ADVANCE SHEET – February 28, 2025

President's Letter

Our featured article this issue is Alistair Cooke's profile of Bertrand Russell, which appeared in his book *Six Men*. The last issue of the *Advance Sheet* set forth the words of Russell himself with the inclusion of "The Taming of Power," the final chapter of his book *Power: a new Social Analysis* which was published in 1938.

It is interesting to note that 40 years earlier, a very different figure, Senator Robert A. Taft, also made his last political utterance a statement about Palestine, written on his deathbed and delivered by his son Robert to the National Association of Christians and Jews on May 26, 1953:

"[Israel] undertook to relieve the world of the problem of resettling a large number of Jewish refugees, for which the world had proposed no better solution. Because of that [1948] war, partly through the intolerance of their own leaders, 900,000 refugees left the Jewish section of Palestine. If this National Conference gets into the international field, it can do nothing better than to try to solve this question by resettlement, either within or without Israel. Plans have been made, but little progress has been achieved. Tolerance in which you believe and in which I believe must extend to these Arab refugees, no matter what the cause of their distress. There seems to be no peaceful solution in the Near East until this refugee problem is settled."

George W. Liebmann

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An Evening With Dan Rodricks

On Wednesday, March 12, 2025, Dan Rodricks will be speaking in the Main Reading Room of the Baltimore Bar Library. The presentation will center around Dan's five decades covering Maryland courts and how he in turn transformed those experiences into a successful play.

Dan Rodricks – Three times a week from January 1979 to last month, Dan wrote a column for the Baltimore Sun, representing more than 6,600 entries. It is believed that at the time of his retirement his was the longest-running column in the country. In addition to his column, Dan hosted both radio and television programs over the years and was the creator and host of The Sun's first podcast, Roughly Speaking. He is the author of three books, including "Father's Day Creek: Fly Fishing, Fatherhood and The Last Best Place on Earth" (Apprentice House 2019). In recent years, Dan has written a number of plays. His first, "Baltimore, You Have No Idea," has had three runs to sold-out audiences at the Baltimore Museum of Art's Meyerhoff Auditorium. A second play, "Baltimore Docket," premiered in February 2024, also to sold-out audiences. Both plays are based on Dan's work as a reporter and columnist for The Sun.

Dan Rodricks is the winner of numerous awards including the National Headliner Award for commentary and the Heywood Broun Award from the Newspaper Guild for writing that championed the underdog.

Originally from Massachusetts, Dan, his wife and two children now reside in Baltimore.

Place: Mitchell Courthouse – 100 North Calvert Street – Main Reading Room of the Bar Library (Room 618, Mitchell Courthouse).

Time: 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 12, 2025.

Reception: Catering by DiPasquale's featuring their famous prosciutto, cod fish, fruits and cheeses.

Invitees: All are welcome to this free event.

R.S.V.P.: If you would like to attend telephone the Library at 410-727-0280 or reply by e-mail to **jwbennett1840@gmail.com**.

The Road Less Travelled

I like to drive even though I don't particularly care about cars. To me, as long as it has four good tires and an engine that is not going to break down I'm fine. I could care less if it is a new Mercedes or a ten year old Dodge.

Ironically, anytime I have ever had to say "goodbye" to a car I have teared up over the "loss of a friend."

It is becoming more difficult, however, to enjoy operating a motor vehicle in that the average driver of today is in actuality, a far cry from average. They are suffering from a horrific and often deadly form of s.t.d. (speeding – tailgating – distraction). Remember when fifty-five meant sixty-five, with ten over being the universally accepted rule for a road, except when common sense dictated otherwise? Now ten over gets you passed in a flash and more "looks" than you can count by "the flashers." How many of you were told one car length for every ten miles an hour? Did you know that car length has been changed to one foot of distance from the car in front of you for every ten miles an hour? Perhaps some of you might have thought that texting and talking on the part of drivers was illegal? As it turns out it is only illegal when a policeman is around. Over the past week I cannot begin to tell you how many drivers I have seen texting: often in heavy traffic.

The solution I have found is with the words of Robert Frost – take "the road less travelled." My family and I have driven cross country on numerous occasions and Bobby Troup is right, you can in fact "Get your kicks on Route sixty-six." No need to cross the country though, head out to Western Maryland or the current favorite of my wife and I, West Virginia. Those country roads might not be taking you home, but they're bound to take you someplace nice and a great deal of the fun will be had getting there.

Now, most likely you will not be taking a country road to get here, but the Bar Library is a place worth facing a little adversity to get to. I wish that all of you would listen to me when I say the Library has what it takes to provide you with what you need. When you contemplate all the legal matters that you have been involved in over the years, I can tell you how the utilization of the Library would have allowed an expedited and cost effective way to obtain the results that you were striving for. It still does. Come see for yourself.

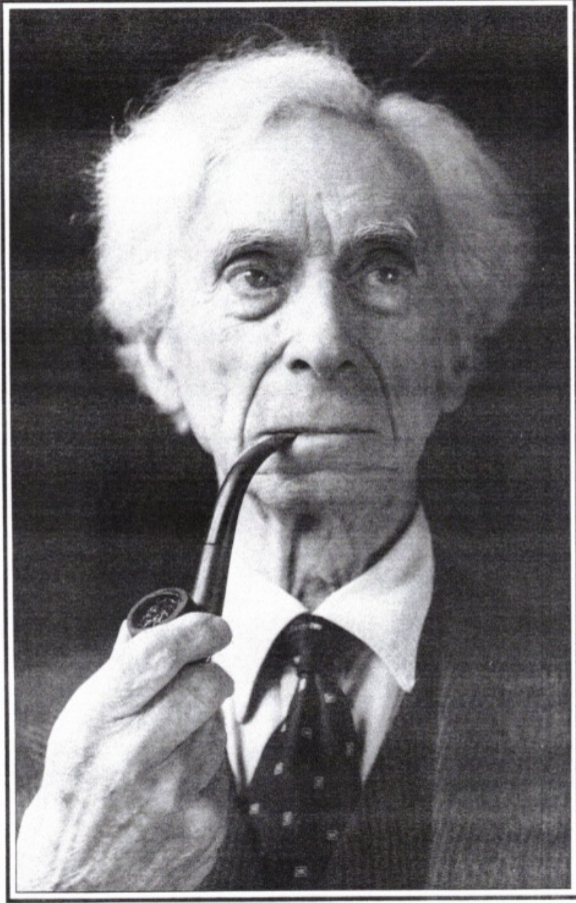
I look forward to seeing you soon.

Joe Bennett

V

BERTRAND RUSSELL

The Lord of Reason



IT WAS NOT YET SEVEN IN THE MORNING ON A SUNDAY IN WINTER, and there were very few people about in the concourse of Pennsylvania Station. We had arranged to meet at the newsstand rather than the Washington track because he liked to mooch around the book displays, and he approved of American railroad station architecture, which allows the traveler to wander around in a cathedral of light and warmth before descending to the dark cave where the trains leave from. It dawns on only the very old in England that waiting for a train on the same level as a concourse which is open to the winter winds is an unnecessary discomfort, no matter how adorably the station is festooned with Victorian ironwork.

In those days—it was 1950—Pennsylvania Station had not yet been torn apart and converted into airport arcade modern. It was a raw morning, and I was glad of our arrangement as I entered the Tepidarium of the Baths of Caracalla, of which the Pennsylvania concourse was a splendid copy.

The newsstand was not yet open, but he was there just the same, pattering up and down and stopping from time to time to peer in at the riches he couldn't get his hands on, like a caged animal impatient for feeding time.

From even a short distance he could fairly have been mistaken for a beggar. A very small man in a green topcoat that was too big for him (was it his?) and was green not from chic but from age. He

held a pipe to his mouth, and he walked with that deliberate flexing motion of the legs which old people have to use to walk evenly, or choose to use to show they are sprightlier than people thought. If he had ever appeared in Beverly Hills like that, with his frayed coat and slouchy hat, he would have been arrested on the spot. And even in New York I doubt he could have gone on pattering and peering for long without some cop strolling over to him. I imagined a Frank Capra vignette, in which the cop was affable but on the ball, and saying, "Pardon me, you got a home? Going someplace, brother?" And the old beggar replying with snapping precision: "I am Bertrand Arthur William, third Earl Russell, at present residing at Richmond, Surrey, and shortly on my way to Stockholm, Sweden, to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. In the meantime, I am going to Washington to see my daughter Kate."

It is a charming scene to dwell on, but Russell, not being Noel Coward or even Monty Woolley, would never have come through with such a snappy riposte. He didn't disdain his title, but when it came to him, in his sixtieth year, on the death of his brother, he thought of it as "a great nuisance" which could, however, be got rid of only if he was "attainted of high treason, a method [that] seems to me perhaps somewhat extreme." Twenty years later, several peers renounced their title on its inheritance without having their heads cut off on Tower Hill. But Russell was never prepared to make a spectacle of renunciation. He simply put out a public statement that he would use the title only on formal occasions and instructed his publishers not to use it "in connection with any of my literary work." If you probed him about it, he was quite clear about why he put up with the "great nuisance." It was part of his heritage. It did not affect either his character or his social views, and—the only time it came up—I had the feeling that he had nothing but contempt for men who, in spurning their father's title, adopted a mucker's pose to make a show of their common humanity. Throughout all his battles against privilege, tyranny, poverty, party politics, and the rest, he did not deplore the Establishment as such but only an Establishment

that had lapsed from its duties and obligations. His lifelong attitude toward the root problem of a classless society was stated once for all when the First World War exposed him—not least as a pacifist in prison—to the world of ordinary people: "When I examine my own conception of human excellence, I find that, doubtless owing to early environment, it contains many elements which have hitherto been associated with aristocracy, such as fearlessness, independence of judgment, emancipation from the herd, and leisurely culture. Is it possible to preserve these qualities, and even make them widespread, in an industrial community? And is it possible to dissociate them from the typical aristocratic vices: limitation of sympathy, haughtiness, and cruelty to those outside a charmed circle?"

Everything of the sort that he had written—his abundant and never-ending pleas for tolerance, compassion, kindness, love of one's fellowman—prepared one for a gentle creature, almost timorous in expressing any opinion, as good people so often are. And it was heartening to see how, with his children and grandchildren, he was full of domestic solicitude, accepted almost with relief the most modest cottage life, and with small children especially rollicked in their rebelliousness and artless play. But in adult society he was a forbidding man. He was back on enemy territory, where other men's prejudices, greed, slipshod thoughts, and unpleasant opinions had to be fought and routed. Out in the world, whether he was lecturing, arguing, or expounding his current mission, he was not a man for small talk or friendly kidding. At a lunch in Washington that preceded a television appearance, the hosts obviously expected the old soldier to be in mufti, but he was driven to fury, and threatened to leave the table, when he was baited for his Socialist views by a woman journalist hot for domestic Communists but indifferent, as he told her, to the means of hunting them.

I KNEW ALL THIS WELL ENOUGH when I walked into Pennsylvania Station. I had listened to him often in public. But this time the

auspices were well calculated to make me revise my view of him and take him at his face value as a venerable sage. He was in America on a lecture tour, and one day his agent telephoned me and said he would be happy if I could go and call on him. It was a summons to the Pope, and I arrived, fairly nervous, at the New York apartment he was staying in. When I knocked on the door, it was opened by a large woman, rose-faced—and bosomed, I imagined—who clapped her hands as at the return of the prodigal. Russell rose from an armchair and said, "Ah!" It was an eloquent welcome, from a man who, however articulate, did not waste words. He wasted no time, either, on genteel preliminaries but announced, like a headmaster awarding the annual English prize: "I asked you here, Cooke, because I wanted to tell you that whenever I read your pieces in the *Guardian*, I say to myself: That is probably the way it happened." There, he seemed to say, what do you think of that? What did I *think?* I was delirious, foolish with pride. I said I thought it was very handsome indeed, and whenever I wasn't sure myself about "the way it happened," I'd take his word for it. "Splendid, splendid," he intoned in his high nasal voice, and waved his pipe in the air. It was a compliment all the more acceptable at the time, because I had for the better part of a year been sweating at the trials of Alger Hiss, and had just put out a book about them, and I didn't know then for sure "the way it happened," and still don't.

At any rate, the reader will be forewarned by this bout of flattery and appreciate why, when he called and asked me if I should like to go with him to Washington, I canceled everything on the calendar, including my Sunday piece for the paper (which was always expected to be, as Sir Walter Scott put it, "the Big Bow-Wow") and set the alarm for five forty-five, something I have not done since.

GREETING ME AT THE CLOSED NEWSSTAND, he gave me a perfunctory smile and, pointing his pipe at the shutters, snapped, "If they run

trains as early as this, why can't they have the bookstall open?" I had no theory about this dereliction, so we walked up and down while he humphed and puffed his pipe. Pretty soon, though, a shutter went rattling up, and behind it a fat man in a sweater was seen snipping the ropes off shoulder-high bundles of *The New York Times* and pausing from time to time to blow on his coffee in a cardboard cup. "Come along, man!" Russell was muttering, but the man looked at us from his fishbowl and took long slurping drafts of his coffee. Russell was surprisingly put out by this languid proletarian, who had the aristocratic virtues of "fearlessness, independence of judgment, emancipation from the herd," as well as the aristocratic vices of "limitation of sympathy, haughtiness, and cruelty to those outside a charmed circle." Eventually, he opened up the stand and, I shall not easily forget, leaned affably on a stack of magazines and said, "Now, granddad, what's on your mind?" Russell ignored the newspapers and magazines and looked wonderingly over row upon row of paperback thrillers, best sellers, science fiction, movie-star confessionals, and the usual reprints of classics got up with three-color jackets suggesting sexual hanky-panky undiscovered by the English Lit. major. Russell promptly pointed to three or four whodunits, bought and pocketed them, and said, "How marvelous to have all this on tap. One of the most beastly things about austerity in England is that we simply won't release the paper to print enough paperback books."

We went off to the train in much better spirits, settled in two dumpy elbow chairs of the parlor car, and were soon sliding under the river and out onto the Wellsian industrial nightmare of the Jersey flats. "I remember all this," said Russell, "before we reaped the benefits of the Industrial Revolution. It was all countryside, except for little manufacturing towns made of brick." He guessed—with what seemed at the time to be lurid pessimism—at the coming blight of the cities, and that led on to a rising crime rate and other such routine lamentations.

I kept detailed notes of this trip, but if I now had a tape record-

ing of the train ride to Washington, I'm sure the striking feature of it would be the almost sententious precision of Russell's talk, generations away from the trailing sentences, the staggering caesuras, the chattering overlap dialogue which the most modish of modern film directors try to convince us is the true style of human conversation. When Russell was angry—which was very often if a moral principle or a political squabble was concerned—he delivered himself of a perfectly composed operatic aria, albeit with the tone of a bagpipe. But also when he was at his most meditative and agreeable, as he was now, he still composed everything in his head and pronounced it with melodious, if nasal, finality. The nasal quality was almost telephonic, and my tapes—if they had ever been made—would sound like examples of a Dial-an-Aphorism service.

Gun control was not then an issue. But as the petticoats of an old manufacturing town drifted by, and a worn sign said "Glassworks," Russell brightened and went into a startling story which I frankly disbelieved—or thought of as a truth outrageously embroidered—until I read it, in persuasive detail, in his autobiography. "My first wife's cousin," he said, "was the manager of a glassworks, here in New Jersey. And he had a wife who carried a revolver till the day she died." I thought he had brought this up as the one-case, eighteen-carat proof that Americans were always a violent lot. But his face creased into a foxy grin as he ended the story with a bang: "She had absurd literary ambitions and wrote very bad plays, which nobody would put on. Consequently, she collected her husband's love letters, which she had preserved, and stuck them in her blouse and shot herself through the heart—first, of course, through the love letters."

This was the kind of anecdote, I was to discover, that by its violent neatness put him in a good humor. In a political discussion, he would blow hot and witheringly cold, and when he had made his point, he would relapse into a kind of smoldering satisfaction. But what delighted him was the memory of a meeting, a famous anecdote, a short, sharp melodrama that ended, or could be made to end,

with a maxim or a shocking punch line. It may explain his rabid appetite for whodunits. They satisfied his lifetime's search for an order he could not find in human affairs, and they tickled the love of violence which lies not far beneath the surface of the intellectual who protests at all times his passion for reason. ("Life," he once wrote, "is nothing but a competition to be the criminal rather than the victim.")

The mention of the small New Jersey town—it was Millville—where he had first stayed in America took him back to other memories of his first visit, in 1896, when he was only twenty-four. On a Sunday in New York he had watched his first parade. Easter? "It may well have been Easter, although the society folk made a point of parading in their finery on Fifth Avenue on any Sunday when the weather was pleasant. But on that occasion, I remember the crowds somewhere in the Fifties, all very excited and crowding round a particular street corner. I thought there'd been an accident. The people were craning their necks and shouting, 'Where is it? Have you seen it?' " What was it all about? He would lean back before any punch line with his neck rigid and his pipe held out before the final pronouncement. "Well, all the fuss was about a French invention that had appeared on the streets for the first time. I believe, later on, the Americans did something about it. It was called *l'automobile*."

The terrors of what "the Americans did" to the automobile led him on to his present obsession, which was with the effect of science—of the nuclear age more than anything—on government and the balance of power. The train was no place to start a seminar, and he knew that I had heard his lectures on the topic, given the previous week at Columbia University. But as we went in to breakfast, he said what a pleasure it had been to see the theater packed with so many attentive young people. They constituted, he remarked with a faint smile, "a very acceptable revenge on their elders." I had not wanted to broach what had been probably the most painful of all his American experiences. But in the evident joy of a tremendous recep-

tion in New York, he was more than willing to talk about the kindness and "belated" sympathy he had had from the academics who had attended the Columbia lectures, and to mark with acidulous asides the contrast with his ordeal of ten years before, which had offered an inglorious demonstration of the New York City Establishment in one of its periodic spasms of civic indignation. In February, 1940, wearying of what he had come to feel was the "almost totalitarian atmosphere" of the University of California under President Robert Sproul, Russell snapped up the invitation of a professorship at the College of the City of New York. He was to teach the theory of logic, but he had probably forgotten that to an old enemy, William Thomas Manning, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of New York, Bertrand Russell in any academic guise was "a recognized propagandist against religion and morality" and "a defender of adultery." The Jesuits took up the warning cry against "a desiccated, divorced, and decadent advocate of sexual promiscuity." They were followed by a scandalized housewife, who brought a case in the State Supreme Court to order the college to rescind Russell's appointment. The presiding judge was a Roman Catholic who had once urged the removal of a likeness of Martin Luther from a courthouse mural (illustrating a history of law, not religion). The judge obliged, citing Russell's legal status as an alien (a refugee from the European war when the United States was determined not to get into it), adding Russell's lamentable failure "to have passed a competitive examination," adding also the gratuitous judicial opinion that in honoring its contract, the college would be "in effect establishing a chair of indecency." Mayor La Guardia short-circuited an appeal by briskly canceling the appropriation for Russell's salary. Russell had at his back a small army of disgusted academes and journalists, but ahead of him he had the prospect of an income of no more than $1000 in the coming year. He had a wife to keep and two children at the University of California, and nothing else coming in. His gloom was exacerbated by the appalling news from Europe: Hitler had invaded the Low Countries and was on his way to Dun-

kirk. Russell longed to be in England, wondered in a letter to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador, if he ought to go back (Halifax, in a masterpiece of diplomatic fuzz, replied, "It all depends"), and wrote sorrowfully to a friend: "My personal ruin passes unnoticed. So I am apt to feel cross, and as I mustn't let it out on my enemies, I snap at my friends."

This visit, on the contrary, had been a triumph. His tour had started with a philosophy course at Mount Holyoke, and while he was giving it, he was invited to do three lectures at Columbia University. Between Holyoke and Columbia, the news came in that he had won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He appeared on three successive days at twilight, and if he had had the faintest interest in publicity or promotion, he would have anticipated the mobs of merely curious citizens who would come to gape at the latest international celebrity. But there was also a solid pack of students there who had heard, or just read, about his old ordeal with City College, and when the bony little figure with the thatch of white hair appeared from the wings, the theater trembled with the stamping feet and baying applause of the young who were exulting in the victory of an undefeatable seventy-eight-year-old.

After breakfast on the train, he remarked that "the City College commotion was, in the long view, only the culmination of a lifetime's battle with bigots in authority. Much the same thing happened, on a more modest scale, on my very first visit. I was brought here, don't you know, by my first wife."

"To New Jersey?"

"More accurately, to Bryn Mawr."

His wife, Alys Pearsall Smith, was of a rich Philadelphia Quaker family and had recently graduated from Bryn Mawr. She was evidently eager to show the bridegroom off, possibly as a coming young English brain, no doubt also as the son of Lord Amberley.

"I contrived to give some lectures on the foundations of geometry, which attracted what I then thought of as an enormous audi-

ence, thirty students at least. But none of the elite of American mathematicians had ever heard of me, and one of them assured the president of the college that I was a dilettante. However, the president was a cousin of my wife's, a Dr. Carey Thomas, a dragon of virtue, the Bishop Manning, you might say, of Bryn Mawr. If she thought I was a dilettante, she was to encounter much worse in her cousin. Alys had three preoccupations at the time: the suffrage movement, the temperance movement, and free love. She undertook to lecture in and about Bryn Mawr on the first two. But her enthusiasm for the third—which I am glad to say was quite theoretical at the time—well, it got the better of her. It was altogether too much for the formidable Dr. Thomas, and we soon left Bryn Mawr under a cloud."

Russell chuckled with great relish over this early brush with the puritans and made a final point after a long draw on his pipe: "Many years later, I was invited to lecture at Bryn Mawr again. Dr. Thomas was still the president, but by that time Alys and I had parted, which only confirmed her first low opinion of me. She absolutely forbade me to appear before the student body. It was always a very comely student body, and she feared for their chastity. She was probably," he ended with a grin, "quite right. Dr. Thomas, I must say though, was a Tartar." (The Tartar was later to be immortalized, not uncharitably, in a painstaking biography written by a Bryn Mawr teacher, one Edith Finch, who was to become Russell's fourth, last, and only satisfactory wife, in his eightieth year.)

"Well," he said, as if to put an end to all this amusing trivia, and reached into his topcoat pocket for the three or four paperback thrillers. It was my cue to quiz him no more. He began to flick the pages over, and at first I thought he was in the habit of skipping through such frivolous stuff. But I noticed that his head went up and down in a slight but steady rhythm, and his right hand turned the pages in rapid sequence. He was a page reader. It could not have been more than fifteen minutes later that he dropped the first book on the floor and started on a second one. Another fifteen minutes,

and he had finished that one. He looked up with a benevolent smile, as if he had taken a prescribed pill—two pills—and began again to reminisce, as the station stops were called off or as stretches of remembered landscape inspired him.

I don't remember—or didn't note down—any other American memories, but at some point he began to philosophize about his long link with the two countries and some of their eminent dead. Not exactly to philosophize but to riffle through a sketchbook of his contemporaries, the more unpleasant the better to damn in a caption. As everybody has noticed about the old, their memory seems to grow sharper about the long-gone years as it grows dimmer about the immediate past. The effect on the listener, as they recall childhood memories, is to turn the past into the historic present. And soon Russell was talking about people fifty years apart as if they were all characters in the cast of a play that was not yet over. I egged him on in this fascinating exercise by mentioning that once, in the early thirties in Wyoming, I had met an old man who knew Frémont, the American explorer who, among other innovations, opened up the northern route beyond the Mississippi into Wyoming. I said something to the effect that looking at that old man, I had the eerie feeling of being in touch with what now seems like America's Middle Ages.

He was not, I think, greatly impressed by this imagined association with a man who, after all, had not died until 1890. But it tickled his vanity sufficiently to make him say, "A little later on, you'll find that that old man will be more vivid than President Truman." I started to toss at him the names of the heroes and ogres of my boyhood, and he responded in just the way I'd hoped, though whether it was my unfortunate choice of names or the expression of a waspish mood, they all came out ogres. H. G. Wells: "A vain man, with a good fund of original ideas, who was spoiled by his ambition to be thought upper-middle class. I remember a disastrous visit he once paid me with his wife. Although he himself had a marked Cockney accent, he kept upbraiding his wife for possessing one."

Bernard Shaw he dismissed with a single savage blow: "He wanted to be witty at all costs and it led him into unbelievable cruelties. He taunted Wells with facetious remarks about his wife—Wells's wife—when he knew very well she was dying of cancer."

We were now well along the path of retracing his earliest contemporaries, and they might have been present-day idols he found unimpressive. Tennyson? "Tennyson was an appalling exhibitionist. He thought of himself as a combination of Homer and Sir Henry Irving. He used to go swaggering along country lanes reciting aloud and swinging a cloak. He had an almost theatrically pink complexion and two red spots on his cheeks. I think he used makeup." Had he known Browning? "Oh, dear, yes. A frightful bore. He used to come round to the house to read his poems to the ladies at teatime. A bouncy man. A showoff, too. Really a Helen Hokinson cartoon character."

We turned to politics, and recalling his *Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*—in the wake of which he was, typically, embraced by his conservative enemies and denounced by his Socialist friends—I asked him if he had ever met Lenin. Lenin was to a few of my own contemporaries in the 1920s a demigod, but to many more Mephistopheles reincarnated. To everybody I knew he was a leader as exotic and sinister as Genghis Khan, and it would have been impossible to imagine his ever being buried, as comfortable, dandruffy old Marx was, in Highgate. Russell replied very deliberately: "I think he was the most evil man—and certainly one of the most imperturbable—I ever met. He had steady black eyes that never flickered. I hoped to make them flicker at one point by asking him why it was thought necessary to murder hundreds of thousands of kulaks. He quite calmly ignored the word 'murder.' He smiled and said they were a nuisance that stood in the way of his agricultural plans." I mumbled the unoriginal thought that Lenin must have been a terrifying man to sit opposite.

"Perhaps. But not to me. I had been inoculated in boyhood against such men"—a long, wheezing draw on the pipe—"by my

first encounter with Mr. Gladstone. Gladstone came to our house to dinner when I was, I suppose, no more than sixteen or seventeen. There was no other man in the house. The dinner, I imagine, went off well enough, for he was surrounded by my female relations, most of them Whigs with the liveliest interest in prisons and social reform and so on. But when they retired, I was left alone with Gladstone. He made no effort to put me at my ease. He sat there saying nothing, with his ferocious face and his basilisk eye, which he turned on me—reprovingly—from time to time. I was petrified with fright. Then I appreciated that I was failing in my duty as a host. I stretched my foot under the table to find the bell, and in due course the butler appeared. I ordered the port. There was another dreadful silence. At last it came. He looked at it suspiciously for what seemed an age, and then he took a sip. At last, he said, 'Capital port you have here. How *odd* that you serve it in a claret glass.' After that, Lenin had no terrors for me."

If he could go back to Gladstone, why not to "Our Gracious Queen" herself? No problem. Since she had lived nearly thirty years after his birth, of course he had met her. But now, well launched on this return voyage, he preferred to recall—or affect to recall—his first memory of her, when he sat on her lap during a tea party at his grandparents' house, Pembroke Lodge: "A tea cozy, I think, would describe her adequately." He was two years old at the time. In case I suspected that this was what Mark Twain called "a stretcher," he quickly recalled "a much more memorable trauma, perhaps a year or so later, though I was later told it happened when I fell out of my mother's carriage. I fell down one day and bruised my penis. Like every other boy at the time, I was supposed not to notice that I had one. Nevertheless, my nurse was instructed to teach me how to sponge it in a hot bath."

His father had died when he was three, and his mother and sister—of the then mortal diphtheria—when he was one and a half. But the mention of his grandparents set him off on the vast social changes since the vanished age they had lived in. If Russell's own life

was to span, as Ronald Clark puts it, "General Grant's presidency and Nixon's reign," the grandparents who helped to bring him up had spanned the reign of Robespierre and Grant's second term. He had the warmest memories of his grandfather, Lord John Russell, Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, the great Whig champion of Parliamentary reform, who had died when Russell was six. But Russell must have tired long ago of talking about the political grandeurs and miseries of the famous man. On this train ride, it was clear, he was much more interested in the private whimsies of the great. Somehow his grandfather's support of the Duke of Wellington's Ministry came up, and after that the name of Napoleon. Without a trace of self-consciousness, Russell made a wry face and said, "A thoroughly nasty man, I was told. I had an aunt who went once or twice to Versailles and danced with him. She took a dim view of him: he danced, she said, on his stummick!"

On this astonishing note, Russell hunched his shoulders and sank into his chair, saying: "Napoleon, as you may know, had an automatic inner clock. He could sleep anywhere, at any time, for just as long or as little as he chose. I shall do the same."

He folded his hands across his lap, the long bony fingers and the patches of liver spots running up to his wrists. The asperity faded from his features. He slumped further down, so it seemed that his angular small head would soon disappear into a collar at least three sizes too big for him. He had been called by many images in his time: a snapping pike, an odd fish, a rare bird, an angry eagle, and—by ex-wives—a goblin and a demon. Shrunken now, as old people are, in a suit that flapped around his bones, he was a sleepy eaglet nestling into its father's clothes. He was asleep almost at once.

I looked at him and thought how absurdly wide is the range of human tolerance of pain and misfortune. The sight of a cockroach can produce hysteria in A; an unpaid bill, ulcers in B; a life sentence on innocent C induces stoicism or perpetual grumbling about a leaky faucet. W. S. Gilbert, a misanthrope if ever there was one, wrote in a bitter mood a quatrain that would have anthology status, along

with Eliot and Frost, if it had been set to music by Mozart or Verdi: "See how the Fates their gifts allot,/For A is happy, B is not./Yet B is worthy, I dare say,/Of more prosperity than A." Here was a man whose life was, by his own egotistical effort, an open book: an act of narcissism that bared him to every sort of enemy and guaranteed he would have ninety-eight years of a fitful fever. Yet it was not possible, it was not possible for me certainly, to look back on it without enormous, if qualified, admiration. It could be said that the First Act of his life, up to the First World War, was the predictable ferment of a gifted and neurotic Cambridge intellectual who chose to throw himself into academic controversy, political protest, Fabian causes, and a sequence of love affairs sparked by simple lust but rationalized, and agonized over, as experiments in human freedom. After that, though, came the Second Act heralded by the Guns of August. He was forty-two years old and geared for sterner troubles. He was, he announced, prepared "to play Faust, for whom Mephistopheles was represented by the Great War." Between the beginning of it and the end of the Second War, he withstood imprisonment, debt, the alienation of friends, D. H. Lawrence, Soviet Communism, a nearly mortal illness, fatherhood (at fifty-nine), the shattering and remaking of his fundamental beliefs, the wrath of two American universities, the repudiation and then the favor of the British Foreign Office, an unrelentingly vicious campaign of slander by the American academic and newspaper Establishment, near poverty, "despair beyond bearing," and the ecstasy and exhaustion of five grand passions (neatly entombed in the index of his autobiography under "Russell, Bertrand Arthur William—Loves").

Throughout these thirty years, he never relaxed to cultivate his garden (in a literal sense, gardens were among his greatest pleasures). He refused, even in the throes of the most baffling mathematical problems, to let the world go by. Early in the First War, the successes of the Germans before the Battle of the Marne provoked him to a public protest against "the massacre of the young of any nationality," and he threw in an extra bit of spleen against "the men

of Westminster who are tortured by patriotism." Understandably, he was a powerful nuisance, and went to jail. When the war was over, he was eager to see the next new social order and went off to Russia well disposed to believe in the courage and effectiveness of the great experiment, but he was outraged by the "cruelty, poverty, suspicion, persecution that formed the very air we breathed," an air admiringly breathed, nonetheless, by his accompanying friends. Then he decided to tackle "the hypocrisy and incompetence of our educational system" and nearly bankrupted himself by founding and running a school on principles of "training, initiative, discouraging prudery and restraints on freedom," but the whooping progressives who were just then enthralled by such things balked at his equally firm insistence on "scholastic instruction and a code of discipline," and—help!—"the absence of the opportunity for exciting pleasures." Down all these years, he keeps telling himself, and publishing tracts to make a religion of it, that marriage achieves dignity only by the freedom of the partners to cherish other intimate relationships. But when his girl sleeps with another man, he is racked with jealousy and "a sense of the sanctuary defiled."

HE WOKE UP as the train lurched into the Washington station. His watery eyes were clear again, and he had that amused benign look that the old—and babies—take on after the shortest rest. He left the two read thrillers on the floor, pocketed the other two, and we went off to the kind of public chore he had borne all his life: the interview, the lunch of admirers and skeptics, the television show (it was, I think, *Meet the Press*), then another interview, and so on to his daughter's house.

He came over the next year for the opening night of the annual forum of the New York *Herald Tribune*, to whose mainly Republican audience—he presumed—he was careful to introduce himself as a Socialist supporter of the British Labor government who cared

more about individual liberty than any other thing and that on that ground, above all others, he opposed Communism and always had. He was in a dinner jacket. "Moscow," he said, "is fond of referring to me as a wolf in a dinner jacket. I seldom wear one, but I want you to know that so far as tonight is concerned, the Moscow statement is a half-truth." It was the only glimmer of humor. He spoke on "New Hopes for a Changing World" before an audience that was polite but not deeply excited by his familiar message that "the application of science to industry, by revolutionizing man's relation to nature, has destroyed the old equilibrium that existed in man's relation to other men and to himself . . . the world is facing a prospective disaster and is asking itself in a bewildered way why there seems to be no escape from a tragic fate that no one desires." It ended with a modest proposal delivered in a soothing and reasonable cadence so strikingly at variance with the snappish tone in which Russell conducted private political discussions: equality must be substituted for love of domination, justice for love of victory, intelligence for brutality; and since "happiness and the means to happiness depend upon harmony with other men," people had only "to think and feel in this way" and they would find that "not only their personal problems, but all the problems of world politics, even the most abstruse and difficult, would melt away . . . and the beauty of the world would take possession."

There was not much to take hold of here during a year which had witnessed, among other expressions of harmony among men, the sentencing of Ilse Koch for obscene brutalities at Buchenwald; the rise to power of Senator Joseph McCarthy through his characterization of General George Marshall as a traitor and an assassin; the exposure by Senator Estes Kefauver of a national crime syndicate buying protection from businessmen and politicians; the American suspension of all tariff concessions to the Soviet Union and Communist China; Britain's mulish refusal to join six other nations of Western Europe in a European Coal and Steel Plan, and a paroxysm of

disunity between Washington, the United Nations in New York, and the UN Allies in Korea which decided President Truman to strip General Douglas MacArthur of his Far Eastern command.

Whenever it was possible to confront Russell in private with the real world and gingerly inquire about the solutions he had in mind to such knotty conflicts as I have listed, he would deliver a series of judgments: Truman was quite right to fire MacArthur; Britain was wrong to stay out of the European plan; the links between crime, business, and politics only went to show that Socialism was right and necessary. Otherwise, he retreated with energetic dogmatism into the verities and shucked off any personal civic responsibility by repeating in informal variations the confession that opens his autobiography: "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."

This splendid credo often reminded me of George Bernard Shaw's equally heroic encyclical: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. And also the only real tragedy in life is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base." This sort of thing gives one to wonder for what mighty purpose a ticket collector or a coal miner imagines himself to be used, or with how much joy a postal clerk or a janitor is free to choose between the patronage of a personally minded man or that of a state-minded commissar. Similarly, Russell's habitual and cavalier retreats into moral injunctions always made me uneasy at the thought of his drafting a farm bill, setting up a nuclear inspection system, adjudicating a case of fraud, or a neighbors' quarrel over property rights, or any other of the great and humble issues that politicians and lawyers have to deal with before "the problems

of world politics, even the most abstruse and difficult, would melt away . . . and the beauty of the world would take possession."

It was with this disturbing trait in mind that I seized the chance, four years later, to hear him address an election rally. I had been brought over to Britain by my editor to try my hand at covering a British election, and I wandered around the country for the whole length of the campaign—all of ten days!—watching the British electoral antics which, compared with the American, are as a prayer meeting to a Roman circus. I heard that Russell was going to appear in Glasgow in support of a Labor candidate who had lost last time, by only a few hundred votes, in a fairly seedy suburb. The issues, as the opposing election agents filled me in on them, had to do with a controversial act of Parliament about subsidies to faltering industries, with the rising retail price index, with the benefits to the community—if any—of the local Cooperative Society. It would be instructive, I thought, to watch Russell come down from his empyrean to tackle what the Scottish oldsters called brass tacks and the youngsters were learning to call the nitty-gritty.

Twelve or thirteen hundred people had gathered in the Rio Cinema, an impressive crowd for a Sunday night sermon, almost as many as would jam the place for *The Ring of Fear*, a Mickey Spillane horror offered on weeknights. They sat remarkably still, turning on coughers, very conscious of having an old wise man come bearing hopeful oracles. He appeared even tinier than usual against the huge CinemaScope screen, and as the respectful applause flowed in on him, he snapped his eaglet eyelids and flexed his arms at the elbows in a "hey, presto" motion, like a charming puppet.

In case any there were unsure who he was—and it is very likely that there were plenty—he would introduce himself. He was Bertrand Russell, a Liberal when most of them were in their perambulators. He had stayed with the Liberals until he discovered "in the First World War that under the guise of seeking peace they had surreptitiously committed the country to war." So for the forty

succeeding years he had supported wholeheartedly the Socialist cause. Now, how about the retail price index, the subsidies, and the glories of the Rutherglen Co-op?

Of course, his thoughts on these local matters were not to be expected. He soared off at once into lofty regions where the audience might peer at him but couldn't follow him. He had come there, all the way up from London, to press on them, "and on the notice of the country the need for a world authority which will put an end to war, for in the opinion of the best men of science it is quite likely that a great war employing hydrogen bombs would put an end to the human race. . . . We should not have the sort of world the Russians want, nor the sort of world the Americans want, and you would certainly not get the sort of world that any of *us* want." By now, the atom bomb was "a nice friendly weapon like the bow and arrow." It was no use "declaring the hydrogen bomb to be an abomination and then trying to forget it." If war broke out tomorrow, it would be made and very likely used. And that was not the end: "There is nothing final about the dreadful ingenuities of science. There will be chemical and bacteriological warfare, and after that satellites that circle the earth and bomb the enemy every time they pass that way."

What could be done about it? He would tell them. First, we must accept limitations on national sovereignty and call a world conference in which "the casting voice lay with the neutrals" (with Chile, Albania, Uganda, South Africa, Communist China?). The nations must disarm. The United Nations must be reformed. Poverty, "which is wholly unnecessary," would have to go.

It may be callous to say that he went on and on in this way, without ever hinting how "the nations" could be made to disarm, how the United Nations could be reformed in a workable way, why "the neutrals" would be necessarily disinterested judges, how the arrested protagonists could be bullied into loving each other. At each announcement of the vague, shining alternative to war, the stolid housekeepers pounded their hands in the hope that belief

would create its object. He ended, as always, clenching his bony hands to grasp the vision that eludes us all and begged them to go away and "bring about" an era "of happiness such as has never existed before . . . a kind of kindliness, of friendliness between men and men. . . . If we would, we could make life splendid and beautiful."

The decent crowd clapped him all the way out on his careful legs. When he had gone, the lucky Mr. McAllister, the Labor candidate he had backed, was in the uncomfortable spot of following a sermon on the Resurrection with a vestryman's search for the boy who had broken the parsonage window. (It was his Conservative opponent, "or his bosses." We were down to the nitty-gritty in no time.) Mr. McAllister, by the way, lost by seven times the size of his previous defeat.

I caught Russell before he was off to his night train. He was, admittedly, eighty-three and four years older than when I had last seen him. But he looked like some gnome from another planet, gray and bloodless. As we walked out of the building to a car that was waiting for him, he talked with little animation about the possible outcome of the election, which was between a prospective Clement Attlee and an Anthony Eden administration. (Eden won.) Just before I left him, I asked him flatly what he thought of Eden. He glared at me and pulled the name out of his memory and looked at it. He shook his head in a quick irritable motion. "Not a gentleman," he said, "dresses too well." The old man still had blood in him.

My report, headlined "Lord Russell's Apocalypse," appeared in the next morning's *Guardian*. It was, at more satirical length, much as I have written it here. I heard later that he had seen it and "disapproved" of it. The "kind of kindliness, of friendliness between men and men," that was going to make life "splendid and beautiful" was not quite ready to come my way. I never heard from him again. And saw him once only, bareheaded in Trafalgar Square, shouting into a bitter east wind some rasping plea to ban the bomb, or beware of the Americans, or denounce the Russians for going into Hun-

gary. He grew increasingly frail, but he was never senile, and he went tottering down the black decade of the 1960s slapping at any injustice, however small, embracing any cause, however unpopular. You would imagine him finally exhausted, being fed gruel in his stuffy library, but suddenly he would be in the papers and on the barricades, again urging a preventive nuclear strike against the Russians, then denying he'd ever said it, then taking up the cudgels for Eugene McCarthy or Mao Tse-tung or Daniel Cohn-Bendit, or the New Left or the Pill. And nobody ever mentioned his complaining about his arthritic hands or rickety legs, for not the least of his aristocratic virtues was a disdain for seeming, in Shaw's phrase, to be "a little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world would not devote itself to making you happy."

THERE IS ONE SIDE OF HIM I have not touched on, and it is not from tact or primness. His "need of women" was abiding until God knows what age, and he was the first to admit it. ("Chastity: I gave it a good try once, but never again.") Either the first or second time I met him, he told me with unashamed glee about a time when he was very ill—I can't remember now whether it was the time in China he was given up for dead or, more likely, the time his plane crashed on a flight from Oslo to Trondheim, when, in his seventies, he swam in a perishing sea to safety. He woke up in a hospital, and when the clinical crisis was over, and he was comfortable, a nurse came to him whom he found "motherly but sexually attractive." Under her nurse's jacket there was apparently nothing but the nurse. Russell was happy to notice this, and with a foxy grin he implied what an absolute respect for the truth would require me to infer never happened. During his wartime stay in Princeton, when he was in his early seventies, the groves of academe were flustered by rumors of Lord Russell's goatish ways. One lady whose testimony is to be trusted made the shivering confession that the groping of the

noble lord in an automobile conveyed the sensation of "dry leaves rustling up your thighs."

I find this not at all culpable and put it down here because Russell himself would have frankly admitted it. But he might in a mellow moment also have admitted that lechery was a curse and got men into situations that came to entail impossible involvements. When he first went to Paris, he was appalled and disgusted by what he saw around him as the sordid truckling to male sexuality. He was enough of a puritan and a very conscious intellectual to have to explain to himself every sexual call of nature as a fated invitation to a mystical union of souls, an incurable form of rationalization that got him into perpetual trouble. Toward the end of his life, thrashing away at the problem of sex as relentlessly as at every other problem, he put out a papal bull on the subject. Marriage was an unlivable institution because it demanded "intolerable intimacy." He implied not so much the wear and tear of different, or competing, personalities as the growing offensiveness of knowing everything about the partner's aches and pains and physical fusses and bathroom habits. Every married person has thought of this sometime or other, but in agonizing over it, Russell seems to me to be expressing the morbid sensitiveness of the uncured puritan, of Swift with his despairing cry: "Celia, Celia, Celia shits." If he had ever been confronted by the proposition, I think Russell would have been abashed to explain how a practicing gynecologist could ever remain in love. This is a problem that afflicts surely only a fraction of the population, although transient symptoms of it disturb the sort of genteel lady, surprisingly common in America, who never retires to the bathroom without turning on the water tap.

Russell himself has charted in exhausting detail the peaks and pits of his love affairs, and the smooth and rocky paths in between. And at least two wives and several other ladies have been only too eager to offer their own voluminous testimony in support, and often in defiance, of his affidavits. It is a fate that the most honest man

should not wish on himself, and the history of it has no decent place in a memoir of this sort. But after a fifty-eight-year war with the demon of sex, he managed a touching truce. At the end of 1952, when he was eighty, he married Edith Finch, yet another Bryn Mawr graduate. He wrote a poem to her which graces, in a photostatic copy of his aged scrawl, the title page of the first volume of his autobiography. It would be charitable to call it banal, and a half-literate person coming on it without a signature might shrewdly attribute it to Robert W. Service or Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

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 and near my end,
I have known you,
And, knowing you,
I have found both ecstasy and peace.
I know rest.
After so many lonely years,
I know what life and love may be.
Now, if I sleep,
I shall sleep fulfilled.

The evidence of both parties, and of all the friends and onlookers who saw them together, testifies that it was far and away the happiest of his marriages. But he had not resolved his old tussle with "Marriage and Morals." It seems more probable that, like legions of ordinary people, he had discovered that in old age a serene compan-

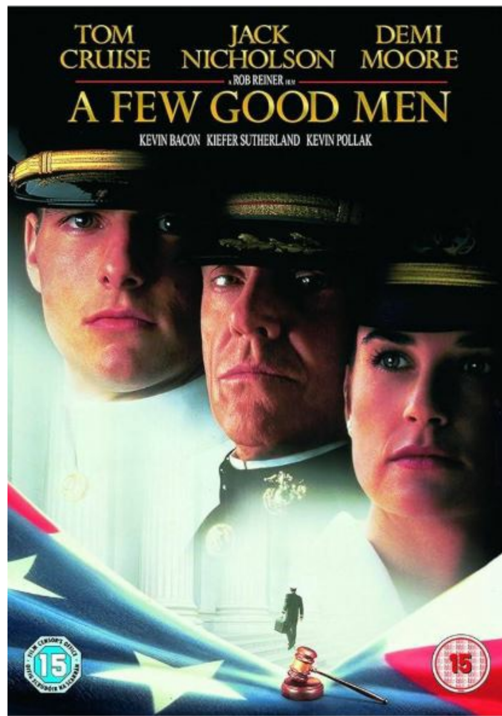
ionship with the other sex becomes for the first time possible. Once passion is spent, morality comes a little easier.

In the end, what we are left with is a towering malcontent, the last of the Whigs, whose aristocratic heritage and contradictions of personality will not easily accommodate the usual labels of Rightist, Leftist, Socialist, Liberal. With his liberal belief in rational reform, his Socialist belief in radical change, his conservative scorn for violence and disorder, his love of "leisured culture," his discomfort in the presence of working people (which today would be taken to contradict his approval of equality of opportunity), he is by now impossible to pin down as either a political or social type. And apart from accepting the title of Socialist (usually at odds with any Socialist government in being), he would not have wished to be pinned down. His considerable vanity, for one thing, resisted it. But what made him wary of swallowing whole any prescribed political program was his fierce independence of thought and his unsleeping passion—the claim of no party and no class—for the liberty of the subject, however high or low. He has been the great libertarian of our age, and it is an age in which, in the Western world, there is an almost routine confusion between liberty and equality.

Sometime, somewhere, Russell sweated to believe, the rational man would make a decent world of his instincts. This is, of course, not a new conviction. It is held, as a dizzy hope, by all evangelists. But whereas the autobiographies of John the Baptist or Billy Graham might be very dull indeed, Russell gave the struggle to make it come true the dimensions of a Greek tragedy. For he was at once a first-class intellect, a man of unyielding, if cantankerous, honesty, and the possessor of one of the master styles of the English language. It is the last of these gifts that may ensure the bystander, even decades from now, an unflagging fascination with his life. For his style gives charm to many a frailty, makes the world over every day in the light of his intelligence and irony, converts political crusades into cantos from Milton and exchanges of learned correspondence and lovers' flutings into episodes as enchanting as sonatas.

The great, and maddening, thing about him is that he would not give in—to prudence or a party line or cynicism, or, I'm afraid, to simple horse sense. He would go to prison for a principle in his forties; weather public scorn in his eighties for urging the banning of the bomb or proclaiming Kennedy and Khrushchev as villains; and in his ninety-eighth year—two days before he died—feel duty bound to protest against Israeli air raids on Egypt, knowing full well he would thereby alienate yet another band of recent admirers: "The aggression committed by Israel must be condemned, not only because no State has the right to annex foreign territory, but because every expansion is also an experiment to discover how much more aggression the world will tolerate. . . . We are frequently told that we must sympathize with Israel because of the suffering of the Jews in Europe at the hands of the Nazis. I see in this suggestion no reason to perpetuate any suffering. What Israel is doing today cannot be condoned, and to invoke the horrors of the past to justify those of the present is gross hypocrisy." It was the last thing he wrote or dictated.

He raged against the dying of the light of reason in human affairs but more against the greed, cowardice, hatreds, and injustices of his fellowmen, of whom, from time to time, he greatly feared he might be one.



A Few Good Men

Please join us on Friday, March 21, 2025 at 5:30 P.M when the Bar Library film series presents **A Few Good Men**.

A Few Good Men involves a military lawyer tasked with defending two United States Marines charged with murdering a fellow Marine. The defense: they were only following their base commander's orders. The film stars Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson and Demi Moore and was directed by Rob Reiner.

The film received four Academy Award Nominations including for Best Picture and Best Supporting Actor (Nicholson). Also included in the cast are Kevin Bacon; Kiefer Sutherland; Cuba Gooding, Jr. and Kevin Pollak.

Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* said, "That the performances are uniformly outstanding is a tribute to Rob Reiner (*Misery*), who directs with masterly assurance, fusing suspense and character to create a movie that literally vibrates with energy." Richard Schickel in *Time* called it "an extraordinarily well-made movie, which wastes no words or images in telling a conventional but compelling story." Todd McCarthy in *Variety* magazine predicted, "The same histrionic fireworks that gripped theater audiences will prove even more compelling to filmgoers due to the star power and dramatic screw-tightening." Roger Ebert was less enthusiastic in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, giving it two-and-a-half out of four stars and finding its major flaw was revealing the courtroom strategy to the audience before the climactic scene between Cruise and Nicholson. Ebert wrote, "In many ways this is a good film, with the potential to be even better than that. The flaws are mostly at the screenplay level; the film doesn't make us work, doesn't allow us to figure out things for ourselves, is afraid we'll miss things if they're not spelled out."

WHEN: Friday, March 21, 2025 - 5:30 P.M

WHERE: The Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse (100 North Calvert Street)

Main Reading Room of the Baltimore Bar Library (Room 618)

COST: Free – Soft Drinks & Snacks will be served.

RESERVATIONS: May be made at the Library, by telephone or e-mail. In order to keep track of attendance, **reservations are required.** For more information telephone 410-727-0280 or e-mail us at jwbennett@barlib.org.

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