

A BOOK OF PREFACES. By H. L. MENCKEN. Alfred A. Knopf.

Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song,  
and his praise in the congregation of saints.

BELIEVE Me, I had hardly hoped to live to see this  
day when a book of criticism like this comes into my  
hand.

Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the chil-  
dren of Zion be joyful in their King.

There are plenty of brains in America, and plenty of  
educated brains, but it is extremely rare to find these  
two combined in one being.

Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing  
praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

Mr. Mencken narrowly escapes the cleverness which  
is the Hall-mark of the silver mind, but he does escape  
it.

For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will  
beautify the meek with salvation.

Mr. Mencken's perception may be gauged by just  
one piece of navigation, the Straits of Ibsen. In 1901 I  
said of Ibsen, "he is the Sophocles of manners." And  
elsewhere spoke of him as "a purely Greek dramatist."

Mr. Mencken says, "the fabulous Ibsen of the sym-  
bols (no more the real Ibsen than Christ was a prohibi-  
tionist)." "His shining skill as a dramatic craftsman his  
one authentic claim upon fame."

Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud  
upon their beds.

His robust joy of castigating curs with his contempt  
swells a paeon in my heart. "Consider one fact: the civi-  
lization that kissed Maeterlinck on both cheeks and Ta-  
gore perhaps even more intimately. . . ."

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a  
two-edged sword in their hand;

To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and pun-  
ishments upon the people;

To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles

with fetters of iron.

To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

A. C.