

Sun Forum

Argues That Mr. Mencken's "Messianic Complex" Has Led Him Into "Vituperations That 'Evince Nothing But Bias,' And A 'Yearning To Right Wrongs,' And To Become 'Messiah Of The Eastern Shore'"

To THE EDITOR OF THE EVENING SUN—Sir:

If justice were sure and swift here in America, as it is in England, possibly there would be no such deplorable manifestations of mob violence and racial hatred as were recently shown in Salisbury, Md.

Justice in high places lags, evades issues, disregards proof of innocence when it has a mind to do so, as witness the case of Mr. Mooney, whose continued incarceration is a blot on our so-called civilization.

Following his habit of wrestling with injustice, never happier than when galloping to the rescue of the under dog, Mr. H. L. Mencken has, in his recent article, "The Eastern Shore Kultur," manifested his usual inhibitions, which, strangely enough, seem to have been built up through his dominant interest—reform.

Some time ago he told the world naïvely: "I have a great distaste for good works, and a loathing for converts." In reality, he has a passion for good works and a yearning for converts. In his article on the Salisbury lynching he is only following, in a more marked degree than usual, his very creditable desire to right wrongs; he is only manifesting in a more marked degree than usual his strong Messianic complex. What further proof of this could be required than when he states: "I long ago suggested that a missionary crusade be organized to save Maryland from its Methodist preachers"?

Speaking of the people of Wicomico, he further states, "They must depend for their ideas upon clowns in the pulpit, clowns on the stump . . . so I call for volunteers," their objective to be the salvation of Wicomico! Obviously, Mr. Mencken is the Messiah who would fain lead the benighted heathen of the Eastern Shore to the promised land.

He thinks that since the World War the "going down hill mentally and morally on the lower Shore" is confined to that part of the country. Filled with inhibitions with regard to "the Shore," he is unable to see farther than his nose to realize that mental and moral decay is only too apparent throughout America since the World War.

It is hardly conceivable that Mr. Mencken thinks "the lack of intelligence on the bench, the lack of courage in the local press, the simian self-seeking in public office," is confined to Wicomico. If Mr. Mencken's influence hereabouts were as farflung as it is in other parts, perhaps he would then be able to see us with a wider vision, and to realize that provincialism after all is but a state of mind, as prevalent in Baltimore or New York as elsewhere.

We have long been a little weary down here, we provincials, of Mr. Mencken's mockery, of his efforts to remold the world nearer to his heart's desire; weary of his "reverend clergy" motif, played always fortissimo; more than weary of his delight in hideous words, manifested, as usual, in his Wicomico article "swinishness," "obscenity," "rot-gut" and the trite saying that down here we are "miles from a lemon," a *bon mot* which escaped the lips of a moron some fifty years ago.

Every right-minded citizen of the Eastern Shore, or elsewhere, can but deplore such a manifestation of mob hatred and brutality as was recently shown at Salisbury, to the shame of America. Mr. Mencken's vituperations, however, confining themselves to one section of a country, evince nothing but bias. Discrimination and injustice against the colored people is not confined to Wicomico; the last lynching which occurred in Maryland took place but a few miles from Baltimore. Because he lives in a glass house, perhaps Mr. Mencken feels he is better equipped to throw stones.

MRS. TILGHMAN JOHNSTON,

Easton, Md., Dec. 10.