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silly humor*

Humor or Sadism?

A fight has been going on over the question of the "brutal" humor of the late Ring Lardner, of George Milburn and of Erskine Caldwell. To some readers, Mr. Caldwell's Georgia cracker stories are too close to sadism to be funny. But humor, as Anthony Ludovici proved recently in his "The Secret of Laughter" (Viking Press), may be compounded, at times, of sadism. Our comic strips succeed in evoking laughter by the principle of having Mutt sock Jeff on the cranium with the rolling pin borrowed from Mrs. Mutt. Why quarrel over definitions? Why not admit there are two sorts of humor, the genial, all-dissolving humor of Falstaff taking his ease at his inn, and the more "brutal" kind? It will save argument if we can get our definitions straight.