

A Book of Burlesques


Henry Louis Mencken

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very different. H. L. Mencken was able to cover many literary styles and his pros, always a pleasure to read.

About the Author Henry Louis "H.L." Mencken became one of the most influential and prolific journalists in America in the 1920s and '30s, writing about all the shams and con artists in the world. He attacked chiropractors and the Ku Klux Klan, politicians and other journalists. Most of all, he attacked Puritan morality. He called Puritanism, "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy." At the height of his career, he edited and wrote for *The American Mercury* magazine and the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper, wrote a nationally syndicated newspaper column for the *Chicago Tribune*, and published two or three books every year. His masterpiece was one of the few books he wrote about something he loved, a book called *The American Language* (1919), a history and collection of American vernacular speech. It included a translation of the Declaration of Independence into American English that began, "When things get so balled up that the people of a country got to cut loose from some other country, and go it on their own hook, without asking no permission from nobody, excepting maybe God Almighty, then they ought to let everybody know why they done it, so that everybody can see they are not trying to put nothing over on nobody." When asked what he would like for an epitaph, Mencken wrote, "If, after I depart this vale, you ever remember me and have thought to please my ghost, forgive some sinner and wink your eye at some homely girl." (from *American Public Media*)