

A Richmond Writer

Comments On Shore

So Declares Richmond Writer In The New York Sunday Times—Feeling Is Waning

Virginius Dabney in THE NEW YORK TIMES of last Sunday, writing from Richmond, Virginia, has a very amusing story of the Eastern Shore—Mencken split---up. The story in part reads thus:

One of the liveliest controversies of recent months, a controversy in which H. L. Mencken and The Baltimore Evening Sun have been arrayed against the citizenry and press of the eastern shore of Maryland and Virginia is gradually simmering down, with all hands apparently tired of dipping their pens in vitriol after some weeks devoted to hurling epithets back and forth across the Chesapeake.

The fun began when Mr. Mencken wrote an article for The Evening Sun on December 7, three days after the lynching of a Negro at Salisbury on the Maryland eastern shore in which he took some ferocious wallops at the state of culture on the lower portion of the Maryland shore. The blast contained such phrases as "poor white trash" "knaveish politicians," "prehensile professional patriots and whooping soul-savers," "and Asatia for morons," and "simian self-seeking in public office," all of which he applied with gusto to the region and its inhabitants.

The reaction from beyond the Chesapeake was immediate and unmistakable. There was an instantaneous outburst of recrimination in the press and Mr. Mencken and The Evening Sun were roundly scored. At the same time a large quantity of business with Baltimore houses was canceled by Salisbury business men—no less than \$150,000 worth in the one day, according to apparently reliable estimates.

Angry With Mr. Mencken

An idea of the sort of thing which appeared in the newspapers of the lower Maryland shore concerning Mr. Mencken may be gleaned from the editorial columns of The Worcester Democrat, which opened that "Mencken's soul, if he has one, must have come from a hyena, a rattlesnake or a skunk," while The Cambridge Daily Banner made the discovery that Mencken is himself "a lyncher" since he once proposed to take William Jennings Bryan "to the top of the Washington Monument in Washington disembowel him and hurl his remains into the Potomac." Meanwhile the two counties of Virginia's eastern shore had become greatly aroused over Mr. Mencken's statement in the same article that since the World War the lower Maryland shore has been "going downhill, mentally and morally" and "sliding out of Maryland and into the orbit of

Arkansas and Tennessee, Mississippi and the more flea-bitten half of Virginia."

There was nothing to indicate that in referring to the "flea-bitten half of Virginia. Mr. Mencken had the two shore counties of Accomac and Northampton in mind, for they are the wealthiest in the United States, but the inhabitants leaped to the conclusion nevertheless that they were being insulted. Their newspapers rushed to the assault The Northampton Times leading in the attack with the query: "What material distinction is there, socially or otherwise, between a flea-bitten Virginian and a lousy Baltimorean?"

As on the Maryland shore, there were it is understood cancellations of orders with Baltimore business houses and stickers appeared on automobiles with the legend: "I am an eastern shoreman and proud of it."

Fun for Mr. Mencken

In the meantime Mr. Mencken was having the time of his life belaboring the Salisbury lynchers. His article in The Evening Sun of December 14, despite the cancellations which were coming in and there was a third broadside on Dec. 21.

For more than a month after the appearance of his first article there was an almost continuous flood of protesting letters from the shore to the editor of The Evening Sun. The shoremen have long looked upon the wet and libertirian city of Baltimore with a decidedly fishy eye anyway and the Menckenian gibes were more than they could stand. "I could not face my God if I should let such insults go unanswered," wrote one correspondent. "The men of the eastern shore are God-fearing, red-blooded men," wrote another.

As for the lynching itself the authorities of Salisbury have been spending so much time in denunciation of Mr. Mencken and The Sun that they have neglected to bring the lynchers to justice. Nearly seven weeks have passed and no arrest has been made, although many of the participants in the crime are said to be known. Governor Ritchie and Attorney General Preston Lane have done all they are empowered to do under the State Constitution. If no member of the mob is brought to trial, the responsibility will lie at the door of the Salisbury authorities.