



Newspaper Days

H.L. Mencken

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The period covered is that of his professional nonage—from his entry into journalism as a reporter for the Baltimore *Morning Herald* in 1899 to 1906. It was not all Baltimore, however, for he went into brief exile when the fire of 1904 destroyed the plant and forced the paper to print in Philadelphia for five weeks. During those roaring years the young journalist did little, if anything, to bring uplift to his city, nor did he become an influential figure in the councils of state or nation. But he did gain a rare knowledge of his community in all its more colorful and uproarious aspects; and he has set them down here in his own inimitable way. It is not the great events of civic life that draw his attention, not the respectable—and dull—doings of respectable citizens. Rather it is the caperings of the judiciary on their days off, the mysterious and melancholy ways of the commercial artists who haunted the newspaper offices of the period, the peccadilloes and generousities of cops and cabbies, of madams and Baltimore's omnipresent Afro-Americans that make up the bulk of this highly personal memoir. As such it brings to livid life the whole of an American city of sixty years ago. It is a book to read and savor, not only for its constant delightful humor, but for its fine picture of the salad days of American journalism as well.

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