

# CRITICISM FAILS

America's Foremost Critic  
Says He Has Lots of  
Fun in Lambasting  
Folk Now and  
Then—



Henry L. Mencken.

By JOHN O'DONNELL.

BALTIMORE.—The enthusiasm of a wealthy bootlegger applauding prohibition is a weak and delicate emotion compared to the glee with which America's foremost critic, Henry Louis Mencken, observes the national indifference to his criticism of life and letters.

"I fail to see a single change in America's philosophy," said Mencken, discussing the effects of his voluminous writings during the past 10 years.

"The only change in America will be a change from one imbecility to a worse," he continued. "Since I have never labored under the moral conviction of trying to do good, I have no feeling of disappointment or futile effort.

"I criticize American life because I enjoy doing it and because I find it profitable.

"In writing, as in living, the only justification is the fun you get out of it.

### Three Sources of Enjoyment.

"I am now a bachelor of 42. I have discovered that it is possible to get enjoyment out of women, alcohol and ideas.

"I get little enjoyment out of women, more out of alcohol and most out of ideas. Therefore, I have become a connoisseur of ideas and devoted myself to criticism of the absurdities.

"But I never expected to make other people adopt my opinions."

Here is Mencken's opinion of American life in this year of Our Lord, 1922:

"It is one of my firmest beliefs, reached after due prayer, that the government of the United States, in both its legislative and executive branches, is corrupt, ignorant, incompetent and disgusting—and from this judgment I except no more than 20 lawmakers and no more than 20 executioners of their laws.

"It is a belief no less piously cherished that the administration of justice in this republic is stupid, dishonest, and against all reason and equity—and from this I expect no more than 20 judges.

"It is another, that the foreign policy of the United States, its habitual manner of dealing with other nations, whether friends or foes, is hypocritical, disingenuous, knavish and dishonorable—and from this judgment I consent to no exceptions whatever.

"When I live in a country like that," continued Mencken, "it is a physical impossibility for me to avoid enjoying myself. Can you imagine a more enjoyable occupation than walking into the cages and then listening to the animals rear and howl?"

### Every Man's Opinions.

"Opinions are dependent on a man's liver, his gall bladder, the asinine ideas he inherited from his parents and the points of view he adopted in boyhood," says Mencken.

"Very probably my own dislike for democracy is the result of always seeing my father in the position of boss—he gave the orders; other men obeyed.

"I have felt able to express my views because I have always been free from any financial pressure.

"If I had to worry about buying the baby's shoes from the weekly pay-envelope, my attitude might have been different.

"I am wholly devoid of public spirit or moral purpose. The only thing I respect is intellectual honesty of which of course, intellectual courage is a necessary part."