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The Old Brown Dog

Women, Workers, and Vivisection
in Edwardian England

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1

The Brown Dog Riots of 1907

In 1980 there was only one old resident of Battersea who could recall the Brown Dog Riots of 1907, when police, feminists, medical students, and trades unionists fought over the statue of a brown dog in the Latchmere Recreation Ground.¹ It was a time when the most unlikely allies found common cause, and for a few turbulent weeks some of the most passionate issues of the day were debated violently in the streets. Cecil Hart, ninety years old, a retired solicitor and vestryman of St. Luke's Church remembered the riots vividly but thought they were concerned with the antivivisection hospital in Battersea Road. The dog was—and clearly he was at a loss to account for the dog's role at the time—the dog was just an “advertizing story.”

For Cecil Hart, memory had established its own logic and hierarchy of events, and what had been for many the very heart and cause of the riots had dwindled into a commercial fiction. We will have reason to discuss memory and the tricks it plays in the course of our investigation: the ways in which memory edits and interprets the past, and the tendency of fictions to live longer than the experiences which inspired them. The brown dog of Battersea had once been a living creature; later it came to be a symbol of feminist outrage and working-class resentment. Those in authority in society sought to destroy it, denouncing it as the embodiment of traditions and attitudes that had been shaped by a past beyond conscious recall. For these people it stood as a denial of progress, relic of a time when sorcery and sentimentality dragged at the skirts of science. Again and again the opponents of the brown dog declared that they were rational and reflective

men of science, whereas the women and workers defending the dog were emotional and irresponsible acolytes of a brutal and unsanitary past. On both sides statements were made that were not the logical consequence of circumstance but the result of accumulated experiences going back to forgotten social rites and customs. What people said and did at that time was shaped as much by literature as by history, and the fears and phantoms invoked by the brown dog were often more real than the actual events. William Hogarth was present at the riots; so too were Black Beauty and the body snatchers, Burke and Hare. Fiction collided continually with facts, and in a sense Cecil Hart was wiser than he knew when he described the brown dog as a "story." What we will try to do now is explore the subterranean motives and ideas that erupted in Battersea and spread across the river to Trafalgar Square, where two cavalry charges of police were required to disperse the "brown-doggers" and their opponents.

Let us begin then with appearances, the superficial structure of the story, remembering that the most discreet and uniform streets may well conceal the landscape of another world, another time. Gillian Tindall has described how Kentish Town erected bricks and cement across sleeping fields and walled over the streams that once carried a freight of ships down to the Thames.² Stroll along St. Pancras Way and you are passing over the buried Fleet; in Battersea it is the Falcon Brook which runs under the corner of Battersea Rise and St. John's Road, only making its presence felt in the occasional flooded basement along Falcon Road. It is an image that speaks to the heart of this study, for what happened in 1907 was, like most riots, a congeries of apparently inexplicable actions performed by an eccentric and disparate cast of players having nothing in common except a brown dog. And yet for each of those people the dog was a potent symbol capable of determining action and belief.

First, we can walk around Battersea and see for ourselves where the riots began, then set up a narrative, remembering always that dates and even events are no more than signposts which may often point to a lost age as well as to a present place. The Lavender Hill of 1900, with its respectable small shops and ranked cottages, was once a garden where lavender was grown and its fragrance then dried or preserved in oil for medicines and perfumes. Battersea lavender was as well known in the eighteenth century as Battersea enamel with its primly pastel arcadian patterns. John Burns, president of the Local Government Board and member of the House of Commons, had moved

up to Lavender Hill, to "Athelstane," a square, shuttered house, in 1906. We will meet him soon as one of the main opponents of the brown dog.

Nine Elms, colored black and blue as a place of "most degraded poverty" in Charles Booth's maps, was where in the 1800s the Battersea artichoke was cultivated and asparagus blanched for West End dinner tables.³ That was the time when there were farms and market gardens from the river's edge to Clapham Common, and a century before that, sheep grazed on Battersea Rise. A report issued in 1813 mentions that "the garden-grounds at Battersea occupying a dry and kindly soil, are much famed for the seeds of vegetables grown on them, and the gardeners at Clapham and some other places in the neighbourhood . . . procure their seed from the former parish. In consequence of this demand for seed, much of the garden ground in the Parish of Battersea is employed in raising vegetables for seed."⁴

It was not always easy to find that agricultural past under the streets of Battersea in 1907; nonetheless, the countryside was not so remote from the factories and tenements as it is today. Sally Plornish of Bleeding Heart Yard in *Little Dorrit* had a rustic cottage painted on her living room wall to remind her father of his childhood home, but the people of Battersea did not need pictures to recall the country. Most of them had heads well furnished with rural memories, and those who may have forgotten the open fields and farm animals had only to walk down Latchmere Road, "Pig Hill," when the cattle and pigs were being driven to Chesney Street and Semple's slaughterhouse. Indeed, one small farm could still be seen on the corner of Battersea Rise and Limburg Road until the First World War.⁵ Rabbits and chickens were kept behind the cottages along Battersea Road and children sent there for fresh eggs. But all this was changing at the turn of the century: tenants were not permitted to keep livestock in council houses, and blocks of flats had begun to displace cottages.

Gipsies used to camp in the fields by Usk Road; by the turn of the century the fields were gone, but the gipsies still returned in winter to put up their caravans in stable yards and bring the sounds and smells of the country with them. Horses were flogged up the Battersea Rise in icy weather, and many people would stop to pity the straining animals and remember the sufferings of Black Beauty on Ludgate Hill. Anna Sewell's book was not only a perennial favorite in the Battersea Municipal Library; it was also prescribed as a school text and a regular Sunday school prize. Down by the river, the two hundred acres of Battersea Park were set out with lawns and trees and flowering shrubs, and here

family groups from Battersea came to picnic in the summer, and children could feel grass under their feet and look up through leaves to the sky. A number of artists and writers lived by the park, among them, G. K. Chesterton, John Burns's friend and ally in his campaign against the brown dog.

From Battersea Rise to Clapham Common the houses were larger, and professional people and tradesfolk made their homes there. This was South Battersea, which worked in the West End like Cecil Hart and insisted that its address was Wandsworth. Rents, land, and servants were cheaper here than across the river; Cecil Hart had a live-in maid and "morning's only" cleaner for seven and sixpence a week. It was a part of Battersea that tried to hold itself aloof, politically and socially, from the factories and slums by the river.

Battersea in 1907, belching smoke across the river, was the creation of the nineteenth century and the railroads.⁶ The population had grown from 6,617 in 1841 to 168,907 in 1901, and a good proportion of the men had come to find work in the railway yards and shunting stations. It was the railway which dominated Battersea: the large flat lands where artichokes and asparagus once flourished were now found to be ideal for depots and sidings. Battersea was on the approach to two major terminals, Waterloo and Victoria, and here in Nine Elms the air was always heavy with coal dust and greasy with oil fumes. Today it is the site of Covent Garden Markets, and boxes and barrows of fruit and flowers recall its buried agricultural past: underneath the cement floors of the produce sheds is still that "dry and kindly soil" where vegetables were once grown for seed.

In 1907 Nine Elms was "an area shaped like a narrow triangle lying on its side, bounded on the north by the Thames and on the other two sides by railway lines. . . . In the centre of the triangle, dominating Nine Elms, were the gasometers, retorts and purifiers of the London Gas Light Company. Nearby there were limeworks, flour mills, breweries and an iron foundry."⁷ With only two exits from the area, both to the south, Nine Elms was, to use Booth's phrase, "a poverty trap," but it was here in the most squalid part of a degraded neighbourhood that one of the main supporters of the brown dog chose to make her home. We will meet Charlotte Despard—feminist, novelist, and social reformer—when she leaves Currie Street to defend the statue of the brown dog against her arch-enemy, John Burns.

Across the river, people said you could smell Battersea long before you saw it. Ernest Morris, who worked at Morgan's Crucibles for over

forty years, remembered Battersea as a place of dirt and foul odors where the stench from paint manufacturers contended with the sulphur fumes of the gasworks: "But the Daddy of them all was the Morgan Crucible Co. then known as the plum which blackened the borough with its lamp black, carbon and plumbago and the dust carried over the Thames into Chelsea."⁸ But it's an ill wind, and Battersea women took in washing by the basket and the cart load. As Booth observed, "Central London washes its dirty linen at home. Battersea undertakes this duty for a large part of the West End."⁹

Over in the city, Battersea was famous for more than its reeking smokestacks; it was notorious as a hotbed of radical politics and militant trades unionism. People had not forgotten August 19, 1889, when John Burns marched with the striking dockworkers around the City of London, the same year that the Battersea gas workers went on strike and secured an eight-hour working day. In 1902 the Battersea Borough Council, controlled by the local Trades and Labour Council, belligerently refused to sign the loyal address to the King, and in December would not even consider a donation from Andrew Carnegie for the municipal library because Carnegie's cash was "tainted with the blood of the Pittsburg strikers."¹⁰

It was also true that if Battersea was mentioned in a music hall, there would be an immediate chorus of barks and howls because of the Battersea Dogs' Home, the largest of its kind in England. Despite the jokes from neighboring boroughs, Battersea residents regarded the Home with a good deal of affection. Part of the folklore of Battersea which found its way into the *South-Western Star* and the *Battersea Mercury* turned upon tales of distraught owners reunited with lost dogs at the kennels. When it was suggested in 1907 that Battersea Dogs' Home should supply animals for vivisection, the chairman of the board, the Duke of Portland, rejected the suggestion as "not only horrible, but absurd . . . and entirely unacceptable to the Home."¹¹ The Battersea Dogs' Home, the Battersea Polytechnic, and the Antivivisection Hospital were landmarks like Arding and Hobbs' store at Battersea Rise. In the Town Hall with its sweeping staircase and fluted columns, the Borough Council had gained the reputation of being "the most democratic council in the metropolis ever since the London Government Act was passed."¹² Certainly the Council could point with considerable pride to its housing estates: the Town Hall and Shaftesbury Estates set a standard for the many private and co-operative building societies in the area.

The Latchmere Housing Estate was formally opened in 1902, and John Burns stood with Mayor Howarth in the centre of the Recreation Ground, where four years later the statue of the brown dog was to be erected. Burns was at his magniloquent best, and after lauding the virtues of hearth and home, he pronounced a general blessing on all those who were going to rent the small detached houses at seven and sixpence a week: "May this little colony never know the curse of drink or the blight of betting; may it be free from the minor nuisances of life; may its children be bright and cheerful, and may all its members be as mindful of their proper neighbours as the Borough Council has been public-spirited in looking after them."¹³ It was a fair sample of Burns's bombast and the patronage that was beginning to make him sound more like Mr. Honeythunder than a radical labor leader. The *South-Western Star* observed that a number of unionists present had jeered at his rhetoric, and noted with approval that the three thousand inhabitants of the Latchmere Estate had failed to go cap in hand to Burns to thank him for his generosity. Battersea workers were never known for their deference.

These were the workers who became the champions and defenders of the brown dog when it was placed in the very centre of the Recreation Ground: a bronze statue of a terrier dog, muzzle lifted, staring pensively towards the houses, the fountain at its base inviting people and animals to drink. Now, drinking fountains had always been a touchy subject among the working class, for they were frequently erected by temperance societies as well as by those who sincerely wanted to slake the thirst of horses and dogs. A workingman resented being told to forgo his pint of bitter and drink alongside his horse, so these monuments to middle class concern for working-class sobriety were regarded as being particularly offensive. In 1903, when the Battersea Council was run by Progressives, it flatly turned down an offer from the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association to donate a drinking fountain and dog trough with the terse response that "the Council regret that they have no available site."¹⁴ As many people suspected, when the brown dog and its fountain were placed in Latchmere with the authority of the Council, it was there for other reasons than those of alleviating thirst.

Here then in Battersea we have the scene for our story, and now we must cross the river and meet some of the men and women who made the brown dog the expression of their most fervent beliefs. The immediate cause of the riot was in the physiology laboratory of University

College, where Louise Lind-af-Hageby and her friend Liese Schartau witnessed the vivisection of a brown dog and noticed that the dog had an unhealed wound in its side which indicated that it had recently been used for another experiment. They both made a record of the incident in their diaries.

Louise Lind-af-Hageby was twenty-four when she enrolled with her friend at the London School of Medicine for Women, with the deliberate intention of becoming medical students in order to master the science of physiology and then use that knowledge to expose the practice of vivisection. Both of them were scornful of those sentimental women who drowned themselves and their listeners in floods of tears when they spoke about the suffering of animals under the vivisectioner's knife: they were determined to arm themselves with the language and arguments of the enemy and speak as doctors. The resolution to dedicate their lives to the antivivisection movement had been born during a visit to the Pasteur Institute in Paris, when they had seen hundreds of animals dying in agony. Fortunately, Louise Lind-af-Hageby came from a wealthy Swedish family and possessed a woman's passport to independence in those days, "private means." She knew that in England the antivivisection movement was strong and well organized if divided in the means required to protect animals from experimental use.

English antivivisectionists were grouped in two main societies, with a number of smaller associations that often seemed more at odds with each other than opposed to vivisection. Despite its fragmentation, however, the movement had won a number of victories with the 1876 Act to Amend the Law Relating to Cruelty to Animals standing as the only legal restriction in the world against the experimental use of animals.¹⁵ But vivisection was still being practiced, and it was known that men who held licenses to vivisect were on the council of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and were even appointing the inspectors whose charge it was to regulate the Act.¹⁶

The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection, under Dr. Robert Walter Hadwen, had been founded in 1898 when Frances Cobbe demanded that the National Antivivisection Society seek the total abolition of vivisection through a single legislative act. The Hon. Stephen Coleridge, a barrister and son of Sir John Coleridge, lord chief justice of England, argued that abolition could be accomplished only by means of successive legislative amendments. It was on this issue of gradualism versus instant and revolutionary change that the movement had split into two distinct societies, with Coleridge assuming the

presidency of the National Antivivisection Society, and Frances Cobbe founding the British Union. Far from being unique to the antivivisection movement, these two attitudes reflected theories of change that were being propounded daily by feminists and leaders of the working class. Millicent Fawcett was calling for women's suffrage to be accomplished by successive electoral reforms; the Pankhursts of Manchester were demanding votes for women by means of one legislative act. H. M. Hyndman predicted violent social revolution, whereas John Burns had pledged himself to a piecemeal progress so slow that his critics claimed he was walking backwards into the arms of the Liberals.

Louise Lind-af-Hageby and Liese Schartau, like most educated young women, had been taught to keep diaries, and in vivid and dramatic prose they recorded what they had seen at University College in the Department of Physiology. Later we will spend some time with the language and metaphors that these young women chose to use in their diary; unconsciously they were evoking images that went beyond, and often contradicted, the immediate meaning. Over a period of months they compiled a series of vignettes which they felt could become a book. They took what they had written to Stephen Coleridge at the Antivivisection Society offices in Victoria Street, and he immediately saw that if what they had recorded was correct, then there had been a serious infringement of the 1876 Act. Under the Act a vivisected animal could not be revived after one experiment and used for another: it had to be destroyed. But the young women, in a section called "Fun," had described a brown terrier dog with a recent abdominal wound which had been carried into the laboratory strapped to a board. The dog was then subjected to an operation in the throat by Professor William Bayliss. The dog had struggled throughout the course of the demonstration and was still alive when it was taken from the lecture room.

Coleridge questioned the two women and, when convinced of the accuracy of their observations, helped them find a publisher for the diary.¹⁷ As soon as *The Shambles of Science* was in print, Coleridge publicly charged the physiologist, Bayliss, with having broken the law. Bayliss in turn had no recourse but to sue Coleridge for libel in order to protect his reputation, and the case was heard in November 1903. Coleridge did not expect to win the case: what he wanted was publicity and an opportunity to ventilate the deficiencies and anomalies of the 1876 Act.

The case was widely reported, but already, clear social divisions

could be seen in the press. The *Times* referred to the diary as a mischievous work, and Coleridge's actions were impugned in the *Telegraph*; but the Liberal and working-class press—the *Star*, the *Daily News*, the *Sun*, the *Standard*, and the *Tribune*—came out strongly in support of Coleridge. The *Daily News* published the court proceedings in full and concluded:

Let us grant for the moment that man has the right to make use of animals for experimentation in the means of alleviating human suffering and saving life. But surely there must be some limit to this right. Has it not been reached in such a case as this? Here is an animal which worships and trusts mankind with an unreasoning fidelity. The dog may almost be said to have surrendered himself into our safe keeping. Does not this overwhelming trust—this absolute confidence that glistens in the dog's eye—lay upon us some obligation?

Is it not worth considering whether the human race may not pay too heavy a penalty for knowledge acquired in this manner? Are we to leave out of count altogether the hardening of heart and searing of sensitive feeling that must be produced by the constant spectacle of such unmerited suffering? Let us suppose that the Swedish ladies were wrong, and that this dog was anaesthetized. But a correspondent points out that the certificate possessed by Dr Bayliss is not the only certificate allowed by law. There are other physiologists who are permitted to perform such operations as these on conscious animals, and no one who alleged that the animals were conscious would be saying anything libellous.¹⁸

Implicit in this statement is not merely a concern for animals, but a challenge to a form of social authority sanctioned by law. For reasons that we will examine in some detail the antivivisectionist movement had become associated with radical politics and the interests of the working class and women. Coleridge had anticipated the outcome of the trial. The chief justice ordered that the section "Fun" be removed from *The Shambles of Science*, and Louise Lind-af-Hageby and Liese Schartau complied in all subsequent editions, replacing the offending vignette with a lengthy account of the trial. Since the burden of proof lay on the defendant, the jury found for Bayliss: Coleridge was fined two thousand pounds to the delighted cheers of the medical students who packed the court throughout the trial—their behavior had been

described by the *Times* as "medical hooliganism." The *Daily News* immediately opened a subscription fund to pay Coleridge's damages, and the money was oversubscribed within the month.¹⁹ If Coleridge and Lind-af-Hageby had lost in court, they were not vanquished in public opinion. The case had brought them the publicity they desired, and the sales of *The Shambles of Science* increased. Yet the verdict rankled, for William Bayliss had been found innocent of any charge of cruelty or failure to abide by the provisions of the 1876 Act. Moreover, the medical students were jubilant, and at every antivivisection meeting they added three cheers for Professor Bayliss to their usual catcalls and groans. If there is a mob in this story, it is not the Battersea workers, but these medical students who now had a long tradition of noisy opposition to antivivisectionists.

As early as 1830 medical students in London had rioted and forced the professor of anatomy, G. S. Pattison, from his chair because of his "total ignorance of and disgusting indifference to new anatomical views and researches."²⁰ All Pattison's attempts to lecture were shouted down by the students, and eventually the college council was forced to compromise between the students' protests and Pattison's obdurate refusal to learn new methods by appointing him to the chair of surgery. There was always considerable tolerance of medical students' boisterous behavior because it was felt that the nature of their work made such outbursts necessary. What would never have been countenanced in a law student was accepted in a medical student because he had frequently to do the work of a butcher on living flesh. For this reason many early physiologists like Koch believed that the cries of vivisected animals helped to habituate the student to the pain of a human patient—an argument which continued after the introduction of anaesthesia.

For William H. Lister, a medical student at University College, the Bayliss case was less an instance of "old women of both sexes" holding back the cause of science than an opportunity to set gown against town and in the process make London University students behave and feel like Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates. Lister's ambition was to create a political estate from the students of London University and, if possible, to represent those students himself.²¹ He was to seize that opportunity three years later at the Latchmere Recreation Ground.

Antivivisection vied for public attention with a great many other issues, foremost among them unemployment and women's suffrage. The old spontaneous market and election riots bore little relation to

the planned and occasionally rehearsed demonstrations of public anger in Trafalgar Square and through the streets of the City of London. The liveliest cause of the day was women's suffrage, and Charlotte Despard, as secretary of the Women's Social and Political Union, was one of the leaders of the radical wing, always ready to march and harangue politicians. For her, as for many feminists, one of the greatest obstacles was John Burns, member of Parliament for Battersea.

In 1906 Burns was prepared to renounce his radical past and run for election as a Liberal with the cabinet post of President of the Local Government Board as his reward. Over the years Charlotte Despard had grown to dislike and despise John Burns. She had led deputations of the unemployed to his door, she had begged him to give his support to women's suffrage like her friend George Lansbury in Poplar, and Burns had always dismissed her with a mouthful of platitudes. A shrewd politician, Burns knew that workingmen had never shown the slightest interest in giving women the vote. For Charlotte Despard, Burns was the great apostate, Mr. Bumble incarnate, and she was not alone in this opinion. The Socialists and many of the Progressives in Battersea abhorred the man. Unfortunately for the radicals of the electorate, Burns proved he had a political base that did not require the support of the Trades and Labour Council or even his own union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In 1906 the TLC presented its own slate of candidates for the borough elections and was successful in capturing forty of the fifty-four Council seats, but they could not break Burns's majority in the parliamentary election. Battersea laughed at Burns's bombast, but it continued to vote for him.

Burns was at his ebullient best in January of 1906. His friend and admirer G. K. Chesterton had spoken on his behalf at the Battersea Town Hall, and Chesterton's dazzling paradoxes met with enthusiastic applause. George Bernard Shaw had just attacked Burns's policies, or the lack of them, in a speech at the Latchmere Baths, and Charlotte Despard followed Shaw with a bitter denunciation of Burns's failure to help women and the unemployed. However, with a majority of over two thousand votes in the election, Burns could afford to disregard his enemies. What the socialists and the suffragettes feared was that as President of the Local Government Board Burns would now be controlling one of the greatest sources of patronage in London.

At this point we can see a number of angry and frustrated individuals: Louise Lind-af-Hageby was still outraged by the Bayliss verdict; Stephen Coleridge was appalled when a commission was appointed to

review the working of the 1876 Act and it was proposed to include known vivisectionists among the commissioners, closing all its inquiries to the press and the public; Charlotte Despard together with a great many disappointed electors in Battersea deplored the election of John Burns. Into this group now came Miss Louisa Woodward, secretary of the Church Antivivisection League, a wealthy woman from an old Wiltshire family and a close friend of the vicar of St. Luke's Church, where Cecil Hart worshipped. The vicar, Erskine Clarke, was not only an antivivisectionist, but was also a supporter of Charlotte Despard and her work among the poor of Nine Elms. Louisa Woodward met Louise Lind-af-Hageby, and the two decided to present the Battersea Council with a most unusual drinking fountain. Stephen Coleridge discussed the plan with the mayor and council, which approved the design and the inscription on the base of the statue. It was agreed that it should be placed in the Latchmere Recreation Ground.²²

The fountain was designed to be provocative. The inscription rang out like a challenge: "In Memory of the Brown Terrier Dog Done to Death in the Laboratories of University College in February, 1903, after having endured Vivisection extending over more than Two Months and having been handed over from one Vivisectionist to Another Till Death came to his Release. Also in Memory of the 232 dogs Vivisected at the same place during the year 1902. Men and women of England, how long shall these Things be?" That there was strong antivivisection sentiment in the Council is obvious. Only the conservatives and a few of the radicals were opposed to accepting the fountain, warning that there might be legal action from London University. Indeed, when University College did threaten to take proceedings against the Battersea Borough Council unless the memorial was removed from the statue, the Council bluntly told the university to mind its own business.²³

There was a large crowd on September 15, 1906, when the fountain was unveiled, and for once, John Burns was not invited. However, Charlotte Despard was there with Louisa Woodward, George Bernard Shaw, and the Reverend Charles Noel, who spoke on behalf of the Antivivisection Council. It was a public snub for Burns, who had always looked on the Latchmere Estate as a testimony to his beneficent care of the borough. The Mayor of Battersea, J. H. Brown, welcomed the statue and all that it stood for. Brown was a thirty-eight-year-old trades unionist, honorary secretary of the General Labourers' Union and secretary of the Battersea Trades and Labour Council.²⁴ As well as being a vocal critic of Burns for having taken office under a Liberal government,

Brown was an antivivisectionist and remained one of the strongest supporters of the brown dog. When the ex-mayor of Chelsea praised Battersea for its bravery in accepting such a gift, Brown said that Battersea would always lead the way in improving conditions for the working class. Clearly, for Brown vivisection was a means used to oppress the working class, and his words were met with cheers. Sufficient to record now that it was a stirring occasion brought to a conclusion by the Reverend Noel, who led the crowd in singing "Ring the Bells of Mercy," the antivivisectionist hymn.²⁵

The fountain was in place, the brown dog stared across to the neat ranks of council houses, and if ever a riot had been deliberately instigated, this was it. The wonder is that it took so long for the medical students to respond to the challenge. The *South-Western Star* wrote enticingly: "It is rumoured that the students of the hospital intend to pull it down and that electric bells have been placed on the statue to give notice of any such attempt."²⁶ However, it was just over a year before the students crossed the river into Battersea. Of course, those who have had some experience of student demonstrations will appreciate that they occur most frequently on campus; there is a marked disinclination to walk any distance for the purpose of rioting. In this case, it is doubtful if the London University students would have done more than complain had they not been organized and led by that politically astute young medical student William Lister.

In Battersea the Socialists were still complaining about John Burns and threatening to run their own candidate against him in the next elections. They were joined by the antivivisectionists, who were outraged when Burns voted in favor of the Vaccination Act, which made inoculation a condition of employment in government service.²⁷ Half a century later Cecil Hart may have forgotten the brown dog, but he did not forget the Battersea General Hospital and what it stood for in the borough. "The Old Anti" had always served the working folk of Battersea, but now abruptly it was refused funds from the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund.²⁸ The Battersea Council saw John Burns's influence at work here and organized carnivals to raise money for the hospital and what it stood for—an institution where every doctor was pledged not to engage in any form of vivisection.

It was a time of furious activity for Charlotte Despard; she led deputations of Battersea's unemployed to the Town Hall, and smaller groups of women to see John Burns, who was no longer able to conceal his contempt for this angry old woman. The Pankhursts, however,

were delighted to have Charlotte Despard as secretary of the Women's Social and Political Union, and they made it known that the reason she had not been arrested was because the government feared a riot in Battersea and because there was alarm that her brother might resign from the army—Sir John French being regarded as the most promising general and Haldane's choice for Inspector-General of the Forces.²⁹ Neither statement was true, but the violence and incoherence of the threats was typical of many of Emmeline Pankhurst's utterances.

In November William Lister decided the time had come to attack the brown dog in Battersea. He had campaigned vigorously throughout the university and felt he had sufficient support to conduct something more elaborate than the customary heckling at antivivisection rallies. On November 20, 1907, an exceptionally foggy day, Lister summoned a group of thirty students from University College and Middlesex Hospital. They purchased a massive hammer and crowbar and set out a little after three to their meeting place at the top of the Tottenham Court Road, where other medical students had assembled. They all caught a Royal Blue Omnibus to Battersea and then quietly, concealed by the fog, made their way along Battersea Park Road to the Latchmere Recreation Ground. But the police had been warned, and when the students rushed to the fountain and one man "took a mighty blow at the creature with the sledge hammer," he was seized by two plainclothes policemen.³⁰ Battersea men rushed out of the council houses and helped the police arrest ten of the students, who were formally charged and fined five pounds each the following day at the South-West London Police Court. The magistrate, Paul Taylor, not only rebuked the students: he sent them off with a warning of two months' prison with hard labor and no option of a fine if they created any further disturbances.³¹

Lister now had a cause which would rouse his fellow students to action, and they responded with bonfires in front of University College and demonstrations against Paul Taylor. What infuriated these young men was that they had been treated in the same manner as the suffragettes, who were now being routinely arrested after their disturbances and given prison sentences. Charlotte Despard, for example, had served twenty-one days in Holloway after her part in the February 12 riot in front of the Commons. Despite the fact that some suffragettes were known to approve of vivisection, the students began to attack every women's suffrage meeting with howls, barks, and cries of "Down with the Brown Dog!" Millicent Fawcett, a close friend of several noted

vivisectionists and the sister of the medical pioneer Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, had her suffrage meeting at the Paddington Baths broken up in disorder on December 5.³² Even Edward K. Ford, who wrote a contemporary account of the riots, was puzzled at this association of antivivisection with the women's cause when men like Coleridge and Hadwen had not shown any particular sympathy for women's suffrage.³³ Yet, for the students and increasingly for the public, antivivisection and women's rights were now part of the same movement. Inevitably, as we shall see, each was to lose by this association.

The medical students were now an organized body, and Lister drew up a campaign to destroy the statue. On November 25 students made another attempt to enter the Latchmere Recreation Ground and were driven back in considerable disarray, so Lister planned a demonstration in Trafalgar Square. He knew that on December 10 the Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates would be in town for the Varsity Rugby football match: if only he could enlist their support, then London men would be seen standing shoulder to shoulder with their Oxbridge companions. The demonstration was advertised, and the police made ready.

Lister was chagrined when the Oxford and Cambridge men down for the match refused to join his cause, but decided to sally forth without them. Shouting and singing, the medical students marched in procession down Kensington High Street, holding aloft effigies of the brown dog and the magistrate Paul Taylor. In Trafalgar Square fights broke out between students and groups of workmen. Immediately the mounted police moved in, scattering the crowd and arresting several students. Lister led the main band across the river to Battersea, where there were more police and a hostile crowd.

Driven out of the Latchmere Ground the students fought their way down Battersea Park Road, where they tried to attack the Antivivisection Hospital. Again the crowd forced the students back, and when one fell from the top of a tram and was slightly injured, the *Daily Chronicle* reported that the crowd had shouted jubilantly, "That's the brown dog's revenge!"³⁴ His friends tried to carry him across to the Antivivisection Hospital, but a group of workers barred the door and refused to let him enter.

Battersea's new mayor at this time was Fred Worthey, a master printer, Congregational temperance worker, and fervent antivivisectionist. When the Police Commissioner asked the Battersea Council to pay for the cost of the two policemen who were now required to guard

the brown dog twenty-four hours a day, Worthey told the Commissioner to stop badgering the Council and start doing the job for which he was paid.³⁵ It was a chance for the borough to assert itself against the city and, indirectly, show the London County Council that it could not bully Battersea. A Conservative member of the Battersea Council, A. E. Runeckles, then suggested that the inscription be removed, but the Council had the following statement recorded in the minutes: "That the inscription on the memorial being founded on ascertained facts, the Council declines to sanction the proposal to remove it, and that the Chief Commissioner of Police be informed in reply to his letter that the care and protection of public monuments is a matter for the police and any expense occasioned thereby should be defrayed out of the public rate to which this Borough contributes so largely; also that the Council considers more strenuous efforts should be made to suppress any renewal of the organised ruffianism which has recently taken place in the Metropolis in connection with the Memorial."³⁶ Letters supporting the Council's stand were received from rate-payers and from an incongruous group of supporters. The Battersea Labour League wanted to see the students removed from Battersea before anyone thought of moving the brown dog, the National Canine Defence League formally applauded the Council for its actions, and the Battersea branch of the Operative Bricklayers' Society pledged its members to defend the statue. Working-class support for antivivisection was now a matter of public record. If medical students had identified the movement with women, people were now beginning to see it as a working-class issue.

When Louise Lind-af-Hageby held a ticketed antivivisection meeting at the Acton Central Hall on December 16, 1907, she had a guard of Battersea workers, yet over a hundred students managed to smuggle their way in, and soon the meeting was pandemonium, with broken chairs, fistfights, and smoke bombs. Again, police were required to restore order and arrest the rioters.³⁷ The students appealed to Sir Philip Magnus, M.P. for London University, to have the inscription removed from the fountain, and he in turn asked the Home Secretary at question time in the Commons what it was costing the government to protect the Brown Dog Memorial, assuring the House that "a large body of students in the London University were quite prepared to remove this offensive monument free of charge."³⁸ A petition signed by over a thousand London University students was presented to the Battersea Council demanding that the libellous inscription be erased.³⁹

At a public meeting in the Battersea Town Hall on January 15, 1908, Stephen Paget, speaking as president of the newly formed Research Defence Society, moved that another inscription be placed on the statue. Stephen Paget was the son of Sir James Paget, who had once remonstrated with Queen Victoria over her opposition to vivisection. The younger Paget was by no means as eminent a doctor as his father, but for several years he had been secretary of the Association for the Advancement of Medicine by Research. On this occasion the students rioted in their customary fashion, and more than three hundred stewards were required to drag the demonstrators from the hall.⁴⁰

The following month in London the Municipal Reformers defeated the Progressives for control of the London County Council. Sir Herbert Jessel had waged a brilliant campaign for the Municipal Reformers, appropriating Socialist slogans and images and using them against the Progressives. Campaign songs were promoted, and one poster showed a Progressive with "a bloated ugly face, chewing a cigar and wearing a top hat, hand outstretched, with the caption *It's Your money we want!*"⁴¹ Battersea was caught up in the same struggle, but here the issues were increasingly debated in terms of the brown dog and the Antivivisection Hospital.

The Battersea General Hospital had always been controlled by a board of local residents: three of the four vice-presidents were women, and these women were antivivisectionists.⁴² With its painted sign announcing its principles and practice to passersby the hospital was felt to be an insult to a modern medical profession dedicated to research by means of animal experimentation. Sir William Church of the Metropolitan Hospital Fund declared that "no self-respecting medical man would for one moment consent to the governing body of a hospital which consisted mainly of laymen." Thomas Bryant stated in the same report that the "Antivivisection Hospital casts a great slur upon the profession generally, and that they ought not to support a hospital which was based upon such principles."⁴³

Cutting off funds to the hospital was one means of closing it, but here the Hospital Fund had not reckoned with the loyalties of men like Cecil Hart and the local trades unions, which helped run carnivals and collect money for the "Old Anti."⁴⁴ Finding it impossible to close the hospital by starving it financially, the Hospital Fund charged it with neglecting its patients. This charge was upheld in the Battersea Coroner's Court in December 1909, when the coroner, John Troutbeck, investigated the deaths of two patients who had initially received treat-

ment at the hospital. He observed that there had been "great neglect at the Anti-Vivisection Hospital."⁴⁵ In consequence the hospital was closed and patients transferred to the Wandsworth Infirmary, where doctors sat on the governing board and there were no restrictions against vivisectors being allowed to practice.

Throughout 1908 the Moderates campaigned to take control of the Battersea Council, and when an additional threepence on the pound was imposed on ratepayers to assist the unemployed, the Moderates knew they could count on an increased vote. After all, not every man could vote under the restricted franchise of this period. In 1907 only 22,914 in a population of more than 180,000 could go to the polls, and these were ratepayers and heads of household most affected by the increase in rates. There were complaints of a Socialist Council pouring money into the pockets of "the wastrels and loafers of that Borough."⁴⁶ And the symbol of Socialist authority in Battersea was now the brown dog.

Meetings were held, each more riotous than the last, but it was clear now that so long as the Socialists and Progressives held a majority in the Council the brown dog would remain in Battersea. Nevertheless, at the 1908 elections the Moderates were able to gain control, and among the first acts of the new Council was an order to remove the statue. The mayor, Peter Haythornthwaite, a Moderate, tried at first to persuade the Council to alter the inscription to one suggested by Stephen Paget:

The dog was submitted under profound anaesthesia to a very slight operation in the interests of science. In two or three days it was healed, and remained perfectly well and free of all pain. Two months later it was again placed under profound anaesthesia for further experiment, and was killed under the anaesthetic. It knew nothing of what was being done to it on either occasion. None of us can count on so easy death. We doubtless shall suffer pain or distress, both mental and physical. This dog was free alike from fear and suffering. It died neither of starvation nor of overfeeding, nor of burdens from old age. It just died in its sleep.⁴⁷

The fatuous stupidity of Paget's declaration did not go unremarked, and even the *Daily Mail* wondered if the dog had felt in the best of health between the two operations.⁴⁸ Louise Lind-af-Hageby was out-

raged that known facts should be falsified by a new inscription from an acknowledged vivisector. This was not what she had seen in the laboratory of University College, and she demanded the right to speak again at the Battersea Town Hall. Even though she was met with wild applause, the same fights and brawls broke out between medical students and the stewards.

William Lister was now convinced that in the brown dog he had at last found a cause to unify the London University students, and he led them from one antivivisection and women's suffrage meeting to another. The Police Commissioner was still insisting that the Battersea Council pay for the protection of the statue, and on February 10, 1910, the Council moved that the fountain should be returned to its donor, Louisa Woodward of the Church Antivivisection Society. She promptly sought a restraining injunction from Chancery, and Charlotte Despard and Louise Lind-af-Hageby addressed a mass meeting at the Latchmere Recreation Ground. The ex-mayor Fred Worthey said the Council was making "a concession to organised violence," and handed out pamphlets which he had composed and printed at his own cost.⁴⁹

Before Miss Woodward could secure the restraining injunction, the Council had acted, and about two o'clock on the morning of March 10, four Council workmen guarded by 120 police carried the statue away and hid it in a bicycle shed.⁵⁰ Battersea exploded in rage, but now there were mounted police ringing the Recreation Ground. Speakers who tried to place a box there and address the crowd were led away, and the demonstration was effectively quashed.

Ten days later over three thousand people assembled in Trafalgar Square to hear the leaders of the antivivisection movement demand the return of the brown dog. Scuffles broke out between medical students and police, but this time the speakers—Sir George Kekewich, Louise Lind-af-Hageby, and Stephen Coleridge—made themselves heard.⁵¹ Despite their fiery pronouncements and the enthusiasm of the crowd it was clear that the brown dog had gone from Battersea and would never return. Indeed, three weeks later it was broken up in the Council yard.

Most of the participants declared themselves well satisfied with the results of the riots. Stephen Paget regarded it as a victory for progress and science; William Lister felt that a corporate spirit had been created in the "*dissecta membra* of the University"; G. K. Chesterton playfully suggested that the Battersea banner should have a brown dog rampant

although he would have preferred a chrysanthemum himself, and Stephen Coleridge stated that the brown dog had been "a splendid advertisement for our cause."⁵² Louisa Woodward continued trying to secure legal redress against the Council, but even when she failed, she declared that the cause had become better known. Louise Lind-af-Hageby maintained the struggle by means of her own society and rented shops where antivivisection literature was displayed and sold. George Bernard Shaw continued to write and lecture against vivisection, but there was a *fin de siècle* feeling about the movement by this time, and for many the issues had become so influenced by other social movements that it was difficult to distinguish antivivisection from feminism or working-class socialism.

A chronological narrative like this is always as enigmatic and intrinsically superficial as the passing traveller's perception of a crowded street. You may be able to see London from the top of a bus, but you cannot hope to know and understand it. Just as the slums and suburbs of Battersea defined an obscure geography wherein architecture concealed the life and purpose of the inhabitants, the ranked tenements and paved streets concealed fields and streams which made their presence felt by covert means and unsuspected signs, like those half-forgotten memories which yet have the power to determine present action. Why people behaved and thought as they did at this particular time cannot be explained by reference to changes in local government or the rivalry between town and gown; there are too many incongruities and contradictions in this particular riot.

An immediate problem in such a brief narrative is the conjunction of workers and suffragettes, for if there was one issue which had no support among the trades unions and with working-class men generally, it was the demand that women be given the vote. Labour men routinely pledged their support for the cause, but when it was put to the test in a mass union vote it failed. Working-class men who were threatened with unemployment had no desire to enfranchise the cheap labor of women, and every strong union sought to exclude women, not give them added authority at the polling booth. George Lansbury discovered this in 1912 when he ran for his old seat in Poplar as a suffrage candidate: a majority of 863 became a minority of 731, and his biographer, Raymond Postgate, saw it as the most serious blunder of his

career.⁵³ Yet in Battersea the suffragettes and trades unionists had worked for a common cause—a brown dog.

This straightway gives rise to another difficulty: R. D. French assures us that antivivisection was a dead letter for the working class. Indeed, all efforts to organize the workers ended in failure, and "the ultimate stumbling block emerged in the profound indifference of laborers towards the issue."⁵⁴ Who then were those cloth-capped stewards at Louise Lind-af-Hageby's lectures, and what were the local ironworkers doing when they voted to defend a memorial to a vivisected dog? In Battersea we find unionists protecting that dog, and men and women prepared to use their fists and meagre funds to support an antivivisection hospital. The RSPCA always maintained that the working class was callous in its treatment of animals, but perhaps this particular society was less concerned with protecting animals than with policing the workers. Statements of this order cannot be explicated in terms of events but only by exploring those attitudes which translate emotion into action, and we may well find that the workers of Battersea are typical of their class and that their concern with antivivisection is more deeply felt than that of any other social group.

French also notes the involvement of women with antivivisection, "among the very highest for movements without overtly feminist objectives."⁵⁵ Women like Frances Cobbe, Anna Kingsford, and Louise Lind-af-Hageby were willing to give their lives to this cause. Anna Kingsford even volunteered to give her own body for vivisection in order to save an animal.⁵⁶ Is this passionate involvement really the "displacement of guilt" that the prosperous middle class transferred from their employees to animals, as James Turner argues?⁵⁷ Surely the emotions are too extreme to make such an ingenious thesis possible, even if the middle class carried such a burden of guilt over the suffering of the working class. Certainly, many of the middle class women did not show the same concern for children or the poor, and it is doubtful whether guilt was as pervasive in Victorian society as it is with us today. It may well be that here we shall find a very dark river running beneath the architecture of social forms, a river bounded on one side by pornography and on the other by conventional medical practice.

The doctors of the future, the medical students of our narrative, behaved like a hooligan mob, but not only E. K. Ford was perplexed by their belligerent insistence that women's suffrage and antivivisection were parts of the same objectionable cause. A number of prominent

antivivisectionists like Anna Kingsford, the novelist "Ouida," and Robert Hadwen were opposed to any extension of the suffrage, while among the suffragists there were many like Millicent Fawcett who saw antivivisection as an obstruction to scientific progress. It also may be that the young men denouncing the brown dog and its supporters were unconsciously responding to the same force that had drawn women into this cause, although there were few who recognized the nature of that force, and fewer still who would have been prepared to acknowledge it if they had.

Eventually, the whole incident became a question of opposed symbols in shop windows, and Cecil Hart's recollection of an "advertising story" now has considerable point. The Anti-Vivisection Council set out a display in a shop front in Oxford Street.⁵⁸ Behind the glass were displayed saws, scalpels, and straps; boards designed to hold animals for vivisection; and a centrepiece which Patrick White describes in his novel *The Vivisector*:

It was one of the greyest days, pierced by black monuments. Hurtle lost the others for a moment: they had all floated apart in the drizzle, the sound of wheels revolving in wet, the tramping of galoshes; when he found himself staring into a display window of horrible purpose. There was a little, brown, stuffed dog clamped to a kind of operating table. The dog's exposed teeth were gnashing in a permanent and most realistic agony. Its guts, exposed too, and varnished pink to grey-green, were more realistic still.⁵⁹

Next to this shop was one managed by the Research Defence Society with photographs of Pasteur and the picture of a smiling young woman with a baby on her knee, and underneath it the inscription: "Which will you save—your child or a guinea pig?"⁶⁰ The images were contradictory, but the conclusion was plain in terms of symbol if not of fact. It was a case where fiction had supplanted reality; the icon of mother and child and the sacrifice of a dog concealed another grotesque image of a woman strapped to a surgical bed struggling to escape. Women's suffrage had very little in common with antivivisection, but the two had become confusedly entwined through the accident of circumstance: the image of the vivisected dog blurred and became one with the militant suffragette being force-fed in Brixton Prison.

There are many reasons why the antivivisection movement dwined

and almost disappeared between these years and the present surge of interest and concern, but one predominating cause is that people no longer saw it in actual terms but through coded messages of scientific progress, sacrificial redemption, and sexual victimization. It was at the time of the Brown Dog Riots that these messages first came to signify reality, but the origin of the messages goes back to the early years of the nineteenth century.

2

What about the Workers!

When Battersea was still a village in the last years of the eighteenth century and market gardens extended from the river's edge to Clapham Common, you could shoot pigeons at the Red House, attend cock-fights in the yard of the Plough, or bet on a rat-killing at the Falcon. Thames rates were regarded as being particularly plucky and courageous, and the spectators knew that they would fight to the death against any terrier. Of course, these sporting occasions were only a pale imitation of what might be found at places like Hockley-in-the-Hole, where sharp at three on Monday there was always a full card of bloodsports with "a *green bull* to be baited, which was never baited before, and a bull to be turned loose, with fireworks all over him; also a mad ass to be baited. With a variety of bull-baiting and bear-baiting, and a dog to be drawn up with fireworks."¹ Nothing as elaborate and diverse as this could be found at any of the Battersea inns, and certainly there were no special stands set aside for gentlemen, no "pleasant cool gallery" where gentlefolk could stand apart from the common people. In Battersea, as at most places, the men stood together around the pit, betting, swearing, and drinking prodigious quantities of beer.

Within walking distance of these sporting taverns was Broomfield House in Clapham, where William Wilberforce planned his campaign against slavery and helped Dr. John Bowdler found the Society for the Suppression of Vice and Encouragement of Religion.² The Clapham Saints were determined to establish Christ's Kingdom in England, and one step in that direction was to abolish all public occasions where

carnal passions were aroused. It was not so much compassion for animals that led Wilberforce to oppose bloodsports as his belief that men became worse than brutes when they witnessed the suffering of animals. In the House of Commons William Windham challenged Wilberforce's motives, declaring that "cruel sports do not make cruel people," and moreover, "if the cruelty of Bull-baiting was thus to be held up to the attention of the house in such glaring colours, why was not hunting, shooting, fishing, and all other amusements of a similar description to be judged by similar principles?"³ Moreover, in the name of Methodism, Wilberforce and his friends were oppressing the poor so pitilessly that the result could only be riot and rebellion: "If to poverty were to be added a privation of amusements, he [Windham] knew nothing that could operate more strongly to goad the mind into desperation, and to prepare the poor for that dangerous enthusiasm which is analogous to Jacobinism."⁴

These two men had visions of an England as far removed from each other as earth from heaven: Wilberforce wanted a community of saints; Windham, the restoration of a rural age where the gentry mingled with their workfolk as though members of the same family. Threaded through Windham's speeches there is the image of the genial squire presiding over a dinner table that includes children and servants, or cheering on a jovial throng at the bullbaiting with men of all classes standing together on the same bloody ground. Although he was not a sportsman, and neither hunted nor fished himself, Windham regarded bloodsports as splendid examples of English fraternity, fostering harmony and good spirits in the community. Morals should be inculcated from the pulpit, he argued, or taught from the press, by precept, by exhortation, and above all else, by example. What could possibly be said in favor of legislation which deprived the poor of their pleasures while preserving the sports of the rich? "I defy a person," Windham wrote, "to attack bull-baiting and to defend hunting."⁵

At issue were two distinct psychologies of social response. Windham insisted that if the working class was permitted to watch bulls gored and dogs flayed, then it would be so sated with violence that it would accept the hardships of life without recourse to protest and riot. Wilberforce argued that the spectacle of suffering encouraged men to rebellion, making the transition a single step from cruelty to animals to cruelty to people. The fear of revolution lay behind most social theorizing at this time, and the likelihood of a market riot or a

rick burning exploding into a reign of terror and a guillotine haunted the English. How to make the working class content with its lot, or, if not content, then disinclined to seek recourse in revolution was the question for which Wilberforce found the answer in faith and law, and Windham in a return to the traditions of the past.

E. P. Thompson has advised those who want to emphasize the sober constitutional ancestry of the working-class movement to look again at some of its rowdier aspects.⁶ It also helps to see the working class in the context of a society where violence was a commonplace and everybody could expect more than one beating in his life. To be born a gentleman did not save one from the floggings and thrashings that were thought to be as necessary a part of education as a knowledge of Scripture. Physical violence as the manifestation of authority remained part of a child's experience when its worst excesses had been removed from public life. Long after the police had imposed a degree of order in the streets of London, with hangings conducted behind the high walls of the prison and many bloodsports abolished; throughout the time when it was no longer fashionable for masters to kick and cuff their servants, the children of both the rich and the working poor continued to share the pain of the rod, the birch, or somebody's fist. Some, like Thackeray and Swinburne, developed a perverse taste for the birch, but for most it was a savage indignity they remembered with considerable anguish. Trollope recalled that at school he was not only beaten by his teachers but by his brother: "As a part of his daily exercise he thrashed me with a big stick. That such thrashings should have been possible at a school as a continual part of one's daily life, seems to me to argue a very ill condition of school discipline."⁷ This was Harrow, yet it was much the same at that dismal church institution, the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, where Charlotte Brontë suffered as a child and which she described in *Jane Eyre* (1846) as Lowood. The refinement of punishment here was to make the offending student curtsy, then hand the birch to the teacher as a token of guilt and grateful acceptance of correction: "Burns immediately left the class, and, going into the small inner room where the books were kept, returned in half a minute, carrying in her hand a bundle of twigs tied together at one end. This ominous tool she presented to Miss Scatcherd with a respectful curtsy: then she quietly left without being told, unloosed her pinafore, and the teacher instantly and sharply inflicted on her neck a dozen strokes with a bunch of twigs" (chap. 6).

Elizabeth Gaskell, fortunate to be born a Unitarian and educated by the enlightened methods of that faith, was one of the very few children to escape flogging. When Flora Thompson recalled the kindly Miss Holmes of her village school, she noted that although this excellent teacher carried a cane from room to room, she never caned the very small children and only occasionally girls.⁸ Poor Traddles in *David Copperfield* (1869), caned every day at Salem House and drawing skeletons on his tear-stained slate (chap. 7), could be found in most English classrooms.⁹ We should not forget that animals were protected long before children in England and in the United States.

In 1884, John Colam, Secretary of the RSPCA since 1860, used the same arguments as the Clapham Saints to defend children from cruelty: those who tortured and abused animals would be sure to injure human beings. So a concern for the welfare of children grew naturally from the compassion felt for animals. Indeed, in that same year the executive committee of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children met regularly in the boardroom of the RSPCA's headquarters in Jermyn Street until they could afford quarters of their own. Twenty percent of the members of the new society were already members of the RSPCA, including John Colam. The words spoken by Henry Bergh, founder of the American SPCC, had become a rallying cry for the protectors of children. In 1874 Bergh had stated: "The child is an animal. If there is no justice for it as a human being, it shall at least have the rights of a cur in the street. It shall not be abused."¹⁰

Flora Thompson learned to accept the cane and was grateful when it was used with moderation to discipline the unruly. She knew that among themselves working-class children learned early that it was necessary to use their fists in order to survive:

It has been said that every child is born a little savage and has to be civilized. The process of civilization had not gone very far with some of the hamlet children; although one civilization had them in hand at home and another at school, they were able to throw off both on the road between the two places and revert to a state of Nature. A favourite amusement with these was to fall in a body upon some unoffending companion, usually a small girl in a clean frock, and to 'run her', as they called it. This meant chasing her until they caught her, then dragging her down and sitting upon her, tearing her clothes, smudging her face, and tousling her hair in the process. She might scream and cry and say she

would 'tell on' them; they took no notice until, tiring of the sport, they would run whooping off, leaving her sobbing and exhausted.¹¹

Boys' games tended to be considerably rougher, with stray dogs stoned and drowned, or cats caught and skinned alive.

The fate of most girls was domestic service or apprenticeship, and then there would certainly be bullying and, occasionally, blows from workmates and other servants. Oliver Twist was not beaten by his master, Mr. Sowerberry, but the other apprentice, Noah Claypole, took a positive delight in tormenting the boy. In due course Noah makes a profession of this taste for petty tyranny in a career suggested to him by Fagin after the lad has rejected bag-snatching from old ladies as being too dangerous: "The kinchins, my dear," said Fagin, "is the young children that's sent on errands by their mothers, with sixpences and shillings; and the lay is just to take their money away—they've always got it ready in their hands—then knock 'em into the kennel and walk off very slow, as if there was nothing else the matter but a child fallen down and hurt itself. Ha! ha! ha!" (*Oliver Twist* [1841], chap. 13).

In this area of abused children, fiction was a pallid imitation of the truth. Throughout the eighteenth century the death of apprentices and servants as a result of beatings was not uncommon: "The Middlesex Sessions papers, for example, record that in 1736 James Durant, a ribbon weaver, beat his thirteen-year-old apprentice to death with a 'mop-stick', and that in 1748 Elizabeth Dickens murdered her child apprentice by beating and ill-using her."¹² If the actual murder of servants became a rare occurrence in the nineteenth century, there was still a full measure of hurt and humiliation to be endured.

The large Victorian house was designed so that servants lived and ate in separate quarters from the family, and this physical division between workers and employers became the model for much poorer homes. It was the very antithesis of Windham's ideal community of "beneficence, humanity and hospitality," functioning like a family with the workers at the bottom of the table and the gentry at the top—but all eating from the same board. Windham was not alone in holding to this vision; it colored the minds and aspirations of the working class. Bitterly Mrs. Golding of Battersea recalled getting a job as "daily maid" at a small house on the Rise when she had just turned fourteen: "I might also add that although there was plenty of room to sit at the table with the Lady of the House and her two daughters 3 or 4 years younger

than myself, I had to eat my dinner off the mangle, next to the scullery but in the same room."¹³ The injustice of this remained with her, but at least she was not beaten by the "Lady of the House."

By contrast, Mrs. Scholefield of Illminster Gardens remembered her mother speaking of an employer's kindness in a way that set aside all questions of low wages and long hours: "My mother worked at 'Astors' the drapers in St. John's Road when she was a little girl. She remembered her boss was very kind and all the Staff had their meals with him at the head of the table carving the joint, always saying grace before they ate. In those days they had to be up to clean, fill and light oil stoves before breakfast to warm the shop for the customers."¹⁴ It would seem that it was not an excess of paternalism that workers resented but its absence.

Windham deplored this growing division between classes, divisions that were forgotten when men stood cheering on the dogs at a bullbaiting. Not only were bloodsports democratic; they could give even the poorest member of society some release for his frustration and pain. And since children were the most helpless and persecuted, what was more natural than that they should want to torture and kill creatures even weaker than themselves? But if Windham saw this as natural and benefic in the community, Wilberforce and his Evangelical friends denounced it as cultivating the inherent savage in a child. Soon the working-class child was learning two contradictory lessons: he was to be coerced into goodness by means of the birch, and he must not inflict a similar pain upon animals.

Nobody has satisfactorily resolved the problem of cruelty in human nature, and I have no elaborate theory to propound now. Instead, at this point, I would like to use Philip Hallie's definition of cruelty as the paradoxical relationship between oppressor and victim whereby the latter is deprived of liberty and freedom and the persecutor is made a slave to his own brutality.¹⁵ This was essentially William Hogarth's belief and the argument of Wilberforce. By extension, the torturing of a person or an animal is the overt assertion of the power and authority of an individual or a group. If you can kick me and get away with it, you have clearly demonstrated your physical and social authority over me, if not your moral ascendancy. So, it can be argued that cruelty, particularly towards animals, had a definite social and psychological function at a time when life was a progress of painful subservience to most people. As Ernest Morris said, looking back to the days of his

youth in Battersea: "Those days one existed by cap in hand and fear of unemployment and the dole. Class distinction reigned and the dole. Class distinction reigned predominant."¹⁶

Rather than being seen as an aberration of human nature, the torture and killing of animals permitted those who had no rights, no possibility of ever imposing their will upon others, to demonstrate, often publicly, their strength and dominance. When men who were accustomed to being thrashed and abused could watch the chained bull harried by a pack of dogs, it was like seeing the authority of the master torn apart by the mob. Wilberforce and others of like mind saw the symbolic and social import of these sports and were deeply troubled: was the satisfaction derived from such a spectacle as a bullbait any different from that of the Paris mob at the foot of the guillotine? Windham responded in turn that it was the democratic nature of a bloodsport in England which precluded any danger of revolution. Masters and workmen, gentry and townfolk, would all turn out to watch a bullbaiting. Gaskell wrote of Rochdale, where

The bull was fastened by a chain or rope to a post in the river. To increase the amount of water, as well as to give their workpeople the opportunity of savage delight, the masters were accustomed to stop their mills on the day when the sport took place. The bull would sometimes wheel suddenly round, so that the rope by which he was fastened swept those who had been careless enough to come within its range down into the water, and the good people of Rochdale had the excitement of seeing one or two of their neighbours drowned as well as of witnessing the bull baited, and the dogs torn and tossed.¹⁷

Windham pleaded for this old England in the face of the abhorred "Methodists and Jacobins" who were resolved to coerce the people into morality, but his cause was lost.¹⁸ Not only were the classes now segregated at sporting occasions; there was also a distinct policy that crowds of workers, invariably described as mobs, should be denied any opportunity to assemble. Above all else, it was necessary for workers to be educated from earliest childhood in deference; they must learn not to harm animals and, by extension, people. A docile, tractable, and energetic work force was the dream of every employer, who, on his part, was prepared to encourage Bible schools and wholesome team sports like cricket and football. Gaskell described an "industrial

school" in Hollingford founded and maintained by the local gentry which trained girls, and ensured a supply of maids for their service: "Girls are taught to sew beautifully, to be capital housemaids, and pretty fair cooks, and, above all, to dress neatly in a kind of charity uniform devised by the ladies of Cumnor Towers; —white caps, white tippets, check aprons, blue gowns, and ready curtseys, and 'please, ma'ams', being *de rigueur*." In the Black Country, an enlightened manager recommended that "all manly games, such as cricket, all humanising and refined tastes, should be encouraged as soon as possible."¹⁹ This in an area where cockfights had been the traditional sport of miners and their employers!

If the Evangelicals could abolish sports like bullbaiting and cockfighting with the assistance of those of humane instincts, it was not so easy, as Windham had sardonically observed, to deny the gentry their traditional pleasures. Therefore, throughout the nineteenth century we find the working class being deprived of the bloodsports they had always enjoyed in the company of the gentry and the middle class, while the latter appropriated those bloodsports which excluded the workers. Gentlemen could race horses, but it was frowned on when they attended ratfights. And unquestionably the reason was that at a race you stood apart from the lower orders, whereas around a ratpit you stood alongside them.

Foxhunting was an expensive sport and it became the pursuit of the rich and the rural gentry in all save a few isolated parts of Wales, where the miners turned out on ponies. So, too, stag hunting and shooting were reserved for those who could afford the time and money to kill animals preserved for the sport. Nothing is more misleading than to speak of the elimination of bloodsports from social life in this period. Instead what we find is the retention of all those bloodsports that could be enjoyed by the upper classes in the exclusive company of their own kind. However, if a gentleman were to indulge in a working-class sport like cockfighting or ratfights, he could expect neither the approval of his peers nor the mercy of the law. The point was made in Trollope's *Orley Farm* (1862), when Sir Peregrine Orme ruefully considered his grandson's predilection for Carrotty Bob's establishment in Cowcross Street, where rats were killed in a barrel: "Rats have this advantage, that they usually come cheaper than race-horses; but then, as Sir Peregrine felt sorely, they do not sound so well" (chap. 4).

Cockfights had always been one of those democratic sports praised by Windham where rich and poor could mingle together. Gaskell re-

lated how as late as the 1850s the gentry of Yorkshire patronized cockfighting in defiance of clerical denunciations against those who preferred to spend Sunday gambling instead of praying:

Another squire, of more distinguished family and larger property—one is thence led to imagine of better education, but that does not always follow—died at his house, not many miles from Haworth, only a few years ago. His great amusement and occupation had been cockfighting. When he was confined to his chamber with what he knew would be his last illness, he had his cocks brought up there, and watched the bloody battle from his bed. As his mortal disease increased, and it became impossible for him to turn so as to follow the combat, he had looking-glasses arranged in such a manner, around and above him, as he lay, that he could still see the cocks fighting. And in this manner he died.²⁰

Not only did men of all classes attend cockfights; it was within the means of a working man to own and train a cock, or a terrier dog for ratfighting. He could never hope to purchase a horse or join a hunt club, and it was most unlikely that he would ever be invited to shoot at a country house. It was not merely the composition of the crowd at a bloodsport which had changed by the end of the century but its location as well. All bloodsports were now confined to rural areas under the patronage of the gentry. The scenes of the foxhunt were as brutal as the flayed and torn birds at the conclusion of a cockfight: it was as "natural" for cocks to fight as it was to set hounds in pursuit of a fox, but those enjoying the carnage were now restricted to the upper classes. Laborers and the like were told to play "manly games" like cricket and football, but the old traditions did not die easily among men who had been passionately devoted to cockfighting. Frances Power Cobbe told the story of the lady taking a Ragged School class on the subject of "Gratitude" and inquiring "what pleasure in the course of the year they most thoroughly enjoyed. After a thoughtful pause, the last boy in the class looked up and said, with simple candour—"Cockfighting, ma'am."²¹

By the middle of the century the RSPCA was actively prosecuting the men who promoted cockfights no matter what their station in life. The rank of Captain Augustus Berkeley did not save him from arrest when he was caught by the society's officials while presiding over a cockfight as referee.²² It was easier to prosecute an illegal cockfight in

the city than in the country; nonetheless, in 1863 the marquis of Hastings was fined for setting up cockfights at Dorington Hall.²³ By the end of the century it had become an illicit sport that workingmen patronized in defiance of the law and gentlemen attended at the risk of name and reputation. Miners still held an occasional and secret cockfight in the north of England, but in other parts it became a specialty of the gypsies, particularly in Wales, where the "travelling people" would arrive with their gamecocks and be off on the road before the local magistrate could be informed.²⁴

Those who had grown up in the early years of the century now tended to look back in dismay and astonishment at what they had been and done. Thackeray felt as though he had lived in two different worlds, and what troubled him was that the old world still had the power to lay claim on his spirit. He remembered with considerable shame how he had enjoyed bloodsports as a child and delighted in sporting writers like Pierce Egan, St. John, and Badcock with their boisterous account of gutted dogs and torn bulls. And he recalled how the ultimate bloodsport, a public hanging, was a very jolly occasion indeed, even if it was no longer possible to witness the spectacle of men having their ears and nose sliced off by the hangman.²⁵ Yet even though Thackeray could never quite forget the exploits of Egan's Tom and Jerry, he declared that he found it impossible to find a copy of the work after 1860. Taste had altered, and although the appetite for bloodsports had not vanished, it was now being driven underground or forced to take different forms.

If the middle class felt it had been irrevocably changed, putting aside forever all the barbarous ways of the past, general opinion held that the working class was becoming ever more dangerous, depraved, and numerous. Wordsworth lauded solitary reapers and the meek, lowly, patient children of toil, but there were few commendations for the virtues of rural workers as the age progressed. At least in the city the brutal cabman flogging his overworked horse was under the supervision of a watchful populace, but in the country the old barbarities persisted. In *North and South* (1855) Gaskell contrasted the shrewd and kindly common sense of the industrial worker with what could be found in a pleasant little village like Helstone where Margaret Hale is questioning one of her father's old parishioners:

"How old is Betty Barnes?"

"I don't know," said the woman rather shortly.

"We's not friends."

"Why not?" asked Margaret, who had formerly been the peace-maker of the village.

"She stole my cat."

"Did she know it was yours?"

"I don't know. I reckon not."

"Well! could not you get it back again when you told her it was yours?"

"No! for she'd burnt it!"

"Burnt it!" exclaimed both Margaret and Mr Bell.

"Roasted it!" explained the woman.

It was no explanation. By dint of questioning, Margaret extracted from her the horrible fact that Betty Barnes, having been induced by a gypsy fortune-teller to lend the latter her husband's Sunday clothes, on promise of having them faithfully returned on the Saturday night before Goodman Barnes should have missed them, became alarmed by their non-appearance, and her consequent dread of her husband's anger, and as, according to one of the savage country superstitions, the cries of a cat, in the agonies of being boiled or roasted alive, compelled (as it were) the powers of darkness to fulfill the wishes of the executioner, resort had been had to the charm. The poor woman evidently believed in its efficacy; her only feeling was indignation that her cat had been chosen out from all others for a sacrifice. (Chap. 46)

Here is a dialogue that must have taken place on countless occasions when middle-class reformers encountered "the savage country superstitions" of an agricultural past. G. Kitson Clark has written that the changed attitudes to bloodsports constituted a turning point in Victorian society: "This conflict was very often between what was to make for a more humane, more civilized and more equitable society in place of indefensible survivals or the product of mere primitive savagery."²⁶ This is undeniable; however, for a rural worker accustomed to killing animals as his daily work, these intrusions into time-honored customs were both unwarranted and resented. It was a tradition for wrens to be hunted and plucked alive on the Isle of Man on St. Stephen's Day and for cocks to be run in Huntingdonshire on Shrove Tuesday; and as late as 1835 there were riots in Wokingham on St. Thomas's Day when the corporation refused to let a bull be baited before it was killed and its meat divided among the poor, especially when

it was believed that the flesh of an unbaited bull was unwholesome if not poisonous. Indignantly, the lower orders of Wokingham "vented their rage for successive years in occasional breaches of the peace. They found out, often informed by the sympathising farmer or butcher, where the devoted animal was domiciled; proceeded at night to liberate him from stall or meadow, and to chase him across the country with all the noisy accompaniments imaginable." On another occasion, "The mob broke into the place where one of the two animals to be divided was abiding and baited him, in defiance of the authorities, in the market-place; one enthusiastic individual, tradition relates, actually lying on the ground and seizing the miserable brute by the nostril with his own teeth. This was not to be endured, and a sentence of imprisonment in Reading Gaol cooled the ardour of the ringleaders, and gave the *coup de grâce* to the sport."²⁷

By the end of the century the Dean of Rochester was writing that an addiction to bullfighting was proof of Spanish perversity and arguing that just as Protestants hunted and played cricket, Roman Catholics would always be drawn to the savagery of the bullfight.²⁸ Although the English countryside had become a much quieter place, general opinion held that the rural worker was a brutish fellow who needed an army of Margaret Hales to prevent him from reverting to his natural state. Wordsworth saw the lowly and patient children of toil standing very close to God. In "A Journey in Search of Nothing" (1863) Wilkie Collins revealed a typical Victorian view which conveys all the contemporary prejudices about rural workers:

It is getting on toward evening, and the sons of labor are assembling on the benches outside the inn to drink. What a delightful scene they would make of this homely every-day event on the stage! How the simple creatures would clink their tin mugs, and drink each other's health and laugh joyously in chorus! How the peasant maidens would come tripping on the scene and lure the men tenderly to the dance! Where are the pipe and tabor that I have seen in so many pictures; where the simple songs that I have read about in so many poems? What do I hear as I listen, prone on the sofa, to the evening gathering of the rustic throng? Oaths—nothing, on my word of honor, but oaths! I look out, and see gangs of cadaverous savages, drinking gloomily from brown mugs, and swearing at each other every time they open their lips. Never in any large town, at home or abroad, have I been exposed

to such an incessant fire of unprintable words as now assail my ears in this primitive village. . . . This is an age of civilization; this is a Christian country; opposite me I see a building with a spire, which is called, I believe, a church; past my window, not an hour since, there rattled a neat pony-chaise with a gentleman inside, clad in glossy-black broadcloth, and popularly known by the style and title of clergy-man. And yet, under all these good influences, here sit twenty or thirty men whose ordinary table-talk is so outrageously beastly and blasphemous that not one single sentence of it, though it lasted the whole evening, could be printed, as a specimen, for public inspection in these pages. When the intelligent foreigner comes to England, and when I tell him (as I am sure to do) that we are the most moral people in the universe, I will take good care that he does not set foot in a secluded British village when the rural population is reposing over its mug of small beer after the labors of the day.²⁹

In the popular mind, Collins's primitive savages carousing among the haystacks were rapidly overtaking Wordsworth's innocent children of toil. When the image of both was invoked, the difference was defined in terms of animals, Jude, who is trying to free himself from the brute existence of country life, cannot bring himself to bleed the pig to death in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, so Arabella (who first made her presence known by flinging a pig's testicles at Jude) finishes off the job herself. Throughout Hardy's novels the humane and sensitive cannot injure or ill-treat animals, and in consequence they are made to suffer for their sensibility in a brute society. The social implications are bleak, for Arabella succeeds in a community that reflects her own values, whereas Jude is doomed to failure because his aspirations go beyond the fleshly mundane. Arabella would be perfectly at home pulling beer for Wilkie Collins's savages. As for the city worker, he was seen as the village lout translated to an urban setting. And George Gissing depicted his rapacious cunning and drunken bestiality in the inhabitants of *The Nether World* (1889) and *Demos* (1886). In Galsworthy's novels lower-class men invariably beat their wives and kick dogs, and as Samuel Hynes observed, they are themselves described as a form of human animal.³⁰ The dog as a dog was the most admirable of creatures, but when it slouched the streets on two legs in the shape of Galsworthy's workingman, it ceased to be an animal and became the kind of beast that

H. G. Wells was to portray in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). Only by means of constant vigilance, as the RSPCA warned, could the working class be prevented from flogging horses to the ground and drowning dogs for sport.

At this time popular opinion held that the workers were inherently deficient in all feelings of compassion towards animals because they were so like animals themselves. Therefore it was the duty of all enlightened people to train and discipline them as though they were dogs that had never known a collar or a command. Brian Harrison has given us an account of an RSPCA that was determined to do more than just defend animals: it was going to civilize the lower orders.³¹ Year after year the Society declared that workingmen were growing more callous and unfeeling and called for more education of working-class children. Certainly, at first sight it would seem that the RSPCA was correct, for almost every issue of the *Times* contains a small paragraph relating the arrest and sentence imposed on a carter or costermonger who had ill-treated his horse. These items were then reprinted in journals and publications concerned with the welfare of animals. The cumulative effect is to give the impression of workingmen who would torment and abuse any animal that fell into their hands. What is also remarkable is that these arrests were frequently brought to the attention of the police by private citizens, and the penalties and fines were often very severe. For example, at the Thames Police Court on August 16, 1894, Harry Leaman, aged twenty-four, was charged with having flogged his pony. He was found guilty and sentenced to a month's hard labor without the option of a fine.³²

Admittedly, coercion of this kind was the last resort of those concerned with the welfare of animals. As Brian Harrison has observed, there was a continuing debate within the RSPCA over using force to restrain working-class brutality and about the need for the more conciliatory methods of persuasion and education, particularly among working-class children.³³ Bands of Hope preached a gospel of temperance and kindness to animals, Sunday schools taught the gospel of a gentle Jesus guarding his lambs, and by the end of the century, Catherine Smithies' Bands of Mercy were flourishing throughout the country with their own hymns and cautionary tales: the boy who delighted in pulling wings off flies was on a certain road to hell.³⁴

One book was used by all these groups; it was the subject of sermons and was always on the list of books to be given as prizes by the

Education Council of the London County Council. *Black Beauty* presented a model of behavior for working-class children: they were to become "Christ's Police," to use the Band of Hope's term. It was not enough for the young Christian to be kind to animals; he had to keep his eyes open for any act of cruelty on the part of an adult, and then, like little Joe Green, he must actively help to apprehend the malefactor. Here indeed was a means whereby the child, that individual without rights or authority, could assert itself over the adult world. If children had once tormented animals in order to express a fragile sense of power, they were now presented with the means to assert their moral authority over adults. When Joe Green confronts the carter in the brickyard, he first warns the offender and offers to help him, then acts as one of "Christ's police":

"Hold hard!" said Joe. "Don't go on flogging the horses like that; the wheels are so stuck that they cannot move the cart."

The man took no heed, but went on lashing.

"Stop! pray stop!" said Joe. "I'll help you to lighten the cart; they can't move it now."

"Mind your own business, you impudent young rascal, and I'll mind mine!" The man was in a towering passion and the worse for drink, and laid on the whip again. Joe turned my head, and the next moment we were going at a round gallop toward the house of the master brickmaker. I cannot say if John would have approved of our pace, but Joe and I were both of one mind, and so angry that we could not have gone slower.

The house stood close by the roadside. Joe knocked at the door, and shouted, "Halloo! Is Mr. Clay at home?" The door was opened, and Mr. Clay himself came out.

"Halloo, young man! You seem in a hurry; any orders from the Squire this morning?"

"No, Mr. Clay, but there's a fellow in your brickyard flogging two horses to death. I told him to stop, and he wouldn't; I said I'd help him to lighten the cart, and he wouldn't; so I have come to tell you. Pray, sir, go." Joe's voice shook with excitement.

"Thank ye, my lad," said the man, running in for his hat; then pausing for a moment, "Will you give evidence of what you saw if I should bring the fellow up before a magistrate?"

"That I will," said Joe, "and glad to." The man was gone, and we were on our way home at a smart trot.

"Why, what's the matter with you, Joe? You look angry all over," said John, as the boy flung himself from the saddle.

"I am angry all over, I can tell you," said the boy, and then in hurried, excited words he told all that had happened. Joe was usually such a quiet, gentle little fellow that it was wonderful to see him so roused.

"Right, Joe! you did right, my boy, whether the fellow gets a summons or not. Many folks would have ridden by and said 'twas not their business to interfere. Now I say that with cruelty and oppression it is everybody's business to interfere when they see it; you did right, my boy." (Chap. 20)

"Everybody's business" was the particular charge of the socially responsible child, and the theme was hammered home in tracts and pamphlets and Sunday school lessons. And if we look at the way working-class people in Battersea remembered their childhoods, it would seem that the RSPCA and groups of allied interest were far more successful than they ever chose to admit. There was the occasional young savage who relished the spectacle of suffering, but most found it almost unendurable. Looking back, Mrs. Scholefield remembered Battersea Rise in winter when "it would be a common sight to see men lashing their horses to get them up the hills on icy roads and it would distress me very much to see these horses flinch with pain and their veins standing out. I would breathe a sigh of relief when they finally made it." Her words recall *Black Beauty* struggling under the whip to reach the crest of Ludgate Hill and then collapsing at the side of the road. She continued: "Another unhappy memory was looking in a pet shop window and seeing all kinds of small wild birds in tiny cages where they could hardly turn round, let alone fly. I would also watch with horror a man with a stick, drive sheep, pigs, etc. into the slaughter house next to North's our Butchers. A few would escape and run down Usk Road screaming all the way for they seemed to know they were going to their death."³⁵

A great many Battersea residents remembered with similar disgust how the cattle were driven down Latchmere Road. Mr. Morris, who as a child often gave his pennies to the "Old Anti," remarked drily that "it was a grand sight for some." Harry Kirkham was among the latter; he remembered only the excitement of chasing the fleeing cattle and that if "we helped to catch them we were allowed to watch in the Slaughterhouse."³⁶ The small boy who told his teacher that he enjoyed a

cockfight more than anything else had not disappeared—he could still be found—but he was disapproved of as much by his own mates as he was by a reforming middle class.

If we read accounts of the working class, there is always a general condemnation of the way they ill-treat animals that serves to illustrate the reports of the RSPCA. However, when we find the occasional text by a worker, there is a very different picture given. It would almost seem as though little Joe Green had grown to be a man in the pages of B. L. Coombes, the miner, who was appalled at the way the pit ponies were treated by the owners and by many of his fellow miners.³⁷ Of course, the most remarkable text by a workingman is *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, in which the painters and decorators are treated like animals by the jobbing contractors, and yet they can still pity those who are weaker and more defenseless than themselves.

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists was probably written in 1907 at the same time as the Battersea workers were turning out to defend the statue of the brown dog: the author, Robert Tressell was dead by 1911.³⁸ The details of his life are scanty, like those of most workingmen, and the known facts of his biography would not fill more than a paragraph, but his novel with its long Socialist tracts does give us his dream of a better world. Tressell's laborers are not the grimed brutes of Arthur Morrison's stories of slum life; they are slaves who have come to accept their chains and servitude as a bitter birthright. By their unending toil they sustain the monied classes, for they are the true philanthropists giving their very lives to maintain a society where philanthropy was doled out by the rich in minute portions. Living hand-to-mouth, their tragedy is that they accept their condition as unalterable and fatalistically drink or gamble to ease the realities of pain, monotony, and hunger.

Yet in some there is a spark of hope, and in Frank Owen it is like a consuming fire; he is the socialist, the reformer who tirelessly preaches the gospel of social change to his fellow workers, receiving only apathy or derision in return. He is introduced by means of an incident that immediately denotes his compassion and decency. Owen is wet through and hurrying home when he decides to turn back and tell old Jack Linden, who has been "stood off," that there is a chance of work with Makehaste and Sloggit:

As he hurried along he presently noticed a small dark object on the doorstep of an untenanted house. He stopped to examine it

more closely and perceived that it was a small black kitten. The tiny creature came towards him and began walking about his feet, looking into his face and crying piteously. He stooped down and stroked it, shuddering as his hands came in contact with its emaciated body. Its fur was saturated with rain and every joint of its backbone was distinctly perceptible to the touch. As he caressed it, the starving creature mewed pathetically.

Owen decided to take it home to the boy, and as he picked it up and put it inside his coat the little outcast began to purr. (Chap. 4)

It is a scene which accepts the rhetoric and emotional responses of a Band of Mercy tract, but the story is used to preach another lesson than the one customarily taught by Evangelicals. Tressell acknowledges that compassion for animals is a necessary condition of the humane individual, but caring for the defenseless does not lead in his case to Christ, but to the rejection of Christian faith and all those who preached its doctrines to the poor. Tressell's rogues, like Slyme and Misery, are fervent members of the Shining Light Chapel; his workingmen heroes cannot afford religion and its shallow hypocrisies. As Frank Owen tucks the kitten into his jacket, it provides him with the text for a sermon of doubt and disbelief. And we should not forget that when the working class was castigated for its savagery, what was frequently deplored, as in Wilkie Collins's criticism, was its refusal to attend church. As an Essex farmworker's son observed: "One thing as a boy I didn't like and it sticks in my mind today. I came to the conclusion that church-goers were something like the railway carriages were at one time—first, second and third class."³⁹ Ernest Morris of Battersea was not alone when he resented class distinction more than anything else in the society of his childhood. So if Tressell's sermon is derived from an Evangelical source, it takes a form that was to horrify a middle class which believed religion to be divine confirmation of deference and class:

This incident served to turn his thoughts into another channel. If, as so many people pretended to believe, there was an infinitely loving God, how was it that this helpless creature that He had made was condemned to suffer? It had never done any harm, and was in no sense responsible for the fact that it existed. Was God unaware of the miseries of His creatures? If so, then He was

not all-knowing. . . . It was not necessary to call in the evidence of science, or to refer to the supposed inconsistencies, impossibilities, contradictions and absurdities contained in the Bible, in order to prove that there was no truth in the Christian religion. All that was necessary was to look at the conduct of the individuals who were its votaries. (Chap. 4)

Throughout Tressell rages at a church which condones exploitation and approves a congregation segregated by class. In this community it is poor Philpot who is the martyr, the one among all the men who works hardest and complains least. To the best of his limited understanding he tries to follow Owen's lessons, and when his mates are not looking, he feeds the birds:

After dinner, when the others had all gone back to their work, Philpot unobtrusively returned to the kitchen and gathered up the discarded paper wrappers in which some of the men had brought their food. Spreading one of these open, he shook the crumbs from the others upon it. In this way and by picking up particles of bread from the floor, he collected a little pile of crumbs and crusts. To these he added some fragments that he had left from his own dinner. He then took the parcel upstairs and opening one of the windows threw the crumbs on to the roof of the portico. He had scarcely closed the window when two starlings fluttered down and began to eat. (Chap. 18)

No one cares for Philpot as he cares for the birds: he is killed when he is forced to climb the swaying sixty-five-rung ladder that is held to the roof of a crumbling building by a rotted rope. Tressell's anger is directed at the Grinders and Grabits who sent men into early graves and, in equal measure, at his fellow workers for their apathy and indifference. Owen cannot even persuade his mates to join the union: they accept their fates and go to their deaths like dumb animals.

Owen is first introduced to the reader, as we have seen, with an incident that replicates similar anecdotes in *Band of Mercy* and Sunday school tracts, but Tressell uses it to subvert the Christian message. In the tracts the stray kitten always belongs to a rich lady who befriends the boy, or else a wealthy stranger notices the act of kindness and rewards the boy handsomely. The bitter irony of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* is that the story is resolved by means of the same

device. George Barrington is a wealthy young man who has disguised himself in order to work with the painters and learn about their conditions at first hand. At the end, when Owen is sick and destitute, a letter arrives from Barrington, who is now living the life of a gentleman, and accompanying the customary good wishes is a ten pound note to help Owen and his family over Christmas. Despite all Tressell's argued socialism and his demands for economic reform, there is a yearning for paternalism, for the genial benevolence of employers who worked and ate with their workers—the world evoked by Windham in so many of his speeches.

Few social observers appreciated the conservatism of the working class, and fewer still were prepared to acknowledge that its feeling towards animals had changed radically from the days when there were dog fights and cockpits behind every large inn. The gentry still hunted and shot and went abroad to kill the more exotic animals of the jungle and veldt for sport. Gentlemen could be found relaxing at their ease in trophy rooms that were like charnel houses of stuffed heads, but workmen had been taught to acquire different tastes and appreciate other values. They had taken to football and cricket and spent more time and money betting on horse races than people thought they should. When the two classes met these days on the occasion of a bloodsport, there was no longer the old fraternity praised by Windham, but anger and a sense of outrage. So the *Tribune* reported a clash between gentry and workers over a wounded stag:

An exciting scene, in which a dreadfully-mutilated stag, chased by members of the Berks and Bucks Stag Hunt from the vicinity of Hawthorn Hill, took a prominent part occurred at the little village of Windlesham, Surrey, yesterday afternoon.

The terrified beast, bleeding freely from the neck, suddenly made its appearance in the main street, and in a frantic endeavour to evade its pursuers dashed up a side lane bordering a grocer's shop and sank to the ground in an exhausted condition. A party of men who witnessed the scene hurried to its side, and having fastened a rope round its neck, were in the act of leading it to a neighbouring stable, when the animal detected sounds of the approaching hunt and in a terrible struggle to regain freedom strangled itself.

A large number of villagers assembled on the spot, and on the arrival of members of the hunt the demeanour of the crowd be-

came hostile, some very uncomplimentary remarks being expressed concerning the nature of the sport.⁴⁰

It would almost seem from an account like this—and increasingly there were incidents of a similar kind—that the working class was identifying with the wounded animal, not with the hunters and sportsmen. If we ask for evidence of a more civilized and humane society, then surely this will answer, but it was seldom reflected in literature or popular opinion. Societies concerned with animal welfare continued to deplore the cruelties of the working class, while writers like George Gissing and Arthur Morrison depicted it as brutish and dangerous. Even an experienced political reporter like Randal Charlton, who wrote some very perceptive pieces indeed about the suffragettes, described a meeting of Battersea unionists with guarded caution: "You see rows upon rows of cloth caps shadowing stolid faces, faces that look at you with a sort of sleepy strength as they pull lazily at their tobacco pipes. It is a work-roughened audience scornfully content in its grime and corduroys, its greasy mufflers, its cardigan jackets, and clay-caked boots. It is an audience that would certainly be impatient of cant or prattle."⁴¹

These were the men who fought to defend the brown dog, who escorted Louise Lind-af-Hageby to her meetings and pledged the support of their unions for antivivisection. On two issues workingmen seldom found any reason to argue: they were opposed to animal experimentation and they stood solidly against women's suffrage and women's rights. Yet, at the time of the riots, the two issues were blurred and the cause of women became the cause of animals. We must now see what our Battersea workingmen thought about women and vivisectioners, and you may choose to attribute their opinions to ignorant prejudice or enlightened self interest according to your own particular prejudice.

3

Ignorant Prejudices

When Charlotte Despard took a Women's Freedom League caravan into South-east England in 1908 to lecture on the suffrage, she was met with "a hostility and a violence quite terrifying to the uninitiated; yelling, shouting and musical instruments drowned our arguments; rotten eggs, fruit and vegetables ruined our frocks—obscenity unspeakable offended our ears."¹ In the market square of Maidstone, as she stood on a chair to address the crowd, the sixty-three-year old woman was pelted with stones and her chair snatched from under her, smashed, and burned. Bleeding and shaken she was forced to leave the town to jeering abuse and volleys of granite chips.

It required just as much courage for a suffragette to speak to a group of workingmen in the East End of London, where she risked the chance of being catcalled and told to go home and look after her family—if she were lucky enough to have one. Working-class women had even less sympathy for the suffragettes, resenting the leisure of these middle-class ladies who were not burdened down with housework and children. Not one of the working-class women in Battersea who reminisced to the local historical association even bothered to mention the suffrage demonstrations, or showed the slightest interest in women's rights. They remembered the "Old Anti" and the dogs' home, but not the struggle to give women the vote. "I reckon they suffragettes wants half-a-dozen kids like this yer squad of mine. That'd steady 'em," was the attitude of most working-class wives.²

Charlotte Despard was accepted in Battersea because she lived

and worked in Nine Elms, where the locals regarded her as eccentric but one of their own. She was always given a hearing when she spoke about unemployment, child-care, or vivisection, but when Emmeline Pankhurst lectured with her on the subject of women's suffrage at the Battersea Town Hall, the crowd kept calling for the brown dog. Like Mrs. Fawcett, Emmeline Pankhurst was bewildered by this association of women's suffrage and the fate of a brown terrier dog. John Burns knew the mind of his electorate when he refused to support the suffragettes and their cause until every adult male in England was given the vote. Keir Hardie remained their friend, and some said it was more for personal reasons than anything else; his secretary was one of Mrs. Pankhurst's followers.³ As for George Lansbury, he was forced to admit in his autobiography that his support for women's suffrage had led him "into a head-on collision with the rest of the Labour Party. All the party were theoretically in favour of votes for women. But the rest did not appear as passionate as I was. . . . It was not a wise political decision."⁴

If the working class in general derided the suffragettes, trades unionists regarded them as a particular and most insidious enemy. From the beginning of the trades union movement, men like George Howell and Henry Broadhurst insisted that woman's place was in the home, not in a trades union, and certainly not at the annual congress. Broadhurst was speaking for his fellow stonemasons when he doubted the wisdom of sending women to these congresses, because "under the influence of emotion they might vote for things they would regret in cooler moments."⁵ Wherever women were unionized it was to the benefit of the male unionist, and this applies so generally that it can almost be taken as a law in the history of labor.

The problem union men confronted with women was that they were always prepared to do the same work for less money. In the colonies it was possible to keep out blacks and Chinese by exploiting race prejudice and denouncing the competing work force as lazy, shiftless, and depraved. The White Australia Policy was as much the creation of the trades union movement as it was an expression of national sentiment. However, it was not so easy to exclude working women by the same means; after all, they were often sisters and mothers. So the language of exclusion took two forms: it could be pejorative, which was effective when dealing with those of a different race, or laudatory, as when disposing of women. Women were innately refined and virtuous,

it was said, too pure to be defiled by contact with brute men in the factory or the mine.

It was extraordinarily effective, even though it ran counter to every social and economic interest of women. The aspiration was to be a lady, and it was not only Liza Doolittle who cherished that dream. Ramsay MacDonald said: "I have met with cutting reproofs from forewomen and others in the bookbinding houses when I tried, in my innocence, to find out why they did not turn their hands to simple and easy processes which were being done by men. 'Why, that is man's work, and we shouldn't think of doing it!' is the usual answer given with a toss of the head and a tone insinuating that there is a certain indelicacy in the question."⁶

The test of a strong union was always its ability to maintain wages and hours and exclude cheap labor. The miners had accomplished the latter by making it illegal for women to work in the pit; when the printers found it impossible to get rid of women in the same way, they set about unionizing them on terms to suit themselves. It was an issue appreciated from the first by Australian unionists, and in 1889 the Queensland Provincial Council of the Australian Labor Federation resolved: "It shall be one of the chief duties of District Organisers to organise women workers in unions of the Federation, and every member shall assist in this work, without which any attempt to permanently benefit Labor must be futile."⁷ In the textile industry in the North of England women were relegated to the lowest-paid jobs, but they were still called upon to pay the largest share of the levy used for the parliamentary salary of David Shackleton, a man who had never given any support to women.⁸

In the past Robert Owen had sought the equality of the sexes, but this idealistic socialism had no influence upon the day-to-day work of the trades unions.⁹ There, one rule applied: if women could not be removed from the workplace, they must be organized in such a way that they presented no competition to men. Charles Drysdale expressed this fear when he wrote: "Men were frequently told to go home and to send their wives in their stead. Every man who is engaged as an employee realises bitterly to-day how women are coming in and under-selling him, and how difficult it is for him to raise his salary and feel secure of his position."¹⁰ Drysdale argued that a major cause of unemployment amongst men was "the exceedingly rapid incursion of unorganised and unrepresented women into the labour market," and there-

fore, "even supposing that women did not want the vote, it is just as necessary for men to induce them to do so, as it is for members of a trade-union to get all the men in their industry enrolled in their society."¹¹

Generally the English worker would have agreed with the first part and ignored the conclusion. The Battersea Council and several of the unions voted solidly for antivivisection but never for women's suffrage. Even in the visionary society which Robert Tressell sets against the world of his novel, there is no suggestion that women should be given equal opportunity to work. They cook and wash for their children, just as they do in William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1891). Robert Owen's radical feminism was forgotten by trades unionists: what they kept in mind was Engels' warning that in a capitalist society men's labor would eventually be replaced by the cheaper work of women, and they in turn could expect to be displaced by children.

Single women and widows were expected to work, and generally they found themselves earning less than a living wage from employers like Tressell's Mr. Adam Sweater, who "employed a great number of girls and young women who were supposed to be learning dress-making, mantel-making or millinery. These were all indentured apprentices, some of whom had paid premiums of from five to ten pounds. They were 'bound' for three years. For the first two years they received no wages: the third year they got a shilling or eightpence a week. At the end of the third year they usually got the sack, unless they were willing to stay on as improvers at from three shillings to four and sixpence per week" (chap. 20). The aspiration of girls like these was not to acquire a better job, but to marry like Gaskell's Mary Barton, or Gissing's Monica Madden in *The Odd Women* (1893).

The home was a married woman's sphere, and what Tressell and workingmen admired most was a good manager.¹² It is Ruth Easton's tragedy in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* that she can never make ends meet, and her housekeeping skills are so limited that she tries to feed a nursing baby with mashed potato and bacon. When Battersea folk looked back to their childhood, many of them recalled with considerable pride a mother who knew how to put a good meal on the table in the hardest times:

My brother used to have to go to Harrods early in the morning before school and buy 3d giblets and a bag full of turkey necks. Rich people didn't want them and sometimes he would get a 3d

big bag full of fish. It was all good food but sometimes the kippers would be broken so the rich people wouldn't like them but my Mum used to feed us on the fat of the land. For 3d we could get pieces of cheese: the ends and the broken bits and all colours, and my Mum used to put it in a saucepan and melt it and it was lovely.¹³

Nothing irritated working-class women more than to hear a well-dressed lady, obviously with time on her hands, lecturing them on the need to campaign for the vote. When you were balancing pennies against sixpence to buy the Sunday dinner, the "New Woman" and her problems of boredom and lack of political power seemed as trivial as they were offensive. Vera Brittain wrote of the stresses of Edwardian society and the need for the Lady to become a Woman, but she did not have much idea of a Battersea housewife's dreams and goals.¹⁴ The problems of Ann Veronica, stifled by convention in H. G. Wells' novel (1909), would have seemed hysterical to those Battersea women who cherished middle-class aspirations for themselves and their children.

When the suffragettes took to the streets in rioting mobs, breaking shop windows and shouting abuse, they were appropriating a traditional working-class mode of protest, and their actions were savagely resented by trades unionists. You broke windows and rioted as a last resort over issues of wages and hours, not for the feminine whim of idle women. With men like Harry Champion and Ben Tillett in charge, the spontaneous riot of the market or workplace had become a calculated expression of violence. Kenneth Brown notes the effectiveness of this kind of action in a society where the fear of poverty erupting into revolution was never far from middle-class minds: "In 1886 the Lord Mayor's Mansion House Fund, established to relieve the unemployed, shot up from £19,000 to £72,000 in the two days immediately following demonstrations in the heart of London's clubland. The rioters, most of them unemployed workers from the East End, were led by members of the Social Democratic Federation who had been drilling them for some time under the direction of H. H. Champion, a former soldier."¹⁵

Battersea had its own history of successful strikes: John Burns had been one of the leaders in the Fight for the Dockers' Tanner in 1889; Mark Hutchins led the gasworkers to victory in the same year. The issues then were those of a living wage for hungry families and the right to combine in a union: to set the cause of votes for women alongside

these concerns was absurd. In consequence, when Labour politicians considered the questions of unemployment and women's suffrage, they worked to alleviate the former and paid lip service to the latter.

What roused Battersea in 1907 was not the plight of women but a fear that had its origins at Tyburn in the eighteenth century. Public hangings were undoubtedly the most popular of all bloodsports, and the "jingling antithesis between life and death," to use Thackeray's phrase, always roused the spectators to a frenzy. Brawls often broke out at the foot of the gallows between the friends of the dead and the servants of the Royal College of Physicians or Company of Barber-Surgeons, who had the right to claim ten corpses a year for dissection. Private surgeons too were ready to pay high prices for a fresh corpse, and in 1736 the grave-digger of St. Dunstan's, Stepney, felt the full fury of the law and the populace when he was convicted for having sold bodies to a private surgeon:

Sentence was executed upon him very severely by John Hooper, the then common Executioner; and on the Day appointed for him to be whipped; there was, perhaps, the greatest Concourse of People that was ever known. A Mob of Sailors and Chimney Sweepers rendezvous'd in Stepney Church-yard, and when [the] poor Culprit was ty'd to the Cart, they led the Horses so slow, that he received some Hundreds of Lashes, the Hangman being encouraged by the Mob (who gave him a good deal of Money) not to favour the Delinquent, but to do his Duty.¹⁶

It was not only the corpses of convicted felons which provided subjects for anatomical research; the poor lived in constant fear that their dead would be taken and dissected on the surgeon's table. There were stories told of dead men suddenly reviving under the knife and meeting a death more painful than any received from the hangman's noose. Certainly, it is doubtful if the English working class went in dread of the pains of hell; what did concern many of them was the likelihood of some surgeon's hack stealing their bodies before they were cold and then cutting them up like carcasses of meat.

The progress from cruelty to animals to the dissection table in Surgeons' Hall had been horrifyingly depicted by William Hogarth in his *Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751). The prints were "intentionally explicit . . . to grip the attention of the ignorant and brutal."¹⁷ Here the most dreaded working-class fears were cast into the form of a cautionary

tract—four pictures that expressed the terrors of vivisection in a sequence from Tom Nero's skewering of a dog, to his flogging of a horse, the murder of his mistress, and his eventual death by hanging, with his body given over to the dissectors. In Hogarth's plates the persecutor of animals was the murderer of women—and this became more than a narrative concept: it was to be an article of faith in popular opinion. It was Hogarth's genius to borrow his images from life, cast them into the form of narrative art and then impose them upon the world as reality.¹⁸

James Mill stated that "nothing is remembered but through its IDEA. The memory, however, of a thing, and the idea of it, are not the same. The idea may be without the memory; but the memory cannot be without the idea."¹⁹ And for the nineteenth century it was Hogarth's idea that framed arguments and shaped the form of working-class belief even when his pictures were not held in the mind's eye. In the first plate Tom Nero is driving a stake into a dog; he is surrounded by emblems of cruelty as boys blind a sparrow, set cats fighting from a lamp post, or tie a bone to the tail of a dog. In the next plate Tom has graduated to hackney coachman, and he flogs a horse that has collapsed with fatigue while another man beats a lamb with a club. The third plate shows Tom arrested for having murdered his pregnant mistress; and in the fourth and final plate, the reward of cruelty, his corpse is laid out before the surgeons who scoop out the eyes, drag forth the entrails, and cut the tendons of the foot. All around the spectators gossip and gloat, and as the intestines and heart are cast to the floor, a famished dog seizes on Tom Nero's cruel heart and devours it. In drawing these pictures for "the lower orders of society," Hogarth had done more than provide a tract: he had taken the fears of Tyburn and the surgeons and made them a direct consequence of the wanton cruelty of children torturing animals for sport. The horror in Hogarth's last plate is concentrated in the face of the corpse, for Tom Nero does not seem dead; it is as if he is silently screaming for help and for mercy. The idea of cruelty to animals leading to a murdered wife or mistress and ending under the surgeon's knife was to remain a recurring figure and traditional belief, for as Mill also stated, "Belief is a matter of habit and accident, and not of reason."²⁰

The last two etchings of *The Four Stages of Cruelty* were sold for sixpence in the form of John Bell's woodcuts, but all of Hogarth's prints were widely disseminated. Just as the temperance societies used *Gin Lane* in their publicity, the antivivisection societies made Tom Nero familiar in their publications and flyers. However, it was the popularity

of Hogarth among the working class which made the progress from cruelty to animals to murder and dissection seem part of the natural order. Charles Mitchell has written of the way that "the prints were cast adrift on an open sea and might fetch up anywhere. They were pasted up in inns and taverns . . . country yokels pored over stray 'pickers come from Lunnon;' and any sort of person might stop to join the crowds round the print-shop windows."²¹ The colored print shaped the mind and imagination of the working class at this time just as television does today, and the recurring theme in many of these prints was body snatching and the disposition of the poor dead.

If the rich and genteel seemed more concerned with the fate of their souls in the next world, it was because their earthly remains were laid to rest in stout coffins in closed crypts or deep graves. A poor man like Silas Wegg in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) often came to feel that his body was being disposed of, bought and sold, while he was still alive. Wegg lost his leg as the result of a hospital amputation and suspects that Mr. Venus, the "articulator," has the bone among a miscellaneous collection from which he constructs skeletons. Plaintively Wegg appeals to his friend's social conscience: "I have a prospect of getting on in life and elevating myself by my own independent exertions," says Wegg, feelingly, "and I shouldn't like—I tell you openly I should *not* like—under such circumstances, to be what I may call dispersed, a part of me here, and a part of me there, but should wish to collect myself like a genteel person!" (chap. 7). No other writer at this time had such insight into the almost mythic fears of his readers, and it is not simply Jerry Cruncher sucking the rust from his fingers in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) who speaks to the dread of the body snatcher, but also Squeers' venomous intentions towards Peg Sliderskew in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839): "Why, I suppose they can't do much to me if I explain how it was that I got into the good company of that there ca-daverous old Slider," replied Squeers viciously, "who I wish was dead and buried, and resurrected and dissected, and hung upon wires in an anatomical museum, before ever I'd anything to do with her!" (chap. 60).

Working-class people paid into burial clubs and funeral funds to ensure that death should be as sumptuous as life had been mean and constricted. There was considerable comfort to be derived from a funeral with nodding sable plumes and velvet-shrouded hearse, the mourners decked out in brand-new clothes for the occasion. Edwin Chadwick recognized the impulses that led to the opulent displays of

a working-class funeral and deplored them as ridiculous and sinful, while the *Quarterly Review* lamented that if only "the poor were wise, their funerals would be as simple as possible; a plain coffin, borne by near male relations, and followed by the family and friends of the deceased in decent mourning, but without any of the undertaker's trappings on their persons, would be sufficient. The poor like funeral pomp because the rich like it; forgetting that during life the condition of the dead was entirely different, and that there ought to be a consistency in every thing belonging to the different ranks of society."²² Here indeed was one reason why burial clubs flourished and people went into debt to keep up the payments. A solemn funeral attended by a throng of mourners was one of the most vehement expressions of social equality: if you could not live like the rich, then at least you could die like them. To be buried handsomely as a "genteel person" was a small compensation for the injustices of life. If some insisted that class distinctions should be maintained in death as in life, the sumptuary rites of the poor repudiated this belief.

The horror working-class people felt for the workhouse was equalled only by their resolve to avoid a pauper's funeral with its cardboard coffin bulging with the body of the corpse. The disgrace of poverty was made all too evident when paupers were buried like dogs, a phrase not uncommon with workhouse guardians. The poor were always being rebuked by middle-class critics for their lavish funerals. Arthur Morrison gives a typical impression in "On the Stairs" (1895):

"When I lost my pore 'usband," said the gaunt woman, with a certain brightening. "I give 'im a 'ansome funeral. 'E was a Odd-fellow, an' I got twelve pound. I 'ad a oak cafin an' a open 'earse. There was a kerridge for the fam'ly an' one for 'is mates—two 'orses each, an' feathers, an' mutes; an' it went the furthest way round to the cimity." 'Wotever 'appens, Mrs. Manders,' says the undertaker, 'you'll feel as you've treated 'im proper; no-body can't reproach you over that.' An' they couldn't. "E was a good 'usband to me, an' I buried 'im respectable."²³

Undertakers competed for every corpse: for ten pounds H. J. Larners's of Battersea would provide a glass-sided carriage with velvets on the horses, drapes all round, and two coaches for the mourners to make the fourteen-mile round trip from Battersea to the burial ground at Morden. Competition was always keen, and undertakers hovered

like vultures around the doors of the dying. Robert Tressell described them as ghouls, prepared to snatch a body from one coffin and put it in another of their own. This is, of course, poor Philpot's fate in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*; his old landlady complains about the undertakers who have clamored for the job of burying him:

"I shall be very glad when it's all over," she said, as she led the way up the narrow stairs, closely followed by Hunter, who carried the tressels, Crass and Sawkins, bringing up the rear with the coffin. "I shall be very glad when it's all over, for I'm sick and tired of answerin' the door to undertakers. If there's been one 'ere since Friday there's been a dozen, all after the job, not to mention all the cards what's been put under the door, besides the one's what I've had give to me by different people. I had a pair of boots bein' mended and the man took the trouble to bring 'em 'ome when they was finished—a thing 'e's never done before—just for an excuse to give me an undertaker's card." (Chap. 47)

It seemed that no amount of criticism or advice could persuade the poor to exercise economy or common sense when it came to funerals, because nothing could assuage the fear of a pauper's funeral and the dreadful prospect of the corpse being sold to a surgeon for dissection. The realities of body snatching were grim enough to make the surgeon a man to be feared. Henry Lonsdale recorded a series of incidents that took place in the 1830s when "a man was hanged in Carlisle; and the friends of the culprit determined to revenge themselves on the doctors who engaged in the post-mortem examination. All the medical men sustained personal injuries, and of a severe kind. Mr Anderson . . . was shot in the face. . . . Another surgeon was found dead by the side of a lofty bridge, over the parapet of which, it was believed, he had been thrown."²⁴ The surgeon (and he was felt to be quite different from the physician) was loathed by the working class. John Nichols and John Ireland in the biography of Hogarth observed with approval that "our legislators, considering how unfit such men are to determine in cases of life and death, have judiciously excluded both surgeons and butchers from serving upon juries," the reason for this legal restriction being that "a frequent contemplation of sanguinary scenes, hardens the heart, deadens sensibility, and destroys every tender sensation."²⁵

A corpse was watched until it was laid in the ground, for it was not only competing undertakers who snatched bodies from coffins. Men

like Jerry Cruncher, who ill-treated his wife when not stealing corpses, were thought to be lurking around every cemetery. One of the entrances to Battersea Park is an Elizabethan-style cottage which was designed by Charles Newnham, a self-made man who struggled up from poverty to become a successful carpenter and builder. When he retired he wrote his autobiography that others might emulate his rise to prosperity. He told of a plasterer's laborer who fell from a great height onto the spikes of some iron railings:

When his mates carried him to the nearest doctor, he pronounced him as quite dead. He was a single man, and they carried him to his lodgings. An hour or two afterwards, two men went. Claiming to be the relations, they were allowed to take him away.

By and by, the real relations came. Finding the body had been surreptitiously moved, they proceeded to the Bow Street Police Office. Obtaining the assistance of a 'runner', they went in pursuit of the 'body-snatchers' as they were called. They escaped but the body was found at the dissecting room of the celebrated Dr Brooks, near Blenheim Steps, Oxford Street. The body was reconveyed to the place where it was stolen from to await the coroner's verdict, the relatives locking the door, and taking away the key to make sure of the body being safe.²⁶

Those who died in the workhouse or the hospital and had neither friends nor family to claim the body were regularly handed over to the surgeons, and the quartering of a traitor's corpse after it had been drawn and hanged now seemed remarkably similar to what was being done to the cadavers of the poor. However, to this fear was now added another, that it was not simply the bodies of the poor dead which were being claimed by doctors. The tales of the "resurrection men" lived on in melodrama and popular folklore. Robert Louis Stevenson's short story "The Body-Snatcher" was published at the time of the Brown Dog Riots and promptly dramatized. The counsel of the surgeon Macfarlane to his shuddering associate when the corpse of their friend is laid out on the slab was hardly comforting to the less successful members of society: "Why, man, do you know what this life is? There are two squads of us—the lions and the lambs. If you're a lamb, you'll come to lie upon these tables like Gray or Jane Galbraith; if you're a lion, you'll live and drive a horse like me."²⁷

The working class firmly believed that surgeons were vivisectioning dogs, cats, and rabbits because they could not vivisection human beings. When the latter were available, they would be used. In response to this conviction a number of hospitals in working-class areas became declared antivivisection institutions: the Battersea General—the “Old Anti,” as it was affectionately known to the residents—was the last of its kind in England, the place where Battersea children went on Fridays to have teeth pulled for a shilling or have their tonsils removed. The fêtes and raffles in support of this hospital were remembered by many Battersea folk: “Once yearly the parade came through the main streets, floats, horse and carts, walkers and bands. What a treat it was for us children. Once my sister was dressed up and sat in a cart. What a honour for our family! The collecting boxes went round for our ‘mouldy coppers.’”²⁸

Robert Tressell shared the resentment of his workmates when they were called on to put twopence in a hospital collecting box as they were paid their wages:

Of course, it was not compulsory to do so, but they all did, because they felt that any man who omitted to contribute might be ‘marked’. They did not all agree with contributing to the Hospital, for several reasons. They knew that the doctors at the Hospital made a practice of using the free patients to make experiments upon, and they also knew that the so-called ‘free’ patients who contribute so very largely directly to the maintenance of such institutions, get scant consideration when they apply for ‘free’ treatment, and are plainly given to understand that they are receiving ‘charity’. (Chap. 22)

The fear of being vivisectioned or made the subject of experiment was not simply superstition and folklore. Many doctors did indeed regard their right to research as being more important than the care of patients. In 1883, William Murrell and Sidney Ringer administered large doses of sodium nitrate to hospital outpatients at the Westminster Hospital before they had conducted any experiments on animals. The eighteen outpatients became ill, suffering frightful pain, and subsequent tests upon animals proved quite conclusively that sodium nitrate was poisonous. The whole affair was publicized in the press, but Ringer and Murrell were exonerated by the Censor’s Board of the

Royal College of Physicians. There was considerable criticism of the doctors and Royal College of Physicians in the popular press; then Dr. A. De Watteville published his support of Ringer and Murrell in a letter to the *Standard* in which he referred to the working class as *corporatilia*, insisting that the few must suffer for the benefit of future generations. No one was left in any doubt that “the few” were to be charity patients: “So far from there being a reason why moral and pecuniary support should be refused to hospitals on the ground that the inmates are made use of otherwise than for treatment, there is ground why more and more should be given to them, in order to compensate by every possible comfort for the discomforts necessarily entailed by the education of succeeding generations of medical men, and the improvements in our methods of coping with disease.”²⁹

Naturally, a letter like this was seized upon by the antivivisectionists. Edward Berdoe used it in *Dying Scientifically: A Key to St. Bernard’s*, which was published as a sequel to his immensely popular *St. Bernard’s: The Romance of a Medical Student* (1888), a novel that described the surgical practices of a contemporary hospital. In *Dying Scientifically*, Berdoe cited several instances where the healing of patients in charity wards was deliberately retarded for the purpose of clinical study. Quite simply his conclusion was that “in our great general hospitals to which medical schools are attached the healing of patients is made subordinate to the professional advantage of the medical staff and the students.”³⁰ The patients concerned were always the working and lower-middle classes, for it was still the privilege of those with means to be nursed at home.

The effect upon the working class was that doctors were now regarded with the deepest suspicion, and hospitals came to have as unsavory a reputation as the workhouse. If medical advice was needed, it was first sought at the local chemist shop, and patent medicines were always preferred to a doctor’s prescription. It was not only Robert Louis Stevenson who felt that the soul of a ravening, amoral monster could be found in the breast of a kindly man of medicine like Dr. Jekyll

When Edward Ford took himself over to Battersea to inspect the statue of the brown dog, he asked a young lad to show him where it could be found:

“Our dorg, sir; I should think I know. I helped to fight the stoopents, and if they’re comin’ again we’ll give ‘em wot for”. “But why

are you so interested in that dog?" I asked, as we turned down a side street. "Oh, I should think I am. I wouldn't 'ave my Bill cut open alive an' kept in a cage for two months and 'anded over from one cutter to another, no, not if I knows it; and as for them stuck-up chaps who yell and shriek 'cause they wants more hani-mals to cut up, dad said last night he'd sooner die in peace than have them doctorin' 'im". "But, my dear boy, when your father is ill I am sure he is glad enough to be helped by doctors?" "Not by them doctors, though. We don't trust them 'ere in Battersea. We've got an 'orspital of our own, where the doctors don't believe in cutting hanimals up alive, it's called the Anti-Vivisection 'Orspital, and we always goes there when we're ill, mother and dad and Nellie and me".³¹

Allowing for the partiality of a journalist who was a convinced anti-vivisectionist, the passage does evoke the attitudes of the Battersea people. They objected to animals being tortured in the name of research, for it was not difficult to see those animals as images of themselves, the *corpora vilia* of De Watteville's statement. Country folk who tried to protect a hunted stag instead of joining in the chase were not engaged in a class war with the gentry; they were genuinely moved by the plight of the animal. The unremitting work of humane societies had been effective to such an extent that working-class people often tended to think of themselves as animals.

This compassion could even be found among the workers in a slaughterhouse, who saw no harm in killing animals but objected violently to those same animals being tormented. Joseph Lister had never shown any regard for the pain of his animal subjects, and he recorded angrily an incident which took place when he conducted an experiment in 1861 upon sheep at the Glasgow slaughterhouse. Lister was observing the effect of chloroform on the larynx of a sheep, and wrote in his diary: "I had just got so far with my observations when the inspector of the slaughter house walked up and told me he would not allow such brutality . . . and forthwith ordered me off the premises. Thus I had a taste of what has since been alas! experienced so largely by our profession, viz. how ignorant prejudice with good intentions may obstruct legitimate scientific inquiry."³²

Workingmen jeered at the suffragettes in order to protect their own livelihood and restricted sphere of social influence, and when they

turned out in Battersea to defend the brown dog, they were protecting themselves against the vivisector's knife. Like Thackeray, they too had learned to abhor the savage pursuits of the past. Football and horse-racing had become substitutes for bullbaiting and cockfights, and even that time-honored pursuit of drowning stray dogs was now frowned upon.

Dogs had been traditionally whipped in Yorkshire on St. Luke's Day, and one of the most popular village sports was to catch a stray dog and slowly drown it.³³ John Brown recorded a typical instance in the first half of the nineteenth century, when his brother rescued a sagacious small terrier: "My brother William found him the centre of attraction to a multitude of small black-guards who were drowning him slowly in Lochend Loch, doing their best to lengthen out the process, and secure the greatest amount of fun with the nearest approach to death."³⁴ Later, when this sport was being prosecuted as a crime, there was always the excuse that a panting dog in summer was rabid and should be stoned or drowned.³⁵ The Band of Mercy tracts paid particular attention to this minor atrocity and told the cautionary tale of the boy who drowned a dog and was later drowned himself, slowly and horribly, in a stormy sea. By the end of the century, a passion for dogs was not confined to the middle class, and an extraordinary number of popular ballads declared that canine love was purer and less selfish than the human variety.

Yet at the Royal Commission on Vivisection in 1907 Dr. Edward Schafer of University College, London, justified research in which he had drowned over fifty dogs: "He claimed that as the result of thirty-six experiments, two without and thirty-four with anaesthetics, he had discovered a more fruitful method of resuscitating the drowned."³⁶ The popular press exploded with indignation, and Edward Schafer was compared unfavorably with Bill Sikes, while a journal like the *Tribune* seriously questioned the results of his research.³⁷ To a workingman it must have seemed that the sport he had once enjoyed as a boy and had subsequently learned to deplore was now the pursuit of a celebrated doctor. It was not simply that the working class had changed in its attitude to animals, but that it was increasingly identifying with these oppressed and ill-treated creatures. If Schafer was drowning dogs, then it seemed quite possible that he would want to drown people in order to refine his research, and if he insisted in calling his experiments scientific, there were many who saw them as mischie-

vous and cruel. Joseph Lister saw the interference with his research motivated by "ignorant prejudice," but when animals were tormented, the shadowy presence of William Hogarth was felt, and his icons of cruelty gave substance to people's feelings. In teaching people to pity animals it became possible for those animals to embody the subjection and suffering of women and workers.

4

Black Beauty and Other Horses

If middle-class feminist women and trades unionists were drawn together in Battersea by the accident of a particular circumstance, there were deeper bonds between them than either consciously imagined. These affinities can be found first in Hogarth's second stage of cruelty, where Tom Nero, the hackney coachman, is flogging an emaciated horse which has collapsed on its knees in the shafts. Generally, in the nineteenth century, if people were asked for the most obvious instance of cruelty to animals, then this spectacle of a beaten and exhausted horse would have answered. Many of the old residents of Battersea remembered the horses straining up the icy Rise in winter, and one old lady of eighty wrote: "I can still see the very bedraggled horse that was kept at the bottom of Broomwood Road. It was there to be hired by anyone who wanted extra strength to get their load to the top of the hill."¹ Too often a driver chose to save the money and whip his horse up this hill or any other.

The idea of working-class cruelty to animals was personified by Tom Nero of St. Giles' Charity School and confirmed whenever a cabman was seen belaboring his horse. Like Miss Evans of Battersea, William Howitt lived on high ground, Highgate West Hill in Kentish Town, and he too wrote of the suffering horses being lashed to the top of the hill.² It was a scene that could have been witnessed any day in most English towns, but by the middle of the century there were concerned observers like Howitt everywhere, and some were not content merely to express feelings of dismay and compassion for the horses; they were quite prepared to bring charges against the drivers. Children

were encouraged by the Band of Mercy to be on the lookout for drunken cabmen and to report them, like young Joe Green in *Black Beauty*. And, as we have already seen, the fines and the terms of imprisonment meted out to offenders were very harsh indeed.

The work which served to crystallize the way people saw themselves and horses was *Black Beauty* (1877), written by Anna Sewell as the declared autobiography of a horse. In its first year of publication in England it sold over 12,000 copies, and by 1894 Jarrolds, the publisher, estimated the sales to be more than 192,000 annually. But it was in America, which did not acknowledge English copyrights, that the book achieved its most spectacular success. George Angell was the founder of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the American Humane Society, the Band of Mercy, and the SPCA magazine *Our Dumb Animals*. As a young man he had worked for the abolition of slavery, and he now looked for a book that would help horses in the way that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had slaves. Within twelve days of receiving a copy of *Black Beauty* in 1890, he was soliciting funds for an American edition, and by the end of the year he had sold 216,000 copies. The sales continued at the rate of a quarter of a million copies a year.³

Black Beauty was not simply a juvenile classic of the order of Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (1863). The work became an approved school reader, and was energetically promoted by the RSPCA, the Band of Mercy, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and a great many humane and antivivisection societies. It had the same fervor and passionate conviction as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was written not to entertain but to change the hearts and minds of all who read it. From the start it found its audience among children and adolescents, who wept and anguished over the story of a black horse. *Black Beauty* is a strange work which most of us can recall but never quite remember. Generally, what comes to mind is the almost unendurable grief when we first read it. Yet, when we take it up again years later, we can recognize the driving homiletic force but not why it should once have stirred us to such tears and anger. Nonetheless, it remains in the mind like a buried landscape, and if we think about it at all, it is to wonder why we should once have wept so bitterly over the fate of a horse.

Anna Sewell was a most unlikely author for a popular classic: she was fifty-seven and dying when she dictated the chapters of *Black Beauty* to her mother, Mary Sewell. In a sense, the story was her last

will and testament, composed when she was preparing with daily prayer and self-examination to meet her God. Perhaps it was the occasion of its creation which gave the work such urgent authority and allowed so many imperious voices to cry out from the text, voices which grieved for more than the plight of horses. Within the formal structure of a simple narrative, Anna Sewell raged against cruelty and injustice, against the nature of work, and the condition of women.

As a Quaker, Anna had been educated by those humane traditions which abhorred violence against people and animals, and her mother, Mary Sewell, preached this message in some of the most popular children's ballads of the day. Jarrolds had published *Mother's Last Words*, Mary Sewell's famous cautionary poem in 1860, and its success was astonishing. In stirring rhymed verse Mary told the story of a dying mother who implores her two young sons to follow her precepts of honesty and truth. The two lads are mindful of her message as they struggle to survive as crossing sweepers, with more than one reference to Jo in Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853). There is the chance of easy money if they turn to theft, but they refuse and continue to sweep and starve. Chris falls ill and John steals a pair of boots to warm his frozen feet; then, as he is about to give them to his brother, his mother's last words ring in his head and he promptly returns them. Chris dies of cold in the night, and the story ends with John seeing his little brother's spirit swept high above the soot and smoke of London and into the waiting arms of his smiling mother. John is rewarded for his honesty and grows up to become a prosperous tradesman.

In all of Mary Sewell's tales, and in the religious tracts issued by Jarrolds and the Band of Mercy, the links are drawn between kindness to animals, salvation, and economic success. One of the first precepts Mary Sewell insists upon in *The Children of Summerbrook* (1859) is kindness to all living creatures, even a butterfly: "I never thought that it would feel, / Or suffer any pain; / But if you really think it will, / I won't do so again."⁴ The message is always starkly authoritarian, declaring that it is better to starve than to steal, and to die rather than challenge the established order of society. Tracts and tales like these roused Robert Tressell to fury because he appreciated their hold upon the imagination of his fellow workers—not for them a socialist manifesto when they could read parables of acceptance and patient fortitude. But even as he denounced the purveyors of "pie in the sky," the resolution of his own novel took on the configurations of the moral tracts he despised.

Tressell's work, like the tracts, is haunted by the vision of a regulated, paternalistic society—the England of William Windham, but without bloodsports.

Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869) and George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871) were the fictional sources for Anna Sewell's loquacious horses, discussing their own and the world's affairs. As an inspiration for them all was Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and his sagacious Houyhnhnms, but whereas Gulliver soon acknowledged the horse as his master, MacDonald and Sewell saw it as the perfect servant. In MacDonald's novel Diamond is the name both of the little boy and the cab horse, and one evening the child overhears his namesake reproaching his stablemate, Ruby:

"Look how fat you are, Ruby!" said old Diamond. "You are so plump and your skin shines so, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"There's no harm in being fat," said Ruby in a deprecating tone. "No, nor in being sleek. I may as well shine as not."

"No harm?" retorted Diamond. "Is it no harm to go eating up all poor master's oats, and taking up so much of his time grooming you, when you only work six hours—no, not six hours a day, and, as I hear, get along no faster than a big dray-horse with two tons behind him? So they tell me."

"Your master's not mine," said Ruby. "I must attend to my own master's interests, and eat all that is given me, and be as sleek and fat as I can, and go no faster than I need."

"Now really if the rest of the horses weren't all asleep, poor things—they work till they're tired—I do believe they would get up and kick you out of the stable. You make me ashamed of being a horse. You dare to say my master ain't your master! That's your gratitude for the way he feeds you and spares you! Pray where would your carcass be if it weren't for him?"

"He doesn't do it for my sake. If I were his own horse, he would work me as hard as he does you."

"And I'm proud to be so worked. I wouldn't be as fat as you—not for all you're worth. You're a disgrace to the stable. Look at the horse next to you. *He's* something like a horse—all skin and bone. And his master ain't over kind to him either. He put a stinging lash on his whip last week. But that old horse know's he's got the wife

and children to keep—as well as his drunken master—and he works *like* a horse." (Chap. 32)

Here is the gospel of work and the acceptance of class expressed through the symbol of the horse and the listening child, who shares both spirit and name with the old cab horse. They are diamonds, the most precious of jewels, because both are obedient and cheerful and good. The horse, patient and forbearing, is to become the model for workingmen, and when Diamond the boy takes his cab through the streets of London, he is like a small angel rebuking the cruel and drunken drivers by his mere presence. One of Diamond's missions on earth is to guide his fellow cabmen into the ways of temperance, and after he has comforted the wailing baby of the drunken cabman, the latter recognizes the boy as "one of God's messengers," and says to his wife with unconscious prophecy: "I do somehow believe that wur an angel just gone. Did you see him, wife? He warn't very big, and he hadn't none o' them wingses, you know. It wur one o' them baby-angels you sees on the grave-stones, you know" (chap. 18).

The reward of such manifest goodness as Diamond's is not prosperity in this life, but heaven in the next. The North Wind, Diamond's friend and guide, is more than a darkly powerful and mysterious force of nature: she is death, and in the clouds of her hair there is both destruction and rest. Her ways are inscrutable, and Diamond must learn not to question her when ships are sunk and trees blown about like matches. The lesson of *At the Back of the North Wind* is obedience, as the narrator assures the reader on more than one occasion:

Diamond learned to drive all the sooner that he had been accustomed to do what he was told, and could obey the smallest hint in a moment. Nothing helps one to get on like that. Some people don't know how to do what they are told; they have not been used to it, and they neither understand quickly nor are able to turn what they do understand into action quickly. With an obedient mind one learns the rights of things fast enough; for it is the law of the universe, and to obey is to understand. (Chap. 16)

Just as Tressell could not resolve his novel without the assistance of the kindly Barrington, who plays Father Christmas to Owen and his family, the fortunes of Diamond and his friends are decided by Mr.

Raymond. But there are ambiguities of tone and language throughout the work: the North Wind is as terrifying as she is kind, and Mr. Raymond's house, where Diamond becomes a pageboy, is called the Mound, and the day comes when Diamond is found dead inside it. The underlying thesis throughout so many stories written for children at this time is a fatalistic pessimism that is in constant contention with the bland assurances of the narrative voice. If the wages of virtue are death, then what punishment should be accorded sin? Whenever metaphysical questions intrude so uncomfortably, the confident structures of the homily begin to waver and blur, permitting ambivalent readings and contrary images. Nonetheless, a solution was to be found in MacDonald's work, for if the story was told about and by animals, then the questions of reward and punishment could be defined in terms of sufficient oats, a dry bed, and a comfortable harness—surely all that anyone could possibly ask for when writing about the working class.

The language of horses and the dialogue of the stable became an accepted mode for relating the concerns of workers and may be found in any number of *Band of Mercy* and *Band of Hope* tracts. Tressell copies one of these little equine parables of conformity and obedience when Crass produces a clipping from the *Obscurer*, handing it to Harlow who then reads it aloud:

PROVE YOUR PRINCIPLES; OR LOOK AT BOTH SIDES

"I wish I could open your eyes to the true misery of our condition: injustice, tyranny and oppression!" said a discontented hack to a weary-looking cob as they stood side by side in unhired cabs.

"I'd rather have them opened to something pleasant, thank you," replied the cob.

"I'm sorry for you. If you could enter into the noble aspirations—" the hack began.

"Talk plain. What would you have?" said the cob, interrupting him.

"What would I have? Why, equality, and share and share alike all over the world," said the hack.

"You *mean* that?" said the cob.

"Of course I do. What right have those sleek, pampered hunters and racers to their warm stables and high feed, their grooms and jockeys? It is really heart-sickening to think of it," replied the hack.

"I don't know but you may be right," said the cob, "and to show I'm in earnest, as no doubt you are, let me have half the good beans you have in your bag, and you shall have half the musty oats and chaff I have in mine. There's nothing like proving one's principles."

Original Parables. By Mrs. Prosser.

"There you are!" cried several voices. (Chap. 25)

Owen argues passionately for a better understanding of socialism than this, but his mates are convinced by Mrs. Prosser's horse sense—a term that was to stand for everything practical and businesslike. As William Windham once assured the House, "There is no grievance existing in this country which we cannot correct, without calling in the advice of a theorist."⁵ Nothing less theoretical than a horse's imagination could be imagined, and equine reasoning was consequently preferred to the higher flights of human understanding. Moreover, when a working man was seen as a horse, all the metaphysics of self could be safely comprehended within the confines of the stable.

These horsey dialogues became an approved means of inculcating docility in workers and in assertive women. The *Girl's Own Paper* conducted a running series of conversations between Pansy and Bob in which the former must learn that rights are determined by the master, not the horse: "Pansy, the mare, was a very different character. She held strong views on the subject of equality, and now and then gave herself very amusing airs. If she had lived at a time when the question of women's rights and the extension of the suffrage were agitating the feminine mind, one might have thought that Pansy had pondered the matter in relation to horses."⁶ Bob soon knocks some horse sense into Pansy, who becomes a devoted servant to her master from that day forward. And in "The Maltese Cat" (1894), Kipling's sage little grey polo pony is like a superior foreman, always eager to go the extra mile for Lutyens, his master, and encourage the other horses to do the same. At the end, the Maltese Cat is quite prepared to break his back in order to save Lutyens from a fall, and for a horse "that was glory and honour enough for the rest of his days."

Neither Anna Sewell nor her mother ever challenged the relationship between master and servant, but whereas Mary Sewell's social philosophy was a bleak acceptance of the injustices of this world, Anna never really acquired an obedient mind reflecting MacDonald's

"law of the universe." The choice of a horse as spokesman for the worker was itself a conservative gesture, for the horse could never aspire beyond its nature, it would always be a beast of burden carrying man or his belongings and asking only to be treated with a little kindness in return. Yet, despite this restrictive form, Anna Sewell contrived to make a number of subversive and radical statements about work as a condition of life.

From the first, Anna Sewell did not regard work as the natural avocation of man, despite the testimony to the contrary by Carlyle and Samuel Smiles. Black Beauty finds it far more enjoyable in the meadow with his mother, and his training, the breaking-in to a life of work, is a painful ordeal. He resents having a saddle thrown across his back and having his will broken to that of his master, even though he has been spared this particular ordeal until fully grown. There is a considerable degree of bitterness as Black Beauty describes the preparation for a life of work:

Everyone may not know what breaking in is, therefore I will describe it. It means to teach a horse to wear a saddle and bridle, and to carry on his back a man, woman, or child; to go just the way they wish, and to go quietly. Besides this, he has to learn to wear a collar, a crupper, and a breeching, and to stand still whilst they are put on; then to have a cart or a chaise fixed behind, so that he cannot walk or trot without dragging it after him; and he must go fast or slow, just as his driver wishes. He must never start at what he sees, nor speak to other horses, nor bite, nor kick, nor have any will of his own, but always do his master's will, even though he may be very tired or hungry; but the worst of all is, when his harness is once on, he may neither jump for joy nor lie down for weariness. So you can see this breaking in is a great thing. (Chap. 3)

And when Owen in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* contemplates the future that awaits his young son, a cold sweat breaks out upon him and his mouth fills with blood, for he knows that a working-man is broken like a horse and driven until he drops: "In a few years' time the boy would be like Bert White, in the clutches of some psalm-singing devil like Hunter or Rushton, who would use him as if he were a beast of burden. He imagined he could see him now as he would be

then: worked, driven, and bullied, carrying loads, dragging carts, and running here and there, trying his best to satisfy the brutal tyrants, whose only thought would be to get a profit out of him for themselves" (Chap. 34).

His mates work like horses, but they refuse to question a society in which a few are dignified by the rank of master while the rest are servants. It is their subservience, their unflinching deference which makes them seem Owen's real enemy: "*They were the enemy*. Those who not only quietly submitted like so many cattle to the existing state of things, but defended it and opposed and ridiculed any suggestion to alter it. *They were the real oppressors*—the men who spoke of themselves as 'The likes of us,' who, having lived in poverty and degradation all their lives considered that what had been good enough for them was good enough for the children they had been the cause of bringing into existence" (Chap. 2). For Old Jack, Linden, and Newman, the cause of their poverty is new machines, foreigners, and women: "Thousands of 'em nowadays doin' work wot oughter be done by men" (Chap. 1). And the solution to all their problems is not reform, as Owen argues, but the luck to land in a job with a good master. Life is always a gamble, but they never expect more than Black Beauty's mother promised him:

She told me the better I behaved the better I should be treated, and that it was wisest always to do my best to please my master; "Büt," said she, "there are a great many kinds of men; there are good, thoughtful men like our master, that any horse may be proud to serve; and there are bad, cruel men, who never ought to have a horse or a dog to call their own. Besides, there are a great many foolish men, vain, ignorant, and careless, who never trouble themselves to think; these spoil more horses than all, just for want of sense; they don't mean it, but they do it for all that. I hope you will fall into good hands; but a horse never knows who may buy him, or who may drive him; it is all a chance for us; but still I say, do your best wherever it is, and keep up your good name." (Chap. 3)

No matter how hard the painters work, they are always called on to do more by men like Misery and Hunter, and to Owen's fury, they are prepared to do it, because the only alternative is unemployment and starvation. Black Beauty and his friends go from place to place, sometimes to a good master, more often to a slave driver, and their condi-

tion is no different from that of Newman, Linden, and Old Jack. It is the knacker's yard for the worn-out horse, the workhouse and a pauper's grave for the worn-out worker.

Black Beauty ends on a note of perilous uncertainty; always working longer hours for less feed, the horse finds himself at last in the care of Miss Ellen and her sisters. He is recognized by Joe Green, his old name is restored to him, and he is cared for and groomed. All seems well except that we know how uncertain life can be for a horse, particularly one with broken knees and the weight of years upon him. So the concluding line carries with it an anxiety for the future which comes from knowing Black Beauty's past: "I have now lived in this happy place a whole year."

It is clear from the novel that a life of work is not to be welcomed with quite the glad enthusiasm enjoined by Samuel Smiles and his ilk, but also that to be out of work and to have no place is a worse fate yet. Black Beauty has been obedient, hardworking and eager to please, yet at the end his happiness is measured by the span of a year. Work is bad enough, but to be deprived of it is like a kind of death that can strike suddenly and without warning. It is the same for the ragged trousered philanthropists: "A few weeks with one firm, a few days with another, then out of a job, then on again for a month perhaps, and so on" (Chap. 3). And Owen can only shake his head in bemusement when his mates are not only treated like cattle; they begin to think like cattle: "The superior classes—those who do nothing—regarded them as a sort of lower animals. A letter appeared in the *Obscurer* one week from one of these well-dressed loafers, complaining of the annoyance caused to the better-class visitors by workmen walking on the pavement as they passed along the Grand Parade in the evening on their way home from work, and suggesting that they should walk in the roadway. When they heard of the letter a lot of the workmen adopted the suggestion and walked in the road so as to avoid contaminating the idlers" (chap. 43).

Olive Schreiner was convinced that if men were treated like animals, they would become something far worse than beasts: they would be made devils incarnate. In *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) Waldo first speaks of men who have been brutalized by the way they have been treated, first being changed into animals, and then devolving into fiends:

"I think sometimes when we walked by my oxen I called to them in my sleep, for I know I thought of nothing; I was like an animal.

My body was strong and well to work, but my brain was dead. . . . Now, when I see one of those evil-looking men that come from Europe—navvies, with beast-like, sunken faces, different from any Kaffir's—I know what brought that look into their eyes; and if I have only one inch of tobacco I give them half. It is work, grinding, mechanical work, that they or their ancestors have done, that has made them into beasts. . . . You may work a man so that all but the animal in him is gone; and that grows stronger with physical labour. You may work a man till he is a devil. I know it, because I have felt it." (Chap. 11)

Waldo then relates an incident that would have been familiar to all his readers: an exhausted animal being flogged in the traces until it drops. In this case it is not Tom Nero belaboring the fallen horse, but a drunken carrier lashing "one ox, so thin that the ridge of his backbone almost cut through his flesh" (chap. 11). Even as the ox lies dying, the furious men whip it and drive their knives into it, for brandy and the misery of work have made them devils. Again, a theme is sounded that can be found in all these incidents: when a man is drunk he will beat the animal in his charge to relieve the anger he feels towards his own master. It is not a horse or an ox that is being flogged, but poverty, weariness, and the unendurable emptiness of life. By this process of displacement and identification the image of the drunken cabman and his suffering horse becomes a reproach to society, for the pain of the animal is the pain of the man.

It was Anna Sewell who produced the emotive image between man and horse when she wrote of Seedy Sam driving his horse until it was ready to drop. Rather than denounce Sam for cruelty, Sewell condemned society for its callous disregard of any interest save its own. When Sam is rebuked over the condition of the horse, he replies in a "voice that sounded almost desperate" that when the horse is tired only the whip will keep it going, just as the needs of his family are like rods across his own back: "If the police have any business with the matter, it ought to be with the masters who charge us so much, or with the fares that are fixed so low. If a man has to pay eighteen shillings a day for the use of a cab and two horses, as many of us have to do in the season, and must make that up before we earn a penny for ourselves—I say 'tis more than hard work; nine shillings a day to get out of each horse, before you begin to get your own living; you know that's true, and if the horses don't work we must starve" (chap. 39).

If cabmen drink and beat their horses, it is because their lives are unendurably wretched, and because they must work seven days a week for a pittance. Sewell is a fervent Sabbatarian for religious and social reasons, insisting that a day of rest is more in accord with Christ's teaching than a church service requiring the labor of the cabman and his horse. *Black Beauty* became a favorite text for temperance societies, as popular with working-class readers as it was with the rich, for the responsibility for brutality towards animals is not made the result of the innate callousness of the poor, but that of the insensitive and intemperate of all classes. The defining characteristic of the brute was not to be his income or his class, but the way he treated his animals. The man who got out and walked beside the coach to ease the horses' load was a gentleman; those who sat at their ease while the horses pulled their hearts out were bullies and cads. Seedy Sam was more of a gentleman than Lord George, who breaks Ginger's wind at a steeplechase, and Mr. Thoroughgood was closer to Christ than the earl who would not keep a horse with broken knees in his stable. If MacDonald regarded obedience as the law of the universe, Sewell saw it as love: "Cruelty was the Devil's own trade-mark, and if we saw anyone who took pleasure in cruelty, we might know who he belonged to, for the Devil was a murderer from the beginning, and a tormentor to the end."

In accordance with Anna Sewell's morality, people should be judged by the way they treated their animals, and by this rule, a well-groomed horse and a contented dog were visible proofs of a virtuous life. Since in Anna Sewell's opinion there is no afterlife for horses, she is careful to see that people should be rewarded and punished in this world like animals. Horses and humans live in the same spiritual universe, and there are no special privileges for the latter. Just as Hogarth showed the reward of cruelty to be the knife and a table in Surgeons' Hall, Anna Sewell relates the fate of Reuben Smith. Now Reuben was a first-rate driver and a good stableman with one failing: when drunk he turned into a madman and a devil. One night he rides *Black Beauty* at full gallop down a turnpike of freshly laid stones, not noticing that the horse has lost a shoe and is already beginning to stumble. Then in a passage of extraordinary eloquence Sewell relates the fate of Reuben Smith:

This could not go on; no horse could keep his footing under such circumstances; the pain was too great. I stumbled, and fell with violence on both my knees, Smith was flung off by my fall, and,

owing to the speed I was going at, he must have fallen with great force. I soon recovered my feet and limped to the side of the road, where it was free from stones. The moon had just risen above the hedge, and by its light I could see Smith lying a few yards beyond me. He did not rise; he made one slight effort to do so, and then there was a heavy groan. I could have groaned too, for I was suffering intense pain both from my foot and knees; but horses are used to bear their pain in silence. I uttered no sound, but I stood there and listened. One more heavy groan from Smith; but though he now lay in the full moonlight, I could see no motion. I could do nothing for him nor myself, but, oh! how I listened for the sound of horse, or wheels, or footsteps! The road was not much frequented, and at this time of the night we might stay for hours before help came to us. I stood watching and listening. It was a calm, sweet April night; there were no sounds but a few low notes of a nightingale, and nothing moved but the white clouds near the moon and a brown owl that flitted over the hedge. It made me think of the summer nights long ago when I used to lie beside my mother in the green, pleasant meadow at Farmer Grey's." (Chap. 25)

Themes and images from *Black Beauty* are threaded through the literature and the consciousness of the age. They can be found in *Battersea*, where children suffered with the horses straining up a hill like the one where *Black Beauty* had once fallen, or in a work like Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, published in 1907. Conrad takes the character of Seedy Sam and translates him into the cabman and his horse, a vision of suffering that tears Stevie between compassion and rage.

At first Stevie is troubled by the sight of the horse, "whose hind quarters appeared unduly elevated by the effect of emaciation. The little stiff tail seemed to have been fitted in for a heartless joke; and at the other end the thin, flat neck, like a plank covered with an old horse-hide, drooped to the ground under the weight of an enormous bony head. The ears hung at different angles, negligently; and the macabre figure of that mute dweller on earth steamed straight up from ribs and backbone in the muggy stillness of the air" (chap. 8). The horse is an image of despairing endurance, and Stevie, the moral sensitive of the work, responds to the animal's suffering and begs the driver not to use the whip because "it hurts."

The night cabby uses the same arguments as Seedy Sam, speaking of the same needs, and the long nights when he has to work till three

or four in the morning with cold and hunger as companions on the box beside him. At first all Stevie can say is that it is bad, to which the cabby replies that it is "'ard on 'osses, but dam 'sight 'arder on poor chaps like me." Straightway Stevie's pity embraces both horse and man in one gesture of convulsive sympathy, for the plight of both is the same: "The desire to make the horse happy and the cabman happy, had reached the point of a bizarre longing to take them to bed with him. And that, he knew, was impossible. For Stevie was not mad. It was, as it were, a symbolic longing; and at the same time it was very distinct, because springing from experience, the mother of wisdom" (chap. 8).

Conrad, like Sewell, was not preaching a gospel of radical change when he described the working class as beasts of burden, but simply that the middle and upper class should be more considerate and caring of the beasts in their charge. The message was profoundly conservative, as old as William Windham's presenting the House of Commons with that model of landlord and master, "an ancient Roman Catholic gentleman in the midst of his people, exercising the virtues of beneficence, humanity, and hospitality."⁷ Or, as Sewell described John's receipt for curing the most vicious of horses, "patience and gentleness, firmness and petting, one pound of each to be mixed up with a pint of common sense, and given to the horse every day" (chap. 8).

Black Beauty became part of the social consciousness of the age with a multitude of literary imitations: autobiographies of animals from dogs to canaries proliferated, and all carried the same cautionary warnings against disobedience and the assurance that the cruel master would always be punished. The greatest of all human virtues in these works is kindness to animals. Unlike the animals depicted in American fiction, these English creatures yearned for good homes and considerate owners: not for them the call of the wild.⁸ Tractable and docile, they are patterns for servants and workers, requiring only fair-minded and responsible owners to make them models of cheerful gratitude. Just as *Black Beauty* is blissfully happy when his kind master Jerry Barker takes him to the country and lets him roll about in a field for a day, Tressell's philanthropists are overjoyed and full of thanks to Mr Rushton when he organizes a beano in the country. This single day of pleasure is enough to set them singing choruses in his praise while Owen weeps with rage over his mates, who ask only "to be allowed to work like brutes for the benefit of other people" (chap. 44).

The philanthropists are taken by brakes to a pub in the country,

and it is as if they are being carried back to a world they have lost but never quite forgotten; for these city workers the country is now the place of rest and pleasure:

The mean streets of Windley were soon left far behind and they found themselves journeying along a sunlit, winding road, bordered with hedges of hawthorn, holly and briar, past rich, brown fields of standing corn, shimmering with gleams of gold, past apple-orchards where bending boughs were heavily loaded with mellow fruits exhaling fragrant odours, through the cool shades of lofty avenues of venerable oaks, whose overarched and interlacing branches formed a roof of green, gilt and illuminated with quivering spots of sunlight that filtered through the trembling leaves; over old mossy stone bridges, spanning limpid streams that duplicated the blue sky and the fleecy clouds; and then again, stretching away to the horizon on every side over more fields, some rich with harvest, others filled with drowsing cattle or with flocks of timid sheep that scampered away at the sound of passing carriages. Several times they saw merry little companies of rabbits frisking gaily in and out of the hedges or in the fields beside the sheep and cattle. At intervals, away in the distance, nestling in the hollows or amid sheltering trees, groups of farm buildings and stacks of hay; and further on, the square ivy-clad tower of an ancient church, or perhaps a solitary windmill with its revolving sails alternately flashing and darkening in the rays of the sun. Past thatched way-side cottages whose inhabitants came out to wave their hands in friendly greeting. (Chap. 44)

It is a remarkable passage, overwritten and deliberately poetic, less an actual landscape than an arcadian paradise, a place to nestle and shelter, where all is gilt and gold with sweet fruits on every branch. Here is the peaceable kingdom where men and animals live happily together, and the people welcome strangers like the legion of the Shining Ones who served the King in the Celestial Country and guided pilgrims into the promised land. For Owen's companions it is a country without work: windmills turn, sheep and cattle browse in rich pastures, and everything is fixed forever in their minds like Sally Plornish's painted cottage. Maudlin with beer and gratitude the philanthropists sing their own hymns of praise to the master:

His clothes may be ragged, his hands may be soiled.
 But where's the disgrace if for bread he has toiled.
 His 'art is in the right place, deny it no one can
 The backbone of Old England is the honest workin' man.

(Chap. 44)

The aspirations of *Black Beauty* and the workingmen are the same: good food, a comfortable bed and a green field on holiday. When *Black Beauty* comes at last to "a pretty, low house, with a lawn and shrubbery at the front, and a drive up to the door" (chap. 49), he has come to the promised land where the work is easy and the employer considerate. Authoritarian and conservative the message may have been, but it was nonetheless a powerful social influence: Robert Tressell and those radicals of like mind were in a minority and knew it. When Geoffrey Gorer set out to explore the English character in the early 1950s he was puzzled to account for the change that had taken place in a society which had been characterized by lawless violence at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with considerable pleasure being taken "in fighting and in witnessing the pain and humiliation of others, and the gratuitous suffering of animals."⁹ Gorer accepts that "cruelty and aggression are English preoccupations," and then wonders where this passion for cruelty had gone. Had it been removed indoors and kept in the heart of the home and family, or had it been internalized into a form of self-punishment? Gorer is quite clearly as dissatisfied with his own conclusions at this point as we should be. We could perhaps point to the increasing popularity of sport, to the crowds shouting their lungs out at football or cheering on a favorite horse, and this again does not really answer. Reluctantly, we must say a little about aggression without taking refuge in a forest of footnotes, and aggression, whether thought to be innate or learned, is a subject that produces inflammatory opinions from the most reticent and circumspect. At this point in our journey we can guarantee disagreement.

With a variety of directions available to us, I think we should take Edward O. Wilson as guide and see if we can follow him to a satisfactory conclusion:

The clear perception of human aggressive behavior as a structured, predictable pattern of interaction between genes and environment is consistent with evolutionary theory. It should satisfy both camps in the venerable nature-nurture controversy. On the

one hand it is true that aggressive behavior, especially in its more dangerous forms of military action and criminal assault, is learned. But the learning is prepared . . . we are strongly predisposed to slide into deep, irrational hostility under certain definable conditions. With dangerous ease hostility feeds on itself and ignites runaway reactions that can swiftly progress to alienation and violence. Aggression does not resemble a fluid that continuously builds pressure against the walls of its containers, nor is it like a set of active ingredients poured into an empty vessel. It is more accurately compared to a preexisting mix of chemicals ready to be transformed by specific catalysts that are added, heated, and stirred at some later time.¹⁰

What Wilson sees as a counteragent to aggression is "a confusion of cross-binding loyalties," a tangle of identifications that bond people so closely that distinctions become increasingly difficult to observe and define. Very likely something like this was occurring between animals and people throughout the nineteenth century. Aesop and La Fontaine had taught moral precepts by means of animals with human characteristics, but this ancient mode had now been reversed with particular groups of people consistently being defined as animals to the considerable advantage of the human animals. What we find throughout this period are not simply didactic fables but complex and emotional bondings between people and animals. Just as it is possible for an Aboriginal tribesman of Australia to shun the killing and eating of possums because they both belong to the same totemic family, whereas the rest of the tribe will hunt them most zealously, so it is conceivable that the English working class had come to feel a particular affinity with horses, dogs and other domestic animals. They had so often been made to see themselves as animals that this responsive vision became second nature to them; and to identify with an animal so inherently noble as the horse did not involve any measure of disesteem. Indeed, a workingman could regard the horse and the dog as the embodiment of his own better self without any loss of self respect. This sympathy frequently extended to those animals ritually hunted and killed by other classes, and it was not unknown for the farm laborer's wife to shelter the fox and point the hunt in the opposite direction.

The prohibition against cruelty to animals became dogma in working class morality: Gorer found that it was regarded as a cardinal sin for which a child deserved to be punished most severely, and it could

even affect a person's existence in the next life. Admittedly, there was considerable doubt about the nature of heaven and hell, but one lower-class married man from Newent stated firmly: "Well I think if a man's been cruel to an animal or some other creature I mean cruel to a great extent knowing full well he had been cruel I think he will come back and suffer like such."¹¹ In 1869 in *Mopsa the Fairy* there was the refrain found in a multitude of religious tracts, as Jean Ingelow's fairy guardian of the old broken-down horses said darkly: "I wonder what will be done to all your people for driving, and working, and beating so many beautiful creatures to death every year that comes? They'll have to pay for it some day, you may depend" (chap. 3). What surprised Gorer was the belief in reincarnation, and the idea that people and animals could slip in and out of each other's skins. One young man wrote: "I think that if everyone has lived a good life, they will be some animals with daylight activities, to enjoy the sunshine and like, but if they have been bad they will be like mice and rates [*sic*] and other nocturnal animals, so under cover of darkness they can hide their shame and not enjoy the beauty of Gods world."¹² Here is Tressell's arcadian landscape with its frisking rabbits and happy people—a vision of paradise where animal and man lived in harmony and shared the same spirit.

What the evangelical reformers and the humane societies had unwittingly accomplished was a reinforcement of beliefs that ran quite counter to Christian doctrine. Foreshadowed in the fictional relationships of animals and men in the nineteenth century was the recreation of a magical world where all living things were members of the same family. The pervasive influence of Spiritualism played its part here, but in the main, the Band of Mercy tracts and writers like Ingelow and Sewell were drawing their fictional images from a very ancient well where there were no set boundaries between animal and human. The morality of human existence was made dependent upon the way one behaved towards animals: kindness would be rewarded and cruelty punished. But whereas Sewell saw the judgment of heaven meted out in this world, Gorer's young workingman could cheerfully contemplate the virtuous soul taking flight as a bird.

Historians have noted the decline of organized Christianity among the working class in England throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was not an active, violent antagonism towards religion, so much as a passive indifference, a dwindling of attendance on Sundays, a general apathy. However, this is not the same thing as saying that these people lacked religion. Old folk traditions still existed

but were now given a new direction, just as a place like Lavender Hill carries the past in its name while to the passerby it offers only brick and cement. The ritual of burning a cat alive had once been thought to be a sure means of exorcising evil spirits and averting misfortune in most rural areas in England, but by the end of the nineteenth century, the same act was regarded as one of the worst sins, meriting punishment in this world and damnation in the next. The act had not lost its gravity and import: it had simply come to be interpreted differently, and for some, it was of the same order as murder. When asked to give an example of the worst possible behavior among children, a working-class mother from Barnes, Surrey, wrote: "Push another child in the river etc. shut the cat puppy in the oven."¹³ Margaret Hale would have regarded this woman as a most satisfactory tribute to her reforming zeal; what would have disconcerted her was that this morality was not dependent upon Christian faith but upon a revised version of pagan custom.

One result of this was a class of people that became known for its love of pets and its decency, in the full Orwellian sense of that word: people who believed that kindness to animals was an aspect of consideration for people, and that both were essential if a person were to live a moral life and be ensured of a reward in the next. Animals, whether tortured or misused, had always been part of the rituals of folklore and rural custom; now, by means of tracts and fictions, arrests and fines, animals were restored to their old significance, but with a changed prescription: they were still a fount of magical power, bringing luck in this world and a happy life in the next, not by means of their death, but as a result of the love and care bestowed on them. The cricket on the hearth brought happiness to the home as long as it sang; misfortune ensued when it had been crushed by a cruel or thoughtless foot.

Here then was one reason why people responded with such a sense of bewilderment and outrage when vivisectors began roasting live animals in ovens after the approved method of Claude Bernard, or drowning dogs in the London laboratories of Professor Schafer. There is no anger like that of the convert for the unreformed and backslider, and to many, the vivisectors seemed like magicians of a dark age ritually condemning animals to fearful tortures. When those tortures resembled those that working-class people had eschewed, the sense of revulsion was enormous. And then it was not simply animals which were being used, as Berdoe and the popular press assured its readers, but human beings like themselves who were experimental subjects in

charity wards. For this reason the "Old Anti" in Battersea had a special place in the memory of those who supported it in preference to more modern institutions. Quite simply, people felt safe there.

Animals as victims, and the worker as society's victim, became interchangeable images. In Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Cloud Howe* (1933), Jim the carthorse dies slowly with a broken shaft in his entrails, and with him dies a whole class of farm laborers. Boxer, the drayhorse in Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1934), is not too bright, but he is "universally respected for his steadiness of character, and tremendous power of work" (chap. 1). But when Boxer is too old and sick to work, he is sold off to a knackery, just as old Jack Linden is sent off to the workhouse to die in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. It was a powerful image continually reinforced by writers and reformers who saw workers and animals sharing the same fate. But a feeling of oppression was not unique to the working class; it was a condition that women shared in full. Although working men had only derisive contempt for suffragettes and feminists, they found common ground over the plight of vivisectioned animals. Women were to be the strength of the antivivisection movement, and every flogged and beaten horse, every dog or cat strapped down for the vivisectioner's knife, reminded them of their own condition in society.

5

Horrible and Indecent Exposure

By the early 1900s medical students and a great many other people were convinced that the antivivisectionists and the suffragettes belonged to the same objectionable movement, despite the fact that members of each group frequently had no sympathy, and in some cases, a positive dislike for each other. Lady Bathurst had been a friend and supporter of Frances Cobbe, but in 1913 she stated publicly that when "a suffragette has been convicted, first have her well birched by women, then shave off her hair, and finally deport her to New Zealand or Australia."¹ Anna Kingsford and Ouida were both opposed to women's suffrage, and both were dedicated antivivisectionists. On the other hand, we have already met Charlotte Despard, who was a vegetarian and antivivisectionist and also went to prison for her suffrage activities. The description of antivivisectionists by the French physiologist Élie de Cyon is certainly incorrect: "Is it necessary to repeat that women—or rather, old maids—form the most numerous contingent of this group? Let my adversaries contradict me, if they can show among the leaders of the agitation one young girl, rich, beautiful, and beloved, or some young wife who has found in her home the full satisfaction of her affections."² The belief that compassion for animals was a manifestation of sexual frustration was long held to be a medical fact, and like a great many other convictions of similar bias it lacked both logic and sense.³

Historians of the antivivisection movement have always observed that women supported the cause in numbers exceeded only by the suffrage societies.⁴ Richard French stresses the influence of Frances