

excellent piece of work, and I so reported to the person who sent it to me. Of this, more when we meet.

Yours,

(Signed) H.L. Mencken

Though the latest fiction failed to win Mencken's respect as much as some earlier writing, he had no trouble in enjoying Miller's naturalistic novels. Mencken read the edition of *Tropic* issued in France in 1934; the American edition was not permitted to come out till 1961.

In fall Mencken wrote his friend the lawyer-philosopher Huntington Cairns (October 19, 1936, *Letters of H.L. Mencken*) that Miller had "a really diabolical talent for getting character on paper."

NYP TLCY

To William Saroyan

January 25, 1936.

William Saroyan, Esq.,  
348 Carl St.,  
San Francisco, California.

Dear Mr. Saroyan:

I note what you say about your aspiration to edit a magazine. I am sending you by this mail a six-chambered revolver. Load it and fire every one into your head. You will thank me after you get to Hell and learn from other editors how dreadful their job was on earth. I wouldn't go back to magazine editing for all the money wasted by the Brain Trust.

Your plan seems amusing and if anything decent occurs to me I'll certainly get it on paper and send it to you. I suggest writing to Cabell and Dreiser directly and at once. I seldom see either of them. O'Neill I never see at all. Hergesheimer, at the moment, is in Nassau, but a letter addressed to him at West Chester, Pennsylvania, will probably be forwarded.

The proletarian brethren will probably respond eagerly, so you'll have to be careful to avoid getting too many of them into the book. I don't promise categorically to do something, for a suitable idea may not occur to me, but if one pops up I'll certainly work it out.

Whenever I read anything about myself it always makes me laugh. I am constantly credited with motives that I never had and accused of enterprises that have been as far from my thoughts as preaching the gospel.

Yours,

(Signed) H.L. Mencken

Saroyan was a font of energy. His *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* had appeared in 1934; his *Inhale and Exhale* appeared in 1936, not long after this letter was written; and he seemed to be at his typewriter all the time. Nevertheless, he had some energy left over which he now proposed to devote to editing. Here he is approaching Mencken with his plan to have a number of prominent American authors do a piece about themselves.

*To Ethalinda Handy*

Miss Ethalinda Handy,  
2329 Calvert St.,  
Baltimore, Md.

EPL TLCY

February 22, 1936.

Dear Miss Handy:

Thanks so much for your note. You must know how tremendously fond Sara was of you and how much good you did her. She told me over and over again that she owed most of the comfort of her last years to your help. I hope you let me see you soon.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) H.L. Mencken

Ethalinda Handy was the nurse who had come in regularly to give Sara treatments for her kidney trouble (Bode's interview with Bessie Lee Poindexter, who was the Menckens' maid on Cathedral Street, October 15, 1963).

*To Charles H. Abhau, Jr.*

GENTHNER

H.L. MENCKEN  
704 CATHEDRAL ST.  
BALTIMORE

February 29, 1936.

My dear Uncle Charlie:

Far from thinking you a dunce, as you hint, Sara was delighted with you, and used to talk about you often. I am only sorry that her ill health and your own disablement prevented the two of you getting better acquainted. She had an extraordinary courage, and faced her troubles with great calm. She was actually hard at work within a few weeks of her death. I put that book together in sheer justice to her. If she had lived she'd have made it much better.

I only hope that the grip[pe] has passed off, and that you are feeling