

The Charlatanry of the Learned (De Charlataneria Eruditorum, 1715), By Johann Burkhard Mencken (1674–1732). Translated from the German by Francis E. Litz, with notes and an introduction by H. L. Mencken (New York: Knopf, 1937), pp. 3–45.

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR

In the Autumn of 1657 the great plague was raging in the towns of the Baltic littoral, as it was to rage in London seven years later. One of those most sorely beset was Marienwerder on the Vistula, an ancient stronghold of the Teutonic Knights, not far from their castle of Marienburg. There was a cathedral in Marienwerder, built by the pious knights in the Thirteenth Century, but by now the whole region had turned Protestant, and so the archpresbyter or head clergyman thereof was a respectable family man. He had come, by the way of the University of Marburg, from Oldenburg in the far West of Germany, and his name was Eilhard Mencke, or, as it was usually Latinized, Eilhardus Menckenius.

The medicine of the time being ineffective against the plague, resort was had to prayer, and in this, by virtue of his office, Dr. Menckenius naturally led. But his petitions went so far unheard by the Lutheran Jahveh that the disease penetrated to his own hearth, and on September 27, 1657, his only son, Christoph Conrad, died of it. On the same day, in fear and trembling, the archpresbyter made his will. By it, after bequests to the Marienwerder hospital for the poor, and to the cathedral for an altar and a modest memorial to himself, he divided his property into two parts. The first, consisting of all his worldly goods in Marienwerder, he left to his wife, Anna Pillhoffskin. The second, consisting of a house, certain lands and some money lying at interest, all in Oldenburg, he left to the children and children's children of his brother Gerhard or Gerd, a merchant there, for their education. In case Gerhard left no heirs the will provided that this Oldenburg property was to be vested in trustees, and that its usufruct was to constitute a *Familienstipendium*, or family scholarship, for the support of any other young Mencke, for all time to come, who desired to frequent a university. But one condition was imposed: that each year the current beneficiary should pronounce an *oratiunculam* in memory of the founder or in praise of *de studiis et artibus liberalibus*.

The good archpresbyter's forebodings were well justified, for he died two months later, and of the same pestilence that had taken off his son. Soon afterward his widow followed, and there were no more Menckes in Marienwerder, though the old man's monument survives in the cathedral to this day, and so does the altar that his legacy paid for, rising heavy with carving above the tombs of long-dead grandmasters of the Teutonic Order. His will was probated at Marienwerder on January 16, 1658, and ten days later a copy of it was filed at Oldenburg, then under the Danish crown. His brother Gerhard, at the time, was the father of a son nine years old, and this boy should have been the first beneficiary under the will, but Gerhard, who was a business man and designed his son to be the same, apparently had a low opinion of the higher learning, even though it had brought Eilhard to the grand estate of an archpresbyter. At all events, he issued a flat declaration, without benefit of judiciary, that the will was invalid, boldly took possession of the Oldenburg property as next of kin, and sold one of the principal items thereof, a building called the Westerloye house, to a certain Christopher Huntorssen, a Dane. This lawless proceeding was not formally challenged by the other Menckes living in Oldenburg —

of whom there was a considerable tribe, mainly merchants in the Baltic trade —, but there was one among them, a boy of fourteen, who marked it and remembered it. His name was Otto and he was the son of Eilhard's and Gerhard's cousin Johannes.

Otto was a very bright youth and had already absorbed nearly everything that the two Oldenburg pedagogues, Pastor Fontenius and Rector Stephani, had to teach. In 1660, two years after Gerhard's piracy, he proceeded to the *Gymnasium* at Bremen, and in 1662 to the university at Leipzig, which was then rapidly rising to first place among the German universities.¹ In 1664, being twenty years old, he took his master's degree, and according to the custom of the time started on his *Wanderjahre*. His goal was Holland, where he visited the universities at Groningen, Utrecht, Delft and Leyden, and met many eminent *savants*. Returning to Leipzig, he stopped off at Oldenburg to visit his family, and there, having come of age, he brought suit against Gerhard, praying for a vacation of the sale of the Westerloye house to Huntorssen and for an accounting of the proceeds. On July 11, 1665, the Danish court declared the sale invalid, and on November 21 of the following year it sustained the will of Eilhard in every particular.

Young Otto thus won a quick and easy victory, but there were delays between judgment and execution in those days as in these, and in 1678, twelve years after the final verdict, Huntorssen was still hanging on to the Westerloye house, and claiming that he ought to be compensated for the money he had paid to Gerhard for it. In that year Oldenburg was swept by a great fire, and every private building in the town, including the Westerloye house, was destroyed. The next year, unable to rebuild it, Huntorssen sold the empty lot to one Delbrüggen for 1000 alberts courant. Bestirred by Otto, who was professor of ethics at Leipzig by now, and the father of a son, the court seized the money and proceeded to administer it. But the descendants of Gerhard, of course, had the first call upon it, and of these all but one had died. He was a son, also called Gerhard, and he was now twenty-nine years old — rather too far along in life to go to a university. However, there was still the possibility that he might have a son of his own, so the rest of the Menckes, shepherded by Otto, could only sit still and wait. In 1684 he pleased everyone by dying childless.

The first beneficiary of the *Stipendium* seems to have been Otto's cousin Lüder, later to be professor of law at Leipzig. He was twenty-six years old in 1684 and had taken his doctorate two years before, but he was still eager for learning, and did not reach a chair in the university until five years later. Lüder was fourteen years younger than Otto, and had gone to Leipzig under his wing. The next beneficiary was Otto's son, Johann Burkhard, born in Leipzig in 1674. He entered the university at

¹ It retained that rank for many years, and until near the end of the Eighteenth Century Leipzig was called "the little Paris." The town's high culture attracted most of the principal German authors of the century, including Goethe and Schiller. Schiller's house in what was, in his time, the suburb of Gohlis is still preserved. It stands in the Menckestrasse, named after Otto Mencke's cousin Lüder, who acquired the Gohlis estate by marriage in 1688. The prosperity of the university was largely due to the wealth of the town. The rich merchants there denized were generous with endowments, and down to the World War Leipzig led all the German universities in income.

seventeen, took his doctorate at twenty, and became professor of history in 1699, when he was twenty-five. During the following year, 1700, the Menckens of all sub-species held a family council, and drew up rules for the management of the *Stipendium*. Those rules endured until 1868, when, at another family council, they were renewed with a few minor changes. In the years since 1700 more than fifty Menckes and Menckens have been beneficiaries of the fund², and it remains available to any descendant in the direct line to this day.³ Some of these beneficiaries later became professors in the German universities, usually either of history or of law; others were called to the bar or entered public life. One, Otto (not to be confused with the Leipzig professor), went into the Danish diplomatic service and was raised to the nobility. Another, Anastasius Ludwig, became one of the secretaries of Frederick the Great. A third, Carl Wilhelm Ernst, celebrated his sixty-seventh birthday, which fell opportunely on August 2, 1914, by volunteering for active service with the German Army, and demanding to be let at the foe. He was a shade too old for that, but they put him in command of a small Baltic port, and there he kept a sharp lookout for the English Grand Fleet until the end of the war.

II

The best of all the Menckenii was probably Johann Burkhard, the author of the present book, whose life stretched from 1674 to 1732. He got a good start, for his father, at the time he was born, was already a rising man in the university at Leipzig, and his mother, Magdalena Sibylla Berlich (1656-1703), was the daughter of a celebrated Saxon jurist, Burkhard Berlich.⁴ Young Burkhard went to the Nikolaischule, and at seventeen entered the university. He spent his first year hearing philosophy, chiefly in the lecture-rooms of his father and of the anti-Cartesian, Johann Gottlieb Hardt,⁵ and by the time he was eighteen he was

² The second *n* in the name was a sediment from the Latin form, Menckenius. It began to be used by the Leipzig Menckenii before the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, and is used by all their descendants today. But for nearly a century usage varied. Christian Gottlieb Jöcher, in his *Allgemeines Gelehrten Lexicon*; Leipzig, 1750, spoke of J. B. Mencken in his preface, but made it Mencke in his text. Some of Mencken's Eighteenth Century translators dropped the *c* and made the name Menken. In the Oldenburg region Mencke is still the usual form.

³ Originally, only males were eligible, but at a family council held at Hattenheim in 1929 the statute was changed to include females. The first beneficiary of this change seems to have been a Fräulein Mechthild Mencke, a student of theology (!). *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Familie Mencke*, Band II, Heft 22, No. 47, Sept., 1936.

⁴ Berlich, born in 1605, was electoral councillor and city judge in Leipzig, and later a member of the court at Dresden, where he died in 1670. He wrote a number of legal commentaries. Johann Burkhard's middle name came from Berlich's first name. It persisted in the Mencken family for two centuries.

⁵ Hardt was born at Loheburg, near Magdeburg, and studied at Leipzig, where he became an assessor of the faculty of philosophy. On the death of Valentin Alberti, in 1697, he was made professor of logic and metaphysics. He wrote a system of philosophy in opposition to that of Descartes, but it was never published. He was elected *rector magnificus* of the university in

sufficiently advanced to become *baccalaureus philosophiae*. Two years later he took his master's degree and soon thereafter his doctorate.

It is conceivable that family influence had something to do with this rapid progress, for Burkhard's father Otto, by the last decade of the century, had become one of the chief men of the university, and his father's cousin, Lüder, was not only professor of law there, but also director of the *Kleine Fürstenkollegium* (College of Princes), and chief judge of the Saxon High Court of Justice. Papa Otto was now the university professor of ethics, had served as *rector magnificus* four times before 1695, and was to serve once again.⁶ He had published relatively little but he was busy with university affairs, commonly acted — *wegen seiner feinen Bildung!* — as the spokesman of his colleagues on state occasions, and had founded, in 1682, the *Acta eruditorum*, the first learned review in Germany, and was still its editor. This last office brought him into contact with all the principal scholars of the time, both at home and abroad, and among his friends were such men as Pufendorf (who had advised him to go into the diplomatic service), Leeuwenhoek, Robert Boyle, Leibniz, Seckendorff, Bernoulli, Graevius, Jacob Gronov, Tschirnhausen, Thomas Gale, and John Wallis,⁷ most of whom were frequent contributors to the *Acta*.⁸ Moreover, he

1713. During his term there were riots among the students, and he died on December 20, 1713, medically of gout, but psychologically, according to a Leipzig legend, of chagrin.

⁶ His terms were in 1675, 1679, 1687, 1693, and 1699. Johann Burkhard Mencken was rector in 1707, 1715, 1717, 1719, 1723 and 1729. Otto was *Decan* (dean) in 1671, 1677, 1685, 1691, 1697 and 1703, and Johann Burkhard in 1706, 1712, 1716, 1720, 1724, 1726 and 1728. In 1726 and 1728 Johann Burkhard was both *Decan* and *Prokanzellar* (vice-chancellor). Die Jüngere Matrikel der Universität Leipzig, 1559–1809, edited by Georg Erler; Leipzig, 1909, Vol. II, pp. liv ff.; Vol. III, pp. xxiv ff.

⁷ Samuel Pufendorf (1632–94) was born at Chemnitz and went to Leipzig as a student of theology, but quickly turned to law. His *Elementa jurisprudentiae universalis*, published at The Hague in 1660, attracted wide attention, and he was summoned to the University of Heidelberg as its first professor of natural law and the law of nations. He went to Lund in Sweden in 1670, and there became historiographer to the King of Sweden. In 1686 he was in Berlin as privy councillor to the Elector of Brandenburg, and there he died. He was one of the founders of international law. Antony van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723) was the first man to make effective use of the microscope. He discovered the red corpuscles of the blood, and many forms of minute animal life. Robert Boyle (1627–91) was one of the founders of modern chemistry, and also did memorable work as a physicist. Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716) was the greatest German scholar of his time, and one of the greatest mathematicians of all time. Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff (1626–92) was both statesman and historian. After serving Ernest the Pious, Duke of Gotha, and Moritz, Duke of Saxony-Weitz, he became chancellor of the University of Halle. His specialty was Protestant church history. Jakob Bernoulli (1654–1705) was a member of a famous Antwerp family of mathematicians, later settled at Basel. He was one of the first to grasp the new ideas of Leibniz, and he gained great fame as a solver of mathematical problems. In the *Acta eruditorum* for May, 1690, he applied the word *integral* to a differential equation for the first time. He wrote many books. Johann Georg Graevius (1632–1703) was a German who began by studying law in Leipzig, but soon turned to philology. He went to Holland and finally settled at Utrecht, where he made a large reputation. Scholars came from all parts of Europe to hear him. Jacob Gronov (1645–1716) was the son of a distinguished Dutch classical scholar. He traveled widely in his

was rich, for his wife had brought him money, he had inherited more from his father Johannes or Hans, in Oldenburg (1607–88), and his lectures were so popular that the other members of the faculty complained to the Elector of Saxony — Carlyle's August the Physically Strong — that their pupils had nearly all left them for him.

But if young Johann Burkhard, with such a father, thus got a good start upon his university career, he did not neglect the aid of personal diligence. He was a hard and patient scholar, and when his work in philosophy was done, and he had his degree, he turned to theology, and after that to history. For two whole years he listened to lectures in theology and canon law by Johannes Olearius and Immanuel Horn, the favorite contemporary specialists in ghostly science.⁹ He was ready, at the end of

youth, and became professor of law at Pisa. But in 1679 he returned to Holland, and was made professor of Greek literature and history at Leyden. Ehrenfried Walter, Count Tschirnhausen (1651–1708) was a mathematician and natural scientist. He greatly improved the manufacture of lenses and porcelain. His mathematical papers appeared frequently in the *Acta eruditorum*. Thomas Gale (c. 1635–1702) was regius professor of Greek at Cambridge from 1666 to 1697, and later Dean of York. John Wallis (1616–1703) was educated at Cambridge, but became Savilian professor of geometry at Oxford. He was a mathematician of great ability, and made many important contributions to geometry and algebra. He introduced the symbol ∞ for infinity. As a recreation he interested himself in cryptograms, and during the English Civil War, in which he sided with the Parliament, he deciphered many of the intercepted messages of the Royalists.

⁸ The *Acta* was continued, after Otto's death in 1707, by Johann Burkhard, and after the latter's death in 1732 by his son, Friedrich Otto, who continued as editor until his own death in 1754. Altogether, the Menckens edited it for sixty-eight years. After Friedrich Otto's death the official *privilegium* for issuing it was held by his widow, and it had various editors. The last was Andreas Bel, professor of poetry at Leipzig and librarian of the university. It fell upon evil days toward the end, and at the time of Bel's death in 1782 he had just brought out the 1776 volume. That was the finish of the *Acta eruditorum*. Its best days were before Johann Burkhard's death. Its files for that period of fifty years show many contributions of lasting importance, including Leibniz's papers on the differential calculus, and monographs by Leeuwenhoek, Sydenham, Halley, Boyle, Bernoulli, Pascal, Descartes, Huygens, Locke, Wallis, Tschirnhausen, Malpighi and Newton. A full account of the founding of the *Acta* by Otto Mencken, and of the manner in which he carried on the editorship, is to be found in *Zur Entstehungs- und Redaktionsgeschichte der Acta eruditorum*, by Joachim Kirchner, librarian of the Prussian State Library at Berlin, *Archiv für Buchgewerbe und Gebrauchsgraphik*, 1928, pp. 75-88. Its later history is detailed in *Geschichte des literarischen Lebens in Leipzig*, by Georg Witkowski; Leipzig and Berlin, 1909, pp. 184 ff. An analysis of its contents down to 1700 is in *The Rôle of Scientific Societies in the Seventeenth Century*, by Martha Ornstein; Chicago, 1928, pp. 203 ff. See also *A History of Modern Culture*, by Preserved Smith; New York, 1930, Vol. I, pp. 174 ff. The *Acta* was put on the Index Librorum Prohibitorum of the Roman Catholic Church by a decree of the Holy Office dated Dec 4, 1702, and the volumes following were interdicted by a further decree dated Aug. 13, 1764. These prohibitions appear in the last edition of the Index, approved by the late Cardinal Merry del Val, June 7, 1929. The correspondence between Leibniz and the two Menckens, Otto and Johann Burkhard, is in the Provincial Library at Hanover.

⁹ Olearius (1639–1713) was born in Halle and studied at Leipzig, Wittenberg and Jena. He became professor of Greek at Leipzig in 1664, and professor of theology in 1677. He was a

that time, to enter the pulpit, but save on one occasion, to be noted presently, it appears that he never did so. Instead, he took to poetry, and became an active member of the Collegium Anthologicum, a society devoted to the practice of Latin verse. He also joined the Vertraute Rednergesellschaft, whose members entertained one another by making Latin speeches. And more and more he read history, which was to be his life-work.

In 1698, in company with his friend Friedrich Wilhelm Schütz,¹⁰ he began his *Wanderjahre*. He went first to Holland, and there he met a number of his father's learned acquaintances, including Jacob Gronov, who had just brought out the first volume of his huge "Thesaurus Antiquitatum Graecarum"; Graevius, whose "Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanorum" was to follow six years later; and Leeuwenhoek. All these men had a powerful influence upon the young scholar, and it was visible to the end of his life. His *magnum opus*, a "Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum" in three volumes folio (Leipzig, 1728–30) — it ran to 6381 pages, excluding prefaces and indices! — was plainly an imitation of the works of Gronov and Graevius, and when, on his father's death in 1707, he took over the editorship of the *Acta*, it was to be full of Leeuwenhoek.

But an influence even greater was that of Pierre Bayle, then living in Rotterdam, where young Mencken met him and quickly got upon good terms with him. Bayle had printed his celebrated "Dictionnaire Historique et Critique" but a year before, and was still in the midst of the ensuing uproar. The orthodox denounced him for obscenity, atheism and worse, but among the younger and livelier men of the time he was a great hero, for his dictionary was a veritable arsenal of iconoclasm. All the plaster saints of scholasticism came to grief in it; it was the forerunner of a new realism in history and a new rationalism in philosophy, and to it the modern spirit probably owes more than to any other book. To Burkhard contact with its author was immensely stimulating, and there was a Baylean touch to his writing until the end of his life. If there had been no "Dictionnaire" it is plain that there would never have been a "Charlataneria Eruditorum."¹¹

great figure in university circles and was *rector magnificus* eight terms. He also held various high offices at the Saxon court, and was *ephorus* in charge of the scholarships established by the Elector. When he died he was *senior* of the university. His three sons, Gottfried, Johannes Friedrich and Philipp all became professors, and his five daughters married academic and ecclesiastic dignitaries. He wrote 106 dissertations in theology, 61 in philology, and many other works. Horn (1652–1714) was educated at Leipzig, and became an assessor of the Consistory there.

¹⁰ Schütz will be encountered again near the end of this preface.

¹¹ Bayle, in his turn, owed a debt to the *Acta eruditorum*, and when he set up his own *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* in 1684 he acknowledged it handsomely. He was born of a Protestant family at Carla, near Foix, in 1647, and died in 1706. His dictionary was published in 1697, and translated into English in 1710. He settled in Holland in 1681, and received, for twelve years, a salary from the municipality of Rotterdam as a sort of unattached professor of philosophy. On the revocation of the Edict of Nantes he published two pamphlets which enraged Catholics and Protestants alike. Bayle disavowed them, but they were undoubtedly his. He was the forerunner of Voltaire and invented many of the

From Holland, after a brief visit to France, Mencken went to England, and there his father's introductions made many agreeable and profitable contacts for him. Robert Boyle had died seven years before, but he met all the other luminaries of the Royal Society of London, and was presently on intimate terms with Richard Bentley, the hero of the Battle of the Books and a famous foe of pedagogues and pedants; John Hudson, librarian of the Bodleian; William Cave, editor of the "*Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Historia Literaria*"; Henry Dodwell, the non-juring professor of history at Oxford; John Covell, master of Christ's College, Cambridge; and John Woodward, the founder of paleontology.¹² Cave and Woodward, in particular, were polite and useful to him. The former gave him a collection of ancient coins, and on the nomination of the latter he was elected a member of the Royal Society, though he was scarcely twenty-five. He visited both of the universities, but put in most of his time in London, frequenting learned society, searching the bookshops, and enjoying the charming life of the town. It was a pleasant day to be in London. The turmoils of the last half of the Seventeenth Century were giving way to the serenity of the Age of Anne, and the capital swarmed with all sorts of picturesque and amusing figures. Mencken, always a gregarious fellow, enjoyed himself immensely. There was, of course, work to do: he put in long hours in the libraries, tracked down

forensic dodges which Voltaire afterward practised with such success. His influence on his time was immense.

¹² Bentley (1662–1742) was the founder of classical scholarship, in the modern sense, in England. In the Battle of the Books he led the side which maintained that the so-called Epistles of Phalaris were spurious. In 1700 he became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and some years later regius professor of divinity in the university. He was engaged in frequent controversies of much bitterness, and several times efforts were made to deprive him of his university posts and honors. His greatness was not quickly recognized in England, but on the Continent he was vastly esteemed, and some of the foremost classical scholars of his time were his friends. Hudson (1662–1719) spent his life at Oxford, mainly engaged in editing classical authors. He became librarian of the Bodleian in 1701 and Principal of St. Mary's Hall in 1711. Cave (1637–1713) was chaplain to Charles II and a canon of Windsor. His *Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum historia literaria* was published in 1688. Dodwell (1641–1711) was born in Dublin and became Camden professor of history at Oxford in 1688. Three years later he was deprived of his professorship for refusing to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary. He retired to the country and devoted himself to ecclesiastical history. He cherished some theological vagaries. One was the doctrine that the soul is born mortal, and may take on immortality only by proper baptism. Covell (1638–1722) went out to Constantinople in early manhood as chaplain to the Levant Company, and while there made a study of the Greek Church that he afterward embodied in a book. In 1681 he became chaplain to the Princess of Orange, but got into trouble by objecting to the Prince's treatment of her, and was sent home. When the Prince, in 1689, appeared at Cambridge as King William III of England, and Covell, as Master of Christ's College, had to receive him, there was some embarrassment, but His Majesty dissipated it by pretending to forget their difference. Before becoming Master of Christ's, Covell was chancellor of York. He died a bachelor. Woodward (1665–1728) made a collection of fossils now in the Woodwardian Museum at Cambridge. He was professor of physics there, and was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1693. He demonstrated that the shells found in rocks had been deposited in sea sand, and described the strata of the rocks themselves.

and bought a great many books for his father, and even projected a grandiose critical treatise on all the surviving classical MSS. But in the main he followed the inclination of his years, and ever thereafter he had a great affection for London. If he could choose freely, he used to say, he would live there.¹³ Once, remembering his theological studies, someone induced him to preach in the Chapel of the Savoy, but that was the last sermon he was ever to deliver. When he returned to Leipzig he knew that his lifework was to be in history.

In 1699 he was gazetted *professor ordinarius* of that science at his *alma mater*, but it was some time before he began actual teaching. Two ideas, apparently hatched in London, set him apart from the other German historians of the time. One, anticipating Carlyle, was that history, in the last analysis, was largely a series of biographies — that it could not be lifted above the level of a dull and pointless chronicle without giving close heed to the motives and characters of its chief actors. The other was that the division between history and jurisprudence was rather artificial — that the one could not be understood without some knowledge of the other. Accordingly, Mencken applied himself to the study of law, and within two years he had got so far that the university at Halle granted him the degree of J.U.D. Meanwhile, he took a few pupils in history, and began the first of his long series of books. It was a biography of Leopold I, the Holy Roman Emperor who had beaten off the Turks from the gates of Vienna in 1683 and so saved Europe for the Christian *Kultur*. It came out in German in 1707, two years after Leopold's death — a squat duodecimo of more than 900 pages, dedicated to *meinem gnädigen Herren*, Count Ludwig von Zinsendorff und Pottendorff, the imperial ambassador at Stockholm.

Thereafter, until the end of his life, Mencken turned out a great variety of books and pamphlets, and was immensely busy otherwise as editor, orator, traveler, public official and university politician. Richard Treitschke, to whose critical essay on his works I am much indebted,¹⁴ divides his publications into five classes: 1, tracts on subjects of current interest; 2, historiographical monographs; 3, archeological studies; 4, historico-political studies, and 5, contributions to history proper. Of the first class the most important was "De Charlataneria Eruditorum." To keep it company there were essays on such varied themes as the dignity of learning, the quarrels of authors, the comic elements in the governmental process, and the alleged decline in the stature of Europeans — this last a counterblast to Pierre-Daniel Huet, Bishop of Avranches. Huet, by a resort to scholastic logic, tried to prove that

¹³ English was very little regarded in the Leipzig of his time, but he spoke and wrote it fluently, and was a diligent reader of English books. His letters to Covell are in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 22910 and 22911). About half of them are in English — very smoothly and colloquially written. To these English letters Mencken subscribes himself, variously, John Burchard Menckenius, J. B. Menckenius, and Jo. Burchard Mencke.

¹⁴ Burkhard Mencke, Professor der Geschichte zu Leipzig and Herausgeber der *Acta eruditorum: Zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft im Anfange des 18. Jahrhunderts*; Leipzig, 1842.

Christians would be reduced to the size of pigmies within a few centuries; Mencken had at him in rebuttal with statistics, and, as Treitschke says, other *reiche Daten*.¹⁵

Mencken's historiographical studies began in 1701 with his doctor's dissertation at Halle — an elaborate investigation of the relation between history and jurisprudence —, and continued until the end of his life. Perhaps his most important work in this category was a review of the whole range of memoir literature in French, with a side glance at that in English. It was a formidable undertaking, and the reviewer of the *Journal des Sçavans* saw *la main de maître* in the result. In the field of what Treitschke calls archeological studies Mencken printed more than a dozen works, ranging from an essay on men who were noted both for their military prowess and their learning to one on the hat as a symbol of liberty, and from one on royal pretenders to one on the celebration of birthdays among the Romans. He was always interested in such byways of history, and accumulated a vast store of historical trivia. As Treitschke says, he was not content with bleached skeletons, but demanded *Fleisch, Blut und Saft* — flesh, blood and sap. His contributions to the first edition of the Allgemeines Gelehrten Lexicon, later taken over by Christian Gottlieb Jöcher (he wrote the introduction, and most of the sketches of Englishmen and Italians), were rich with anecdotes, and some of those anecdotes were not a little salty.

Treitschke does not include Mencken's poetry among his serious writings, but Mencken himself apparently set a considerable value upon it. Certainly he wrote plenty of it, all under the pseudonym of Philander von der Linde.¹⁶ It survives in four volumes — one of "Ernsthafter Gedichte" (Grave Poems), first published in 1706, and reprinted in 1712 and 1723; one of "Sherzhaffte Gedichte" (Satirical Poems), first published in 1706, and reprinted in 1713; one of "Galante Gedichte" (Poems of Occasion), first published in 1705, and reprinted in 1710, 1712, 1723, and 1724; and one of "Vermischte Gedichte" (Miscellaneous Poems), first published in 1710, and reprinted in 1727. Here, obviously, was no mean series of successes, for in those days in Germany as in these days in the United States poetry usually sold badly, and only an occasional volume got beyond its first edition. I omit any effort to describe these poems, and content myself with recording that they seem to have been well received by the critics of the time. Mencken not only wrote a great deal of verse himself; he also encouraged its writing by others. He was the founder in 1717

¹⁵ Huet (1630–1721) was educated by the Jesuits, but became a follower of Descartes. After a stay in Stockholm, he returned to his native Caen and devoted fifteen years to an edition of Origen. In 1670 he became the associate of Bossuet in the education of the Dauphin. He was made a member of the French Academy in 1674, and two years later took holy orders. In 1678 he was chosen abbot of the Cistercian Abbey of Aulnay, and in 1685 he became Bishop of Soissons. In 1692 he was translated to Avranches. His works were numerous, and covered a wide range. Mencken's counterblast to him was *De statura humana num nostra aetate multum a pristina proceritate defecerit? contra P. D. Huetium*; Leipzig, 1722.

¹⁶ Dr. Agnes-Hermine Hermes, in *Johann Burkhard Mencke in seiner Zeit*; Wiesbaden, 1924, discusses the origin of this pseudonym. It may have been suggested by the fact that Leipzig was called, in those days, the *Lindenstadt* (City of Lindens), or by the fact that the Mencken arms showed a linden tree. Dr. Hermes inclines to the former notion.

of the Teutschübende Poetische Gesellschaft at Leipzig, and was very active in its operations. When, in 1724, young Johann Christoph Gottsched, later to be the dictator of German letters, fled to Leipzig from Königsberg to escape service in the Prussian Army, Mencken took him into his house, made him the tutor of the Mencken children, and helped him to a place on the university faculty.¹⁷ Gottsched made good use of the Mencken library, which had been founded by Otto, and was introduced by Mencken to the Teutschübende Gesellschaft, of which he was later to become president himself, and to the Vertraute Rednergesellschaft.

Mencken is described by his contemporaries as a man of imposing presence, with a good platform manner and a plentiful flow of wit. He was the master of a simple and fluent Latin, and was thus often called upon to act as *praeses* at university disputations, and to make speeches. He was the orator at the celebration of the three hundredth anniversary of the university in 1709, and spoke for it on many other occasions. His German was quite as good as his Latin, and, as we have seen, he also knew English, not to mention French and Italian. During the years of his maturity the German language was undergoing great changes, and learning at last to stand on its own legs. His early writings show a heavy admixture of Latin and French, but in his later years he wrote the vulgate unadorned.¹⁸

He was a conspicuous figure in many fields — as a historian, as a university professor and officer, as an orator, as an editor, even as a poet — and he was not unaware of his dignity. During one of his terms as *rector magnificus* of the university he set up a pother because the soldiers of the city garrison failed to present arms when he encountered them on the streets; they were ordered to do so thereafter. He acquired a landed estate (*Rittergut*), subscribed himself grandly *Dom. heredit. in Görnitz*, and died just too soon to see his only daughter, Christina Sibylla (1711–59), married to Peter Hohmann, Freiherr von Hohenthal (1694–1763).¹⁹

¹⁷ Gottsched (1700–66) became professor of poetry in 1730, and moved to the chair of logic and metaphysics in 1734. His chief work was *Versuch einer kritischen Dichtkunst für die Deutschen* (An Attempt at a Critical Theory of Poetry for Germans); Leipzig, 1730. He took the side of the classics, and had a powerful influence upon the development of German style in general, and upon that of the German drama in particular. He was much esteemed by Goethe. But with the rise of Lessing he lost ground, and in his later days two Swiss critics, Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698–1783) and Johann Jakob Breitinger (1701–76), did powerful execution upon him. He married a literary lady, and had rows with her over stage matters. His tragedy, *Der sterbende Cato* (The Dying Cato) was pedantic and dull.

¹⁸ In her Johann Burkhard Mencken in seiner Zeit, *op. cit.*, Dr. Hermes lists some of the differences between the vocabulary of the 1705 and 1710 editions of *Galante Gedichte* and that of the 1723 edition. In the latter there are German substitutes for many French and Latin terms in the former.

¹⁹ The title of *Freiherr* roughly corresponds to that of *baron*. The founder of the Hohenthal family was Peter's father, also Peter (1663-1732), a rich Leipzig merchant. The elder Peter was ennobled by Karl VI, Holy Roman Emperor, in 1717. In 1790 Friedrich August, Elector of Saxony, raised the Hohenthals to the rank of counts. They intermarried with many families of the older German nobility, including the Gneisenaus, Bissings, Uxkülls and Gersdorffs. Count Peter Alfred (1806–60) had, for his second wife, Princess Luise Marie

Mencken, always a hard student, made large additions to his father's library, and threw it open to all the students at the university. Its fame went far beyond Leipzig, and in 1722 a catalogue of it was published, with a second edition the next year. There were further editions in 1734 and 1755. On Mencken's death the greater part of it went to his son, Friedrich Otto, but other parts were left to the City Library of Leipzig, and to Count Heinrich Ninau, a friend.²⁰ Says Treitschke:

*Mencken's spirit showed an extraordinary and cheerful clarity; his education is best described as harmonious. He had a sound Thomistic grounding, but was a warm friend of classical literature, and had excellent taste. He was thoroughly learned, and yet a relentless foe of pedantry; he was German to the extent of hating the French, but had a keen eye for whatever was good in France; he was, finally, a monarchist in politics, and yet a free spirit He was genuinely religious, but revealed not the slightest trace of pietism or intolerance He was a mild and placid man, moderate, without envy, philanthropic, charitable Altogether, he was a small picture of his time, and on its most striking and delightful side.*²¹

III

"De Charlataneria Eruditorum" was a great success. "It produced in its time," says Conrad Müller, "a veritable storm (*einen wahren Sturm*)."²² Leibniz, in a Latin letter to Mencken on December 15, 1715, hailed it as *elegantissime*,²³ and it brought in a large correspondence from other sages. Unfortunately, the "veritable storm" had some unpleasant features. At the close of the second lecture, in telling of a Leipzig ecclesiastic who was victimized by a bogus Count Pompey, Mencken had incautiously given the victim's initials, E. S. R., and he was thus identified as Elias Sigismund Reinhard, pastor of the famous Nikolaikirche in Leipzig, *Superintendent* of the State Church in the town, consistorial assessor, and professor of theology in the university.²⁴ Reinhard's descendants complained to the courts at Dresden, and in consequence the Leipzig Book Commission (*Bücherkommission*) ordered the volume

Fredericke of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg. The history of the family is set forth in *Die Familie der Grafen von Hohenthal*, by Georg Schmidt; Halle a. S., 1896.

²⁰ Bünau (1697–1762) was a German noble who rose to high judicial office in Saxony and the Empire, but found time to devote himself to historical studies. His principal work was his *Deutsche Kaiser- und Reichshistorie*, in four volumes, 1728–43. He studied law at Leipzig, and there met Mencken.

²¹ Burkhard Mencke, *op. cit.*, pp. 24 f.

²² Bismarcks Mutter and ihre Ahnen; Berlin, 1909, p. 46.

²³ This letter is preserved in the Provincial Library at Hanover.

²⁴ Reinhard was born at Halle in 1625 and died at Leipzig in 1669. He studied at Wittenberg and Rostock, and preached in Berlin before coming to Leipzig. He seems to have got into trouble in Berlin by seeking to exorcise demons. In Leipzig, however, he became an eminent personage, and was still well remembered in 1715. A *Superintendent*, in the German State Church, is a functionary analogous to a bishop, but without some of a bishop's awful powers.

confiscated on May 6, 1715.²⁵ It had been published by Mencken's father-in-law, Johann Friedrich Gleditsch, the most important and influential Leipzig publisher of the time,²⁶ and Mencken himself ordinarily carried a great deal of weight in the town, but at the moment both were in bad favor in official circles, and so the order stood. Their bad favor was due to an uproar two years before over an article in the *Europäische Fama*, a Leipzig monthly edited by Philip Balthasar Sinold von Schütz, *Regierungsrat* to Duke Karl of Württemberg-Oels. Gleditsch was the publisher of the *Fama*, and Mencken, who was official censor to the *Bücherkommission*, was responsible for the contents of the magazine. When it came out in January, 1713, with an article highly offensive to the Imperial Court at Vienna, Gleditsch was fined 100 gold gulden, and Mencken was fined 50 and supplanted as censor by a more watchful man. His successor was apparently not inclined to deal with him gently, and "De Charlataneria Eruditorum" continued to be forbidden in Leipzig for some years. But it was reprinted at once in Amsterdam, and sold so well that there was a second edition before the end of the year, and a third during the year following. A fourth followed in 1727 and a fifth in 1747. The book remained in circulation throughout the Eighteenth Century. A reprint of the Amsterdam edition was brought out in Lucca, reaching a fourth edition in 1726. There was also a reprint in Naples, which reached a sixth edition in 1786. Meanwhile, translators were busy.

A German translation by some anonymous who signed only the initials, H. Z. I., appeared at Halle and Jena in 1716. It bore neither date nor publisher's name, and the place of publication was given as "Cosmopolis" — a common false-face, in those days, for books under official ban. The title-page announced grandly that the volume was brought out "at the expense of the learned *societät*." But the translation was a bad one, and Gottfried Tilgner, Mencken's friend and disciple, hastened to prepare a better.²⁷ It came out, also anonymously, in Leipzig the same year, with the imprint of Gleditsch, and "the approval of the author." The dudgeon of the Reinhard family was got rid of by omitting old Elias Sigismund's identifying initials, and substituting "an eminent *Superintendent*," and the *Bücherkommission* seems to have remained

²⁵ The confiscation was somewhat delayed by red tape, and a great many copies got into circulation. They are still often encountered in German book catalogues.

²⁶ Gleditsch was born in 1653 and died in 1716. He set up his own publishing firm in 1694, and it was an immediate success. He brought out many important works, including dictionaries and encyclopedias. His firm lasted until 1831, when it was absorbed by the great German publishing house of F. A. Brockhaus, which still exists. Mencken married Gleditsch's daughter, Katharine Margarete. Their only son, Friedrich Otto (1708–54), studied law at Wittenberg and Leipzig, and became a *Justizrat* and *Hofrat*, a member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, and a senator in Leipzig. He wrote a life of Politian (Leipzig, 1736), a work on the Latin language (1745), a volume of Latin poems (1737) and other books, and edited his father's *Dissertationes literariae* (1736), *Orationes academicae* (1734), and *Dissertationum academicarum* (1734).

²⁷ *Vitae et Meritorum Johannis Burchardi Menckenii Narratio*, in the posthumous edition of Mencken's *Dissertationum academicarum* brought out by his son, Friedrich Otto, in Leipzig, 1734, p. xx.

quiescent.²⁸ An anonymous French translation was published at The Hague by Jean van Duren in 1721, and an anonymous Dutch version at Amsterdam by A. Lobedanuis and J. Ryckhof, Jr., in 1738. The latter was republished a year later. The French version was probably reprinted from time to time without any change in its date, for a great many copies were circulated, and specimens are still far from rare. A Spanish translation was projected by Gregorius Majansius, a professor in Valencia, but it was abandoned because the ecclesiastical authorities frowned on such works. "So weit," observes Treitschke sadly, "hatte es Pfaffenverfinsterung dort gebracht."²⁹ But this *Pfaffenverfinsterung* (papal obscurantism) seems to have lightened toward the end of the century, for a Spanish translation appeared at Madrid in 1787 or 1788.³⁰ An Italian version had to wait nearly a century longer. It appeared at Florence in 1880 in an edition limited to 100 copies, the translator being Giuseppe Rigutini and the publisher A. Favi.³¹ So far as I am aware, the present translation is the first in English. There are references to an English translation in some of the bibliographies, but they are all vague about it, and no copy of it, if it ever existed, appears to have survived.

The first edition of "De Charlataneria Eruditorum" is a charming duodecimo, 3 ½ x 6 ⅛ inches in size. It runs to 154 pages of text, with twelve pages of front matter and an *index rerum* of six pages at the end. The title page is printed in red, and bears the motto, *Ridendo dicere verum quid vetat?*³² There is a frontispiece on copper by some anonymous engraver, showing the platform set up on the street by a traveling quack. The quack, resplendent in the long wig of the period and begirt with a sword, is lecturing, supported by an assistant in Turkish costume, carrying a box of his medicines. To his right two acrobats are performing; to his left a black servant is handing down a package to a customer, who reaches up with his money. In the foreground a dozen or more other customers are gathered, one of them a woman and another a man in academic costume, mounted on a donkey. At the top of the engraving is the motto, *Muntus fuld tezibi.*³³

The dedication is to *virum incomparabilem, Chrysostomum Mathanasium, criticorum h.t. principem*, whose once famous work, "Le Chef d'oeuvre d'un inconnu,"

²⁸ The volume of Mencken's *Orationes academicae*, published by his son in 1734, two years after his death, included both of the lectures composing *De charlataneria eruditorum*. Here, also, the initials of Reinhard were omitted.

²⁹ Burkhard Mencke, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

³⁰ The title is given in various bibliographies as *Declamationes contra la charlataneria de los eruditos*, but I have never seen a copy.

³¹ There is a copy in the British Museum.

³² A quotation from Horace. The meaning is, What hinders one from laughing when speaking the truth? In other words, one may speak the truth without pulling a long face.

³³ This, says Dr. Hermes, *op. cit.*, p. 50, is "falsch geschrieben." It should be *Mundus vult decipi.*, i.e., The world wants to be deceived. *Muntus fuld tezibi* strongly suggests Latin spoken with a Saxon accent.

was published in Paris after Mencken's first lecture but before the second.³⁴ Two *programmata* follow the two lectures.³⁵ The first is entitled "De Applausu Eruditorum" (Applause for the Learned), and the second, "De Dignitate Magistri" (The Dignity of a Master). Both are short. In the first Mencken describes the efforts made by various *Gelehrten*, ancient and modern, to round up crowds for their lectures. "At the present day," he says, "some of them do not hesitate to employ the same devices as the mimics and actors in the theatres." He then goes on to tell of teachers famous for their extraordinary acclaim, beginning with Peter Abélard. Giovanni Antonio Campanus, when he began his teaching at Naples, often discoursed to immense throngs for three hours, and when he visited Perugia, was heard by an audience of three thousand, including the bishop of the city, the governor thereof, forty-eight jurisconsults, and a large herd of medicos, grammarians, orators and other dignitaries. There was a tumult in the city for three days, and Campanus says in one of his letters that he was pointed out wherever he went.³⁶

Julius Pomponius Laetus stammered when he spoke his native Italian, but when he resorted to Latin he was so eloquent that crowds would gather in the middle of the night to hear him next day.³⁷ Juan Maldonatus, a famous Jesuit orator, taught at Bourges with such success that his lecture-hall was always filled three or four hours

³⁴ Chrisostome Matanasius was the *nom de plume* of Hyacinthe Cordonnier de Saint-Hyacinthe, a French soldier and diplomat of scholarly tastes. Born at Orleans in 1684, he took part in the Battle of Blenheim (1704) as a young cavalry officer. He was captured by the English, but soon paroled. Later he entered the service of Charles XII of Sweden. *Le chef d'oeuvre d'un inconnu* reached a fourth edition by 1716, and was often reprinted during the Eighteenth Century. Saint-Hyacinthe, like Mencken, was a member of the Royal Society of London, and the two probably had some personal acquaintance. He died in 1748.

³⁵ Originally, a *programma* was an announcement or conspectus of a coming lecture, and was commonly posted on the university door. But later on it grew longer and took on an independent life of its own.

³⁶ His letters and poems were edited and published by Mencken — *Epistolae et poemata, una cum vita auctoris*; Leipzig, 1707 — and his *Opera selectiora* by Mencken's son, Friedrich Otto; Leipzig, 1734. The quotation is from Book II, Letter 1 of the former, p. 50. Campanus was the son of a peasant, and his mother gave birth to him under a laurel tree (near a beehive) in 1427. He studied law and *litteras humaniores* at Naples, and taught the latter with great success. He became Bishop of Crotona (later, of Teramo), governor of Todi and Foligno in the Papal States, and secretary to the papal nuncio to Germany. In 1477 he got involved in one of the revolts that so often racked the Papal States, and was banished to Siena, where he is said to have died of chagrin. He wrote many books, including a life of Pope Pius II (1458-64), and was famous as a letter-writer. Mencken describes him as of a jocose disposition, and says that when he reached the Alps on leaving Germany he let down his breeches and exclaimed: "Aspice nudatas barbara terra nates!"

³⁷ Laetus was the natural son of one of the Sanseverini of Salerno, and flourished in Rome in the time of the aforesaid Campanus. He wrote a history of the Roman Emperors, a book on Mahomet, and another on the Roman magistrates. Despite his early success, he died in 1498, at seventy, in great poverty.

before he began, and he often had to speak to overflow crowds in the open air.³⁸ Jacques Cujacius, a French jurisconsult, was so popular that eight hundred students followed him wherever he went.³⁹ The celebrated Philipp Melanchthon, Luther's associate, was a fair match for Maldonatus. He was followed all over Germany by crowds of pastors and schoolmasters, and seldom spoke to an audience of less than fifteen hundred. Mencken mentions a dozen or more other such prodigies of the sacred and profane desks; some of them will be encountered in his two lectures, *e.g.*, Francisco Philelphus, Portius Azo, and Politian. His *programma* concludes formally as follows:

Now, therefore, aere invite the rector magnificus of the University, the most illustrious counts, the nobles of both republics, and the citizens thereof without invidious distinction, to hear the public speech prepared for tomorrow, February 9. Done at Leipzig, this fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, 1713.

The second *programma* is a discourse on the origin and significance of the academic degree of master. Mencken says that the title goes back to Roman times, and was in common use both in the Holy Roman Empire and at the Papal court. The Roman emperors had a *magistrum officiorum*, or master of offices; Charlemagne had a *magistrum aulae imperialis*, or master of the imperial palace, and the Popes had masters of the sacred palace, of the scrolls, of memorials, of the library, of correspondence, of administration, of the archives, of admissions, and so on. He then proceeds to trace the evolution of the title in the armies of medieval Europe, in the administration of towns, and in the universities. By the Twelfth Century, he says, the academic mastership had reached such esteem that no one could aspire to high office in either church or state who lacked it; even cardinals and the chief dignitaries of the royal courts bore it with pride. James I of England, because of his love of learning, was addressed as master by Henry IV of France, and thereafter all the English courtiers hastened to obtain the degree from Oxford or Cambridge. In 1646 those students of Oxford who helped resist the siege of the town by the Parliamentary army were made masters as a reward for their loyalty to Charles I. At Leipzig, says Mencken, the degree was formerly held in higher esteem than the doctorate. He concludes by reciting the privileges of a master in his own time — the right to teach (“but be careful that you violate no doctrine of religion, for there is no refuge in Philuraea for foolish and obscene contemners of the Divine Will”), the right to participate in the election of rector, canons, syndics, decemvirs and assessors of the university, and finally the right to be elected, in due course, to the philosophical

³⁸ Maldonatus was born of a noble family in 1534 and died in 1583. He studied at Salamanca, Rome, Paris and Poitiers, and was a relentless foe of Protestantism. Once he went to Sedan and engaged in a disputation with twenty Calvinist theologians. But he got into trouble with his ecclesiastical superiors by teaching that belief in the Immaculate Conception was not necessary to salvation, and the doctors of the Sorbonne banned him from Paris. He wrote a great many biblical commentaries.

³⁹ He taught at Bourges, Valence, Cahors and Turin. Born at Toulouse in 1532, he died at Bourges in 1590. It is possible that his students were attracted by something less lofty than his learning, for he had a daughter of whom it was said that she was as famous for her unchastity as he was for his knowledge of the law.

faculty and the university council. "It is well known," he says, "that the masters of this university are freely admitted to the faculties of other universities, and made welcome by the most celebrated learned men there, who gladly give them their intimate friendship." The *programma* concludes formally with an invitation to Mencken's second lecture. It is dated "the first Sunday in Advent, 1714."

The first edition of "De Charlataneria Eruditorum," as we have seen, was a modest duodecimo of 154 pages. The book began at once to swell with notes, and by 1727 the Amsterdam edition had grown to 296 pages. Some of these notes were supplied by Mencken himself, but many more came from other hands — among them, those of Johann Gottlieb Krause, Georg Samuel Wagner, Johann Georg Walch, Johann Christian Schöttgen, Justus Gottfried Rabener, Friedrich Wilhelm Schutz, Johann Jacob Mascou, J. D. Schreber and Gottfried Tilgner.⁴⁰ Tilgner's German translation

⁴⁰ Most of these were young scholars who had been Mencken's pupils at Leipzig, and some of them helped him in the onerous work of editing the *Acta eruditorum*. Krause was born in Silesia in 1684, and after taking his degree at Leipzig became, in 1723, professor of *eloquentia* there. In 1732 he went to Wittenberg as professor of history. From 1715 to 1733 he edited the *Neue Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen*, the *privilegium* for which was held by the Mencken family. He also edited various other journals, and wrote many books, chiefly in the field of history. Wagner (1693–1728) was a literary clergyman. He became cantor of the famous Schulpforta, which, more than a century later, was to have F. W. Nietzsche among its pupils, and was subsequently one of the clergy of the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig. Walch (1693–1775) studied at Leipzig, but spent most of his life at Jena, where he died at eighty-one as *primarius* of the theological faculty. He had been professor of philosophy, of antiquities, of poetry and of *eloquentia*. He edited the works of Martin Luther and also those of many early Christian writers. His *Critical History of the Latin Language*, published at Leipzig in 1716, was a very influential work in its day. His *Philosophisches Lexicon*, published in 1726, had reached a fourth edition and grown to two volumes by 1775. In 1733 he published a *Compendium antiquitatum ecclesiasticarum*, and in 1750 a *Christlicher Concordebuch*. He was a frequent contributor to the *Acta eruditorum*. Schöttgen (1687–1751), was the son of a shoemaker, and worked his way through the University of Leipzig, studying mainly theology. On his graduation he was employed by J. F. Gleditsch, Mencken's publisher, in an editorial capacity, and thereafter devoted himself to literary enterprises, though he also took orders and for a time was headmaster of the *Gymnasium* of the Holy Cross at Dresden. In 1721 he published a history of Pomerania, in 1722 a history of bookselling, and in 1740 a history of printing in Dresden. A work of piety, *Jesus der wahre Messias*, appeared at Leipzig in 1748. With the above-mentioned Walch, Justus Gottfried Rabener and Christian Gottlieb Jöcher, he founded and edited the *Teutsche Acta eruditorum*, a sort of imitation of the *Acta eruditorum* in the vulgate. Schöttgen wrote many schoolbooks. His pupil, Jöcher, who was also a pupil of Mencken, and succeeded the latter as professor of history at Leipzig, greatly expanded Mencken's *Compendiöses Gelehrten-Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1715), and it remained the chief German authority in its field for a century. Indeed, it is still often consulted, and I have found it very useful in compiling the notes to this volume. Rabener (1702–32) died too young to realize the promise of his early years. In 1725, when he was but twenty-three, he published a life of Peter the Great of Russia. Later he devoted himself to an historical lexicon on a large scale, but he did not live to complete it. Schütz (1677–1739) was a native of Leipzig, and took his degree in theology there. He accompanied Mencken on the latter's tour of Holland and England, and made many translations of English theological works. He was adept at Hebrew, which he had studied with a baptized Jew, and he became the chief

of 1716 made the first contributions. One editor copied another, until finally the two lectures became a thin stream of text flowing over a dense stratum of notes, most of them in Latin but some in German, French and Italian. The Lucca editor of 1726, despairing of getting all that he had accumulated under the passages to which they referred, added twenty pages — *notae tumulturiae* — at the end of the volume, bringing it to 386 pages, not counting the front matter or the index.

Tilgner's German translation of 1716 also included a long letter from Sebastian Stadelli to Janus Philomusus, under the title of "De Circumforanea Literatorum Vanitate."⁴¹ Stadelli was a pseudonym for Christoph August Heumann, a Göttingen savant; Philomusus was probably a myth, though many German authors of an earlier period had used Philomusus (or Musenfreund) as a *nom de plume*. Heumann's letter, originally written in Latin, was added to all the editions and translations of "De Charlataneria Eruditorum" published after 1716, save only the French translation brought out at The Hague in 1721. It begins by reciting three defects in Mencken's lectures. The first is that "they are unjust to men of the learned order, since they do not record the charlatanry of any other class, and so bring our order under suspicion." There are charlatans, continues Heumann, in every class of men, and he calls upon Pufendorf as a witness that pedantry, which is a brother to charlatanry, is "a vice of the mind which permeates men of every race, order and condition, and not only the learned." The obvious answer here, of course, is that Mencken set out to discuss, not charlatanry in general, but *de charlataneria eruditorum*. Heumann's second caveat is more plausible. It is to the effect that Mencken nowhere offers a precise definition of *charlataneria*, and that he confuses it more often than not, especially in his second lecture, with pedantry. The third caveat sets up the contention that a certain amount of pretension is natural and necessary to the learned, and should not be confused with mere pretense. "In itself," says Heumann, "ostentation is not altogether unworthy of a man of merit. It helps him to place his attainments before others, if only by putting what he knows in terms those others can understand and appreciate." So saying, the learned critic

clergyman of the Nikolaikirche at Leipzig. He was a frequent contributor to the *Acta eruditorum*. Mascou, or Mascov (1689–1761) was a native of Danzig and studied at Leipzig. He became professor of law at Halle, and later a judge of the court there and a *Hofrat*. He also devoted himself to history, specializing in the early history of the Germans. He published a large work on the subject, and it was translated into Italian in 1731 and into English in 1737, appearing in London in two volumes. Mascou was also an extensive traveler. Tilgner (1691–1717) was a Silesian like Krause, and was educated at Leipzig. He lent a hand with the *Acta eruditorum*, and worked on an *Opere numismatico literario* that was never finished. He was a Deist and a skeptic.

In 1717 he ran himself through the body with his own sword — in those days students and professors still carried swords — and died in two days. Schreber, an M.A. of Leipzig, became rector of the Schulpforta and was a busy author.

⁴¹ *Circumforaneous* was once a respectable word in English, as in Latin, but it seems to have gone out. It is derived from *circum* and *forum*, and means, primarily, of or around the forum, or market-place. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as "strolling from market to market; wandering, vagrant, vagabond, quack." It was used by Addison in the *Spectator*, No. 47.

apologizes formally for calling attention to “the blemishes on so beautiful a body,” and proceeds to support Mencken’s argument with what amounts, in substance, to an additional series of notes. His chief contribution is a short section on the quackery of schoolmasters, a class to which he had once belonged himself, but which Mencken had somehow overlooked. His letter is dated September 1, 1715.⁴² It is overlong and of meager content, so I have omitted it from this edition. I have also swept away nine-tenths of the accumulated notes by other hands, but the more interesting tenth I have retained, though usually with some shortening. I have had to add, unhappily, a great many notes of my own, for Mencken was extraordinarily allusive, even when he was not actually piling up his dreadful lists of quacks, and many of his references would be unintelligible to a reader of today. Such a book as this one, indeed, must carry almost inevitably the burden of an *apparatus criticus*. Its only imaginable appeal is to persons interested in exploring literary and historical byways, and they expect to find plenty of signs along the road, and enjoy stopping to read them.

“De Charlataneria Eruditorum” was not only read during the larger part of the Eighteenth Century; it also produced a formidable imitative literature. A year after it first appeared one Johannis Laeti of Verona began the business with “Ciarlatanaria Medicorum,” which was done into German in 1717 and published as “Marcktschreyerey der gelehrten Aertzte” at Freysing in Bavaria. A dozen other such works followed, some large and some small, and Mencken himself made several more contributions to the general subject, e.g., “De Origine et Causis Bellorum Inter Eruditos” (On the Origin and Causes of Quarrels Among the Learned) in 1717, and “De Eo Quod Ridiculum est in Republica s. de Histrionia Politica” (On That Which is Absurd in Government, or, Political Play-Acting) in 1721. In the latter year an anonymous “Critique de la Charlatanerie” appeared at Paris in two volumes, and so late as 1791 an anonymous volume entitled “Ueber die Charlatanerie der Gelehrten Seit Mencken” was published at Leipzig. The latter, a book of 272 pages, began with the statement that “Menckens zwei Reden von der Charlatanerie der Gelehrten sind so bekannt, als dass ich glauben dürfte, irgend einer meiner Leser wisse nichts von ihrem Dasein.”⁴³ This was seventy-six years after the little duodecimo of 1715, and fifty-nine years after Mencken’s death.⁴⁴

⁴² Heumann (1681–1764) was a scholar of very respectable attainments. His *De libris anonymis et pseudonymis*, published at Jena in 1711, was widely read, and his *Conspectus reipublicae literariae*, published at Hanover in 1718 (and dedicated to Mencken), founded the scientific study of literary history in Germany. The latter work had reached a seventh edition by 1763, and was still in print at the end of the century. Heumann was born at Allstedt, took his degree at Jena, and became head of the *Gymnasium* at Göttingen. In 1734 he was made professor of literary history at the university there, and in 1745 professor of theology. He published a new German translation of the New Testament in 1748, but it never supplanted Luther’s. He wrote a great many books in various fields.

⁴³ Mencken’s two lectures on the charlatanry of the learned are so well known that I may assume that not one of my readers has never heard of their existence.

⁴⁴ Señor G. Gomez Estavillo of Mexico, D. F., calls my attention to the fact that *De charlataneria eruditorum* is quoted at length, and with approbation, in *El Perquillo*

The Napoleonic wars, which ended the line of Mencken scholars at Leipzig, Halle, Helmstedt and Wittenberg, also seem to have wiped out the book. It belonged, indeed, to an era that was then definitely closing; it looked back to the revolutionary Seventeenth Century, not forward to the revolutionary Nineteenth, and it was, in its small way, one of the monuments marking the last stage of the Renaissance. I was forty years old before I ever read it, or any other of Mencken's writings. I may be pardoned, I hope, for recording that it astonished me, and no little delighted me, to find that a man of my name, nearly two hundred years in his grave, had devoted himself so heartily to an enterprise that had engaged me day in and day out in a far country — the tracking down of quacks of all sorts, and the appreciative exhibition of their multifarious tricks to catch coneys. Nor was my delight lessened when I noted that the quacks he had thus belabored in Eighteenth Century Europe were still flourishing mightily in Twentieth Century America, along with many reinforcements that he had never dreamed of. Old Johann was not my ancestor; I am descended from his father's cousin, Lüder (1658–1726), professor of law at Leipzig, and *Viva Lex* (The Living Law-Book). But if the two were alive today I suspect that I'd greatly prefer the company of Johann to that of Lüder, so my editing of Dr. Litz's translation of "De Charlataneria Eruditorum" takes on a sort of filial character, and will be granted the indulgence, perhaps, that goes therewith. I should add that Dr. Litz is not to be blamed for any blunders that may be detected by the learned. He translated the two lectures, but I am responsible for all the rest, including not only the notes but also some changes suggested by the German and French translations. It is a pleasure to acknowledge my debt to Dr. Agnes-Hermine Hermes of Wiesbaden; to my secretary, Mrs. Rosalind C. Lohrfinck; to my old friend, Ernest Boyd; and to Mr. Samuel E. Lafferty and his associates of the Peabody Library, Baltimore.

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H. L. M.

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Sarniento, by Jose Joaquin Fernandez de Lizardi (1816). Says Señor Gomez Estavillo: "Fernandez de Lizardi is commonly called El Pensador Mejicano (The Mexican Thinker). El Periquillo Sarniento was published toward the time of the consummation of Mexican independence, and deals with life at the end of the colonial period. Many critics consider it the best novel ever written in Mexico. It is a sort of Gil Blas de Santillana — a picaresque story, full of incident. Fernandez de Lizardi's pages, says one critic, 'are full of satirical thrusts against the backward society in which he lived — against the degradation of the people, the sickly education received by the upper classes, and the abuses of the clergy.'"