

A Delaware Man Condemns The Lynching At Salisbury

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EVENING SUN—Sir:

This is my first letter to a newspaper, but after reading H. L. Mencken on Eastern Shore Kultur it seems natural to put the reactions down on paper. The first is a sense of wonder. How can Mr. Mencken look down so far and not get dizzy?

We heartily agree with him that lynching is never justifiable; that the Salisbury case was particularly needless and brutal, and that the officers were not as zealous as they might have been, but from there we just can't follow him. As near as we can make out, Mr. Mencken is irritated over prohibition and the Methodists and lays the blame for the lynching at the door of the irritants.

Now, the last case of lynching on the Shore was at Crisfield some twenty years ago when a Negro was lynched about noon one Sunday. That night a Methodist preacher in the town, in spite of repeated warnings, preached a strong sermon against lynch law. He also requested to appear before the grand jury and gave evidence. Since the recent case numerous Methodists, along with spokesmen for other denominations, have vigorously denounced the crime both in the pulpit and in print. So much for Methodism's contribution to lynching.

Of course, Mr. Mencken drags in prohibition under the unstated assumption that prohibition increases the supply of alcoholic beverages. Not even he would claim that mobs well filled with liquor are less likely to lynch Negroes.

When he comes down to the real meat of his argument; namely, that if Baltimore city had its just and proper representation in the State government it could at least make the counties be good if it could not enlighten them by its own exemplary conduct, we might be tempted to laugh or to point out some sore spots near Mr. Mencken's home. The counties do not have a monopoly of ninth-rate politicians, venal officials, or servile press. We believe there are some good people in Baltimore. We even believe that, as in the rural sections, these outnumber the other kind. We rejoice with them if and when they clean house. We sympathize with them as they face their own peculiar problems, and Mr. Mencken and his type of kultur are surely one of their minor pains in the neck. As for us, we think the Eastern Shore is the better for its hosts of Methodists and for prohibition, even if neither are perfect at present.

JAMES H. MCNEAL.

Camden, Del., Dec. 11.

The Eastern Shore Press

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EVENING SUN—Sir:

The lower Eastern Shore has many intelligent people, of course; but they are not to be found in the newspaper offices of that section.

JOHN ALBERT HOOVER.

Baltimore, Dec. 14.

Mencken In Hell [i. e. Baltimore] Will Issue Tirade Against Heaven [i. e. Eastern Shore] According To This Philippic

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EVENING SUN—Sir:

Not many observant citizens of the Eastern Shore, I take it, were surprised at the hysterical outburst of disparities coming from the fanatical pen of H. L. Mencken in *The Evening Sun* of December 7.

Writing as he does from a well-filled storehouse of atheistic beliefs, unsocial theories and an ignorantly conceived pride in the spectacular, he poured upon an already wounded spirit, that of the Eastern Shore, no balm of Gilead, but the foulest epithets and undisguised vindictive condemnation. We are well acquainted with Mr. Mencken and his ideas of civilization, having heard a group of college men vigorously hiss and boo his unhealthy dogma.

Thank God, none of his ideas have ever been accepted by responsible people, and only his most loyal followers—Negroes, outcasts and Communists—have considered his rantings. Even with opening a very sore wound, he was not satisfied, but his nature forced him to again disregard all convention and attack, not the members of the group participating in the demonstration against a self-confessed Negro murderer of a highly respected white citizen, but included in his spurious array of invective the entire population of the Eastern Shore, the men and women who did not even hear of the affair until it was well completed.

The record of H. L. Mencken is too well known on the Shore to cause a consideration of the overflowings of his vile pen. His is the glory of the intellect that takes supreme delight in the unethical, the side of the iconoclast, the unbeliever. He is the type of man who will sometime go to hell, and once there will promptly begin a tirade against Heaven. In the same way, from Baltimore, he has attacked the Eastern Shore.

Citizens here regret the aftermath of the lynching as all self-respecting people do, but rest secure in the knowledge that violent crimes merit just retribution. H. L. Mencken is pleading for something he himself fails to understand and we are willing to overlook his blissful ignorance.

G. RICHARD LONG.

Delmar, Del., Dec. 12.