

THE VISIT OF MR. MENCKEN

the reader, and his contempt has been only the more deadly because of the good-humoured slang in which he couches it. The extent of his triumph may be gauged by the fact that he is writing in *Harper's*, the *Century*, and other former reactionary strongholds. Without declaring that his judgment is always impeccable, we can say that his critical acumen is at least equal to anything that we can show in Europe, and he has exercised his power with a decision and authority which is almost incomprehensible to people accustomed to the compromises of Fleet Street.

It is hardly too much to hope that his visit to Europe may be the beginning of the end of the flabbiness and half-heartedness of English criticism. He is a living witness to the fact that it is not necessary to acquiesce in the shoddy output of our literary linendrapers any longer.

Mr. Mencken's motto has been: first right, then upright, and then downright.

Our national fear of saying something about an author whom we may possibly meet at dinner the following week has destroyed our national standards of literature, and, despite the Puritans and tradesmen of America, she is actually forging ahead of us because of our lack of independent criticism.

"Consider one fact: the civilisation that kissed Maeterlinck on both cheeks, and Tagore perhaps even more intimately . . ."

That is typical of his smashing blow; may he lay about him heartily during his visit to Europe!