

THE HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE, 1891 – 1919

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PREFACE

The Humanitarian League was a small radical British pressure group opposed to all cruelty. It was in existence between the years 1891 and 1919.

The intention of this study is to analyse the activities and ideas of the League and its impact upon British society. Humanitarianism, the central value of the League, was a diffuse moral basis for general opposition to cruelty, despoliation and unnecessary restrictions upon sentient beings. Upon it were built a number of campaigns which were intended to help alleviate the pain suffered by particular sections of the 'Universal Kinship'. These included paupers, criminals, cattle and the low paid. Particular facets of the work of the League have been selected in order to highlight its vision of the interrelatedness of all nature and the similarity between all bonds whether they be imposed by legislation or socially.

Apart from this aim of relocating the basis of the ideas of radicalism and the perimeters of its concerns, the League also tried to counter sectarianism. It tried to unite those who wished to change the whole nature of the social order with those who desired only minor alterations. On specific issues it attempted to link the non-aligned progressives with anarchists, pacifists, socialists and Liberals. The purpose of this study is to explore these connections and to assess the League's role in this area as well.

Henry Salt was the leading architect of the concept of Humanitarianism. He was, he wrote, "a rationalist socialist pacifist and humanitarian ... I wholly disbelieve in the present established religion; but I have a very firm religious faith of my own – a creed for kinship".¹ He was often called a 'crank'. He replied rhetorically:

Who in reality is a crank – the person who wants a beautiful and bloodless environment or the one who does *not* want it?²

The same criticism was levelled at him after his death.³ Salt was not alone in the League in being reviled for his opinions.⁴ A third purpose of this thesis is to consider the view that the League was a serious attempt to evaluate, and alter, the social order, particularly its anthropocentric perceptions.

The moral code of the League was not immediately related to the major political upheavals of the years in which it existed. Furthermore it has not been within the scope of this work to examine the connections between the League and many of these events. The League opposed war, but this study does not consider in detail the attitude it took to the employment of British troops in Ireland, the British mainland, South Africa or during the Great War. The League thus appears to be more isolated than in fact it was. The study has also been limited to the years in which the League existed. The problem with this has been aptly summarised:

Such is the unity of history that anyone who endeavours to tell a piece of it must feel that his first sentence tears a seamless web.⁵

The antecedents of the League and the long term results of its activities and ethos have only been touched upon lightly. This work has also been bound by the range of sources tapped. The Government, the RSPCA, the Howard Association, Eton School and the Sporting League all responded to the League. Major primary sources such as the records of these bodies have not been closely consulted, the emphasis has been upon the League. Some of the scattered Annual Reports and issues of the League journals are missing. Some of the pamphlets of the League are not available. There are no other records of the League. The possibilities for study of the League were limited by time as well as by materials. This thesis has been considerably improved by the help of a large number of people.

My grateful acknowledgements are due to the staff at the following libraries:

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British Library of Economic & Political Science
Fawcett Library
Marx Memorial Library
University of London Senate House Library
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I have also to thank Dr. F. Reid, Dr. A. Mason and especially Dr. J. Obelkevich for their helpful criticisms. They are not of course responsible for my judgements. Others who have helped me with this thesis include Rebecca, Ed, Gesine, Andy, Hartmut, Beverley, Adam, Alli and Benjamin.

PREFACE: Footnotes

1. The funeral address of H. S. Salt, which he wrote, as published in the *Sussex Daily News* and reproduced in G. Hendrick, *Henry Salt, Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*, (Illinois 1977), p. 1.
2. H. S. Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, (1930), pp. 162-163. His emphasis.
3. There are a number of examples of this:
 - The Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1939, called Salt “the most thorough going faddist in Britain”, quoted in G. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
 - L. Stevenson, *The Ordeal of George Meredith*, (New York 1953), p. 348, called Salt one of a number of ‘assorted cranks’.
 - S. Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, (Cornell 1973), p. 183, called Salt a ‘faddist’.
 - A. Haynes, Murderous Millinery, *History Today*, Vol. 33, July 1983, p. 28, called Salt a ‘sentiment crank’.
4. “The Sporting League felt it to be the duty of all true lover of sport to see that no wrong’ uns got on the council again... These faddists came upon them in all shapes and kinds, either as members of the Humanitarian League, or the anti-Gambling League, or Anti-Vaccination. They were all acting on the same principle, trying to interfere with the enjoyment and pleasures of the people.”
Mrs. Ormiston Chant, *Why We Attacked the Empire*, (1985), p. 30, quoted in G Stedman Jones, Working Class Culture and Working Class Politics in London 1870-1900: Notes on the remaking of a Working Class, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 7 No. 4, Summer 1974, p. 496.
5. Edward Maitland quoted by A. Marwick, *The Nature of History*, (1970), p. 245.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will consider the way in which the League was structured, the ideas of those who were active within it, what the League did and who was involved in its work. The League will then be placed within the contemporary context. It will be shown that it was one of a

number of new movements or enterprises tending towards the establishment of mystic ideas and a new social order ... [which] marked the coming of a great reaction from the smug commercialism and materialism of the mid Victorian epoch and a preparation for the new universe of the twentieth century.¹

Chapter 1 attempts to chart the rise and fall of the League by setting out the changes in its format. The numbers involved in the League are difficult to assess. There are a few references to the numerical strength of the League in the *Annual Reports* and the League house journal, *Humanity*, but there were others who helped it without being subscribers. They did so by writing or by the signing of petitions or by further publicising League interests in the House or in the press. The fortunes of the League can be gauged by the volume of its printed output and the number of committees it could sustain and consideration is given to those matters in this chapter.

In the second chapter the numerous ideas which were woven into the formulation of the theory and practice of Humanitarianism are examined. The League represented itself as being more interested in action than in words, and only a few statements were made as to where it stood. The general theory was adopted by many different people who came to it from a variety of directions. The theory was adopted by individuals and tailored to circumstances in a number of different ways. The overall effect of the theory is considered as well as the variations.

“The Humanitarian League is a Society of thinkers and workers, irrespective of class or creed who have united for the sole purpose of humanising, as far as possible, the conditions of modern life.”² The League recognized that “compassion, when it assumes a practical form, must experience, for a time at any rate, restrictions and limitations.”³ These ‘limitations’ and the successes of a selected number of League campaigns to ‘humanise’ modern life are considered in Chapter 3.

The fourth chapter of the thesis is a study of the characteristics of those who joined the League. Their class, sex, age and moral attitudes are examined in order to try to evaluate the work of the League. The elite of the League are given particular consideration as it was their energy which maintained the League and acted as a catalyst for its activities.

The summary intends to consider the ways in which the League threw light upon the concept of institutionalisation, the role of the visionary aesthetic, and the emerging environment ethic. The League attempted to unify opposition to the cultural order. In its place it wished to create a new scheme for those whose mid-Victorian evangelical sense of the significance and harmony of human experience had been shattered. It hoped to build a political and economic world upon its moral vision.

INTRODUCTION: Footnotes

1. E. Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams. Being Autobiographical Notes*, (1916), p. 240.
2. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and What it is not*, (undated).
3. H. S. Salt, *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress*, (3rd edition, 1906, p. 22).

THE ORGANISATION OF THE LEAGUE

(i) Introduction

The Humanitarian League was a small, umbrella pressure group formed in 1891 in order to advocate “humane principles on a rational basis”.¹ Its campaigns were designed to change attitudes towards crime and punishment; the conditions of labour; the killing of animals for food, fashion, sport or profit; and the use of natural resources. The principal methods employed by the League to counter cruelty and to establish its ideas as an integral part of the social sciences were the issue of pamphlets, the writing of letters to the press, public meetings and personal influence. The League had five branches and around five hundred members during the middle decade of its existence but had collapsed by 1919.

The foundation, policy formation, internal framework and publications of the League were influenced by one person above all others, Henry Stephens Salt, (1851-1939). The League was greater than a single individual and an assessment of its structure must also consider others involved and the position of the League with regard to comparable contemporary organisations.

(ii) The formative years 1891-1894

Howard Williams, author of *The Ethics of Diet* (1883), suggested the formation of “a humane society with a wider scope than any previously existing body”.² Henry Salt, who thought the book of “rare merit”,³ wrote an article for the *Westminster Review* on Humanitarianism. He also gave a paper on the subject to his fellow Fabians in 1889. In 1891, Edward Maitland, Ernest Bell, Howard Williams, Kenneth Romanes and Henry Salt met with Alice Lewis at her house, 14 Park Square, London, NW1. Annie Besant, W. H. Hudson, Sydney Olivier, Bernard Shaw and Edward Carpenter were among those who promised their support. A manifesto was drawn up for the society and a name chosen. Carpenter with Walt Whitman in mind, supported ‘lovers’. Shaw wanted ‘The Salt Age’, after the founder, and the classically educated Salt thought the name ‘Lucretians’ appropriate.⁴ Edward Aveling did not want such a scholarly title and suggested the ‘New Savages’ on the grounds that the old savages preyed on one another whereas the new savages would co-operate with each other. The need was for a name which conveyed compassion without sentimentality, and they eventually decided upon the term Humanitarianism, “not altogether a very happy or satisfactory compound”⁵ and a title, ‘Humanitarian’ because it was the only one “which sufficiently expressed out meaning”.⁶

It was to be a “fighting, not a talking Society”⁷ according to Salt, though this, in reality, meant campaigning through writing and talking rather than through violence. The League launched into campaign pamphlets after only a single pamphlet setting out its aims and ideals. The first of these was written by a new member of the committee, the Reverend Stratton.⁸

(iii) The contribution of Henry S. Salt

Apart from his authorship of the pamphlet in which the principles of Humanitarianism were expressed, Henry Salt also wrote *Animals’ Rights considered in relation to Social Progress* (1894). This set out the philosophy which lay behind Humanitarianism and argued that animals should be “exempt from any unnecessary suffering or serfdom.” They, like humans, should have “the right to live a natural life of ‘restricted freedom’, subject to the real, not supposed or pretended requirements of the general community”.⁹ It was Salt who proclaimed that the two major causes of the denial of animals’ rights in Britain were the belief that only humans possess souls and the Cartesian view that animals have no consciousness.

Salt took on the tasks of the Honorary Secretary (with the aid of another secretary after 1897), for the whole period of the existence of the League. Also, due to the fact that “no one else has the time or inclination to do the continuous secretarial and organising work which is quite indispensable to the Society’s existence”,¹⁰ Salt structured the League almost alone.

The League folded in the year that Salt told the Committee “I must give up at the end of the year the editing of the Journal, and such other work as I am doing for the League. I feel that I must be free now – cannot be tied any longer by committee meetings or having to bring out the ever-approaching next number of “The Humanitarian”.¹¹ That was also the year in which Salts’ wife, Kate, died. As Shaw said in a letter of condolence,

The loss of one's wife after ten years is only the end of an adventure. After thirty it is the end of an epoch.¹²

Salt did not only contribute ideas and time but he also used his many literary, social and political ties to try to link as many 'progressives' as possible. Furthermore, his own temperament was valuable to the well-being of the League. This was, according to his obituary in *The Times*, "a good tempered but thoroughly resourceful agitator and antagonist ... happily gifted with a sense of humour and the power of seeing his opponent's point of view".¹³ He published four books of his own poetry, several literary criticisms, autobiographical works and a variety of other books. He believed drama to be "not without its use in the battle against unreason"¹⁴ and wrote plays. *The Times Literary Supplement* felt that:

Mr. Salt's humour is the best proof that he is really humane, that he is not, in fact, a superior person exploiting from the standpoint of a barren sanity the brutal stupidity of mankind. It is a stinging humour which pierces ever mask of self interest and hypocrisy, but generally it rises above personal bitterness and it is verbally very accomplished.¹⁵

(iv) The structure of the League after 1895

In 1895 the League obtained a new office, a new journal and far more publicity than it had previously enjoyed. In May the League moved from 38 Gloucester Road, where Salt had rooms, to 79A Great Queen Street W.C.2. During that year it instituted a National Humanitarian Conference. This was held in St. Martin's Town Hall, London, and was the first major public meeting of the League. The calls of the meetings for prison reform, the public control of hospitals, the establishment of municipal slaughterhouses "conducted on scientific principles" and the abolition of bloodsports were widely reported. The journal of the League, *Humanity*, appeared in March that year and continued on a monthly basis until the Great War. It was then produced more sporadically until September 1919. Its format altered little during this period. A few pictures were added to the copy in the latter issues but it almost never broke with its double column style, nor with the eight sides format which made up each issue. Occasionally supplements were slipped into it, for example those on 'Pasteur and Rabies', the 'Children Department', or the Preliminary Notice of an 'At Home'. *Humanity* was sent free of charge to anybody who had paid their half crown annual subscription to the League. It cost a penny otherwise, or 1/6d for a year supply by mail and probably had only a small circulation outside the League. It was never financially viable but the League maintained it for twenty-four years and obviously valued its informative, inspirational and integrative functions. *Humanity* later changed its name to *The Humanitarian* when another journal of that name ceased publication thus releasing the title for use by the League. It provided readers with the comfort of knowing that there were others; the ammunition to attack the surrounding enemy, and information on forthcoming events. It did not carry advertisements for commercial products and was primarily for the activists, not for the enlightenment of the unconverted.

The League valued the press highly.¹⁶ It frequently gave it an upper case, 'P' and had an annual 'role of honour' of the newspapers in which articles or letters favourable to the League had appeared.¹⁷ Letters were a "distinctive feature" of the work of the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Department.¹⁸ The League claimed that it scorned popularity;

... has *The Humanitarian* been popular? We rejoice to say the reverse has been the case for to be popular as Thoreau said, "is to go down perpendicularly".¹⁹

However, its general outlook was that success relied upon the changing of the attitudes of the public. What the League was not prepared to do was to buy popularity at any price. Around the time of the League newspapers became:

quite frankly organs of business, supplying the wares they think their customers want, and changing them whenever a new demand arises

A gap was created as journals of opinion became attuned to the mass readership created by successive Education Acts.²⁰

The Humane Review, the other major journal published by the League, tried to fill this gap. It consisted mostly of commissioned articles. On average six of these appeared in each quarterly issue. The subjects covered were similar to those of the pamphlets. There were also articles on other countries, for example; 'The Protection of Animals in France' and 'Inhumanity in Schools' in America. There were also book reviews, comments upon other organisations, (the R.S.P.C.A., Howard Association, The Metropolitan Public Gardens Association for example) and literary critiques of writers such as Meredith and Kipling. There were historical articles, and some of the work of the League was summarised in reviews such as the one which appeared in October 1901 on "Criminal Law and Prison Reform: A Year's Work." The journal was produced at the expense of League members Mr. and Mrs. Atherton Curtis. Henry Salt edited and contributed to both journals. He also wrote the two issues of a magazine called *The Beagler Boy*. This was a satire, the stated purpose of which was "to save a gallant school sport from extinction". He also produced *The Brutalitarian: A Journal for the Sane and Strong* (1904). This satiric attack only lasted for a single issue.

In 1895 also, the League was divided into special departments designed to deal with different aspects of its work. At first there were four departments; the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Department, the Sports Department, the Humane Diet Department and the Lectures for Children. Each had a separate general committee, often with distinguished figures sitting on it, and an executive committee which always included Salt and, for a number of years, Ernest Bell and Joseph Collinson as well. In 1897 the Humane Diet Department became the Humane Diet and Dress Department and a year later an Indian Humanitarian Committee was started. In 1908 these departments were consolidated into the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Committee, which covered the areas which the old Department had covered and appropriate Indian affairs as well, and the Animals Defence Committee, which embraced the former Humane Diet and Dress Department and the Sports Department. There were besides these, a Ladies Committee and an Entertainment Committee.

The separation of the activities of the League into more manageable groups was useful organisationally as well as tactically as it allowed the work load to be spread over more people and for energy and money to be channelled to specific areas whilst unity of purpose was not sacrificed.

This organisational decentralisation was accompanied by a relinquishing of certain powers by the original League executive. Each Department had its own Treasurer, and money donated to a specific Department was used for its work alone. The priorities of a department were decided by those active within it. This system meant that different people were able to put their energies into different areas. These areas overlapped and together formed the whole. Humanitarianism was not a disconnected assemblage. The interconnection of the parts was fundamental to its operation as an ideological structure and as a campaigning organisation. The executive committee of the departments, rather than the Annual Business Meetings, were where policy decisions were made. Just as the decision to form the League was taken by a committee, so the decision to bring it to an end was also the recommendation of a committee. This recommendation was later ratified by a vote. Power resided with those who devoted the most time to the affairs of the League.

The suggestion of forming branches of the League outside London was taken to the 1909 Annual Meeting by two of those who worked diligently for the League, Carl Heath and Louise Mallet. Both of them had written for the League and at that time sat on two of its committees. The first branch was formed following a public meeting in Glasgow. Groups in Manchester, Croydon and Letchworth were formed shortly afterwards. There was also a Bombay Humanitarian League which took League ideas to the Raj.

Those branches were small and semi-autonomous. By June 1914 Croydon had 56 members in its branch and, during the previous year, had held two public meetings, a garden party and an evening social gathering. It had raised just over £4 in profits, and was run by its own committee.²¹ The Letchworth Branch was larger. The original Garden City Association had been sponsored by several League members and there were close ties between the League and the new town.²² To them Letchworth represented the creation of a new society which voluntarily incorporated many League aspirations within itself. It appeared to be a painless solution to the problem of an organisation which drew its funds from the well-to-do and yet held that;

so long as pecuniary profit and self interest are acceptable as the guiding principles of trade it will remain impossible to secure a right treatment of animals [because] economic necessity leaves no scope for humaness.²³

(v) The effect of the principle of “mutual understanding” upon the League organisation

League members believed that humane feelings were innate in humans and that the appeal to these feelings was often in vain due to

the lack of any well-defined and unmistakable standard of humaneness which might form the basis of a mutual understanding²⁴

What the League

primarily intended was a consistent intellectual, well reasoned protest against *all* forms of cruelty, not against this or that cruel practice in particular.²⁵

Despite the desire for a general principle the League recognised the practical need for the selection of a limited number of goals. It was “designed to supplement and reinforce such efforts as have already been organized for similar events”.²⁶

The desire for the unity of the humane movement and also the readiness to support other groups led the League to consider the issue of amalgamation. Charles L. Money made ‘A plan for federation of all advanced workers’ in *Humanity* (May 1895). In this he pointed out that

all around us are leagues, societies unions, in their several ways doing useful sound practical works ... each ... priding itself so hugely on its distinctiveness and individuality as to keep its usefulness within a ring fence, and cause its self-isolation to present but a narrow and necessarily weak front to a derisive and triumphant foe.

This scheme for a Federated Union of Reformers was never realised. Amalgamation could have led to the elimination of duplication effort and to concentration upon critical issues. The most closely the League approached such a

union of progressive thinkers and workers, shoulder to shoulder against the slave drivers of our civilisation

was in joint meetings, and free publicity for other groups with whom their ideas overlapped. There was a talk given by Maurice Adams of the Fellowship of New Life on ‘The Sweated Trades’, which was organised, in conjunction with the League in London in 1896. The ‘Committee of Our Dumb Friends League’ gave five guineas to the League to help pay for its animal welfare work²⁷ and the League publicised the Co-operative Typewriters Company, which was founded to improve the status of female shorthand writers and typists. A supplement to the League journal of September 1899 supplied details of the Manchester Society for the Protection of Animals for Vivisection. These were just some of the causes linked to the League.

Single issue pressure groups of the time often did not consider that the problems which they sought to raise and tackle were related components of a larger problem. Once the voluntary associations had been founded, their own impetus was towards a continued independent development. For example, Edward Maitland and F. W. Newman, both League members and vegetarians, vehemently protested against any involvement of organised antivivisectionists in the question of slaughterhouse reform.²⁸ The latter suggested to the League, in a letter read at its inaugural meeting, that the time was “not ripe for such a venture as the assertion of a humanitarian ethic”.²⁹ The former asked, after the appearance of “two or three” numbers of *Humanity*, whether there were sufficient material for further issues.³⁰

There was also a fear that amalgamation would dilute the accomplishments of individual, narrowly-focused causes. The early anti-slavery movement had refused to generalise its programme and was held up as an example of a successful pressure group by many contemporary organisations, such as the antivivisectionists.

Some groups did not wish to unite because of personal antagonism. League member Robert Blatchford of *The Clarion* described the hostility between ‘*The Clarion* Crowd’ and the “*Labour Leader* people”

(*Labour Leader* was a journal edited by League member Keir Hardie) as “a repetition of the old hostility between the Roundheads and Cavaliers”.³¹

Finally, the existence of many Societies with cognate aims created an impression that the Humane movement was of greater weight than the existence of one comprehensive organisation would have done. Organizational history; the force of conflicting personalities, practical experience and public image help to explain the existence of separate entities and the way that the League itself was structured.

(vi) Informal links

The League was designed not to be the instrument of any political party. This would have split it on the issues on which it campaigned along party lines. The League was more concerned to make its “instinctive” precepts important to all parties so that none could abandon the creed of Humanitarianism. Also the League would probably not have benefited from stronger links with parliamentary politics. The party from which the League gained least in terms of members or ideas was the one which was in office during the years of the League’s greatest activity (1895-1905), the Conservatives. When the Secretary of the Conservative Central Office asked the League details of the campaign against the Royal Buckhounds, Salt recalled “we were rather surprised ... in fact we had some suspicions”.³² To have been associated with a Government would have meant a loss of ideological purity, of certain freedom and of absolute control. “It is of vital importance that a pioneer society such as ours should in all cases be able to speak and act openly and without fear” the League stated.³³ To have been associated with the actions of a Government would have imperilled that doctrine. The likelihood of an increase in influence or greater public recognition in return was quite small. The Liberal Party, with which lay the sympathies of many more League supporters was, during this period, readjusting itself within British’s political structure. It appeared to be unable to respond adequately to crises on issues such as the Empire, Ireland, labour and finance. The attitudes of the two major parties to some extent determined the structure of radical protest. The League’s response was to rely upon the social conscience of the public rather than upon their own ability to influence any particular party or Government. It supported specific MP’s and expressed pleasure at the defeat of others, but largely steered clear of the developing party machines. On the issue of “The People Versus the Peers”, *The Humanitarian* merely urged the support of the former; it did not discuss the effects or merits of this constitutional wrangle.

There were other informal methods of operating besides the links with party members. The people who dominated the League were a closely knit group of radicals. They all met weekly at an open meeting held in a vegetarian restaurant in London. These people had other ties which allowed them to meet frequently in order to run the League.³⁴

(vii) Summary

The League organization was designed not only in order to facilitate political change; it also offered a cultural and intellectual home for its members. It was, in fact, better organised for this latter function. It tended to concentrate on the ends rather than upon the means. The League stressed that

we must cultivate the higher and more imaginative moral instincts so that the immense power of habit which has been hitherto uniformly opposed to humaneness may now be enlisted on its behalf.³⁵

It did not lay as much emphasis on the cultivation of political power. The belief that “Bad as things are, it is *only* from the knowledge of their badness that we can hope for a means of reformation”³⁶ proved to be an inadequate strategy for the far reaching changes that the League sought. In the years immediately preceding the Great War the Liberal Party became associated with the creation of the Welfare State, the Labour Party became a viable parliamentary entity, and the international tension between the Great Powers led to an increase in nationalistic fervour. The League failed to develop a broader political base and a following of its own. The organisational scheme of the League relied upon trust in the idea that “in compassion ... there is a solid basis”.³⁷ In the event this proved insufficient.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE LEAGUE: Footnotes

(i) Introduction

1. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated)

(ii) The formative years 1891-1894

2. H. S. Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, (1921), p. 122.

3. H. S. Salt, (1921) *ibid.*, p. 63.

4. It was Lucretius who sang:

we find
No other care in Nature than to keep
A painless body and a joyous mind,
Which never care nor terror can enthrall
So see we that our bodily wants are small.

S. Winsten, *Salt and his Circle*, (1951), p. 88.

5. H. S. Salt, *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress*, (3rd edition 1906), p. 3.

6. H. S. Salt, (1921) *op. cit.*, p. 123.

7. H. S. Salt, (1921) *ibid.*, p. 123.

8. H. S. Salt, *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress*, (1891), was followed by J. Stratton, *Royal Sport: Some Facts Concerning the Queen's Buckhounds*.

(iii) The contribution of Henry S. Salt

9. H. S. Salt, *Animals' Rights considered in relation to Social Progress*, (1894), p. 84.

10. H. S. Salt quoted by G. Hendrick, *Henry Salt, Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*, (Illinois 1977).

11. H. S. Salt in 1918 quoted by G. Hendrick, *Ibid.*, p. 83.

12. S. Winsten, *Salt and his Circle*, (1951), pp. 136-137.

13. *The Times*, 20 April 1939.

14. H. S. Salt, *Cum Grano, Verses and Epigrams*, (Berkley Heights, New Jersey, 1931), p. vii.

15. *The Times Literary Supplement*, December 23rd 1926, p. 951, quoted in G. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

(iv) The structure of the League after 1895

16. There was frequent support for the League from *The Star*, *Daily News*, *Morning Leader*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Northern Echo*, *Clarion*, *Labour Leader*, *Chronicle* and *Shafts*. All were edited by League members at some point, or were supportive of the general position of the League. Many League members wrote for other journals such as *Justice*, *Vegetarian Messenger*, *Commonwealth*, *To-Day* and *Seed Time*.

17. See the *Annual Reports* of the League for these lists.

18. *The Humanitarian*, September 1919.

19. *The Humanitarian*, *ibid.*

20. This line of argument is derived from W. Martin, *'The New Age' Under Orage*, (Manchester 1967), pp. 6-9. The quotation from H. W. Massingham a leading newspaper editor who was in the League, is to be found here.

21. *The Humanitarian*, June 1914. The precise figure raised after expenses had been paid was £4.3s.11d.

22. Robert Blatchford, A. R. Wallace, Herbert Burrows and J. B. Wallace (no relation) were all sponsors of the Garden City Association. One of the two major architects of Letchworth, Raymond Unwin, was a friend of Bruce Glasier and named his son, Edward, after the boy's godfather – Carpenter. Unwin was in the Sheffield Socialist Society, the Socialist League and later the Fabians. He knew a number of other members of the League. (W. L. Creese, *The Search for Environment, The Garden City: Before and After*, (Yale 1966), p. 147 and p. 160. The leadless glazes of the Icen Pottery at Letchworth were recommended by name in *The Humanitarian* (G. L. Mallet made this suggestion in the July 1910 issue) as the process was not injurious to the workforce, unlike the white lead formula. The pottery was started by W. H. Cowlshaw, the brother-in-law of League member Edward Garnett. (J. Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England from 1880-1914*, (1982), pp. 227-228.) Letchworth was also the home of the Alpha Union Commune. This was designed by League member J. Bruce Wallace to "shame the capitalist system into surrender" by enrolling altruists in "a voluntary co-operative commonwealth". (J. A. Fincher, *The Clarion Movement: A Study of a Socialist attempt to implement the co-operative commonwealth in England 1891-1914*, University of Manchester unpublished MA thesis, 1971, p. 137. note 128.

23. *Humanity*, October 1898.

(v) The effect of the principle of "mutual understanding" upon League organisation

24. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, p. 18.

25. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated)

26. Manifesto. A copy of this can be found in I. O. Ford, *Women's Wages and the Conditions Under Which They Are Earned*, (1893), p. 18.

27. *Humanity*, August 1899.
28. R. D. French, *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society*, (Princeton 1975), p. 245.
29. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 123.
30. *The Humanitarian*, September 1919.
31. J. A. Fincher, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

(vi) Informal links

32. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 166.
33. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated)
34. For example, Sydney Olivier, of the League, married Margaret Cox in 1885. Her sister married Alfred Carpenter also prominent in the League. He was the brother of League member Edward Carpenter. Mrs. Olivier's brother lived in a cottage he bought in order to be near Henry Salt. Salt married the sister of fellow League member Jim Joynes. The circular nature of these relationships was repeated elsewhere as well.

(vii) Summary

35. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, pp. 24-27.
36. *The Humane Review*, April 1900, p. 79.
37. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, p. 25.

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE LEAGUE

The Humanitarian League was founded, so it said:

On the instinct of compassion, an instinct which is, if not original in our nature, an acquisition of such an early date as to be practically original – while closely allied with this sense of compassion is a sense of justice. The object of humanitarianism is to prevent the perpetuation of cruelty and wrong – to redress the suffering, as far as is possible, of all sentient life; to effect which it must be attempted to educate and organise this innate instinct into a definite and rational principle.

This summary of the League's position, taken from its first pamphlet, *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress* (1891) followed a lengthy section which sought to prove the belief that human beings were innately good. There was, the League held, "a common instinct of humanity and justice inherent, however imperfectly developed, in every human heart". This instinct was, however, frequently in opposition to another "great natural impulse", that of self-preservation. There was also the callous "indifferentism of society" and, more insidiously, "partial and short-sighted philanthropy". In order to counter these three threats, the League proposed to set out rational guidelines in order to aid instinctive sympathy. The "compassionate instinct demands from us a more systematic study...it deserves better than to be rejected with cold indifference or advocated with ill-balanced enthusiasm". It ought to be studied "rationally", as a definite branch of moral science. This was not to commend a dispassionate survey of the innate, but to call for the cultivation of "higher and more imaginative moral instincts".

These beliefs assumed that there was "a sympathetic imagination"¹ to cultivate and that, once cultivated, it would accept the League's definition of "humane". There was also an assumption that the functions of the state could be manipulated for humane ends. The League defined its "business" as being "to educate public opinion, and so pave the way for fuller and more advanced legislation".² Thirdly, the ideology rested upon the idea that a widespread change of fundamental attitudes was a necessary prerequisite for the social transformation envisaged by the League.

The notion of Humanitarianism was originated by Salt. It changed little over the twenty-nine years that the League existed. It remained "nothing more and nothing less than the study and practice of humane principles of compassion, love, gentleness, universal benevolence". It is necessary to look beyond Salt for its deeper roots and wider application. It was the leading individuals in the League (who wrote its pamphlets and ran its committees) who fleshed out Humanitarianism. There was an attempt to avoid the constrictions of dogma: "Morality is progressive; there is no given point in our moral development where we can hold a perfectly logical and unassailable position ... Let the line be drawn ... at the point indicated by human compassion, provided always that this compassion, has allowed free growth...".³ The generalities produced by Salt allowed considerable scope for development by others. A study of Humanitarianism has to go beyond the League in order to account for this. Individuals justified some of their ideas by appeals to a variety of moral codes. Another source of their ideas was the Darwinian revolution. Humanitarianism was a synthesis of many threads of thought, from the mystic to the rational. It was, in part, a desire "to reconcile the ideal with the actual, to unite compassion and judgment".⁴ It was also an attempt to focus "scattered and isolated compassionate sentiment" into "an energetic whole".⁵

An analysis of the League's ideology should start with its central claim:

It is our object to show that Humanitarianism is not merely a kindly sentiment, a product of the heart rather than the head, but an integral portion of any intelligible system of Ethics or Social Science.⁶

My intention is to unravel the rationality from the morality, to consider first the ethical input and then the role which science played in the construction of (and assorted interpretations of) Humanitarianism.

(i) The moral code

Half of the explanatory pamphlet on Humanitarianism was on "The Past". Salt, the author, cited examples of the Humanitarian concept from the works of Buddha, Pythagoras, the Essenes, ("communists and vegetarians who anticipated in an extraordinary degree some of the best features of modern humanitarianism") and early Christians. Later Christians were taken to task for "bastard alms giving" and

“the monstrous fiction of an eternal hell”.⁷ A further articles, entitled *What is Humanitarianism?* pointed out:

It is certain that ... when the Catholic Church was dominant ... there was little or no progress in humanitarian feeling ... it was this lack of sympathy which, surviving in large measure even to modern times, has caused Buddhists to speak of Christendom as “the hell of animals”.⁸

The emphasis on organised religion signifies the role that it had to play in the thought of the League.

An evangelical past was common to many League members. In a number of them it had produced an intense disbelief in the idea that individuals should work out their own Divine Salvation. It also produced a frame of mind receptive to broad philosophical ideas and emotions. The League acted in part as a channel for the secularisation of this religious impulse.

A contemporary observer remarked upon a “moral transformation” which, during the nineteenth century, had

swept over our Western world. We no longer think that we are called on to face physical pain with equanimity ... to listen to the recital of it makes our flesh creep morally as well as physically.⁹

The late nineteenth century saw a revolt, of which the League was part, against what Salt called “the religion of the torture chamber”.¹⁰ By this he meant the evangelical emphasis upon suffering in the after-life. As hell receded in importance in the beliefs of League members, so the pain and cruelty of life in this world became more important.

New England Transcendentalism influenced many in the League. They received its ideas either directly, from the works of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau, or indirectly through Carpenter, Thomas Carlyle or F. D. Maurice, the Christian Socialist.

League members drew strength from these ideas, but they did not adopt them uncritically. Transcendentalism raised the individual above the state, instinct over convention, and experience over book-learning. It feared “the hordes of ignorant and deceivable natives and armies of foreign voters”, as R W Emerson phrased it. Thoreau scorned “the *cackling* of political convention”.¹¹ Transcendentalists wanted to be independent of the state, whereas the League wished to increase individual freedom by means of the state. Henry Salt tried to reconcile the ideas:

It is stupid to represent simplification as merely a personal matter and as amounting to little more than moderation and sincerity in the various departments of life: there is a *social* aspect of the question which cannot thus be ignored.¹²

In *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress* the work of Arthur Schopenhauer was praised. In his writings “humanitarianism attained its fullest and most philosophical development”.¹³ Schopenhauer believed that it was a fact of human consciousness “that compassion resided in human nature itself”.¹⁴ He was also well-versed in Indian philosophy. This was a further influence within the League. These ideas were transmitted through New England Transcendentalists, through Edward Carpenter, and through the Theosophical Society.

Theosophists believed that a person was part of a Universal Brotherhood. They held that it was a duty to promote the study of eastern religions, and that it was desirable to promote human psychic processes. Just as Jesus was seen as a “radical reformer both in social and religious matters”, by the League Christians, so Buddha’s exemplary nature was emphasised by League theosophists.¹⁵

There were also many socialists in the League. A significant contribution to Humanitarianism came from those who were adherents of the “religion of socialism”. The League’s faith in the Labour movement as a whole and in autonomous working-class activism was bolstered by these socialists. The first edition of *The Humane Review*, April 1900 opened by stating that

our most important, yet most simple duty is towards our sentient fellow-beings is a sympathetic regard for *their* needs and *their* individuality as well as our own.¹⁶

Isabella Ford made the same point in “Industrial Women and How to Help Them”. She criticised “self-sacrificing women who were everywhere engaged in rescue work”. They did not, she said, try to educate politically those they sought to help.

... for when the working woman does awake and desire her true salvation she must, as all of us must, work it out for herself. All that can be done by outsiders – i.e. persons not of the proletariat class – is to help awaken that desire for a true salvation.

Ford saw “the real roots of the question” of moral reform lying in economic reform. This was not a unique development of Humanitarianism. Her comment that “we must fill the minds of those we wish to emancipate with an intelligent discontent”¹⁷ was common within the League.

The “religion of humanity”¹⁸ was derived from the “religion of socialism”, from eastern religions, Christianity and the religion of nature”. This latter was the emotional link with the countryside expressed in Thoreau’s phrase, “Wilderness is the preservation of the World”.¹⁹ Salt wrote of his own “intellectual sympathy with untamed and primitive Nature, which our civilisation threatens to destroy; a mountain is something more than just a thing to climb”.²⁰ League ideas incorporated anti-industrialism with Henry George’s ideas of land reform. The spiritual and the political were linked.

British Idealism, which justified state intervention in order to increase individual liberty, was another source for Humanitarianism. Its leading exponent was T. H. Green, who was highly popular among “new” Liberals and who was called by Hugh Price Hughes “most splendid”.²¹ The ideas were utilised by League members to bolster Humanitarianism, in as far as they were compatible with the general values.

Humanitarianism was a new philosophical development created from a variety of sources and taken in a variety of directions. It attempted to give people a reason for being humane which was not based upon any supernatural forces. It required humaneness not for its own sake, neither for any reward in the after-life, but rather for the sake of the perpetrator. Humanitarianism “rightly regarded is not self-sacrifice but self-realisation”. League members “are not ‘altruists’ in the sense attributed to them – that is, they do not pretend to be thinking solely of others while forgetting themselves – since they refuse to admit the existence of any such barrier between others’ interests and their own”. An article explained that this was the basis of the novelty of the idea:

Humanitarianism, the reasoned plea of sympathy and compassion, is not derived from some ancient religious formula, but from an inner spontaneous instinct: it is modern and its full import is, as yet, indistinctly perceived.

Despite this pronouncement the article concluded with an extract from a poem by John Buchanan. The League disposed of the evangelical Almighty but still coughed its message in a Christian form:

No God behind us in the empty vast,
No God enthroned on yonder heights above,
But God emerging and evolved at last
Out of the inmost heart of human Love.²²

The penultimate line contains a clue to the major force which the League added to its coalescence of moral codes – the theory of evolution. A fresh understanding of the relationship between people and nature was formed by the merging of the League concept of an ethically based world with the Darwinian idea of an amoral one.

(ii) The rational arguments

The League adapted the theory of evolution in order to give credence to their ideas:

If we choose to let conjecture run wild then animals, – our fellow brethren in pain, disease death, suffering and famine, our slaves in the most laborious works, our companions in our

amusements – they may partake from our origin in one common ancestor, we may all be netted together.²³

The “conjecture” of which Darwin wrote in the above was added to the other notions of universal bonds between people and nature. By deft exegesis Salt could claim:

Humanity and science between them have exploded the time-honoured idea of a hard-and-fast line between white ... and black ... rich and poor ... educated and uneducated ... “good” ... and “bad”. Equally impossible to maintain in the light of newer knowledge, is the idea that there is a difference in kind, and not in degree only between human and non-human intelligence.²⁴

William Jupp in his *Religion of Nature and Human Experience*, (1906), praised Wordsworth as the first great prophet of the religion of nature and then, turning to Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* and *Origin of Species*, commented,

it may justly be said that they establish, on its intellectual side the truth of the poet’s insight – that in them the vision of the lover gazing in joy and admiration on the countenance of the world, and feeling himself one with its inner spirit, is confirmed by the marshalled facts and sustained arguments of the investigator.

“What Wordsworth felt concerning the relations of Man to Nature, Darwin proved to have a reasonable basis in fact.”²⁵

The League did not accept the theory of an indifferent, cruel nature. They welcomed the idea of animals being similar to humans, but mitigated the bestiality of the former. Just as criminals were like animals, according to Cesare Lombroso, a criminologist respected in League circles, so animals were “like cousins” according to Salt.²⁶ The League never employed the words “brute” or “beast”, but always “animal” or “lower animal”. Salt believed that there was “a sinister influence in the nomenclature which had invented such phrases as ‘brute beasts’, ‘livestock’ and ‘dumb animals’”,²⁷ and he pointed out such words were not the incentive to kindness that they were supposed to be. Animals appear to have been, certainly to some League members, more like fellow people who were dressed in fur or feathers, than like wild beasts. An article in *Humanity* set out to refute “certain fallacies”. The first fallacy condemned was that of “nature red in tooth and claw”. From the works of Darwin the following lines were selected in order to explain that nature was not as heartless or aimless as might have been feared:

When we reflect on this struggle [in nature] we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that it is generally prompt, and that the vigorous and happy survive and multiply.²⁹

Animals became models of compassion and sympathy and kindness. They were, to the League, a refutation of the idea that humans were engaged in the amoral struggles of nature. People could transcend their corporal appetites through spiritual purity. “Sentiment”, as League member, Mona Caird phrased it, was “the sole safeguard that the individual possesses against the crude and ferocious instincts of the human animal.” The humanising of animals and the de-animalising of humans were co-ordinate aspects of a single set of ideas that attempted to deny and repress certain biological realities.³⁰

Another League member, Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy, laid the blame for the perceived physical disabilities of women such as menstruation on the over-stimulated instincts of men.³¹ The other side of this coin was the demand for pets to be “liberated”. When the League was founded, what was “primarily intended was a consistent, intellectual, well-reasoned protest against *all* forms of cruelty”.³² It was inconsistent, Salt argued, to tolerate the artificial “thralldom of domestication”. There was, he wrote, “nothing more miserable being than a lap-dog and the lap-dog is the sign and symbol of that spurious humanity which is the final outcome of petting”.³³ League ideology ran: “A lack of humanity in any one particular direction tends ultimately to produce an indifference to humanity in general”.³⁴ Thus “we ought to make animals our friends not our pets”.³⁵ Others saw things differently, and were tolerated and, indeed, welcomed in the League. The ideas were not intended as a barrier to be crossed only by the purists, but as a guideline for “progressive” change.

Others in the League also turned to Darwin. Thomas Hardy, for example, opposed vivisection on the grounds that the law of evolution had “revealed that all organic creatures” are of one family and so there was no longer “any logical arguments in its favour”. He felt that Darwin had “shifted the centre of altruism to the whole world collectively”, and that people and animals were not to be considered as “essentially different”.³⁶ “Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the common origin of all species is ethical; that it logically involves a readjustment of altruistic morals by enlarging as a ‘necessity of rightness’ the application of ‘The Golden Rule’ beyond the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom”.³⁷ This logical “readjustment of altruistic morals” based upon a Darwinian evolutionary perspective appealed to the *Clarion* editor, League member Robert Blatchford, as well. That altruism was “better than selfishness” was now, he felt, a scientifically proven fact.³⁸

Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy opened *Woman Free* (1893) with the words:

“Sources of the Light that cheers this later day,
Science calm moves to spread her sovereign sway.
Research and Reason ranged on either hand,
Proclaim her message to each waiting land.”³⁹

Vivisection, however, shattered the image of science as a force for social progress. To the Humanitarians, progress presupposed more evolution even more than material advancement. Science was deliberately inflicting pain, undermining its own role as an instrument of moral progress, and thereby dashing confidence in moral evolution itself. The League was attempting to safeguard the morality of science against all attacks including those of scientists. The League set out to be “a Society of thinkers and workers, irrespective of class or creed, who have united for the sole purpose of humanising, as far as possible, the conditions of modern life”.⁴⁰ The ideology rested upon humaneness and rational argument. The vivisectionists argument did so also. It was therefore particularly threatening.

The partial resolution of the contradictions involved in the various attempts to blend aspects of Darwinian reasoning with non-scientific morality so as to create a “branch of ethical science” is clearly displayed in the campaign to end the killing of wild birds for their feathers.⁴¹

By the time the League was formed only wild birds challenged the supremacy of pets as the focus for animal lovers’ interest. There was a Plumage League, a Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and thousands of women who took the pledge not to wear feathers.

Bird lovers employed familiar arguments: that bird song was melodious, birds were models of industry and tenacity, and that the method of killing them was cruel. The League based part of its campaign on these lines. It published a far from unique account of a return visit to Central Florida where “several hundred” herons used to nest. By 1897, it was reported, there were only “shattered nests ... crumbling bones ... the screaming of young birds and the buzzing of green flies”. The writer described one particular bird, and concluded, “It was an awful picture of pain”.⁴²

There was also another attitude. This was that the destruction of insect eating birds upset the balance of nature. The phylloxera which devastated the French vineyards at the time was blamed upon those who destroyed the birds. Also the League pointed out that English owls, (whose barred wings were very popular as hat decoration were “valuable to agriculture”.⁴³ This was a new, conservationist, approach.

Conservationists attempted to safeguard specific endangered species whilst animal protectors sought to save each life regardless of whether there were many of that species left or not. Both camps agreed that life deserved respect, and League members or not, they often co-operated. Their principles were different, however. The only partially refuted the Darwinian vision of natural selection, the other went further by attempting to restore a moral purpose to nature.

The League connected moral concern for the natural order and the scientifically based understanding of nature as an intricate web of life. It helped create a new ethical approach. This subordinated all animals, including human beings, to a larger structure: nature. It required equal reverence for all creatures. Lawson Tait of the League phrased it thus:

Admitting that so-called lower animals are part of ourselves, in being of one scheme and differing from us only by degree, no matter how they be considered, is to admit that they have equal rights.⁴⁴

All living creatures merited respect because they all lived together in mutual support. Cruelty to one was cruelty to all. “Humane feelings [toward animals] form a natural tie which cannot be rudely broken without doing violence to many of the finer attitudes of our nature” what how Salt expressed the idea.⁴⁵

This can be contrasted with the attitude of John Colam of the R.S.P.C.A. When writing about tigers he held that there was no reason “why the noxious, ferocious and deadly enemies of mankind should not be destroyed. “Civilisation”, he thought, demanded their “extermination”.⁴⁶ The League theory, tentative and patchy though it was, made a connection between the protection of the natural order and the protection of individual animals which the R.S.P.C.A. did not.

There was practical reasons why people should try to reassert the balance of nature. The League wanted to put this on to an ethical plane. To return to the example of the “slaughtered songsters”;⁴⁷ rational evidence suggested that the “ruthless destruction” of bird-life would have dangerous repercussions for people. Ethically, “the wholesale slaughter of birds daily flung before the Juggernaut wheel of greed and vanity” was immoral aggression.⁴⁸

League ideology used the scientific concept that people were similar to animals; it took the ethical corollary of this which demanded an increase in human spirituality and then it added a Socialistic ethic and made the birds “feathered fellow-workers”.⁴⁹

The system of ideas had a vision as well. There was a faith in the ability of ‘progressive’, humane forces to be able to sweep through the minds of legislature of the nation. “I venture to surmise” wrote Salt “that the scope of humane feeling will gradually be expanded until it includes much that is at present held to be outside the pale of sympathy”. He suggested a route for this extension by his observation of the “natural” connection “between the horror with which we witness human or animal torture and the disgust exerted by the wanton destruction of any beautiful scene – the destruction of a growing tree or the pollution of a clear river”. Prior to the Great War it seemed reasonable to the League to proclaim “the coming creed [as] likely to be none other than a religion of humanity – humanity in no narrower sense than compassion, love, justice for every living creature”. The way forward was to inculcate and practise the ideas and so draw “nearer to a true civilisation, a society in which harmless and healthy life shall be free to develop itself unrestricted and uninjured”.⁵⁰ By 1919, however, the tone had been calmed a little. In an article entitled “After the War” there was a gloomy prediction that there would be a return to all the pre-war cruelties to which the League objected. The proposed Ministry of Health would mean “a large extension of medical tyranny and of experimental torture of animals other than man”. The piece went on:

to hold this view is not pessimism ... a pessimist is not he who sees and declares at any particular time that things are in a very evil and dangerous state but he who believes that the general and ultimate tendency is itself towards evil. We may be as convinced as ever of the final victory of our cause; but that need not blind us ... our cause is now in a worse plight than ever before”.⁵¹

“It is proposed”, ran a preliminary circular of 1891, “under the title of the Humanitarian League to form an association for the advocacy of humane principles and a consistent and rational basis”.⁵² The principles were expanded along a variety of paths. At the centre of the different contributory ideas and the various shades of the vision each member chose to highlight, lay an acceptance of the two interlocked aspects of the creed:

in Compassion, whether we regard it as a primary instinct or an acquired faculty, there is a solid and incontrovertible basis ... (for) an ethical creed ... Humanitarianism ... will do still more in the future if its leading principle, once deliberately adopted, be followed out, rationally and fearlessly, to its just and inevitable conclusion”.⁵³

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE LEAGUE: Footnotes

1. H. S. Salt, *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress*, (3rd edition 1906), pp. 15-27.
2. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated).
3. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, pp. 24-26.
4. *The Humane Review*, October 1907, p. 179.
5. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, pp. 24-27
6. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated).

(i) The moral code

7. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.
8. *The Humane Review*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181.
9. J. Turner, *Reckoning With The Beast: Animals, Pain and Humanity in the Victorian Mind*, (Baltimore and London 1980), p. 19.
10. C. Noel, *Autobiography*, (1945), p. 6.
11. S. Elbert and M. Glastonbury, *Inspiration and Drudgery: Notes on Literature and Domestic Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, (1978), p. 10.
12. G. Hendrick, *Henry Salt, Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*, (Illinois 1977), pp. 41-43.
13. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, p. 25.
14. *The Humane Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
15. G. C. Binyon, *The Christian Socialist Movement in England*, (1931), p. 120.
16. *The Humane Review*, April 1900, p. 1. Their italics.
17. *The Humane Review*, October 1901, pp. 196-7.
18. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, pp. 24-27.
19. J. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
20. H. S. Salt, *On Cumbrian and Cambrian Hills*, (1908), p. 16.
21. G. Mayhew, *The Ethical and Religious Foundations of Socialist Politics in Britain: The First Generation and Its Ideas*, (University of York, Unpublished D. Phil. 1980), p. 98.
J. Bowle, *Politics and Opinion in the Nineteenth Century*, (1954), p. 274.
22. *The Humane Review*, April 1900, p. 83 and p. 86.

(ii) The rational arguments

23. J. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. vii.
24. H. S. Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, (1928), p. 62.
25. J. M. Twigg, *The Vegetarian Movement in England 1847-1981: With Particular Reference To Its Ideology*, (University of London, Unpublished Ph.D. 1981), p. 206.
26. W. D. Morrison, the penal reform campaigner in the League, wrote the introduction to *The Female Offender* by Lombroso, (1895).
H. S. Salt entitled a chapter of his autobiographical *Company I Have Kept*, (1930), My Cousins. This referred to a dog, several cats and a rook.
27. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, p. 22.
28. *Humanity*, April 1896.
29. *Humanity*, *ibid.*
30. J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-203.
31. P. Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form*, (Brighton and Totawa, New Jersey 1982), p. 18.
32. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated).
33. H. S. Salt, *Literae Humaniores: An Appeal to Teachers*, H. S. Salt, (ed.), *Cruelties of Civilisation*, Vol. 3, (1897), pp. 9-12.
34. W. Jupp, *Wayfarings*, (1918), p. 168.
35. H. S. Salt, (1897), *op. cit.*, p. 10.
36. F. E. Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, Vol. II, 1962, p. 363.
37. F. E. Hardy, *ibid.*, p. 141.
38. G. Mayhew, *op. cit.*, p. 354.
39. P. Bomelha, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
40. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated).
41. *The Humane Review*, October 1907, p. 179.
42. 'E. P.', Murderous Millinery, H. S. Salt, (ed.), *Food and Fashion: Some Thoughts on What We Eat and What We Wear*, (2nd edition 1905), unnumbered.
43. 'E. P.', *ibid.*
44. Lawson Tait, quoted by J. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
45. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, p. 19.
46. John Colam, quoted in J. Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
47. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, pp. 22-27.
48. 'E. P.', *op. cit.*

49. 'E. P.', *op. cit.*
50. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, pp. 24-7.
51. *The Humanitarian*, January 1919.
52. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated)
53. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.* p. 27.

SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE LEAGUE

(i) Introduction

The Humanitarian League was “established in the belief that the promulgation of a high and positive system of morality in the conduct of life, in all its aspects is one of the greatest needs of the time,” to quote the Manifesto. It went on to announce that the League would “assert as the basis of that system an intelligible and consistent principle of humaneness, viz.: that it is iniquitous to inflict suffering ... on any sentient being, except when ... absolute necessity can be justly pleaded”. This principle led the League to establish and aid a wide range of single-issue campaigns and to attempt to obtain their aims through negotiation, examination and publication of information, and agitation through meetings and propaganda. They relied primarily on appealing to the authorities and the public. The areas covered included Poor Law and Criminal Law reform, the abolition of corporal and capital punishment, the public control of hospitals, slaughter houses, dangerous trades, sweated trades and womens’ wages. They demanded the abolition of vivisection and of compulsory vaccination, and an end of hunting, shooting, fishing, seal culling, the fur and feather trades, and the ill treatment of horses and pit ponies. They wanted greater access to the countryside, the protection of birds and animals and a greater emphasis on international arbitration, instead of nations resorting to warfare in order to settle disputes. They were concerned not merely to resist their opponents but to create constructive alternatives which emphasised their own self-improvement both collectively and individually. League journals, conferences and briefings were, in part, intended to encourage greater participation and the raising of morale.

The League’s guiding policy was “to consolidate and give consistent expression to those principles of humaneness, the recognition of which is essential to the understanding and realisation of all that is highest and best in Humanity”. The campaigns were connected by those principles rather than by a theory which distinguished between the different types of reform available – specifically between those reforms likely to shore up an inhumane society and those likely to bring about its fundamental restructuring.¹

(ii) The campaigns to change criminal law and penal code

(a) The outline

The Humanitarian League devoted a great deal of energy to campaigns to change both the penal code and legislation relating to criminals. In general, although it felt that the “cause is best served by an alliance with kindred movements that are in tendency, progressive”² the League organised on its own. The effect of this can be gauged by a study of the appropriate organisational structure, the specific individuals involved and examples of campaigns which either failed or were only partially successful. The League responded most successfully when demanding legislative change in a single area. The challenge presented by the suffragettes left the League hesitant and divided, whereas abolition of state-controlled flogging in the Royal Navy fitted the League’s belief in gradual progress much more easily.

(b) The dominant League personalities

The importance in the minds of League members of their campaign to change the punishment ethic can be partially gauged by the fact that the first special committees of the League included one for Criminal Law and Prison Reform.³ The general committee included W. T. Stead, Edward Carpenter, G. W. Foote, three MP’s and a judge. The committee became a Department which produced its own *Supplement to Humanity* – *The Prison Record* and, when the five League Departments were consolidated into two, in 1909, one of these was the C.L.P.R.D.

The League called upon a number of eloquent and well-informed supporters in its work for changes in the penal laws. W. H. S. Monck drafted many of the resolutions, memorials and letters to Government departments. As a civil servant he was well acquainted with the presentation of material to Whitehall or Westminster. Joseph Collinson was honorary secretary of the C.L.P.R.D. for thirteen years and wrote a number of pamphlets, as well as a huge number of letters.⁴ Carl Heath, Secretary of the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, was active in the Humanitarian League as well as in the Prison Reform League. He worked in the latter with George Ives, the author of a number of books on prisons including *A History of Penal Methods* (1914). There was an authority on International Law, Doctor Thomas Baty and a Fenian ex-convict, Michael Davitt. M. P. Henry Salt wrote of how many times “convicts wishing to write their own story at the League’s expense” come to the League’s office; presumably after the publication of

I Was in Prison by 'R. J.' (1893).⁵ It was Salt who put the writer John Galsworthy in touch with Ruggles-Brise, the Head of the Prison Service. The latter was a former pupil of Salt's and the novelist was an acquaintance of Salt. He visited Lewes Prison and went on to write *Justice*, (a play in which he criticised the legal system), and to surprise the head of the Prisons by his "earnest pleading".⁶ Also Salt was, according to his friend and biographer, "a frustrated lawyer".⁷ Certainly he was able to convince disparate forces to work, if not together, then at least not antagonistically. He persuaded C. H. Hopwood, the Recorder of Liverpool and the founder of the Romilly Society, to address the League. Hopwood would not join due to his fear "that the inclusion within its programme of many other questions such as sport and vivisection would alienate sympathy in some quarters".⁸ His address became the second League pamphlet in this area. *A Plea for Mercy to Offenders* (1896). He need not have been discouraged; the Secretary to the Conservative Central Office, the Hon. Fitzroy Stewart signing himself 'Old Harrovian' or 'A Member of the Carlton Club', Stewart often campaigned for the League over the issue of blood-sports. However, he favoured the retention of flogging. Salt arranged that the subject of flogging placed at the head of the agenda when Stewart was to attend a Committee meeting, in order that he could enter the room following discussion of the subject. Such compromise left League ideas at odds with League practices, just as did Salt's expressed belief in democracy and his use of the 'old boy' network. The League's belief in 'ends rather than means' did lead to its principles being put into practice, as far as was possible, by League member Sidney Olivier when, following his appointment as Governor of Jamaica, he was made responsible for rebuilding the prison farm after the 1907 earthquake and fire.

Salt contributed more than just his social connections and his energy. He also employed his literary skill. In *Criminals and Crime* the ex-Assistant Commissioner of Police Sir Robert Anderson abused "humanity mongers" and "doctrinaire philanthropists, hysterical faddists, agitators ... fools ... spurious philosophy" and, strangely enough for a salaried officer describing voluntary workers; "professional humanitarians".⁹ He favoured the gallows, thumb-screws, the rack and, according to Salt, "crucifixion".¹⁰ In reply Salt tried to outwit those who told him that he believed in pie in the sky; by giving it to them in the face. His attempt to "carry the war into the enemies' camps ... by means of the *reductio ad absurdum*,"¹¹ came with the first, and only, copy of a new magazine: *The Brutalitarian: a Journal for the Sane and Strong*.¹² The printers were inundated with requests for this pro-blood sports, imperialism and flogging journal which was "to be the official organ of those who hold, the late Mr. G. W. Stevens (author of a piece in *Blackwood*) that; "we have let brutality die out too much. It is in full time, in this age of decadent humanitarianism; that some trumpet tongue be raised against the prevalent sentimentality ...".¹³ Some suspected Chesterton, some Shaw and one editor thought it might have been the League but added, "perhaps that would be attributing too much cleverness to the Humanitarian League".¹⁴ The joke may have backfired, though, as the single issue of this spoof brought more flattering letters to the League than were received in a year through the *Humanitarian*.¹⁵

An arguably more substantial contribution to the furtherance of League aims in this area was made by William Douglas Morrison (1852-1943). He was a Chaplain in H. M. Prisons for several years, author of two books on crime and many articles in periodicals and newspapers. Ever since the great age the separate system, the 1840's, the Chaplain had been most important figure in prisons after the Governor. It was he who gave the moral advice and religious consolation to the prisoners whose will to resist authority had, in theory, been broken by solitary confinement. Morrison believed that penal law had to deal with the conditions which produced criminals rather than be punitive. His work was probably influenced by the atavistic theory of the criminologist Cesare Lombroso, for whose work, *The Female Offenders* (1893), he wrote an introduction.¹⁶ Lombroso thought that 'natural' criminals resembled the great apes, a view he derived from Darwin. Unease about the animalisation of humans and the potential danger of the 'criminal classes' were widespread fears during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Morrison reflected such concerns in his work.

(c) The campaign for changes in penal administration

During the 1890's, when the League was campaigning to change the administration of prisons, the Chairman of the Prison Commissioners, Chairman of the Directors of Convict Prisons Surveyor-general of Prisons and Inspector General of Military Prisons was Colonel Sir Edmond F. Du Cann, KCB, RE. He was responsible for the "uniform application of cellular isolation, absolute non-intercourse among prisoners, the rule of silence, oakum-picking and the tread-wheel"¹⁷ and has been called "the greatest figure in the history of the English Prison System".¹⁸ The system reflected religious prejudice about the value of isolation and contemplation and was infused with military notions of discipline and frugality more often than it was with imaginative ideas or humanitarian concern.¹⁹

The League wanted offences to be reclassified and offenders not to be beaten or hanged but treated with “gentler action”, whenever possible. They emphasised the social environment of the criminal, and reflected intemperance and the economic situation as primary cause of crime. They were willing to “trust to the steady operation of the merciful quality which enters into every character by nature and is so universal that our most apt English appellation for it is humane, a mere corruption of the word ... human”, rather than trust to the “ruling idea ... that it was possible to stamp out crime by crushing sentences”.²⁰ The League hoped to make a contribution to the alteration of both the climate of opinion and legal practice by their raising of awareness of the severity of the penal laws, of the irregularity of sentences and of the hard and indiscriminate character of prison discipline. The League ethical notion of justice, was covered by a web of scientific data. There were letters by experts, pamphlets and articles but, underlying these, was the moral fervour expressed in the novels, plays and poems. The criminological thought-system which had been nurtured for a generation was overturned. The League’s pressure for that change, be it through Bills or Questions to the House, selective boycotts or a word in the right ear was part of a wider desire for change.

The separate system had promised to provide mass reformation of criminals. When it failed in this aim it was criticised and calls were made, from the House of Lords, for example, for greater severity of punishments in order to deter potential criminals.²¹ The League, also opposed to moral reformation, built upon this disenchantment in a campaign to shift the whole balance of the debate. They wrote letters to the press and won over the editor of *The Daily Chronicle*, who later joined the League, to their belief that it was necessary “to humanize both the spirit of the law and the conditions of prison life and to show that the true purpose of imprisonment was the reformation, not the more punishment, of the offender”.²² Morrison produced tables and statistics based on his inside knowledge in order to produce what was, until it was superseded in 1959, “the most considered statement of penal policy ever enunciated in the country”.²³ The prevailing ethos favoured the League for, when Morrison’s “The Increase in Crime” which was published in *Nineteenth Century* was refuted by Du Cann nine months later in the same journal, it was the former who was widely perceived as the more accurate statistician.²⁴ Morrison took into account judicial policy, police attitudes and the general atmosphere as well as officially provided data. The favour which he had found in 1891 when his *Crime and its Causes* was greeted as “a sociological investigation ... distinguished for its thoroughly scientific spirit”,²⁵ was maintained.

In 1895, the report of the Department Committee of Prisons, headed by Herbert Gladstone, found fault with the whole Du Cann ideology. It condemned unproductive penal labour absolutely and recommended the employment of all prisoners on useful, industrial work. The Committee opposed both silence and separation, and effectively ended the career of Du Cann. Furthermore R. B. (late Lord) Haldane, Q.C., M. P. who sat on the Committee wrote to a leading League member, W. D. Morrison, who had given evidence:

“I cannot let the opportunity pass without saying how deeply I think that not only the Prison Committee but the whole English public are in your debt. You have been the real instrument in bringing about what I hope will be a very great change for the better.”²⁶

The ideas met with detractors besides Du Cann. Sir Algerson West was a senior Civil Servant and Financial expert on the Gladstone Committee accused Morrison of “somewhat wild statements”.²⁷ The League adeptly changed its position, tacitly admitting error. It published the remarks of C.H. Hopwood who conceded; “It is true that for some years the number of serious crimes has diminished but,” he added, “no one attributes this to severe punishment.” He said that the reason was that the “struggle for life” among the less favoured classes ... had been less severe”.²⁸

William Tallack of the Howard Association was also unconvinced by the League. He was born within a year of Du Cann and they shared mid-Victorian resolution and a belief in the deterrence value of prison. Referring to Tallack, the League noted that “there is no hostility so dangerous as that which lusts under the grasp of friendship” and Salt placed his ideas as belonging to “an antiquated school of thought”.²⁹ Six years after his retirement the League still recalled his long opposition to reform, in this case to the newly established Court of Criminal Appeal.³⁰ For his part, Tallack was ungracious about humanitarians and scathing of their lack of status.³¹ He once boasted to Salt that he enjoyed the privilege, now and then, of talking with the Home Secretary. This only suggested to Salt that he was “a parasite of the old system” and “tame”.³² He appears in Salt’s second, and last, play, which is a presentation of several different criminological principles practised and advocated at the time, as ‘Mr. Prim’. This character sees

‘segregation’, ‘introspection’, ‘self questioning’ and ‘remorse’ as means by which convicts may come to realise their guilt.³³ Tallack never effectively answered the question, posed by an ex-prison officer in a letter to *The Daily Chronicle*; “What has the Howard Society (sic) been doing all these years?” He gave evidence to the Gladstone Committee but did not agree with its liberalising recommendations and went so far as to suggest that there had been undue influence exerted by those using crude arguments which were unsupported by factual evidence. The League bluntly repudiated such accusations.³⁴ In an article headed “Where is the Howard Association?” and commencing with, ‘We ask this is no unfriendly spirit’. It went on to remark, ‘It cannot be denied that there is a deep conviction among those who are working most strenuously for the humanising of our prisons that the Howard Association is no longer a progressive but a reactionary institution’. The conclusion, concerning the Association (which had condemned “pseudo-humanitarians”) was that it was a “dead weight”. Tallack held, like many other Quakers of his generation, to an almost Benthamite notion of individual psychology. Just as crime was a deliberate act, so reform was also one; which offender, on reflection, could himself perform. The League was more prone to link crime and punishment with economic factors “... amend social conditions and you strike at the root of crime. Punishments may be necessary as a temporary expedient, but they are perfectly futile in the long run” ran an article based upon the 1908 Criminal Statistics.³⁵ Hopwood believed that “The vast bulk of what is called crime consists of pilfering and stealing which are induced by the pressure of extreme want and misery”.³⁶ Edward Carpenter also stressed this point “The slum is the vestibule of the prison. Society can hardly assume to punish the thief, unless it offers him the alternative of honest employment”. He advocated “the transformation of our prisons into industrial centres,³⁷ elsewhere calling the prison “an epitome of folly and wickedness”.³⁸ It is little wonder, given their fundamental differences, that the League condemned the Association as “a thoroughly reactionary body (that) exercises an evil influence, in so far as it has any influence at all”.³⁹ The Association was not needed, and the League believed that “the sooner the public realises this the better”.⁴⁰

Certainly the League gained support in the Houses of Parliament, at least in part, for the major recommendations of the Gladstone Committee. The concept that deterrence and reform rather than punishment were “the primary and concurrent objects” of prison treatment received statutory endorsement in 1898. The Home Secretary gained increased powers (something not suggested in 1895) which emancipated him from the need to legislate every policy change and which accelerated penal reform (although it reduced parliamentary attention to the matter). The Association had been opposed to greater leniency over birching, the League wanted to abolish it, and flogging was reduced by the 1898 Act.⁴¹ Despite the physical reality of there being between eight and eleven thousand separate cells within British prisons,⁴² the Act, like the League, demanded the removal of them in order to aid rehabilitation of inmates. Even though the Home Secretary insisted that the Act was “not a revolution in prison government” it still bore a striking resemblance to one.⁴³

Although the ideas propagated by the League did become a part of the basis of criminological studies for the following fifty years, they were not always sufficient. The underlying concept was of a Social Problem made up of connected but apparently different problems pauperism, crime and cruelty – which could be solved by Social Progress. The latter was a belief in an ethic at odds with that of Tallack. H. J. B. Montgomery, an active League campaigner in this area wrote about how “depressing” he found it to know that the Association had many members who felt ‘a profound belief in the doctrine of Christianity. The Howard Association has never attempted any propaganda of mercy, it has preached no gospel of humanitarianism. The great truth which adorns every page of the New Testament the essential brotherhood of man has no place in its literature’.⁴⁴ Social Progress and ‘mercy’ could not easily solve the dilemma of the imprisoned suffragettes and it was over this issue that the League’s doctrine was ruptured.

A significant proportion of the League membership consisted of people campaigning for the extension of the franchise. From The I.L.P. these included Enid Stacey, the only female advocate of women’s suffrage at national level until joined by Isabella Ford, another League member, in the early 1900’s and Margaret McMillan, (the only woman on the Bradford School Board). She too supported the imprisoned women. There were also the socialist Sinn Feiner and suffragette Charlotte Despard and Stella Browne, and Mrs. Anne Cobden-Sanderson whose experiences in prison in 1906 concerned fellow League members Arthur St. John, George Ives and Carl Heath so much that they helped set up the Prison Reform League (P.R.L.). The schoolmistress turned militant suffragette Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy who, years before, had collected three hundred signatures for John Stuart Mill and who helped to set up the Womens Emancipation Union was a League member, as was Jane E. Brownlow, also in the Emancipation Union. Male sympathisers included Keir Hardie, (who condemned force-feeding in prison in the House in June

1912), the novelists A. E. Houseman and Thomas Hardy, and Robert Blatchford who provided “an excellent introduction to feminism and women’s suffrage for young women [of that] generation”.⁴⁶

It is thus not surprising that the League campaigned, along with the P.R.L. for the release of those on hunger strike for political status, or that it abhorred “the abominable practice of forcibly feeding prisoners by artificial means”.⁴⁷ This did, however, lead to a financial dilemma as “owing to the intense feeling aroused by the suffrage movement a number of former subscribers to the League ... temporarily [withdrew] or reduced their contributions”.⁴⁸ The League maintained that force feeding was a “barbarous and repugnant practice” and resolved in 1913 that it was an “outrage against decency and freedom”.⁴⁹ It was not, however, the major issue in prison reform, and it was believed to be “incidental to a certain phase of a political struggle, and, as such, it will shortly pass”.⁵⁰ Arthur St. John, who sat on both the General Committee of the C.L.P.R.D. and on the Committee of the P.R.L., considered the controversy over the Prisoners, (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health), Act 1913, to be “digressions from ordinary course of penal reform”⁵¹ without recognising that the struggle for women’s votes might change that ‘ordinary course’.

The situation was uneasy for those who worked, not to disrupt the Legislature but, “to educate public opinion and so pave the way for further and more advanced legislation”,⁵² and who wanted to continue to use the media in a conventional way, by requesting space and trying to fill the letters column, not by seizing the front page and filling the prisons. The League used subtle irony, satire and debating methods and could deal far more easily with a petition to the Queen requesting, “respectfully”, that she use her powers to ban oakum picking for imprisoned, or pauperised, pregnant women, than it could deal with the several hundred gaoled suffragettes.⁵³ The women had changed the unspoken rules of pressure groups and the League was, like the Liberal Party leaders stranded. The women who had gained confidence within the ranks and had taken the back door into politics, now joined their sisters in hammering at the front door. They “broke more than windows with their stones, they broke the crust and conventions of a whole era”.⁵⁴ The League, attuned to conventional lobbying and a belief that “much good will be done by the mere placing on record of a systematic protest against numerous barbarisms of Civilisation” failed to adapt to the new situation. In writing on the subject of ‘Minstreling angels’ and ‘Womanly women’, the League remarked that “there terms are well enough in themselves, but the people who *talk* about them with the sole desire of depriving them of the vote are too antediluvian for further alteration. One might as reasonably argue with that fossil lizard, the megalosaurus. We rejoice that the promoters of the Women’s agitation have, by their prompt and decisive action lifted the question, once and for all out of the range of antiquated and futile discussion and brought it into that of immediate and practical politics. They have our most earnest wishes for their full and speed success”.⁵⁵ The ‘prompt and decisive action’ of the women which it praised made the League look more like a megalosaurus than it would have cared to admit.

(d) Capital punishment

Members of the Humanitarian League such as Thomas Hardy, Edward Carpenter, A. E. Houseman and Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner contributed to the revival of interest in that well-nigh immortal subject; capital punishment. The broad-based opposition which was at once emotive and moral and also rational and considered, successfully aroused discussion; although state executions in Britain continued.

Within an eight year period Hardy, Gissing, Kipling, Beardsley, Wilde and A. E. Houseman all created figures who were “hanged by the neck until dead”.⁵⁶ This was no literary aberration, Houseman, for example, addressed the League on the subject of “Crime and Punishment” a dozen years after his poem. The subject was extensively discussed in a number of contemporary periodicals despite the fact that there was neither a *cause célèbre* trial nor impending legislation on capital punishment to act as a catalyst.

There had been a full scale parliamentary debate in 1881, and there was the publication, two years later, of *A History of the Criminal Law in England* by Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, which might have stimulated debate. The reform of the Scottish criminal law (1881) also might have provoked arguments but these seem to be unlikely to have been persistently of interest.⁵⁷ Furthermore it is unlikely that there was concern for notorious felons such as Thomas Neill Cream, George Chapman and Samuel Dougal who were not especially pitiable characters.⁵⁸ Indeed, in order to arrive at accurate estimate of serious crime in the decade 1860-69, as compared with the decades 1869-89, Morrison selected murder as representative of a serious offence unaffected by changes in public feeling or judicial procedure within the period. He found that in the first ten years the average number of reported murders per annum was 126, while in the next twenty it 160.

The morbid nature of the topic might have been a reason for its appeal engrossed in the decadent, 'naughty nineties', or it may have been that premature mortality was less likely than before as advances in sewage disposal, surgery and sanitation, along with an absence of war meant the living standard with rising and life was not so cheap. Thirdly, there was extensive correspondence in *The Times* and other newspapers. Tallock in *Howard Letters and Memories*⁵⁹ suggested his exchanges in 1891 with Lord Gamthorpe were at least of some influence and Joseph Collinson's letters were often published and so helped keep the issue in the public eye.

The League often adopted an impersonal style, in order to make general statements of belief. In an article on "The Death Penalty" Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonnor consider that

"none of our punishments are perfect and they will never be until we treat crime from a more reasonable and scientific standpoint, until we cease to look upon it as a necessarily conscious wilful wrongdoing. We need to probe for the causes of crime and find some remedy for these rather than be content to punish the criminals who are often but little more than mere straws driven on the wind of circumstances".⁶⁰

Edward Carpenter took up the case of an individual, Mary Ansell, who was executed for giving her imbecile sister a fatally poisonous sandwich and then claiming £22 insurance, but he deprived the general point from this within the same article. He pointed out that there was no danger from this woman any longer and that "the poor diseased brains, both of Mary and her victim, were the products in all probability of ... [state] greed in factory and slum, working all through our social conditions and condemning half the children of our cities beforehand to ill-health and ignorance".⁶¹ His book which covered this subject also treated the death penalty as part of a programme organised by the state which created conditions where crime inevitably bred "and on the Scaffold [the state] completes its programme"⁶²

Emotive response was not typical of League publications. It was more like the death of Tess Durbeyfield or Danny Deever, – the Hardy and Kipling characters, or those of C. T. Wooldridge and the Carpenter's son (the creations of Wilde and Houseman). Compared with the high seriousness of other abolitionists they expressed their feelings very strongly. Gissing implicitly censured the Philistine Jasper Milkain for his self-congratulation on the death of an anonymous man in London⁶³ whilst Hardy, a fellow League supporter, sombrely contrasted "the scarlet blot" having "the appearance of a gigantic ace of hearts" with "the black flag". This, said Hardy, using quotation marks, was "justice".⁶⁴ The logic of the League's stance was impeccable given their presumption that all use of force or violence needs to be justified and that, when justified, the minimum possible use should be used. If this applied to citizens it applied with greater force to the state and the law. As public bodies claiming legitimacy and obedience they had, as the League recognised, an enormous influence on individual conduct. The use of syllogistic reasoning, analogy and satire in order to promote their argument were of importance in the creation of a rational basis. The literature had a different, more emotional appeal. It is difficult to think dispassionately of death by hanging after reading the famous poem, extracts from which appeared in *Humanity* in April 1897.

"But it is not sweet with nimble feet. To dance upon the air"⁶⁵

(e) Flogging

The infliction of corporal punishment aroused much anger in the League. An entire issue of *The Prison Record* was devoted to the subject of suffragettes and the lash. This followed a Memorial to the Home Secretary from the Edinburgh Women's Suffrage Society. They petitioned for the flogging of men found guilty of attacking women. Leading suffragists and suffragettes condemned the Memorial in *The Humanitarian*. The League pointed out that flogging was often seen as the only way to 'stamp out' various crimes such as wife beating, blackmail, and train wrecking and that these suffragettes were only following this tradition. However "it is impossible thus to 'stamp out' any vicious tendency, since all crimes are symptoms of a diseased social condition which only a long and patient course of wise treatment can cure".⁶⁶ Mrs. Fenwick Miller, Editor-owner of the leading women's journal *The Woman's Signal* disagreed. She believed flogging "to be the only deterrent power to bring about more self control as regards these shameful acts towards women." *The Signal*, purporting to be "flashing its light from Humanity's capital" (London)⁶⁷ had its final issue in March 1899 but the C.L.P.R.D. still felt it "necessary to appeal to the better sense of women on this question".⁶⁸ This echoed the April 1895 Conference which

heard Robert Johnson call for both a Minister of Justice and, after noting the high proportion of women present, a larger role for women:

Their brilliant intuition and their keen sense of right and wrong would be of the greatest assistance ... there is noble work for women to do; and if a few able and energetic women would form a small committee ... the work would be done.⁶⁹

Flogging men for offences against women was according to the League, “simply part of the so-called ‘chivalrous’ spirit which has for centuries done more than anything else to keep women in subjugation under the guise of respect”.⁷⁰ There was a slight deviation from this in another Department of the League. Writing about flogging in India Sir Henry Cotton demanded an end to all corporal punishment except perhaps for “gross outrages upon women committed by a gang of men in concert”. The pamphlet is otherwise taken up with factual information and little analysis. It re-entered the League fold in concluding that “in awarding punishment, we have to regard primarily and directly the nature of the crime and the enormity of the offence. Reformation, repression and examples are only secondary consideration.”⁷¹

Although in disagreement with the Edinburgh Suffragists, the League still credited these women with “sincerity and feeling”, carefully reserving the epithet “ill-balanced and hysterical” for “victims to this silly and vicious flogging craze ... of both sexes”.⁷²

The use of the word ‘victims’ for the people who flogged rather than those who were beaten was indicative of an underlying League theme brought out more clearly in a poem Salt composed – ‘The Hymn of the Flagellomaniacs’. In this he called flogging a morbid pleasure and he suggested that it derived from a “fevered yearning/For the bare and bleeding back ...”.⁷³ He later wrote that those who flog ‘have felt that in wielding the rod they were discharging a religious obligation, and not, as might otherwise have been suspected, gratifying some very primitive instincts of their own’.⁷⁴ The League view, as expressed in a pamphlet of 1912, was that ‘corporal punishment ... is an outrage on what should above all things, be held sacred – the supremacy of the human mind and the dignity of the human body’.⁷⁵ The League’s campaign against ‘torture;’ for “if that is not torture” as one M.P. – put it after examining the ‘cat’, “then I do not know what torture is” lay at the heart of their beliefs.⁷⁶ In part this was because, as Hopwood put it, floggings “brutalise and corrupt all society” and the League felt it their role to “teach that the diminution of crime is not effected in proportion to the employment of torture”.⁷⁷

The League spent some time refuting the notion that the 1862 ‘garrotting epidemic’ in London was suppressed by the introduction of the ‘cat’ for those found guilty. In fact, the culprits were imprisoned before the 1863 Flogging Act made those found guilty of this crime liable to be flogged but the 1901 *Encyclopaedia Britannia*⁷⁸ and various other reference works added plausibility to the theory of deterrence by getting the dates wrong. The one person who, in a letter to *The Times*, admitted that the League was right on this matter, ought, the League felt, to be honoured by a statue. His candour was, after all, unique.⁷⁹ The League played a significant role in the defeat of the 1900 ‘Flogging Bill’. It circularised the House with *Why Mr. Wharton’s Flogging Bill should be Rejected*, a special leaflet and it sent a resolution to the P.M. and the Home Secretary, Sir Mathew White Ridley. Sir Mathew also received a Memorial signed by a number of influential women, and a Resolution was published in a number of London papers. Letters appeared in *The Times*, *The Daily Chronicle*, *The Morning Post*, *The Morning Leader*, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, and a number of other newspapers and the League felt justified in reporting; “almost single-handed, it [the C.L.P.R.D.] fought Mr. J. Lloyd Wharton’s Flogging Bill, which ... was rejected. It went on “The significance of this victory has not been lost; for since the defeat of this Bill flogging has become more and more unpopular.”⁸⁰ This last comment was more wishful thinking than accurate prediction.⁸¹

The League was involved in a successful attempt to prune the Youthful Offenders Act (1900) of its flogging clauses (despite the fact that the Howard Association and the N.S.P.C.C. were on the opposite side) but it failed to stop the “White Slave” Bill which allowed for the flogging of convicted pimps and was enacted in 1912. This concerned the League for, as Sylvia Pankhurst pointed out, “it is a strange thing the latest Act which was passed ostensibly to protect women, it being used exclusively to punish women”.⁸²

The League did not always seek to defend the legal *status quo*. They sought to outlaw birching in the Royal Navy. This campaign, which led to legislation in 1906, was spearheaded by Joseph Collinson outside the House and by Swift MacNeill M.P. within it. The Admiralty gave the impression not of sincere belief but rather of irrational prejudice as they discredited themselves by claiming that they no longer

flogged and then had to admit that this, “a technical quibble very characteristic of officialdom”, meant only that they had outlawed the ‘cat’ not the birch. Another response from Admiral Sir William Kennedy was to challenge Salt to meet him;

“at any time and place, when pistols and coffee will be provided”.⁸³

There are similarities between the work of the League and the early nineteenth century reformers attempts to abolish flogging in the army. Both relied on arousing and communicating emotion against the punishment itself and against its degrading affect on others, and both asserted as something self-evident that barbarities of this nature could not be allowed to continue in a civilised nation. Both used the press and the Commons in order to raise and debate into view and make it more significant as a political issue. Finally it was the work of a small number of activists who were, if not entirely disinterested, then at least inspired more by feelings of compassion and repugnance and concern for human dignity than by a desire for party or personal gain.⁸⁴ A major difference was that whereas “next to the press gangs, flogging was perhaps the most hated of the institution of Old England”, the League had to work hard just to raise the issue and then they faced opposition.⁸⁵

(f) The effect

A founder member of the League, Howard Williams, called flogging ‘torture’ and vivisection ‘experimental torture’. The League’s belief in the essential unity of life led it to conglomerate that which it despised in this fashion. Salt commented; “The twin tyrannies of flogging and vivisection should be linked together ... for they are indeed linked expressions of one barbarous spirit.”⁸⁶ This emotive analysis blocked the route to a more specific understanding, something the League believed was a necessary prerequisite of change.

The Department also lobbied for the abandonment of the treadmill. This device typified the reformation, or punishment, argument. Those who favoured the separate system objected to the treadmill as an irritating and alienating punishment, inimical to submission and repentance and so, by the mid 1850’s, it was falling into disuse. However, as enthusiasm for such a system of discipline began to wane so the treadmill became more popular. The 1863 Lords Committee wanted punishments including specifically the treadmill. The Humanitarian League sailed between the Scylla of reformation and the Charybdis of retributive punishment, pressed for Humanitarianism and was, in this instance, successful.

The League intentions were summed up in the contradictory remark “the public should think for themselves, never deserting mercy as their standpoint”.⁸⁷ The aim was to gain a tangible if minor, reform, and, never losing sight of the overall desire to change the whole notion of punishment, try for the next prize. This strategy did not distinguish between palliative and landmark on the road to progress. It helped change the reality of prison life and naval punishment and it tried to place the “guilty” as well as the “Law abiding” within the ranks of those whose emancipation from cruelty should be high on any political agenda. However the “broad democratic sentiment of university sympathy”⁸⁸ never became a popular philosophical stance. The League accused the Howard Association of being moribund but it was the Association, vitalised by the League offshoot the P.R.L., which lived on, whilst the League folded. The moment for liberal radicalism had passed and the League programme for liberal reform passed with it. The penal policies of the League reflected the ethos of a fading era. The truth of this as regards its other prescriptions can more clearly be observed in its medical campaigns.

(iii) **The medical campaigns**

The League campaigns over vaccination, vivisection and Pasteurism were closely connected, based on similar assumptions and carried out in similar fashions.

They sought – in the face of established medical opinion, tradition and the parliamentary consensus – to manipulate public opinion by using shock tactics concealed beneath an aura of respectability. They achieved the substance of their goals within a decade in the case of their campaign against compulsory vaccination. There was a letter writing campaign and support from the press, particularly Massingham’s *Star*. This was, said Joseph Collinson “one of the few organs of the press which has taken up the anti-vaccinists’ case with a spirit both persistent and determined”.

The 1871 Vaccination Act, which enabled non-medical vaccination officers to have fined or imprisoned parents who did not have their children inoculated against smallpox aroused sustained opposition. By the time that the League initiated its own campaign, the overall campaign had run a course from Radical outbursts in the North through a broad rural movement to a London-based parliamentary lobbying group. The imposition of the 1898 Act, which was “unequal ... oppressive and ... a monstrous travesty of justice”,⁸⁹ according to the “Young North Countryman”,⁹⁰ Collinson, substantially acceded to antivaccinationist demands. It abolished the compulsory element for those fathers who could prove to a magistrate or two justices in petty sessions that they sincerely believed that vaccination would impair the health of their child. By 1907 the final objectives of the campaign were, in essence, achieved.⁹¹

The work of the League, as stated in the Manifesto, was designed “to supplement and reinforce such efforts as have already been organized for similar objects”.⁹² They specified in *The Humanitarian* that there was not an anti-vivisection department precisely for this reason.⁹³ The League claimed that it was responsible for “the more democratic element that has lately been introduced into the crusade against Vivisection”.⁹⁴ The League did not, however, introduce a new element. While vivisectionists had by the 1890’s marshalled their arguments much more effectively the League continued to maintain a flimsy, contradictory, mental construction. This was inadequate for its task.

Vivisection and vaccination, (the “twin sciences” said Collinson), were frequently help up as the effects of legislation for which the scientific community was responsible.⁹⁵ A quarter of the League *Vivisection* pamphlet was devoted to vaccination. Edward Carpenter, the co-author, called vivisection “the logical outcome and last expression of the scientific materialism of the day”.⁹⁶ He believed that this materialism threatened natural purity inside and outside the laboratories. In order to fight this pollution and filth he advocated sanitation. The faith in sanitary medicine was well founded in the seventies and eighties. Sanitation had probably done more to improve health in the previous fifty years than had vivisection. By the late nineties bacteriological techniques were being applied to the water supply and as a means of prevention medicine. To condemn antitoxin and prescribe cleanliness as the sovereign cure was an inadequate response.⁹⁷

The League maintained that the requirement was for healthier housing rather than inoculation if there was not to be widespread smallpox. This environmental argument was put forward by Dr. William Job Collins in the minority statement of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Vaccination which issued a report in 1889 and two more in 1890. Collinson offered a popular précis of the work of the doctor. Collins was also a prolific author of anti-vivisection documents. The other dissentient Commissioner, J. Allanson Picton M.P., opposed the violation by the state of inalienable personal responsibilities which, he believed, compulsion represented. The League largely ignored this line of argument. Collinson made a brief reference to the cost of “parents’ self respect and happiness” but otherwise concentrated his energies elsewhere. Collins did not deny the role played by micro-organisms in infectious diseases under certain conditions; rather he thought that evolution might develop them in an unforeseen manner. He held that “the chief, if not the only element in determining specificity [was] *the nature of the soil* in which the poison (whatever its nature) grows, that is to say the predisposition of the individual”.⁹⁸ He saw himself as one of the new sanitarians who were in harmony alike with the teaching of Chadwick and his school as to the nature and origins of zygotic diseases as well as with the modern conception of the evolution of specific infections.⁹⁹ Collins sought to establish his credentials by an appeal to a name associated with public health. The irony of this for the League was that Chadwick was also associated with the harsh discipline of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act of 1834 – the subject of another League campaign.

The relative calm of Collins was translated into a rhetorical diatribe by Collinson;

“What but sanitation and science destroyed the terrible string of those most mortal of plagues e.g. sweating sickness, Black Death, Oriental plague and the lesser scourges? Yes, what of the more devastating European plagues in comparison with which smallpox is a trifle? What protects us from such epidemics now? Isolation and disinfection, sufficient and good sanitation; better homes and better food”.¹⁰⁰

Carpenter took up the point and wrote that, in the case of epidemics where “the evil is more social than individual” the right approach would be “improve sanitation and cleaner [sic] social life”¹⁰¹ in the case of smallpox or cholera, and the immediate nationalisation of the water supply in the case of typhoid. In 1897 one of the Humane science lectures organised by the League was “The Germ Theory and Its Fallacies”

which was given by Dr. Campbell Black. Another title in the series was “The Mind as a Disease Producer” a lecture by Herbert Coryn a member of the Royal College of Surgeons.

The emphasis on prevention by sanitation rather than cure derived from animal experimentation was related to a more general belief in hygiene and disease as a divinely sanctioned ‘wage of sin’. The now recognised psychiatric phenomenon of distrust of “animalisation”¹⁰² mean that those affected feared that the integrity of their bodies or, by extension or displacement, the bodies of their children or of animals would be violated by vaccination or vivisection. Maitland felt that it was “incontestable that the prevailing low level in thought and conduct through which alone vivisection has been accepted is largely, if not wholly due to the deterioration of character of perception induced by a diet to which man is not naturally adapted”. “Redemption” needed a change in diet and that needed “but the love and the will to accomplish it”.

Carpenter saw health not as a chance product of conflicting external sources but rather as a “positive force” within each creature. “Disease is avoidable” he said “and due to a failure to learn or obey the laws of the inner being”.¹⁰³ This was not unlike the earlier evangelical Christian belief that through illness an individual was punished or warned by God. Treatment of the symptoms encouraged ignorance of these “laws” and palliatives also had dangerous side effects. The development of the treatment of sleeplessness with bromide instead of a change in lifestyle was destructive. Carpenter believed that such a development, the focusing of the physical rather than the spiritual threatened the moral health of society and was, he held, encouraged by vivisection.

Maitland took up this general idea and republished it with his own thoughts,

To one duly percipient and reflective and capable of thought, which being really free is unrestricted to the material and physical, every natural object is suggestive of an informing idea. The pursuit of these, if carried far enough, lifts the mind to the divine source of all truth ... something vastly transcending ... man.¹⁰⁴

Carpenter saw each individual as responsible for society, and advancement as coming not when knowledge was acquired but when people recognised that the infliction of suffering on any creature harmed humans. Every time a vivisector

pins a trembling rabbit down to the operating table he draws a fresh veil between himself and the source of all life and light and in the name of knowledge confirms himself in pitiless blindness and ignorance.

Ignoring the plight of animals destroyed the “consciousness of self, the everlasting soul, the knowledge of which before all things and alone gave true health and freedom from disease”.¹⁰⁵

This moral superiority was adopted by Maitland as well. To him doctors were materialists, agnostics and spiritually bankrupt. They were unfit to minister to the ill as they had “renounced the very idea of religion and morality as chimera”,¹⁰⁶ and they lacked feelings as they had rejected the infinitely “superior” part of human nature “which transcends the physical and physiological namely the moral and spiritual”.¹⁰⁷ The first condition of ... understanding is sympathy”.¹⁰⁸ Vivisectors seeking answers only in external gore, could never be sympathetic. This belief in the oneness of nature lay behind Collinson’s brief mention of ‘purity of blood’¹⁰⁹ and his remark in conclusion that

What we need now are good conditions of living and wholesomeness of food, clothing and abode.¹¹⁰

There were hints of this in his abhorrence of inoculation and re-inoculation by means of animal poison.¹¹¹

The League presented its case as far as possible in traditional debating style with much use of scientific authorities in order to point out realistic flaws in the evidence of their opponents and to bolster rational argument. Dr. Collins maintained that many cases of syphilis were attributable to vaccination but that this was not the cause of the increase in the disease.¹¹² The League suggested, but did not state, that this was debatable. Carpenter mentioned the “dread increase in Infantile – Syphilis by fourfold frequency, since vaccination has been compulsory” and then cited two doctors who attributed the increase in the number of deaths from cancer to vaccination.¹¹³ Collinson quoted “the great syphilographer”, Doctor Jonathon

Hutchinson as saying “It is impossible for the most careful and experienced doctor always to tell when syphilis is present in vaccine lymph”.¹¹⁴ Collinson also placed between “the case of little Minnie Cohen” (p. 38), and a comparison of the Vaccination Law with “one equivalent in history ... the Fugitive Slave Law of America” (p. 40), a short, imaginary, dialogue. This was from a “clever little work written and arranged in a popular vein” in which it was suggested that if a child developed syphilis following vaccination and the vaccinator claimed that calf lymph was used then he would be exonerated and the blame for the disease would fall upon the parents of the child.¹¹⁵ This dialogue, like an entirely different article by ‘Ouida’ on “the Scientific Torture of Lunatics”¹¹⁶ was distinctly placed so as to separate it from, yet link it to, the fear of animalisation. Despite the dubious attraction of largely unsubstantiated scaremongering the League still managed to procure respectable writers. These included Sir James Thornton who, prior to retirement, had been in medical charge of nearly two million people and supervisor of around 100,000 sick or injured people in a district of India. He came to conclusions not unlike those of Dr. Collins, that whilst Pasteur might exert a large and growing influence his ideas were wrong in theory and sometimes fatal in practice. This he expressed in his *Pasteurism in India*,¹¹⁷ written for the India Humanitarian Committee. Pasteurs’ treatment for rabies came under heavy fire, in part because it scotched the idea that hydrophobia resulted from cruelty to dogs. That is that people were being punished for the sin of causing an animal pain.

Another sub-group of activists significant quantitatively as well as qualitatively were women. John Burns, who supported the antivivisection cause, once described protesters as “a well dress crowd of breastless Amazons who made up for their lack of children by an inordinate love of cats and dogs”.¹¹⁸ Women were often humiliated at the hands of prying male doctors and the prevailing image of their role alienated them from the world of science. They were perceived as being closer to Nature; “she is very woman, whose real law is sympathy”.¹¹⁹ Certainly that the large and leading role of women in the movement had an effect upon their emancipation was recognised by the feminist *Englishwoman’s Review* which published an article opposing vivisection and by A. P. Childs’ antivivisection magazine *Home Chronicler* which contrived a dialogue between a scandalised aunt and her antivivisectionist niece entitled “Woman and Woman: A Sketch for Life”.¹²⁰

Feminists sought to demystify the medical profession so that women were less frequently patients and so that they could enter the profession itself. This threatened the status of doctors and indeed “doctors were prominent ... in upholding the anti-feminist case before 1914”.¹²¹ Medical students physically attacked the International Suffrage Bookshop,¹²² and an Emeritus Lecturer in Psychological Medicine likened the interruption of political meetings by Women to “the explosive fury of epileptics”.¹²³ “There is, mixed up in the woman’s movement much mental disorder” wrote a distinguished bacteriologist to *The Times* which not only published this but produced an editorial headed “Insurgent Hysteria” about “the regrettable by-products of our civilisation”,¹²⁴ whose lack of mental balance led them to become suffragettes. In view of this it is hardly surprising that leading suffragist and League supporter Millicent Fawcett opposed vaccination and vivisection and ardently admired Josephine Butler. Nor that Mrs. Parsons, another eminent suffragist, expressed disgust when told that her views on the vaccination of her child were of no consequence in law, as she was not legally a parent.¹²⁵ Emmeline Pankhurst referred often to the infant deaths from syphilis which she had encountered as a registrar of births and deaths and explained that there was “a sort of conspiracy in those days between the medical man and the husband” and that this was “one of the things which made me a militant Suffragist”.¹²⁶

In January, 1898, the League issued an appeal for money to be denoted to a married couple who “owing to their spirited resistance to the detestable vaccination laws are in severe financial straits ...” The item in *Humanity* when on to make the point that Mrs. Newton was the first woman Guardian of the Dartford Workhouse and on the Erith School Board. It did not mention anything about Mr. Newton. The incident was not an isolated one. Rather it indicates that general sexual division over issues relating to medical matters. These divisions become more obvious when between 1909 and 1914 women were force fed in prisons. As *Suffragette* put it in 1913, “the medical profession has now become a police force whose task it is to break the spirit of the suffragist women by injuring their bodies”.¹²⁷

There was a high proportion, relative to the general population of women graduates within the League¹²⁸ and these women had a particular axe to grind with the medical profession. As Francis Mary Buss informed Emily Davies of Girton, the college “suffers largely ... from the determined opposition of medical men ... in the case of any girl [the] smallest ailment always proceeds from over brainwork!!! never neglected conditions of health from too many parties etc.”¹²⁹ While Katherine St. John Conway was an undergraduate at Newnham there was a survey of all the graduates of women’s colleges at Oxford and

Cambridge in order to discover the impact of their education upon their health, so great was the pressure of prejudice.¹³⁰ Nine years later it was doctors who were selected as being the most capable for the exclusion of women from Oxford BA degrees by at least one journal.¹³¹ The correlation between the concerns of the League and the concerns of educated middle class women is high enough to suggest that the former derived, at least in part, from recognition of the latter.

The oppression engendered by the medical pursuit of professional status was not confined to women, although it did affect them in a way which cut across other boundaries of knowledge or class. Edward Maitland opened his pamphlet with a warning against the “very real and serious danger” of specialists attempting to gain power. He compared the medical specialists with military and ecclesiastical leaders of the past. The new authority has to be strictly watched as “the habit of exclusive concentration upon one subject ... renders them non-percipient in respect of others, and incapacitates them for estimating their relative values”.¹³² Anti-vivisectionist literature written by medically trained people often suggested that there were alienated from the supporters of experimental medicine and their backers in the professional elite, despite the power of the latter to employ sanctions against them. Lawson Tait as a provincial practitioner, and Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson as women perhaps felt that there was discrimination.¹³³ The League pamphlet on *Public Control in Hospitals* by Harry Roberts returned to the subject “... the lay point of view is the only one to be considered. There cannot be any rational discussion of “professional point of view” of which we have heard so much. Hospitals should exist solely for the good of the people and not in the least for the aggrandisement, amusement or scientific advancement of any class of specialist”.¹³⁴ Although nominally about hospitals the chapter headings of this pamphlet suggest a different emphasis. They included “Patients or Clinical Material”, “The Medical Profession and Vivisection”, “Corpora-Vilia”, and “Faith and Charity”. The League was suggesting a Fabian solution to an antivivisectionist problem, or at least using an altruistic protest against the mistreatment of charity patients as a stick to beat the doctors. This was not the first time that antivivisectionists had raised these issues. In 1887 Edward Berdoe who, like Edward Maitland, sat on the executive committee of the antivivisectionists Victoria Street Society, published *St. Bernards: The Romance of a Medical Student*. This detailed in fictional form the abuses which doctors were said to practice on poor patients and, a year later *Dying Scientifically: A Key to St. Bernard's* was published to substantiate the existence of every abuse by reference to the *British Medical Journal*. At the same time that Roberts published his pamphlet the highly publicised dispute over the Chelsea Hospital for Women was raging. In this case a high mortality rate of around forty-five per cent in “exploratory” abdominal surgery for purposes of diagnoses was used by Roberts and the others, as evidence of medical staff experimenting on women. ‘Ouida’ made a similar error by failing to distinguish between experiments and examinations. She nevertheless helped the antivivisectionist movement stop the British Institute of Preventative Medicine being located in Chelsea.¹³⁵ Medical enthusiasm for knowledge rather than wisdom, (it was Carpenter who made this distinction) left no room for humanity in hospitals or elsewhere.¹³⁶ “The most important reform of all will probably be the last, namely the humanising of medical education” wrote Roberts echoing the Victoria Street *Zoophilist* of a decade earlier which had described the “gallons of Scientific sack to a miserable halfpennyworth of therapeutic bread” which medical students received.¹³⁷ Other reforms demanded by the League included control by County Councils of hospitals through a Board, free hospitals and coroners’ reports on all deaths in hospital. Such a hospital would have a “considerable educational influence on its inmates rich and poor, educated and uneducated, idler and worker, mixing together for once on terms of equality” a consideration characteristic of the Humanitarian League. Finally Roberts pointed out that almshouses, i.e. voluntary hospitals, were “unwholesome in its effect on both parties”. The argument that the community will lose its moral sense if the State intervenes was akin to saying that the poor ought to be poor so that the rich can be charitable; a line scarcely likely to commend itself to “rational people”.¹³⁸ The language and the tone made this a typical Humanitarian League pamphlet, reflecting the League’s desire “to educate public opinion and so pave the way for further and more advanced legislation” and to humanise “the conditions of modern life” through well reasoned protest.¹³⁹ It also reflected League admiration of a ‘wholesome’ lifestyle for all.

Whilst wary of palliatives, the League still welcomed both the “Maternity Society of England”; which wished to provide poor women with homes without vivisectionist staff and with a vegetarian diet; and also the Humanitarian Cottage Hospital, set up on similar principles, whose Warden was League activist Josiah Oldfield, M.A., B.C.L. However, the League did not consider such establishments to be the true solution to the perceived problems of meat consumption and animal experimentation. When the Prince of Wales Hospital Fund was set up, (March 1897), the League pointed out; “The result of the benevolent interference of the part of Royalty in London politics will be practically to render the hospitals free from public control for some time hence. The Prince is simply playing into the hands of the vivisectionist clique

when the talks of “saving the hospitals from State and parochial aid”. Would it not be a more humane proceeding to “save” them from the physiologists who now use them for the purposes of experimentation? “Apart from the purely philanthropic work”, says the Prince,” we look to the voluntary hospitals for the means of medical education”. The League comment upon this typically picked upon the form of words used; “The apartness is just what we object to. The medical education is very much “apart” from the philanthropy whereas it ought to be inseparable and indistinguishable from it”.¹⁴⁰ The League welcomed the municipal hospitals of Bradford and added, “The institution of a few antivivisectionist or vegetarian hospitals with the special purpose of serving as an example, and striking out on a new humanitarian and hygienic line is an excellent thing; but as a general rule the right policy is not to found private hospitals but to agitate for public ones”.¹⁴¹

The League sometimes saw that behind the vivisectionists lay “the monstrous and incalculable mischief [due to] the possession by a single human being of infinite irresponsible, money power”.¹⁴² It sometimes called upon “Labour” to defend animals against the horrible exploitation of “so-called science”.¹⁴³ More often its arguments were more ethereal and the class analysis less in evidence. The League did not significantly alter the socially distinguished, and politically moribund, antivivisection movement. That movement was thus more easily undermined by vivisectionists who appealed to similar basic principles.

Their sense of mission gave League members the sense that they were the embodiment of a new sensibility which wished to cleanse all pain from the world, was not unlike the sense of righteousness of scientists. They too had a vision of a better world, and a desire not so much for legislative change as a long term change in attitudes. They had their own pressure groups; the Association for the Advancement of Medicine by Research (AAMR) which was set up in 1882 and the Research Defence Society (founded 1908) which had a more public face. The defenders of vivisection had to prove that they were not materialist, immoral, or hardhearted, and also that vivisection was useful. Vivisection created doubt among some doctors, especially older physicians, who felt that it was a brash newcomer, Darwin said that it left him “sick and horror” even though he felt it necessary. The vivisectors therefore attempted to explain why experimentation was necessary if the boundaries of science were to be extended. They argued that vivisection was useful to science, which was an aid to humanity. It was also part of a noble attempt to understand more about the world. “... the Universe is God’s, and none can touch his robe in faith without virtue going out from it” wrote one scientist. He went on; “So long as the moral and spiritual development of mankind remains the supreme purpose of creation, medical science can claim equal honours with the science of God”.¹⁴⁵ Edward Maitland decried the attempt to “invest the doctors with the authority formerly wielded by soldiers and ecclesiastics”.¹⁴⁶ Scientists were certainly trying to appear as saints, dedicated to the service of science and willing to die on its altar.¹⁴⁷

There was still the hurdle of pain for the scientist to overcome. They insisted that anaesthetics were used and claimed variously that one in a hundred and one in a hundred thousand experiments caused pain, and also that animals did not feel pain as much as humans. They also cultivated the connection between ordinary physicians and vivisectors. Family doctors were trusted and so, they hoped, might experimenters be. Their most important tactic took them to the same moral terrain as the League. This was their insistence upon their own humanity in their attempts to alleviate pain. They thus cut the ground from under the Humanitarian League.

(iv) Bloodsports

In order to enforce the principle that “it is iniquitous to inflict avoidable suffering on any sentient being” and, more specifically, in order to enforce their “insistence on the immorality of all so-called ‘sports’ which seek amusement in the death of suffering of animals”,¹⁴⁸ the Humanitarian League campaigned against bloodsports. This prominent campaign was its first. It lasted from 1891 when *Royal Sport: Some Facts concerning the Queens Buckhounds*¹⁴⁹ was published until 1901 when, after seven hundred years, the Royal Buckhounds were disbanded.

The socially prestigious activity of hunting carted deer involved the pursuit of a popular and tame animal, rather than a ‘pest’, and was thus a well-chosen starting point for more general opposition to bloodsports; “a very useful peg ... on which to hang an exposure of the cruelty of stag hunting”.¹⁵⁰ A de-horned deer was released about three quarters of a mile from the meet, chased, and then re-crated, and so any blood spilt was by misadventure. On the other hand “the charm and beauty of the stag”¹⁵¹ attracted more attention and caused greater sympathy than did the fox, as Salt expected. Also as “in reforms of every sort progress is partial and intermittent and comes less as logic would expect than as feelings ordain”,¹⁵² the

subject of the League's second pamphlet was well chosen. The campaign took several forms. Initially the Reverend J. Stratton, Chaplain to Lucus' Hospital, and a former fox hunter, wrote letters to the press, and then wrote his pamphlet. In this he stressed the peculiar conditions surrounding the Royal pack at Ascot. Once released, the deer were often so tame that they would seek refuge in building such as a barn or railway station waiting room. They were defenceless, as their horns had been removed. This was not so that the hounds could be protected, as was widely assumed, but "for the benefit of the deer as they cannot get hung up in the woods nor can they injure themselves in the Swinley Paddocks" as *The Field* explained¹⁵³. As it was deer were frequently injured on fence stakes and barbed wire. Furthermore, unlike the other score of carted deer packs this one was "maintained not at the instance and at the expense of individual citizens, but as a royal institution: it is recognized by Parliament and carried on in the Queen's name. The nation is, therefore, indirectly responsible for the doing of the Buckhounds and implicitly sanctions this abominable treatment of harmless and defenceless animals".¹⁵⁴ Stratton sent a copy of this to Queen Victoria. Her private secretary, Sir A. Bigge, refused to bring the grievance of the League to her attention but a letter from the Palace was sent to the League by Sir Henry F. Ponsonby. In this he observed "that the Queen has been strongly opposed to stag hunting for many years past".¹⁵⁵ Later approaches to the Queen brought the reply that she could only take action on the advice of her Ministers. Both the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister refused to put the matter to her, as this was "contrary to practice".¹⁵⁶ The League then tried to petition the Queen and eventually Victoria received the message of the League through this method.

Petitioning went on to sway the Prime Minister to take action as well. In 1896 the headmaster of Rugby, the Archbishop Designate of Canterbury, the Bishop of Hereford and several M.P.'s signed a letter addressed to the Marquis of Salisbury on the subject. This pointed out that the 'park stag hunt' involved "unfair treatment of the quarry and merciless riding of horses in the effort to save the deer for another day" and that it stunted "the growth of humane feeling" amongst the witnesses particularly the young.¹⁵⁷ Another memorial, presented by Stratton in 1900, included the signatures of five peers, eighty M.P.'s, eight bishops and eight deans. The support of the influential was not enough to secure the passage of legislation in 1894 nor the "mature deliberation"¹⁵⁸ which the Chancellor of the Exchequer felt that the question demanded.

The League engineered resolutions, memorials, petitions and support for the press, particularly *The Star*. They gathered signatures, organised deputations, had Questions and Bills placed in the House and, in Stratton's case, often walked twenty miles in a day to gather evidence. They even employed a former police inspector for this task.¹⁵⁹ Their style was not confrontational, despite the abuse of the opposition. Salt noted in his memoirs "a pleasant recollection of friendly encounters" with a champion of bloodsports¹⁶⁰ and said "we much enjoyed the argument which was quite as good sport to us as their hunting and coursing was to them".¹⁶¹ After showing 'disgust' for the bleeding of children he went on to mockingly reproduce a 'truly delightful account' of a huntsman.¹⁶² The tone of his campaign against 'this rascally "sport"'¹⁶³ with its comical followers is illustrated by the parody of Richard Lovelace entitled "The Deer Departed: An Elegy", which purported to be "By a follower of the late Royal Buckhounds". The final stanza ran:

Didst wonder since my love was such
I hunted thee so sore
I could not love thee, Deer, so much,
Loved I not Hunted more.¹⁶⁴

Another verse hinted at a point made by Stratton, in which the lines are; "No more ... Thou 'T frolic through suburban street/Pursued by Cockney crowd ...". Stratton thought the Royal Hunt "infinitely mischievous in that it – influenced "the lower classes to imitate the higher". His was a plea for the 'Aristocratic ladies and gentlemen ... [to] ... exercise self denial, refrain from amusement which works harm to the community."¹⁶⁵

The reaction to the campaign was violent and, relative to the League's work, ill organised. The hounds were already the target of criticism amongst the hunters because the mastership was a political appointment, "sometimes a Conservative minister chased the stag, sometimes a Liberal"¹⁶⁶ and because it attracted social climbers. Lord Randolph Churchill called the followers of the Buckhounds "counterjumpers of London that class of person who were dominated by the generic term of 'Arry'.¹⁶⁷ *The Field*, which later closed ranks and disowned the article, published a piece in which the writer equated the hunting of carted deer with the bull baiting and said that "nothing but the prescription and aegis of royal

patronage have saved it from being consigned to limbo.” He went on to argue that there would be an outcry if badgers were caught aniseeded, and then given a five minutes start over a pack of terriers, yet the badger would be better able to defend itself than the de-horned buck of modern staghunting that “sails” in a river or shelters in a cowshed. Furthermore, the badger was more wild than the park reared deer.¹⁶⁸

In 1894 the Sporting League was founded in Workingham. That this was the home of Stratton was probably of less significance than the fact that the town had a long association with bull-baiting. The object of this League was “the protection, support and improvement of all legitimate sports, pastimes and recreations”.¹⁶⁹ It published “an imaginary interview with the famous stag Guy Fawkes in which he is represented as hugely enjoying the chase”.¹⁷⁰ The interview was published three weeks after the stag was shot following its being disembowelled on a fence. Also of doubtful publicity to the Sporting League was the shooting of Stratton’s house and the abusive letters that he received due to his work.¹⁷¹ In 1899 the Kaiser visited England and was invited to witness a meet but, following pressure from the League, (they sent a letter to the Prince of Wales), the Kaiser did not attend. Had he been present he would have seen a deer “staked and done to death in the manner which was far from uncommon”.¹⁷² The hunters had more success in Parliament when in 1900 stag hunting and rabbit coursing were specifically exonerated from the Cruelty to Wild Animals in Captivity Act.

Opposition to the League came from another quarter as well. “What has become of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals that it never seems to have made a persistent stand against this barbarity in high places?”¹⁷³ asked Stratton. Five years later John Colam, secretary of the R.S.P.C.A., did write to the Prime Minister but, in 1901 when the fate of the Buckhounds was in the balance, he told Salt that the Society was unable to take any public action as that might alienate subscribers including the Royal patron. As Salt said of him “He would have made a successful Prime Minister” as he was wily and had a “reputation for astuteness” however, “as a humanitarian he left something to be desired”.¹⁷⁴ The R.S.P.C.A members included pigeon shooters, rabbit coursers, stag hunters and the headmaster of Eton who favoured beagling.

The outcome of the campaign was a partial victory for the League. Following the accession of Edward VII, the League publicised the letter from the late Queen which Stratton had received a decade earlier. This “settled the fate of the Buckhounds”.¹⁷⁵ A Parliamentary Select Committee which had been appointed to make economies in the Royal Household decided to abolish the Buckhounds. This was done “on Royal insistence”¹⁷⁶ according to one historian, but the reason given by the Committee was one of cost; £6,000 a year was saved by the abolition. Consideration was briefly given to the idea that a pack of fox hounds be substituted but this was abandoned and so the Conservative Government ended an institution which had survived since Plantagenet times. However, the hunting of carted deer continued and when, in 1910, the R.S.P.C.A. tried to prosecute Cambridge undergraduates for this they failed to win the case.

The League’s other major campaign against bloodsports was their long running opposition to hare hunting by Etonians. This took the form of a memorial to the Governing Body of Eton College; the publication of a *Supplement to Humanity* of May 1897 consisting of extracts from the *Eton College Chronicle* which were written by the pupils about their beagling exploits and letters to the Headmaster, Dr. Warre. The fact that the R.S.P.C.A. had, in March 1902, condemned the Eton College Beagles as “contrary to the principles” of the Society and yet allowed Warre to remain a member of Windsor branch, was scathingly denounced by Salt, protracted correspondence on this subject being published in *The Times*, *Standard*, *Morning Leader* and other papers.¹⁷⁷ This campaign also allowed Salt to be tempted into satire. In 1907 two members of the *Beagler Boy*, a journal by two Old Etonians¹⁷⁸ which ostensibly had the purpose of “saving a gallant school sport from extinction”, was published by the League. The *Sportsman* found it “a publication – after our own heart” and “far more interesting and invigorating than anything we are capable of”. The *British Medical Journal* praised it in a long dissertation on “Boys and Beagles,” whilst it was also welcomed by *Sporting Life*, *Horse and Hound* and the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*. A year after *The Beagler Boy* was published Mr. Ching Ping who was, he claimed, a Chinaman visiting England, wrote to the headmaster at Eton, offering to conduct a Chinese Mission to Eton. The Etonians were organising a mission to give the Chinese “an opportunity of the best education and of learning Christianity”. Ching Ping offered to bring “a message of humanity and civilisation to your young barbarians of the West.” The correspondence was widely circulated, including in China itself, much to the amusement of Salt.¹⁷⁹

More caustically, Salt borrowed and expanded upon the work of Gray. His *Fragment of An Ode On The Extremely Distant Prospect of Humane Reform At Eton College* including words used by Etonians in describing their activities and stressed the pain inflicted in pursuit of this “boyish pastime”.¹⁸⁰

The League failed to institute a drag hunt at the school, Eton tradition being too much for them to overcome.

They also attempted to stop rabbit coursing and deer and partridge shooting, the subjects of their and fourth pamphlets.¹⁸¹ In the former, by R.H. Jude, the appeal is to working class machismo as perceived by the middle-class, graduate, author:

A manly thing properly means a thing worthy of a man! Because the lion, impelled by hunger, lies in wait for the antelope, which he kills with scarcely any pain, is that any reason why a human being for the mere fun of the thing should inflict prolonged torture upon stag, fox, hare or rabbit ... to torture defenceless creatures is not manly but is the extreme of meanness and cowardice.¹⁸²

Jude did, however, equate tiger hunting with manliness. This is “doubtless an exciting pastime” said Salt, he went on; “what of that other tiger that lurks in the heart of us and how is he going to be eliminated, so long as a savage lust for killing is a recognised form of amusement?”¹⁸³ Salt was not making a direct reference to Jude, but to “big game hunting,” the inconsistency of the latter is surprisingly though. Jude took side swipes at gambling and mainstream Christianity. The one was “hardly the sort of amusement that is good for any man”. The other, hypocritical because it saw a clergyman smoking an occasional cigar, without harming any living creature, as sinful, yet ignored the “sheer evil” of coursing. Jude, in traditional terms, attacked their tradition:

We ask you to think of the agony you cause the rabbits, and we beseech you, in the name alike of your country, your manhood and your religion to give over and induce your friends and fellow workmen to give over this vile amusement.¹⁸⁴

The last four pages of the pamphlet were an eye witness account, first published in a local newspaper, of rabbit coursing. It was written by a country gentleman, J.P. and former hunter, Colonel W.L.B. Coulson.

Appealing to the other end of the social scale from ‘working-men’, was another fervent convert;

A sort of “Admirable Crichton” among women, a poet, a novelist, an explorer, a war correspondent a splendid horse-woman, a convincing platform speaker, a swimmer of great endurance and as keen a humanitarian as ever lived.¹⁸⁵

- Lady Florence Dixie. Author of a twelve page pamphlet devoted to descriptions of her own hunting and shooting exploits she had an emotive style as she recounted,

The terror-stricken orb of the red deer, dark, full of tears, glaring at me with mute reproach as it sobbed its life away.¹⁸⁶

This was popular enough to be “quoted in every part of the English speaking world”¹⁸⁷ a fact which might have comforted the correspondence to *Humanity* who wrote in disgust at the conduct of

Ladies of gentle birth and high culture who take pleasure in sport

and asked

One wonders what our Hindoo sisters think of the Christian women of England and their participation in cruel cold blooded slaughter ...¹⁸⁸

This was a period of great popularity in bloodsports as, owing to the agricultural depression and the increase in ostentatiously wealthy people, a large acreage of arable land was turned over to rearing birds and animals to be killed. The League was opposing the prevailing cultural ethic and recognised that recourse to the law could not lead to the legislating ‘goodness’ but would at least protect the weak and be used against the perpetrators of gross inhumanity. It did experience a victory against a public body, the

Buckhounds, but not a private one, Eton. Also the League maintained the pressure for widespread change to occur not through scientific progress but through legislation and education. The League pointed out that 'true' naturalists did not shoot the object of their study but watched, drew or photographed them, but this argument was insufficient to stop hunting of game. As Ernest Bell, wrote, commenting upon the claim that photography could put an end to vivisection:

No invention will stop it. There are only two ways to do that. One is to forbid it absolutely by law under heavy penalty, the other is to create so strong a feeling against the cruelties and meanness which it involves that its advocates will be ashamed to carry it on.¹⁸⁹

A specific aspect of the ethos which humanitarians sought to counter was the profit motive. This was the link behind a variety of forms of cruelty:

The idea of profit precedes and transcends all ideas of kindness of humanity. Under the iron law of competition there is very little margin for humaneness, it does not pay; it is not to be thought except as a superfluous bit of sentiment. The wretched cabman or carman was savagely flogs his horse and is perhaps prosecuted for so doing is often himself sweated and over-driven by his employer and though this does not justify his conduct it largely accounts for it.

(v) Women and work

Although the League's opposition to sweating was "quite as much in the cause of animals as it is in the cause of men",¹⁹⁰ it is to women that they turned when they considered this subject.

That the League produced in 1896 a pamphlet on *The Sweating System*¹⁹¹ is of no surprise given that it was the subject of both a House of Lords Committee report and also dealt with by a Royal Commission on labour in 1894.¹⁹² Both the majority and the minority reports of the latter recommended a tightening up of the law as regards the registration and inspection of all work places. The minority commission; which included William Abraham, James Mawdsley and Tom Mann; put "the reform of the sweated trades" at the top of list of "the most pressing necessities of the industrial situation".¹⁹³

The solution that the League's Maurice Adams proposed was not unlike that of his fellow Fabian Sidney Webb, a member of the Commission. Webb, arguing from the incalculable benefits which factory legislation had brought to the cotton workers of Lancashire, maintained "that it is of the highest importance that the extension of public control in the better organised industries should be accompanied by an extension of that control in the degraded industries".¹⁹⁴ Adams wrote of "the great factory, with its cleanliness and thorough organisation of labour [where] ... adequate inspection and efficient public control are possible. The ever-increasing concentration of capital and organisation of labour is fast preparing the way for the municipalisation and nationalisation of industry generally ... the really efficient economic cure for sweating is to hasten the evolution of those backward industries and secure their organisation under public control".¹⁹⁵

The League went beyond Webb, in recognising that legislation tended to increase the amount of homework which was less amenable to effective public control. Adams suggested that sweating was "also due to the imperfect moral development of the people".¹⁹⁶ He was not blaming the victims, rather this indicates League belief in the progressive movement of society. Social Darwinism would give way to "rational organisation and co-operation" and "control of the individual by the whole".¹⁹⁷ The sympathy of the advantaged for the disadvantaged was growing and for,

"the full solution of the problem of sweating, as of all the other problems of social life we must look forward to the growth of sympathy, guided by reason which shall work vigorously to discover their causes; and having discovered these shall intelligently organise the whole of life in accordance with Insight and Love".¹⁹⁸

Webb saw sweating in terms of arrested economic development. Adams took this point, recognising that "We must look to collective and State action to do the greater part of work mitigating and destroying sweating"¹⁹⁹ and then added the less tangible notion of arrested moral development.

The League also produced pamphlets on *Dangerous Trades For Women* and *Women's Wages And The Conditions Under Which They Are Earned*.²⁰⁰ These two, like that of Adams who pointed out that "woman is *par excellence*, the sweated one,²⁰¹ insisted that working-class women were isolated from both their working class brothers and their middle class sisters, that patriarchal oppression cut across class oppression. In his list of reasons why certain people were victims of sweating, Adams included sex as a distinctive category, and Isabella Ford ended her pamphlet on womens' wages with the words "freedom is what women cry for, not philanthropy".²⁰² The idea of oppression due to racial prejudice, (many sweated labourers were Jewish immigrants), appears not to have occurred to the League.

The League concentrated on jobs in which a high proportion of the workforce were women, such as the match-making trade and particularly the firm of Bryant and May. The "match girls'" dramatic strike for two weeks in July, 1888 had been greatly aided by League member Annie Besant but, since its conclusion, the company had gained a great deal of good publicity. By the 1890's writers treated Bryant and May as a model company, both in terms of technological innovation and in terms of its relationship with its employees. The union presented little challenge to the paternalistic company and contemporary writers referred to the company officials being polite, helpful and concerned for the workforce.²⁰³ However, in 1892 *The Star*, (which was edited by League member H. W. Massingham, had supported the strikers in 1888 and had printed the letters of Annie Besant then), revealed cases of 'phossy jaw'.²⁰⁴ These necrosis cases were only found among Bryant and May workers, despite investigations at other factories. *The Star* ran a campaign to change conditions at the works. This included appeals to shareholders and the publication of a list of the shareholders.²⁰⁵ In spite of the publicity in 1892 little came of the exposé. The Humanitarian League publicised further the findings of *The Star* and added details of dangers to workers in White Lead factories, in the making of artificial flowers and fur capes, in the chemical, steel, stone, linen and china and pottery trades and in the blowing of glass.

The message of the League was clearly set out in the title of the first subsection of the pamphlet, "Social Responsibilities".²⁰⁶ In this Mallet wrote; "the one duty of employers is plain to aim at the complete protection of the worker who, ... is entirely at [the] employer's mercy". Her solution was to purchase matches from the Salvation Army. There the female employees worked nine hours a day with no overtime and received from 10/- to 16/- per week; a rate reported as three fifths higher than that received in neighbouring match factories. Only harmless red phosphorus was used, since the factory produced safety matches.²⁰⁷ Mallet referred to the workforce as "some of our brothers and sisters" but devoted tow paragraphs to the manager of the works. She clearly saw that her "first duty" as "a true humanitarian reformer" was "to fight the battle of freedom for those who are in mental or physical bondage, and who are unable to fight it for themselves". Her identification as a middle class woman, with the oppressed was made explicit in her final paragraph when she specially commended the study of "this urgent and terrible question" to the Women's Liberal Associations of Great Britain" who she felt ought to help create "a sound public opinion and thus stop the suffering".²⁰⁸

In fact, effective reform was largely a by-product of economic circumstance and technological innovation rather than of humanitarian appeals for governmental action. Bryant and May only demanded the banning of British and imported white phosphorus matches after they had acquired the patent and begun production of matches using the harmless compound of phosphorus sesqui sulphide in 1900. It was only from 1910 that an Act of Parliament prohibited the making, importing or selling of white phosphorus matches.²⁰⁹ The pressure to correct abuses did diminish incidents of 'phossy jaw' but the Government never allocated sufficient resources to enforce legislation designed to eliminate it. The League cannot however, be dismissed merely because it was not the primary agent of change. It recognised, as for example the Anti-Sweating League did not, that many women valued the 'independence' which homework brought and that they often relied upon those who oppressed them. It therefore stressed the need to change attitudes towards the responsibilities of the community so that acceptance of its 'charity' did not necessitate loss of self-respect, or financial independence. "The interests of the whole community are identical ... a nations health is its wealth ... it is practically impossible for workpeople to insist upon that ... " wrote Mallet in her opening paragraph.²¹⁰ The League for the long term advocated a broader concept of change than merely outlawing dangerous trades. In the short term it publicised "the agony [which was] endured simply in order that wax vestas and other common matches may be sold at street corners for an abnormally low price!".²¹¹

Isabella Ford, as one might expect from a member of the I.L.P. executive, the Women's Freedom League and the Adult Suffrage Society, took a more radical and distinctive line than Louise Mallet, of the Womens Liberal Federation, when it came to opposition to dangerous trades, "Laws, Conventions,

conditions of work everything is against working women". Ford proved this contention by quoting wages and conditions not of the homeworkers but of the better-off mill workers. Her sources included the recent Labour Commission and showed widespread illegal and exorbitant fines and unhealthy conditions of work. "The Remedy" which covered the final two and a half pages of this seventeen page pamphlet was that the conditioning of women had, wrote this comfortably off Quaker, to be reversed. She went on;

"We must teach these women to rebel, not to submit. We must arouse them to a better value of their own worth, their own infinite value. We must stir within them a discontent which will make them loath their surroundings and make them insist on obtaining happiness and rest. We must show them that it is one of the most selfish of crimes to submit to injustice, since each of these submissions adds a link to the chain of slavery flattening all working women, not in England only but all over the world."

Just as Carpenter held that if you gave people sties they would behave like pigs so Ford held "that in order to make people good and intelligent ... [one must] ... not snub them into badness and stupidity". In common with others in the League Ford held that "better things are coming", citing trade union member for women as an example. She looked though to her own class "the purely philanthropic and Orthodox people" for changes in themselves. They must be shown the misery of "the voteless and therefore voiceless"²¹² and they must be prepared to relinquish some of their power.

(vi) The range of campaigns

League work covered *The Cruel Treatment of Fish*, *The Cramming of Strasburg Geese* and a number of other specific abuses.²¹³ It also produced pamphlets on broad issues, *The Shadow of the Sword* by the leading secularist G. W. Foote and *International Arbitration: Its Necessity and Its Practicability* by the President of the International Arbitration and Peace Association, Hodgson Pratt, being two of these.²¹⁴ Despite the differences between a condemnation of fishing and one of warfare the tone in all was derived from the same philosophical basis, and essentially similar moral assumptions. Foote announced that he was not trying to alter human nature but was trying to appeal to "self interest which is eternal; to humanity which is as ancient as the first face which saddened at another's suffering; to reason which existed in man's progenitors, and in the growth of which lies his only intelligible freedom".²¹⁵ Collinson, author of *The Cruel Treatment of Fish* makes the point that "there is no justification whatever for such wanton treatment of fish – not even the base one of utility ... humane treatment would financially benefit the trader ...".²¹⁶

Foote attacked stock Humanitarian League targets and supplied solutions similar to those offered in circumstances other than war. War, he considered to be the "game of sovereigns and statesmen"²¹⁷ who, by their "Villainous Laws," forced soldiers to fight or starve. They "loved Militarism and hate Industrialism" and worked on the "patriarchal principle" standing armies being "legacies of Feudalism" and "relics of monarchy."

Foote thought, that "the wisest plan is to hate the institution [of war] and pity its members" [soldiers]. Once more the League produced statistics; "the last century's butchers' bill"; favoured sources, Bright, *The Times*, and Byron; and the belief that "Nature quietly burns and conceals" and "that there is instinctive justice and mercy"²¹⁸ within human beings. Pratt demanded an international court to avoid conflict by arms and asked all reasonable people to "take this sacred cause in hand and arouse everywhere such a universal demand that what all nations need shall now be secured for them".²¹⁹ Foote ended on a more sombre note, comparing Europe with Damocles. He repeated the ancient tale and then pointed out:

"Europe likewise sits at its feast of life but the fatal weapon overhead mars its felicity. Serpents twine in the dance, arms clash in the song, the meats have a strange savour, there is a demonic sparkle in the wine and a poisonous bitterness in the dregs of the cup. All is darkened by the Shadow of the Sword."²²⁰

(vii) Summary

The campaigns that the League waged were largely unsuccessful. Capital punishment and the hunting of carted deer continued for another half century. Most other forms of hunting still continue, as does meat-eating, 'cruel' fashions, the large amount of poorly paid work done by non-unionised women, and

vivisection. The Poor Law has been superseded, hospitals taken into public ownership and horses are better treated but the part which the League played in these three changes was minimal.

The programme of the League was structured so that it was both over-ambitious; the Boer War and Great War were fought despite the League; and too narrow, the League spent a decade trying to stop the state sponsored carted deer hunt in the erroneous belief that such a move would lead to more anti-hunt legislation. This programme meant that although a huge number of causes were espoused, the underlying theme was the same. Whether it was warfare or fishing the solution was perceived as being identical. The tangible results of the League were few; its role as a net for the 'progressive movement', full of holes but enmeshing many causes, was more significant. The League recognized this in part: "We are painfully conscious of the many things left undone and ... We think we may congratulate ourselves on having brought social reformers and zoophilists into line." The League created in its campaign work a practical example of the radical-liberal world view, for this it had few supporters, little influence, and "no advantage of any sort except that of the rightness of their principle".²²¹

The most successful League campaigns were ones which sought minor changes in government administration. The changes bore little relation to the League vision of a humane society. The League failed to plan a route between the two.

SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE LEAGUE: Footnotes

(i) Introduction

1. Manifesto of the Humanitarian League. This was printed at the end of many of their publications. See, for example, I.O. Ford, *Women's Wages and the Conditions Under Which They are Earned*, (1893), p. 18.

(ii) The campaign to change the criminal law and penal code

(a) The outline

2. *The Humane Review*, April 1900, p. 2.

(b) The dominant League personalities

3. The other sections were for Sports, Humane Diet, and Lectures to Children. In 1897 The Humane Diet Department broadened to include 'Dress' as well, and a year later the Indian Department was added. *Fifth Annual Report*.
4. Collinson wrote *The Flogging of Vagrants, Facts About Flogging, 'Lawlessness on The Bench'* and an open letter to the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone, which was later a pamphlet *Imprisonment for Debt*. To this last he added the comments of twelve judges one registrar, one stipendary magistrate, one recorder, a lawyer, solicitors, a civil servant, two M.P.'s, and thirty journals in support of his argument.
5. *Humanitarian*, May 1910. See also the letter to Edward Carpenter quoted in G. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.
6. S. Winsten, *Salt and his Circle*, (1951), p. 122.
7. S. Winsten, *ibid.*, p. 116.
8. H. S. Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 140.
9. H. S. Salt, (1921), *ibid.*, p. 161. A more dramatic example of this is the Admiral who challenged Salt to a duel over birching and supported the League in their protest over the feeding of live prey to snakes at London Zoo. H. S. Salt, *ibid.*, pp. 138-9.
10. H. S. Salt, (1921), *ibid.*, p. 144.
11. H. S. Salt, (1921), *ibid.*, p. 175.
12. 'Brutalitarian' was a word invented by Salt, 'Flagellomania' was invented by Shaw. Both words did 'yeoman service' for the League. H. S. Salt, (1921), *ibid.*, p. 161.
13. *The Brutalitarian*, October 1904, No. 1.
14. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 174.
15. *The Humanitarian*, September 1919, p. 164.
16. G. D. Robin, Pioneers in Criminology; William Douglas Morrison 1852-1943, *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science*, Vol. 55, No. 1. March 1964, p. 49.

(c) The campaign for changes in penal administration

17. S. and B. Webb, *English Prisons Under Local Government*, (1922), p. 188-92.
18. J. E. Thomas, *The English Prison Officer Since 1850*, (1922), p. 28.
19. J. E. Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 113.
20. C. H. Hopwood K.C., M.P., *A Plea for Mercy to Offenders*, (1894 revised 1902 – all references are to this later edition unless otherwise stated).
21. There was a Report from a House of Lords Select Committee on this matter in 1863.
22. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 140.
23. A recent head of the Prison Department quoted by R. D. Fairn, *Prisons 1866-1966*, H. J. Klasse, (ed.), *Changing Crimes and Their Treatment*, (Oxford, 1966).
24. W. D. Morrison, The Increase in Crime, *Nineteenth Century*, No. 31, (1892), p. 950. E. F. Du Cann, The Decrease in Crime, *Nineteenth Century*, No. 33, (1893), p. 480.
25. Book Review, 53, *Nation*, 128, August 13 1891, quoted by G. D. Robin, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
26. S. Leslie (compiler), *Sir. E. Ruggles-Brise*, (1938), p. 89.
27. G. Rose, *The Struggle For Penal Reform*, (1961), p. 62.
28. C. H. Hopwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
29. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 142.
30. *The Humanitarian*, November 1907.
31. *The Humanitarian*, December 1901.
32. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 143.
33. The Home Secretary's Holiday quoted in G. Hendrick, *Henry Salt, Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*, (Illinois 1977), pp. 196-221.
34. *Humanity*, January 1886.
35. *The Humanitarian*, October 1910.
36. C. H. Hopwood, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
37. *Humanity*, December 1887.
38. E. Carpenter, *Prisons, Police and Parliament*, (1905), p. 40.
39. *The Humane Review*, January 1907, p. 222.

- 40 *Humanity*, January 1886.
41. Corporal punishment was restricted to mutiny, incitement to mutiny and gross personal violence to an officer. Sentence could only be passed by a Visiting Committee and had to be confirmed by the Home Secretary. G. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
42. Discussion on the inaccuracy of the figure of 11,000 presented by Du Cann, and why 8,770 is probably a more accurate figure in N. McLachlan, *Penal Reform and Penal History*. L. Blom-Cooper, (ed.), *Progress in Penal Reform*, (1974) p. 4, note 9.
43. The Home Secretary, Sir Mathew White Riley, March 3 1898, quoted in G. Rose *op. cit.*, p. 58.
44. *The Humane Review*, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
45. E. S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, (1931), p. 225, for the origins of the P.R.L. The links between the Prison Reform League and the Humanitarian League included the reprinting in *The Humanitarian* of a section of the P.R.L. Annual Report (1904) and the co-authorship of a book about miscarriages of justice by 'Investigator' (probably Monck) and St. John entitled *Crime and Commonsense*.
46. J. Liddington and J. Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, (1979), p. 121.
47. The Letter to the Home Secretary, *The Humanitarian*, January 1910.
48. *Twenty-Second Annual Report*.
49. *Twenty-Third Annual Report*.
50. *Twenty-Third Annual Report*.
51. G. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
52. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated).
53. *The Humanitarian*, May 1893, p. 34.
54. Viscountess Rhondda, *This Was My World*, (1933), p. 162, note 42.
55. *The Humanitarian*, July 1910, Its Italics.

(d) Capital punishment

56. T. Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, (1891).
- R. Kipling, *Danny Deever* "*Scots Observer*", (1890).
- G. Gissing, *New Grub Street*, (1891).
- 'The Savory' *The Ballad of a Barber*, (1896).
- O. Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, (1891).
- A. E. Houseman, *A Shropshire Lad*, (1896).
57. G. Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 202, cites an unpublished report of the Capital Sentence Committee (1888) which revealed some miscalculated hangings and cases of drunken executioners. A year earlier there had been the virtual abolition, by use of Prerogative, of execution of those under eighteen years of age.
58. R. Altick, *Victorian Studies in Scarlet*, (New York 1970), pp. 1259-280.
59. W. Tallock, *Howard Letters and Memories*, (1903), pp. 248-9.
60. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, *The Death Penalty*, (1905), p. 14.
61. *Humanity*, September 1899.
62. C. Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter, 1844-1929 Prophet of Human Fellowship*, (1890), p. 114.
63. I. Howe, (ed.), *G. Gissing, New Grub Street*, pp. 5-6
64. T. Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, (1891), ed. D. Sifton, pub. Penguin 1978, p. 489.
65. The poem "great in art and great in humanity" was attributed to "C33" of Reading from Wandsworth.

(e) Flogging

66. *The Prison Record*, No. 2, p. 1.
67. *Woman's Signal*, No. 2, January 4, 1894.
68. *The Prison Record*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
69. Reported in *Humanity*, April 1895, p. 21.
70. *The Prison Record*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
71. Sir Cotton, *Corporal Punishment in India: Whipping and Morality in Gaols*, (1905), p. 7.
72. *The Prison Record*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
73. H. S. Salt, (ed.), *Consolations of a Faddist*, (1906), p. 28.
74. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 138.
75. H. S. Salt, *The Case Against Corporal Punishment*, (1912), p. 29.
76. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 136.
77. C. H. Hopwood, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
78. H. S. Salt, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
79. *The Times*, 11th December 1902 and 27th December, 1902.
80. *The Humane Review*, October 1901, pp. 285-6.
81. The cause of the anti-garrotting scare is briefly outlined and modern parallels drawn in Hall S et al, *Policing The Crisis, Mugging, The State, and Law and Order*, (1978), pp. 4-5.
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179. - 202. – Missing (page 114 of the photocopy of the thesis that this was transcribed from is missing).
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(vi) The range of campaigns

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(vii) Summary

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THE PEOPLE IN THE LEAGUE

(i) Introduction

The hundreds of people who were members of the Humanitarian League during the twenty-nine years of its existence cannot all be traced. The evidence gathered about those whose activities have been recorded is that they had a number of similarities. They shared a common appreciation of literature and music, and showed unity in the face of general disparagement of the opinions and lifestyles of League members and those they strove to aid. There were ties between people who rejected evil, Divine Wrath and the aspect of modern technology in favour of compassion and an idyllic, natural world. Many League members were born within a decade of one another. Apart from sharing some or all of these values, members of the League were also almost exclusively middle class.

(ii) The social background of those in the League

Despite the lack of subscription lists or similar material the outline of League membership can be discerned. The conclusion, that the League was dominated by professional or lower middle-class activists, has been gained by a general survey of the economic background; a consideration of the implication of League ideas and activities; a study of contemporary organisations whose membership overlapped with that of the League, and a look at the social positions of prominent League members.

Inspired by an individualistic philosophy, the moral reform movement worked out a *modus vivendi* with state power until around 1880. As expectations of the state and of central government changed, that is, they were expected to take greater responsibility, so new concepts of pressure group politics developed and old ones were adapted. This was true not only in the sphere of animal politics but also in the prison reform movement. As has been noted, with the end of transportation in 1852 there developed the 'separate' system, the hardening of public attitudes towards the criminal in the sixties and greater centralisation of administration. The reformers emphasised an authoritarian approach to social policy and stressed coercion rather than persuasion. They, too, increasingly initiated campaigns from the centre, and laid down national standards. More and more, the driving force in social change became not the doctrine of personal activity, self help and private enterprise, but a desire for publicly funded answers to deep-rooted social questions.

The movement away from individualism was recorded by Beatrice Webb, who commented upon the decision of League members Canon and Mrs. Barnett to break with the Charity Organisation Society:

They had discovered for themselves that there was a deeper and more continuous evil than unrestricted and unregulated charity, namely unrestricted and unregulated capitalism and landlordism.¹

At the same time that the whole system, rather than a particular aspect of it, was under scrutiny, prices and profits fell, unemployment rose, industrial production ceased to expand, the export trade and home agriculture grew more slowly and Britain's rivals in economic enterprise – Germany and the U.S. – forged ahead. The middle class began to feel insecure and, whether the Great Depression 1813-1896 was an economic reality or not, it was certainly felt to be a reality at the time. The middle class was assailed by a rise in real wages, labour unrest, land legislation in Ireland designed to increase peasant ownership but which threatened property security on the mainland, and scientific proof from Booth and others of the depths of "depravity" and "degeneration" of inner-city London. The crisis for the middle class led to what Joll has called one of those

moments in history when ideas long discussed by intellectuals began to acquire political reality, when new forces appear that are capable of upsetting the balance of power between classes, as between states, when old doctrines and practices have gradually to be abandoned and existing society strains to come to terms with a new age.²

The crisis was perceived by educated middle class people as a crisis of meaning. Their reaction was, in part, mediated through the Humanitarian League.

League members were concerned to re-establish links with nature and the outdoor life. This was because they felt oppressed by their ownership of possessions. It was only those who had such goods who could

talk of “the endless distraction of material cares, the endless temptation of material pleasures [which] inevitably has the effect of paralysing the great free life.”³

There were middle class habits which the League adapted rather than rejected. Ernest Bell and Henry Salt held weekly meetings for over twenty-five years, not in a club or public house, but over tea in a vegetarian restaurant in London.⁴

A further pointer to the social quality of League members is the high esteem they had for the written word. Quite apart from the high proportion of the active members involved in the production of factual reports, both for official bodies and designed to sway such bodies, there were numerous plays, books, poems and sketches written by League members. These were seen as being of great benefit in the struggle to alter societal perceptions and preconceptions and so to liberate the oppressed. The high value they placed upon education, though not necessarily on their own formal education, gave them an ideology of creativity and of critical values which was at odds with the dominant ideology. Educated middle-class people tended to apply theories to their own lives, to emphasise rational rules of thought and to stress the conscious application of universal properties. This applied to other contemporary groups which respected the embedded moral rules. Studies of such groups as the vegetarians, the socialists and the members of the Fellowship of New Life have come to similar conclusions.⁵ Furthermore, members of the League were frequently in such organisations as the I.L.P., the Vegetarian Society and the Socialist League.

The evidence accumulated about individuals in the League fits into this general pattern. There were a number of leading journalists and editors, Parliamentarians and graduates in the League.⁶

There was also a significant number of middle class women in the League. To take an example, the Children’s Department executive of the League had nine members in 1897, seven of whom were women. One gave her address simply as ‘Highwood’, Romsey, and the others had similarly prestigious addresses.⁷ The two men were an old Etonian and a successful publisher.⁸ Of the twenty-one local secretaries, sixteen were women. They lived in Cheyne Walk, Cromwell Road, Bayswater and the royally favoured town of Ryde. That year, just under five hundred members contributed over four hundred pounds.⁹ An average urban family received under 30/- a week at that time; that is £78 per annum if they were in constant paid employment.¹⁰

There is also anecdotal corroborative evidence, which suggests a prevalent middle class frame of reference. Salt wrote, on the subject of flogging:

The horrors of the old navel and military lashings is within the memory of many officers who were compelled to witness them.¹¹

The Reverend Stratton wrote, in the 1898 *Annual Report*; “no more important work could be attempted than to visit the great public schools ...” The same report carried a “Bequest for Legacies” on the book cover; a hint of the wealth that readers were assumed to possess.

The League was being disingenuous in its self description as “a mere handful of workers with no funds at their disposal, no influential support, no special qualifications for their task and, in fact, no advantage of any sort except that of the rightness of their principle”. The League went on to say that in order to maintain its “perfect liberty of speech and action”, the League “avoided the creation of presidents or vice-presidents or any official patronage which might compromise our freedom”,¹² and although “satisfaction” was expressed that there were no “figureheads” but rather reliance “throughout not upon names but upon arguments”, there were still distinguished and well connected supporters and sympathisers who wrote, or lectured for, or sat on the committees of, the League.¹³

(iii) The bonds forged due to a common opposition to evangelical Protestantism

The 1890’s witnessed the rise of what Beatrice Webb called a “new consciousness of sin amongst men of intellect and property”. This was not a sense of “personal sin” but a “collective or class consciousness ... a growing uneasiness amounting to conviction that the industrial organisation which had yielded rent and interest-profits on a huge scale, had failed to provide a decent livelihood and tolerable conditions for a majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain”. This “sense of sin” was felt by such League members as Katherine St. John Glasier. She was in church in November 1887 when striking cotton workers occupied the church:

I had been praying for a fuller consciousness of the presence, and there they stood, sister-women, if the 'Our Father' were true ... "They stand between me and the Christ". So the thought smote me; so I see it still. Never shall any human being so long as the world suffers wrong know one moment's real communion with the mind of the Master till they have actually thrown in their lot with the poor and oppressed.¹⁴

There were others with similar experience in the League. They often also shared a rejection of the "revolting doctrine of eternal hell"; an admiration for the early Christian and socialist F. D. Maurice, and a friendly disposition towards others of a similar cast of mind, whether theist or not.¹⁵ Some of those who opposed the image of Jesus as a "man of sorrows"¹⁶ developed a number of new Christian groups.¹⁷ Others, who found Protestantism "too meagre, too earthly, too calculating in its accommodation to social conventionalities" such as Annie Besant did, left the Church.¹⁸ One of the former, Stewart Headlam, said that Cambridge "meant Maurice and little more".¹⁹ Henry Salt was also influenced by Maurice while at Cambridge, although he later became a rationalist, and Edward Carpenter was a curate who served Maurice when both were at Cambridge.²⁰ Moncure Conway, who left evangelism for secularism, wrote of "the pure face and earnest eyes ... the lofty brow and halo of white hair" of F.D. Maurice. Salt and Headlam maintained good relations with those in the other camp and another League member, the secularist George Holyoake, has been noted for "the number of cordial friendships he had with clergymen".²¹ Edward Maitland abandoned his plans to take orders but still presented Jesus as a shining youth "lovely and blooming, surrounded by vines and doves, lambs and fishes".²²

Both Christians and non-Christians often believed in an Inner Light within every person which linked all life and was the fountainhead of moral knowledge. This belief was ascribed to the New England Transcendentalists. One of them, R. W. Emerson "calls us back from dogma and precedent and rule to the images of God, impressed in our Souls", wrote Christian Socialist Stewart Headlam. Henry Salt considered the work of Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau "a revelation" and was persuaded to leave his teaching post at Eton, dismiss his servants and "adopt a simpler and more independent style of life" because of it.²³

The simplification of life was a major theme for many League members in their attempts to draw closer to nature.²⁴ The League's demand for greater access to the countryside was an expression of this. There were also a number of League members who derived inspiration from the Georgite land reform campaigns. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879) had an important section devoted to explaining how a change in the political economy could revitalise Christianity.²⁵ A love of George's Christian rhetoric or the pantheism of others in the League was not shared by all. W. H. Hudson wrote a romance, *The Crystal Age* (1897), which portrayed another world where people lived in vegetarian simplicity, close to Nature. Hudson, however, did not see in nature either a repository of encouraging humanitarian principles or the oneness of a Divine world. He still treated nature with "an impartiality which pets nothing and persecutes nothing".²⁶ Nature reflected harsh truths but they could ultimately be consoling and Hudson felt that nature could give pleasure as a purely non-metaphysical matter; God was not the hills, the hills were enjoyable on their own account. His essay *The Return of the Chiff Chaff* illustrates this as it criticises Arnold's *Dover Beach*. Arnold was "wrong when he listened to the waves on Dover Beach bringing the eternal notes of sadness in; when he saw in imagination the ebbing of the great sea of faith which had made the world so beautiful ... [his sadness] was due to the erroneous idea that our earthly happiness comes to us from other where, some region outside our planet." Salt persuaded Hudson to contribute to the first edition of *The Humane Review*. "The Dartford Warbler: How to Save Our Rare Birds" was followed by other articles and an early appreciation of his works, "The Nature Books of Mr. W.H. Hudson" by a figure well known in literary circles of the time, Edward Garnett, later appeared in the *Review*. Nature, even if not viewed in a pantheistic light, still acted as a salve for the distortions caused by the repudiation of the idea of a Wrathful Deity.

Another route taken by those disillusioned with a religion which emphasises "the painful mystery of dread",²⁷ was towards Eastern religions. Many became theosophists, Charlotte Despard made clear in *Theosophy and the Women's Movement* (1913) the connection she felt there was between the spiritual freedom offered by theosophy and the political freedom desired by the suffrage campaign. The interest in spiritual knowledge was common to many League members and theosophy valued it particularly highly.

People in the League desired an escape from, what Belfort Bax called, the "hotbed of Calvinism" which was often their childhood fate. They sought in *The Religion of Nature*, (the title of a book by Japp), *The*

Religion of Socialism (this was written by Bax in 1885) and in “the coming creed ... a religion of humanity” (Henry Salt).²⁸ The League sought not coercion, as this would brutalise its perpetrators, but rather, “a change of heart” in order to “liberate us from our bondage”.²⁹ Such changes would not be ‘manly’. The opposition to evangelism in part explains the other major force which united those in the League – a desire to enhance the image of women and of “the feminine”.

(iv) Opposition to “The Manly Folk”

Femininity, within the prevailing cultural archetype, was concerned with wholeness, gentleness, co-operation, rather than competition, and nurturing rather than dominating life. The League members found masculinity detached, analytic, rational and, all too often, without emotion or imagination.

Symbolic associations frequently put vegetarian food, the diet of many League members, into the female category. One study of this suggested that there was a scale from carnivorous animals (too strong) down through red meat; heavy, hot, cooked meals; poultry; fish; eggs and cheese; to cereals (too weak). The grammar of conventional eating, like the grammar of conventional sport, put the League on the “female” side.³⁰ The obverse of this was to suggest that meat eating simulated the non-spiritual side of the human character, making people carnally-minded, violent and aggressive. The involvement in killing, even at second-hand, militated against the life of the spirit, fractured the harmony of nature and, as Edward Maitland put it, drew a “veil of blood” between the individual and holiness.³¹ Edward Carpenter believed that meat, which he only rarely ate,

has a tendency to inflame the subsidiary centres and so diminish central control.

He felt there was a need for balance within the body (including balance of sexual desire) and that flesh foods contained “highly wrought organic forces”. These might, he believed:

liberate within our system powers which we may find difficult or even impossible to dominate – lethargic monsters, foul harpies, and sad-visaged lemurs – which may insist on having their way, building up an animal body, not truly human.³²

Bernard Shaw called meat-eating “cannibalism with the heroic dish omitted”, and fellow League Josiah Oldfield wrote of the way the “custom of flesh eating diminishes our natural horror of cannibalism”.

League members lived according to moral precepts which did not give them an image of red blooded virility.

League members often made associations between male power in the public and in the private arena. These left it with feminine traits. Annie Besant, for example, publicly fought for greater freedom for women as potential child bearers (in her 1877 ‘obscenity’ trial), and as workers (a decade later at ‘Bryant and May’). She then extended this critique to animals in laboratories. She strove for a more positive attitude towards the ‘feminine’ attributes which were ascribed to her and to the League. She was not alone in her position. Emilia Augusta Louise Lind-af-Hageby was active in the League, author of *Women’s Right to Work* (1920) and active in the Animal Defence and Antivivisection Society founded in 1906 “on the principle that the cause of humanity to animals is not a side issue but a vital part of civilisation and social development”. Lind-af-Hageby too went to court to gain publicity. In 1911 she helped set up a shop in Piccadilly in the window of which was a display showing a dog fixed to a board and a vivisector about to operate. She claimed that she was libelled by a member of the Research Defence Society (who set up a counter exhibition next door) and in the ensuing court case she “revealed the most brilliant piece of advocacy that the Bar has known since the days of Russell, though”, the *Nation* went on, “it was entirely conducted by a women”. She spoke for thirty-two hours in court and raised over seven thousand pounds in an appeal for funds – she lost the case – a sum which put her over £500 in the black. Here strength derived from that which was seen as a weakness; that is, her ‘feminine’ belief that,

the fact that science, so-called, is now predominant ... in no way alters spiritual law.³³

Such ideas were strengthened and transmitted by Tolstoy and his acolytes in the League, Ernest Crosby, J. C. Kenworthy, and his translator, Aylmer Maude being the most notable. Tolstoy’s advocacy of vegetarianism was bound up with his desire for a higher human spirituality and a corresponding reduction in carnality. According to Salt, Tolstoy wrote *The First Step* as an introduction to a translation of League

member Howard Williams' *Ethics of Diet*. Tolstoy also took up the theme that the land belonged to everybody and ideally people ought to work communally upon it, in direct contact with nature.

League members Mona Caird and Thomas Hardy both challenged the traditional concepts of the feminine role by showing in their literary work how the socially sanctioned structure of marriage discriminated against women, and by creating heroines who were vital and sexually aware.

These two novelists need to be distinguished from the less radical 'purity school' novelists such as Salt and Shaw's friend, Grant Allen, author of the notorious *The Women Who Did*.³⁴ Allen tried to explain that his writing was supposed to be of the variety "which raises a protest in favour of purity".³⁵ However, his conception of purity, like that of Hardy in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: The Story of a Pure Women*, was not a popular one, and the term was used ironically. In "purity" novels the bold, independent girl with decided opinions upon a particular social problem – in this case marriage and the "woman question" – used her mind, and her honesty, to solve the problem, i.e. by a non-hypocritical marriage. The woman did not shirk topics such as V.D., prostitution or adultery and she strove to eliminate the need for men to 'protect' her innocence. The "New Woman" of this school rejected the absurdities of an imposed feminine delicacy but maintained a belief in the traditional structure of sexual relationships, sexual morality and feminine fulfilment.

Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy and Hadria in *The Daughters of Danaus* by Mona Caird had more radical ideas of fulfilment; the writers being more aware of the sexual motivation of women, the psychological problems arising from attempts at emancipation and the problems of monogamous relationships. Both heroines were unconventional, freethinking and initially opposed to marriage as a profession. The ideas of personal purity, self-sacrifice and devotion to duty were closely linked to orthodox Christianity. Both Hadria and Sue rejected such religion only to return to a form of it in their attempts to rid themselves of their socially unacceptable ideas. The novels did not offer an encouraging picture of what the practical results of certain reforms would be but they are not merely simplistic, sensational propaganda.

Hadria drifts into marriage – despite her objections that it is frequently a form of institutionalising ill-formed judgements – in order to escape from home. The marriage is socially ideal, yet it represents an end of hope for Hadria who fluctuates between efforts to escape it and efforts to submit to it. Caird was concerned to show how individual bids for emancipation must finally be frustrated by powers of social convention. The rejection of the most sacrosanct of feminine characteristics – the maternal instincts, the running away to Paris, the rejection of social acceptability, were not enough to help Hadria. Wider reform was needed.³⁶

The League also gained the qualified sympathy of George Meredith and League member Sydney Olivier contributed a lecture to the Fabians as an article for *The Humane Review* of October 1900. Olivier observed:

that Woman and what is called the woman question is really at the centre of Meredith's interest in human society.³⁷

an idea echoed almost a quarter of a century later by Stevenson who declared "Meredith is my leader and I fight under his colours". Fellow League member Laurence Houseman added "those who are working for women's suffrage might well make the phrase their own."³⁸

Meredith achieved "what philosophers strove to do through generalisation and what preachers tried to attain through dogma", wrote Olivier, "he freed the will and thus allowed new ideas room in which to develop. "But always", Olivier warned in conclusion, "the new forms must come up through the desires of formal life, and out of the hidden vigour of nature. This is, from the direction which Meredith typifies in *Woman and the People*".³⁹

Meredith himself joined the League towards the end of his life, sending a subscription for its campaign against spring traps for rabbits and adding: "on a point or two of your advocacy I am not in accord with you".⁴⁰ He felt that "the good cause of sport has to be cleansed of blood and cruelty",⁴¹ and that he was "all for religion, but not the religion of the creeds".⁴² Meredith still refused to sign a petition for the release from prison of Oscar Wilde, as he felt that "abnormal sensuality in a leader of men was a crime." He also refused to sign another petition, presented to him by League activist Lord Coleridge which opposed

vivisection – only signing when presented with an amended version calling for the use of anaesthetics on the “sacrificial victims”.⁴³

League members were tied to one another by traditional social bonds in so far as they often came from the same social class. Voluntarily they linked themselves by the stronger tie of opposition to those whom Salt dubbed ‘The Manly Folk’.⁴⁴

(v) The bonds created by attitudes of nature

There were a multitude of conflicting views on nature held by antivivisectionists, vegetarians, Simple Lifers and others marked out by their opinions on this subject. The attitudes of the League members were largely distinct from those of other groups. A network was created which unified League members in this respect, just as they were distinguishable by their positions on Orthodox Christianity and ‘masculine attributes’.

R. D. French suggests that the antivivisectionist movement was led by the traditional Tory, literary and Anglican elite, and that vegetarians tended to have different politics (liberal and progressive), different class origins (lower middle, upper working class) and more unorthodox attitudes to religion.⁴⁵ The League attracted a number of people from both groups. It appears to have been dominated by the latter.

Antivivisectionists tended to single out dogs, cats and horses for their particular attention, as their proposed legislation made clear. The League member Edward Maitland deplored special provision for pets as ‘utterly unworthy’. Salt scorned sentimental people who wept into their seal skin coats at the suffering of old cab horses, and then when home to eat meat.⁴⁶ Edward Carpenter too had more than surface sympathy for animals:

I saw deep in the eyes of the animals the human soul look up at me.⁴⁷

This inclusion of all sentient life forms within their scope marked out the League socially. Their attitude towards the traditional, often religiously inspired, idea of human dominion over animals also separated them from others. Salt refuted the charge that responsibility towards animals was different in kind to responsibility towards people, saying that it was, in fact, a matter of degree.⁴⁸ Shaw proposed the idea that there was a right to know whether the knowledge gained was derived by cruel means or not.⁴⁹ The moral authority of science and of religion was denied in a way that the antivivisectionists would not have deemed fit.

The political scope of League members also often put them beyond the pale with regard to socially prestigious convention. R. B. Cunningham-Grahame, for example, was born into the upper class but became a socialist agitator. He wrote evocative descriptions of nature in Scotland and the many other countries he visited, and also a memorable account of ‘Bloody Sunday’, 1888. He “had a deep sense of the sadness and futility of much human life with an awareness of the stoical dignity with which many humble people bear hardship and injustice”. He also “had a bitter contempt for those laws, institutions, prejudices and fashions that perpetuated inequality and injustice”.⁵⁰

The distinctive League view of nature was strengthened by literature. That of Thomas Hardy carried a number of League ideas. In part he did this through the use of the ideas of Shelley, a respected figure in League circles.⁵¹ Salt viewed Shelley as the finest of lyric poets and, more importantly perhaps, the one who

devoted the whole power of his genius to the cause of the people ... Alike in social questions, politics and religion, he was an ardent and uncompromising champion of the people’s rights and true liberty of thought and action ...⁵²

Shelley advocated vegetarianism on the grounds that moral and physical wellbeing derived from a natural diet. “Crime is madness. Madness is disease.”⁵³ Vegetarianism, unlike a legislative change, struck at the root of the problem, “the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart”. He was concerned only tangentially with animal mistreatment, being more interested in the economic arguments for the diet and with an Edenic dream of a cruelty free world. Salt adopted his vegetarianism, his rationalism and his belief that wealth, particularly urban wealth, lead to degeneration, from Shelley. He wrote several articles in *Justice* and *Humanity* for example, as well as three books on Shelley.

In *Jude and Obscure* the two principal characters feel initially that they have “perfect ... reciprocity”,⁵⁴ that they are two halves of a single whole. Their co-habitation is like the vision of Shelley’s *Epipsychidion* which was an important source for the novel. Both Hardy and Shelley grappled with the problem of opposition to the institution of marriage and an inclination to favour a vision of two people with twin souls freely committed to one another.⁵⁵ Mona Caird proposed a more flexible and personalised contractual relationship between two people; a fact of which Hardy was probably aware as he introduced an article on marriage by her in *Contemporary Review*, 1890.⁵⁶ *Epipsychidion*, which Sue invokes, is about a love which evokes itself in transcendence of a prison.⁵⁷

Typical League motifs are suggested, of social controls creating prisons for the mind, and of aspirations to comradeship. The literary tradition is clear. Salt, in particular in the League, set himself the task of making intelligible the lives and works of writers with ideas like his own. The “rediscovery” of Shelley was an overtly political act, and part of the creation of the League ambience.

Suffragist and League supporter Millicent Garret Fawcett wrote to Hardy in 1892 suggesting that he write a short story “showing how the trifling with the physical element in love leads to corruption”. Hardy pointed out, in reply, that this had already been done in general and more specific details would be needed to do “the thing well”. However, “This I fear the British public would not stand just now; though to be sure, we are educating it by degrees”.⁵⁸ Such gradualism was a hallmark of League work and, in the later poems, Hardy controlled his anger as if in recognition of the slowness with which the virtues he espoused developed within humans with their minds on other matters. This generalisation is true even of the strongly worded *The Lady in the Furs* – one of his last poems. It is an angry attack on the kind of woman who benefits from her husband’s indulgence (her robe “cost three figures”), the slaughter of “feeble and afraid” animals by “a cunning engine’s aid”, and underpaid factory labour (“midnight workers” not personally known to her). In conclusion Hardy has his lady repeat a characterisation of herself, by others, that she is “but a broomstick/Like a scarecrow’s wooden spine” and he makes plain his conviction of her coarseness. This unnamed “lofty lovely woman” is as incapable of perceiving the need for a broader moral outlook as those of,

... throbless hearts, near, far, that hear no calls
Of honour towards their too dependent frail (compassion).

Hardy also lay in bed imagining the ‘groups’ of the eyes of ill-treated horses that he had seen that day and he was convinced that horses should not be used for battle ‘except for transport’. On the subject of bloodsports he speculated on the idea of using “the smaller children, say, of overcrowded families”, pointing out, with the logic of Swift, that “Darwin has revealed that there would be no difference in principle; moreover, these children would often escape lives intrinsically less happy than those of wild birds and other animals”.⁵⁹ Hardy held it to be:

immoral and unmanly to cultivate a pleasure in compassing the death of our weaker and simpler fellow creatures by cunning, instead of learning to regard their destruction, if a necessity, as an odious task, akin to that, say, of the common hangman. In this view the hunting of tame stags is but a detail.⁶⁰

Hardy, in a view characteristic of the League, grasped the enormity of the subject, had time for the details, but did not suggest a route between the two. He believed that Darwin’s ‘discovery’ had indeed “shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively”, that people and animals were “essentially different” no longer, but rather that the law of evolution had “revealed that all organic creatures are of one family”. From this he concluded that the ‘treacherous contrivances’ and “needless suffering” of vivisection ought to be resisted as every living creature’s death diminishes everybody. In *The Wind Blew Words* Hardy related how he felt that he had broken the law not “to kill, break or suppress”, how his failure to honour life, be it “black, dwarfed ... browned” white or otherwise made him ‘pathetic’, and how a tree was an organic creature (“this troubled tree ... is a limb of thee”). Hardy could not demonstrate the truth of this scientifically, but he felt that “The wind blew words along the skies”. Schopenhauer, source of the idea that the scientific laws of the universe and human consciousness were inevitably unaligned, may have been the source for Hardy in his poem. Schopenhauer held that a tree expresses the will to be a tree and Hardy was apparently propagating this view.

Hardy also believed that human oppressors lacked imagination. This was a view which other League members expressed at various times but none so eloquently as in *The Blinded Bird*. In this short poem Hardy expressed his outrage that a bird should have red hot needles thrust ‘into its eye’ to make it sing. Hardy felt for the victim rather than emphasising the cruelty of people who did not recognise what he saw as the oneness of the Universe:

Who hopeth endureth all things?
Who thinketh no evil, but sings?
Who is divine? This bird.⁶¹

League ideology separated its perpetrators from others in the same social class. The attitude towards other species and the planet in general which Hardy vividly portrayed made them distinctive in a way that defies classification by other methods.

There were a number of other writers in the League who explored, evaluated and celebrated the new themes concerning nature. In so doing they helped create the consciousness which connected League members. Edmund Selous, though not a literary writer in the sense that others were, was one of these.

Selous was a semi-professional bird-watcher who, as an evolutionist, attempted to test Darwin’s ideas, particularly those concerned with sexual selection, through the study of the reproductive habits of birds. He seems to have spent most of his adult life taking notes about what he referred to as the ‘domestic habits’ of birds. Many of his publications were simply observational diaries interspersed with his immediate thoughts upon the meaning of the activities. He saw himself as a vehicle through which birds could speak – “but the birds’ amanuensis”.⁶² He felt that his comments were merely making explicit what the birds were communicating – a tacit acknowledgement that he was not the passive observer of the nuances of bird life which he felt was the idea. He identified very closely with his subjects as can be seen from this interjection into a description of “courtship”.

It is in watching such *imponderables*, such by-products or unessentials, as one may call them ... that the automaton theory as applied to animals ... entirely breaks down. One sees now not a mere species acting on certain definite lines necessary to its salvation, but two tenderly affectionate little *persons*, behaving, because they both feel like that, in very much the same way as a pair of young human lovers.

Selous concluded in a vein similar to that of many League publications:

It follows ... as a result of my observations, that the “brute beast” is a more intelligent, more emotional, more affectionate and generally fuller-feeling being than they (sic) has yet been acknowledged to be, having been too much killed and (even where protected) too little observed to allow of this justice being done to him. For the most part, such observation as he has received has not been of a sympathetic (which means understanding) kind.

Selous had Europe-wide influence, his opposition to laboratory-based comparative psychologists and favouring of Darwin helped create a distinctive approach to the study of animal life. Selous was accused of anthropomorphism because he attributed both aesthetic sensibilities and the power of choice to birds by saying that female ruffs actively selected their mates on the basis of subjective preference. The point was not, however, in this or other cases, that he wished to project human capacities into birds on a wholesale basis but rather that each bird ought to be seen as an individual and that only observation of each individual would lead to an understanding of the nature of bird-life, just as people are considered as individuals with distinct states of mind. From his comparisons of the activities of birds with those of people Selous initiated the idea of symbolic “courtship” habits in grebes:

In every essential except the clear consciousness that they are doing so ... these grebes, as it appears to me, went through a marriage ceremony.⁶³

He treated birds as if they were mimes in a play and, more to the point, as if they were people. In doing this Selous was making the link on which the League was founded, and was substantially strengthening their claim to be scientific. The debt was recognised in a review of his *Bird-Watching* which appeared in *The Humane Review* which called it “interesting”, “valuable ... a book which all humanitarians should read and circulate”. The review was mostly taken up by reproducing the view of Selous that it is more

beneficial to observe birds in their natural habitat than to kill them for collections, gain or sport. The basis of his ideas was common to many League members and the same *Review* also reviewed *Darwin considered mainly as Ethical Thinker, Human Reformer and Pessimist* by Alexander H. Japp. It was pointed out that:

... though the theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest has often been used – however improperly – as an argument against humanitarianism, we cannot agree with the view that the doctrine of Darwinism, the idea of evolution, is in any way antagonistic to our principles. On the contrary, it seems to us that the surest foundation of the humanitarian creed is to be sought in the scientific doctrine of beings, as contrasted with the old anthropocentric notion conceived of the lower races as wholly distinct from mankind and purposely created for its use.⁶⁴

League members were linked by a “deviant” moral aesthetic which strove for greater communication between nature and humanity and within humanity. The emphasis was on education, and on reshaping consciousness. The creed which drew them together was articulated through the rationalism of science, and the mythic and parabolic means of literature. The recognition of the value of both approaches and the exploitation of them was of major importance in its outlook.

(vi) The bonds created by the dissentient role of League members

League members felt drawn to one another by their common attitudes to nature, femininity and religion. They were also linked by legislative and ideological chains. They could more easily identify with others placed in positions of servitude and dependency by those dominant in society because often they themselves were denied certain freedoms by apparently similar structural coercion.

Prisoners were, until the 1898 Prisons Act changed penal policy, considered to be individual pathology cases, best treated by a Chaplain. The League cast them as products of the pathology of the social structure. They were linked to others who were denied freedom be they other species or not. Thomas Hardy wrote in a letter to *The Times*:

The assertion that a caged skylark experiences none of the misery of a caged man demands our credulity.⁶⁵

Hardy clearly showed what he thought of caged birds in the image in his *Jude The Obscure* and when Tess appeared as the caged bird at Trantridge. Henry Salt devoted a chapter of his *Company I Have Kept* to W. H. Hudson. In this he compared him to a captive eagle. After spending a paragraph on this image he then reversed the metaphor and started the next anecdote, “I am reminded of another prisoner, a real eagle ...”⁶⁶ Margaret S. Clayton, an imprisoned suffragist, wrote an article, for *The Humane Review* of October 1907, about her experiences inside Holloway. She took up not suffrage themes but more general humanitarian ones:

It is appalling to think of the waste in this place almost entirely peopled by victims of poverty.

She observed that wardresses often kept caged birds and also that the prison (Holloway), was:

like a huge cruel aviary. It is dreadful to see so many women caged up.⁶⁷

It was not only the plight of captive birds and people which the League members compared. Thomas Hardy denounced the cruelty and terror of dog performances at country fairs and the use of drugs on animals. Hardy’s peroration, with its use of the word ‘cell’, reiterates the theme, whilst “unnatural” hints at another:

It seems marvellous that the twentieth century, with all its rhetoric on morality, should tolerate such useless inflictions as making animals do what is unnatural to them or drag out an unnatural life in a wired cell. I would include the keeping of tame animals in hutches among the prohibited cruelties of this kind.⁶⁸

The symbol of conspicuous leisure and delicacy, that of the perfect Victorian lady, was placed in a similar position by doctors judging who was fit and justifying social norms with the scientific language of technical rationality. The cage, for such middle class women though, was a pedestal. A society which discriminated between men and women rested on knowledge of differences between their bodies, and medical knowledge was crucial in defining theory. Decisions about the social body and the diseased aberrants within it as well as the human body and its care were not the technical tasks of a value-free science but rested upon an ethos which oppressed League members and which they saw as unified.

This sense of oppression was weighted further by a sense of envy among some in the League. There were many literary and clerical intellectuals in the League⁶⁹ and some of them must have felt that their prestige and their high standing in the culture of the nation were being undermined. The scientists were displacing them. Edward Maitland, in his League pamphlet on vivisection, starts the text with the words:

It is a very real and serious danger with which modern society is confronted, the danger which arises from the demand of certain scientific classes to exercise supremacy over it...

He goes on to point out that

History shows ... that it depends upon what people most dread, what class of specialists get the upper hand ... (people's) concern is all for their bodily welfare.⁷⁰

As science grew more abstruse, so it slipped from the grasp of those outside an exclusive circle. Most educated people could understand Darwin, but David Ferrier's researches on cerebral localisation, for example, which were unsuccessfully prosecuted by anti-vivisectionists in 1881, were considerably less accessible.

In *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, Carpenter set out his thesis that civilisation had distorted people and made them ill. The state of the body was used as a social metaphor, disease being a problem that applied to both the physical and social states:

For, as in the body, disease arises from the loss of the physical unity which constitutes Health and so takes the form of Warfare or discord between the various parts.⁷¹

The true ideal of health is a positive one:

a condition of the body in which it is an entirety, a unity – a central force maintaining that condition – and disease being the break up – or break down – of that entirety into multiplicity (the modern idea of disease is a) purely negative one.⁷²

The natural unity of humanity with nature had, Carpenter held, been destroyed by the divisions created by civilisation. Property, housing and clothes all divided people, and reintegration had to come through the return to nature and the community of human life. There had to be an acceptance of “the cosmical man, the instinctive elemental man accepting and crowning nature”.⁷³ Sin and pain arose from conflict and division and “the unity of our nature” had to be restored. Carpenter, however, emphasised that identification with the cosmos did not involve:

A denial of depreciation of human life and interests.⁷⁴

(vii) The admiration for Wagner

When he discovered that Richard Wagner, the composer, was a vegetarian Henry Salt invited Shaw to lecture on the subject. Shaw replied:

I don't think Wagner would be a good subject for a humanitarian lecture ...⁷⁵

Carpenter, however, found Wagner of immense value. In *Angel Wings* he compared him favourably to the Transcendentalist Walt Whitman, and his conversation and writings were influenced by him.⁷⁶ The theme was also taken up by Alice Leighton Cleather in *The Humane Review* of July 1902, in which she called Wagner:

a dramatic poet ... a fully developed musician ... reformer, philosopher, humanitarian and, above all, mystic.⁷⁷

Wagner was highly regarded as an opponent of vivisection and as an animal lover. He equated activities on the dissecting table with those in the weapons factory; both being part of State sanctioned utilitarianism. He felt that pure humanity and compassion could be the only motives for kindness towards animals. He cited Schopenhauer as the philosopher who had to prove that “pity deep seated in the human breast is the only true foundation of morality” and proposed, according to his son-in-law Houston Steward Chamberlain, that the moral principle of life be “sympathy with all that lives”. Chamberlain dealt, wrote Cleather “most admirably”⁷⁸ with Wagner in his biography of him. Chamberlain was also author of the racist *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, sharing with Wagner a hatred of Jews.⁷⁹ Cleather felt Wagner to be “one of the truest champions of womanhood that it is possible to imagine,⁸⁰ and that he stood “for all time as one who forever challenges us to make true for ourselves the dreams we have dreamed of God”.⁸¹

The appreciation of Wagner by League members appears to fit uneasily with some of their other views. However, with Wagner, as with others whom they praised, there was careful selection from his opinions. Furthermore, there was no League policy on religion, beyond a general distaste for traditional Protestantism, and the League offered no comment upon either the Jewish workers involved in the sweated trades, nor the various Aliens Acts passed during the lifespan of the League.

(viii) Summary

Members of the League were distinguished by their attraction to the moral framework which the League coterie created. This offered a new understanding for those, primarily from the middle strata of society, who rejected Evangelical values and who were attracted to the belief that:

The cause of each and all the evils that afflict the world is the same – the general lack of humanity. The one and only talisman is Love.⁸²

There was another cause of unity through the belief in the importance of literature as a means of working and deepening self knowledge and an understanding of the community, and as a method of humane principles. “Humanitarianism is nothing more than conscious and organized humanness”.⁸³ The members of the League saw literature helping to make more people conscious of the need for humanity and the League as organising that humane instinct once it was revived.

Edward Carpenter, formerly a Fellow at Cambridge, maintained that University life was

a fraud and a weariness, the everlasting discussion of theories that never came near actual life, the ornamental cleverness, the ... boredom underlying.⁸⁴

Salt, too, felt that learning which strengthened “the intellect only and does not feed the heart is in the main barren and unprofitable, a culture of *literae inhumaniores*”.⁸⁵ Salt used this Latin tag in the title of a League pamphlet as well. Both men wished to reassert the value of direct experience and feeling, a desire which can also be found in the writings of Edward Maitland.⁸⁶ Salt went on to write that

My thirty years’ work for the Humanitarian League had this effect among others, that it alienated me from the literary class. I have written books because I liked doing, so not because they brought me any profit.⁸⁷

Despite their protests League members still believed in the power of written words. The assumption that the imagination, honesty and passion of writers, if employed for humane purposes, could change the social order was the key factor linking those who left the security of the conforming, mid-Victorian middle class home.

THE PEOPLE IN THE LEAGUE: Footnotes

(ii) The social background of those in the League

1. J. Roach, *Social Reform in England 278-1880*, (1978), p. 227.
2. J. Joll, *The Second International 1889-1914*, (1974), p. 4.
3. E. Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams: Being Autobiographical Notes*, (1916), p. 166.
4. H. S. Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, (1930), p. 136.
5. For more detailed evidence see:
 - J.A. Fincher, *The Clarion Movement: A Study of a Socialist attempt to implement the co-operative commonwealth in England 1891-1914*, (unpublished M.A. thesis, 1971).
 - J.M. Twigg, *The Vegetarian Movement in England 1847-1981: with particular reference to its ideology*, (unpublished Ph.D., 1981).
 - S. Yeo, The Religion of Socialism, 1883-1896. *History Workshop Journal*, Autumn 1977, No. 4, pp. 5-56. (for the Socialist League and ILP).
 - S. Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, (Cornell, 1973).
6. Journalists in the League included H.W. Massingham, A.E. Fletcher, W.T. Stead, Ernest Parke and Robert Blatchford. Parliamentarians included Michael Davitt, Henry Broadhurst, E.H. Pickersgill, George Lansbury, Keir Hardie, Ramsey MacDonald, H.E. Luttrell, Dr. Farquharson and Justin McCarthy in the Commons, and Lord Coleridge, Earl Russell, Lord Loreburn (formerly Sir Robert T. Reid, M.P.), Lord (formerly Sidney) Olivier, Justice Mathew and Justice Wright. Graduates included Henry Salt, Jim Joynes, Edward Carpenter, Stewart Headlam, Josiah Oldfield and would have included Annie Besant and Katherine St. John Glasier but for the fact that they were women. They did attend Universities. There were also Professors: Alfred Russell Wallace, Lawson Tait and Goldwin Smith; and doctors, Helen Densmore, Gordon Stabbs R.N., Fredericka MacDonald, Herbert Gryn and at least another half a dozen besides them. The clerics, who included two deans, several bishops, the headmasters of Rugby, Marlborough and Bradfield amongst them, also went to University.
7. There were also titled women in the League, Lady Florence Dixie, Lady Paget, the Countess of Warwick and Lady Henry Somerset, for example.
8. *Humanity*, October 1897, the two men were Henry Salt and Ernest Bell.
9. £436 to be precise, *Seventh Annual Report 1897*.
10. A. L. Bowley, *Wages and Incomes in the U.K. Since 1860*, (1937).
11. H. S. Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, (1921), pp. 135-6.
12. *The Humanitarian League: What it is and what it is not*, (undated).
13. *The Humanitarian*, September 1919.

(iii) The bonds forged due to a common opposition to evangelical Protestantism

14. S. Yeo, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
15. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 45.
16. Edward Maitland quoted by J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
17. The founders of the Guild of Saint Matthew, Church Socialist League, Labour Church English Land Restoration League and Brotherhood Church all were League members. These bodies all rejected narrow ecclesiasticism in favour of radicalism and fraternity. The League included in this group of people Stewart Headlam, Conrad Noel, John Trevor, J.B. Wallace, J.C. Kenworthy, George Lansbury and Hugh Price Hughes.
18. J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
19. J. M. Twigg, *ibid.*, p. 187.
20. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, pp. 44-47.
21. W. S. Smith, *The London Heretics 1870-1914*, (1967), p. 106 and p. 175.
22. J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
23. G. Hendrick, *Henry Salt, Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*, (Illinois 1977), p. 26.
24. Edward Carpenter, William Jupp, Henry Salt, Dugald Semple, Bruce Glasier are examples of those who spend time living and extensively visiting the countryside. Semple lived in a caravan and later a remote cottage. Salt and Carpenter lived in rural cottages. Others in the League did lengthy tours in the *Clarion* Vans. Indeed one League member, Caroline Martyn, had a Van named posthumously in her honour. (H. Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1900*, (Oxford 1965), photograph between p. 134 and p. 135.)
25. Henry Salt, J. L. Joynes, G. B. Shaw were all advocates of the ideas of Henry George. Joynes was arrested on a tour of Ireland with George. (H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 58). See also S. Yeo, *op. cit.*, p. 19 and E. P. Thompson, *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary*, (1945), pp. 338-341.
26. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 121.
27. W. Jupp quoted by J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, p. 205.
28. H. S. Salt, *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress*, (3rd edition, 1906), p. 26.
29. H. S. Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, (1928), p. 12.

(iv) Opposition to 'The Manly Folk'

30. J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.
31. *Vegetarian Review*, February 1895, p. 3, quoted by J. M. Twigg, *ibid.*, p. 48.

32. J. M. Twigg, *ibid.*, pp. 158-159.
33. C. D. Niven, *History of the Humane Movement*, (1967), pp. 88-90.
34. H. S. Salt, (1930), *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.
35. A. R. Cunningham, The "New Woman Fiction" of the 1890's, *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, December 1973, p. 179, note 7.
36. A. R. Cunningham, *ibid.*, p. 183.
37. S. Olivier, George Meredith's Writings: A Side View on Democratic Tendency, *The Humane Review*, Vol. I, No. 3, October 1900, p. 220.
38. G. Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*, (1978), p. 119.
39. S. Olivier, George Meredith's Writings: A Side View on Democratic Tendency, *The Humane Review*, Vol. I, No. 3, October 1900, p. 222.
40. L. Stevenson, *The Ordeal of George Meredith: A Biography*, (New York 1953), p. 348.
41. *The Humane Review*, October 1901, p. 283.
42. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 135.
43. L. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 348.
44. H. S. Salt, (1930), *op. cit.*, pp. 165-172. 'The Manly Folk' is the title of the chapter.

(v) The bonds created by attitudes to nature

45. R. D. French, *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society*, (Princeton 1975), p. 230.
46. H. S. Salt, (1906), *op. cit.*, p. 27.
47. H. S. Salt, *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, (4th edition, 1922) quotes E. Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, at the start of the book.
48. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 127.
49. G. B. Shaw, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, (1910), pp. 44-55.
50. D. Daiches, don Roberto, *London Review of Books*, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 17.
51. Shelley admirers in the League included W.E.A. Axon, G.B. Shaw, G.W. Foote, W.M. Rossetti, Charlotte Despard and Henry Salt.
52. G. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
53. J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
54. T. Eagleton, (ed.), *T. Hardy, Jude The Obscure*, (1975), p. 221.
55. M.E. Hasselt, Compromised Romanticism in 'Jude The Obscure', *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 25, (1971) gives account of Shelley and Hardy, pp. 432-443.
56. P. Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form*, (Brighton 1982), p. 135.
57. J. Goode, Sue Bridehead and the New Woman, M. Jacobus, (ed.), *Women Writing and Writing About Women*, (1979), p. 107.
58. P. Boumelha, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-6.
59. H. Orel, Hardy and the Animal World, *The Thomas Hardy Society Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (1975), pp. 8-9.
60. *The Humanitarian*, *op. cit.*, p. 170.
61. H. Orel, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.
62. J. R. Durant, Innate Character in Animals and Man: A Perspective on the origins of Ethnology, C. Webster, (ed.), *Biology, Medicine and Society*, (Cambridge 1981), p. 179.
63. J. R. Durant, *ibid.*, pp. 179-80.
64. *The Humane Review*, October 1901, pp. 281-282.

(vi) The bonds created by the dissentient role of League members

65. H. Orel, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
66. H. S. Salt, (1930), *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.
67. *The Humane Review*, October 1907, pp. 162-165.
68. H. Orel, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
69. Some of the more famous and thus influential writers within the League were: John Galsworthy, the novelist and playwright; George Bernard Shaw, the satiric dramatist; Edward Carpenter, the mystic poet; Ernest Crosby, also a poet, Marie Ramée, 'Ouida', the prolific novelist whose *An Altruist* (1897) satirized the life of an aristocratic socialist vegetarian; A. E. Bayly who wrote as Edna Lyall, another popular novelist; Mrs Deucher, (pen name: Miss M Little); E. Livingstone Prescott, author of the popular *Scarlet and Steel*; and John Buchanan were also novelists in the League. A. E. Houseman, the poet of nature and the anarchist writer Elisee Reclus, gave support to the League as well. Even Henry Salt turned to playwriting. The fact that he felt it a useful project for the advancement of humanitarianism is indicative of the high esteem in which literature was held in the League.
70. E. Carpenter and E. Maitland, *Vivisection*, (1893) pp. 19-20.
71. E. Carpenter, *Civilization: its Cause and Cure and Other Essays*, (2nd edition, 1907), p. 2.
72. E. Carpenter, *ibid.*, p. 11.
73. E. Carpenter, *ibid.*, p. 42.
74. E. Carpenter, *ibid.*, p. 38.

(vii) The admiration for Wagner

75. S. Winsten, *Salt and his Circle*, (1951), p. 117.
76. C. Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter, 1844-1929, Prophet of Human Fellowship*, (Cambridge 1980), pp. 141 and 67.
77. A. L. Cleather, Wagner as Pioneer, *The Humane Review*, July 1902, p. 97.
78. A. L. Cleather, *ibid.*, p. 105.
79. J. Barkas, *The Vegetable Passion: A History of Vegetarian State of Mind*, (1975), pp. 101-103.
80. A. L. Cleather, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
81. A. L. Cleather, *ibid.*, p. 108.

(viii) Summary

82. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, pp. 243-244.
83. *The Humane Review*, October 1907, p. 179.
84. S. Winsten, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
85. H. S. Salt, (1921), *op. cit.*, p. 47.
86. J. M. Twigg, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
87. Letters from Salt to his publisher, quoted by G. Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

CONCLUSION

The Humanitarian League was of historical significance because of the ideas that it formulated and the activities in which it was involved. Its system of values was adopted to form part of the Socialism of the Labour Party. It was also built upon by later environmentalists. The campaign work of the League led to legislative change, the revitalisation of other pressure groups around the League, and the formation of new groups.

Four people dominated the executive of the I.L.P. and the Labour Party between 1893 and the outbreak of the First World War. Three of these people: Ramsey MacDonald, Keir Hardie and James Bruce Glasier were also in the League. Only Philip Snowden was not.¹ When the I.L.P. “completed its suicide”, as Beatrice Webb recorded in her diary when remarking upon the 1895 General Election, the League gained support.² When the Labour Party was His Majesty’s opposition and Ramsey MacDonald and the ethical socialists were prominent within the party, the League declined and collapsed. The League aided the immersion of I.L.P. socialism within the “Edwardian progressivism”.³ It also helped to seal its own fate as a separate entity. After the creation of the Labour Party there was a place for most members of the League within the Parliamentary system. Many had been Liberals or members of the I.L.P. An effective parliamentary party was a firmer political basis for effecting social change than an amorphous pressure group.

The League’s vision of a new ethic of Humanitarianism also had success elsewhere. It created a secular moral code of kindness towards nature and all life. The League’s campaigns which were designed to bring people to an awareness of the connection between humans and the world required the philosophical basis of Humanitarianism. The League combined self improvement with social reform.

This provided a theoretical framework for those who wished to stress the primacy of the need to halt the deterioration of the natural environment.

According to Brian Harrison’s analysis, the activities, as well as the ideas, of the League are of interest:

There can be no academic *cordon sanitaire* between the study of Britain in the nineteenth century and the present day in any sphere and least of all here [in the study of pressure groups].⁴

Elsewhere he has written of this “important topic”;

If the growth of humanitarianism attains its due prominence in the historiography of modern England the attention devoted to the years 1838-9 when government troops were sent to repress the bull-baiting held in Stamford since the reign of King John will perhaps rival that devoted to the better known political developments of 1831-2.⁵

Accordingly the League, being a pressure group opposed to all cruelty, must be worthy of study. The League was significant not merely because it existed but because from it grew the Prison Reform League (formed by Arthur St John of the League), the Animal Defence and Antivivisection Society (a prominent founder was E.A. Lind-af-Hageby), and the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports. Ernest Bell was a co-founder of this society, and it was backed by Salt, Carpenter, and Shaw.⁶ The League also inspired members of the environmental movement.⁷

The League played a large part in the abolition of flogging in the Navy, in the abolition of the use of the treadmill in Britain gaols and in the banning of the Royal Buckhounds. It was involved in the campaigns leading up to the 1898 Prisons Act, the 1912 Criminal Justice Act (relating to imprisonment for debt) and the 1921 Plumage Act.

The success of the League is not measurable only in terms of its successes in achieving its ostensible goals. The education of public opinion, leading to the rise of “a real civilisation, a true morality” founded on League principles was a very ambitious hope.⁸ Its significance lies also in its role as a particular manifestation of a widespread phenomenon, as a route to the investigation of the connection between intellectual currents and social action. The League was a reaction to specific needs in society and perceived weakness in its political philosophy.

There was a large debt to evolutionary thought in the plays of Shaw, the novels of Hardy and the writing of Carpenter. It underlay the rise in interest in Theosophy and in Schopenhauer, and it was a major plank in the Humanitarian platform.⁹ The rejection of mid-century Christianity and the unease induced by alienation from the land, reinforced the moral indignation which the League exemplified. The concern for the elimination of pain and the conception of “a self-sacrificing citizenship” were united in Humanitarianism.¹⁰ To study the form that this creed took is to throw light upon our own time as well as upon the thirty years prior to 1919.

CONCLUSION: Footnotes

1. J.F. Whelan, *The Working Class in British Socialist Thought 1880-1914*, (University of London Ph.D. 1974).
2. Beatrice Webb quoted by H. Pelling, *Origins of the Labour Party 1880-1900*, (2nd edition 1965), p. 16.
3. L.T. Clarke, Conclusion, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, (1971), elaborates upon this concept.
4. B. Harrison Press and Pressure Groups in Modern Britain, in J. Shattock and M. Wolff *The Victorian Periodical Press*, (Toronto and Leicester 1982), p. 262.
5. B. Harrison, Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth Century England, *Past and Present* 38, (1967), p. 99.
6. P. Windeatt, *The Hunt and the Anti-Hunt*, (1982), p. 22.
7. J. Ranlett, “Checking Nature’s Desecration: Late Victorian Environmental Organisations”, *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 197-222.
8. *The Humanitarian*, September 1919.
9. T. Gibbons, *Rooms in the Darwin Hotel*, (University of Western Australia, 1973), pp. 3-5 and pp. 128-130.
10. T.H. Green quoted in J. F. Whelan, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

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