr. Ain</td>
<td>Plumbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Unken</td>
<td>Alcoholics</td>
<td>Dr. Uggist</td>
<td>Hypochondriacs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ivel</td>
<td>Excessive talkers</td>
<td>Dr. Astic</td>
<td>Over-reactors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Rible</td>
<td>Kidney problems</td>
<td>Dr. Izzle</td>
<td>Runny noses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Apery</td>
<td>Home decorators</td>
<td>Dr. Ench</td>
<td>Weathermen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Omedarian</td>
<td>Camel riders</td>
<td>Dr. Umbeat</td>
<td>Indian dancers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Opisy</td>
<td>Late sleepers</td>
<td>Dr. Oppe</td>
<td>Clumsy oafs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Oopy</td>
<td>Unkempt persons</td>
<td>Dr. Aving</td>
<td>Artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Eamland</td>
<td>Fantasizers</td>
<td>Dr. Umner</td>
<td>Rock &amp; rollers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Amatics</td>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Dr. Agoon</td>
<td>State troopers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Acula</td>
<td>Spoiled brats</td>
<td>Dr. Achma</td>
<td>Greek bankers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Illmaster</td>
<td>Army sergeants</td>
<td>Dr. Aft</td>
<td>Brewery workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Eadnought</td>
<td>Sailors</td>
<td>Dr. Awer</td>
<td>Furniture makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Awl</td>
<td>Southerners</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A Query

Darryl Francis points out that the British magazine Games & Puzzles awhile ago ran a contest called Parallel Words. The idea was to find the two longest words, of equal length, such that when they were written horizontally, one above the other, all the vertical two-letter sequences were words. This is the same thing as searching for an n-by-2 crossword, where the value of n must be as large as possible.

The dictionary of authority for the contest was the 1972 edition of Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary. Besides allowing two-letter words as such, two-letter words that occurred only in foreign phrases were also allowed, as long as the phrase concerned was given in the dictionary. The winning solution was

```
P A S S M E A S U R E
I N T E R O R B I T A L
```

What are the best solutions to this utilizing other dictionaries?

Update

Darryl August Kevorkian, of Normal, Illinois: "I am familiar with the Thesaurus, but my dictionary (H. W. and S. Brown Co. Word Power, page 53) also has some splendid words with which you can choose from.

As for the medical specialty, I have come to the conclusion that the department of degenerative diseases is the one that is most in need of a new name. Medical degeneration, you see, has been little studied, and I think it is appropriate that this new name be given to an appropriate specialty.

Degenerative Diseases

As for the second query, I have come to the conclusion that the British magazine Games & Puzzles awhile ago ran a contest called Parallel Words. The idea was to find the two longest words, of equal length, such that when they were written horizontally, one above the other, all the vertical two-letter sequences were words. This is the same thing as searching for an n-by-2 crossword, where the value of n must be as large as possible.

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Disputing Maxey Brooke's August Kickshaws claim that OHO and XIX are the only two spatially invariant words (palindromes consisting of only the letters H, I, O and X), editor Eckler adds the Web Z words HOH (a branch of the Quileute Indian tribe of Washington), IHI (a New Zealand food fish), and OXO (oxygen-containing) to the meager stockpile. Jay Ames notes that OXO is also a trade-name associated with Bovril, and Rudolph Ondrejka comes up with the splendid coinage IXOHOXI, the name of a certain magic square on page 53 of Jerome S. Meyer's Fun with Mathematics (1952).

Darryl Francis extends Maxey Brooke's DINGUS-words in the August Kickshaws by referring to the American Thesaurus of Slang, which contains hundreds of additional items (see Sections 75, 76 in the Thesaurus): for example, diddenbobbus, diddledywhacker, domawda, dumbflicket, hoofenpooper, hoopnanny, rigamajisser, snivvie, thinkumthankum, whazzit, woofin-whiffle. Philip Cohen's favorite nonce-word of this nature is whatchamadiddly; others are what'sit, giljuy, frammis and whatsis.

As for multiple negatives, Edward Wolpow has found in Stedman's Medical Dictionary (1957) the entry "alexia without agraphia", an acquired condition of the brain in which the patient can write but is unable to read.

Degenerative English

Degenerative English, like gonorrhea, is an epidemic disease because so few of its victims are aware that anything is wrong with them. Though the disease is seldom curable, palliatives exist. One available to teachers of our mother (father?) tongue -- but not if they suffer from degenerative English themselves -- is light verse devised to distinguish between correct and incorrect usage. You may be moved to add a few mnemonic pills of your own to those hereunder:

Imly, Infer

When Ann implied she hungered to be kissed,
The boys inferred that she would not resist.
But since she slapped them roundly when they tried,
They clearly mis-inferred what she implied.

The grammarians' witch hunt against 'ain't I' is exceeded in ferocity, though not in duration, only by the Salem witchcraft hysteria of the 1690s:

Triollet Celebrating 'Ain't I'
The tongue, too stiff for 'amn't I,' Is loose enough for 'ain't!'.
Though 'am I not' may qualify,
The tongue's too stiff for 'amn't I:'
While 'aren't I' -- solipsistic cry --
Makes even strong men faint.
The tongue, too stiff for 'amn't I,'
Is loose enough for 'ain't.'

'Well' is as Good an Adjective as 'Good'

At the stake,
Through the blaze
Of the wood,
The Martyr spake:
"I feel good,"
(So all should
Who forsake
Sinful ways;
Wish I could!)
But I laze
Down to Hell ...
Joan felt good.
I feel well.

The following quatrain is a reminder of how quietly proper and
improper usages blend:

Come Set With Me

The Sun has set, the sails are set,
Farewell, old setting hen!
I'm off to set the world on fire,
Then home to set again.

Though I know no manual of usage which will give the horrid
phrase "convince ... to" the time of day, it has become so common-
place that I am quixotic to complain about it:

Convince Me To

The day someone convinces me to say
"Convince me to" will be the day that I
Have been convinced to quit this ball of clay:
That is to say,
The day
I
Die.