

Victorianism. He deplored "the Southwestern, the Lincolnan, the Elizabethan breadth of parlance" that Mark Twain practiced in conversation, but this diminished neither his fondness nor his admiration for his friend, who, he said, would "bask in the same light as Cervantes and Shakespeare." The man who wrote *My Mark Twain* was not wholly a prude.

The young rebels assumed that realism was primarily a matter of candor, a willingness to present and examine all the aspects of life that the Victorians had tried to ignore and about which they had commanded writers to be silent. This was not, of course, what Howells had meant by realism when he was waging his fifty years' war on its behalf. In one of his early novels, *Their Wedding Journey*, Howells wrote, "Ah, poor real life, which I love, can I make others share the delight I find in thy foolish and insipid face?" He was challenging not only the frankly romantic novelists, Scott and his myriad disciples, but also such contemporaries as Dickens and Thackeray, who, as he saw it, found it necessary to improve on "real life" to hold their readers. Says a character in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*: "The novelist who could interpret the common feelings of the common people would have the answer to 'the riddle of the painful earth' on the tip of his tongue."

The critics could argue that the "real life" Howells saw was a small part of American reality, and that was true, although it is to his credit that he saw more and more as time passed. They said, too, that he wrote dull books about dull people, and sometimes he did. They said, finally, that his theory of realism led him to see only the surfaces of life, and here they were largely wrong. Whatever else may be true of the man who created Bartley Hubbard and Marcia Gaylord, Silas Lapham, Dryfoos and Lindau in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, Northwick in *The Quality of Mercy*, Jeff Durgin in *The Landlord at Lion's Head*, and Dylks in *The Leatherstocking God*, his knowledge of men and women was not superficial.

A "really beautiful time" did come for Henry James, though not until he had been dead for thirty years; but Howells's time hasn't come and probably never will. Although there have been many attempts to reawaken interest in his work, he drifts further and further away from us. He seems to be the kind of writer who speaks less and less clearly to people as the passage of the years works its ever swifter and swifter alterations in our society. If he is to be kept alive at all, it will be by the scholars, and they should keep him alive, for, if he is unlikely to be widely read, he deserves to be gratefully remembered.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Konvitz vs. Hoffer

PROFESSOR MILTON KONVITZ's attack [SR, Apr. 8] on Eric Hoffer's essay on the Negro Revolution in *The Temper of Our Time* illustrates anew the typical liberal historian's misunderstanding of America's heterogeneous and diverse heritage, and his lack of faith in this diversity as a central pillar of American development. . . .

Hoffer's insistence on the development of Negro-created, -owned, and -run institutions, the development, in short, of a Negro community of which Negroes can be proud, as the only true road to successful and meaningful integration, is dismissed by Konvitz as "the rankest form of racism." "Racism without exploitation and with a large dose of race pride," says Konvitz, "is still racism." On the contrary, such community development and self-help has been the first step toward a positive role in American society for each ethnic or racial community in our history. The true tragedy of the Negro in America has been that his arrival on these shores destroyed, rather than helped create and extend, a sense of community pride and creativity.

HENRY M. SCHAFER.

St. Louis, Mo.

I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE Mr. Konvitz. I have the feeling that more than "60 per cent of the population outside the South" side with him rather than with Mr. Hoffer. We Northerners need to be more than tolerant—we must assume a responsibility to love, accept, and help.

PAT ZAHLER.

Hutchinson, Minn.

DOES MR. KONVITZ THINK for a moment that Hoffer is so shallow, so socially unconscious, that he does not understand or sympathize with the Negro plight? Hoffer is discussing our times in these essays—not just the ideals, not just what should be, but what *is*. His comments on the nature and temper of recent racial explosions are correct, bitingly correct, regardless of the zeal and high-mindedness of the Negro leaders. And to accuse Eric Hoffer of being unloving, by quoting St. Paul's hymn, is to utterly misunderstand the man.

VENT FISCUS.

Cleveland, O.

I WOULD DESPERATELY LIKE to meet Mr. Konvitz. He has grasped, with a "mature" mind, the fact that one cannot dismiss a human being with a wave of the hand and a belittling of that human being's problems. Nor can one simply say, "There is no justification here. Don't bother me." Finally, Mr. Hoffer, like so many others, assumes that because life is hard for everyone, it is meaningless to consider that for some life is harder than for others.

JAMES A. GORMAN.

Cummaquid, Mass.

PROFESSOR KONVITZ COMPLETELY MISSES the point of Eric Hoffer's writings on the Negro. Mr. Hoffer has the courage—and loving concern—to offer admonitions. It seems a strange perversion to call this a crude, murderous weapon! The reviewer satisfies himself with a quotation from a hymn to love, and deplores racism with pride. The professor does not tell us what he would substitute for pride, nor how, nor when.

ELIZABETH G. WAGNER.

Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

Do Statistics Tell the Story?

IN MY OPINION, Fred J. Cook's review of *Overcharge*, by Lee Metcalf and Vic Reinemer [SR, Apr. 1], is one of the most biased I have seen in a long while.

I am not a principal in, nor am I an employee of, an investor-owned power company. I am a construction engineer, old enough to retire, who has been in a position to know about the power industry and the men who manage and control these investor-owned electric power companies. All of them whom I know are honest, hard-working, public-spirited Americans who are good businessmen with integrity.

You cannot compare the cost of producing electrical energy in Boston with the cost of producing it in Seattle, regardless of whether the energy is produced by a private utility or a municipality. The cost of electrical energy is made up of a good many things, such as fuel, labor, depreciation on plant and equipment, etc. I notice from the *Directory of Electric Utilities—1966 Issue*, published by McGraw-Hill, that practically all of the power produced by Boston Edison is produced by steam, and in my opinion the fuel is primarily coal, which is undoubtedly quite expensive around Boston.

The Department of Lighting, Seattle, Washington, is listed as having primarily hydro-electric plants of quite large size. Therefore, there is probably no cost for fuel and the plants were undoubtedly built quite a few years ago when labor was cheap. Even at that I have my doubts, when the power is sold for an average of about \$.01 per KWH, if all of the costs which go into producing this power are being charged to the production of power.

CURT E. BOTTUM, SR.

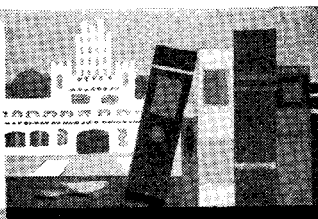
Ann Arbor, Mich.

"STATISTICS TELL THE STORY," Mr. Cook says. "In Boston, 500 kilowatt-hours cost \$13.41; in Seattle, the same amount of current costs \$.5." Do statistics tell the story? Seattle happens to be close to Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams, built with federal money, where large amounts of cheap power are available. Perhaps the Bostonians pay too much, or do the citizens of Seattle pay too little?

WM. K. MUNN.

Oakland, Calif.

Perspective



"A Bit of an Ass"

WHEN he was a very old man, I used to visit G. M. Trevelyan, the historian, at his Northumberland home. Nearly sightless, he still clambered about the ruins of the great Roman wall which stretched across the fells he loved so much and knew so well. No day was so wet that it kept him from stumbling round the deep woodland garden that surrounded his house. During these walks he would stop, glare at the middle distance, and grunt a gnomic utterance. One day Namier was very much on his mind, another it was Russell. He paused in the drenching Scotch mist and growled at the dripping beeches, "Bertie Russell was always a bit of an ass." And for once I thought I heard a hint of envy from a man whose life was as generous and as malice-free as any I have known.

Bertrand Russell and Trevelyan had been young dons together at Trinity at the turn of the century, its period of greatest intellectual distinction since the days of Newton and Bentley. Here were clustered A. E. Whitehead, G. E. Moore, the physicist H. J. Thompson, the anthropologist Sir James Frazer, all of world stature, and a host of others just below. None are left now save Russell, the last lingering relic of a wonderful generation—liberal, humanist, agnostic, intensely proud of man's intellectual achievements. To participate in them was their desire. Before such men one can only feel humility and a profound respect and wish that one's own generation had half their sincerity and dedication.

And yet—what of Russell? When Trevelyan spoke, Bertrand Russell had recently been sitting, frail and old, amongst a horde of adolescents on the sidewalk in Trafalgar Square protesting the Bomb. Long after the others were dead, or had retired, or become conservative, he went on and on. The baubles of the Establishment meant nothing to him, and protest for human rights was still as indestructible a part of his nature as it had been seventy years before. Of course, one can point to occasional lapses that have betrayed both his historical sense and the warmth of his heart. Yet how rare have these moments been, compared with the decades of sane judgment and wise comment that he has offered the world.

A Socialist, he was pro-Boer in 1901, a pacifist in 1914. He has been an ardent supporter of votes for women, an expo-

nent of freedom in education, a despiser of conventional morality, a hater of Fascism and Nazism, a friend of Negroes and Jews, a protester against American involvement in Vietnam.

Filled with utter loathing of oppression in every form, a passionate adherent of human rights, since 1900 Russell has given his ardent support and superb intellectual dialectic to one noble cause after another. Who among us can present so honorable a record not only over nearly seventy years but even over fifteen? Which of our generation in America or in Britain of Lord Russell's eminence has gone gladly to jail for his beliefs? And the motives that have driven him on, an old man doing a young man's work, lie very deep, at the core of his personality. Much better than anyone else he himself explains this in one of the most beautiful forewords I have ever read—that to *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1872-1914* (At-

To Edith

Through the long years

I sought peace

I found ecstasy, I found anguish,

I found madness,

I found loneliness.

I found the solitary pain

that gnaws the heart;

But peace I did not find.

Now, old & near my end,

I have known you,

And, knowing you,

I have found both ecstasy & peace

I know rest.

After so many lonely years,

I know what life & love may be

Now, if I sleep,

I shall sleep fulfilled.

Dedication in Bertrand Russell's
hand to *The Autobiography*—a
life governed by three passions.

lantic-Little, Brown, \$7.95). It ought to be engraved in stone and set up in every school and university throughout the world—an epitome of the noble aspirations of a noble man.

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy—ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness—that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what—at last—I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

This should teach us that the deepest religious feelings can live in the heart of an agnostic, that the mind and the passions are not forever at variance. There is nothing more absurd than the notion that the intellect is cold, as insane indeed as to suggest that it is a poor guide to the affairs of men. There is none better or safer so long, as with Russell, it is warmed with compassion.

Russell, of course, was lucky. Like so many of his friends, he has a remarkable heritage. The grandson of Lord John Russell, "Finality Jack" of the Great Reform Bill, he is thus allied to the Dukes of Bedford and half the Grand Whigery of Victorian England. He was educated privately, but in an atmosphere drenched with the philosophy of the Utilitarians and Positivists. Hence he was saved from the thoughtless philistin-