'RATIONAL RECREATION': THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF LEISURE AND POPULAR CULTURE IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND, 1830 - 1885

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the transformation of popular leisure in mid-nineteenth century England, with special reference to the various schemes of 'rational recreation' whereby social reformers attempted to control the content and direction of cultural change. The movement aimed to improve the conduct of working-class leisure in such a way as to promote moral progress and class reconciliation. Through the philanthropic provision of new recreational amenities and the fraternal encouragement of middle-class superintendants, the workers were to be immunised against the corruptions of their own culture and instructed in the social values and disciplines of their betters.

After giving account of the state of popular recreations and the genesis of the reform design in the 1830s and '40s, the thesis examines the developing concept and performance of rational recreation in the context of the rapidly expanding new leisure world which overtook Victorian society from the mid-century on. Following a consideration of the changing practice and rationale of leisure among the middle classes and the implications for
social reform, the thesis looks at the increasing activity and debate in reform circles in these years, and examines the influence of rational recreation on working-class culture in three specific areas: the reform experiment of the Working Men's Club movement; the promotion of organised games and the new athleticism; and the emergent mass entertainment industry of the music halls. The study is based on extensive reading in contemporary periodicals, the specialist press, government reports and social commentaries on working-class life, and draws on local evidence from Bolton, Lancashire.

Rational recreation enjoyed some success, but working-class leisure retained a strong class identity and resisted any comprehensive conversion to the bourgeois value system. While recognising that popular recreations increasingly conformed to the patterns required by a maturing urban industrial society, the thesis concludes that such adjustments owed more to an internal process of largely autonomous adaptation and growth in working-class culture than to the direct influence of reformers who were, in any case, ill-equipped to overcome the social distance between the classes which remained a pronounced feature of English leisure.
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INTRODUCTION

Social history is no longer the residual category that G. M. Trevelyan once identified. It now aspires to subsume all other branches of the discipline in reaching towards a totality—the history of society.¹ Fulfilment of the grand design waits, however, upon an improved knowledge of certain neglected areas, among which stands the study of culture, taken in the anthropologist's sense as the complex of values, attitudes and practices to which a society or its constituent sub-groups habitually conform. Attention to this area in the history of nineteenth-century British society has given a new impetus and direction to the well-established study of labour history and popular movements; research is moving beyond the field of political organisation and economic circumstance to the consideration of other phenomena which shaped social consciousness and gave substance and meaning to the life of the common man. In this work of reconstructing popular or working class culture, the study of recreation promises to be of major importance.

Leisure time and its activities—"... the way man enjoys himself and the way his enjoyments are exploited"²—were until recently poorly served by historians. From labour
history, for example, one could learn a great deal about bread but little of circuses. The subject was generally left to the amateur, whose enthusiasm and industry was rarely matched by any great concern for historical perspective or social context. Within the last decade, however, the increasing range and confidence of the modern social historian has brought several aspects of nineteenth century popular recreation under scholarly examination. The best of this work is at pains to locate popular recreation within its parent culture, to assess its role in class relationships and to relate changes in its conduct and occasion to broader patterns of social change. Thus some kind of intelligible and coherent map of the field is emerging.

It is obvious from early reconnaissance that the mid-nineteenth century saw great changes in popular leisure patterns in Britain as part of a fundamental transformation in the culture of an industrial working class. According to Asa Briggs and E. J. Hobsbawm the 1830s and '40s were the 'Dark Age' of working-class culture (a phrase which echoes the diagnosis of the Hammonds--honourable exceptions to the rule of previous scholarly neglect). In these decades an older, traditional working-class culture broke up, leaving amid its wreckage many of the people's traditional recreations. Another culture, better adapted to the milieu of a mature urban industrial society, formed, and in the last quarter of
the century the British working class were settled into a new way of life which has in turn come to be viewed as 'traditional'. Prominent among the features of this new working-class world were its recreations: music halls, brass bands, association football, fish and chips, seaside holidays and the like. Such familiar paraphernalia were, by the 1880s, well established as the authentic furnishings of the working man's free time. The present study is set within the framework of these fifty years or so of social and cultural change.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the attempts of social reformers to direct the course of this change through the reform of popular recreation. The campaign for improved recreation—rational recreation—was a piecemeal operation which formed part of a broader front comprising the more clearly defined and institutionalised movements for temperance and educational reform. Abstinence and edification were common prescriptions of rational recreation, but I have paid more attention to reform schemes which were sensitive to the popular need for recreation in entertainment, play and relaxation. I should add that I have rarely used leisure in any qualitative sense, but most often as a neutral category denoting time free from work and social duties; recreation is behaviour and activity which form the common occupations of free time.
Source material for this kind of study is abundant but diffuse. The state of popular recreation was a perennial topic of public interest but its discussion was often incidental to that of other issues. I have had, therefore, to track chronicle and debate over a wide area, through press and periodicals, reports of government committees, sermons and pamphlet literature, works of social commentary, memoirs, novels and ephemera. To a considerable extent I have let the Victorians speak for themselves. The evidence adduced is meant to represent the common experience of urban and metropolitan England in these years, though I have provided something of a running case study in local history in the references to Bolton, Lancashire, an archetype new industrial town.

There are many pitfalls to writing in this field; not the least is that of giving way to what one not unsympathetic reviewer recently called "the uncritical celebration of 'popular culture.'"7 This should remind us that, although there was no room for soccer and music halls in the Whig interpretation of history, there is a body of serious writing which sees such artefacts as part of an achievement that qualifies the reconstructed culture of the nineteenth century working class as one of the success stories of modern English history.8 While I have tried not to be uncritical, I write under the conviction that there is good sense to this case;
I rely upon the testimony of one eminent scholar that such sentiments are not an impediment, but a prerequisite to the writing of sound history.  

I would like to thank Dr. John Norris of the University of British Columbia for his patient and sympathetic support of this thesis, and the Canada Council for the generous financial assistance without which this research could not have been undertaken.
FOOTNOTES


9 "There is no work on the rise and conditions of the working class which has not suffered intellectual shipwreck if the author has not been sympathetic towards this class." J. Kuczynski, *The Rise of the Working Class* (London, 1967), p. 232.
I. POPULAR RECREATION IN THE EARLY VICTORIAN TOWN

The early historians of England as an urban industrial society have left us with an overall picture of popular recreation which is cramped and joyless—the Hammonds, for example, concluded that "the new towns were built for a race that was allowed no leisure ... recreation was waste"1--yet, while it must be recognised that the town worker suffered from lack of time and space for recreation, and that the amusements of the poor were under frequent attack from the superior classes, what is more remarkable is the vitality and adaptability displayed by popular recreation under these siege conditions.2

In seeking first to demonstrate the vitality of popular recreation in this period, one must allow that the evidence for this does in part help to confirm the Hammonds' picture of gross deprivation. Foreigners had frequently been alarmed at the exuberance of the Englishman at play—a Frenchman who witnessed a football game in Derby in 1829 was moved to remark that, if Englishmen called this playing, it would be impossible to say what they would call fighting3--but it becomes clear enough that such occasions were often crude and explosive compensations for the strains of an
industrial society, rather than simple exercises in the boisterous joviality of Merrie England, that ideal bucolic state invoked in most debates on recreation.

The pattern of tension and release in working life had become tauter. Contemplating Manchester in 1844 another Frenchman, Leon Faucher, was much disturbed at the immoderation in all things which characterised the new industrial Englishman. He thought that overworking was a malady which Lancashire had inflicted on the whole country; it was balanced only by another extreme, the incontinence of the Englishman's recreation. "They cannot partake of anything in moderation; they must partake of it to repletion." Francis Place, recalling the grinding demands placed on his early working life, remembered how he would tear himself away from his work and rush out to some park or open space in the city for a brief respite before "returning to his vomit." Given such experience, he professed himself well able to understand the reactions of the "uninformed man," and the latter's urgent need "to procure the excitement which must be procured." Dickens recognised the desperate edge to popular festivities when he described Greenwich Fair thus:

... a periodical breaking out; a sort of spring rush, a three day's fever which cools the blood for six months and at the expiration of which, London is restored to its old habits of plodding industry.

Looking back at the improvement in manners from the vantage
point of 1867, two students of working class life recalled the pattern of the 1830s as one of "noisy, drunken riot ... alternated with sullen, silent work."\(^7\)

Noise and drink were common accompaniments of popular recreation—\textit{in some minds no doubt their dual presence thereby constituted a riot—but they did not always or necessarily indicate a simple reflex action of despair to the tedium of work. Mention of them should, however, remind us that working-class recreation was for the most part public and gregarious, and that its principal everyday setting was that of the public house. As an old working man pointed out in recalling conditions in industrial Yorkshire in the 1830s:}

\begin{quote}
There were only two places to go in spending spare time away from one's own house—church, chapel or alehouse; the former were seldom open, while the latter was seldom closed. The first was not attractive, the second was made attractive.
\end{quote}

Among the attractions of the pub were a great variety of recreations which brought enrichment as well as escape to the life of the town worker.

Reports in Bolton's local press reveal how diverse and extensive were the activities held in the pub or its gardens: bowling, quoiting, glee clubs and free and easies, amateur and professional dramatics, fruit and vegetable shows, flower shows, sweepstake clubs, cock fighting and dog fighting, and the meetings of trades' and friendly societies.\(^9\) The latter
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occasions combined business with pleasure, and serve as an example of how the pull of the public house as the institutional hub of working-class recreation was reinforced by the wide range of social and economic services which it offered.  

The pub served as a labour exchange, a pay station and a port of call for the tramping artisan. Initiation into particular trades and other customs of the work place demanded the treating of work-mates, which tied men further to the credit of the local pub. For the single man in lodgings the pub was the closest thing to a home—here he would take his meals and read the newspapers. And always there was beer—"the friendly mug of beer"—which, as Charles Booth was later to remark, "was the primordial cell of British social life." Thus in an age of social dislocation the pub remained a centre of warmth, light and sociability for the urban poor, a haven from the filth and meanness of inadequate and congested housing, a magnet for the disoriented newcomer and the disgruntled regular alike. "There is plenty of gas and company to keep us alive," explained the customers who were quizzed by an inquiring cleric; "there is always society in the pubs, and the men there are so very agreeable." 

The most prominent among the many clubs and associations which met on pub premises were the friendly societies. Their activities were well reported in Bolton where membership grew during the 1830s and '40s despite frequent hard
times; by 1850 there were over two hundred lodges of the various societies in the town. The recitations and songs printed in the Grand Lodge Circular of the Bolton Oddfellows indicate a year round concern for recreation, but the annual feasts were the great occasions. As many as thirty or forty might be held on a single night, with the lodge banners flying from the pub windows. Foot races and dancing were held in the street, but it was the inner man (and woman) who came first, for it was food and drink in abundance which marked the successful anniversary. The staples of roast beef and strong ale were not merely customary—they were part of the birthright of the freeborn Englishman.

But as the previous inventory of activities demonstrates, pub life was not all cakes and ale, and there was enough 'rationality' in popular recreation inside and outside the pub, to secure the acknowledgment of middle-class contemporaries alert to such qualities. In Nottingham, reported James Hudson, in his survey of adult education written in 1851, "there are several Working Men's libraries held in public houses" (the italics seem more intended to counter the incredulity of the reader than to emphasise the exceptional). "At two of these houses," Hudson continued, "political discussions are also held under judicious regulations." A churchman in Bolton recorded how two working men explained their absence from a Sunday lecture at
chapel—they were attending a discussion at their local pub on the existence of God. From Manchester, Faucher reported that Handel and Haydn were "as household words" in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire; there was no difficulty in raising choirs among the factory operatives. The popularity of clubs and choirs confirms the communal nature of working class recreation, but one must note here too the familiar exception of the working class solitary: Job Legh, the weaver botanist, in Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton; Joseph Gutteridge, a weaver from real life who studied natural history in the fields around Coventry; Charles Manby Smith, a journeyman printer in London, who painted water colours and studied the pianoforte. All this provides evidence of a thriving popular culture and justifies the pride of the veteran working class radical, Samuel Bamford, when he listed the accomplishments of his Lancashire workmates in 1844:

... they are the greatest readers; can show the greatest number of good writers; the greatest number of sensible and considerate public speakers. They can show a greater number of botanists; a greater number of horticulturists, a greater number who are acquainted with the abstruse sciences; the greatest number of poets, and a greater number of good musicians, whether choral or instrumental.

The capacity for adaptation which was a further strength of popular recreation, reveals itself in response to those constraints noted by the Hammonds; the curtailment of time and space, and the hostility of the superior classes.
Conditions of regular employment in the manufacturing towns often allowed only the merest scrapings of free time. The prominent factory inspector, Leonard Horner, found that the twelve-hour working day left the worker "utterly unfit for anything like mental improvement ... and not very fit for much social enjoyment with his family." John Fielden, the reforming manufacturer and co-architect of the Ten Hours Bill, was greatly struck by the testimony of a youngster in one of the mills that there was "never any time to play"; another millowner admitted that the time left for recreation and improvement after the average working day was scarcely two hours. Sunday was the only day free from work, but for the working wife it was the one day available for the washing and other accumulated domestic tasks; for the rest of the family the propensity to stay in bed on a Sunday was no doubt less a matter of choice than a necessary recruitment of strength. By 1834 there were only eight statutory half-holidays in England, and the traditional calendar of religious feast days and the celebrations of seasonal tasks or particular trades had been considerably pruned, both by the employers and the church.

But the working classes stretched the meagre allowance of free time. Sunday's leisure, for example, could be extended through the largesse of 'St.Monday', who claimed many devotees. Disraeli recorded the popularity of the
extended weekend in describing the industrial town of Wodgate in *Sybil, or the Two Nations*, his novel on the 'Condition of England' in the 1840s:

The social system is not an unvarying course of infinite toil. The plan is to work hard, but not always. The men seldom exceed four days of labour in the week. On Sunday the master workmen begin to drink; for the apprentices there is dog-fighting without stint. On Monday and Tuesday the whole population is drunk. Here is relaxation, excitement. It was in the 1840s too that the Factory Commissioners reported frequent occasions when extra holidays were conceded. "It was," they remarked, "not due to liberality on the part of the masters, but to custom." In one area of Lancashire it was averred that the workers enjoyed a fortnight's break at Christmas, a full week at Whitsun, "three or four days at Ringley Wakes, about the same at Ratcliff Races, and at odd times besides." Often it was sport as much as drink that was irresistible. Thus the exploits of Ben Hart, Bolton's pedestrian champion of these years, drew crowds which left the local mills half-empty. From the Warwickshire pits a witness reported:

When there is such a matter of universal interest as a prize fight most go to see it, and it is a day's play. Upon the average there may be five or six such occasions in the course of the summer. Elections also occasioned impromptu holidays--when an M.P. complained of a certain bill in 1828 which proposed to limit the duration of elections, that "it abridged the constitution- nal enjoyments of the people," he was not referring to their
rights of suffrage; similarly, The Times noted that the great reform demonstration in Birmingham in 1833 had "the appearance of a great fair ... the excuse for making holyday." The rigours of the regular work week were further relieved by periods of general economic depression or seasonal drops in particular trades, however unwelcome the circumstances.

The practice of such time-honoured delinquencies as St. Monday obviously varied according to the industrial setting. In Disraeli's Wodgate (modelled on the lock-making town of Willenhall in Staffordshire) small workshops rather than factories provided the typical work situation, and there masters and men shared a common indulgence. Domestic out-workers were less confined than factory hands—in Bury in the 1830s the handloom weavers would drop their work whenever the hounds passed by and join in the chase. Men in relatively minor trades, on the other hand, might lack the numbers necessary to outface their employers—we learn from the Bolton Chronicle for August 1834 that five apprentice combmakers "who seemed to consider that they had a prescriptive right to a holiday on the Horse Fair Day" were successfully prosecuted for absenteeism. Factory workers were generally subject to a tighter industrial discipline than that imposed in other work situations, but even here the claims of St. Monday were not completely extinguished.
The passage of the Ten Hours Act in 1847 brought some official respite to a substantial number of factory workers and some employers in manufacturing and commerce in the North began granting Saturday half-holidays in the late '40s. The guaranteed Saturday break was meant to win the worker to a greater regularity in attendance and punctuality, but the old wilfulness was not easily corrected. "The working artisan," as one experienced observer remarked in the mid-1850s, "possesses more facilities for getting holidays than is generally supposed."  

Restrictions on space were severe in the industrial town, and were less easily overcome. Open space vanished before the march of bricks and mortar: in Coventry, the mayor complained of the enclosure of the town's open park, which had deprived the young men of "much active exercise," and driven them into the public house; in Bolton, the gardeners' club which had been formed to encourage working-men's allotments had become the preserve of gentlemen's gardeners from the suburbs as the patches of old cottage gardens disappeared from the town itself. One common resort, the pub garden, was vulnerable to the pressure on building space, rising ground rents, and neighbours' complaints of the crowd nuisance. In London, the somewhat more ambitious pleasure gardens, often descendants of eighteenth century institutions, had long since lost their
fashionable clientele, and were similarly prone to complaints from the respectables. Geoffrey Best has suggested that even in the '50s and '60s few towns or cities were so large that the countryside was more than a few minutes walk away. It should be pointed out, however, that on the evidence of Bolton, it seems that such an apparently simple excursion could be extremely hazardous where it meant negotiating the often hostile streets beyond one's immediate neighbourhood. In any case, access to the countryside was further limited by the denial of footpath rights by the landowners.

The most obvious escape from confinement was the mass break-out such as Dickens had described in the Londoners' "spring rush" to Greenwich Fair. Bolton held major fairs in its market square at New Year and Whitsuntide, but equally popular were the wakes, a succession of fairs celebrated in late summer in the villages and townships surrounding the borough. At Whitsun the country cousins came to town and their awe at beholding the big city gave the break its local title of 'Gaping Sunday'; in August and September the flow was reversed and the town workers burst out into the villages. Race meetings were other great occasions in the popular calendar. The progress of the London crowds from the metropolis to Epsom Downs on Derby Day was advertised by the huge swirling cloud of dust which hung over their route. On race days Mancunians debouched to Kersal Moor, the
mons sacer of the cotton towns as Engels called it. Belle Vue pleasure gardens (the scene of early brass band contests) also provided an important outlet for Manchester. Trains and steamboats increased the range of the excursionist: hitherto remote country race meetings, such as Goodwood, were inundated with townspeople; the wakes at the Cheshire villages of Hale and Tranmere were transformed into major proletarian festivals by the regular descent of the Liverpool working class from across the Mersey. From Bolton Henry Ashworth reported on the excursion travels of his workpeople: "They will go to Ireland, or London, or Scotland, wherever the coach or the steamboat will carry them, and spend their time rationally..."

Such occasions, however, provided only temporary relief, and the problem of open space for everyday recreation and exercise remained chronic. As footpaths, pub gardens and common land were denied them, so the poor were left only with the street. There was some successful adjustment to the new parameter—the proccessional Whit Walks in northern England can be seen as linear expressions of traditional round dances once held on local greens. There were also many professional habitues of the street, who had long provided entertainment in the towns: Punch and Judy men, buskers, ballad hawkers (the 'flying stationers'), street preachers, stump orators and patent medicine salesmen. But traffic and pollution seriously limited the amenity of the street, which
was at best a constricted and unsalutary playground.

It was not just a problem of open space but of adequate indoor facilities as well; moreover, as a corollary, there was the problem of the increasing pressure of sheer numbers. A London tradesman appearing before a parliamentary inquiry into drunkenness in 1834 made the point that all the pubs seemed much fuller than ever he could recall. When asked where the new customers came from he replied simply enough: "I think they came from the current in the streets." Thus the pub was the natural resting place for this increase in human traffic.

The pub changed to accommodate the increasing volume of callers. Many old pubs could have been little more than the parlours or kitchens of private houses, presided over by an ex-butler or the like (when the Sedleys' business collapsed in *Vanity Fair*, the butler, "with the infatuation of his profession," set up a pub); new pubs built in the 1830s--the so-called gin palaces--were entirely different in scale, in lay-out, in style, and in management. They solved the problem of space by doing away with seats; this also discouraged dawdling, which in turn meant a more rapid turnover in customers. Any feeling of congestion among the new generation of 'perpendicular drinkers' was relieved by an upward spaciousness provided by higher ceilings, and the illusion of roominess contrived by the generous use of mirrors and plate
glass. The huge gas lamps (a feature which impressed itself so greatly on contemporaries) hung outside as well as inside, and extended the territory of the pub into the street at all hours of the night. A bar separated the customers from the liquor and its dispensers, indicative of a more business-like approach by the proprietors, some of whom were alleged to spend more time in the counting house than waiting on their customers. That function was increasingly taken over by barmaids, who constituted as much of an attraction as the elaborate fittings, and in some cases were just as garish. The domesticity of the old pub had given way to the glamour of new people's palaces, gaudy compensations for the meanness of everyday life. They were, as Dickens noted, "invariably numerous and splendid in precise proportion to the dirt and poverty of the surrounding neighbourhood." But in that they were vast as well as spectacular they offered some solution to the problem of the spatial as well as the social limitations of town life.

Drinking, the simple company of the pub--these could be a recreation in themselves; but the working population demanded entertainment too. This was provided by the 'free and easy', an informal sing-song of longstanding popularity in the history of the pub, which was developed into a more formalised and regular style of tavern concert. Here again, new space was created by the more economical use of existing
space: billiard rooms, skittle alleys, even the publican's own sleeping quarters, were converted into 'singing saloons', the prototype music halls. At a London licensing session in 1834, a sympathetic magistrate passed the following comment on the new phenomenon:

He rejoiced in seeing so many applications for music licenses, as they proved the growing desire on the part of the public for intellectual and rational amusements. At the same time, he regretted the number of applications, as they proved that a power had too long been exercised to abridge popular recreations.

Such a remark brings us to a consideration of those who discerned little or no intellectual or rational content in the amusements of the people; their hostility constituted the other major constraint upon popular recreation.

The concern to police the amusements of the poor had a long history, but it had taken on a new acuity since the late eighteenth century. As industrial production intensified, entrepreneurs grew impatient with popular merrymaking, for it impaired the regularity of attendance and effort which they demanded from their labour force. They sought therefore to banish any sportiveness from the workplace and curtail the number of local holidays. More pervasive was the growing influence of the evangelical movement, which was deeply suspicious of recreation and amusement as sources of worldly corruption. By the early Victorian period the movement had taken firm root in the
middle classes and found support among clergy of all denominations. In the nonconformist churches its sentiments reinforced a long-standing hostility to traditional recreations, and the Methodists in particular were credited with some remarkable reforms of popular behaviour: a government commissioner reporting from the mining districts of the West of England and North Wales in 1843 found the Wesleyans responsible for a transformation in the people's play "from brute riot to decorum." For the Anglicans who joined the attack on popular recreations, censure meant abandoning their traditional role of patron. The Northern wakes, for example, were originally parish feasts, but the Church had disowned them by the 1830s. In the 1820s leading Churchmen exorcised the surviving image of the sporting parson with his love of field sports and country dancing as part of a purge of their clergy's worldliness, prompting Sidney Smith to a parody of the new commandments: "Hunt not, fish not, shoot not; dance not, fiddle not, flute not." Thus church and chapel, as the old Yorkshireman had remarked, provided little for the working man's recreation and indeed condemned such that he had. This greater censoriousness was noted in a snatch of popular verse:

The poor man's delight
Is a sore in the sight
And a stench in the nose of piety.

By the 1830s there were several active reform movements—predominantly evangelical in inspiration and middle-
class in membership—whose campaigns against certain abuses in public life threatened the form and content of much popular recreation. Principal targets were animal cruelty, Sabbath-breaking and intemperance.\textsuperscript{59} The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals included in its brief the suppression of all blood sports, and its inspectors were zealous in reporting infringements of the act of 1835 which had made the sports illegal. The society played a prominent role in suppressing the traditional bull-running at Stamford in Lincolnshire in the late 1830s,\textsuperscript{60} though many smaller-scale blood sports continued to flourish clandestinely. The Sabbatarians, operating principally through the Lord's Day Observance Society, offered a greater threat to popular recreation, for they sought to close all institutions (including the pub) which required the employment of labour on a Sunday, or otherwise distracted the populace from attending church. Sunday, as noted previously, was sanctified to the working classes in other ways—it was generally the one day a week which was free for recreation and domestic tasks. The cause was not popular in Parliament and its proposals were often greeted with ridicule or disdain, not least because its spokesman in the Commons, Sir Andrew Agnew, had a peevish and almost inaudible voice. But the Sabbatarians were well enough organised as a lobby and their flourish of petitions ("greater than on any subject other
than those against West Indian slavery”) earned them some deference from succeeding administrations—they won select committees in 1831, 1847 and 1851, successfully postponed the opening of the British Museum on a Sunday for over fifteen years, and secured the passage of some important restrictive legislation in the mid-1850s.61 The temperance movement comprised many local and several national organisations, but there was a common trend in the mid-1830s away from general appeals for moderation in drink-taking to an insistence upon complete abstention or teetotalism.62 The movement was split as to how this could best be achieved, but its hostility to drink and its purveyors cut at the roots of much popular recreation. Its early champions in Parliament were received as derisively as Agnew,63 but out of doors the local organisations proved formidable in petitioning the magistracy for the restriction of drink licences.64 Temperance reformers often formed a common front with Sabbatarians in opposing the Sunday opening of the pub.

It is clear that local authorities often played a major part in abridging popular recreations, either on their own initiative, or as servants (reluctant or otherwise) of the reform interests. In Bolton, for example, the magistracy proved amenable to a campaign by local clergy against the leading singing saloon in the town, the Star Museum and Concert Hall. In 1843 the proprietor, William Sharples, was
frustrated in his bid for a theatre licence for his expensive-ly remodelled premises by petitioners to the bench led by Bolton's vicar, who complained of the degeneracy of the concert room.\textsuperscript{65} The following year the same lobby secured a magistrate's order prohibiting Sunday performances at the Star.\textsuperscript{66} But the local millhands voted with their feet and the Star's popularity continued to grow. When the Star burnt down in 1852 church and chapel took the lead in forming an anti-singing saloon association pledged to prevent its resurrection, and successfully petitioned at the annual brewster sessions for the suspension of Sharples' licence.\textsuperscript{67} But the magistrates' action is not necessarily evidence of a genuine concern for public morality, for a revealing commentary in the \textit{Era}, the national trade paper of the licenced victuallers, claimed that the bench discriminated against Sharples for political and commercial reasons: as Liberals, the magistrates were anxious to retain the chapel vote in a forthcoming municipal election; as landlords of other public houses in town, they were securing their own tenants against the powerful competition of the Star.\textsuperscript{68}

Elsewhere, as we have seen in the remarks of the London J.P. quoted above, magistrates were actively sympathetic towards popular recreation—several who appeared before the select committee on licencing in the early 850s clearly recognised the adequate social controls built into the singing saloons
and were prepared to defend them. On other occasions magistrates were respectful of popular traditions; some invoked the Stuart Book of Sports in defence of Sunday sport and evinced great distaste for actions brought on the evidence of common informers, a frequent device of the Sabbatarians. Thus there was obviously great local and individual variation in the attitudes of the magistracy, though on balance they were probably more repressive than benevolent.

Other local bodies were frequently hostile to traditional amusements. In London, the Common Council in the City (largely under the prompting of its Methodist contingent, so we are told) strangled the historic Bartholomew Fair by degrees. During the 1840s they raised the rents for stallholders, limited the duration of the fair, and succeeded in forcing it to use another, less convenient, site. Thus 'old Bartlemy' was dead by 1854, following the fate of several other London fairs (some despatched by private bills). Robert Slaney, an M.P. greatly concerned with the contraction of popular recreation, accused local authorities of allowing nuisances at fairs to go unchecked in order to build up a case for their complete suppression. Municipal incorporation in the mid-1830s gave office to a generation of councillors greatly concerned with retrenchment, sometimes at the expense of traditional festivities— the fat geese roasted to celebrate success at Michaelmas elections disappeared in most boroughs.
Other administrative rationalisations could trim away time-honoured local recreations—W. E. Adams recalled how the introduction of the New Poor Law in Cheltenham in the '40s put an end to the agreeable annual ritual of 'beating the bounds', for it discontinued the subsidy which, under the old law, had paid for the wagonloads of drink. Incorporation could produce an officious local bureaucracy—in Bolton, the inspector of nuisances was indefatigable in his campaign to exterminate pigeon-flying, a very popular working class sport.

The officers who had the greatest impact upon popular recreations were the officers of the new police. They were organised in both town and countryside during these decades, following the model of Peel's reform of the metropolitan police in 1829. Constables were soon a prominent feature of the fairground and race track: intercepting the Swell Mob, flushing out the pickpockets and other small fry, and harassing the itinerant showpeople whom they regarded as a cover for the criminal nuisance. The police enforced the law against blood sports. In Spitalfields in London, for example, they put an end to the bull-running on Easter Monday, an occasion which the old specials had been powerless to control. The bobbies were also effective in curtailing other wild sports, such as the Shrove Tuesday football game in Derby, which engulfed the streets with its mob of players, but which
yielded to official limitations in 1846.  

There was considerable opposition to the introduction of the new police from all levels of society, and there is some indication that they were initially cautious in interfering with popular pleasures; eventually, however, it was only by conspicuous zeal in such matters that they could justify their existence to the more cantankerous and influential among the ratepayers. 'Where are the new police?' became a common cry in letters to the Bolton press in the 1840s—why did the officers of this offensive new institution (maintained at great local expense) do nothing about the young men playing pitch and toss in Great Moor Street, about the boys playing 'piggy' (a Lancashire game of tip-cat) behind Walmsley's Warehouse, about the crowds of louts who gathered to cheer on pedestrian races and obstructed rights of way? The list of cases before the local courts show that the police did indeed come to bear down heavily upon these 'nuisances'; the players and spectators of street games were prosecuted for obstruction, trespass, breaches of the peace, vagrancy, and desecration of the Sabbath. Thus the police invaded the daily occasions for recreation as well as the popular festivals of the fair and race-meeting. In clearing the streets, they not only threatened to deprive the working class of their last resort of public assembly, but also cut off many of its diversions by moving on the street performers.
The hostility of the reform associations and local authorities was only the most forceful expression of a general middle-class impatience with the intractable crudities and excess of so much of popular recreation. The respectable citizens of Bolton who demanded police action against street games were not just concerned to criticise the efficiency of a distasteful new service, but were generally affronted by what they saw and heard of. In an age of progress and rationality it was frankly incomprehensible that people should amuse themselves by eating scalding porridge with their fingers or stripping the wicks from a pound of candles with their teeth, all for the sake of a wager and the applause of an audience of like-minded boobies. These exercises were popular contests at the yearly Halshaw Wakes held near Bolton, but similar feats took place all the year round—eight pounds of treacle consumed in twenty minutes by a butcher's assistant (the commonest of participants) provides a typical example. Such displays were generally attended by a great deal of drinking and gambling. The gentry and the respectable middle classes recoiled from such uncouth congenialities and, like the clergy, no longer appeared as patrons of the local fairs and feasts.

One persistent defence of the aberrations witnessed at the annual festivals—that they provided a safety valve for the discontents and frustrations of a hard-driven working
people--found no support among the middle classes, particularly since this traditional licence encouraged recrudescences of saturnalia which they found offensive to their sense of station. In Lancashire at Eastertime the ancient practice of begging for eggs or 'peace-egging' had become the excuse for gangs of youths to dress in outlandish garb and march in procession from pub to pub, blowing trumpets and banging on the tables till free drink was brought. Respectable passers-by were badgered into contributing drink money, and Henry Richard recorded an occasion when 'a rabble sort' stormed the Commercial Room of his hotel in search of tribute. At Ashton in Cheshire, revellers demanded beer money for the Black Knight, who was paraded in effigy at the annual fair--missiles hurled at the Knight had a way of breaking windows or spattering the better-dressed bystanders. It does not seem merely fanciful to detect a certain retaliatory edge to these celebrations--a popular retort to the studied neglect, compounded by official harassment, which characterised the attitudes of the superior classes to the working man's amusements.

Before turning to consider the general response of the lower orders, it should be noted that there were some great popular festivals which significantly resisted curtailment, though castigated as morally degenerate. Race meetings head this category. Racing had long been a target for the
reformers of manners—an early sign of Wilberforce's conversion had been his pointed refusal of the stewardship of York races in 1790—but the aristocracy were successful in protecting the sport from its enemies. A committee of the House of Lords considered that the traditional arguments for the defence still held good in the 1840s:

The Committee think it desirable that this amusement should be upheld, because it is in accordance with a long-established national taste, because it serves to bring together for a common object, vast bodies of people in different parts of the country, and to promote intercourse between different classes of society.

The committee went on to recall how Manchester races had been allowed to take place immediately after the Peterloo massacre; despite official misgivings, the meeting had not provided a new rallying ground for the disaffected, but had afforded a three-day armistice. The sport could also be defended as necessary for maintaining the good quality of English bloodstock. There were problems of public order on the turf, but the Jockey Club, the aristocratic governing body, successfully put its own house in order during the '40s and '50s. So the race meeting remained a stronghold of aristocratic patronage and lifestyle, trading on the patriotic claims and status associations of equestrianism; its broad and harmonious social mix received its apotheosis in Frith's classic picture, Derby Day, painted in 1858.
Racing increased in popularity with the working class in this period, and certain big city meetings became almost exclusively proletarian occasions. This was true at Manchester, Newcastle, and at Doncaster, where by 1850 it was a matter of comment that "the family carriage has been superseded by the bus."92 The spread of excursion traffic, and the continuing lure of a day in the open, account for some of the growth, but an additional attraction was quite obviously the betting market. There was an immense increase of on-course betting for individually small sums, and the editor of Bell's Life in London, the leading sporting paper, concluded: "The great majority of betters are persons from the manufacturing towns."93 As a betting medium, racing was also popular away from the track: off-course betting shops proliferated, and avid punters hung over bridges to catch the name of the big race winner from the fireman as the express train flashed through. In the light of modern examinations of betting, this phenomenon can be reckoned as part of the compensation activity of the socially deprived;94 to the government it represented a threat to property, for it was feared that gambling debts would lead the workman to theft, and the shopman to plunder his master's till. The remedy was the 1853 act for suppressing betting shops, which also outlawed the promotion of betting lists in the pubs. The legislation was meant to eliminate excessive betting from the
towns, though the gentleman's right to wager was protected by significant loopholes in the new law (Palmerston was supposedly responsible for cutting out some of the bill's more drastic proposals in the committee stage). The act was never a very watertight measure and, in any case, betting was still permitted at the race meeting itself. To prohibit betting on the course would have invited political disaster, but this relative tolerance suggests that, as a safety valve, the race meeting was regarded by the authorities as a manageable explosion; because of the presence of the upper classes, and perhaps too because the race meeting crackled away in a kind of quarantine on the edges of towns or beyond.

The prize ring deserves some attention at this point, since it displayed a social formula similar to that of the Turf. It had a long history of aristocratic patronage, but all classes and callings were found among its followers, giving the sport "its dominant feeling of social equality." The fist was "England's national weapon," and the fist fight, claimed the Ring's supporters, kept alive the spirit of Waterloo. Prize matches were generally fought in the countryside, and the style of the sport was heavily rustic; "on the whole," observed Dickens, "the associations entwined with the pugilistic art are much in the manner of Izaak Walton." As with the Turf, there was much gambling, considerable piecemeal commercialisation, and a pronounced criminal fringe. The Ring
was very popular with the working class. The champion fighters were great popular heroes who often provided a focus for fierce local loyalties, and news of the big matches brought excitement to the slums. As the costermongers told Mayhew, fighting was considered a necessary part of any boy's education, and the rather portly musculature and rubicund complexion of the pugilist embodied popular ideals of physical health. A successful career in the Ring for a working-class professional could mean substantial enrichment and the company of nobility—at least it generally meant enough money to open a pub.

But the prize fight was a bloody and unruly affair, and it came under heavy attack from humanitarians and reforming magistrates. Publicans who promoted fights were prosecuted for breaches of the peace, or were unable to renew their liquor licence at the next brewster sessions; on the not infrequent occasions when a pugilist was slugged to death, his adversary was charged with homicide. The coming of the new police increased the odds against the sport's survival, but a few hardy promoters continued to trade upon such intelligence as that "the Constables and Justices slept more soundly in Cambridgshire than in Essex," and the Ring survived in a somewhat attenuated but largely unreformed state. In 1860 the great international match between Sayers and Heenan provided the final climax for pugilism and revealed the
subterfuges to which its supporters had had to resort. A special train left London before dawn, bound for a secret rendezvous beyond the reach of mounted police patrols; the contenders had gone before, in disguise. The press generally treated the event as a brutal anachronism, but assertions of the traditional warranty for the sport were still heard: in the Commons, Lord Palmerston (who was accused of conniving at the outwitting of the authorities) made plain his personal approval of the Ring as a manly exercise in self-defence. The lordly patronage of prize-fighting had by then greatly declined, but on such occasions, and in their continuing presence on the Turf, the aristocracy showed themselves the custodians of certain of the great myths of the English at play—the egalitarian bonhomie of the sporting event, and the necessary role of the fist fight in building a sturdy national character. As apologia for two heavily criticised institutions these sentiments provided some protection for popular participation.

Generally, however, the working classes could count on little protection for their amusements from their betters; how, then, did they react to the campaigns against popular recreation? Reformers often met with harassment: parish officers attempting to enforce Sunday closing were serenaded with 'rough music' and the clanging of dustmen's bells; racegoers and fairground crowds occasionally manhandled
religious fanatics who harangued them on their sinfulness.\textsuperscript{104} There were also occasions of fiercer and more sustained resistance. The dragoons had finally to be called in to assist the police in suppressing the annual bull-running at Stamford in Lincolnshire in 1839, such was the defiant popular support for the sport.\textsuperscript{105} A similar though comparatively minor incident in Berkshire is a reminder that these occasions were not only sporting events but expressions of community, and defended as such: in Wokingham, a local alderman donated the bull, and the proceeds from the sale of the dead animal (whose meat was allegedly improved by baiting) went to charity, together with the hide, which made shoes for the poor.\textsuperscript{106} In a small country town such an occasion would dominate the calendar. In the cluster of manufacturing towns and industrial villages in Lancashire there were so many feasts and wakes that some succumbed to reform pressures without arousing any recorded popular protest—in Bolton and district, Horwich races, the Cross Keys Fair and Tonge Fold Fair disappeared quietly within a few years of each other in the late '40s, at the apparently uncontested promptings of "moralists" and "influential gentlemen."\textsuperscript{107} What excited determined resistance in the big towns were measures which threatened the more frequent incidence of recreation. In Bolton in 1853, the working-class secularist society successfully organised mass protest meetings against Sabbatarian
proposals to close the pubs on Sunday.\textsuperscript{108} Two years later there were serious riots in London against similar measures; in this case not only recreation but domestic habit was threatened, for Parliament was proposing to stop all trading in the city on Sunday.\textsuperscript{109} Such campaigns were interpreted as an attack upon the whole fabric of working-class life.

The language of resistance shows that working men often saw these confrontations as part of a broader social and political conflict. There is, for instance, a story (its origins as yet still obscure) of how the Chartists took up the case of the proprietor of a London saloon theatre who was prosecuted for playing the drama, at a time when dramatic licences were still restricted to the patent theatres. The Chartists picketed Westminster carrying placards with the following legends: "Freedom for the People's Amusements"; "Workers Want Theatres"; "One Law for the Rich, Another for the Poor."\textsuperscript{110} A more reliable example is provided by the Bolton protesters against Sabbatarianism, whose leaders were veterans of the radical politics of the '40s; the latter repeated a long and well-rehearsed catalogue of grievances against the local clergy--how they had sabotaged the Peel Park scheme, obstructed Sunday excursions, vetoed the Mechanics' Institute, and neglected the welfare of the people in the hard times of previous years.\textsuperscript{111} In Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the same year a workman warned his mates against the shopkeepers
and clergymen of a local anti-race committee in words which carry the authentic note of class hostility:

They promise nought to replace this workman's holiday ... . They would legislate for our morals ... in their desire to deny us recreation and amusement they only add another to the many proofs they have already given us of their utter ignorance of human nature ... . They are very fond of indulging in invectives against the publican, but the most casual observer among them cannot fail to have perceived that this body furnishes the only instances of providing amusements which, judging from the patronage they have received, appear to be most in demand ... . They only speak of workmen's intelligence on rare occasions and display concern for their welfare when they want to use us to promote a scheme of their own ... . I would say to you then, my fellow working men, be up and stirring in this matter; you, more than either the publican or the brewer, are interested in it, as it is only the prelude to a series of attempts to prevent, if possible, all recreation and amusement--it is the thin edge of the wedge which they will use all their efforts to drive home.112

Given these examples of defiance it is difficult to explain away occasions when popular festivals lapsed without demur in terms of working-class indifference. In an open letter to the Prime Minister in 1856 attacking the cessation of Sunday band concerts in London parks under pressure from the bishops, the radical, G. J. Holyoake, was anxious to counter this impression. "It is," he said, "a farce to talk of, and a wrong to assume, the 'indifference of the people' from their silence--even on questions vital to them." It was, however, in Holyoake's experience, difficult to marshal popular opposition, and thus many abridgments of popular recreation seemed to pass without offense, until accumulated
resentment finally exploded in riot, as in the case of the Sunday trading riots in London in the previous year. Holyoake's contentions are sound, but it seems likely too that the working man was better able to accept and overcome many of the undoubted losses of these years because of the emergence of a new urban popular culture whose recreations were more appropriate to the environment of the modern industrial town.

In moving on to consider the singing saloons as one of the more prominent and, in middle-class eyes, more disturbing manifestations of the new popular culture, we meet up with the most formidable vested interest in popular recreation--the publican. The primacy of the publican derived in large part from his dominating position in the food and drink trade, and the traditional social skills he displayed in his stewardship of the pub. He sang in the pub harmonic society and presided over the Derby sweepstakes; he provided the prizes for the clubs which met on his premises; he played host and stakeholder to the various sporting fraternities, and gave cover to 'listmen', the early bookmakers; he put up the leg of mutton or the new chemise for which contestants danced or ran at the local fair. He also sold the refreshments for the fair, like Jack Entwhistle of the Falcon and Four Factories at Cross Keys Fair in Bolton, "better known as Happy Jack--there in all his glory,
surrounded by beer barrels and beer buyers." This was the 'genial Boniface', the people's friendly major-domo. Moreover, his central position in popular recreation, as the working man from Newcastle had indicated, was reinforced by the withdrawal of such erstwhile patrons as the clergy and other local worthies.

The publican had to defend his commanding position against the reformers, particularly the temperance movement. His free beer fuelled many of the working-class demonstrations noted above, and publicans (or licenced victuallers as they increasingly preferred to be known) formed trade protection societies whose function included propaganda in which the publican stood for the very ideal in good living, as we may learn from a report of the Manchester licenced victuallers' annual dinner in 1850: "Here were jolly faces, healthful countenances and athletic men, whose thews showed the strength that roast beef, plum pudding and John Barleycorn create." The glowing image was contrasted with that of temperance diners picking at their food—"as pale, decayed and thin a set of human beings as ever scowled on humanity." In his defence the publican also laid claim to a unique professional expertise. "Public amusements," argued the Era "is a trade and a mystery and requires to be learned like any other trade ... no amateur ever ventured into it without damaging its character, and injuring its professors."
This retort was made in criticism of a particular attempt by clergymen to provide amusements which would counter the attractions of the pub, but the publican was more threatened during this era by competition from within his own bailiwick. The Beershop Act of 1830 had thrown open the retail trade in beer, allowing any ratepayer to brew and sell beer on his premises; licences were available from the local excise officer, and the beershop proprietor did not, like the publican, have to present sureties of solvency and good character, or submit to the magistrates for the annual renewal of his licence. Beershops proliferated. The publican was also likely to find himself in competition with his own kind, for the conditions of entry into public house proprietorship had also become easier under the influence of the free licencing movement. Publicans made shift to outface their rivals—as one of them explained to a government committee in 1831, the search for extra attractions had led him and his fellows to resort to "very great show and ornament." Hence the elaborations of the gin palace and the regular entertainment of the singing saloon, which show the publican on the defence as much as on the make. Given the burgeoning 'current in the streets,' the situation was almost certainly never as bad as the trade made out—one witness who knew the business from the inside maintained that some London publicans had increased their profits so substan-
tially in the '30s that they were diversifying into steamboat excursions. But many of them were worried about hanging on to their share of the drinking public; as rival leisure attractions multiplied in the following decades, publicans came to conform less to the popular image of a genial Boniface than to Dickens' picture of the proprietor of a Liverpool singing saloon: "Mr. Licenced Victualler ... a sharp and watchful man, with tight lips and a complete edition of Cocker's arithmetic in each eye."

The commercial operation of the singing saloons reveals also that despite growth there were significant economic and social limitations to the leisure market of the period. Revenue came from the sale of food and drink, particularly the latter. Admission to the saloons was by purchase of a refreshment check, a bronze or copper disc bearing the name of the pub and the value of the refreshments for which it was exchangeable inside the hall (in some areas this practice relieved the publican of the need to hold a music licence, and also obviated an old law forbidding the taking of money for admission on Sundays, often a popular night at the saloons). The publican tried to sell more drink than that provided on the refreshment check--he had to cover rising rents and increased overheads. The chairman, who conducted the entertainment, was therefore required to ensure frequent breaks for ordering drinks, setting a personal
example by his own readiness to accept a glass from the audience. His duties were graphically described by a Lancashire magistrate:

... there were diverting pleasant fellows who had what is called 'the run of their teeth'; that is, they were allowed to eat and drink, and they were employed by the publicans to sing songs and tell stories, and badger any country fellow who came till they made him drink.124

The waiters, too, kept up the pressure, as another witness recorded: "(Visitors) are soon made to understand by the waiter coming to them that they must order drink or leave the place ... they are compelled to order drink as the condition of remaining to witness the performance."125 These practices demonstrate that however numerous popular demand might have been, it was not very effective in terms of spending power—a full singing saloon did not automatically guarantee a full till. The refreshment ticket and the importunities of the saloon staff were necessary devices to prise revenue from the meagre competences of a working-class public with no established habit of direct payment for entertainment, particularly not for entertainment as familiar and largely self-generated as the free and easy. The singing saloons were called into being by the working classes, and the working classes asserted a remarkable degree of popular control over them. Not until the 1850s did certain of the more enterprising publican entrepreneurs devise a new and more remunerative market formula.
In the meantime the saloons flourished as a popular institution. The new tavern concerts were most numerous in London and the North. Between 1829 and 1849 applications for music and dancing licences to the Middlesex bench increased eightfold, and an increasing proportion of these were granted. By the 1840s London had a substantial body of professionals working the singing saloons; they had their own benevolent society and used the Hope Tavern off Drury Lane as a clearing house for engagements. Here was evidence of a growing commercialisation and regularity. There were thriving music rooms in Manchester by 1834, there being six to one street in Ancoats alone. "Many of them," reported one observer alert to the conspicuous consumption of the poor, "have an organ, or a pianoforte, or a musical clock worth 150 guineas." From Preston in 1851, James Hudson reported: "Singing-rooms are numerous, prosperous and constantly well-attended." At first the music had only been provided in the winter months, but by the 1840s concerts were being held throughout the year, and the entertainment and appointments were on a grander scale. William Dodd has left us a good picture of a thriving singing saloon in his description of The Jolly Hatters in Stockport in 1842, where a large extension had just been opened. This annexe, the 'Thespian Gallery and Temple of the Muses,' was "beautifully painted and well furnished," and could accommodate four to five hundred customers for its nightly performances.
A good example of the rise of the singing saloon to a dominating local position in working-class recreation is provided by the Star in Bolton.\textsuperscript{131} Opened in 1840 by Thomas Sharples, a prominent publican of the town, the Star had gradually expanded under his son's management to incorporate a picture gallery, museum and menagerie. The museum held historical relics such as the axe reputed to have been used at Derby's execution, geological specimens, stuffed birds, a photographic studio, and a ship's mainmast complete with rigging. Lectures on these various exhibits and topical subjects such as immigration were held in the Star, as well as the music and dancing associated with saloon entertainment. "The principle of the concert room," explained George Gray, the manager, "is to combine social enjoyment with wholesome instruction." Referring to disappointing experiments in popular education, he championed the saloons as "the only engines for public instruction now existing in society."\textsuperscript{132} Gray's formula was certainly attractive to the Bolton working class. The Star could hold over a thousand folk, and at weekends in particular it was bursting at the seams with the influx of excursion crowds from surrounding towns. A score of minor rivals operated in its shadow, but in 1852 it accounted for the biggest share of the estimated nightly attendance of three to four thousand at Bolton's singing saloons.\textsuperscript{133} It was particularly attractive to the young of
both sexes, who used the Star for their courting; most of them were unattended by their parents.\(^\text{134}\) Sharples' account books provide several examples of the headaches of management, but they show too, amid the confusions of his own personal style of accounting, that the Star yielded a handsome and regular profit.\(^\text{135}\)

The entertainment set before the saloon audiences was diverse in its materials, illustrating the wide resources of popular culture; the songs, dances and tricks were derived from the travelling show and popular theatre, the village green and the street, the drawing room and the church, and the recently imported nigger minstrel shows. The style was boisterous, vulgar and irreverent—Dodd, in his 1842 description of The Jolly Hatters at Stockport, noted a satirical song entitled 'The Parson and his Pigs', a young woman "in a stylish undress," and "an indecent mongrel kind of dance."\(^\text{136}\) The saloon audience also had a taste for spectacle (tableaux of battle scenes and reproductions of great historic events)\(^\text{137}\) but essential to all performances was the chorus singing, in which the audience came into its own. The fierce enthusiasm of their participation is described here by a member of the 'improving' press, who records with some amazement the lese-majeste visited upon some of his own favourite songs:

By name, they are often the same as we see in music-sellers' windows and on our own drawing-room tables; but they are garbled and interpolated here in a manner
to defy description. They are sung, or rather roared, with a vehemence that is stunning, and accompanied with spoken passages of the most outrageous characters. At the end of every verse the audience takes up the chorus with a zest and vigour which speaks volumes—they sing, they roar, they yell, they scream, they get on their legs and waving dirty hands and ragged hats bellow again till their voices crack. When the song is ended, and the singer withdraws, they encore him with a peal that seems enough to bring the rotting roof on their heads.¹³⁸

Whatever the abandon, the procedure was well formalised by the 1850s: "... programme books thick as a magazine are laid upon the tables for our acceptance, and as the song is announced by the chairman, he refers you to the number in the volume, beneath which you may find the words."¹³⁹

The singing saloons in particular emphasise the continuing strengths of popular recreation—the vitality and capacity for adaptation. Their success represents a victory over the constrictions and impersonality of the new towns. They utilised and stretched existing resources to accommodate the increasing numbers from the street who were hungry for company and diversion. As with the gin palace (often one and the same set of premises with the saloon) the gas light and other advances in technology were pressed into service to allow for greatly enlarged assemblies,¹⁴⁰ yet saloon entertainment demonstrated the retention of an essentially human scale within these new dimensions—chorus singing was hardly a very edifying ritual but it provided for the spirited expression of a common geniality. It must be noted too that despite the
incessant clatter of bonhomie good order prevailed among the singing saloon crowds. In his tour of Lancashire in 1842, the journalist and historian Cooke Taylor recorded: "I have gone into some of the concert-rooms attached to favoured public houses which they (the operatives of Manchester) frequent, and I have never been in a more orderly and better behaved company." Some ten years later a spokesman for a Manchester association for the reform of public houses found no need to demand any alteration in the hours which the singing saloons kept because he allowed: "The people regulate the hours—all the working people leave by 9.30." The same witness also acknowledged that there was very little drunkenness among saloon audiences, and Sharples' accounts testify that ginger beer or 'pop' sold as well as the stronger stuff.

The Star in Bolton, with its wide range of attractions, shows how the saloon could meet the popular thirst for instruction as well as entertainment. From Bolton too, there is evidence of how the saloons could fight off the attacks of the reformers, for Sharples eventually defeated the designs of the local anti-singing saloon association and rebuilt the Star after the 1852 fire. On its re-opening, the Bolton dialect paper recorded the cheers of popular satisfaction:

We're so fain to see the Star oppen ogen, that we're just gettin' shut of a bit of eawr surplus emoshun ... nearly every chops had a grin on it.
In a more reflective manner, another local correspondent drew the following conclusion from the controversy over the Star:

The Singing Saloons, or Singing Halls, are the best guarantee for recreation, and approach nearer to the inclinations and customs of the working classes than any other institution of the present age.145

The singing saloons advertised their success with a clamant assault upon the senses, for they were certainly more obtrusive than their predecessors. With their powerful lighting, their enlarged capacity, and the prevailing enthusiasm for chorus singing, they were a phenomenon of which few can have remained unaware. The saloons were blazing arcades of light. Customers crowded outside on the pavement waiting to get in, while the sounds of popular music-making were roared abroad—on Sunday nights such favourites as the Doxology and the Hallelujah Chorus dominated the repertoire. To Faucher's translator, a middle-class Mancunian, the inclusion of hymns was a sign of an improved taste among the working classes,146 but to other respectable citizens the saloons afforded fleeting peepshows of degeneracy, confirming the evidence of prison chaplains whose younger charges seemed ever ready to oblige with testimonies to the corrupting influences of such places.147

The saloons were particularly disturbing to the reformers.148 They saw the brutality and crudeness of the older traditional amusements as the excrescences of a folk
or rustic barbarism--noxious enough, but ultimately incapable of withstanding the moral advances of a modern society; they were now confronted with a thriving recreational institution which was the direct product of a modern urban society, and which so fitted the tastes and conventions of a large section of the members of that society, that it threatened to engross all their leisure time. It was this marked capacity for autonomous renewal in popular recreation which demanded of reformers that their counter-attack be constructive rather than merely repressive.
FOOTNOTES


2 There is no adequate modern history of popular recreation in these years. Malcolmson, op.cit., affords an excellent introduction to the subject, but his treatment of the Victorian period is concerned primarily with the growing hostility to popular recreation rather than a continuing study of the recreation itself. Two theses on recreation in Lancashire offer some helpful material, but are generally insubstantial: K. Allan, "Recreations and Amusements of the Industrial Working Class in the Second Quarter of the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to Lancashire" (M.A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1947); M. B. Smith, "The Growth and Development of Popular Entertainments and Pastimes in the Lancashire Cotton Towns, 1830-1870" (M. Litt. thesis, University of Lancaster, 1970).


8 J. Lawson, Letters to the Young on Progress in Pudsey (Stanningley, 1887), p. 58.


quoted in Jackson, op. cit., p. 47. Beer was, of course, widely regarded as a staple of the working man's diet, as well as a refreshment.


B.C., 4 September 1841, 16 July 1842, 31 August 1850. There is a useful list of club anniversaries in ibid., 17 August 1850.

Society, Grand Lodge Circular, 1831-1959, 115 vols. Women's societies flourished too, at least until the 1840s, and held their own celebrations in fine style, see B. T. Barton, Historical Gleanings of Bolton and District (Bolton, 1881), pp. 11-13. All the above sources, with the exception of Dyson, are located in Bolton Reference Library (B.R.L.).

16 The symbolic and material primacy of these legendary comestibles in working-class life comes through in the address of a Wiltshire Chartist, who promised his audience "plenty of roast beef, plum pudding and strong beer by working three hours a day." Quoted by Briggs, "The Local Background of Chartism," in his Chartist Studies (London, 1960), p. 10. W. L. Sargent, Economy of the Labouring Classes (London, 1857), p. 352, noted: "A mechanic at a feast thinks himself scurvily used if he is supplied with less than a gallon of strong ale."


18 B.C., 7 March 1857. There were, said the correspondent, several working-class pubs "with a systematic way of carrying on debates on all subjects, mixed up with drink and tobacco." For more detailed evidence from Birmingham, see Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp. 337-38.


22 I have used adaptation here in the sense understood by anthropologists as "the adjustment of a society to its


29 Thompson, English Working Class (London, Penguin paperback, 1968), pp. 916-39. (All other references to this work are to the American edition, see above, Introduction, p. 6n.)


31 B.C., 9 August 1834.

33 Allen, op.cit., pp. 22-25.


36 Reports of the Assistant Hand-Loom Weavers Commissioners, part IV, Parl. Papers, 1840, XXIV, pp. 315-16.

37 B.C., 2 October 1852.


39 B.C., 22 June 1850. The Irish ghetto in the Newtown district of Bolton was, for example, a notorious trouble spot. Cf. G. Best, Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875 (London, 1971), p. 10.


41 Among the annual reports there is a particularly good account of Bolton's New Year Fair in B.C., 13 January 1872. Whitsuntide qualified as 'the greatest holiday of the year,' and the Chronicle always honoured this 'festival of the poor' with a cheerful editorial. Reports on Halshaw Moor Wakes, ibid., 5 October 1833; Deane Church Wakes, ibid., 13 September 1834; and the historic Turton Fair, ibid., 13, 27 September 1851 are representative. For an interesting account of St. Giles Fair in Oxford in this period see Alexander, op.cit., and for recollections of boisterous times at the Lansdown Fair in Bath see 'Lord' George Sanger, Seventy Years a Showman (London, 1910), pp. 86-87. For fairs and wakes in general see Thompson, English Working Class, pp. 403-7; Malcolmson, op.cit., pp. 16-33; W. Addison, English Fairs and Markets (London, 1952).

42 Henry Mayhew records the exodus of London's street children to the Derby; some appeared at other race meetings

43 C. Aspin, Lancashire, the First Industrial Society (Helmshore, 1969), pp. 165-69.

44 Era (London), 28 July 1850. The Era was the national trade paper of the licenced victuallers, and is an excellent source for the study of popular recreation.


47 This is a suggestion made by Professor Checkland in H. J. Dyos, ed., The Study of Urban History: the Proceedings of an International Round Table Conference of the Urban History Group at Gilbert Murray Hall, University of Leicester, September 1966 (London, 1968), pp. 337-42.


49 Among the many descriptions of the new gin palaces see Dickens, op.cit., 1:276-87; Faucher, op.cit., p. 49. Gas lighting was an extremely important innovation for popular recreation, see W. T. O'Dea, The Social History of Lighting (London, 1958), pp. 105, 185-87.


51 S.C.H.C. on Drunkenness, q. 3270.

pretty girls, protected from all human seductions behind the imposing serenity and the Olympian majesty of business."

53 Dickens, loc.cit.

54 "Public Amusements," Colburn's Monthly Magazine 56 (1838) : 300; "The Age Before the Music Halls," All The Year Round 11 (December 1873) : 175-80. Note should be made too, of the proliferation of penny theatres or 'penny gaffs', which provided cheap entertainment, mainly for youths and children. Here again, any available space was pressed into service; empty shop premises, stables etc. Mayhew stumbled upon scores of these dens in his perambulations of London, op.cit., 1 : 18, 40-42.

55 The Times, 18 October 1834.


58 The old style sporting parson was not yet an extinct species however, see L. de Longpre (Baron d'Haussez), Great Britain in 1833, 2 vols. (London, 1833), 1 : 251. Clergymen were noted among the crowd at the famous Sayers-Heenan prize fight in 1860, and there was consternation in church circles in 1874 when it was discovered that the winner of the St. Leger was owned by a vicar in Lincolnshire, The Times, 12 October 1874. For Bishop Blomfield and the new style, see R. A. Solloway, Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England, 1783-1852 (London, 1969), pp. 150, 219, 240, 319-30.

59 Harrison, "Religion and Recreation."

60 Malcolmson, op.cit., pp. 130-33.

debates can be found in \textit{Hansard}, XXIII, 21 May 1835 (when the volume of petitions was remarked); XXXIII, 21 April 1836; LV, 14 July 1840. Agnew's bills were popularly known as Agony Bills which, according to the wags, forbade even the working of Epsom salts on a Sunday. The legislation of the '50s is considered below.

\textsuperscript{62}The history and ramifications of the temperance movement are examined at length in \textit{Harrison, Drink and the Victorians}. The constructive role of the movement in recreation is considered below, chap. 2.


\textsuperscript{64}J. Clegg, ed., \textit{Autobiography of a Lancashire Lawyer} (Bolton, 1883), pp. 202-10, 253. Regular memorials to the annual licencing sessions in Bolton effectively curtailed the grant of new licences throughout the 1850s and '60s. See the editorial comment, \textit{B.C.}, 31 August 1867.

\textsuperscript{65}\textit{B.C.}, 7, 14 January 1843.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 28 September 1844.

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 14 August - 9 October 1852.

\textsuperscript{68}Ibid., 29 August - 12 September 1852. As a prominent local Tory (like most publicans) Sharples was obviously unlikely to attract the sympathies of a predominantly Liberal bench; significantly, the magistrates had refused his invitation to visit the Star, though J.P.s in other towns had accepted.


\textsuperscript{71}T. Frost, \textit{The Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs} (London, 1874), pp. 337-56. There had been several previous attempts to suppress this famous fair in the City, which had a boisterous history. It was traditionally preceded by the people's declaration of their right to this ancient holiday. Gangs of apprentices--'Lady Holland's Mob'--swarmed through the streets, making rough music and knocking on doors 'to proclaim the Fair.' H. Morley, \textit{Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair


Hansard, LVII, 22 March 1841.


Reports of James Fogg in B.C., 30 November 1850; 17 May 1851.

R. H. Mottram, Portrait of an Unknown Victorian (London, 1936), pp. 148-49; Sanger, op. cit., pp. 37-41, 178. The criminality of the fairs is investigated at length in the First Report of the Commissioners on Constabulary, Parl. Papers, 1839, XIX. This is a frankly partisan document, a brain-child of Edwin Chadwick, but it is an extremely useful source.

A Working Man, Scenes from My Life (London, 1858), pp. 30-31. Rich old gentlemen who took refuge in doorways from the hullabaloo had been an easy prey for thieves.

Malcolmson, op. cit., pp. 141-42.


E.g. B.C., 24 April, 1 May 1841; 7 May 1842; 29 September 1849.

This was a continuous offensive, see below, chap. 4, and S.C.H.C. on Gaming, q. 831.

Hansard, XXXV, 11, 12 July 1836; Era, 16 May 1852. G. Godwin, Town Swamps and Social Bridges (London, 1859), pp. 94-95 records a police campaign against the penny gaffs.
These folk pleasures are described in Dyson, op.cit., pp. 39-42, and his "Recollections of Rural Congregationalism," B.C., 29 April 1882. The bemused middle-class response to such spectacles can be sampled in the letters of Pro Bono Publico (a ubiquitous and probably many-headed guardian of public sanity), Bolton Free Press, 14 December 1844; B.C., 31 May 1851. Contemplating men still climbing greasy poles and chasing buttered pigs in the '60s an improving journal condemned all such contests as "vile in bone, sinew, marrow and heart." "The Philosophy of Amusements: A Summary of the Permissible and the Unjustifiable Amusements of Our Age and Country," Meliora; or Better Times to Come, 6 (1864) : 193-210.

B.C., 19 February 1848. See ibid., 7 December 1833 for another impressive feat of gourmandizing.

Diary of Henry Richard, 22 March 1853, National Library of Wales, MS. 10199B. I owe this reference to Mr. Eric Sager. See also B.C., 19 April 1851; P. A. Whittle, Blackburn As It Is (Preston, 1852), pp. 30-33. In later years 'pace-egger' became synonymous with disturber of the peace in Lancashire reports of disorders.

W. E. Axon, The Black Knight of Ashton (Manchester, 1870).

As Max Gluckman has observed in his study of the licence in ritual in certain African societies, rituals which allow people to behave in normally prohibited ways can only be tolerated where all parties agree to the normal rightness of a particular kind of social order. Once the social order is questioned (as was the case, clearly, in the 1830s and '40s) such rituals become inappropriate, Custom and Conflict in Africa (Oxford, 1956), pp. 109-37. Cf. Malcolmson, op.cit., pp. 81-82, particularly n. 40.

Jaeger, op.cit., p. 13. The race meeting was an occasion likened only to the Assizes in the local excitement it generated; many of the additions made to the racing calendar in the previous century had indeed been scheduled to coincide with the Assizes, in order to gratify the increasing popularity of the sport in fashionable circles, Plumb, loc.cit. Racing was one of the three commonest recreations occurring in working-class ballads (the others were prize-fighting and poaching), Mackerness, op.cit., p. 143.


93 S.C.H.L. on Gambling, p. 95; Era, 23 June 1850.


95 Pam's part in the episode is described briefly in Era, 1 January 1854. For the rest see S.C.H.C. on the Suppression of Betting Houses, Parl. Papers, 1852-53, I; Hansard, CXXIX, 11 July 1853.

96 There is no adequate social history of the prize ring, or indeed of any other single sport in the period. The columns of Bell's Life are the best source, and there are some good cuttings in the Place Collection, 41 : fol. 48. A useful contemporary biography is H. D. Miles, ed., Tom Sayers: His Life and Pugilistic Career (London, 1866), which includes a selection of press reports on the Sayers-Heenan fight of 1860, from which the unattributed quotes in the text are taken. See also E. Mingaud, The Life of James Ward with a Short Treatise on Training (London, 1882).


100 In 1860 Tom Sayers was rewarded with, among other things, a public subscription and a reception at the Stock Exchange.

101 "The Decline of the Ring," Tinsley's Magazine, 4 (July 1869) : 552-58. The Queensbury Rules were introduced
in 1865 and boxing remained popular as a manly exercise; but the prize fight was virtually finished by then.


103 Miles, op.cit.

104 S.C.H.C on the Observance of the Sabbath, p. 24; Era, 8 September 1850.

105 Malcolmson, op.cit., pp. 126-33. The bull-running was still being celebrated by an annual dinner in 1850, see Era, 17 November 1850. Attempts to suppress bull-baiting in West Bromwich provoked extensive rioting in the late 1830s, S.C.H.C. on the Education of the Poorer Classes, Parl. Papers, 1838, VII, p. 96.


110 The story appears in A. L. Craufurd, Sam and Sallie: A Romance of the Stage (London, 1933), pp. 145-55. Despite the unpromising title the book is a very helpful piece of theatre history, recording the careers of the Lane family who ran the Britannia in Hoxton. There are allusions to some such incident in other sources and Craufurd's report is unlikely to be complete fabrication, but a brief search in the contemporary press has not provided any substantiation as yet, see C. Barker, "A Theatre for the People," in K. Richards and P. Thomson, eds., Essays on Nineteenth Century British Theatre (Manchester, 1971), pp. 1-17.

111 Hilton, Grimshaw and Witherington, op.cit.; B.C., 4, 11 June 1853.
'A Fellow Workman,' *The Races Defended as an Amusement* (Newcastle, 1853). The writer was careful to dissociate himself from the drink interest.


The history of the publican is in large part the history of the pub (see above n. 10), but there is certainly room for a social history of the publican *per se*; as yet, he has only been studied seriously as a member of an interest group and its relations with Westminster.

*Bolton Free Press*, 16 September 1843. The Free Press provided (at intervals) a Liberal voice to counter the *Chronicle's* Tory and Anglican bias.

*Era*, 28 July 1850.

Ibid., 12 September 1852.


Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, pp. 73-74.


*The Town*, 21 July 1838. This was edited by 'Baron' Nicholson, a leading London 'caterer', who managed one of the famous supper rooms in the '40s and ran a refreshment tent at Epsom. In Birmingham, the publican and later music hall impresario, James Day, was organising canal and railway excursions in 1841. For the obituary of this unsung Thomas Cook, see *Era*, 27 February 1876.

*Dickens, Uncommercial Traveller*, pp. 63-66.

J. Macmillan, Description of Checks Issued by Birmingham Concert Halls, MS, in Birmingham Central Reference Library. The young patrons of the penny gaffs bought entrance with an empty bottle or a scrap of food.
126 J. Adams, A Letter to the Justices of the Peace of the County of Middlesex, on the Subject of Licences for Public Music and Dancing (London, 1850).
127 The Town, 18 August 1838; All the Year Round, loc.cit.
130 W. Dodd, The Factory System Illustrated in Letters to Lord Ashley (London, 1842), pp. 182-83. See also, Faucher, op.cit., p. 49. Perhaps it was Dodd's account that provided Disraeli with the basic material for his entertaining description of a singing saloon in the factory town of Mowbray in Sybil (London, 1926), pp. 105-16.
131 See above, pp. 25-26. The Bolton Chronicle provided a history and description of the Star on the occasion of its destruction by fire, B.C., 17 July 1852.
132 Ibid., 28 August 1852, and Gray's evidence to S.C.H.C. on Licencing, qq. 7653, 7715-16. One important limitation on the Star's repertoire followed from the Theatre Act of 1843 which virtually prohibited the staging of legitimate drama where there was smoking or the sale of intoxicants in the auditorium. This ruling, which Gray and other music hall interests opposed, stayed in force throughout the century, and did much to determine the unique character of music hall entertainment.
133 Era, 29 August 1852. Bolton's population was 60,000. The weekly attendance at Manchester singing saloons was estimated at 50,000 by a reliable witness, Hudson, op.cit., p. 140. In Leeds there were flourishing singing-saloons which held audiences of over a thousand, see J. Hole, An Essay on the History and Management of Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions (London, 1853), pp. 74-75.
Star Music Hall Account Book, 1847-1850. Xerox copy in B.R.L. from the original in the possession of Mrs. D. Scholefield, St. Mary's Cray, Kent.

Dodd, loc.cit.

See the analysis of theatre and saloon entertainments in Manchester between 1837 and 1854 made by R. J. Richardson, S.C.H.C. Further Report on Licencing, qq. 3621-23. In 1848 the Star offered scenes from the storming of Amoy and a representation of the Fire of London.

"Amusements of the Mob," Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, 26 (November 1856) : 225, 281. See also Mayhew's account of his visit to a popular theatre where the singer called for a chorus from the crowd with the mocking injunction: "Now then, the Exeter Hall touch, if you please, gentlemen." Op.cit., 1 : 18, 40-42.

Era', 19 October 1856.

Dickens, Uncommercial Traveller, pp. 40-56, remarked how the Britannia Theatre built in the '50s "ingeniously combined the experience of hospitals and railway stations in the matter of ventilation and furnishing."

W. C. Taylor, Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire (Manchester, 1842), p. 136. See also Dodd, loc.cit., who reported that "as good order as one could expect prevailed," and Disraeli, loc.cit.


Ibid., q. 3834; see also Gray's evidence, ibid., q. 7787; Star Account Book; 'BBB's' letter to B.C., 11 September 1852.

Bowtun Luminary (Bolton,) 13 January 1855.

B.C., 18 September 1852.

Faucher, op.cit., p. 49n.

Chaplain's Reports on the Preston House of Correction (Preston, 1841), p. 6; "Singing Saloon Immorality," Tonic Sol-fa Reporter and Magazine of Vocal Music for the People, no. 46 (October 1856). In the previous decade it had been the Sunday newspapers that had attracted similar accusations, S.C.H.C. on the Observance of the Sabbath, p. 168.
Hudson, op.cit., p. 140; Hole, op.cit., pp. 74-75.
II. RATIONAL RECREATION: VOICES OF IMPROVEMENT

In the 1830s and '40s English society faced appalling problems of social order and public health which provoked a wide-ranging debate on the 'Condition of England.' One strand in the debate concerned popular recreations and the desirability of promoting their reform in such a way as would make a constructive contribution to the general drive for social amelioration or 'improvement'. In this scenario improved recreations were an important instrument for educating the working classes in the social values of middle-class orthodoxy. Rational recreation, as the new prescription was styled, commended itself to a variety of reform interests and attracted increasing public attention as the mid-century approached. By then the history of several schemes launched in its name had revealed the considerable problems of putting its rationale of social control into practice.¹

Rational recreation proceeded from a basic humanitarian sympathy with the plight of the urban masses. Expressions of regret at the persecution and neglect of their amusements multiplied during the early Victorian era. "The very essence of our laws," acknowledged Lytton Bulwer, the novelist, "has been against the social meetings of the humble, which have been called idleness, and against the amusements of the poor, which have
been stigmatised as disorder." Such confessions became calls for action. In the Commons, Robert Slaney, a country gentleman with a utilitarian interest in the health of towns, argued that those who abolished the amusements of the poor "were bound to find a substitute." There were, he maintained, "great arrears to make up in this respect towards these neglected classes."  

The concern to humanise life in the towns was reinforced by practical considerations of social stability. If relief was not forthcoming, warned Slaney, "the working classes will fly to demagogues and dangerous causes"; it was, he claimed, "alike wise and benevolent to provide, in regulated amusement for the many, safety valves for their eager energies." Chartism was the dangerous cause uppermost in middle-class minds. Edwin Chadwick was moved to argue for the provision of improved recreational amenities from the example of one occasion in Manchester, when potential demonstrators flocked to the zoo and museum (opened specially at the instigation of the police chief) rather than a Chartist meeting. A witness to the commission on the health of towns reminded its members that open spaces and sports were essential for diverting the lower orders from political disaffection. In particular, it was the unnerving spectacle of the Chartist agitation in 1842 which alerted a Manchester banker, Benjamin Heywood, to the alienation of the working
class, and prompted him to reform the Manchester Lyceums; within these new recreational centres he hoped to create a "community of enjoyment" which would engender "reciprocal feelings" between employer and employee. Though the threat of Chartism receded, there still remained the problem of containing the 'dangerous classes,' that indeterminate but volatile menace that lurked in the rookeries of the big cities.

But rational recreation was not an old-fashioned exercise in placating the mob; Slaney talked of safety valves, but qualified the image by talking of the need for "regulated amusement." Existing popular recreations which served to dissipate tensions within society were generally dismissed. While middle-class reformers acknowledged examples of working-class improvement at play and derived considerable encouragement from them, they stood dismayed at the prodigality of much working-class leisure with its determined exploration of the limits of the human appetite to the point of repletion or collapse. Contemplating the Staffordshire miners in 1850, Hugh Tremenheere, a factory inspector of much experience, noted despondently: "The half-savage manners of the last generation have been exchanged for a deep and almost universally pervading sensuality." Drunkenness was the most frequently indicted 'sensual' pleasure; feasting, brawling and (less directly stated) fornication, were other regrettable
indulgences. The reformers meant to cut back these excesses by providing alternative diversions of a more edifying nature. Cooke Taylor, the journalist and historian met with previously in his tour of Lancashire in the early '40s, concluded:

There must be safety valves for the mind; that is, there must be means for its pleasurable, profitable, and healthful exertion. These means it is in our power to render safe and innocent: these means in too many instances have been rendered dangerous and guilty.10

Taylor's prescription pointed out that improvement in recreation could be more than just a therapy or a diversion: it could be the principal instrument for effecting the moral reclamation of the working classes, the reclamation of what one of Slaney's supporters had once termed the "social waste" of the cities.11 To most social reformers in the early Victorian period, formal education appeared as the single great lever with which the working classes could be moved into the light. Education, in the words of Dr. Kay-Shuttleworth, its chief government policy-maker in the 1840s, was meant not only to teach occupational skills, but also "the nature of his (the artisan's) domestic and social relations ... his political position in society, and the moral and religious duties appropriate to it."12 But, as Cooke Taylor pointed out: "The lectures of the schoolroom will be utterly ineffective when they are counteracted by the practical lessons of the playground." "It was," he asserted,
"the great but neglected truth, that moral education, in spite of all the labours of direct instructors, is really acquired in hours of recreation."¹³ Leisure time, as the Christian Socialists pointed out in the house journal of the London Working Men's College, was the working man's major area of free choice:

Our work, whatever it might be, was for the most part assigned to us by circumstances over which we had very little control; but with respect to our amusements much more was left to our freedom of choice.

This fact gave leisure hours "a value for the formation and development of character which cannot be estimated too highly."¹⁴ Rational recreation was meant to secure this vital territory in the interests of social conformity.

Reformers saw the question as urgent and often difficult; but it was also attractive, for it offered the opportunity to contribute to what contemporaries conceived as a general remaking of society. Contemplating the state of popular recreation and the travails of modern life in 1838, William Howitt concluded that both had reached a turning point:

There appears to have been a pause in that important portion of human life, amusement, so far as the common people are concerned; but it has been in appearance only. One of the greatest changes that ever took place in human society has been in this interval maturing: the change from the last stage of worn out feudalism to the commencement of the era of social regeneration.¹⁵
How was rational recreation to assist in this regeneration; how was it to be implemented? Reformers were generally agreed upon the need to provide more recreational amenities in the manufacturing towns as a basic improvement. This was one of the 'immediate remedies' proposed by the Select Committee on Drunkenness in 1834, which indicated the range and balance required of such provisions. The committee recommended:

The establishment by the joint aid of Government and the local authorities and residents on the spot, of public walks, and gardens, or open spaces for healthy and athletic exercises in the open air, in the immediate vicinity of every town, of an extent and character adapted to its population; and of district and parish libraries, museums and reading rooms, accessible at the lowest rate of charge; so as to admit of one or the other being visited in any weather, and at any time.\(^{16}\)

But governments and local authorities were generally dilatory in meeting such requests, despite the lobbying of men like Slaney who regularly promoted bills to secure public walks and playgrounds. In 1837 Joseph Hume, another Radical interested in the amusements of the poor, was successful in passing a motion in the Commons which instructed the enclosure commissioners to ensure that each enclosure left an open space "sufficient for the purposes of exercise and recreation of the neighbouring population." Two years later, after an inspection of the breviates of enclosure bills, an interested member reported back that "the laudable object had
been laxly looked after."¹⁷ Members for the new towns in
the reformed House recognised the problem but were sceptical
of any municipal improvement which required an increase in
the rates—"There is," said Fielden to a select committee on
public walks, "an extraordinary jealousy in that respect."¹⁸
In 1840 Parliament voted money to assist local authorities in
providing parks, and in 1845 Peel made a personal example by
a gift of one thousand pounds towards the establishment of
Peel Park in Manchester; but the boroughs were slow in
response—in Bolton the proposal for a Peel Park was first
made in 1850 and was not brought to fruition till sixteen years
later.¹⁹

Official parsimony effectively restricted the
improvement of mental as well as physical recreation.
William Ewart, a Liberal back-bencher, successfully introduced
a bill in 1850 which enabled local authorities to provide
public libraries out of the rates. It was, said one of his
supporters, "the cheapest police that could possibly be
established." The Libraries Act enabled town councils to
levy a small rate which paid for housing and servicing the
libraries, but not for buying books; the select committee on
libraries had maintained that "donation will abundantly supply
the books."²⁰ Once the authorities had grudgingly primed the
pump, philanthropy was meant to complete the operation.
Thus recreational reform failed to command any real priority with the legislators. The Commons seemed happy enough to debate the issue of the amusements of the poor as a diversion—the image of Merrie England was freely invoked as members deplored the puritan zeal of certain magistrates who prosecuted Sabbath-breaking cricket players, or applied the vagrancy laws to street singers—21—but members deprecated direct control as a means of improving the manners of the people. In its enquiry into the licencing of places of entertainment in the early '50s, the Commons' select committee obviously preferred education as an agent of improvement to any extension of the magistrate's powers.22 Improvement outside the field of education, as one M.P. reminded the House, would come from "the influence of an increased morality, diffused downward from the upper class."23 This was the current orthodoxy: 'Opinions travel upwards, manners downwards.' No government action, whether through limiting the number of theatres, legislating for the better observance of the Sabbath, or imposing sumptuary laws, was any substitute for the operation of this mysterious and respected process.24

While reformers would not allow laissez-faire arguments to excuse the official neglect of amenities, they did accept the need for example setting by the superior classes. Setting an example was, in any case, a salutary exercise for the superior classes, but it was hoped that their
presence in recreation would engender a mutual moral vigilance in the community at large. Thus would be created the police of public opinion—mores sans legibus, rather than legibus sans mores, as the Lord Chancellor had put it in a debate on Sabbath observance. In rational recreation the community restraints would be reinforced by imprinting the values of the superior example on the working-class mind, making them self-acting imperatives. "Self-action for self-improvement," proclaimed the Bolton Chronicle, drawing a moral from the Factory Operatives Bazaar, "was the only sure ground for hope of progress."26

But if the working class needed an example to follow, exactly who among the rest of society was to provide it? The patronage of the nobility could be far from appropriate—commenting on the spectacle of 'the gentry going down to Newmarket' on what had become a regular Easter Sunday procession, Bishop Blomfield of London declared that there was "nothing more likely to unhinge the whole fabric of civil society than this evil example of the rich."27 Where the moral conduct of the aristocracy had greatly improved—and this was generally held to be the case—middle class commentators suggested that it was the conspicuous rectitude of the middle classes which had shamed the aristocracy out of its old ways.28 If, therefore, the middle classes accepted the aphorism 'opinions travel upwards, manners downwards,' they
did so because they saw themselves as the central point of departure for the diffusion of improvement in both ideas and behaviour. If aristocracy meant rule by the best, then the English middle class were beginning to assert their claims to be better qualified—as Carlyle challenged: "Not that we want no aristocracy, but that we want a new one."

There was considerable apprehension among the middle class at the persistent attractions of aristocratic patronage among the working men of a nation proverbially enamoured of a lord. The fear was that aristocratic paternalism would obstruct the diffusion of middle-class values and stunt the growth of working-class self-help. Such misgivings quickened in time of political rivalry. In 1843, Lord John Manners, a supporter of protection and factory reform and a member of Disraeli's Young England group, accused the manufacturing interest of "a utilitarian selfishness which has well nigh banished all unproductive amusements from the land," and demanded extra holidays for the people. The instrument of deliverance was to be the old high Church:

Before the millions are taught to dance and sing, leisure must be obtained for them and obtained in a way which they shall be taught thankfully to acknowledge--the way of the Church Catholic in England.29

The following year, with the campaign against the Corn Laws still undecided and Short Time agitation mounting, the Manchester Lyceum (the working men's club run by Heywood the
banker) asked Manners to be its patron, but was privately warned off such a course by Cobden and the Anti-Corn Law League.

Some working-class reformers were also wary of the insidious grip of the aristocracy and the persistence of habits of deference. Francis Place, for example, was dismayed by the initially strong influence of the aristocracy at Exeter Hall, the London rallying ground for evangelical reformers, for he feared it would seduce middle-class attenders from their duties to working men. In a prize essay written for a Leeds mechanics' institute in 1850, a workman applauded many of the proposals of Young England for joining the rich with the poor in common pursuit of sports and games, but suspected the group's motives: "They would," he feared, "re-establish the bond of feudalism."

The one persona non grata to all reformers was the publican. There were respectable working men who defended the 'social glass' and spoke well of the publican and the pub, but the experience of the Temperance Chartists had alienated men like William Lovett who had tried to provide rational recreation for their class. Lovett learnt at first hand of the ruthlessness of the drink interest when he was evicted from his People's Hall in Holborn by the machinations of the publican-entrepreneur Edward Weston, who took over the
premises for conversion into a music hall.\textsuperscript{32} A Liverpool vicar who ran concerts for his working-class congregation put the reformers' case succinctly: "The duties of publican and the duties of provider of public amusements for the people are quite incompatible."\textsuperscript{33} Reformers were at least agreed upon the principal figure in their demonology.

Whatever the rivalries over its direction, the general strategy of rational recreation was clear: new amenities would divert the workingman from the pub and provide the proper environment for his exposure to the superior example, whose values would ultimately be internalised. But how was the superior example to be projected to the working classes; was it to be by display or prescription? Slaney provided an example of the former in arguing for public walks:

A man walking out with his family among his neighbours of different ranks, will naturally be desirous to be properly clothed, and that his wife should be also; but this desire duly directed and controlled, is found by experience to be of the most powerful effect in promoting Civilisation and exciting industry.

Family recreation in the company of social superiors would generate "a pardonable vanity."\textsuperscript{34} For those reformers untouched by whole-hog Sabbatarianism, the 'Continental Sunday' offered an admirable model.\textsuperscript{35} French and Germans of all classes took their recreation together on their Sunday promenâes; though drink was taken ('a glass of light beer') the moderation and decorum of these occasions seemed to prove
to English witnesses how effectively the public parade of bourgeois respectability could impress the masses. This was also the assumption behind the tea party or soiree, where the good manners of the middle-class guests were expected to rub off on the less genteel. But, as the history of several schemes for recreational improvement shows, reformers felt the need to clarify the content of conformity more forcefully, and display and the conventions of polite social intercourse were generally reinforced and mostly overtaken by prescription.

The tension which developed between the two approaches is implicit in Samuel Greg's report on a programme of improvement he introduced on his industrial estate in Cheshire. Greg was a substantial employer who provided a variety of recreations for his work people—music classes, gardens, a playground for games, and regular tea parties in the winter. He insisted that other schemes to improve the content of working-class leisure were often inappropriate—he dismissed the Mechanics' Institutes as offering "mere intellectual pursuits," maintaining that:

There are many whose minds are not sufficiently cultivated to avail themselves of these: they have little or no taste for them, and yet are quite capable of being made very worthy, sensible, respectable, and happy men .... By gently leading them, or rather perhaps by letting them find their own way, from one step to another, you may at length succeed in making them what you wish them to be.
Having professed his belief in the perfectability of working-men, he talked of 'letting them find their own way'; having seen something of the erratic and reluctant nature of their actual progress towards self-redemption, he felt the need to expedite the process by 'gently leading them.' The guiding hand of the reformer was frequently more impatient and intrusive than the latter phrase suggests, and Greg himself was more peremptory in practice than his comments allow; elsewhere in the report he remarked briskly that he had succeeded in "breaking them (his operatives) into my system."

Greg's schemes were not exceptional among manufacturers whose operations were confined to an industrial estate or factory village which constituted a closed community—"a little Colony," as Greg put it. Robert Owen's New Lanark mills had included an annexe comprising a school, museum, music hall and ballroom (Owenites were accused of orgies of rational recreation). The Ashworth brothers provided similar facilities at their country mills at Turton, near Bolton. In the village of Flockton, near Huddersfield, the firm of Stanfeld and Briggs maintained a clubroom, choir, playground and gymnasium for their colliers, and there were several other examples of this kind of welfare capitalism. The employers were applauded for their concern to humanise the factory system. The Spectator commended Greg for providing his work people with a "moral" or "aesthetic" economy to
balance the necessary exigencies of political economy. Disraeli's ideal employer, Trafford of Wodgate, was based on such a model:

In the midst of this village, surrounded by beautiful gardens, which gave an impulse to the horticulture of the community, was the house of Trafford himself, who comprehended his position too well to withdraw himself with vulgar exclusiveness from his real dependents, but recognised the baronial principle, reviving in a new form, and adapted to the softer manners and more ingenious circumstances of the times.

Such men were the new industrial lords of the manor. It should be noted, however, that the returns on their paternalism could be disappointing. Greg was very hurt when his workpeople went on strike in 1847 over the introduction of a new process, especially since they made no attempts at negotiation with him before abruptly turning out. At Flockton in 1845 there was a thirteen week strike which Tremenheere, the government inspector, regarded as "an unhappy perverseness of conduct" on the part of employees who were so well provided for. Subsequent reports from Flockton recorded further disenchantment: "The novelty having gone off, the amusements and rational occupations for leisure hours have fallen into some neglect."

It was a common contemporary assertion that such schemes were only practicable in industries and manufactories located in the countryside; as these centres of production declined or became absorbed by urban growth, the factory
inspectors tried to encourage some attention to welfare and recreation on the part of employers in the towns, where the main thrust of industrial growth now lay. Welfare capitalism had made but slight progress in this sector, according to a government report of 1843:

Instances of personal attention on the part of employers to the welfare of their workpeople in general, and of the younger portion of them in particular can be regarded only as individual exceptions. It is a fearful thing to see how exempt the great body of employers hold themselves from moral obligations of every description towards those from whose industry their own fortunes spring. Even they who contribute at all to the education or moral improvement of their workmen do so in nineteen cases of twenty merely by money, and without personal pains or superintendence of their own. These vicarious benevolences are seldom availing.46

As the decade progressed, however, the provision of recreational facilities did improve.47 James Hudson provided one explanation. "The manufacturer," he claimed, "finds it profitable to form schools and factory libraries, to rear amateur bands of musicians among his workmen."48 A further explanation must be that factory employers in the 1840s felt the need to counter growing criticism of their class, both in parliament and out of doors. Hence the defensive tone to this declamation by Sir John Potter, manufacturer and mayor of Manchester, on the occasion of the inauguration of the public library in the town:

Let it never be said hereafter that the masters, the employers, the richer classes of Manchester, have no interest in the improvement and advancement of those they employ ... . Let it never be said that they are
not willing to make sacrifices for the many. Let it not be said that they seek merely their own advantage: that they are content with making money for themselves.49

Yet where employers offered recreational facilities on the site the workers' response was often disappointing—John Bright's brother reported that only a small percentage of his employees took advantage of the means he offered them for their improvement.50

The demand for public libraries exemplified the need for more accessible facilities than those attached to and indelibly associated with the work place; some schemes set their experiments on more neutral ground and bid for a broader and more casual clientele. Heywood's Lyceums offer a good example. The Lyceums were formed in Manchester and Salford in the late 1830s as auxiliaries to Mechanics' Institutes. The institutes had generally failed to attract a substantial working-class membership; Heywood recognised that the formal lectures of the institutes were often too demanding for the exhausted factory worker, and offered a lighter regimen of social evenings, sports and excursions.51 After the Chartist agitation in 1842 Heywood concentrated his full attention on the Lyceums as an instrument of community welfare and class reconciliation. He lowered the subscription and encouraged wives to attend; the Lyceums were to be a home from home, "a match for the public house," and an agreeable meeting ground for masters and men. Despite the more relaxed and entertaining
fare there was an underlying note of earnestness, as Heywood revealed: "Beneath the tempting experience of amusements and exhibitions, valuable as they are, there must be an undercurrent of solid instruction to support your progress." Thus Harriet Martineau's moral tales of political economy were read aloud while the working men took their coffee.

The Lyceums were a failure according to the criteria of their promoters. Reporting on the experiment in his history of adult education, Hudson concluded: "Their moral influence has become inoperative against the singing rooms which have sprung up in the cotton metropolis." Heywood found that his efforts to develop a common sociability among employers and employed were vitiated by social distance. The mechanics' parties were uneasy parades along the class frontier. The middle-class directors were self-conscious in their bonhomie, and the working men too obviously on their best behaviour to give these occasions any real conviviality. For the working men, trying to be festive in these circumstances must have been like attempting a clog dance on a tight rope. The propriety of such occasions disintegrated, as Heywood mournfully reported to his son in 1851:

The character of the thing is changed. I am glad you were there, however, for old sake's sake. It is somewhat humiliating that the sober speakers should be the stopgaps between the acts.
The danger that amusements might dilute or obliterate instruction was a constant hazard to improvers.

Yet amusements were undeniably important to the appeal of sectional interests no longer assured of a ready flow of working-class recruits. The churches may have turned their backs on traditional recreations, but in the Sunday schools of all denominations they were active in promoting counter attractions. In Bolton in the 1820s, for example, the Sunday schools had instituted regular tea parties to keep their pupils from defecting on race meeting days. In the early '40s they began to combine with the junior divisions of the town's temperance association to dominate the popular holiday ritual of the Whit Walks—street processions of witness complete with flags and decorations and marching bands (minus the spiced ale which had been served at Sunday school treats twenty years previously). 54 The Half-Holiday Hand-Book, published in Manchester in 1846, was meant "to assist conductors and superintendents of Sunday schools in selecting a locality for the periodical excursions of their pupils." It was the Sunday school teachers in Bolton who took the lead in forming the anti-singing saloon association which campaigned against the Star; one teacher pointed out that the best counter to the concert room lay in expanding the schools' recreational programme. 55
In the schools proper solid instruction predominated, though the policy makers of education were aware of the didactic potential of recreation. Kay-Shuttleworth acknowledged the importance of the playground as "a source of moral training," wherein children could be taught to maintain "mutual good offices ... and propriety of demeanour." Playgrounds, however, remained scarce. But in the 1840s the education secretary did promote one classroom subject with considerable recreational content. The Education Department gave warm encouragement to the new systems of class instruction in choral music—the Hullah and Tonic Sol-fa method. Echoing Fletcher of Saltoun, Kay-Shuttleworth declared a people's songs "an important means of forming an industrious, brave, loyal and religious working class." "They might," he ventured, "inspire cheerful views of industry" and "associate amusements ... with duties." A great many schools continued to pay no attention to musical instruction, but the new systems did make an extremely important contribution to popular music-making, particularly in the industrial cities of the North where they reinforced already strong musical traditions. The discipline of the adult choirs and the predominantly sacred content of their programmes continued to recommend themselves to those concerned with moral training in the mid-Victorian period.
In the 1840s, however, the single most important agency of recreational improvement was the rising temperance movement. Though most of its injunctions were prohibitive its founding fathers were not kill-joys. Joseph Livesey of Preston, for example, in testifying to the Drunken Committee in 1834, had not objected to either music or dancing in beershops and pubs, provided there was some official regulation. Only later did temperance become subsumed by the canon of restrictive respectability. Even then it maintained a constructive concern to defeat the pub by building up counter attractions, in the tradition of James Silk Buckingham's 1834 proposals for parks and playgrounds, which had been meant "to draw off by innocent and pleasurable recreation and instruction, all who can be weaned from habits of drinking."

The movement showed considerable energy and imagination in providing counter-attractions. Though hardly unique to the movement, the railway excursion became a common temperance recreation in the '40s--Thomas Cook, first temperance reformer, later travel magnate, ran his first trip in 1841, to remove working-class children from the temptations of Leicester race-week. Temperance societies were as prominent as the Sunday schools in appropriating the popular Whit Walks in the North, and just as keen in proselytizing the young (the two institutions were, of course, frequently maintained under the same religious sponsorship). The enthusiasm of
the temperance youth fife and drum band in Bolton was such as to condemn it as a public nuisance in the eyes and ears of some residents. Temperance halls provided what was often the only facility for large popular assemblies before the great town halls were built: Bolton's Temperance Hall opened in 1840, its town hall in 1873. The movement developed its own friendly societies and produced a vast literature which was a recreation in itself. Though many temperance meetings were dauntingly single-minded, the movement was, by the late '40s, clearly providing an alternative world of recreation for the lower middle and working classes. Samuel Smiles made a note of its progress in 1846:

Our temperance reformers have been slow to recognise the importance of these truths; but they are now beginning to act on them. They begin to feel that there is no other way to defeat drink but to outrival it with attractions of a higher kind—such as music, cheap railway excursions, cheap concerts, and cheap rural galas.63

A few years later, William Howitt concluded: "The Temperance Associations have approached nearer to the ideal of a popular festival than any other body yet ... . They are finding out the art to be glad and social, merry and wise."64

The appeal of temperance recreations was, however, greatly restricted by the strong prejudice against the movement among the working classes. In a beer culture, workingmen regarded temperance itself as a dangerously unhealthy practice (a point much emphasised in the counter-
propaganda of the publican), and the missionary zeal of the reformers circumscribed enjoyment of the recreations. The call for forbearance was too often translated into unpopular campaigns to close the pubs, which brought down such recriminations from the working class as the Bolton and Hyde Park riots in the mid '50s. On occasions, temperance philanthropy was thrown back in the face of its promoters. In 1844, Thomas Trevaskis, 'The Temperance Father of the West,' offered the people of Padstow in Cornwall a fat bullock to roast for seven years, to replace the usual revelry of the annual festival of the Padstow Hobby Horse—when he drove the first bullock into town, both he and his offering were driven out by a hail of stones. Temperance reformers were attacked by working-class critics for attributing solely to intemperance the evils which came from the general squalor and meanness of the urban environment—evils which could only be remedied by more comprehensive reforms than restrictions on the availability of drink. The feeling that the temperance movement was a fundamental insult to the capabilities of his class stung Francis Place into a wholesale attack upon Buckingham's proposals, even though they recommended a general improvement of amenities.

As we have seen in the case of William Lovett, there were working-class reformers who pioneered their own schemes of rational recreation. In his autobiography Lovett recalled
with distaste the crude recreations of his youth, and the formula for his People's Halls foreswore drink and boorishness:

Let us blend, as far as our means will enable us, study with recreation, and share in any rational amusement (unassociated with the means of intoxication) calculated to soothe our anxieties and alleviate our toils.

Lovett was an early agitator for the Sunday opening of art galleries and museums, the epitome of 'study with recreation.' This was all part of his concern to promote a comprehensively rational life-style for his class. Thus he also emphasised the value of correct diet and proper exercise and encouraged greater attention to personal manners, rejecting in the process the rhetoric of Feargus O'Connor, for whom roughness of speech and bearing was a defiant badge of class. Wrote Lovett:

Unshorn chins, unwashed faces, and dirty habits will in nowise prepare you for political and social equality with the decent portion of your brethren.

Lovett displayed something of that puritan streak which appeared in other working-class leaders. Thomas Cooper, for example, extended his strictures on loose entertainment to include all dancing and theatregoing. But, as Lovett's rebuttal of O'Connor indicates, respectability was not an end in itself, but a means to class advancement on a broad front. Although the People's Halls were short-lived institutions, Lovett's tactics did pay off, for it was his representations on the part of the working class which did
much to secure the favourable report on public libraries. There are examples of working-class reformers whose ambitions for their class were as dedicated as Lovett's but whose manner was less rigorous. Christopher Thomson was a lively character who started an Artisan's Improvement Society in Suffolk, and revitalised the village feast. One day of the week's celebrations was devoted to "intellectual training," to balance what he termed the "beef and pudding business." The blend seems to have been successful, but most working-class schemes eschewed the easy congeniality which Thomson fostered, for earnestness and propriety were weapons for winning concessions from the system.

Only by demonstrating their commitment to the serious duties of recreation could the working class prove their fitness for the shortening of the working day, agitation for which drew increased attention to the question of popular recreation in the mid and late 1840s. When the chief architect of the Ten Hours Bill, Lord Shaftesbury, was honoured by a public address in Bolton in 1850, he took the occasion to warn the working-class audience of the great responsibility they faced now that the bill had passed into law; he implored them to turn to good account the extra free time they had acquired--to ensure that they did not abuse their additional leisure by "senseless and disgusting recreations." He urged them to see the bill as a starting
point in "their great career of moral and social improvement." 72

In this, as in many other matters, the Bolton working man, like his fellows elsewhere, did not want for good advice; but he still lacked adequate amenities. The town had been one of the earliest to take advantage of municipal incorporation and had received its charter in 1838, but this had done little to stimulate recreational improvement. One impediment had been the political and sectarian bitterness of the 1840s, which divided public life in Bolton as in many other towns. The Tories assailed the Liberals as 'political economists' whose retrenchments threatened popular amusements in general and the Cross Keys Fair in particular. The Liberals retorted by attacking the Tories for celebrating their first election victory by calling a holiday and squandering public funds on an inaugural procession to the parish church, an innovation which gave added offence in its implied religious discrimination. 73 Bolton's glee club was destroyed by quarrelling over the Corn Laws and a project for public baths was delayed by party squabbling. The town's public library, opened in 1852, was almost the only municipal improvement to recreation. There were enlightened employers like the Ashworth brothers, but the Chronicle reported that "the majority of employers concern themselves only to see that their operatives do their allotted work, and for nought beside." The neglect was still extensive, as the paper
made clear in another lament in the mid-'50s: "Where is there a town which either in itself, its environment, or its public institutions, offers such scanty means of either physical or mental recreation to the workingman?"\textsuperscript{74}

The wider evidence suggests that Bolton was far from being as exceptional as the local editor believed, for the overall gains in recreational improvement in the '30s and '40s were slender. In the first place, the number of schemes for rational recreation were relatively few in number. As we have seen, various factors help explain this basic paucity: governmental disinterest, reinforced by the arguments of laissez-faire; the financial tightness of the new municipal authorities; the presence of other, infinitely more threatening problems, which tended to absorb both public and private reform energies. Education was the great social panacea—recreation, where its importance was recognised, was still regarded mostly as an accessory, and the philanthropy which was expected to assist in its improvement may have been curtailed by the uneven performance of the economy.

Schemes that were introduced were often disappointing to promoters and participants—why was this so? One common feature which undoubtedly affected working-class attendance was the insistence upon certain pre-requisites of conduct and appearance. At Flockton, admission to the company clubroom
and playgrounds was dependent upon "a respectable demeanour" and, among the children, evidence that they had signed a temperance pledge. At a Liverpool mill, an annual summer fete was open to those employees "whose general conduct entitles them to a ticket, upon their being able to give satisfactory proof of being in the habit of attending some place of instruction or of public worship on a Sunday." Samuel Greg considered that only about a half of his workforce were eligible for more than one invitation per year to his parties; these were "the superior ones—the aristocracy of the place." Admission to a free exhibition in Bury's new Town Hall was denied those wearing clogs. The Times provides another tell-tale example of this kind of discrimination in reporting on the passage of a private bill of Ewart's which threw open Regent's Park to the public in 1841. Here, claimed the paper, was an encouraging move in "the redemption of the working class through recreation"; after all, it continued, why should the lower orders not enjoy "the liberty of taking a walk in the more plebeian portions of the park, provided they have a decent coat on." Provided they had decent coats on, provided they were regular attenders at Sunday School, provided they signed a temperance pledge—all these conditions reduced the eligibility of work people. There were, moreover, some friends of improvement who found the working classes manifestly too unscrubbed to make a
respectable public debut. To Bishop Blomfield, speaking in the Lords, the way to social salvation lay through the bathhouse:

... it must be obvious that before the needful recreation of the people can be attained, before museums and public places could be made available, habits and cleanliness must be diffused throughout the whole community.79

Cleanliness came before godliness, but a broad hint of both was needed to gain entrance to the park or playground.

More central to an explanation of working-class disenchantment is class hostility. Tremenheere discerned this in the collapse of a lending library scheme in the North East, which he attributed to "... the spirit of jealous suspicion with which everything set on foot by the masters is regarded."80 Sporadic benevolences could obviously not dispel overnight the working-class resentment of the assault on popular amusements which more frequently marked the interest of the middle class in such matters. Reconciliation may have been difficult where improvement was too crudely designed as an instrument of work discipline. The Times found this motive distressingly common:

Popular gatherings and merrymakings seem, really, in this utilitarian generation, to be tolerated only as stimulants for provoking people to 'industry' ... . It is entirely reprehensible to celebrate with misplaced festivities what is in reality the greatest disgrace of all—viz, the necessity of securing the good conduct of the poor by artificial and secondary contrivances.81
It seems too that the employers' benevolences could carry a sting in the tail, if we take account of the experience of one workingman, who here recalls his unease at the spectacle of the boss ingratiating himself with the men at the printers' traditional autumn feast:

Somehow it generally happens that this brief moment of relaxation is immediately followed by a tightening of the reigns of government and a rather rough assertion of authority. As if the employer were fearful that his previous sentiments of universal brotherhood with which the hearts of employers expand convulsively and regularly once a year should be mistaken for anything more than they are meant for—mere flowers of rhetoric—next day comes some Draconic enforcement of often obsolete laws. At the heels of the weigh-goose, too, there frequently comes 'the bullet' as it is termed, or the sudden discharge, which sends a third or a half of the hands adrift after a fortnight's notice.

Working-class disillusion in Bolton was fed by the shabby spectacle of the Peel Park scheme, whose erratic progress was sabotaged by sectional priorities among the local middle class. Although the machinery and resources of the municipal government were sufficient to provide for such a park in 1850, public opinion decided that such an undertaking had to involve a positive act of will on the part of the whole town, in deference both to the memory of Sir Robert, and to the virtues of self-help. A committee was struck to raise a public subscription and make an appeal to the working classes, who as the main prospective beneficiaries were expected to give the lead; once their interest in the scheme had been realised in hard cash, the middle classes, so it was
argued, would come forward with a subvention. Workshop collections over the winter of 1850-'51 mounted steadily, and the Treasury weighed in with a grant from the government. In the meantime the park committee's voice grew fainter, and workingmen's letters to the *Chronicle* asked if the committee had disappeared. It had certainly gone to ground, and surfaced only briefly in the spring of 1852 to announce the shelving of the park scheme in view of the inordinate expense of land. In the following recriminations the Radical manufacturer Thomasson accused the 'Tory' committee of bad faith; back came the retort that Thomasson was one of several employers who had refused to allow collections among their workpeople, for fear of the party advantage their opponents might derive from the successful promotion of the scheme.

Thomasson's alleged boycott was, however, less offensive to the popular mind than that of the clergy and Sunday school teachers. The defenders of the Star against the anti-singing saloon association raised the charge that the churches had sunk Peel Park (and other schemes) by reserving their funds for improvements of their own establishments rather than for projects of general public benefit--this allegation remained a staple of popular debate in Bolton for nearly twenty years. Such charges undoubtedly killed working-class support for any later subscription scheme; when there was talk of a Public Institution in 1860, one
workingman wrote to the *Chronicle* explaining that he and his father were both deaf to such appeals, having each lost half-sovereigns on a previous project.\(^85\)

Compounding such antipathy was the distinct unease which characterised the social exchanges between the classes on occasions when recreation was taken in common. As we have seen, the traditional social bridges which had been built by the church and the aristocracy had either fallen into disuse or were maintained for the occasional rites of an obsolescent sub-culture; the middle class employer or professional man had no habit of easy association with his workpeople. It was still possible to maintain that: "The great practical education of an Englishman is derived from the incessant intercourse between master and man in trade,"\(^86\) but the social experience of the workplace was already becoming too discrete and limited to generate much genuine sociability in the more loosely structured milieu of recreation. A fundamental shortcoming among reformers was that they had little real knowledge of the actual substance of working-class leisure and recreation; in an age of extensive social enquiry, the working man was more studied, more understood, and more respected in the setting of his work than of his play. At the end of the working day master and men parted, and from this fact a Sheffield M.P. felt obliged to inform a select committee on public walks: "I am scarcely a competent witness
to their (the workingmen's) social habits."⁸⁷ Sargant, the Birmingham manufacturer recorded how he had deceived himself with the facile assumption that the steady habits he saw in his own workshop were consistently reproduced in life outside of work:

Most of us know very little about what goes on among workmen in the evening. We see them in their places during the day, we find them always ready to labour when they are called upon, and we set them down as men of temperate habits; inferring from their regularity that they are not guilty of excesses in their leisure hours. It is sometimes startling to find that we are entirely mistaken.⁸⁸

Plebeian recreation was, therefore, an alien world, and the middle-class interloper was least unhappy in it when decorating a platform or standing at a lectern. The first stance served to emphasise social distance, the second made plain the didactic intentions of rational recreation—a further impediment to its realisation.

Whatever its accessories, rational recreation was basically and relentlessly didactic. As Heywood had revealed, the entertainments at the Lyceums were devised to sugar the pill of instruction. Once the revellers were pinned to their seats by a great weight of tea and buns, they became a captive audience for lectures on political economy, or homilies on the virtues of a Christian home life. Yet it is important to realise that Heywood was a venturesome man in his day, for he was willing to allow that popular recreation
could legitimately embrace pleasure, the pursuit of which was vilified in his own culture as the road to vicious sensual gratification—the mark of an unregenerate aristocracy and a recalcitrant working class. He was also (against the wishes of his fellow directors) prepared to serve beer ("the merry brown bowl") at the mechanics' parties. He was, in fact, prepared to meet working-class culture half-way. That this was exceptional may be judged by comparing Heywood's tolerance with the forbidding severity of correspondents to the Bolton Chronicle on this question. Pro Bono Publico, for example, maintained: "I would advocate no amusements but such as would impart a high-toned morality and pure devotional principles." A letter from a tradesman on the Peel Park proposal put his view thus: "The proper park for a Sunday afternoon is a tastefully laid out modern cemetery, where a conspicuous tablet, to the memory of Sir Robert Peel, or any other great and good man would preach a sermon upon the reward of virtue in the future." Mayhew offered confirmation of the discouraging burden that improving recreation was expected to carry. He recommended "wholesome amusements" to rescue the costermongers from "the moral mire in which they are wallowing" but added:

The misfortune, however, is that, when we seek to elevate the character of the people, we give them such mere dry abstract truths and dogmas to digest, that the uneducated mind turns away with abhorrence ... we strive to make true knowledge and true beauty
as forbidding as possible to the uneducated and the unrefined that they fly to their penny gaffs, their two-penny hops, their beer shops and their gambling grounds for pleasures which we deny them, and which we, in our arrogance, believe it is possible for them to do without.90

By the early 1850s, when Mayhew was writing, there could be no doubt that big changes had taken place in popular recreation. The study of a society at play was held to be an especially revealing test of its moral character, and several commentators were comforted by England's record of improvement.91 But improvement was essentially a middle-class concept and applauding its progress was primarily an exercise in bourgeois self-congratulation. Rational recreation could claim its successes, but it had encountered a number of difficulties which would not admit of easy solution in a class society. Men in the field close to working-class life realised how formidable was the task of remaking a whole culture. As Tremenheere pointed out:

To train a rising society in the right way, is a process of comparatively little difficulty, but to change a great uneducated mass requires the well directed effort of many years.92
FOOTNOTES

1 For the state of society and the idea of improvement in this period, see Briggs, The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867 (London, 1959); J. F. C. Harrison, The Early Victorians, 1832-1851 (London, Panther paperback, 1973), pp. 162-73. For social control, see the article by Jesse R. Pitts, International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 14: 381-402.


3 Hansard, XV, 1833, cols. 1049-59.


5 Chadwick, op.cit., pp. 337-38.


7 B. Heywood, Addresses Delivered at the Manchester Mechanics' Institute (Manchester, 1843), p. 120. See also below, pp. 84-85.


14. Working Men's College Magazine, 1 March, 1 November 1859.


17. Hansard, XXXVII, 9 March 1837, 23 April 1839. See also Hammond and Hammond, Age of Chartists, pp. 106-43.


23. Hansard, XXVII, 2 May 1835.


Manners' friends in the Young England group took him seriously on this matter—he appears in Disraeli's Coningsby (London, 1963), p. 111, as Lord Henry Sidney, the man who would improve the Condition of England by restoring the maypole. Cobden's concern is noted in J. A. Nicholls, Collected Letters (Manchester, 1862), p. 8.


36 Greg, op.cit., pp. 21-23.

37 The Strutts of Derby had, since the Napoleonic wars, habitually celebrated coronations and military victories with generous feasts for their workpeople; in the '20s they had founded a choir and an orchestra for their operatives and provided them with concert and dancing rooms. Workmen who played in the orchestra were bound to the mill for seven years, but the favoured ones might expect an occasional trip to London with the master to visit the opera. The Quaker owned London Lead Company, with several mines in the North of England, had encouraged brass bands among its workers, and sponsored flower shows and cricket matches during the same period. R. S. Fitton and A. P. Wadsworth, The Strutts and Arkwrights, 1758-1830 (London, 1958), pp. 258-60; A. Raistrick, Two Centuries of Industrial Welfare (London, 1938), p. 71. See also W. Ashworth, "British Industrial Villages in the Nineteenth Century," Economic History Review 3 (1950) : 378.


40 Appendix to First Report of the Commissioners on Children's Employment, Parl. Papers, 1843, XIII, p. 381.


43 L. Stephen and S. Lee, Dictionary of National Biography (London, 1908, in progress). Engels pointed out how hostile the country manufacturers were to any real display of worker independence, op.cit., p. 214n.


46 Appendix to First Report on Children's Employment, loc.cit.


48 Hudson's italics, op.cit., p. v.

49 Quoted in Munford, op.cit., p. 60. Cf. Manchester and Manchester People ... by a Citizen of the World (Manchester, 1843), p. 19.


Hudson, op. cit., pp. 137, 140.


J. Johnston, Mawdsley Street Congregational Chapel, 1808-1908 (Bolton, 1908), p. 127. By 1837 the weekly attendance at Bolton's Sunday schools was estimated at close to ten thousand, of which number the Anglican churches claimed a quarter, the Methodists a half, the balance being shared between the other denominations. Later reports recorded continuing growth in attendance. J. Black, A Medico-Topographical Sketch of Bolton (Bolton, 1837), p. 70; Bolton Free Press, 17, 24 June 1843; B.C., 6 June 1849; Whittle, Bolton le Moors (Bolton, 1855), p. 151.

B.C., 28 August 1852.

S.C.H.C. On the Education of the Poorer Classes, Parl. Papers, VII, 1838, pp. 19, 123-24. For the continued shortage of playgrounds, see the findings of a commissioner enquiring into popular education in the '60s, The Times, 13 September 1861.


Ibid., p. viii.


65. B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp. 127-29.


67. B. Harrison, "Two Roads to Social Reform."


72. B.C., 20 September 1850.

73. Ibid., 7 December 1844; Bolton Free Press, 30 November, 14 December 1844; W. E. Brown, Robert Heywood of Bolton (Wakefield, 1970), pp. 27-8, 30, 51. The latter is a commendable piece of local history.

74. B.C., 18 November 1854, 31 October 1857.

75. Appendix to First Report of the Commissioners on Children's Employment, pp. 201-2.


78 The Times, 22 April 1841.

79 Hansard, LXXVII, 8 June 1846.

80 Report of Commission on Mining Districts, p. 520.

81 The Times, 24 September 1844.


83 The history of the park scheme was reviewed in B.C., 26 May 1866, on its ceremonial opening. For the controversy, see ibid., from February 1851 through to September 1852.

84 E.g., ibid., 4 June 1853, 22 February 1868.

85 Ibid., 17 March 1860.


88 Sargant, op.cit., p. 390.

89 B.C., 31 May 1851, 5 October 1850.

90 Mayhew, op.cit., 1: 42.


III. THE NEW LEISURE WORLD OF THE MID-VICTORIANS:  
THE EXPANSION OF MIDDLE-CLASS RECREATION,  
ITS PRACTICE AND RATIONALE

"Let us then consent to a little unharnessing from the go-carts of life." By 1864, when this appeal was made in a reforming periodical addressing itself to "The Philosophy of Amusement," such concern for the place of recreation in modern life was less a protest against some begrudging spirit of the times than an acknowledgment of the greatly expanded world of middle-class leisure.¹ From the mid-century, leisure and its activities became a new area of social innovation and fulfilment for the Victorian bourgeoisie; like their inferiors they were entering into the process of developing a new culture within the unique matrix of a maturing urban industrial society. The increasingly prominent role of recreation in middle-class life, its effects upon the bourgeois identity, the debate which such changes generated--all these features of the new leisure world held important implications for campaigns to improve the recreations of the working classes.

From the 1850s onwards there were many testimonies both to the general expansion of leisure and the development of a wide range of recreations devised to fill this new life space. In a lecture on the influences of city life, given in
1857, Charles Kingsley remarked: "Every man has now a hundred means of rational occupation and amusement which were closed to his grandfather."² Some twenty years later, a leading article in The Times grumbled at the importunate demands of 'Modern Amusements':

The space we ourselves are from time to time compelled to surrender to this class of subject is in itself not the least proof of the importance they have attained ... a mingled mass of perfectly legitimate pleasures ever thrusting themselves forward in a variety of shapes, some known, some unknown, to our more easily contented ancestors, and all together making continually increasing demands upon our time, upon our money, and not least, upon our strength and powers of endurance.³

Leisure and its enjoyments were hardly a mid-Victorian invention, but contemporaries were frequently moved to draw a contrast between the more abundant leisure of their own day and the meagre commons of previous decades. The middle classes of the older provincial centres of England had enjoyed a cultural life of considerable vigour and sociability in the late eighteenth century, and many of its institutions, if not perhaps its original elan, had survived into the early Victorian period.⁴ In the new towns too, middle-class life had not been all jejeune: Bamford was as impressed by the literary and musical interests of the Lancashire middle classes in the forties as he was by those of the workers;⁵ a Bolton lawyer who took articles in the thirties recalled that hard work had taken its reward in leisure hours enlivened
by a constant round of amateur dramatics, discussion clubs, much dancing, singing and athletic exercise, together with the relaxations of fireside and garden. Such a life style could not have been unique to Bolton's John Taylor, but the more general recollection of middle and late Victorians was of an immediate past which was grey and joyless. "We must remember," wrote the novelist Walter Besant, "how very little play went on even among the comfortable and opulent classes in those days ... dullness and a serious view of life seemed inseparable." As Hobsbawm has remarked, the Victorian bourgeoisie had had their own 'Bleak Age' to endure.

Relief came with greater economic security and the time and services that it could buy. By the 1850s the disquieting fluctuations which had characterised the economy of previous decades had levelled out; men who had weathered the exigencies of those years could afford to rest awhile on a comfortable plateau of prosperity, accompanied by wives whose domestic duties were taken care of by a growing army of servants. Constant attention to business was no longer necessary for the successful, and a mellowing process suffused their lives. We may take the Ashworth brothers of Bolton as an example. In the 1840s they had struggled through a period of uncertain profits; in the fifties they felt secure enough to delegate the running of their mill to subordinates and allow themselves a series of travelling holidays. Relaxation
also became easier with the easing of political pressures--the Ashworths had imperilled their business by their preoccupation with the Anti-Corn Law League--and the Saturday Review interpreted the new taste for social pleasures as a reaction from the intellectual and political crises of the Great Reform Bill, the Tractarian movement, and the fight for free trade.¹⁰

The pursuit of leisure was more widely remarked because it was becoming more widely spread; it was not only master manufacturers who enjoyed the new bounty, but the lesser lights in a middle class which was growing more numerous as well as more prosperous. Henry Mayhew sought to represent a new middle-class type in his account of Cockayne, a very minor captain of industry, but one whose thirty five years in command of a soap factory in Clapham had earned him a trip to Paris.¹¹ This was in the 1860s, by which time the process of bourgeois enleisurement was plain to all; its reach continued to widen throughout the period. T. H. S. Escott observed its operation in the eighties:

A social movement quite as remarkable as that which has been going forward among the better portion of the English middle class, has been taking place, and is now steadily progressing on a lower social stratum. This class would once have been called the small shopkeeper class, and its present condition is almost the growth of yesterday ... . Only the commercial prosperity of England could have generated the new order from which the chief patrons of theatres and outdoor amusements are drawn.¹²
There were always new recruits for the single-minded pursuit of money, but the second or later generations of successful business families were less disposed to answer its imperatives. The younger Gurneys of Norwich were "rather more inclined to stand before the fire with their hands in the fronts of very good riding breeches" than to attend daily at the bank.\(^{13}\) The *Saturday Review* remarked in the '60s how rapidly the "habit of enjoyment" had spread among the young. "It is," the journal maintained, "an axiom with many young people that they have a right to be always amused, or to be always going to be amused." Such a state of affairs was attributed to a relaxation of domestic discipline by the parents: "They now live with their children, see them at all hours, obey all their wishes, and gratify all their fancies."\(^{14}\) There were those who claimed rather that domestic discipline was declining because of the estrangement of fathers and sons brought about by the growing practice of boarding children at the public schools. Whatever the particular reason for this relaxation of discipline, it is true that the middle-class young (of whom more were surviving into early adulthood) enjoyed more free time than their elders had done. The increasing emphasis upon public school and, to a lesser extent, university education as indispensable requirements for middle-class gentility meant a prolonged freedom from the immediate pressures of earning a living. Eventually put to work in the
family firm—'stretching his legs under the governor's mahogany'—the son and heir often continued to exploit the generosity of the paterfamilias and apply himself more to play than business. This much is clear from a lively debate on the 'young man of the day' in the correspondence columns of the Daily Telegraph in the late sixties.  

The 'habit of enjoyment' was diffused and encouraged through major improvements in communications. By the early 1850s the major lines in the British rail system were completed or under construction. Rail travel stimulated a general public curiosity and helped break down regional insularities of mind and practice. "The typical John Bull," said the Cornhill Magazine, "is fast becoming a legendary personage; his vegetative life and stationary habits and local prejudices are all disappearing beneath the stimulating influence of the railway, the telegraph and the great cities." Of parallel importance was the growth of the cheap press and the increase in newspaper advertising: the tax on advertising was abolished in 1853, the newspaper duty of 4d a copy went in 1855, and six years later the duty on paper was removed. Escott recorded the effects:

The cheap press, with its ubiquitous correspondents and historians of all contemporary ranks and occurrences in the body politic, has transformed the severely domesticated Briton of both sexes, of all ages, who belonged to a bygone generation, into an eager, actively enquiring, socially omniscient citizen of the world, ever on the outlook for new excitements, habitually demanding social pleasure in fresh forms.
What were the particular forms that social pleasure took? Certainly a great deal of it took place within the ambit of the home and family. The proliferation of newspapers was part of a general flood of literature which kept the middle-class public well supplied with its periodicals and three-decker novels, either for solitary reading or to be read aloud to the family group. Cheap sheet music was also published in increasing abundance from the 1840s; mechanical refinement and improved production methods provided suburban villas with moderately priced pianos upon which the ladies of the house could display their talents—music was a fashionable, indeed necessary, accomplishment for girls. There were many other new diversions for the drawing room besides reading and music. The Saturday found "the cleverness and the laziness of the age aptly typified ... by its ingenious contrivances for getting rid of an evening." Within the home these contrivances might consist of private theatricals, quizzes and games newly devised for the middle-class family market, or older pastimes such as draughts and billiards—the latter now restored to respectability within the new canon of 'domestic athletics.' Cheap service and gains in space and comfort in the middle-class home allowed of the increasing vogue for entertaining guests, particularly at the dinner party. Gardens were also part of the improved amenities of domestic life; here the family and its guests could play a set of lawn tennis (an
invention of the '70s) or take a game of croquet—as E. L. Woodward pointed out, *Alice in Wonderland* affords a convincing demonstration that by the mid-sixties every middle-class child could be expected to know the rules.22

The mid-Victorian middle classes were not, however, permanently home-bound in their recreations, though they did in general take their public pleasures 'en famille'. The railway gave them in particular a new mobility in leisure, and the regular spate of advice and reports in the press in the summer months testified to the growing habit and ritual of the annual holiday. Old fashioned watering places were neglected for the attractions of new seaside holiday resorts.23 Travel horizons broadened, and by the 1860s Thomas Cook was running excursions, not only to the Continent, but to the United States and the Holy Land. "The quietest sort of people," so the *Saturday* observed, "are uncomfortable unless they, at least once a year, tie themselves together in batches and go prowling over the tops of unexplored Alps."24 Recreation out of doors was generally brisker than the gentilities of domestic leisure, as a London lawyer and socialite recorded in his diary in 1861:

Muscular Christianity, the Volunteer movement, and alpine climbing are in the ascendant. The affected Dandy of past years is unknown. If he exists, he is despised. The standard or average English gentleman of the present day must at least show vigour of body, if he cannot display vigour of mind.25
Sport or, more specifically, organised games gave expression to this predilection for the physical. The newly codified games spread from the reformed public schools to the universities, and thence into adult life; national bodies for the supervision and co-ordination of the major new sports were formed in the 1860s and '70s under middle-class auspices. The Volunteer movement, revived in 1859 in face of threatening noises from the French, promoted a general concern for physical fitness and the regimental sports meetings which enlivened the drills often became the basis for the formation of permanent athletics clubs. One contemporary credited the Volunteers with "fostering a love of outdoor life that has been utterly wanting among the great middle classes for a century." Furthermore, the strainings of amateur athletes and part-time soldiers provided occasions for new leisure festivals for middle class families: the Oxford and Cambridge athletics meet, the Eton and Harrow cricket match, the Volunteers' annual reviews and sports tournaments at Aldershot and in the counties—all were significant additions to the social calendar.

Public amusements of a less strenuous kind were also plentiful; so much so that Stephen Fiske, an American who worked in London in the sixties, found the English at play anything but the traditional dullards that other visitors had judged them (Froissart's tag "They take their pleasures sadly after their fashion" was another cliche of commentaries on
national manners). Wrote Fiske:

Taking the average Englishman and the average Frenchman, the former goes oftener to the theatres, has more holidays, laughs more, and spends more evenings where something besides a drink and smoke are to be had for his money, than the latter; and yet the average Frenchman is mistakenly held up to us as a devotee of amusement.28

These conclusions were based upon Fiske's experience as a theatre manager in a capital city which was sucking up the theatrical talent of the provinces, and thriving on a tourist traffic built upon the excursion boom of 1851. Providing one was not in search of diversion on a Sunday—Taine found himself ready for suicide after his first Sabbath in London—there was no gainsaying the vitality of the metropolis as an entertainment centre.29 But what of the provinces?

There are some forbidding memorials to the bleak tedium of provincial towns, most notably in Dickens' descriptions of Coketown and Dullborough. In his archetype industrial town, "You saw nothing ... but what was severely workful"; in his archetype small town "the prevalence ... of putting the natural demand for amusement out of sight" strikes a sour but resonant note.30 An Australian visiting England in the mid-60s offered further confirmation of the discrepancy between the capital and the country at large. Only in London, he concluded, could one find company in "idleness and pleasure seeking"; he found life in all the great manufacturing towns "as busy and
rather more anxious than it is in Australia or the United States"; in the small provincial towns he found "too much exclusiveness for an Australian to penetrate into society when on a short visit." It is obvious that there had long been a gap between the compendious attractions of the capital and, say, the thinner pickings available to the Mancunian; but nonetheless, pace Dickens (who was often concerned over this question) the natural demand for amusement was being met in the provinces, if only yet in modest proportions. The sophisticated Londoner on his reluctant prowl out of Town could overlook much that served the function of entertainment or recreation, hidden as it might be behind the deterring items on a lecture list. Besides, provincials might save their time and money for pleasures elsewhere: in its growth from a small country town to a London suburb, Croydon lost its taste for its local celebrations as its inhabitants sought their diversions in the West End by cheap rail excursions. Thus the Londoner travelling out to the provinces might miss his country cousins travelling in.

Mid-Victorian Bolton certainly provides clear evidence that the middle classes in one large manufacturing town knew a real expansion of leisure and recreation. Bolton's growing population enjoyed general prosperity in these years—the relative diversification of her industries and her specialisation in better quality textiles enabled her to survive the
cotton famine of the early '60s better than most Lancashire towns—and the middle classes showed a substantial increase in numbers and wealth. The Chronicle in the late '50s considered the local bourgeoisie "scanty" compared with other large towns, but correspondents pointed to the recent wave of professional and commercial men now assuming middle-class status in Bolton, plus a disturbing new breed of 'fast' young men. The Chronicle was pleased to see the leisure energies of these novitiates absorbed by the new passion for outdoor sports and the pull of the volunteer movement, thus dispelling its fears that increasing affectation of manners must lead to effeminacy. But refinement was as fashionable as athleticism and found its expression in exclusive subscription concerts at the Baths Assembly Rooms and "select and gorgeous" dinner parties in private houses. Pub society had ceased to be respectable. John Taylor took the teetotal pledge and pursued his love of debate in a private club which met at members' houses—the pledge was hardly fashionable but the retreat to the drawing room was. Middle-class homes grew more palatial and one local builder at least made his fortune providing new residences for wealthy Boltonians at Southport on the Lancashire coast. Southport was the fashionable resort town for the north-west, but the biographies of Bolton worthies show how much farther their excursions ranged, from Scotland to the Continent.
Yet the practice of leisure for the mid-Victorian middle classes by no means afforded them complete and unalloyed delight. "There is," the Saturday Review maintained, "a sort of mechanical style in the measurement of our joys," and Herbert Spencer was moved to remark how little there was in the Englishman's leisure of "that abandonment to the moment which is requisite for full enjoyment." There were many other similar contemporary observations upon the stilted nature of the English at play, of which Trollope's was, perhaps, the most devastating. Analysing the palsied progress of a middle-class dinner party in The New Zealander, he concluded that the pursuit of leisure in England was as laborious, affected and dull as foreign observers persistently made it out to be. It is instructive to consider why leisure should have been so much less than satisfying.

The problem of leisure for the Victorian middle-classes was a many-sided one. In the first place they were discovering that recreation in the railway age meant planning and preparation; timetables meant an increasing preoccupation with time-budgeting and the co-ordination of people and services. In a moment of disenchantment with modern 'holydays' The Times complained that the search for enjoyment was often fatuous: "It is work, and it is tiring work ... it involves a perpetual attention to time, and all the anxieties and irritations of that responsibility." Furthermore, as a class whose
immediate traditions were those of unremitting industry, the Victorian bourgeoisie had only an attenuated leisure culture to draw upon, so that the new life space they had won for themselves was something of an embarrassment—"We really do not know how to amuse ourselves," was the Saturday's admission. New recreations were hastily borrowed or contrived to fill the emptiness, for the middle classes, no less than nature, abhorred a vacuum, but it was difficult to infuse such ad hoc devices with any spontaneity. There was, too, the difficult matter of choice of recreation; moral constraints disallowed traditional convivialities but left the question of their replacement unresolved, as the Saturday explained:

It is a very fine thing to have cured ourselves of the boozing (sic) habits of our ancestors; but there is no doubt that the moral conquest has left a formidable void in our social existence ... the gentlemen used to be drunk, and are now sober; and the mistress of the house, who got rid of them in the drinking days, has to bear the burden of their reformation, and find amusements to beguile the weary hours of sobriety.

It was the need to reconcile their recreations with their morality which caused the Victorian middle classes the greatest discomfiture in leisure. Here again is the Cornhill:

A lingering asceticism of sentiment, a relic of the superstition which looked upon the body as the source of sin, still affects our modes of thought ... . We do not proscribe amusement as previous generations have done, nor do we go heartily into them, as Paganism did and the Latin races do; but we indulge in them and apologise for them. We take some of our more pleasant and more needful recreations with a half suspicion that they are only half right.
The ambivalence is understandable. Moral integrity and the code of respectability which defined its public face were essential constituents of middle-class identity and class consciousness. Resting on basically religious sanctions reinforced by the teachings of political economy, bourgeois morality had, in the first half of the century, provided its class with an effective platform from which to challenge the aristocracy and subordinate the lower orders. From the turn of the mid-century the new and extensive bonus of leisure time threatened to subvert the internal disciplines of the middle-class world by its invitation to indolence and prodigality. Unwilling or unable to deny the claims and attractions of leisure, yet anxious to maintain a sturdy and coherent code of values amid rapid innovation and social change, the Victorian middle classes sought a rationale which would relieve them of the need to apologise for their pleasures, yet still keep them within the bounds of moral fitness.

The question received considerable attention, and the Cornhill article offers a useful starting point for following the debate. Entitled "Off for the Holidays: The Rationale of Recreation," it moved on from the usual breezy bon voyage to the summer holidaymaker, to a consideration of the nature, method and purpose of recreation, "a subject only now beginning to be understood." The anonymous author emphasised how modes of life had been transformed by Britain's industrial progress.
In response to the demands of modern civilisation, Englishmen had developed "magnificent nervous organisations" which gave them an expanded capacity for work. This enabled them to continue to exploit the opportunities of the nineteenth century world, but the cost of the new regimen was high:

Our great grandfathers ambled along with an almost restful movement; we rush along at high pressure, with fearful wear and noise. Their work was almost play compared with ours ... A kind of necessity is upon us, even at home, much more in our spheres of duty or activity, and all continuous necessity is a strain.

Readers could therefore rest assured that holidays and recreation were necessary, as relief from this strain; they allowed "the rebound of an elastic nature from the repression and constraint of civilised life." The rebound was best absorbed in recreation which afforded a total change of pace, direction and environment, for "work and play, like day and night, are opposites, and the widest unlikeness between them is the truest completeness of each." According to this principle therefore, men were encouraged to seek recreations which provided the greatest contrast to their normal occupations, and the article sought to free holidaymakers of the oppressive fears of ridicule which too often confounded this stratagem:

We are dreadfully afraid of making ourselves ridiculous before one another. Public opinion ... persistently merges the man in his profession, keeps him perpetually on the pedestal of his status, and will on no account allow him to descend from it.

Such stricutures could be safely ignored, according to the Cornhill's dispensations.
Thus did one writer try to relieve some of the misgivings which attended the modern pursuit of leisure; there were, however, some important qualifications to be made. Mere rest was not true recreation, neither was amusement: "... amusement merely occupies or diverts, while recreation, as the word itself indicates, renews and recreates." Work and play were best disassociated in time, locus and content—"renewal and recreation proceeds on the principle of antithesis"—but their functions were complementary. In this way recreation was validated primarily as an adjunct to work and its ideal represented in terms of the vigour and purposiveness appropriate to work. Play, explained the Cornhill, was change of work as much as change from work. The sentiment became a commonplace under the imprimatur of Gladstone, who maintained that recreation was nought but change of employment, exemplifying the ideal in his retreat from the toils of office to the arduous pleasures of tree-felling on his estate at Hawarden.\(^{51}\)

The Cornhill for all its purposeful tone was alive to the potential of leisure for the intellectual and cultural enrichment of the individual,\(^{52}\) but many writers were only prepared to justify leisure in its utilitarian role. Writing in the Nineteenth Century, G. J. Romanes put the matter succinctly:

Recreation is, or ought to be, not a pastime entered upon for the sake of pleasure which it affords, but an act of duty undertaken for the sake of the
subsequent power which it generates, and the subsequent profit which it ensures.\textsuperscript{53}

There were other tests of acceptability, as W. H. Miller outlined in his \textit{Culture of Pleasure}.\textsuperscript{54} The proper recreation should, he advised, "bring back body and mind fitted again for the business of life ... and it should accomplish its objects with the least expense possible of time, strength and money." Writing in the late '60s, John Morley thought that considerations of time and cost operated as a more forceful limitation than religion:

Just as we have ceased to believe that pleasure is fatal to salvation people start up to persuade us that it is fatal to getting on in the world. The active worldling is as ready to call every kind of amusement by the evil names of frivolity and stupid self-indulgence as the converted saint used to be.\textsuperscript{55}

There was still a general suspicion of pleasure. "As a legitimate object of deliberate pursuit," complained Morley, "it is invariably disparaged." Education, he maintained, taught that anything pleasant was wrong. Yet, significantly, Morley felt able to record that "Even within the most contracted limits, the range of allowable recreations is being extended."

The churches were particularly sensitive to the expansion of leisure. An early note of concern was sounded at the Wesleyan Conference in 1855, which recorded "with sincere regret, the existence in some quarters of a disposition to indulge in and encourage amusements which it cannot regard as harmless or allowable."\textsuperscript{56} By 1872, when the prominent Broad
Churchman, Henry Haweis, gave his attention to the problem, it had become more alarming:

Our streets are reeking with the abuse of pleasure; our society is rotten with it; our social fabric is crumbling beneath it; our best institutions are being shaken and paralysed by it. 57

It must be noted that despite the apocalyptic tone Haweis was not condemning pleasure, but its abuse. "Pleasure," he allowed, "is a legitimate incident of life, but not a legitimate end," and he sought some middle ground between "the lean ascetic and the bloated voluptuary." While conceding the case for leisure in modern life, Haweis was above all concerned to impress upon his readers the need to subject its pleasures to the strictest tests of conscience. It was a weighty matter, of a piece with the great questions of biblical warranty and evolution. Here is Haweis writing on "Music and Morals":

The enormous importance of the distinction between right and wrong has been so branded by fire and stained in blood upon the page of history, that everything in modern life sinks into comparative insignificance by the side of morality and religion. No art or science is allowed to pass the solemn sentinels of the nineteenth century without getting some answer to the momentous question—What in its own deportment is really right or really wrong? 58

Men looked to the churches for guidance. A nonconformist minister noted how the young in particular sought answers to the moral problem of leisure: "Where is the rule which settles where to conform and where to protest ... this difficulty of adjustment meets us everywhere." 59
The question was a prickly one to judge from the
trepidation with which clergymen embarked upon its public
debate. In a sermon at Sheffield in 1860 the Rev. G. J.
Chester maintained that "The subject of amusement is of such
importance and involves such tremendous interests that I might
well shrink from bringing it before you." This was obviously
no imaginary fear, for another Sheffield Anglican minister,
Samuel Earnshaw, came close to losing his living after
delivering a sermon on the subject in the same year. Chester
had moved gingerly, but Earnshaw had pressed a bold attack
against the old evangelical proscriptions on games and sports,
for which he could find no scriptural warranty. It was, he
argued, in any case "unnatural to resist the call of nature
for exercise in honouring what were simply the commandments
of mere men." Earnshaw appealed for a more charitable attitude
towards the theatre and other public amusements, endorsing
the example of the Royal Family who, he said, "openly do the
very things which the arbiters of religious opinions and
models of Christian practice have pronounced irreconcilable
with a religious state of mind." In all, Earnshaw was
trying to reconcile the Church with what he obviously
considered to be the tolerable peccadilloes of a modern society.
"Is anything," he asked, "permanently gained by increasing
the burdens and restraints of a religious life?"
Earnshaw was a minor, though significant, figure but the importance of this matter can be better appreciated when we consider the concern of the Birmingham minister, R. W. Dale, Chairman of the Congregational Union, and one of the century's leading churchmen. Dale tackled the problem before a wide audience in an article on "Amusements" in *Good Words*, a middle-class family magazine, in 1867. "What amusements are lawful to persons who wish to live a religious life" was, he claimed, "the question by which many good people are sorely perplexed." Dale was anxious to redeem the old evangelical strictures from charges of casuistry, and to explain them in terms of common sense rather than scriptural sanction. He maintained that the proscribed amusements had been condemned because of "the accessories with which they have been associated." Thus, he explained, racing had been excoriated because of the gambling which was so much a part of it. At a less obvious level, bagatelle had been acceptable because the game demanded no expensive and therefore wasteful equipment, and was usually played within the family home. Billiards was condemned because the expensive equipment it required would usually only have been provided in a public house (Herbert Spencer, revealing his affection for billiards in his autobiography, remarked "those who confess to playing billiards commonly make some kind of excuse"). Fishing was permissible because it was solitary and encouraged meditation and communion with
nature. Shooting, interestingly enough, was suspect not because of any cruelty involved, but because it took place among groups, which usually led to the unseemly conviviality of the dinner party and heavy drinking. Dale was attempting to argue out a revised catalogue of permissible amusements, but in the last analysis he was not prepared to make many specific rehabilitations; he acknowledged that there were some honourable exceptions in a sea of otherwise perverse popular fiction, and condoned dancing provided it was not excessive or tainted by "unsavoury social intercourse." He remained opposed to the theatre. But he did emphasise that "each generation must examine recreation anew," and urged a more charitable attitude towards the recreations of one's neighbours--"That may be safe to them which is perilous to us."

Dale's church took some of his teaching to heart, for the problem of amusements was subjected to several re-examinations, the most notable being a Congregational symposium called in 1879. Here again there was evidence of an advance in tolerance, for none of the contributors favoured re-enacting the old discipline against amusements, though much of the hostility to dancing and the theatre remained. There was, too, a general feeling that amusements were best kept within the home.

Thus the churches came to allow the legitimacy of leisure, but there were still many conditions they attached to
its pursuit. "Recreation", warned the Catholic Dublin Review, "should be more than even negatively harmless, it should be positively healthy." The Rev. Chester urged that, "As when men work, they should work, according to Apostolic rule, with all their might, so when they play, they should play with all their might." Pleasure seekers were reminded that Christianity had a high sense of the value of time, and that duty to others should find a place in recreation:

Thus the enchanting country walk may be rendered more enchanting still by the visit of mercy paid on the way to the cottage of the poor or sick; the trip to the seaside may be rendered doubly enjoyable by giving some invalid an excursion; and the ramble ... can delight the memory by the useful book given away on its banks.

That the churches themselves should make direct provision for recreation was a point frequently raised in the '70s and '80s. A layman attending the Congregational symposium had urged that, "it would be better to reclaim certain amusements than to abandon them to those who abuse them," and such remarks prompted the churches' considerable participation in recreation in the last quarter of the century. But it was not easy for churchmen to unbend on this matter and, as a Scottish minister observed in the early '80s: "The Church has still to set herself right with what is called 'the world' in reference to her oversight of amusements and recreations, and her providing of such."

Entering into direct competition with the world of amusements marked a climax in the churches' mounting anxiety
at the general erosion of their pastoral presence. Halting dispensations on the range of permissible amusements probably just added to this wastage for, unless they controlled them, the churches were thereby simply endorsing the counter-attractions to the religious life. William Thomson, Archbishop of York, in a sermon on "Sports and Pastimes" in 1874, spoke of his fear that the church was losing contact with culture at every level, and admitted that many Christians were failing to find relevant scriptural guidance on the proper conduct of their recreations. Perhaps many no longer felt obliged to look in the first place—in a sermon on "Leisure Time" the Dean of Durham argued that good works and self-improvement were the proper constituents of leisure, but recognised "the more common feeling that leisure is out of the pale of religion altogether, a sort of neutral ground which we may fairly call our own." Yet, though the churches were to lose their struggle for dominion over leisure, their caveats against unproductive or purposeless amusements reinforced a mid-Victorian rationale of recreation which bristled with the highest intentions.

Accordingly, the recreations which recommended themselves to respectable tastes were those with some manifest moral or improving content. Much that took place in the home was naturally so blessed, but the new family games on the market took care to combine "innocent amusement with instruction"—
formula met with in Greenwood's Round Games (Questions For Our Sunday Tea Table, Bible Quartets, Scientific Quartets) which earned the endorsement of the Bolton Chronicle. The fusing of recreation with instruction had been exemplified in the Great Exhibition and the improving mixture was dispensed in penny packets in public lectures and readings across the country. Albert Smith drew huge crowds in the '50s with his lectures on the ascent of Mont Blanc, illustrated with lantern slides and the equipment used on the expedition. The retelling of an heroic exploit, the information on a foreign country which was now within reach of the excursionist, and the excitement of a night out proved an irresistible combination.

Travel was generally regarded as wholesome: "To have seen a mountain," averred the Chronicle, "is a great step in a man's education." There was thus a great deal of recreation that came within the pale by virtue of educational rather than spiritual content, though there was a felicitous combination of both in oratoria, whose considerable popularity in these years was attributed to "the prevalent religious sentiment of the English middle classes." Because of its non-representational character, music was generally thought to be the least corruptible of the arts; even so, we may recall that Haweis had warned of the need to refer it to moral touchstones.

The concern for moral legitimation remained a powerful determinant of middle-class choice in leisure, but it was not
the only or necessarily the prime motivation, for recreations answered a variety of other needs. Thus organised games met the tests of moral propriety while serving as an important medium for advancing middle-class social aspirations.

Charles Kingsley's exaltation of muscular Christianity provided the necessary moral gloss for organised games. As a country vicar in the 1840s Kingsley had championed physical health:

The body, the temple of the living God .... There has always seemed to me something impious in the neglect of personal health, strength and beauty, which the religious and sometimes clergymen of these days affect. I could not do half the little good I do do here if it were not for that strength and activity which some consider coarse and degrading.79

Thus he had done much to dispel the suspicions of the body as a source of sin, a staple of evangelical teaching which the Cornhill had identified as an impediment to physical enjoyment. Kingsley urged his young audiences "to carry into them (games) the principles of honour and religion,"80 declaring bodily health a matter of personal responsibility to God and duty to one's country. Neglect of what he came to call 'the science of health' would, he maintained, render Englishmen "incapable, unhappy, like a Byzantine Greek, filled up with some sort of pap."81 Herbert Spencer acknowledged Kingsley's leading role in registering the importance of bodily exercise, and himself used the language and imperatives of religion in emphasising that "the preservation of health is a duty ... all breaches of
the laws of health are physical sins. Kingsley's novels gave currency to such ideals, and inspired a whole school of imitators who were, in the words of the Saturday Review, "continually ready to build a model hero, very good and very strong ... and free from faults and fat." As The Times remarked drily of the spread of athleticism: "When you can at the same time enjoy yourself and feel the consciousness that you are doing a moral action, it is difficult to refrain."

In games, the rhetoric of recreation and religion tended to become one. Charles Box, an historian of cricket, wrote 'sportsmen's homilies' to console athletes obliged to interrupt their games in observation of the Sabbath. His Musings for Athletes consisted of biblical tales rendered in the language of the sports field, thus "Jacob's Eleven vs. The Stings of Defeat." But in such stilted compounds it was the religious content which suffered, and the vocabulary of exhortations which emerged from the new athleticism furnished the sentiments of an increasingly secular morality. The ideal of muscular Christianity yielded to that of manliness. Manliness as a Victorian ideal derived in part from Coleridge, who conceived of it as that state of intellectual maturity which marked the passing of childhood. It also carried strong associations of physical courage and endurance in the sense of the old eighteenth century virtue of 'bottom'. Kingsley in effect had combined the two usages and added a dressing of aggressive
religiosity. But it was Thomas Hughes rather than Kingsley who provided the most popular model of the manly hero in Tom Brown, the archetype public schoolboy.  

In creating Tom, Hughes drew heavily on his own rural upbringing in Berkshire, and the boy represented qualities that the author much admired in the old squirearchy—accordingly Tom was jovial, gregarious and combative—but in his later writings Hughes was anxious to commend a manliness shorn of any suggestion of boorishness or animalism. Though the Rugby boys in the novel 'mixed it' with drovers at the fair and navvies from the LNWR (just as the Rector's son in Vanity Fair had slugged it out with the bargees at Oxford) Hughes remarked of such brawling that he had not himself shared "this indiscriminate enthusiasm." Thus he deplored the notion of manliness as mere brute force, and was much concerned to represent its essence as a moral action which could be found in the physically weakest of men. Hughes' own personal model in this regard was Christ, but he recognised the dwindling enthusiasm for this feature of his philosophy.

Historically the aristocracy had a long claim to manliness, but in several instances their conduct was found wanting by the standards of the revised ideal. In 1854 a court-martial at Windsor broadcast an example of dangerous horseplay in the Guards' officers' mess. Among the many censures on such behaviour, the Era declared:
In that great middle class who form the most important element of English society the feeling is one of unmitigated and contemptuous abhorrence of the coarse habits and disgusting language which prevail where we looked for elevated and chivalric notions of honour and the refined manners of a gentleman ... We shall nowhere in manufactories or workshops find such unmanly brutality.90

In 1871 there was an outcry against the pigeon-shooting at the fashionable Hurlingham Club. It was, said The Times, "practiced by aristocratic amateurs out of mere wantonness and love of killing .... It betokens and encourages the restless levity and insatiable pleasure-seeking of our younger nobility."91 Haweis offered this comment:

With some illustrious exceptions there is not enough real education among our upper classes, or we should not find them gawping over sports that the middle class have long abandoned as brutal and undignified.92

Vicious antics in the mess and the slaughter of captive birds were unmanly offences against the spirit of the new laws of organised games, and all the more offensive when practiced by the aristocracy.

The hostility is, however, misleading. There was a continuing radical animus against the aristocracy, exemplified in the campaign against the mismanagement of the Crimean War, but, in general, hostility towards the old class enemy was diminishing.93 The guardians of the new morality of recreation had no wish to ostracise their betters, but sought rather to use the new code as a discreet vehicle for advancing their own class by redefining the qualifications of a gentleman more in
terms of conduct than heredity. "Manliness without coarseness, polish without complacency, nobility without caste" under Hughes' definition, any public schoolboy might make himself a gentleman, though he owed his education to his father's trade in 'unmentionables'. And it was in the public schools, not in the officers' mess, Tattersall's or the Hurlingham that the new model gentlemen were being made, for the schools were at once dynamos of the new athleticism and hothouses for the precocious seedlings of a newly aspirant gentility. Contemplating the games cult, the Saturday Review contended:

Very many parents consider that the first requisite to success in life is the habit of associating freely with millionaires and their sons. They would, if possible, get teaching too; but the first demand is that their boys should go to the same schools with the sons of men of wealth and rank ... a boy is sent to keep company with lords.

At the local grammar school in Derby in the 1870s, so J. A. Hobson recalled, "Sport was encouraged as a means of bringing us into the company of more reputable public schools on the basis of equality."

The attractions of status were an obvious element in the appeal of lawn tennis, an innovation of the mid-seventies. The game was promoted without any moral apologia, and its principal recommendation seems to have lain in the fact that it could equip the suburban villa with some of the resources of the country house, thus reconciling flights of social fancy.
with the measurements of the back garden. Major Wingfield, the game's inventor, advertised a list of noble clients who had bought the necessary kit, together with a letter of endorsement from a baronet; the Sporting Gazette predicted with confidence that "having won its entree into good society ... it (lawn tennis) will be a popular pastime in every English home which can boast a level piece of ground twenty yards by ten." Looking back on the 1870s, T. H. S. Escott had this to say:

In all things the accredited exemplars of the latest and most cosmopolitan mode were followed by the younger generation of the classes that conveniently were still regarded as strongholds of the ethical severity which Puritan ancestors handed down.99

To the Saturday Review, the "eager attempts of persons to wedge themselves into a slightly higher stratum of the social formation by seizing on the favourite amusements of that higher level" was part of "The Pathos of Pleasure Seeking."100 In these circumstances, reprimanding the aristocracy was something of an anachronistic exercise, a ritual denunciation which hurt no one and cost little by fixing on antique stereotypes rather than personalities. It was mostly the reflex response of an older generation;101 in a new and ad hoc leisure culture, fashion rather than custom conferred its own legitimacy, and fashion was dictated by the rich and aristocratic—the magical 'upper ten thousand'—whose appeal remained undiminished by the scandals for which a few of their number were still notorious.
But middle-class leisure time was far from being totally given over to the emulative strivings of innumerable bourgeois gentilhommes, however much the latter crowded the pages of *Punch* during this period. There was in English society a process of longstanding whereby prominent bourgeoisie could be assimilated by their social superiors, but in the middle years of the nineteenth century there was a flood tide of middle-class men and their families who could not be similarly accommodated and, in many cases, were not sure that they wished to be. For this large group, leisure provided an opportunity to confirm and consolidate their social standing rather than redefine it upwards.

Building community was a task which went hand in hand with the confirmation of class identity, and helped determine the shape and nature of middle-class leisure in a changing environment. Urbanisation had herded the working classes into a gross proximity in the centre of the cities; the same process relocated the middle classes on the suburban peripheries. The once tight middle-class world comprising a handful of families with more or less permanent entrees into each other's company was multiplied, fragmented, and flung outwards to crystallise into large numbers of discrete and insular households (lacking as yet the telephone, that great and in England almost exclusively middle-class instrument of social communication). The dislocation of old patterns of neighbourhood
intimacy was compounded by the growing practice of boarding out children at school age; young adults returned home to find themselves bereft of local acquaintances. The solitary family was inadequate for social fulfilment and the middle class, no less than the working class, had to build its secondary associations to combat the strains of the new environment. For recreation, these might take the form of private house or garden parties among business associates, or the extended family, but a major agent of regeneration was certainly the formally constituted club or society. These associations embraced a wide range of activities: sports, amateur soldiering, literary and scientific education and debate, the definition and promotion of professional interests, and the pursuit of reform—all, in varying degrees, performed an important social function. "In the Volunteer corps," observed Hugh Shimmin, the Liverpool journalist, "patriotism is a mask for social relaxation; not only is each company or regiment as distinct a section of English society as a club, but its most prominent features are those of club life." Contemplating the annual meeting of the Church Congress in 1863, The Times was moved to comment on congresses in general:

They are great social meetings to which people go to see one another and become better friends, or to learn, in a genial, offhand manner, the general course their thoughts are taking ... this is the meaning of the Social Science Congress. It is not scientific, and it is not a congress, but it is social.
By such means did the mid-Victorian middle classes sustain communities of interest which overcame the barriers of a cellular suburban society.

Recreation through association appealed on many counts. It appealed on practical grounds, since for every middle-class arrivist bent on raising his status with the cheque book, there were plenty with a nose for a bargain, in leisure as in business, and clubbing together spread the cost of facilities and equipment—the exclusive gentleman's clubs of St. James's were copied by rising professional bodies for their economy as well as their associations of gentility. A club atmosphere also afforded new opportunities for informal dealings in business and politics. All this suggests heavy male dominance, but the broadening choice of sports and outdoor activities provided increased recreational opportunities for the ladies as well. Games-parties and sports clubs provided cover for courtship and flirtation, and the constant surplus of women over men during this period accounts for female enthusiasm for the mixed sports of lawn tennis and croquet—the latter, we are told, offered "fresh air and flirtation in agreeable combination." The ice-skating boom or 'rinkomania' of the seventies was clearly attractive to young people anxious to escape the chaperone:

Not without a shock to her sense of maternal propriety did the English Matron of old fashioned ideas see, or hear of, her daughter being twirled in the arms of some
youth just introduced, or perhaps without even the preliminary of that easy form. 107

Even matrons bold enough to take to the ice themselves were no doubt easily out-skated, just as they were soon to be out-bicycled. Yet there were also ways in which associations reinforced rather than slackened the bonds of orthodox morality. For good or bad, they reproduced the kind of mutual vigilance which acted as a social discipline in the small town milieu, but which tended to break down in the anonymity of a big city. 108 One imagines that correctly ordered social clubs would have recommended themselves to such moral watchdogs as the journalist Ewing Ritchie, who was scandalised by businessmen who drank heavily in Town but passed as a model of respectability at home—the Jekylls and Hydes of suburbia. 109

Voluntary associations in general, and those for recreation in particular, met a variety of important needs in middle-class life. A perceptive French observer offered these remarks on this notable phenomenon:

This tendency of the English to form groups through the attractions of certain pleasures, deserves our attention .... In France men like to meet for the sake of meeting; the Englishman is perhaps less sociable: he requires an object, a community of tastes, a peculiar tie, which draws him nearer his fellow-men. Does not this explain how a nation founded in great measure on the principle of self, maintains itself so firm, compact, and united, without calling on the individual to sacrifice any of his liberties? The voluntary association in groups and series, is the great counterpoise of British personality. 110
There is a further point: in a literal minded society with a taste for the rituals of constitutionalism, few associations were without their rules and regulations—by such proper devices the Englishman could choose who to join with or exclude from such associations.

The example of Bolton provides illustrations of several of these themes. Here there was no resident aristocracy to turn the heads of the town's burgeoning middle class; but the new men abroad in business and the professions, many of whose grandfathers according to a disgruntled local informant "had sold sand, boiled tripe, cobbled shoes, sold clogs, worked the traddles, or spun cotton," needed to find some corporate identity, some social expression for their new status. A correspondent to the Chronicle in 1865 declared the great need for a club for gentlemen (the term itself was almost a new designation in Bolton, for men like the Ashworths had been proud to style themselves 'manufacturer' or 'cotton spinner.' The town's gentlemen were soon accommodated in the succession of associations formed in Bolton from the mid-sixties: a rowing club was in existence in 1865, the year of the foundation of Bolton's cricket club; an amateur athletic club formed in 1870, followed by an amateur swimming club in '71. A public school man trying to locate his kind in a town to which he was a stranger, wrote to the Chronicle in 1872, suggesting the formation of an association football club,
and Bolton F.C. was born the following year. Subscriptions were beyond the range of any but a middle-class pocket, and there were several complaints about the exclusivity of the clubs, so much so that a Liberal parliamentary candidate in '68 tried to make political capital out of the elitist pretensions of the cricket club and the Volunteer corps which, he claimed, were "confined to a certain class" (mostly of a disappointingly Tory persuasion).\textsuperscript{116} We have seen how John Taylor, the Bolton lawyer (and sometime town coroner) no longer took his recreation in the pubs by the 1850s but entertained at home, and mention has been made of the town's "select and gorgeous" dinner parties, but much socialising, perhaps even the greater part, took place in groups outside the drawing room. "Home sweet home," lamented one Boltonian in the mid-seventies, "does not form the centre of attraction it once did ... .

We do almost everything in public ... every idea nowadays assuming the form of a society--and these of course must all be supplemented by their music, their eating and drinking, and the inevitable speechifying.\textsuperscript{117}

The accession of large numbers of the middle classes to the enjoyment of greater leisure was a development of considerable importance in mid-Victorian England. Undoubtedly they filled this new life space with much that was otiose--the excesses of conspicuous consumption, the patent exercises in social climbing--thus presenting broad targets for those engaged in the new intellectual sport of shooting down
bourgeois culture. It was the spectacle of middle-class 'enjoyments' that moved Matthew Arnold to ask: "Can any life be imagined more hideous, more dismal, more unenviable?"118 But the Victorian middle classes deserve more understanding, for they had virtually to create a leisure culture overnight; though they enjoyed immeasurably richer material resources than the working classes, they were culturally ill-equipped for the new opportunity, and the process of adaptation for them was necessarily awkward and contrived. Despite the admonitions of a rationale which subordinated recreation to the priorities of work and Christian duty, the old constraints were dissolving, and the public face of leisure grew increasingly unabashed, particularly among the young. Yet tensions between work and play, between moral glosses and social reality still remained, and were reflected in the dispensations of rational recreation to the masses, themselves enjoying something of a modest leisure boom in the more comfortable circumstances of the third quarter of the nineteenth century.
FOOTNOTES

1. Meliora: A Quarterly Review of Social Science in its Ethical, Economical, Political, and Ameliorative Aspects (1864): 193-210. We now have an admirable and suggestive survey of mid-Victorian leisure in general, see Best, op. cit., pp. 197-227.


3. The Times, 20 June 1876.


7. "The Amusements of the People," Contemporary Review 45 (March 1884) : 342-53; recollections of childhood in the thirties and forties in A. G. Gardiner, Life of Sir William Harcourt, 2 vols. (London, 1923), 1 : 20 : "Our earliest life was made for all of us very monotonous, and no variety or amusements of any kind were provided ... we never had a holiday." See also below, n. 32.


10. "Mind and Muscle," Saturday Review, 21 April 1860. The Saturday was primarily a literary weekly, but it provided an extremely valuable running commentary on bourgeois mores; its reputation for arrogance was due as much to the accuracy of its perceptions as to the abrasive nature of its style, see R. G. Cox, "The Reviews and Magazines," in B. Ford, ed.,


13 Mottram, op. cit., pp. 120, 125. See also, E. Hodder, Life of Samuel Morley (London, 1887), pp. 430-43.


15 Daily Telegraph, 8-21 January 1869; Banks, op. cit., pp. 195-96.


20 "Evening Amusements," Saturday Review, 4 January 1862. For domestic games see e.g. F. Bellew, The Art of Amusing (London, 1866), the serial publication Games for Quartets (London, 1857-63) and the monthly recreation supplement in Gentleman's Journal and Youth's Miscellany, November 1869 - September 1872.


23 The middle-class style (together with the extensive paraphernalia which was so much a part of it) is graphically
reproduced by Frith in his paintings of Paddington Station, 1860, and Ramsgate Sands, 1854. Ramsgate apparently lost its respectability as the century progressed. Some information on the development of resorts is provided in Pimlott, op. cit., pp. 111-14.


26 E.g., Football Association, 1863; Amateur Athletic Club, 1866; English Rugby Union, 1871. The county championship in cricket dates from 1873, and the first Australian touring team arrived in 1878, by which time international matches between the home countries were a fairly common feature of most other organised games.


29 For the growing tourist traffic, see "Entertaining Mossoo," Temple Bar 5 (June 1862) : 327-34. For Taine's horrified reaction to the English Sunday and that of other foreigners see E. Smith, Foreign Visitors in England and What They Have Thought of Us (London, 1889), p. 151ff.


32 Cf. Mottram, "Town Life and London," and J. H. and M. H. Clapham, "Life in the New Towns," in Young, op. cit., 1 : 153-224, 225-44. "To name the amusements of the class under consideration," reported a Citizen of the World, of the Manchester middle class of the forties, "will not be difficult, there being no public amusements they can attend but the
theatre, which is closed half the year." Manchester and the Manchester People (Manchester, 1843), p. 22.

33 The lecture meeting could provide sociability, see the description of such an occasion in provincial life in M. O. Oliphant, Salem Chapel : Chronicles of Carlingford (London, 1907, copyright 1863), pp. 84-6. See also below n. 75.


35 B. C., 13 June, 31 October, 28 November 1857.

36 Ibid., 6 June 1868.

37 Ibid., 29 January 1875.


42 Trollope, op. cit., pp. 150-70.

43 The Times, 8 October 1861. In the forties, the paper's retention of the antique form--hollydays--was out of conviction that the Church should resume its benevolent role in popular recreation. After the mid-century the usage became heavily ironic.

44 "Pleasure Taking," Saturday Review, 4 June 1870.

45 "Having nothing to do is the very worst excuse that could be preferred for doing nothing. To have nothing to do is a disgrace to a reasonable being; to love it is a vice, and to persist in it is a crime." The Leisure Hour; A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation, 17 June 1852. This mentality may help explain the deplorable aesthetics of the Victorian parlour. A contemporary guide to interior decoration proclaimed: "Every space has to be filled, every surface covered. 'Bare' is a term of severe disapproval." Quoted by C. S. Peel in Young, op. cit., I : 111. See also J. Buckley, The Victorian Temper (London, 1952), pp. 130-31 on contemporary taste.

Cornhill, loc. cit.

Perkin, op. cit., pp. 276-77, 288. See also above, pp. 76-77.

Middle-class anxiety in a changing world is examined in W. E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870 (Yale, 1957), pp. 53-89.

Cornhill, loc. cit. The magazine addressed itself to this topic on other occasions, see "On Holidays" 2 (1860) : 242-51, which seems to come from the same anonymous hand as the article under consideration, and "Vacations" 20 (1869) : 205-14, written by A. Cynic and attributed to Leslie Stephen. The latter was exceptional in making a case for "the negative pleasure of indolence."

The dictum is quoted, for example, in Jerrold, London : A Pilgrimage (London, 1872), p. 162, and E. Entwhistle, Pastimes and Recreations (Bolton, 1881), an essay read before the Bolton Mutual Improvement Society (B.R.L.). For the importance of work and its function as an antidote to anxiety, see Houghton, op. cit., 242-62.

For similar recommendations see F. Harrison, Sundays and Festivals : A Lecture (London, 1867).


(W. H. Miller), The Culture of Pleasure (London, 1872), pp. 64-65.


Contemporary Review 16 (1870) : 89-101. This piece achieved some popularity in book form.

60 G. J. Chester, The Young Man at Rest and at Play (Sheffield, 1860).

61 S. Earnshaw, The Tradition of the Elders (Sheffield, 1860).

62 Charles Kingsley, in correspondence with Earnshaw, praised the sermon: "The legalism and formalism of the Low Church school needs to be exposed, and you have done it bravely and well. If you wish to carry out your own views, push the Volunteer movement. The incalculable good to the middle class which it is working I can vouch for." See F. E. Kingsley, Charles Kingsley: Letters and Life, 2 vols. (London, 1877), 2 : 108-9. Local opposition to Earnshaw was aggravated when a Sheffield theatre published extracts from his sermons on its hoardings, see E. R. Wickham, Church and People in an Industrial City (Lutterworth, 1957), p. 153. Sheffield was also the home of one of the most militant opponents of the theatre, the Rev. Thomas Best, see his Love of Pleasure (1862).

63 Good Words 8 (1867) : 329-35. For the tone set in one middle-class nonconformist family of the period, see E. B. Bax, Reminiscences and Reflections of a Mid and Late Victorian (London, 1918), p. 13.


65 "What Attitude Should Christian Churches Take in Relation to Amusements," Congregationalist 8 (July, August 1879) : 543-56; 650-65.


67 Chester, loc. cit.


69 Thomas Walker in Congregationalist, loc. cit.

70 J. Kay, The Church and Popular Recreation (Edinburgh, 1883), p. 17.

on "a certain alienation of the ministry of the Church from general culture" in a paper read to a Church of England conference on temperance, see "Amusements," All The Year Round 16 (1876) : 133-36.


73 The effect of such injunctions were still felt at the turn of the century when the historian Lecky commented that "young men who are really idle pretend to be busy," W. E. H. Lecky, The Map of Life (London, 1899), p. 64.

74 They provided "agreeable employment for the family circle." B. C., 26 December 1868.

75 Illustrated London News, 25 December 1852. "The demand for 'Lectures', especially in our trading and manufacturing districts," reported the S.C.H.C. on Public Libraries, p. viii, "has called into existence a new class of men, and created, as it were, a new profession." In "Provincial Amusements," Saturday Review, 11 October 1862, we meet the mid-Victorian equivalent of the horror movie, at chapel teas where lecturers' reports on missionary work abroad included extensive tales of native cruelties.

76 B. C., 18 May 1872.


79 F. E. Kingsley, op. cit., 2 : 83. See also above, n. 62.


84 The Times, 2 March 1869.
C. Box, *Musings for Athletes* (London, 1888), was directed "to the middle classes of society."


*Era*, 10 September 1854.

*The Times*, 21 June 1871. Live birds were sprung from traps to provide relatively easy targets for sportsmen who wished to avoid the discomfiture and higher standards of marksmanship which prevailed in the field. The bag for an afternoon's sport was usually very high and this and the presence of fashionable ladies, excited the disfavour of public opinion—there was considerably less condemnation of the pigeon shooting organised by London publicans. See E. S. Turner, *All Heaven in a Rage* (London, 1964), pp. 174-87, and the exchanges between the historian Freeman and Anthony Trollope on cruelty in field sports, *Fortnightly Review* 12 (1869) : 353, 616; 13 (1869) : 63; 14 (1870) : 674.

Haweis, *Thoughts For the Times*, p. 300.


The contemporary concern with definitions of gentility is examined in Kitson Clark, op. cit., 253-74.

Hughes, loc. cit.


the new athleticism does not, of course, stop here. Newsome, op. cit., p. 237, claims that sport gave expression to a craving for revolt and excitement among a middle class weary of security and comfort. E. Weber has some suggestive interpretations of the fashion for sport among the French bourgeoisie, see "Pierre de Coubertin and the Introduction of Organised Sport in France," Journal of Contemporary History 5 (1970): 5-26; "Gymnastics and Sports in Fin de Siecle France: Opium of the Classes?", American Historical Review 76 (February 1971): 70-96. For further considerations see below, chap. VI.

98 See "Opinions of the Press," in W. Wingfield, The Game of Sphairistike (London, 1876), pp. 24ff. Sphairistike was Wingfield's original name for his brainchild, but the Greek was soon superseded.

99 Escott, Social Transformations, p. 197.

100 Saturday Review, 29 August 1874.

101 Even the old antagonists were softening a little. E. P. Hood, popular Congregational preacher and liberal journalist, reported how "the politeness, the courtesy of the heads of the house ... have very frequently almost converted me from my radical propensities." The Age and its Architects (London, 1852), p. 190. Cobden confessed himself "already half-seduced by the fascinating ease of their parties." Quoted in Woodward, op. cit., p. 121.

102 Best, op. cit., pp. 253-54.

103 "Notes on the Volunteer Movement--The Social Element," Porcupine (Liverpool), 10 February 1866.

104 The Times, 12 October 1863.

105 "Most roturiers (self-made men) carry into private life the sound business capacity that has made them so successful in commerce." Escott, Society in London, p. 163.

106 Wingfield, op. cit., p. 27; Jerrold, op. cit., p. 174: "It may be said that a man is nearer the church-door when he has a mallet in his hand, than when to the strains of Godfrey, he has his arm round a lady's waist."

107 Escott, Social Transformations, p. 195. The progress of this briefly fashionable sport can be studied in the periodical Rink (London), 1876.
See the preoccupations of M. D. Hill, the Recorder of Birmingham, quoted in Burn, op. cit., p. 269: "I think that in small towns there must be a sort of natural police, of a very wholesome kind, operating under the conduct of each individual who lives, as it were, under the public eye; but in a large town he lives, if he chooses, in absolute obscurity." See also the correspondence on the Young Man of the Day in the Daily Telegraph, 12 January 1869.


Esquiros, op. cit., 2 : 52-63.

B. C., 28 November 1857.

Ibid., 19 August 1865.

Boyson, op. cit., p. 203.

B. C., passim. Membership of the cricket club grew from 30 to 220 in six years.

Ibid., 20 January 1872.

Ibid., 14 November 1868.

Ibid., 3 July 1875.

Arnold, "My Countrymen," Cornhill 13 (February 1866) : 153-72. Arnold did allow indirectly that "the present bent of the world towards amusing itself, so perilous to the highest class, is curative and good for our middle class."
IV. DISPENSING RECREATION TO THE MASSES
IN THE NEW LEISURE WORLD

From the mid-century, many among the English working classes found themselves sharing in the new bonus of leisure and the spread and diversification of popular recreations. The middle classes had therefore not only to decide upon their own response to the invitations to worldly pleasure, but what to do and say about the pleasures of the masses. Social reformers gave more attention to monitoring popular amusements during this period than before, but though they increased the facilities for rational recreation they fell far short of the complete realisation of their schemes for improvement; among the various difficulties they had to contend with was that of a more competitive leisure market, and the refusal of the middle classes to play the regenerative role the reformers assigned to them.

A complex of changing circumstances allowed of the growth of working-class leisure in this period. First, the workingman enjoyed more free time, as legislation enforced the limitation of working hours and the provision of a Saturday half-holiday in an increasing number of trades. Measured overall the gains were no doubt marginal—many
occupational groups remained unprotected at law, and to one informed workingman the half-holiday meant a rearrangement rather than a diminution of hours—but the Saturday break gave some regularity and assurance to working-class leisure, and the precedent of successful short-time agitation encouraged further campaigns to cut working hours, including the early closing movement for shop and office workers. The Bank Holidays Act of 1871 guaranteed modest annual holidays for bank workers, a dispensation which spread to other groups.

Company holidays also became more common: in the late sixties bank clerks in the City could expect up to three weeks off after a certain period of established service, and railwaymen with the Great Northern in 1872 seem to have been the first workingmen to receive holidays with pay. For the majority of workingmen there were no such official holidays, but custom still allowed many of the traditional annual breaks, and Thomas Wright, 'The Journeyman Engineer', noted in 1867 that St. Monday continued to flourish.

Improved communications broadened the horizons of working-class life. The cheap press expanded social consciousness here as it had done in higher levels of society; similarly, the working classes shared in the benefits of increased mobility conferred by the growth of cheap rail travel and the excursion business. Provincial workingmen and their families poured into London by train for the Great Exhibition
in 1851. Sometime in the sixties working-class families began to take breaks of several days at the seaside, where distinctively proletarian resorts were developing. A party of Bolton artisans went to the Paris Exhibition in 1867 and a London journeyman published advice on cheap continental holidays for workingmen in 1878. Savings clubs assisted in financing the more ambitious trips, and the development of third-class rail travel in the seventies increased popular traffic. Robert Baker, Factory Inspector, noted approvingly:

The working class are moving about on the surface of their own country, visiting in turn exhibition after exhibition, spending the wealth they have acquired 'in seeing the world' as the upper classes did in 1800, as the middle class did in 1850, and as they themselves are doing in 1875.

There were other gains in space and facilities inside the towns and cities. As one observer recorded in the late sixties: "The lavish provision of public parks, pleasure grounds, baths and free libraries in all the larger Lancashire towns, testifies that the corporate authorities are not unmindful of their obligations to promote the health, happiness and culture of the industrial orders." In Bolton and district, municipal and private initiative increased the number of parks and indoor places of assembly. A vast new town hall, opened in 1873, looked down upon the Free Library, the Chadwick Museum, a new Co-operative hall, a second Temperance hall, and a rash of different club-rooms, institutes and coffee
taverns. It is important to note that what appeared lavish to the visitor might still be meagre for local needs. In proportion to the number and density of population in many big cities the provision of open space, for example, was grossly inadequate.\(^1\) Yet it remains plain enough that the workingman had a wider choice of leisure resort than simply that between church or pub which had previously obtained.

Though constraints on time and space were considerably eased, popular recreation could still not escape the rebukes of its old opponents. The Sabbatarian lobby delayed the Sunday opening of art galleries until 1896, a stand which exasperated many working-class leaders though galleries may have been caviar to the general;\(^{12}\) more offensive in popular eyes, as we have seen, was the victory of Sabbatarians in closing down Sunday band concerts in London parks and their threat to pub opening hours in the fifties.\(^{13}\) There were several clashes in Bolton between a Sabbatarian rearguard and a popular party led by the local secularists, who interpreted the issue of Sunday opening in terms of class discrimination. "The question of the Sabbath," declared Simon Hilton, veteran Bolton radical, "is never mooted but when the privileges of the humbler classes are concerned." Hilton's party secured the Sunday opening of Peel Park in 1867; two years later Hilton led the fight to allow the sale of refreshments in the Park on Sundays--quoting John Stuart Mill
to the hisses of the Sunday School claque—and there were other contests in later years. The temperance movement developed a formidable national organisation in this period which secured various curtailments of pub opening hours, thus cutting back on recreational drinking. In Bolton, regular memorials from influential temperance supporters to the annual licencing sessions cut off the grant of new pub licences; the same group, in alliance with the Sunday school lobby, also took advantage of new requirements in Bolton's Corporation Improvement Act of 1872 to pressure the magistrates into withholding a singing and dancing licence for the Museum Music Hall, the descendant of the Star. Such tactics were used against music halls in many other towns.

'The Battle of the Music Halls' made headlines in the 1880s, but there was another battle over popular recreation—the battle of the streets—which went on interminably, but whose communiques were lost in the small print of provincial newspapers. From one of many similar reports from this forgotten front here is the case of a certain George Healey of Bolton, charged with indecent conduct on Chorley New Road in the spring of 1866. The principal witness before the court was a Mr. W. H. Wright, a respectable tea dealer of the town:

... on Saturday afternoon, about half past two, he was in his garden at Heaton, when he heard a noise in the road, and on turning round, he saw
a man pass by wearing nothing except a pair of drawers; while directly afterwards he saw the defendant running along the road in a completely nude state, with the exception of a handkerchief which was wrapped around his loins .... Witness ordered the defendant to dress himself, and then brought him to the police office in a cab. There were about 50 men and boys on the road. Witness added that he had been very much annoyed by this sort of conduct lately. Defendant said he was only running for exercise. Mr. Wright: He told me he was racing for 5s.19

The police superintendent commended Mr. Wright on his zeal and remarked on the frequency of such happenings: it was, he said, "the same all round the town." This, then, was an example of the 'Race Running Nuisance', as it was regularly characterised by the authorities; there were several other nuisances, some of which have been noted previously, which also gave rise to frequent arrests. The nuisances were often the desultory recreations of the loafers in the street, by many accounts a common, numerous and obtrusive constituent of the town's poor. On Sundays their presence was even more disturbing, and their contumely more offensive--"crowds of men and boys," reported one observer, "for the most part all in their deshabille ... applying the expression 'bloody' to almost every person and thing that came in their way."20

Such congregations must often have unnerved the middle-class passer-by, but in the case quoted above there was no threat to life, limb or property--a large and interested crowd (some no doubt with money riding on Healey's performance) gathered together on a Saturday afternoon (a legitimate time off work
for most) and watched without protest (there was apparently no bad language) while Mr. Wright made his citizen's arrest. Healey's specific offence was that of indecency, a condition easily achieved within prevailing definitions of nudity—police witnesses thought it worthwhile to inform the courts whether or not defendants in such cases were apprehended with or without a jacket on—but his general offence was against bourgeois respectability, and he was only one of the countless many so indicted in this period. Police harassment was compounded by the hostilities of petty officials: park keepers broke up games in the parks, and library attendants became minor ogres in working-class folk lore.²¹

Active hostility to popular recreation was therefore still very much a reality in the mid-Victorian period, but on balance the working classes enjoyed a greater freedom and opportunity in their leisure than previously, not only in terms of time and space, but in terms of spending power, the greatest of emancipators. Average real wages rose gradually from the mid-century, and there was a pronounced upward swing in the seventies; since there was as yet only a restricted choice of cheap consumer goods available to the working classes, much of the extra pocket money went on leisure.²² Though not all workers shared equally or simultaneously in the advance, in general popular demand became not only more numerous but more effective.
Popular recreations in this period of growth often evidenced considerable improvement in terms of regularity, moderation and edification, particularly in the North, where working-class life conformed more tidily than elsewhere to the parameters of an urban industrial society. The advances were exemplified in the careful year-round saving which made the seaside holiday a regular annual occasion for many Lancashire cotton workers. A survey of "Lancashire At Play" in the _Pall Mall Gazette_ in 1884 reported that sixty thousand pounds had been paid out by Oldham's works' savings committees on the eve of Wakes week, adding that holiday drunkenness had much abated. Choral and brass-band music flourished in the North and Midlands, and armies of choristers descended regularly on London's Crystal Palace for the great choir festivals. The more popular and commercialised music hall never approached the respectability of these offshoots of orthodox culture, but its devotees were seldom profligates and several observers discerned a humanising, even decorous, influence in this burgeoning institution. Working men made good use of the wider range of public resources. Tom Barclay, semi-skilled hosiery worker and self-styled 'bottlewasher', enjoyed a fair choice of recreations in late-century Leicester: dancing classes at the Spiritualist Hall, lectures at the Secular Club, Gilbert and Sullivan at the Opera House. From London in the eighties we learn of a certain Edward Baker,
"who had a faculty for making the best of the various organisations created for the elevation of the working classes ... a perfect directory of free and cheap concerts and lectures all over London."

From Leeds in 1870 a working man's institute reported the proliferation of cheap concerts, penny readings, church entertainments and public libraries in the town. Old showmen attributed the decline of their profession to, among other things, the modern appetite for reading; it was, they claimed, destroying the public credulousness upon which much of their business had been traditionally based.

It was, of course, far from true that popular recreations had succumbed en bloc to a new sophistication, for many traditional styles and occasions retained their appeal. "In most of our provincial cities and boroughs," so the Saturday Review maintained in 1869, "the fair and the race-meeting are the two great festivals of the local calendar, the two seasons from which the mass of people date forwards or backwards." Though fairs declined in number, recent research demonstrates how one at least--St. Giles' Fair in Oxford--proved capable of enhancing its attractions, by utilising the modern technology that one may too readily assume to have spelt its doom. In Lancashire the term 'wakes week' was borrowed to describe the seaside holiday the workers increasingly preferred to the local summer fairs, but the
spring fairs remained great occasions for neighbourhood visiting (though May Day celebrations seem to have been appropriated for displays of municipal pride—parades of corporation dust-carts and the like). Bolton's New Year's Fair was still a two or three day holiday, celebrated in more extensive fashion than Christmas. The number of race-meetings in the country actually increased, particularly in the vicinity of the larger towns; their provenance is clear from the disparaging label of 'publicans' races' awarded them by the racing establishment. The Turf was becoming more commercialised: admission charges were introduced, the bookmaker appeared in force, and gambling on and off the course was further serviced and encouraged by the cheap racing sheet and newspaper supplement. The sport at the minor tracks was still rough and ready and in general much working-class sport of the sixties and early seventies remained unreconstructed. Contemplating the sporting press of the sixties, one journalist remarked:

Bell's Life tells us, not what ought to be done by Englishmen, but what, as a matter of fact, is done. It shows what a large balance there still is versus that crushing respectability which threatens to overwhelm us—it tells us how much of the animal pleasures of savage life survives in the heart of civilised life.

Animality, excess, certainly boisterousness—these were still conspicuous features of popular recreation. The Sayers-Heenan fight in 1860 offers a notorious case in point,
but most historians of mid-Victorian England have their favourite horror stories of brutal or violent episodes which passed for recreation; public executions continued into the sixties, and elections, despite reforms, were celebrated as popular holidays cum licenced brawls throughout the period. The "violent delights" of Derby Day, as Jerrold characterised them, continued to jolt the confidence of the most generous Anglophiles, and from the mid-century Boat Race Day occasioned similar popular bacchanalia. August Bank Holiday seemed to encourage more of the same—"For days the streets are full of stragglers" recorded a Frenchman living in England, "it is a whole week lost, drowned in beer." As suggested earlier, there was a certain rawness and urgency in popular recreation which marked the reflex action to the rigours and privations of much working-class life. Thomas Wright thought the London workman in particular was driven to a craving for excitement in his amusements by squalid and over-crowded housing, and Taine considered the licence of Derby Day "an outlet for a year of repression."

But it was not all quite so manic; violence bespeaks frustration but prodigality answers to other less desperate explanations. It was folk wisdom among those who lived near the poverty line to put any extra money in the belly and not on the back, and there were in any case still relatively
few competing alternatives to food and, more especially, drink for the spare cash in the workman's pocket. Feasting and drinking enjoyed the sanction of a powerful tradition: roast beef and strong ale were not merely the stage properties of an erstwhile Merrie England, but sacraments in a continuing mythology of national superiority and class identity. The English workman was the great meat-eater and ale-swiller whose industry and stamina put the puny continentals to shame or flight, in work or war--this was the lesson of Waterloo, and the lesson of the prodigious exploits of Peto's navvies on railway construction in the Crimea and France in the sixties and seventies. 37

Though not every day was Derby Day, there were a good many occasions for celebrating its minor relative the 'beano', the 'spree', the 'blow-out'--all terms of popular currency in mid-Victorian England. The national meeting of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders held in Bolton in 1866 provides an example. 38 The chairman opened proceedings by declaring they were met for two principal objects--"enjoyment and pleasure, and to show the country that the ironfounders were not behind other bodies of workpeople in this age of improvement." Improvement here was measured on a different scale from that used by politicians and reformers--it came by the bellyful. In a pavilion in Peel Park a local publican provided the following spread:
1000 lbs. of beef, 400 lbs. of mutton, 500 lbs. of lamb, 300 lbs. of salmon, 100 rice puddings, 150 plum puddings, 200 cheese cakes, 200 small and 100 large blackcurrant, damson, strawberry and gooseberry tarts; 6 loads of potatoes, 12 doz. of cauliflowers, 36 doz. of cabbage, 24 bags of peas, 150 4 lb. loaves, and 1200 cobs of bread, in addition to cheese.

To cater to the thirst of the 1500 delegates "the whole length of the west side of the pavilion had been appropriated to a refreshment department, in which were to be seen a multitudinous array of glasses, jugs and beer barrels."

Afterwards the ironfounders and members of local allied trades disported themselves with "singing, dancing and reciting, and other amusements which continued until the dawn of day." The friendly societies in general provide an interesting example of the continuing strength of traditional recreational priorities in institutions which mostly commended themselves to middle-class observers as improving agencies in working-class life. "After all their drawbacks," concluded the Chronicle in a review of the Lancashire societies in the late seventies, "they ... provide an education in the duties of citizenship through the practice of self-government."^39

Thus rationality and old-style conviviality were not necessarily irreconcilable qualities in popular recreation, a point given further exemplification in a suggestive piece by Thomas Wright called "Bill Banks's Day Out," published in 1868.^40 Bill is a railwayman who goes 'St. Mondaying' with his wife and friends to Hampton Court. They meet outside a
local pub, admire each other in their best dress, and start the excursion with a morning pint. They travel out to Hampton Court by hired van, complete with cornet player to enliven the journey. On arrival they tuck into a dinner provided by the van-owner at 2s/6d a head—"a first-rater; beef and mutton and ham, and any quantity of rolls, and lots of fruit-tarts, in the way of eating, and bottled ale and a small cask of porter to wash 'em down." The harmony of the occasion is disturbed when Bill, somewhat flushed with drink, takes exception to the superior airs of a young shopman in the company (Wright himself detested 'counter-jumpers'); after a scuffle, peace is restored and the party continues, finishing up in late evening back in town, at the Alhambra, the famous Leicester Square music hall. Bill and his wife together with two friends share the cost of a cab home, enjoying the prospect of scandalising the neighbours by arriving in such style.

Retailed in the first person, the piece has an internal consistency which suggests how a working man at play could move through several different roles, all reconcilable, but each in turn likely to be interpreted by an outsider as the behaviour peculiar to a distinct, separate and exclusive type within the working classes. On the evidence of his home life Banks would pass as the self-improving artisan: he is a considerable and intelligent reader who
borrows books from the local Institute to supplement his own small library. Thus he belongs to the tradition recorded by Bamford and lauded by the students of working-class progress. In taking an excursion Bill appears at first to be a further credit to his class. His expenditure can be reckoned at between ten and fifteen shillings for him and his wife, yet the day out is not the reflex action of a poor family gobbling up a sudden windfall, but the happy product of careful budgeting which, so we gather, owes something to Mrs. Banks' good management (Wright, in company with other commentators, attributed many of the miseries of working-class life to inefficient housekeeping). Hampton Court, an historic house on which Bill is well read, represents a 'rational' choice for a visit, and in their concern with their appearance the party display that "pardonable vanity" which Slaney had once recommended as a tonic both for trade and self-respect. Thereafter, however, Bill Banks' respectable image disintegrates, as he regresses into the time-honoured role of the English workman on spree. To a middle-class observer he would then appear drunk, gluttonous and unruly. Detected among the music hall crowd he would serve as an example of the feckless new breed of workingman who surrendered himself to the temptations of the 'fast' life. If Bill Banks is at all representative, the pattern of his day out can, at a later point in this chapter,
help us understand the gap between ideals and achievements in the work of those who worked to reform popular recreation. It is to their continuing endeavours that we now turn.

The concern to encourage rational recreation for the working classes which had awakened public attention with the passing of the Factory Acts in the late forties continued to grow in the following period, finding a firm place in the general vocabulary of most social reformers. "There is," wrote Professor Stanley Jevons in a much-quoted article in the *Contemporary Review* for 1878, "hardly any other method (of social reform) taken separately, to which greater importance should be attributed than to the providing of good moral public amusements." 43 Since leisure was now assumed to be a common possession, the manner of its proper disposal was a frequent topic for debate at all levels of the press, from the detached commentaries of the critical reviews to the crusading journalism of men like Mayhew and George Godwin (editor of the *Builder*) in London, and Hugh Shimmin in Liverpool.

Working-class reformers and writers were generally more concerned with the achievement of the essential pre-requisites for leisure--time and money--than with its proper content. They were, however, worried that immoderate indulgence in amusements and holiday-making would reduce the political consciousness of the workingman. In a well-known
commentary upon Lancashire in 1870, Thomas Cooper discovered that affluence had reduced many of the heirs of his unkempt Chartist heroes of the forties to political indifference, and he stood aghast at the spectacle of Lincoln workmen pawning their beds to take a railway excursion. Wright, too, had misgivings about the Londoners' insatiable taste for amusements. The recommended corrective was that of rational recreation, both to continue the political and educational improvement of the class and, through public good manners, to oblige the other classes to respect the working man.

Faced with declining congregations the churches interested themselves more actively in the question of popular recreations. This was particularly noticeable in the Church of England which was shrugging off its discomfiture in the presence of the urban masses and moving in to tackle a wide range of social problems. The activists in recreational improvement were only a minority, but a very vocal one which pushed its case hard at the annual church congresses that met regularly from 1862. The established church also reassumed a prominent role in the temperance movement, which expanded its work of providing counter attractions to pub-based recreations.

The commonest platform for reformers of all stripes was that of the National Association for the Promotion of
Social Science which met in annual conference from 1857. Meetings of its department of social economy received regular reports on recreational reform projects. The reformers in the field were mainly churchmen, local notables, occasional municipal officials, and a number of middle-class women. The audience included most of the leading contemporary 'friends of the working classes': new model employers such as Mundella and Morley, Christian Socialists such as Kingsley and Maurice, civil servants such as Chadwick and Tremenheere, reconstructed aristocrats such as Lords Shaftesbury and Lyttelton, reform M.P.s such as Slaney and Ewart. The tone of proceedings was earnest but non-sectarian, the rationale that of gradualist social engineering serviced by philanthropy. The association was a good deal less rigorous and hard-headed in its promotion of social science than its propaganda proclaimed, but it provided the most important single forum for middle-class recreational reformers.

Rational recreation widened its brief in one important respect as reformers addressed themselves to the problematical social life of the young clerks and shopmen whose number increased dramatically in this period. Although concern for their welfare echoed something of the traditional concern for the town apprentice, this group constituted a new phenomenon, an overnight creation of modern urban society; the clerk, maintained Charles Kingsley, "is
distinctly a creature of the city; as all city influences bear at once on him more than in any class, we see in him at once the best and the worst effects of modern city life."\textsuperscript{52}

Clerkdom occupied a decidedly marginal and ambivalent position in society; from within its ranks one Liverpudlian wrote that it "presents divergencies as wide, and peculiarities as interesting as does any other class of a great labouring community."\textsuperscript{53} In Edward Hodder's cautionary tale, \textit{The Junior Clerk: A Tale of City Life} (published in 1862 and recommended to employers for distribution among their young men), the hero is well educated and confident of an eventual partnership, but below the articed youngster with good connexions stretched an army of young men with careers ranging from middling to destitute—Shimmin, another practiced observer from Merseyside, included clerks and shopkeepers' assistants in with the working classes.\textsuperscript{54} Generally, however, reformers defined the social problems of this group in terms of its urban environment rather than its class identity. Young and impressionable, often living in lodgings away from the restraints and affection of home, "their hours of business constantly shortened and relaxed to suit faint inclinations for work," according to one exaggerated but not untypical estimate of the achievements of the Early Closing Movement, clerks were considered exceptionally vulnerable to the temptations of fast company—juvenile 'swells' and 'cads'
who had yielded to such corruptions figure in most contemporary descriptions of music hall clientele. Organised rescue work had begun with the founding of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1844 in London and YMCAs multiplied throughout the country in the next decade. Although at first these institutions were narrowly evangelistic—"Amusements are not necessary to your happiness, religion is"—they began to broaden their activities in the sixties with cautious doses of recreation.

As debate increased, the lineaments of rational recreation for the masses became clearer. In the calmer climate of the mid-Victorian era there was less preoccupation with recreation as a distraction from mob politics. In any case, as we have seen, the idea of recreation as a safety valve whose cathartic effect justified the suspension of normal social disciplines was unacceptable to men primarily concerned to maintain control and conformity. Play was not to be allowed any form of special licence; rather it had to be firmly and unequivocally integrated with the rest of life and securely anchored in orthodox morality. Ideally—rationally—recreation was an adjunct and complement to work. The literal implications of the word itself were repeated: "Recreation is the re-creation, the creation anew of fresh strength for tomorrow's work"; and again, "Amusement, to be legitimate, wholesome, innocent, must be useful, in
refitting the body or mind for its duty." Accordingly it was "of workers only that there can be recreation." In this prescription work and play were antithetical in form only; in purpose they were part of a single natural process at the service of God and society. It was however made clear that of the two constituents work was sovereign: work disciplines had to be projected into play, not vice-versa. As the house journal of the Christian Socialists' London Working Men's College put it: "The question is not, are we to have all work and no play, but what sort of work can we find pleasant enough to be made play of?" To invert the relationship would be destructive, as the Bishop of Winchester warned a working men's meeting at a Church Congress in the seventies:

We have been considering how best to get the workingmen leisure hours and I myself am bent upon it. But why? That they may in their leisure hours raise their own physical force—I don't forget that we have a body as well as a soul—then their family, then their intellectual, and above all their spiritual being. That is the use of having these leisure hours, and if the additional hours should be spent by the workingmen of England in dissipation, riot and drunkenness—if they should be spent in learning himself and teaching others not to be satisfied, not to understand that work is glory, and that doing the work he is set to do is the glory of man here, and will be the elevation of his faculties—then better by far that they should not have hours of leisure.

The address reveals the tension which attended most debates on the place of leisure in working-class life. Leisure was a necessary condition for physical refreshment
and progress towards the good life, but without moral vigilance its practice would threaten the priorities of work and social discipline. The discussion of leisure was still characterised by the weight of cautionary advice it was made to carry. Leisure was time—ideally a third of men's lives, according to reformers in the Early Closing Movement who resurrected King Alfred's formula of eight hours work, eight hours play, and eight hours sleep—and time was valuable. Members of the YMCA (which was started by employers) were reminded that "their masters would naturally be chary of curtailing the hours of labour unless they could see the leisure of their young men profitably employed." Profit was tangible in work, but how was it to be made a recognisable quantity in play? Young men at the YMCA were advised to apply a simple catechism to their recreations: "Are they likely to make us better sons, brothers, husbands and fathers, better servants or masters, better citizens, and better Christians?"

At this point it might well be asked how the precepts outlined above differed from those urged upon middle-class audiences. The answer must be that there was little difference in basic teachings—the Victorian rationale of recreation was not in itself discriminatory—but that the stronger tone employed in addressing the working classes betrays fundamentally different assumptions regarding the capacity of the particular
classes for recognising and acting upon moral imperatives in recreation. A society based upon a paramount belief in the benevolent operation of free will had to concede the right and capability of the individual to practice and police his own leisure activities—according to the commonest of contemporary analogies, "Free trade, free religion, free art and free self-culture are all bound up in the same bundle, and stand or fall together." Nevertheless, it was as yet only the middle classes who in the nature of things could be expected to apply the appropriate moral calculus to their pleasures. Reformers were generally agreed that most working men still lacked the education and elementary accomplishments of 'social economy'--the proper management of time and money--which would qualify them to assume the responsible status of free agent in the dangerously open-ended world of leisure time.

Fears for the working classes' ability to apply the necessary controls in leisure grew sharper in the seventies, when observers noted that gains in free time and spending power seemed generally to promote increased drunkenness rather than self-improvement. "The period of transition from low to high wages, and from incessant toil to comparative leisure," warned Goldwin Smith, "must be one of peril to the masses." Faith in the powers of formal education gave hope that the recent educational reforms would produce a
better disciplined younger generation, but there were still wide areas of working-class life untouched by any effective control mechanisms. Education in the necessary leisure disciplines had to be taken to the masses. It was, declared Jevons, "a positive duty on the part of the middle and upper classes to frequent the well conducted places of popular recreation."  

The question of precisely who was to set the correct example was no longer contentious. Neither the aristocracy nor the bourgeoisie now contested for social or political leadership in the terms of a class dialectic; philanthropy in particular afforded opportunity for the middle-classes both to savour the snobbish frisson of rubbing shoulders with nobility, and advance their claims to share in the common gentility which identified a new composite ruling class. The agreed denomination for exemplar of rational recreation was that of gentleman.

Example-setting by superiors and the common association of all ranks in recreation was a formula well rehearsed during the previous period, but it was now being urged more forcefully. In the first place observers argued that the upper classes had need to be put on their best behaviour as a corrective to their own infatuation with the lure of worldly amusement. Obliging them to fulfil their reform role would be mutually beneficial and arrest the
degeneration which faced society as a whole in its transition to a leisure culture. "Raise the workers," wrote one reforming journalist, "and the masters will be shamed into morality." A further and more prevalent argument for securing an upper-class presence in popular recreation was that it would achieve a return to what many believed to have been a pristine state of fraternity among all the classes. The bitter alienations of the previous period seemed to have subsided but industrial strife still advertised the hostility between capital and labour, and urban dispersal and the physical segregation of the classes threatened general social disintegration. Rational recreation could help rebuild a common identity of interest and community. This was the formula of the Christian Socialists, as explained by the secretary of their London Workingmen's College to the Social Science Association. The promoters sought to overcome diversities of birth and education by appealing to "the weight of common interests which bind together fellow strugglers in the race of human progress ... they work on the principle of a direct personal relationship ... on the principle, in short, that in order to do any good to or for a man you must first make a friend of him." The Christian Socialist cultivated only a select corner of working-class company, but there was general agreement among reformers that some such exercise on a broad scale was necessary to integrate and
humanise mass society.\textsuperscript{75} As the \textit{Bolton Chronicle} put it in more down to earth manner: "If the working classes cannot have equality, they can at least have fraternity."\textsuperscript{76}

What was the best setting for this fraternal exercise? The semi-rural industrial colonies which had furnished the milieu for reform experiments in the previous era were mostly defunct and the middle classes were unwilling to throw open their homes or relax the exclusive regulations of their clubs and societies. There was a long-standing concern with the breakdown of the working-class family in industrial towns and reformers urged the prior claims of home life as a salutary and necessary recreation for the workingman,\textsuperscript{77} but his home was too small and ill-equipped to afford a common meeting ground and homes in general were in any case becoming increasingly respected as desirable sanctums of privacy. In this regard the home also lacked what reformers came to hold as a vital property of rational recreation--visibility or, in its contemporary usage, publicity, the condition or fact of being open to public observation or knowledge. Teaching by example was done most effectively and economically in open congregation. Public assembly under proper restraints and of the right social mix exerted a collective moral vigilance--"the coercion of public opinion";"a police of good understanding," as it was variously called by reformers.\textsuperscript{78} It was therefore of little use to
clear the streets of its various nuisances if the workingman retreated to the impenetrable bolt hole of the home or, much worse, the pub.

There were suggestions for taming the pub (and other places of entertainment) by constructing the front entirely of plate glass so that its denizens would be visible to those outside and thus shamed into moderation and respectability, but reformers generally preferred that the milieu of improvement be of their own making. In an age which remained awestruck by the scale, logic and success of the Great Exhibition's Crystal Palace, schemes for some kind of grand mechanical solution were regularly offered: People's Palaces--built at Muswell Hill in the sixties, and the Mile End Road in the eighties--were attempts to provide a Great Eastern, as it were, of rational recreation. There was support, too, for public gardens on the model of the German volksgarten or Copenhagen's Tivoli. Foreign travel introduced an increasing number of middle-class reformers to the Continental Sunday; its moderation and easy mingling of the classes in public promenade won many new converts and encouraged the growing opposition to Sabbatarianism. A People's Garden Company issued a prospectus in London in 1870, and there were regular appeals in the press for the opening of the many private city squares to the public. But the most favoured device for improvement was not the
people's palace or the people's garden but the smaller association of the club or institute. Although the pub was still anathema to most reformers, its ubiquity and popularity in working-class life made it an inescapable model, and rational recreation tried in many guises to reproduce its human scale and convivial intimacy of spirit away from the contagion of strong drink and the corrupting benevolences of the publican. Accordingly it was the smaller institutions of rational recreation which grew considerably in number from the mid-century.

There was considerable debate among reformers as to precisely what fare these institutions should offer in the name of rational recreation. Given the moral purpose it was meant to serve it was, as one interested party neatly observed, a very difficult task to provide recreation that was "pure, yet not dull; relaxing, yet not enervating; invigorating, yet not too exciting; popular, yet not vulgarising, and much more besides." Since the early Victorian period improving institutions for workingmen had concentrated on solidly instructional fare. Where the pill of 'useful knowledge' had been sugared with entertainment, the more serious purposes had often been thwarted; this had been so with the Lyceums in Manchester, as we have seen, and it held true for the London Mechanics Institute in the 1850s. But as popular demand for amusement rose steeply in the fifties
and sixties reformers were forced to acknowledge it. In 1861 the London Working Men's College felt it necessary to hold a conference on the Amusement Question, although in this particular confrontation between the claims of "seriousness and frivolity" as J. M. Ludlow chose to characterise it, seriousness prevailed. Three years later, at the YMCA's annual conference, workers in the field impressed upon senior officials how important it was that they offer amusement as well as instruction in order to boost the association's appeal. Temperance audiences demanded and got comic relief as well as exhortation. British Workman pubs (dry facsimiles of the original, started in Leeds in 1867 and copied in many northern towns) and coffee taverns and palaces (offshoots of a movement established in 1874 with the formation of a London Coffee Tavern Company) from the outset placed a major emphasis on amusement and relaxation as well as the provision of cheap refreshments. By the late seventies a People's Entertainment Society was in operation in London.

Dating from the sixties there was in fact a significant retreat from unrelieved didacticism in most schemes for recreational improvement. Reformers were learning that successful competition with the growing range of leisure attractions meant making some attempt to approach popular culture on its own terms, taking the workingman for
what he was, rather than for what he ought to be. James Hole in Leeds had indeed arrived at this realisation some years previously:

It is no longer a question of social morals, but of supply and demand; not of the elevation of popular taste, but of gratification ... . It is not drink, much as our people are given to drinking, which attracts the majority. The singing saloon supplies what neither the gin-palace, nor the beer-house supplies--amusement ... . Exclude the workingman from the opportunity of spending a leisure hour unprofitably if you like, and you shut the door of your institute on half of those who now enjoy its advantages. To raise the workman, we must take hold of him where he is, not where he is not.92

As Shimmin remarked from Liverpool in the same period, "An improvement of manners has been attempted without duly considering the man to be improved."93 Hole and Shimmin were men who knew working-class life at close hand, but the good sense of their message impressed itself on others further removed from its actualities. Explaining the workingmen's club movement to the Social Science Association in 1865 Lord Brougham emphasised, "Nothing can be more erroneous than the notion prevailing in some quarters that the object of these clubs is for education ... the primary objects are relaxation and amusement."94 Methods had changed, as another speaker impressed on a later conference of the Association: "Their object," reported James Airlie, "was to instruct through amusement instead of amusing through instruction."95 It is likely that this tactical volte-face was due to something more than a changing appreciation of
the realities of working-class culture—due in good measure to the more relaxed mores of middle-class life. As Walter Besant remarked of this latter transformation, the days had gone when employers of leisure disallowed merriment among the poor because they themselves were content to be dull. 96

It is obvious, however, that whatever the changes in method, rational recreation remained a very serious business for its proponents, who still spoke in a strongly missionary tone. The dilemma they now faced was that the admission of lighter and more entertaining fare would dilute or obscure the moral message which lay at the heart of the reform design. Churchmen were particularly sensitive to this problem. The churches' concern for recreation was partly a defensive operation against what the Dean of Manchester identified as a "non-Christian humanitarianism," and partly a determination to rid the clergy of the kill-joy image which hampered the fight to hold and expand congregations. 97 It was attended by a real effort to understand popular needs—to recognise, as Bishop Fraser of Manchester put it, "the actual instincts and appetites of the human beings with whom we have to deal"—and Anglican reformers in particular (with the new wave of Christian Socialists in the van) moved forward in the seventies and eighties to endorse the claims of dancing, the theatre and even the pub as
humanising institutions which might yet serve as proper vehicles for social and moral improvement. In such a spirit did a certain Canon Woodhouse propose to update John Wesley: "If the devil ought not to have all the good tunes, why should he have all the popular amusements? But many clergy and lay workers were disturbed by the consequences of entering into competition with the outside world on its own terms. The Sunday Schools enlivened their meetings with songs and sketches, but according to one Bolton minister, who claimed to detect the same syndrome in all the local churches and chapels, the additional recreation failed to hold young people for the senior church:

Where are all the scholars that pass through our Sunday schools? How is it that they do not find their way into the church? My answer is, you have created in them an appetite for something else, and if you want to find them, visit our theatres and singing saloons, and you will find them there in thousands.

A lay worker noted that occasional booms in Sunday School attendance were directly attributable to the announcement of some treat or excursion and were never sustained beyond that date; "Pleasure seeking," he concluded, "is so rampant on every hand that it crushes out all desire for mental progress and produces indifference to religious matters."

Disillusionment and disappointment provided a persistent counterpoint to the reformers' faith in the ultimate efficacy of rational recreation. After the conclusion of a
debate on recreational improvements in the Social Science Association in 1866, Lord Shaftesbury remarked wearily: "It has exhausted the subject but it has devised no cures." A dozen years later Jevons was no more impressed with the progress of reform. Undoubtedly much of the reformers' disappointment can be attributed to the difficulty of realising expectations that were markedly at odds with the cultural process at work in urban popular society. Rational recreation was meant to supplant all 'irrational' recreation and thus establish a moral monopoly in working-class leisure. But in the absence of coercion the workingman still retained the right to choose his recreations, and on the evidence of Bill Banks his choice was indiscriminately rational and irrational. We are not told how Bill Banks spent his Sundays, but even though he may well have been no churchgoer he passed as a man of rational taste in respect of his intelligent literacy and the good management of his home—in several other respects he could be seen as a pleasure-seeking yahoo. Bill Banks reflects the nature of his culture, which was predominantly additive rather than substitutive, and exclusively responsible neither to fashion nor ideology. In an expanding working-class leisure world recreations were not all equally attractive, but they were all equally legitimate. In such circumstances it was most unlikely that rational recreation could effect total victory.
Other problems which the reformers faced in reaching and holding working-class attentions are considered more fully in subsequent chapters; this chapter concludes with a consideration of the middle-classes' response to rational recreation, bearing in mind the important role assigned to them in the reform design.

It seems clear that the reformers' propaganda did much to convert the middle-class public to recreational improvement in the fifties and sixties; recreation grew to be accepted as a necessary amenity, a basic overhead in the maintenance of an industrial society. The opening of new facilities were occasions for much official self-congratulation on the theme of progress. The inauguration of Peel Park in 1866 moved the Bolton Chronicle to recall how leaders of the people had once made the poor find amusements for themselves, whereas now the poor were increasingly well provided for in any number of schemes across the country "which may fairly be qualified by the adjective disinterested." Editorialising on the Working Men's Club movement of the same period The Times commented that "such institutions stand upon the modest and unassailable ground of simple convenience," opining that, aside from a little neighbourly assistance, "we see no necessity for a gentleman going much out of his way or putting his hand very deep into his pocket."
If this was the language of encouragement it was also the language of disengagement, marking a general middle-class reluctance to favour popular recreation with anything other than an occasional subscription or platform speech. Letters to the Chronicle in the seventies pointed out the still inadequate facilities for rational recreation in Bolton. There was, remarked one correspondent, no shortage of moralising on the workingman's condition, but a real shortage of practical assistance: "... moralisers in general never 'knuckle down', that is, propose much more worthy substitutes for recreating the plebeian order, seldom go beyond a sort of Infirmary-recommend" (the latter was a sour local joke referring to the long delay in building a much-needed hospital in the town). Bishop Fraser assailed the Bolton middle classes for their neglect of what he called "the great question of the day," chiding them for their self-righteousness as they sat over nuts and claret deploring the crudity of working-class behaviour. They had, he said, no sympathy or interest in the unfortunate yet remediable environment in which workingmen lived. Certain employers provided their workpeople with reading rooms and sports facilities, but as the big masters withdrew to Southport or farther afield class contact had diminished; the day to day running of the mills passed to a new class of managers with little interest in the lighter side of
industrial welfare, and the heads of firms only met their hands for celebration of the major dynastic events of marriage and majority, and occasional beanos in the run-up to elections. With the exception of this sporadic largesse and the endeavours of a handful of local philanthropists and churchmen, the behaviour of Bolton's bourgeoisie conformed to what the reformer Ellice Hopkins identified as "the selfish indifference of the higher and educated classes to the people's amusements."

Indifference might be better rendered as distaste, for the period witnessed a growing middle-class impatience with the workers. There had been something of a honeymoon period in class relations following recovery from the alarms of the forties: the working classes had distinguished themselves by their good behaviour on the 'shilling days' at the Great Exhibition, the workingman in arms had won admiration for his courage and steadiness in the Crimea, and the Lancashire millhands had earned great praise for their stoic bearing during the cotton famine in the early sixties. No doubt, too, others besides Mr. Gladstone were heartened by the accumulating deposits of small investors in the Post Office Savings Bank. With the revival of reform agitation and the passage of the 1867 Reform Bill the working classes came under more critical scrutiny as 'Our New Masters' (a somewhat apprehensive designation), and it was discovered
that the workingman was being paid too much, scamping his work, striking indiscriminately, and spending his 'overplus' in reckless style. In 1873 The Times remarked tetchily that "More wages and more idle time furnish this abundant leisure which is indeed the luxury of the so-called working classes."\textsuperscript{111} "Workingman worship," so the Saturday Review reported in the same year, "has abated"; the workingman had become "rather tiresome and exasperating."\textsuperscript{112}

The conspicuous pleasure of the masses gave particular offence where it was maintained in the face of financial exigencies in the business and professional world. The writer of a theatre article in the Daily News in the late sixties confessed himself irritated by increasing working-class patronage of the theatre and music hall, at a time when "the critical nature of commercial affairs demands that the middle-class man must ration the visits of his family in the interests of economy."\textsuperscript{113} Such comparisons became more frequent and invidious as the economy inched into the Great Depression, and the middle-classes found their rising standard of living threatened by the relative stagnation of their incomes. Reviewing the expenditure in an East End music hall in 1880, the journalist Ewing Ritchie was indignant that "In these bad times, when people in the middle ranks of life are in despair at the hard prospect before them, here were these workingmen spending their
two hundred pounds a night at least."\(^{114}\)

The offence was compounded when the workingman made his mass break-out from the urban ghetto and thrust himself in upon the privacy of his betters. After four weeks in Southend, reported Ritchie, "I began to tremble at the very sight of an excursionist."\(^{115}\) In the following childhood recollection of the descent of the 'townie' upon rural Derbyshire, the novelist Onida expressed her repugnance more fully:

The excursion trains used to vomit forth, at Easter and in Whitsun week, throngs of the millhands of the period, cads and their flames, tawdry, blowzy, noisy, drunken; the women with dress that aped 'the fashion', and pyramids of artificial flowers on their heads; the men as grotesque and hideous in their own way; tearing through woods and fields like swarms of devastating locusts, and dragging the fern and hawthorn boughs they had torn down in the dust, ending the lovely spring day in pot-houses, drinking gin and bitters, or heavy ales by the quart, and tumbling pell-mell into the night train, roaring music-hall choruses; sodden, tipsy, yelling, loathsome creatures, such as make a monkey look a king, and the newt seem an angel beside humanity—exact semblance and emblem of the vulgarity of the age ... vulgarity likely to live and multiply, and increase in power and in extent.\(^{116}\)

The magazine *Fun* provided regular graphic illustration of the boorishness of the workingman's leisure seen through middle-class eyes. In a representative cartoon on 'The Rough's Holiday', a suitably wart-encrusted blackguard confers with his mate:

Well, we ain't done a bad 'oliday 'ave we? We've broke lots of trees an' 'edges, an' spiled a luvley garding, an' trampled down some roses an' things,
Yet, in one sense, reducing the workingman to this loutish stereotype may well have been comforting; a little gratuitous hooliganism was better than the fury of a Communard, and was small price to pay for its implicit confirmation of bourgeois superiority of manners and morals. The reality, however, was more insidious, for the broad advances in working-class leisure (in company with marked economic and political gains) threatened to obliterate the social differential between the classes. Contemplating the prospective "plebification of art" in 1866, the journalist Matthew Browne remarked that "social boundary lines are not so sharply drawn as they used to be ... . In other words the old cordon sanitaires have snapped under the pressure of the multitudes, and we have not yet succeeded in twisting new ones." This advance of the multitudes was more clearly defined by another writer, Keningale Cook, in a consideration of "The Labourer's Leisure" in 1871:

From being machines, fit only for machine work or inert quiescence, the masses are given the liberty of being men--gentlemen indeed, if in that term be applied the possession of leisure, the power of being 'at large'--a coveted attribute of gentility.

By the eighties the implications of this development had made themselves very clear to the middle classes, for as Walter Besant noted, "they have perceived that their
amusements--also, which seems the last straw, their vices--can be enjoyed by the base mechanical sort, insomuch that, if this kind of thing goes on, there must in the end follow an effacement of all classes.\textsuperscript{120}

In such circumstances the middle classes stood ready to defend the line of their own gentility with a judicious mixture of discrimination and neglect, and the reformers found themselves pulling against the stream. The latter were proposing to alleviate the tensions and degeneration in society through the fraternal association of all classes in leisure, at a time when the middle classes were acutely concerned to reinforce, not reduce, social distance.
FOOTNOTES


2. Factory Inspectors' Reports, Parl. Papers, 1851, XXIII, pp. 4, 220; 1859, XII, p. 56; 1866, XXIV, p. 421. The Factory Act Extension Act and Workshop Regulation Act of the sixties extended the gains of 1847 and 1850. Leonard Horner reported that workers preferred leisure to additional pay.

3. It seems ludicrous, for example, to talk of a more leisurely way of life for the gasworkers, with whom Will Thorne worked 12 hour and even 24 hour shifts in Birmingham in the mid-70s, op. cit., pp. 35-6. The comment on the Saturday half-holiday came from John Heap, secretary of the Sunday League in S. C. H. C. on Public Institutions, Parl. Papers, 1860, XVI, qq. 1109-10.

4. The famous strike for the nine hour day among Newcastle engineers in 1871 provided a rallying cry for several trade groups in Bolton, including miners, joiners, shop-assistants and commercial clerks, e.g. B.C. 8 July 1871; 24 February, 4 May 1872. See also "The Future of Labour and Leisure," Reynolds's Newspaper (London), 15 October 1871.
"The result," said The Times, of the bank holiday, "seems to have been not merely to increase the number of holydays, but to stimulate the observance of them." 14 April 1873. The old spelling was now even more obsolete, for the bank holiday had no counterpart in the religious calendar. Pimlott, op. cit., pp. 144-48.


Factory Inspectors' Reports, Parl. Papers, 1866, XXIV, p. 16; Wright, Some Habits, pp. 108-30.


Factory Inspectors' Reports, Parl. Papers, 1875, XVI, p. 135.


See above, ch. 1, pp. 39-40; The Times, 14 May 1856.
14 B. C., 8, 13 June 1867; 15 May 1869.


16 B. C., 31 August 1867 remarked on the continued aversion of the bench to granting new licences in the face of organised opposition.

17 Ibid., 18 January - 22 February 1873. The licence was granted only after a public meeting of protest, when there were many references to the previous wranglings over the Star.

18 See below, chap. VII.

19 B. C., 17 March 1866. Will Thorne records how the police in Birmingham interfered with his athletic training, carried out perforce in the streets, op. cit., pp. 26-7.

20 From a letter on the morality of the streets in B. C. 18 March 1871. Cases of assault and intimidation in Bolton's streets are recorded in ibid., 4 October 1873, 8 May 1875. See also from Liverpool, "Street Ruffianism," Porcupine, 11 November 1865, and Best on loafers, op. cit., pp. 121, 271.


23 Pall Mall Gazette, 11 September 1884.

24 J. Spencer Curwen, "The Progress of Popular Music," Contemporary Review 52 (August 1887) : 236-48. For the music halls, see below, chap. VII.

25 Barclay, op. cit., passim.


27 Beehive (London), 27 August 1870. I owe this reference to Eric Sager.
28 Esquiros, op. cit., 1 : 344-47.


30 Alexander, op. cit.

31 See the editorial on Whitsuntide and its festivities in B.C., 10 June 1865, and a lengthy report on the New Year's Fair by a clergyman investigating the condition of Bolton's masses in ibid., 13 January 1872.


33 A. Wynter, "Bell's Life and Our Sports and Pastimes," Once a Week 5 (1861) : 151-53. See also Thorne, op. cit., pp. 25-6, 33-4. In Bolton, Samuel Foulds, a shoemaker, was on two occasions prosecuted for his part in organising cockfights, one of them an 'international' at a Cheshire pub. B.C., 30 August 1873, 26 June 1878, and see the letter on the frequency of such occasions, from R. L., ibid., 3 July 1875.

34 E.g. Kitson Clark, op. cit., p. 62; Best, op. cit., p. 203. The Lancashire specialty in this category was 'purring', a form of combat by kicking which still produced occasional fatalities in this period.

35 For Derby Day see Dore's engravings in Jerrold, op. cit., 65-80; H. Taine, Notes on England (London, 1872), pp. 37-44; the Anglophile R. H. Dana, Hospitable England in the 1870s : The Diary of a Young American, 1875-1876 (London, 1921), pp. 294-99. Dore also provided illustrations of Boat Race Day in Jerrold, pp. 59-64, and there is a Walter Greaves' painting in the Tate Gallery which records the event in the early sixties when the S. P. C. K. was trying to have it suppressed. Pimlott, op. cit., pp. 144-48 talks of the "amazing scenes" in August 1871, and the eyewitness is Paul Blouet, French master at a London boys school in the '70s, reminiscing as 'Max O'Rell', John Bull and His Island (London, 1883), p. 114. George Gissing

36 Wright, *Our New Masters* (London, 1873), p. 70; Taine, op. cit., p. 44.

37 The folk wisdom finds expression in diverse sources ranging from Gammer Gurtons Needle in the sixteenth century to Harry Champion's "Boiled Beer and Carrots" on the Victorian music halls. Esquiros, the French visitor, recorded the following snatch of popular oratory in the sixties:

> Beer and wine met at Waterloo: wine red with fury, boiling over with enthusiasm, mad with audacity, rose thrice against that hill on which stood a wall of immovable men, the sons of beer. You have read history: beer gained the day.


38 B. C., 14 July 1866. The Friendly Society of Ironfounders dated from 1809; in the sixties it was in the process of transformation from a trade friendly society into one of the new model unions, but it obviously retained much of its emphasis on good fellowship. Iron workers constituted the second largest occupational group in Bolton, next to the textile workers. Clapham, op. cit., 2: 162; statistics given at workingmen's meeting, B. C., 18 October 1868.

39 Ibid., 26 May 1877. A friendly society official estimated the town's membership at between ten and twelve thousand in 1879, ibid., 8 November, which represents over half of Bolton's male labour force.


41 *Our New Masters*, pp. vii, 121, 180-81.

42 Ibid., pp. 191-93.


Our New Masters, pp. 18-21, 70.

G. J. Holyoake, The Rich Man's Six and the Poor Man's One Day (London, 1856), pleaded for more courtesy in address between members of the working classes: "If working-men treated each other with more respect, other classes would be obliged to treat them with more deference."


B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp. 181-95.


See the qualifications expressed in M. B. Simey, Charitable Effort in Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century (Liverpool, 1951), pp. 55-8. See also the comment by The Times, chap. III, p. 142 above.

Kitson Clark, Making of Victorian England, pp. 119-21; Best, op. cit., 89-90.


B. G. Orchard, The Clerks of Liverpool (Liverpool, 1871), pp. 3-4.

Shimmin, Town Life, p. 139.


W. E. Shipton, "History of the Young Men's Christian Association of London," Exeter Hall Lectures (London, 1864); J. E. H. Williams, Life of Sir George Williams (London, 1906). Recalling his own youthful experience as a draper's clerk in the City, Williams asserted that
"the first 24 hours of a young man's life in London usually settled his eternity in heaven or hell," p. 51.


58 Rev. J. E. Clarke, Plain Papers on the Social Economy of the People (London, 1858), p. 7, and his speech on "Recreation of the People" at the Liverpool Church Congress, 1869, The Times, 7 October 1869. The italics in this and following quotations are the authors', unless otherwise stated.


60 Clarke, Plain Papers, loc. cit; see also Rev. H. S. Brown, Lectures to Working Men (London, 1870), p. 11.

61 Working Men's College Magazine, 1 January 1861.


63 Rev. J. Begg in preface to J. Belford, The Saturday Half-Holiday, in its Bearing on the Due Observance of the Sabbath (Glasgow, 1867).


65 Corderoy, loc. cit.; Clifford, loc. cit.


68 "The Labour Movement," Contemporary Review 21 (January 1873) : 226-51; W. Rathbone, The Increased Earnings of the Working Classes and Their Effect on Themselves and on
the Future of England (Liverpool, 1877); Dingle, op. cit.

69 Jevons, op. cit.

70 Kitson Clark, Making of Victorian England, chap. 8.


76 B. C., 3 June 1882. Cf. The Times 15 October 1883: "The classes are obliged to be separated in much of the work of life. At least in their leisure they should be accustomed to unite and sympathise."


80 The Crystal Palace had been removed to Sydenham in South London where it continued to serve as an exhibition and concert centre and a popular site for excursions. The statistics which impressed reformers recorded that scarcely one case of drunkenness per million visitors appeared in the police reports. Frances Fuller's letter to The Times drawing attention to these figures was published in pamphlet form and widely circulated, see Ludlow and Jones, op. cit., p. 250. Gissing's account of a Bank Holiday at the Crystal Palace suggests that the police often turned a blind eye to drunkenness on such an occasion, see above, n. 35.

81 See e.g. E. H. Currie, Appeal for a People's Palace (London, 1886), and Thomas Brassey's enthusiasm for the 'social palace' of the French industrial philanthropist Godin in Lectures on the Labour Question (London, 1878), pp. 150-52.

82 Travel in Germany, for example, converted Anna Swanwick from Sabbatarianism to support of the Continental Sunday; she became vice-president of the National Sunday League, which campaigned for the opening of museums and galleries, and attracted the support of a number of intellectuals, see M. L. Bruce, Anna Swanwick: Memoir and Recollections (London, 1903), pp. 32-33. For a counterpart working-class movement, see the evidence of R. M. Morrell of the Recreative Religionists in S. C. H. C. on the Sale of Liquor on Sunday Bill, Parl. Papers, 1867-68, XIV, qq. 6251, 6318-26. The Continental Sunday had allegedly eliminated St. Monday among foreign workmen, see Report of Inspectors of Factories, Parl. Papers, 1856, XVIII, p. 87; J. Samuelson, The German Working Man: His Institutions for Self-Culture (London, 1869), pp. 21-34.

83 For the People's Garden Company, see Beehive, 3 September, 26 November 1870 (I owe this reference to Eric Sager). For correspondence on London squares, see The Times, 14, 17 July 1871, which adduced the argument
for the meeting of the classes and proposed to issue entrance tickets to deserving school children from the East End, subject to cleanliness and decency of dress.

A certain Alderman Bennett of Manchester suggested to the Church Congress at Bath in 1873 that its members would do well to learn from the publican how best to attract customers, *The Times*, 11 October 1873. See also *The Coffee Tavern Company, Practical Hints for the Management of Coffee Taverns* (London, 1878).


*Quarterly Messenger*, July 1864.


E. H. Hall, *Coffee Taverns, Cocoa Houses, and Coffee Palaces: Their Rise, Progress, and Prospects* (London, 1878) is the best source for these related movements, together with the files of the *Coffee Public House News*, first published in the same year, and the later *Refreshment News*. There are reports on the British Workman pubs in *Trans. N. A. P. S. S.*, 1871, pp. 591-92. Such ventures were expected to pay their own way, but frequently suffered from bad management. The hearty style of the coffee tavern movement comes across in these lines written to celebrate the opening of a Birmingham coffee house:

"Throw open your doors with a flourish of trumpets, Let the generous tea urn run frothing and free. Oh! toast the rich muffins, and butter the crumpets, We pledge the 'promoters' in mocha and tea."


Ibid., 1866, p. 792.


Report on Church Congress at Sheffield, *The Times*, 4 October 1878, and Wakefield, ibid., 8 October 1886.

Fraser, who exemplified the more progressive approach to social reform, was speaking in Bolton on recreation for the working classes, "the great question of the day," B. C., 4 September 1875. For the Christian Socialists, see P. d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 99-102, 118-22; Rev. T. Hancock, "The Church and the Pub," *Church Reformer*, May 1888. Of the leader of this new phase of Christian Socialism, Stewart Headlam, it should be noted that he was more interested in aesthetic than rational recreation.

"The Drama as a Moral Teacher," editorial in *Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1879.

B. C., 29 January 1876. See also, the report of a Wesleyan Sunday school convention, ibid., 8 April 1876.

Ibid., 29 May 1875.

*Trans. N. A. P. S. S.*, 1866, p. 3; Jevons, op. cit.

There was a similar eclecticism to the popular choice of place of worship, see H. Pelling, "Popular Attitudes to Religion," in *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London, 1968), pp. 19-36.

B. C., 26 May 1866.

*The Times*, 14 November 1865.
B. C., 29 January 1875. See also the dialect letter from an artisan, 'Dicky Drawfoile,' ibid., 21 August 1875.

Ibid., 4 September 1875. 'Purring' was in the news at the time.

On the evidence of the factory inspectors' reports (which, with the increase in legislation, covered a much greater number of establishments) employers generally paid less attention to their workers' social welfare than in the forties. There were some obvious exceptions, but it should be noted that improving employers could meet with considerable hostility from their peers, see, for example, the case of Hugh Mason in W. M. Bowman, *England in Ashton under Lyne* (Altrincham, 1960), pp. 461-62.

Hopkins, op. cit., p. 131.


Ibid., pp. 182-95. A London police superintendent opined that only the more intelligent of the working classes were to be found on excursions, S. C. H. L. on Intemperance, Parl. Papers, 1877, XI, q. 6283.

Ouida (M. de la Ramee), *Views and Opinions* (London, 1895), pp. 333-34, 340. The image of vomiting was common to this kind of commentary.

118 Browne, op. cit., p. 280.

119 Idem, loc. cit.

120 Besant, "The People's Palace," (1887) in As We Are and As We May Be (London, 1903), p. 55.
V. RATIONAL RECREATION IN OPERATION:
THE WORKING MEN'S CLUB MOVEMENT

The working men's club movement provides the most prominent example of rational recreation formally organised on a national scale. Fostered by the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, founded in 1862, the movement derived its momentum from middle-class initiative and support, yet by the eighties the clubs had become exclusive working-class preserves, and the original designs of its mentors had been all but frustrated. The history of the movement provides further illustration of the social philosophy of rational recreation, while demonstrating the problems of putting it into practice.¹

The idea of providing working men with social clubs which emphasised good fellowship rather than adult education clearly finds its antecedents in Heywood's Manchester Lyceums of the 1840s.² Charles Knight, the publisher, also recalled a club in Birmingham in 1848 which was run by a hosiery manufacturer called Brookes, who advertised it as his own Ministry to the Poor, providing cheap food and reading rooms "in an attempt to penetrate down to those classes which Mechanics Institutes and Benefit Societies have never
yet reached."³ This sounds more like an exercise in relief than recreation, but the attempt to reach beyond the established working-class public for improvement and mutual assistance was one of the principal objectives of the club movement as it developed. In Brighton in the same year, the Reverend Frederick Robertson founded a Working Men's Institute which, though short-lived, provided some early inspiration for Henry Solly, the subsequent founder of the CIU; its primary emphasis was on formal education, but Robertson's Institute has been awarded the title of the "first recognisable workingmen's club."⁴

Of the twenty or so clubs which emerged in the 1850s and satisfied the CIU's later search for a pedigree, the majority were rural.⁵ They were the creations of paternalist landlords and clergymen anxious to counter the beershops, whose spread had excited much more opposition from local authorities in the country districts than in the towns. The Rev. Sidney Godolphin Osborne, a shrewd observer of rural society (and, as S.G.O., an indefatigable correspondent to The Times) wrote in 1852 of the need for "moral beer-houses," painting a picture of "a simple retreat, furnishing warmth and light, bread and cheese, baccy and beer under the superintendence of a steward with no interest in beer sales."⁶ Osborne's description soon came to life in the establishment of Bastard's Club in Blandford, Dorset⁷
(named after its founder and not its members, as Cole and Postgate enjoy telling us) and several other clubs were in existence in the southern counties by the middle of the decade. At Littlemore, near Oxford, the local vicar formed a club for farm labourers which progressive churchmen hailed as a timely experiment. At Rothamsted in Hertfordshire, Sir John Lawes, the pioneer agricultural chemist, established a club for the workers on his estate. The success of his experiment attracted a visit from Dickens, who recorded his approval, noting that the sale of beer in the new club—in limited amounts—had put the local village pub out of business. Such a victory was the battle honour reformers were proudest to display, but the mortality rate among these early village clubs was high, and the few details of their careers which survive show clearly where they were most vulnerable to working-class disaffection. The prohibition of beer which prevailed in most of these pioneer establishments was much disliked, but the greater offence of the first club promoters in the eyes of members was that of their intrusive supervision of club affairs, a particular failing of the clergy. These problems bulked large in the history of the developing club movement.

A handful of town clubs were also started in the 1850s. Temperance was a common guiding light—literally so in the case of the Notting Hill Workman's Hall where a
working model of the Eddystone lighthouse guided the converted to its doors—and clergymen were the commonest promoters. Among them was Henry Solly, who founded a Working Men's Mutual Improvement and Recreation Society in Lancaster in 1860. The organised games at least pleased the local police sergeant ("If this thing goes on, sir, there'll soon be nothing for us to do") but the experiment was short-lived, and provided Solly with hard evidence of the difficulties of establishing a constructive rapport between middle-class patron and working-class members. He found the latter's behaviour alternately encouraging and exasperating, as he reported to Lord Brougham on the progress of his scheme; one week he was warmed by their "earnest, brotherly zeal," the next week he was depressed by their "miserable apathy." Such vagaries no doubt bedevilled other town clubs, for they were not noticeably hardier than their country cousins.

But Solly held faith with the club ideal, and it was largely through his energies that the C I U was founded in 1862, to encourage, supervise and co-ordinate the establishment of working men's clubs across the country. Solly had found the ideal platform for propaganda in the Social Science Association, and it was in the course of its annual congress in London that year that his lobbying produced a meeting with other interested parties which established the Union. The other founder members included
philanthropic businessmen such as Edward Rathbone of Liverpool, the M.P. James Heywood, Edward Clarke, a young London lawyer interested in social reform, and the Rev. David Thomas who had pioneered clubs in the capital. Two workingmen were present among this predominantly middle-class assembly, one of whom, John Bainbridge, had been Solly's friend since the forties. Solly prevailed upon Lord Brougham to be the first president of the C I U, an early example of his success in attracting aristocratic patronage. But the real work of the Union was done by a small secretariat, and its early history is dominated by successive secretaries. Of these, Solly himself, who held the post from 1862-72 and remained an influential figure for several years thereafter, is most important. He embodied the C I U, and his credo exemplifies much that was common thinking behind rational recreation.

Solly's interest in working-class improvement was conditioned by his first hand experience of class conflict in the 1840s. Born in 1814 into one of the well-educated and commercially prosperous London dissenting communities, Solly had been educated at London University and was destined initially for the family business; he chose instead to enter the Unitarian ministry, which took him to the West Country, where he became involved in the Chartist agitation. This was his first contact with working-class life and
politics. He discovered a sympathy with the local Chartists who, as moral force men, impressed him by their intelligence and restraint as well as the basic justice of their case. It was in this company that he met Bainbridge, who later moved to London and served as something of a mascot for Solly in the early years of the C I U. Bainbridge clearly represented all that was best in working-class life for Solly, and was most likely the model for the eponymous hero of Solly's novel *James Sandford, Carpenter and Chartist*, a working man who takes William Lovett for his hero and admits the good sense of working with rather than against middle-class reformism. After the excitement of the Chartist years, strenuous self-help brings Sandford the proprietorship of a small business, the happy-ever-after denouement of the bourgeois prescription for working-class contentment. During the course of his progress, Sandford meets with and resists the appeals of the dark forces within the working-class community, represented by the physical force Chartists with their credulous infatuation with Feargus O'Connor. Thus for Solly the confrontations of the forties revealed two distinct and contrary faces to the working class.

During these years Solly also learnt at first hand of the gulf between the classes; the elders of his church in Yeovil had been so affrighted by Chartism that they had threatened to withhold Solly's stipend when they learnt of
his implication in the movement. Solly was a natural convert to Joseph Sturge's Complete Suffrage Union of 1842, which was formed expressly to effect a reconciliation between middle and working classes behind a reform programme free of all associations with O'Connorite militancy, and he enlisted as one of the movement's missionaries. His appetite for political reform subsided after the forties, and under the influence of Christian Socialism he turned to social questions. His continuing concern here was that the classes should work for improvement in concert, and thus preclude a return to the dangerous divisions of the Chartist years.

Solly's ambivalent attitude to the working classes persisted into the sixties. At his most optimistic, Solly cast them as "the new Greeks," whose genius for association would, when effectively released, renovate national life, which he considered dangerously decayed due to the reckless competition and materialism of both the aristocracy and the middle class. But this same canker which was demoralising the upper levels of society was liable to disrupt those of the working classes necessarily cast as helots or worse:

Every advance in material prosperity presents increased temptations and facilities to the destitute and criminal classes for more direct violations of the eighth commandment. What would a force of eight or nine thousand police be against the 150,000 roughs
and villains whom, on some sufficiently exciting occasion, the metropolis might see arrayed versus law and order ... we must not conceal from ourselves the possibility of Londoners having to live from time to time under the protection and even rule of the military; that again might raise the labouring classes throughout the country, and give us a civil or servile war.19

The garotting scare in West End streets and a recent bread riot in the East End moved Solly to raise this spectre of insurrection in an address in 1868 to the Royal Society of Arts, and his warnings reflect the underlying nervousness among his class at the continuing combustibility of the masses, particularly in the capital.

To Solly the achievement of a well ordered and harmonious society depended upon educating the working classes to recognise that the existing system offered the best, and indeed the only guarantee that the interests of both capital and labour would be well and equitably served. The better elements among the workingmen would come to this realisation voluntarily if they could find sanctuary from the ignorant clamour of the pub and the baseness that lurked among their fellows; "the more prudent, worthier members of the working class," noted Solly, "are too often dragged down by their reckless, drinking, cowardly or dishonest neighbours."20 The club was the right milieu within which the necessary education of the workingman could proceed; it provided firstly for recreation, which Solly recognised as a basic need of social welfare, but it also constituted
an informal teaching situation into which more serious matters could gradually be introduced. The principle was explained in Solly's theory of the inclined plane:

Begin by meeting the workingmen's humblest social wants for relaxation and amusement, and you may lift our hardworked brethren by degrees up to very respectable heights of knowledge and education .. You fail if you present the thick end of the plane first.21

Accordingly, he explained, some incidental discussion on news of the day could lead to regular classes which, had they constituted the only item on the club programme, would have been impalatable to the average workingman. Head of the list of suggested topics was political economy. "If they (workingmen) were asked at the outset to join such a class," Solly maintained, "they would never consent; but if they once attended such classes, they would discover that political economists were not striving to enforce laws of their own or anybody's making, but simply seeking to interpret the laws of God."22 Solly chose the word club for its associations of sociability and relaxation but the inclusion of institute in the Union's title was meant to indicate its serious educational intentions, and there was never any dissembling as to its ultimate purpose of social indoctrination.

The success of the scheme was, in Solly's mind, very much dependent upon the participation of the middle
and upper classes. They were to provide the initiative, the **stimulus ab extra**, as he called it. Working at the local level they would establish clubs according to the guidelines recommended by the C I U. The workers themselves were expected eventually to take over the complete management of the clubs, but the practice of social contact between the classes would by then be firmly implanted. It was an express purpose of the clubs

... to form a centre of communication between men of all classes interested in the welfare of the people; to bring about a better understanding between men of different occupations and standings.  

Communication would be facilitated by instructing workingmen in the proper forms of address and conversation—"getting rid of that which makes men repellent in ordinary intercourse," as E. V. Neale explained in his club lectures on True Refinement. Cordiality and good manners would then allow such practical returns as the arbitration and conciliation of industrial disputes and "the interchange of kind services."  

Solly was indefatigable in pursuing his dream ("This is Mr. Solly," Henry Fawcett remarked drily to his wife, "who thinks Heaven is made of working men's clubs") but his single-mindedness was a mixed blessing to the movement. Benjamin Hall, the C I U's first official historian, wrote that Solly had two jobs to do in his capacity as Union secretary: he had to obtain support, financial and moral,
from non-workmen; and he had to interest the workmen themselves.\textsuperscript{26} He was more successful in the first task. Hall, who was not wholly uncritical of his predecessor, was nonetheless dazzled by Solly's skill in raising subscriptions, declaring that "so comprehensive a list of distinguished men and women of the Victorian era, led by Lord Chancellors and Archbishops, was never before or since attracted to any scheme."\textsuperscript{27} The tenacity with which Solly pursued aristocratic patronage bemused and ultimately exasperated Lord Lyttelton, who succeeded Brougham as President. Lyttelton confessed to the latter that he had allowed himself to succumb to "our persevering friend," and be used "as a jackal to get letters and opinions from the nobility";\textsuperscript{28} he finally rebelled after "ten years of ridiculous gyrations."\textsuperscript{29} There was something of the social climber in Solly which may have been anxious to compensate for the occasional ostracism he had suffered as a Unitarian,\textsuperscript{30} or may more simply have reflected the characteristic desire of his class for lordly contact and recognition; in any case, it is clear that he was more solicitous of noble than working-class company. Within the council of the C I U he rode roughshod over Thomas Paterson, the most prominent working-class member, and in 1870, when Solly was at issue with the council as a whole and attempted briefly to form a rival organisation, it is noticeable that though he
contrived to redirect the subscriptions of most of the Dukes and Earls to his new scheme he was unable to command the allegiance of the rank and file club members. Paterson is an obscure figure and it would be too facile to interpret his clash with Solly in exclusively class terms, especially since the latter was told by James Hole that he was "without exception the most deficient in tact of any man in a public capacity," a deficiency which, as we have seen, could exasperate an aristocrat as easily as an artisan.

But the court revolt against Solly was against his authoritarianism, and it is plain that this characteristic alienated working men with whom he worked in other improvement schemes. As one of them wrote:

Mr. Solly's different attempts at similar movements have not recommended him to the working men. He has never worked unless allowed the entire lead as well as good pay. And has never been overscrupulous in obtaining his ends.

It is doubtful if the lordly guineas that Solly attracted were always sufficient compensation for the ill-feeling generated by his often irascible missionary zeal.

The C I U grew but slowly during its early years and Hall identified various general difficulties that impeded its progress. Of these, 'The Great Beer Question' and the complications of patronage weighed heaviest. Beer was central to working-class culture but mostly abhorrent to middle-class reformers. Solly himself was an active
teetotaller, and though the original prospectus for the C I U disclaimed any connexion with the Total Abstinence movement it recommended prohibition of the sale of liquor, and Solly mailed a copy of the prospectus to every temperance society in the country. Many of the clubs of the 1850s had been strictly teetotal and Hodgson Pratt, Solly's successor to the secretaryship, recollected that local cadres of temperance workingmen, backed by discreet subsidies from wealthy sympathisers, had founded a substantial number of the new clubs following the inception of the Union in 1862. Pratt also recalled how unpopular these 'temperance shops' had been with other workingmen. Brougham and Lyttelton of the Union council had from the outset advised Solly against enforcing prohibition. Lyttelton, who was an enthusiastic supporter of the C I U, took his model for the workingmen's clubs from the gentleman's clubs of Pall Mall and St. James, and argued that drink in moderate amounts had a natural place in social life. As a lord, he was more likely to prevail with Solly than other council members, but what seemed finally to effect the latter's conversion to tolerance on the beer question was the respectable character of those clubs which had ignored the C I U ruling and sold beer to their members from the beginning.
At several conferences in the mid and late sixties Solly heard the working men's case: that they drank beer for the company rather than from an unmanageable lust for beer, that tea and coffee were inadequate refreshment after a shift down the mines or in the steel mills, and that the clubs would foster moderation by moving men out of range of the publican with his encouragement of traditional customs of 'treating and tossing'. These arguments were not new—they were mostly common enough counters to the temperance case—but now they were proven in practice, and were supported by club patrons who had been won over from an initial hostility to strong drink. Union officials tried to promote coffee as an alternative beverage and took club secretaries on tours of the coffee taverns, but the clubmen were unimpressed by the "black dose of chicory soup" as a source of refreshment or good cheer, and by 1871 Henry Solly was to be found urging the Social Science Association to recognise the fact that the great majority of British workmen were "moderate drinkers" who would never join a club without beer. The young Lord Rosebery endeared himself to clubmen by delivering the final blow for tolerance at the thirteenth annual meeting of the Union four years later. As guest speaker he declared that each club "should be free from all vexations and childish restrictions on the supply of intoxicating drinks and all similar matters."
The patronage issue constituted a more obstinate problem than the Great Beer Question, though the two were closely connected, for the prohibition of beer exemplified the tight control which most early patrons considered appropriate for club members. Drawing on their experience of other promotions, several speakers to the Social Science Association had warned of workingmen's resentment of manipulation and autocracy, but club patrons were confident that they knew best. As Ben Hall remarked: "It may be taken for granted that what took place in the majority of clubs in the first year of our Union was not what the members wished, but what was allowed." After ten years' acquaintance with the C I U an artisan reported to The Times that little had changed; the clubs, he maintained, offered only a secular version of "the cup of tea and tract formula." Solly was aware of the members' criticisms and in one of the Union pamphlets explaining club philosophy to prospective patrons he reproduced one of the working men's complaints: "We have masters all day long, and we don't want them at night." The motto of the movement, emphasised Solly, must be "Supplement, not supersede." The middle classes must prime the pump, but the workers were to be given every encouragement to work towards independent management, and Union policy recommended that at least half the members of any club's governing committee should be bona-fide working men. Patrons, advised Solly, must conduct
themselves as friends, not masters. 45

Solly's own overbearing manner reveals how difficult it was to reconcile this prescription with existing class roles; moreover, however much confidence Union propaganda expressed in the workingman, Solly and other middle-class supporters of the movement had considerable misgivings about his ability to initiate or maintain an orderly and efficient organisation. As one otherwise encouraging article on the clubs pointed out when the C I U was formed:

... if such institutions are left entirely to the working classes they will be deficient in power, method and stability, and for want of the conservative element will be ever in danger of falling to pieces. 46

At the inaugural tea party of the Bolton W. M. C. Edmund Ashworth warned:

We shall always find a number of men, perhaps, whose education has been acquired in the pub, and the improprieties of such characters will be difficult to control, except you have a vigorous committee and an absolute authority to enforce good order. You may find sometimes a little difficulty but I suggest that absolute authority be placed in the hands of one individual and that the committee be always at hand to support his authority. 47

In recounting the history of the early years Hall confessed:
"As we know now, failure lay principally in the fact that the clubs were not spontaneously originated and democratically controlled." In explanation he offered the standard apologia that workingmen then "were little capable of the thought of,
or the power to originate and manage clubs until taught and inspired by others.  

Certainly, outside support was often invaluable in establishing clubs; granting premises, guaranteeing rents and mortgages, advancing loans, providing a legal umbrella—these were services the working classes could not easily provide for themselves. But members objected to the further tutelage they were obliged to accept, "the cup of tea and tract formula" that included censorship of entertainments and a ban on all political discussion.

The C.I.U oligarchy was particularly anxious to keep politics out of the clubs. Solly had promoted the club ideal as non-sectarian in matters of religion and politics—"a green spot," as one of his supporters once put it, "where all shades of opinion, creed, or calling can meet in harmony with one another." Though he was sympathetic to the London junta of trade union leaders he shut George Howell out of the C.I.U council in 1866 as an undesirable agitator, and in 1870 when he was joint editor of the Beehive for a few months, he tried hard to counterbalance the radical views of George Potter, the founder of the famous working-class paper. "Politics," Solly once declared, in a desperately ingenuous remark, "should be studied without reference to politics." He feared that the working classes would return to the political
adventurism of thirty years previous and destroy the likelihood of achieving the fraternal class consensus he yearned for. W. T. Marriott, Q. C., a long-standing supporter and council member of the C I U, told a union soiree in the early eighties that he would say nothing against political clubs, "but he much preferred social clubs, because in the latter there would be more fair play (loud cries of 'No' and 'Yes')."\(^{53}\) Fair play in the early years of the C I U had meant no play; in the seventies, as middle-class control of individual clubs was supplanted, many of them provided strong political content, and by 1881 Solly estimated their number at between five to six hundred.\(^{54}\)

Friction between patrons and members appeared least in small towns, and it was this type of club which fared best in the first years of the C I U's history. In a list of one hundred and three clubs known to the Union in 1869 only nine were in the big towns or manufacturing districts; two years later, despite an overall increase in number, the proportions had scarcely changed.\(^{55}\) It was a small-town which provided the Union executive with its model club--Wisbech W M C in Cambridgeshire. Hodgson Pratt awarded Wisbech first prize after a tour of clubland in 1870, and it represented the ideal to him and Solly for more than a decade. Its patrons were drawn from the
prominent local Quaker family, the Peckovers, and in a
town of nine thousand it enjoyed a membership of over eight
hundred working men. It incorporated its own co-operative
society, savings bank, library and allotment scheme; it
stayed teetotal and, in Solly's words, "eschewed polemics."
Strong traditions of deference and a marked community
identity gave the club its stability. The other successful
clubs which impressed Pratt during his tour were in
Bridlington and North Ormesby, and one of the few enthusiastic
reports from workingmen in these years came from Scarborough,
another small urban centre.

The halting progress of the movement in the large
towns and cities reflected the tensions of a more divisive
class society. C I U reports attributed slow growth in
the capital to the fragmented nature of its working-class
community and the abundant rival attractions of a great city.
Solly felt that the root of the problem lay with the trade
societies. The Union encouraged workmen to use club
premises for their trades' and friendly societies meetings
rather than the pub, but London trade societies' leaders
feared the employer's hand in this, for during the 1859
builders' strike the masters had attempted to set up
workingmen's institutes to supplant the existing houses of
call and shelter and indoctrinate non-unionised labour.
Solly met with the trades' leaders and went some way to
appeasing their fears, but there were still considerable working-class misgivings about the motives of the Union patrons, and the annual meeting of 1866 remarked on "the suspicion with which the great mass of the workmen view the Union."\(^{60}\)

Just as the working men held back, so too did those "men of higher social position" whose assistance the C I U considered so necessary to success. Few of the vice-presidents whose names adorned the Union's prospectus sponsored their own clubs. The treasurer of the Wellclose Square W M C in the East End of London reported on "the utter indifference of most of the wealthy employers of labour who amass their money here, but spend it elsewhere."\(^{61}\) The indifference was not confined to London, and appears as much a measure of studied retaliation as of insensibility, for the annual report of 1873 acknowledged that "In several localities we have found a determination on the part of employers to refuse any aid towards the establishment of these clubs--the result of the unfortunate disputes which have arisen between them and those they employ."\(^{62}\) When the first Working Men's Club in Bolton was in a state of imminent collapse in 1869, the Chronicle warned that its members could expect no subvention from employers while industrial relations were strained.\(^{63}\) Thus were the new clubs afflicted by the very problems they were supposed to remedy.
But the club idea met real working-class needs and workingmen gradually overcame the problems of absent or overbearing patronage by founding their own clubs or discharging the original middle-class promoters as redundant. Some working men had formed their own clubs in the first decade of the C I U's history, but the practice became noticeably widespread in the mid-seventies; the annual report for 1873 which remarked on the hostility of employers also noted the increasing number of applications for C I U advice from workingmen—"The idea of no patronage," it noted, "grows fast." As examples the report referred to the establishment of an independent W M C in St. Austell in Cornwall, and the emancipation of the Wednesbury W M C in Staffordshire, where members had succeeded to self-government by kicking out their "sluggish" gentleman patrons. Workingmen pooled their trade skills to convert and furnish premises, and established clubs assisted their new neighbours.

The sale of beer was of great assistance in the development towards worker control of the movement, for it provided valuable revenue. From Maidstone, the local workingmen's clubs made the following report to the Union's house journal in 1873: "The members have made the discovery that the profit on beer is about 30%, and brings them double what they have to pay for rent, though the quantity sold does not average two pints per person per week." Once a
club was self-supporting it could become self-governing. So went Maidstone W M C, and so went many others.\textsuperscript{67} It should be noted here too that the sale of beer indirectly encouraged a greater responsibility among club members, for it obliged the clubs to fight a long defensive action against the publicans' trade protection societies which contested the legality of club liquor sales.\textsuperscript{68} Good order and scrupulous attention to the conditions of membership were thus necessary to assure the clubs of their continued status as private institutions exempt from official licensing requirements.

By 1878 an outside observer estimated that 52\% of the clubs were wholly self-supporting, and five years later Pratt put the figure at 75\%.\textsuperscript{69} Membership figures indicate the overall growth in the same period: in 1874 membership was put at 90,000, in 1878 at 150,000, in 1880 at 320,000, and by 1883 was estimated to have passed the half-million mark. The expansion was particularly marked in the London area where the number of clubs rose from 82 to 120 between 1876 and 1882.\textsuperscript{70}

It was the London clubs which took the lead in attacking the last stronghold of patronage. For though the clubs increasingly controlled their own affairs, they were almost completely unrepresented on the C I U council. A handful of the more politically-minded London clubs began to protest the middle-class monopoly of council offices by
refusing to contribute to C I U funds and forming a virtually independent London branch of the Union in 1881 (the forerunner of the Metropolitan Federation of Radical Clubs of 1886). The withholding of subscriptions hurt the Union. Solly complained to the Social Science Association that it was being "mischievously crippled," and by 1883 the council realised that it could no longer survive on the hand-outs of honorary vice-presidents and agreed to a conference on the question of finances and club representation. Here the longstanding complaints of club members found full and forcible expression. One working-class delegate put it thus:

The Union has reached a crisis in its history. It must either be patronising or self-supporting. It cannot be the former and must either become the latter or cease to exist ... . A great deal has been said about abolishing class distinctions but under the present system these existed in the constitution of the Union itself.

Another workingman registered "a strong protest versus patronage," before meeting criticisms which must have been used to block working-class representation before:

The working men have a right to work out their own aims. It is absurd to say they cannot maintain and work the Union—they must take it in hand at once, for at present there was no faith in it.

Council members repeated the Union's aims of eradicating class feeling, talking bluntly of the need to deflate the bigots in fustian as well as in broadcloth. Solly was afraid that a sudden working-class takeover would alienate
subscribers to Union funds. But the working-class delegation claimed that such dependence was not only demeaning but unnecessary if the C I U could command the complete allegiance of its members, and the delegation carried the day with the passage of New Model Rules, which secured direct club representation on the C I U council. J. J. Dent became the Union's first working-class secretary on the resignation of Hodgson Pratt. In Manchester there was a similar victory over the class exclusiveness of the district headquarters, and at the following annual general meeting in 1884 Thomas Brassey pronounced the Union justly democratised.

Who were these first generations of clubmen and what was club life like? It seems that the movement attracted members from across a wide range of working-class society. The C I U had never recommended imposing any test of membership (or conditions of dress) and advised only a lower age limit of eighteen years. Henry Mayhew, whose categories are generally reliable, visited London clubs where membership comprised "lower middle class, well-to-do artisans and petty tradesmen," others where membership was "confined to the labouring rather than the artisan class." Some club secretaries agreed in recognising a caste distinction between mechanics and labourers which determined local membership, but the majority of references suggest a
broad mix of members within each club. The Scarborough club reported that its members included "the better class of workmen, the indifferent, those who spend their spare time in drinking and loose company, and some of the off-scourings of society."\(^{77}\) The Leeds club ran the gamut "from respectable artisans to the low fellows who may be seen leaning against the walls of public houses."\(^{78}\) On the evidence of the minutes of the Newcastle-Upon-Tyne W M C it may have been true that it was the skilled craftsman who dominated the club committees,\(^ {79}\) but it seems likely that in general the clubs recruited by neighbourhood rather than particular trades.

There was some adverse comment on the quality of club membership. Hodgson Pratt complained in the '80s of "the lack of some sort of intellectual or educational backbone" to the movement, and was disturbed at what he felt was a "complete separation" between the clubs and other working-class organisations such as the co-operative societies (of which he was himself an active supporter).\(^ {80}\) Frederick Rogers, in what seems to be the only contemporary working-class autobiography to record club life in any detail, maintained that "the clubs did not attract the more intellectual of the working classes; these were in the trade union movement or the co-operative world."\(^ {81}\) Such comment is not to be disregarded—particularly since this kind of charge became more common by the nineties\(^ {82}\)—but neither should it be left
unchallenged. At Newcastle and Wisbech, for example, local co-operative societies used the workingmen's clubs' premises, which argues some mutual acquaintance, and during the campaign for the third reform bill in 1884 the Club and Institute Journal reported that "the affiliated clubs formed no mean part of the procession, although somewhat short of numbers through the fact that many of their members fell in with the various trades unions." James Beal, the middle-class chairman of the Metropolitan Municipal Reform Association, found that the clubs in Chelsea at which he lectured were composed of "the most intelligent workingmen of the district in all cases," and Stan Shipley's researches into metropolitan clublife reveal programmes of lectures and discussions which fulfil his claims that certain of the clubs constituted an artisan's university. The vigorously intellectual club was no doubt an exception in the movement as a whole, and would have been too iconoclastic in the content of its debate to recommend itself to Pratt and the Union council, but the weekly reports in the club press record a regular diet of literary and scientific talks, dramatic readings and discussions, which demonstrates that club life was far from mindless. Perhaps it was the unabashed informality of the clubs--the constant traffic, the cries of the pie-boy and the pot-boy, the smoking and bantering--which produced a bad press among middle-class visitors. For Rogers,
fired with the enthusiasm of the workingclass auto-didact, disenchantment came in the middle of his Sunday morning lecture on Shakespeare, when the club chairman called a break to let the man come round with the beer.\textsuperscript{87}

Certainly in these years the clubs were not passive institutions, and as patronage receded they made themselves heard on an increasing range of public questions.\textsuperscript{88} The Newcastle-Upon-Tyne club petitioned Parliament on several occasions in the 1860s: on the franchise question, the Alabama Dispute, and the Contagious Diseases Act.\textsuperscript{89} Several clubs in London and the provinces applied for membership of the republican-flavoured Land and Labour League in 1870,\textsuperscript{90} and there was considerable protest from metropolitan clubs at the grant of funds to the Prince of Wales for his Indian trip in 1875.\textsuperscript{91} The London clubs also spoke out against Sabbatarianism and the anti-music hall lobby, and exerted considerable influence in local municipal politics, particularly in school board elections.\textsuperscript{92} There are echoes of this kind of activism in Lancashire.\textsuperscript{93}

But the main function of the clubs was to provide for 'the humbler wants' of its members, and this they did admirably. They provided a set of permanent premises for recreation to an extent which no other organisation or movement could match. Illustrations of club interiors seem cheerless to us, but the rooms were kept clean, well-lit
and warm, a far remove from the condition of much working-
class housing. They were genuine recuperative refuges,
free from commercial pressures, ritual drinking, police
harassment, district visitors, and the wife and family.

With their lectures, concerts, indoor and outdoor games,
excursions and picnics, Christmas clubs, coal clubs and sick
clubs they provided, at modest cost, the facilities of the
public library, music-hall, pub, playing field and friendly
society combined.

The spare and functional aspect of the club rooms
was relieved by the feeling of community generated by
the members, a factor that impressed otherwise critical
visitors such as Rogers and Walter Besant. This had not
been an instant accomplishment. In the early years members
had missed the commanding central figure of the landlord
and the familiar atmosphere of the pub— one man complained
that he missed the potboy in particular, for here at least
had been someone he could order about after a day of taking
orders. When drink was introduced the Union urged club
stewards to play the part of the host, but as simple
dispensers of beer they lacked the traditional substance
of the publican. The style of the workingman's club as
it evolved was much less monocentric than that of the pub,
and management by committee made authority more self-effacing.
Something of the essence of club life and of the typical club
man is conveyed in this character sketch by Rogers of James Lowe, the greatly respected president of the Hackney W M C;

He was a man with a good fund of general information but was not in any large sense an educated man. He was not a great orator; he was a moderately good speaker, and that was all ... . He had the frank geniality which the workman loves, knew his own limitations and never presumed on his position, devoted himself absolutely to the well-being of the club and its ideals, and in his interpretation of them was only just a little ahead of his followers.  

Club government was nonetheless forceful for being by committee. Mayhew had remarked on the perfect decorum in the clubs he visited on his London tour. He had, he said, witnessed NOT ONE single case of drunkenness, nor riot, nor coarse language. At the Newcastle upon Tyne club which was self-managed, the committee appointed a superintendent who patrolled the club rooms, alert for drunkenness, "ungentlemanly language," or petty corruption on the part of the bagatelle marker. The club hired up to a dozen policemen to keep order at the annual picnic. Members who were expelled or suspended for some breach of the regulations anxiously solicited for reinstatement, for membership was obviously highly valued and the rules generally respected. This concern for good order and good manners fulfilled something at least of the original intentions of Solly and his friends.
How close had the C I U come to realising its founder's designs? The clubs' historian provided one answer: "The sphere of the workman's club," wrote B. T. Hall in 1912, "is smaller in circumference than was at first projected by the Pioneer, and immeasurably smaller in its results." Measured against Solly's expectations, this would also stand as a fair judgement of the reach and progress of the organised club movement in the first twenty years or so of its life. The good order that obtained was obscured by the fug of tobacco smoke and the clatter of glasses, and if club members were not barbarians they would hardly yet have passed as the new Greeks. The workingmen who gradually assumed control of the clubs were bent on improvement, but though they moved up Solly's inclined plane they were bound for a different destination and—most disappointing of all—they expressly rejected the guiding hand of their social superiors. The resolution of class differences through "the friendly discussion of capital and labour" clearly begged too many questions about the outside world of the 1870s and '80s, and in struggling to construct their own life within the clubs the members revealed the instincts of an authentic class consciousness and the continuing strengths of an independent culture. Yet in their willingness to allow beer in the clubs Solly and other bourgeois patrons had come closer to an informed and
committed tolerance of that culture than the great majority of their fellows, for they had after all been prepared to modify social patterns to accommodate behaviour that others tried simply to eradicate. It was ironic that it was this concession which gave the working-class members the economic self-sufficiency that enabled them to unship their mentors.
FOOTNOTES

1 Materials for the study of the club movement are to be found in the 17 volumes of the Solly Collection of cuttings and manuscripts, assembled by Henry Solly, founder of the C I U; British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics, Misc. MSS 154. There is a typescript index, but the collection is often difficult to use and generally disappointing in quality and range. The first official history, Our Fifty Years (London, 1912), by B. T. Hall, secretary of the Union in the early years of this century, is still useful, as is his edited collection of Solly's pamphlets, Workingmen's Social Clubs and Educational Institutes (London, 1904). Solly's autobiography, My Eighty Years, 2 vols. (London, 1893) is also helpful. A centenary history of the movement, G. Tremlett, The First Century (London, 1962), adds little of substance for the Victorian period. Several periodicals which served intermittently as the house organ of the C I U and provide an entree into club life itself are referred to below. I have been able to discover only three surviving examples of individual club minute books from the period and these are also referred to more precisely below. I understand that I am not alone in being refused access to such papers as the present Union headquarters possesses, though Hall mentions that many early minute books were lost by the time he was writing.

Until recently historians have neglected the clubs beyond a few simple gleanings from Hall and Solly, e.g. G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People, 2d ed. (London, 1961), pp. 378-79, but the quickening interest in popular culture has produced some good original work within the last three years, viz., two Ruskin History Workshop pamphlets, S. Shipley, Club Life and Socialism in Mid-Victorian London (Oxford, 1971), and J. Taylor, From Self-Help to Glamour: The Working Man's Club, 1860-1972 (Oxford, 1972)--through his involvement with the present day club movement, Taylor was able to gain access to the records at the C I U's head office. R. N. Price, "The Working Men's Club Movement and Victorian Social Reform Ideology," Victorian Studies 15 (December 1971) : 117-47, as the title indicates, is concerned to place the clubs within the general context of social reform and has worked much the same ground as that covered in this chapter. Price's findings mostly confirm the general conclusions of my own independent research.
2 See above, chap. II, pp. 69-70, 84-85.


5 See the list in Occasional Papers of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, no. 1 (March 1863); "Working Men's Clubs," All The Year Round 11 (1864) : 149-54.


13 Solly to Brougham, 9, 24 August 1861, Brougham MSS., University College Library, London; Solly, These Eighty Years, 2 : 159-60.

14 See the exchange of letters on the difficulties of running Adeline Cooper's club in Duck Lane, Westminster, The Times, 9, 11 January 1862.
15 Solly, Social Clubs and Institute, pp. 28-29; These Eighty Years, 2: 189-93; Solly to Brougham, 13 December 1862, Brougham MSS.

16 Solly, These Eighty Years, 1, passim; R. V. Holt, The Unitarian Contribution to Human Progress (London, 1948).


19 Solly, How to Deal with the Unemployed Poor of London and with its 'Roughs' and Criminal Classes? (London, 1868). For the background of social insecurity in the capital, see Stedman Jones, op. cit., pp. 241-43.

20 Address to the T.U.C. in 1871, recorded in Occasional Papers, no. 20 (January 1872).

21 Solly, Social Clubs and Institutes, p. 58; "Working Men's Clubs and Institutes; What are They?", Fraser's Magazine 71 (1864) : 383-92.


24 E. V. Neale, True Refinement; Address to Rochdale Working Man's Club (Manchester, 1876). Neale was a wealthy Christian Socialist whose reform interests included the co-operative movement. The latter's emphasis on 'association' echoed the social philosophy of the club scheme.

25 Solly, Social Clubs and Institutes, p. 57.


27 Ibid., loc. cit. A list of vice-presidents for 1874-75 appears in Taylor, op. cit., pp. 3-5. At one time or another almost every member of the familiar cast of mid-Victorian friends of the working classes appeared on the list--F. D. Maurice, Thomas Hughes, Samuel Smiles, Samuel Morley et. al.
The dispute, which led to Solly's temporary resignation from the secretaryship, centred on his refusal to co-operate with other officers, particularly Paterson, whom he accused of leading intrigues against him. For the dispute, see inter alia Solly to Lichfield, 27 June 1868; Solly to Pratt, 3 July 1870; Lyttelton to Solly, 10 November 1871, Solly Collection, 16. For Paterson, see the introduction by his wife in his New Method of Mental Science (London, 1886), pp. i-viii. He was a cabinetmaker, secretary of the Clerkenwell W M C and active in the Workmen's Peace Association, but his obvious credentials as a self-improving artisan failed to recommend him to Solly. He lacked perhaps the deference of James Sandford, alias Bainbridge.

Hole to Solly, 5 July 1872, Solly Collection, 16.

The opinion of Adam Weiler, prominent in London working-class associations in the seventies, quoted in Price, op. cit., p. 131n. (Solly's claims for travelling expenses was one of the points of contention in the internal politics of the C I U.) See also an attack on Solly in the South London Chronicle, 28 March 1868, by a young man called Dexter who maintained that "Among those who write and speak 'In Praise of Solly' are not to be found either the elite or the rank and file of working men's club members." Cutting in Solly Collection, 16.

B. T. Hall, op. cit., pp. 24-25. Looking back over the first twenty one years of the Union's history, W. T. Marriott, who had pioneered town clubs in the late fifties, recalled that the years 1868-69 had been the most testing for the new organisation. Club and Institute Journal (C.I.J.), 6 July 1883.

Solly, Hints and Suggestions for the Formation and Management of Working Men's Clubs and Institutes (London, 1862); B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 337.

Pratt to The Times, 5 January 1872. Pratt was a former senior civil servant who had been prematurely retired
from service in India due to ill-health. His interest in
the political and social conditions of the working classes
derived from boyhood memories of the Chartist agitation in
Bristol, and he was active in several reform causes,
notably the co-operative and peace movements. He became a
member of the C I U council in 1864, succeeding to the
secretaryship in 1874, a post which he held till 1883 when
he accepted the presidency. Pratt was less assertive in
manner than his predecessor, and pronouncedly secularist in
inclination—the latter bent helped turn away the charge of
'parsondom' which had always dogged the Union under Solly.
See Dictionary of National Biography, and J. J. Dent, Hodgson

37 Lyttelton to The Times, 13 July 1863.
38 The Times, 11 May 1864; Occasional Papers, no. 10,
1867; no. 20, 1869; Price, op. cit., pp. 126-29.
39 Pratt to The Times, 13 January 1872, on a series
of visits in 1868 and 1870.
40 Solly, "The Growing Importance of Workingmen's
Pratt argued that the clubs were self-policing: "They cut
down drinking because the workman is placed in a circle
where over-drinking was reprobated." Many clubs fixed a
nightly limit of two pints of beer per person. Pratt to
The Times, 5 January, 22 July 1872. See also "The Gin Palace
and the Workingmen's Club," Good Words, 13 (1872) : 211-15;
The C I U also yielded on another issue of these years in
allowing card games for moderate stakes, see Richard Shaen
to Solly, 23 July 1869, Solly Collection, 14.
41 The Times, 20 July 1875. His son later recalled
how Rosebery's gift of 180 pounds on debenture had seen the
Union through a sticky patch, Tremlett, op. cit., p. 144.
42 E.g., Trans. N.A.P.S.S., 1857, pp. 509-17; 1860,
43 B. T. Hall, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
44 The Times, 9 January 1872.
45 Solly, Social Clubs and Institutes, pp. 37, 56-57.
B. C., 2 April 1864. The Bolton club was one of the casualties of the difficult early years of the C I U. Its demise was attributed to bad management and restrictive supervision which forbade, among other things, all political discussion. The club was wound up in 1869 though a fresh start was made again in the seventies. See letters to ibid., 3, 17 August 1867, report of closure, ibid., 24 April 1869, and Solly's letter, ibid., 21 October 1871.

B. T. Hall, op. cit., p. 35.

Censorship had its farcical side—a music hall artist performing at a Sunday concert in a club in Burnley discovered that members were forbidden to applaud on the Sabbath, but were allowed to show their appreciation by raising their hands. W. H. Boardman, Vaudeville Days (London, 1935), p. 201.


B. T. Hall, op. cit., p. 29; R. Harrison, op. cit., 226-28. Engels noted that under Solly's editorship the Beehive became "crawling, bourgeois and condescending in tone." See also G. F. Savage to Solly, 30 May 1873, Solly Collection, 13.

Solly, quoted in Wisbech Advertiser, 2 February 1887, cutting in Solly Collection, 15.

C.I.J., 7 December 1883.

Common Good, 15 January 1881. There are few reliable figures for the growth of the club movement in these years, but there were over 800 clubs known to the Union by the early eighties, of which five to six hundred were affiliated to the C I U. It is difficult to know what passed as a 'political' club, but we may allow that it was the independent radical clubs that offended Solly and the Union oligarchy rather than those formed under the auspices of the two political parties. The working men's clubs of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, according to one modern historian, tended "to institutionalise the deferential relationship between the artisan and his social superiors," P. Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform (London, 1967), p. 117. The history and character of the Liberal clubs is more obscure, see J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-1868.
(London, 1966), pp. 86-88, but a Liberal councillor opening a new club in Bolton in 1879 (the fourth of its kind in the town) admitted his concern that "the billiard tables had more interest for the members than political discussions," B. C., 19 July 1879.

55 List of Clubs Known to the Union, November 1869, May 1871. C I U pamphlets.

56 H. Pratt, An Account of a Tour of Working Men's Clubs (London, 1870); Social Notes, July 16, 1881; Solly in Wisbech Advertiser, loc. cit.; F. J. Gardiner, The Eightieth Birthday of a Model Institution; an Account of the Origin and Development of Wisbech Workingmen's Club and Institute (Wisbech, 1914).

57 The Times, 8 April 1863. The only big city club which won honourable mention in Pratt's tour report of 1870 was one in Liverpool.

58 Occasional Papers, no. 5, May 1864.

59 Solly, Social Clubs and Institutes, pp. 72-73; Frederic Harrison to the Beehive, 14 July 1866.

60 The Times, 11 July 1866.

61 Ibid., 29 February 1864.

62 Copy of 11th Annual Report in Solly Collection, 16.

63 B. C., 24 April 1869.

64 Solly Collection, loc. cit.

65 Taylor, op. cit., pp. 18-20. The workers thus provided themselves with premises which often marked an improvement upon those provided by patrons. "Many friends of the working classes," remarked John Hollingshead, "think that they have done all that is necessary when they have provided a building like a cab stable or a wash-house." Today : Essays and Miscellanies, 2 vols. (London, 1865), 1 : 171-77.

66 Workman's Magazine, no. 6, June 1873.

There is an interesting commentary on the course of this campaign in London in the Beehive, 24 June - 22 July 1871. Pratt sought clarification of the Union's position from Home Secretary Richard Cross, see The Times, 8 June 1874 and Social Notes, 1, 8 June 1874. For later developments see Marriott in C.I.J., 6 July 1883.


Evidence of Solly and Pratt in Fourth Report of Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into Friendly and Benefit Building Societies, Parl. Papers, 1874, XXIII, pp. 614-16; E. H. Hall, loc. cit.; Social Notes, 27 April 1880; C.I.J., 6 July 1883.

Social Notes and Club News, 22 April, 30 July 1881.

The official view of the defection of the London clubs can be found in House and Home, 11 December 1880, and Solly's report in Trans. N.A.P.S.S., 1880, pp. 504-5. The proposals for the conference and the background history of the dispute are reported in C.I.J., 26 October 1883. The conference itself is covered in ibid., 16, 23 November and some interesting reverberations are recorded in ibid., 18 January 1884. See also Price, op. cit., pp. 129-39.

C.I.J., 21 November 1884.

The Times, 26 May 1884.

H. Mayhew, Report on the Trade and Hours of Closing at Workingmen's Clubs (London, 1871). This was a piece of detective work for the London Licenced Victuallers' Association.

The Times, 8, 9 January 1872.

Ibid., 15 April 1863.

Unidentified newspaper cutting, August 1873, Solly Collection, 15, Section 13a.

The committee in 1865-66 comprised joiners, cabinet makers, whitesmiths, and a tailor. The surviving minute books of the Newcastle Upon Tyne W M C for 1865-66, 1870-73 are bound in two volumes in the Newcastle Central Reference Library. The club seems to have been self-managed. The only other extant material of this kind that I have been able to locate relates to village clubs viz. Horringer and
Ickworth Village Club Minute Books, mostly intact from 1877 onwards, together with the club accounts, held by Mrs. Z. Ward of Horringer in Suffolk, the grand-daughter of one of the founder members; the minute book of the Romsley W M C in Worcestershire for 1879, deposited with the Marcy Hemingway papers, bundle 486, in the County Record Office. The Horringer club was started by Lord John Hervey for the workers on his estate. Romsley was similarly a proprietary club, of Lord Lyttelton, President of the C I U. I have not consulted the Romsley material.

80 The Common Good, 15 January 1881; C.I.J., 5 December 1884.


82 Taylor, op. cit., p. 57.

83 C.I.J., 1 August 1884.

84 Royal Commission on the Companies of the City of London, Parl. Papers, 1884, XXXIX, pp. 115-17.

85 Shipley, op. cit.

86 See the comments of Shaw and William Morris on lecturing engagements at clubs, quoted in Taylor, op. cit., p. 59.

87 Rogers, op. cit., pp. 96-97.


89 Newcastle W M C minute book, 1866.

90 R. Harrison, op. cit., p. 227.

91 Beehive, 14 April 1875.

92 Conversation with Stan Shipley. The Kingsland Club in Stoke Newington, London, had a political council of twelve, elected annually "to watch over social and political events, and to give their support to measures calculated to advance the interest of the masses. It shall report to the club before it pledges the club to any policy in any election contest." From club bye-laws for 1876, copy in Solly Collection, 15 item 27.
93 Taylor, loc. cit.

94 See e.g. the illustration from the Mansell collection in N. Bentley, The Victorian Scene, 1837-1901 (London, 1968), p. 279.

95 Club members at Tower Hamlets Radical Club and Institute recalled how they were hounded from tavern to tavern by the police until the opening of their club in 1874, _C I J_, 26 September 1884. The exclusion of wives and families was a point on which C I U officials were definitely uneasy, though they claimed that the clubs did indirectly promote domestic comfort. _Occasional Papers_, no. 7, December 1865.


97 Solly, _Social Club and Institutes_, p. 71.

98 Rogers, op. cit., p. 68. Brian Jackson has a very interesting account of today's club life in _Working Class Community_ (London, 1968), pp. 39-68, which shows how these qualities still mark the character of club leadership.

99 Mayhew, loc. cit.

100 Newcastle W M C minute books, passim.

101 B. T. Hall, op. cit., p. 176.
VI. RATIONAL RECREATION AND THE NEW ATHLETICISM

One of the more remarkable features of the expanding world of mid-Victorian leisure was the innovation of organised and codified athletic sports—a broad category of activities which comprised primarily the athletics of track and field events, as the term is understood today, together with a reconstructed version of football, and the previously reformed game of cricket. In the 1860s public school men began to carry their enthusiasm for the reformed canon of athletic sports through into adult life, and by the Jubilee year of 1887 Gladstone was pointing to the popularity of these sports as a measure of the nation's improved taste in recreation. "For the schoolboy and the man alike," he observed, "athletics are becoming an ordinary incident of life."¹ Thereafter the practice spread still more widely and moved one distinguished historian of the period to contend that "the suburban middle class made organised games rank among England's leading contributions to world culture."² In today's world sport is recognised as a powerful instrument for commanding social conformity, with a unique role to play in counteracting divisive forces such as class and race.³ How did it commend itself to the
Victorians, and what part did it play in the prescriptions of rational recreation?

There were those contemporaries who were persistently hostile to the growing cult of organised games, but they need not detain us long; the intellectual strengths of their case could do little to check the tide of popular enthusiasm. John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and Wilkie Collins were among those who attacked the worship of athletics as boorish and dehumanising. In 1869 Collins enjoyed considerable literary success with his novel *Man and Wife* in which the central figure, Geoffrey Delamayn, is an athlete whose life is brutalised by his sport. In the preface Collins makes it quite clear that Delamayn represents a new type, "the rough in broadcloth," who constitutes a serious menace to society. Recalling this indictment some twenty years later, Montague Shearman, author of several discerning and respected handbooks on sport, commented that the English public had admired the story but refused to swallow its message; to Shearman it was by then self-evident that "the athletic movement has benefited the people at large."

For the most part the new style athleticism won a good press and recommended itself as an eminently rational, even spiritual, recreation. In mid-Victorian England, in particular, the preoccupation with the maintenance of national military preparedness led to a new respect for
physical education. In the thirties and forties reformers had talked of the Health of Towns; the capitalised imperative in following decades became the Health of the Nation. The shift is significant. The previous concern had been that the disease and misery of the new manufacturing towns would demoralise the working classes, make them easy prey for the political agitator, and lead them to subversion and revolt. After 1848 the fear of the governing classes was of assault from without, rather than from within. In 1850, contemplating the welter of self-congratulation at England's escape from the fires of the continental revolutions, John Stores Smith, a Manchester businessman, declared England "the forlorn hope of European life." Smith was impressed less by the fact of her survival than by the extent of her vulnerability which, in the light of his study of other once-great nations, suggested the danger of immediate decline. This theme gained currency. In 1852, in the course of reviewing the activities and publications of the growing number of vegetarian and homeopathic societies, the Westminster Review—while enjoying itself a little at the expense of the "potato gospel"—pointed out "how unfailing an accompaniment of the decline of empires is the depreciation of the national habit of body." A proper concern for the nation's health, continued the journal, came "just in time for that great contest with European tyranny during the
remainder of the century, which is apparently to be the part of England and America. The Crimean War, the invasion scare of 1859, and the dramatic rise of Prussia increased alarm at the imminence of such a contest, and gave new emphasis to the traditional utility of sport in preserving the fitness of the nation's physical stock. Thus the Volunteers played their games in the service of England's security.

The call for effective exercise was addressed to town dwellers of all classes, for the debilities of city life seemed to threaten rich as well as poor. Of the former, Leslie Stephens noted in 1870:

The class which does not live by manual labour, and which at the same time has very little opportunity for hunting and fishing, has increased in an enormous ratio, and is still increasing. We are living more and more in towns and treading closer upon each other's heels.

Though he was apprehensive at the dangers that the popularity of athletic sports posed to intellectual life at the universities, Stephens allowed that they met the need for physical recreation ("some good stupid amusement") for the urban middle classes. Some traditional prescriptions were in any case now simply impractical—as John Morley pointed out, "the persistence of doctors in urging horse exercise is, to the majority, absurd." Among this majority were the clerks and shopmen, whose work, according to The Times, demanded only the slightest of physiques: "Civilisation
wants light men—they don't want six feet to vault over counters and run up steps at a draper's shop." At the time of the Crimean War the paper warned that the nation could not rely upon such insubstantial material to win future Inkermans, unless nimbleness was reinforced with muscle and stamina.\(^{13}\) Thirty years later, in a survey of modern English sport, Frederick Gale concluded that only organised games had saved the 'counter skippers' from effeminacy.\(^ {14}\) The working classes were never in danger of effeminacy, but city life blighted their health to an extent which alarmed doctors and disappointed recruiting sergeants. William Hardwicke, medical officer for health in Paddington in the sixties, urged the case for state promotion of games and gymnastic exercises to halt this degeneration, and Lord Brabazon, chairman of the Gardens and Playgrounds Association, moved the same case twenty years later on the evidence that nearly half the recruits seeking enlistment in the services were rejected for physical incapacity.\(^ {15}\)

Physical recreation received further endorsement from major contemporary figures. We have seen in a previous chapter how Charles Kingsley imparted a spiritual gloss to sport and bodily exercise. His emphasis upon their necessary practice as a duty to one's country became more insistent after his conversion to Darwinism (an ideology whose popularity increased the general concern over national
health). Another Darwinian, Herbert Spencer, maintained that "the contests of commerce are in part determined by the bodily endurance of the producers."  

Under the influence of such teachings sport became a medium for training the young to meet with the diverse challenges of a naturally harsh and competitive world—"Games," declared the physician to Rugby School, "produce a just ambition to excel in every phase of the battle of life." The language of games became the language of adventure and the highest endeavour, designed to sustain the young under fire, whether from fast bowlers or insurgent tribesmen. A Scottish divine expressed his delight at a youthful game of cricket in the following terms:

How I love to mark the quick, watchful glance of the eye as the ball comes speeding on which will decide for 'our Club' the honour of the day, and to mark on the faces of those who go out, the look which was on that of Francois I as he wrote to his mother after the battle of Pavia, "Tout est perdu hormis l'honneur."  

In Newbolt's popular poem "Vitai Lampada," it is the voice of a schoolboy that rallies the ranks during some desperate desert action: "Play up! Play up! and play the game!"

The public school was the principal laboratory in which the young were exposed to sport as a test for greater things to come, and it was here that the games ethos was refined. Men like Dr. Arnold at Rugby had promoted organised games to instil discipline and self-government in schoolboys.
who, in the unreformed public schools of the early nineteenth century, had often sought their recreation in organised riot. The full returns on this practice stood out clearly by the 1880s when Edward Lyttelton considered the merits of public school athletics:

Firstly by being forced to put the welfare of the common cause before selfish interests, to obey implicitly the word of command, and act in concert with the heterogeneous elements of the company he belongs in; and secondly, should it so turn out, a boy is disciplined by being raised to a post of command, where he feels the gravity of responsible office and the difficulty of making prompt decisions and securing a willing obedience.

Personal courage tempered by the team spirit, and a respect for authority under the governance of fair play—these were the key values in the new rationale of sport, and also served as important social controls off the field. Devotees of sport internalised its values: N. L. Jackson, a prominent and influential athlete of the eighties and nineties, decorated his memoirs with an ample definition of sportsmanship, to which he attributed lessons in self-control, compassion and honesty, maintaining in conclusion that "it unconsciously directs every action of your life." "Athleticism," asserted Charles Box, cricket writer and popular philosopher, "is no unimportant bulwark of the constitution ... (it) has no sympathy with Nihilism, Communism, nor any other 'ism' that points to national disorder."
Sport could be effective in indoctrinating the hoi-polloi as well as public schoolmen. A testimony on this count comes from H. B. Philpott, an early historian of the London School Board:

It is as true for the children of mechanics and labourers, as for the children of merchants and professional men, that manly sports, played as they should be played, tend to develop unselfish pluck, determination, self-control and public spirit. Observe a group of Board School cricketers after they have undergone a period of friendly supervision... . No one quarrels with the placing of the field... . the young captain does not bawl 'butter fingers' or 'silly fathead' whenever a catch is missed... . the batsman bowled for a duck neither shouts that 'it ain't fair' nor punches the umpire... . No they have learned to 'play the game.' And the change is not a matter of cricket only; in becoming better cricketers they have become better boys.26

Philpott also remarked on the "moral salvation" effected by football, but it is significant that he should pay most attention to the social therapies of cricket, for it was this game which was constantly made to serve as a metaphor for the ideal society. Although there was a thorough-going commercial sector in cricket, the general banishment of gambling from the game recommended it as a reformed sport.27 It carried with it long-standing associations of a bucolic, pre-industrial society; it was in fact a perfect vehicle for the myths of Merrie England. Cricket, wrote one representative commentator in the course of a political reform tract of the late fifties, afforded "a happy
and compendious illustration of English characteristics and English social institutions ... the truly English republican element of a mixture of classes with the right man in the right place, is nowhere better exemplified than in the cricket field. The game was applauded as a civilising influence in the new towns, not least because it was credited with disciplining the spectator as well as the participant. Recording progress in Yorkshire, John Lawson observed that "it is not uncommon now (1887) for the people of Pudsey to be seen applauding their opponents by clapping hands" (the reactions of sixty years previous had been somewhat more curmudgeonly).

Thus the new model athletic sports boasted some impeccable credentials: they provided a regimen which brought physical fitness to the individual, toughening him against the debilities of city life and maintaining his readiness for armed service; they also provided an education in self-discipline and team work which acted as a moral police over the individual's life at large; adapted to the new circumstances of modern society they yet retained sentimental historical associations of social harmony and the fraternity of all classes in sport. At the very least they were recommended as an antidote for what, by all accounts, seems to have been the common complaint of Victorian town dwellers--indigestion.
Given then the patently 'rational' nature of athletic sports or organised games we would expect them to have been widely promoted among the working classes. Yet such was not the case. As H. A. Butler-Johnstone, M.P. pointed out to the House of Commons in 1875, "it is no answer to the complaint that large classes are deprived of the advantages of athletics and outdoor sports to say that other classes are devoted to these exercises." It was only in the late eighties, and then with doubtful enthusiasm, that Shearman could record: "The athletic movement which commenced with the 'classes', and first drew its strength from the Universities and public schools, has finally, like most other movements and fashions, good or bad, spread downwards to the masses." The story of the cultural spin-off during these years records the obstacles in the way of achieving in sport the social liaison which had long been preached by those interested in the reform of recreation.

Firstly, there was little provision or encouragement for athletic games in the educational world outside the public schools. Clearly one of the problems was lack of space. An assistant commissioner enquiring into popular education in the sixties deplored the absence of playgrounds and organised games in working-class schools, and Thomas Okey, who was a boy in Spitalfields at this time, echoed the complaint of many a working-class autobiography in recalling
that the streets were the only playing fields of his youth—as athletic practice he swam in the canal, for there were no games at his National School. The Education Act of 1870 did little to remedy such deficiencies. Philpott, who we have quoted on the beneficent effect of properly supervised sport on board school boys in London, nevertheless found physical education "one of the least satisfactory features of the Board's work" and described some of the problems impeding its progress. The children's interest in and capacity for playing sport was restricted by deficiencies of diet and of pocket money, and in the long absence of playing fields their cultural traditions stopped short with the games of the street. Some teachers had worked hard to promote sport, said Philpott, but most of them were too intent on the struggle of bringing each scholar up to the point of passing the Government inspector; under the system of payment by results it was difficult for them to introduce anything not encouraged by the official Code.

The neglect of games in elementary schools was not however due simply to the dearth of play space but to the specific social function assigned to these schools in educational policy. The Clarendon report on public schools in 1861 had recognised the value of sport in character training, but in terms of the State's provision
it was training reserved for society's leaders, not the led. Physical education for working-class children meant not games, but drill.\(^{35}\) Edwin Chadwick was prominent among those who made a strong argument for drill in the sixties and pressed their case upon Forster, the author of the 1870 Act. Drill would provide industrial training for each new generation of the labour force and para-military training for a potential citizens' army. The economics of the scheme were spelled out in detail—with such training, claimed Chadwick, three might eventually do the work of five, and if a boy was taught to walk with a more even step he might make do with one less pair of boots over the year.\(^{36}\) Drill found its way into the schools' curriculum and, unlike sport, qualified for a grant. The school boards welcomed drill: it helped control unruly classes; it made efficient use of limited space (drill could be practiced in the classroom gangways if there was no playground at all); the children often enough enjoyed it, and it was not unpopular with parents (a man who was in school in Swindon in the eighties recalled forming squares and doing elementary rifle drill with broomsticks—"My father, a John Bright liberal, didn't object").\(^{37}\) Gymnastic exercises provided an occasional supplement to drill but there was no teaching of athletic skills which might later enrich the adult life of board school children. Indeed, one authority talked as though
physical education during schooldays was the only such training most working-class children would receive, "in as much as, after an early age, they have little or no time for recreation like those socially above them." 38

In the adult world, even where time was available, working-class participation was limited by the restrictive rulings of the new governing bodies of the various athletic sports. As an example we may take the policy of the influential Amateur Athletic Club, formed in 1866 "to afford as completely as possible to all classes of Gentleman Amateurs the means of practicing and competing versus one another without being compelled to mix with professional runners." For the A A C an amateur was further defined as "Any person who has never competed in an open competition, or for public money, or for admission money, or with professionals for a prize, public money or admission money, and who has never, at any period of his life, taught or assisted in the pursuit of Athletic exercises as a means of livelihood, or is a mechanic, artisan or labourer." 39

Discrimination against the mechanic, artisan or labourer evinces considerable concern for the social status of sport, which we would not find surprising in a class society, but this concern was reinforced by a fundamentally new attitude to the practice of sport which served to emphasise still more the distance between bourgeois and
popular cultures. This is exemplified in the contrast between the new model athletic sports of the A A C and the popular athletics of 'pedestrianism'—the sub rosa world of professional running and walking races.

Pedestrianism was eccentric and undisciplined. Its contests were frequently bizarre—walking backwards, racing in heavily weighted clogs, picking up stones (or eggs) at regular intervals over a long distance, trundling barrow loads of bricks—and often seemed little removed from traditional rural feats of brute strength and endurance. The sport had a long previous history of gentlemanly patronage—masters had chosen footmen for their running prowess, and backed them against those of rival households in matches which they themselves had often joined—but upper-class interest and participation had waned considerably by the fifties. It was in 1852 that Chambers's Edinburgh Journal reported:

In pedestrianism ... we occasionally hear of gentlemen whose emulation impels to a contest, which they may spice with a bet of 100 guineas or so; but the competitors, in most instances where money passes, are poor men, who literally walk or run for their bread; the match is generally concocted by a tavern-keeper, who plans it so as to make it a matter of business. The individuals who outrage nature by walking 1000 miles in 1000 successive half-hours, and such like feats, are mostly publicans' proteges.

While shedding its old patrons, the sport had become extremely popular. The elite among the professionals,
bearing heroic and flamboyant names—the Gateshead Clipper, the Norwich Milk Boy, the Crow Catcher, and the like—raced for championship cups and belts before crowds of several thousands at major pedestrian enclosures in the big cities. It was an unruly business, to judge from the notices of pedestrian meetings appearing in the sporting press of the period. From a match promoted by the landlord of the Yorkshire Stingo at Mr. Roberts' ground in West London in January 1862, the *Era* reported: "The betting was heavy, the sport admirable, the management insufferable ... not until half the proceedings were over did the Proprietor send for the police to keep order, as is usual on all running grounds."  

As we have seen, pedestrianism was a sport of the streets as well as the running grounds—an 'indecent nuisance', condemned by respectable citizens, harassed by the police, and punished by the courts. The world of its champions was recorded in the pages of *Bell's Sporting Life*, the principal organ of a great underground of popular sport. A contemporary acknowledgment of the paper's significance is worth quoting:

*Bell's Life* tells us not what ought to be done by Englishmen but what, as a matter of fact, is done. It shows what a large balance there still is versus that crushing respectability which threatens to overwhelm us—it tells us how much of the animal pleasures of savage life survives in the heart of civilised life.
Supporters of the new athleticism would not have represented their games as celebrations of the savage life; in many ways they were institutions abstracted from life, whether savage or civilised. Despite the aggressive style of language which coloured debates on health and athletics in the context of social Darwinism and national survival, there was a sense in which the games field served more as a refuge from the competitive strains of real life than as an extension of it. The doctrine of fair play provided for competition, of course, but suspended the absolute judgements of success or failure, affluence or bankruptcy, which could befall commercial or professional life. The vindictive laws of Nature which were judged to govern a man's working life were to be barred from his play. Sport was now a laboratory in which men could test themselves under precise and uniform rules, not an arena where, to recall the phrase in Chambers's Journal, men were incited to "outrage nature." The old sports had about them the flavour of gladiatorial contests (in pedestrianism as much as the prize ring) and were reported in an arcane vernacular of epic and arresting style; the new sport had its heroes (notably Captain Webb, the long-distance swimmer) and the heroic style of reportage survived in modified form in the flourishing world of boy's periodicals, but the typical sporting paper which appeared in the sixties and seventies
to service the new athleticism was a journal of record, rarely an essay in melodrama.\textsuperscript{48} Thus was sport represented as a neutral, scientific exercise, an alternative world of physical improvement and achievement which could be exactly measured, safe from the harsh and often adventitious sanctions of working life; the members of its fraternity enjoyed a sense of competitive striving which stopped far short of self-destruction. In team games in particular, reckless individualism was restrained by the insistence upon team spirit and co-operation. Sport was not, however, to be allowed to engross life; a magazine article in 1881 which criticised the proliferation of prizes in amateur athletics did so because they tended "to exalt recreation above its limits into a substitute for work," leading to a situation where "selfish competition prevails rather than the sense of wholesome membership in sports."\textsuperscript{49} Thus pedestrianism was abhorrent to amateurs because it was professionalised and therefore a kind of work. It was on such grounds that the governing bodies of the reformed sports contested the participation of professionals in their meetings, in a running controversy which dominated the athletic world from the sixties onwards.

Also central to the case against professionalism was the contention that it encouraged gambling. Gambling was reviled by middle-class opinion on several grounds.
It was a matter of perpetual scandal to the man of business that the society gambler would honour his gaming debts while scorning to the last the claims of the honest tradesmen among his creditors, while betting among the lower orders was regarded as a constant threat to property and social order. Young gentlemen were advised that "The moral healthiness or unhealthiness of any recreation may generally be estimated by the extent to which it has become the subject of bets." The gentleman patron of traditional sports had backed his proteges as a matter of course, and The Times could still defend betting in the sixties with the argument that, with a few reckless exceptions, the nobility knew how to bet; their vulgar imitators, said the paper, should be cautioned but not proscribed. But the railways and telegraph had produced a national sporting market in which the aristocratic backer had been superseded by the bookmaker; the presence of a gentleman had allegedly ensured fair play, whereas the bookie provided no such guarantee. The 'ropeing' or rigging of contests by the gambling interests was notorious at pedestrian meetings, and as far as the amateurs were concerned such chicanery distorted the neutral frame of reference within which sports should ideally be conducted. "The pedestrian circle," asserted one of the new wave of athletic papers, "is too much surrounded by a halo of beer
and skittles, and amenable to the low art of the bookmakers to make it either a healthy or an improving place of resort, or a reliable gauge of man's physical powers."  

Such associations were to be avoided at all costs if the new sports were to be made socially respectable. The enthusiasts who founded the A A C and like bodies had some initial difficulties in persuading their elders that the practice of athletic sports outside the confines of public school and university was not vulgar and morally ruinous—Walter Rye's fiancee was forced to break off the engagement when her mother discovered that he took part in athletics, "sharing with my own parents, as she did, the then prevalent idea that athletics meant pot-housing." It was to avoid such opprobrium that early amateurs wore masks and competed incognito. Even in 1868, Anthony Trollope considered modern football and athletics too parvenu to include in his survey of British sports and games, explaining that "we have felt that they have fallen somewhat short of the necessary dignity." Once such prejudice was dispelled, everything was done to maintain a respectable tone by securing amateur athletics against interlopers from lower stations in society.

The new world of amateur sport was therefore an exclusive one. Discrimination against the older sport and its practitioners was based on rational and moral grounds—what could be more irrational than walking backwards, or
more immoral than gambling?—but the concern for respectability reveals the strong element of class discrimination. In a review of the amateur versus professional controversy in 1880, The Times noted that "artisans and mechanics have, by almost general consent, been shut out from the privileged inner circle, and have been counted as in every case, professionals ... . Their muscular practice is held to give them unfair advantage over more delicately nurtured competitors." The Times thought such an argument had become rather obsolete but spoke up for discrimination on other grounds:

The outsiders, artisans, mechanics, and such like troublesome persons can have no place found for them. To keep them out is a thing desirable on every account. The status of the rest seems better assured and more clear from any doubt which might attach to it, and the prizes are more certain to fall into the right hands. Loud indeed would be the wail over a chased goblet or a pair of silver sculls which a mechanic had been lucky enough to carry off. The whole 'pot-hunting' world would be simply so much the poorer, to say nothing of the ridiculous nature of such a defeat, and of the social degradation which the contest would have implied, whatever its results had been ... . No base mechanic arms need be suffered to thrust themselves in here.56

The most difficult problem in maintaining exclusivity lay along the margins of the class line; it was, presumably, fairly easy to distinguish and therefore exclude the base mechanics or professionals (even though the latter occasionally adopted false whiskers and false names to
plunder a few cups) but in large metropolitan communities with a high rate of social mobility the screening capacity of the ruling cliques was severely reduced, and the ex-public-school and varsity men faced a takeover by the lower middle-class tradesman and clerk. This situation produced a further refinement of the definition of amateur in an attempt to reserve the higher social reaches of sport for the 'gentleman amateur', as a letter to the *Sporting Gazette* in July 1872 serves to emphasise:

Sports nominally open to gentleman amateurs must be confined to those who have a real right to that title, and men of a class considerably lower must be given to understand that the facts of their being well conducted and civil and never having run for money are not sufficient to make a man a gentleman as well as an amateur. They have a hundred and one tradesmen's meetings to fall back upon, and what more can they want?58

Nor was it to be expected that sporting skills would secure an entree where civility and good conduct on their own were insufficient credentials; as an editorial in the *Referee* laid down, "The fact that a man is exceptionally brilliant as a player is in no way an excuse for the assumption of unwarranted social rank; quite the reverse."59 It appears that those most recently qualified as gentlemen were the most assiduous in pulling up the ladder behind them; as one observer remarked, "From enquiries I have made I find that nearly all the members of the athletic clubs calling themselves 'Gentleman Amateurs,' and who exclude tradesmen are, in
If sport was indeed the great leveller, its social utility to the established or aspiring bourgeoisie was that it might level up, not level down.

Given then the limitations on working-class participation in the new games in the schools and those associations best equipped to provide for and encourage athleticism, by what process did athletics "spread downwards to the masses"? In particular, what role did reformers allot to sport in their promotion of rational recreation?

Reformers certainly recommended physical exercise to the working classes. Samuel Smiles advised "abundant physical exercise" in his programme of self-help. William Lovett prescribed the same in proposing a physical regimen which he believed would assist the improvement of his class, and other working-class reformers contributed to the delineation of a new model physique--trimmer and more ascetic than that derived from the publican and the prizefighter. The preservation of open spaces attracted attention among reformers in the seventies: trades' union leaders and middle-class friends of the working classes formed the People's Garden Company in London in 1870, and by the middle of the decade Octavia Hill and other philanthropists had established the Open Space Movement, whose manifestos emphasised the common man's need for healthy outdoor sports. As we have seen, Lord Brabazon and others urged the same
A growing number of athletic churchmen urged their colleagues to develop games' skills as a means of reaching and extending their working-class congregations. As noted previously, Kingsley's teachings had helped to make sport more respectable (though Kingsley himself kept to fishing and leap-frog rather than football and cricket) and the new style sporting parson was well enough known to suffer Dickens' mocking attentions by the sixties. The cricket field was the most frequently recommended setting for the clergyman's exercise in fraternity—in Bolton by 1867 about a third of the cricket clubs were connected to a religious body—but he was active in other sports too. The most recent historian of British football finds that "the curate, and often the vicar, inspired by his own early education, frequently set out to claim souls with a Bible in one hand and a football in the other." There are some well-known examples of this provenance in the histories of today's major football clubs, and the contention receives further support from another detailed local study of the period—at least a quarter of the clubs in the Birmingham area in the eighties had some connexion with religious organisations.

The church was one of several institutions that provided physical facilities for sports (the most welcome form of assistance) such as changing rooms and playing fields.
In the seventies and eighties working men were able to meet together in YMCAs, friendly societies, working men's clubs, public houses and the workplace to form their various sports clubs. In Bolton in the sixties a number of local employers provided their workers with a cricket ground; many of the clubs formed in this way followed the common national pattern of fielding a football side in the winter to maintain their association, thus further extending the practice of organised sports among working men. But Butler-Johnstone's statement to the Commons, quoted above, should alert us to the extent to which active encouragement and provision by the wealthier classes was the exception rather than the rule. The Open Space Movement provided a standing acknowledgment of the chronic shortage of playing room in the towns. Where public parks existed sport was often prohibited--Farnworth Park near Bolton was not unexceptional in banning cricket and allowing games "of a quiet nature only." Church patronage in sport was not yet convincing enough to dispel the image of the clergyman as kill-joy, and the sporting churchman was in a minority in a profession which remained generally suspicious of popular sport as a corrupter of morals, despite the new and respectable models. "Despite all the talk, fashionable as is the so-called muscular Christianity," complained W. T. Marriott, "still little is done for their (the
working classes) improvement." In any case, according to some observers from within the Anglican church, athletic clergymen often used their games skills to ingratiate themselves with the upper classes rather than with working men. Moreover, church sponsored sports clubs were subject to built-in limitations on membership, for the latter was often made conditional upon church attendance. Similarly, some business firms restricted passes to recreational functions to "reputable employees."

Yet the role of the upper classes must still be recognised as an important one. Despite the reservations which some of their number continued to hold, the simple fact that athleticism was practiced by the respectables made it legitimate practice for the lower orders. Certainly there was a new tolerance for sport which had not existed in the thirties and forties. The new codes of play and conduct were the work of middle-class administrators who could secure them almost immediate national recognition through that intimate community of interest which the English know as the old-boy net, an institution for which there was no good working-class equivalent. There is some indication too that working-class boys absorbed the new teachings of fair play and good sportsmanship from reading schoolboy papers written for the middle-class market (though the new code must often have sat uneasily beside the laws of survival
learned in a slum culture). 77

What the middle classes did not provide in any abundance was a direct presence. Even in the case of the many football clubs associated with church or chapel, it is clear that in several instances the initiative came from within the church membership rather than from the church officers. The latter were often of less assistance than other members of the community, and once established the teams seem to have quickly severed the religious connexion. The original members of Aston Villa (a club referred to as a church team in standard histories of the game) were "connected with" the Bible class of a Wesleyan Chapel. Their playing field was provided by a local butcher and their dressing room by a local publican. Members of a Church of England school team in Wolverhampton, later the Wolves, derived more support from the publican father of one of the boys than from their clerical headmaster, and themselves took the initiative in approaching a local industrialist for his backing. Members of the Christ Church football club in Bolton deserted their mentor, Rev. J. F. Wright, four years after he had formed the club; they walked out of a meeting in the church school rooms, crossed the road to the Gladstone Hotel and reconstituted themselves the Bolton Wanderers. Tottenham Hotspur was a team originally associated with the YMCA, but it was formed by a small
group of enthusiasts who approached the Association for assistance, rather than responded to any initial lead from that organisation. In the practical and eclectic fashion of their culture, working men used such institutions as a socially neutral locus for the formation of their clubs and teams; the function of institutions was more one of convenience than of direct encouragement.

The popular expansion of the new sports in the seventies and eighties derived its major impetus from below rather than above; working men generated their own encouragement, and showed too how little they were deterred by explicit discouragement. There had always been a considerable popular appetite for sport in England, and it had been far from extinguished by the deficiencies of diet, income and space, and the attenuation of cultural continuity that Philpott later remarked. As Will Thorne recalled of Birmingham in the early seventies: "One of the remarkable things about those times was that, no matter how hard men and boys worked, they were whenever possible always anxious to take part in sports." Such was the pressure of popular interest in athletics that it became difficult for governing bodies to enforce any distinction other than the basic one between amateur and professional, where the former was defined simply as a competitor who was not dependent on the sport for his livelihood (the matter of
legitimate expenses for the amateur was an early problem which did, however, continue to obscure the issue. Some officers in the London hierarchy had begun canvassing for the deletion of the clause excluding mechanics, artisans and labourers in the seventies, though the appeals were sometimes less than gracious. Arguing that "The common republic of sport does not admit of such invidious comparisons," H. F. Wilkinson of the London Athletic Club went on to instance examples from other sports of the happy combination of "the lord, the lout, and the merchant." The lout was in fact turning out to be less of a threat to the new sporting ethics than had at first been feared.

The Northern Counties Athletic Association, formed in 1879, dropped the mechanics clause and threatened to boycott the AAC championships which were traditionally held in the spring. The timing here was made to fit in with the university calendar but caught the bulk of working-class entrants unprepared; they could not train during the day and needed the long summer evenings to reach optimum fitness. Faced with this crisis the AAC went into dissolution, to be replaced by the more democratic and less elitist Amateur Athletic Association in 1880 which followed the provincial associations in deleting the mechanic clause and recognising athletics as primarily a summer sport.
The popular participation which opened up the amateur running tracks to all comers was not, however, of such a volume to provide the regular market opportunities for commercial speculation which might have led to eventual professional domination of the sport. For some time the pedestrian world continued to co-exist with amateur athletics, still attracting large attendances on occasions, but otherwise alienating its supporters by the overt corruption of the 'gaffers', the backers who put up the stakes and manipulated the betting. In any case the big crowds were being lured away by football, the most dramatic in growth of the new organised games, and a mass spectacle by the mid-eighties.

The middle-class officials of the Football Association, founded in 1863, had at first felt no need to stipulate the status appropriate to those who wished to play. The old game of football was an occasional and irregular affair, and there was no flourishing professional sector of the game to threaten the new code as had been the case with athletics. Moreover, the nature of the game itself allowed for a covert and largely inoffensive form of discrimination. Athletic clubs received entries for their meetings from individual competitors rather than from clubs en bloc, and then more often by post than in person, so that comprehensive screening was very difficult; football clubs could choose
their opponents at will. For almost the first twenty years of its life, therefore, major wrangles within the FA centred on differences over the rules of play, as the administrators sought to reconcile the several variations emanating from the key public schools which had fostered a revised version of the game—the issues were those of technical, not social, discrimination. But the early enthusiasts were mindful of the need to give football a respectable tone, for it was but a few years previously that the headmaster of Shrewsbury had dismissed the game as "fit only for butcher boys," and we have noted above Trollope's misgivings about the lack of dignity in football. In Sheffield, an early stronghold of the game, the managing committee of the first established football club in 1854 stated its intention to confine activities to gentlemen, an intention echoed in the following advertisement for the post of secretary to the local football association in the eighties: "Besides possessing great educational ability, the secretary should be a gentleman of good position, with whom distant officials would not deem it derogatory to correspond." Frederick Wall, secretary of the FA from 1895, recalled the game in its early years as "a joyous revel for the middle classes," and so it remained with little need for policing its boundaries until the mid-1870s.
It was the inception of the FA Cup competition in 1871 which opened up the game, simultaneously disarming the freedom of preference the early clubs had been able to exercise in selecting opponents and inducing a cumulative excitement throughout the season which multiplied popular interest. The Cup competition was conceived initially as an extension of the system of public school house matches, but its subsequent history rapidly dissolved this recherche image. Northern clubs with a predominantly working-class membership and following entered for the Cup, and thus broke into London and the South where the idea of football as the gentleman's game was strongest. To travel to the South, the Northern clubs were often obliged to raise a public subscription, and the problem of meeting their players' expenses grew as the range and frequency of matches increased. Competition in the North, particularly in Lancashire, became so intense that the leading clubs began to import players from Scotland, already productive of notably gifted 'professors' of the game.88

The signs of incipient professionalism were soon noticed—the sovereign in the boot, the mysterious deliveries of free coal, the easy tenancy of a pub—and the FA moved to defend the amateur status of the game. The debate between supporters and critics of professionalism had grown heated by the early eighties, and the football world was
convulsed in the autumn of 1884 when the governing body introduced a ruling effectively banning professionals from playing in the Cup competition.89

The Lancashire clubs saw themselves as the principal target of such a move and expressed their resentment in class terms. The football correspondent of the Bolton Chronicle put it thus:

In the South the players are mainly of the 'upper ten'. They can afford time and money for training, and travelling, and playing. In the North the devotees of the game are mainly working men. They cannot play the game on strictly amateur lines ... They cannot afford to train, or to 'get in form', or whatever other name you like to call it. Besides, they command big 'gates' and they naturally think they have a right to a trifle from it.90

A Preston official writing to the Athletic News voiced the popular opinion that the covert professional was a working man denied the full fruits of his labour. Those who paid to see the game were willing to pay its players and abhorred the system which sought to preserve the fiction of amateurism; it was absurd and unjust to reward the coal miner with a talent for football with "the occasional supply of a set of dessert cutlery" when the man would be better served as an open professional in a new and superior employment. "To the 'upper crust', no doubt," concluded the correspondent, "it is annoying to see 'cads' attaining excellence and equal powers to themselves."91 Class resentment was compounded by a provincial hostility to the metropolis, from where, in
Northern eyes, the game was being manipulated by "a few mashers who wish to have the English cup back in London." The North formed its own British Association in November 1884, announcing it as a democratic alternative to the peremptory oligarchy of the FA, and promising to regularise professionalism within the game. Faced with the open secession of Lancashire and considerable disaffection in the Midlands, the FA executed a remarkable volte-face and gave official sanction to professionalism in football in the summer of 1885. Though the northern clubs were thus prevailed upon to accept the continued jurisdiction of the FA, the mood of grass roots assertiveness persisted in the local Lancashire Football Association where there was an outspoken campaign to remove Lord Hartington as President—"the day of ornamental officers," said one critic, "has passed."

Professionalism did not, however, mean the end of patronage, but rather a change in its pattern and provenance. Professionalism, increasing gates, and the inception of a national league in 1888 brought new problems of management without necessarily guaranteeing financial viability for the clubs. Men with longish pockets were needed in these years when professionals were contracted to individual members of club committees rather than to a club itself. Such men could provide jobs and housing for the pros, as
well as stand as trustees for club grounds with expanding amenities and services. The early enthusiasts who had encouraged workingmen to take up football had been men of the middle class or above. Probably fewer in number than has previously been allowed, they were nonetheless moved by considerations of social and moral responsibility and, in many cases, a player's love of the game. In class terms the new patrons who fastened on the sport in the eighties were marginal men: successful tradesmen, small businessmen, aspiring publicans. William Sudell of Preston North End was a mill manager. William MacGregor of Aston Villa, the instigator of the new Football League, was a prosperous shopkeeper. John Davies, who rescued Manchester United from bankruptcy, was a publican turned brewer. Few clubs could have been without one of their kind. In one sense they represented a traditional source of support, heirs to the countless publicans and other middling men who had encouraged the new game of football as they had previously encouraged all manner of other working-class games and contests. The new patrons revealed much the same motivation as their forerunners—serving sport won prestige in the working-class community, a prestige flattering for men who still regarded themselves as of the people, and useful too in local council elections. But though often fanatical in their enthusiasm for their teams and football itself, the
institutionalisation of financial control in the game made these men more hard-nosed and proprietorial than their predecessors from either their own class or the public school elite.

At the top, the FA continued to be officered by gentlemen, but in general the middle class withdrew from the game which they had once proclaimed an instrument of moral salvation and social order. The practice of professionalism, the related growth of mass spectatorship, and the commercial patronage of men of doubtful respectability made association football (soccer, as it became known) increasingly distasteful, and the middle class retreated to the more select world of rugby football. By the nineties, commentators were attacking soccer as "a moral slough" and "the acme of athletic horrors." The top players were, it was claimed, the objects of extravagant popular adulation and were better known than local M.P.s. The professional game generated "an epidemic excitement" among the crowds. "As a rule," remarked one observer, "they do not go to see football; they go to see their own side win, and that is all they care about." Petty violence on and off the field seemed proof that ideals of fair play and gentlemanly conduct had given way to "a fashionable brutality." "Football," concluded another disillusioned witness, "is a passion, not a recreation." 98
Herbert Spencer crystallised much respectable contemporary opinion in representing football as a prime example of what he termed the 're-barbarisation' of society. The modern game was in many ways far removed from the hectic clashes of its folk predecessor, but those of its features which excited the adverse comment of middle-class witnesses were strongly reminiscent not only of the older game but of much unreconstructed popular sport in general. The occasion of modern football was now strictly limited in duration, and regularly scheduled within the legitimate free-time of Saturday afternoon; players and spectators were clearly segregated, and the activities of both contained within purpose-built stadia; play was limited to a small, fixed number of participants policed by a referee in common acknowledgment of a standardised code of rules. Yet the fierce expressions of group or neighbourhood loyalties conveyed in the crowd's partisan identification with team and players, and the general function of spectatorship as an act of collective participation showed how, even within its new structure, the sport retained much of the emotional temper and spirit of an earlier society. For such manifestations was association football generally disqualified from the canon of rational recreation.

In contrast, cricket maintained its respectable image. Professionals had been an accepted part of the
game since the early years of the century and, though cricket expanded greatly from the seventies onward, they continued to play alongside the amateurs without corrupting the equable spirit of the game. (This held good despite occasional strikes among the top pros in the eighties and nineties.) Professionalism in cricket, argued the game's many champions, did not produce the vicious rivalry and bad sportsmanship which had marred pedestrianism and now corrupted football, because control rested firmly with the gentleman amateurs; their presence carried a traditional authority derived from that of the landowner in the rural society whence the game had originally sprung. Furthermore, the good manners on the field communicated themselves to the spectators, whose conduct was irreproachable beside that of the football crowds. There was something in this. The nature of the game was less combustible than other sports, and the absence of physical contact meant that to a large extent the normal terms of social address could be maintained at play. Patrons of the game no longer recruited professionals exclusively from the workers on their estates, but they clearly did regard the pros as servants who were assigned functions within the game appropriate to their station. Thus the pro would spend most of his time fielding—the chore given to fags in public school cricket—and bowling in the nets to give the gentlemen practice. The professional with
Bolton Cricket Club in the sixties bowled in clogs as if to acknowledge his status,\textsuperscript{105} and the distinction between amateur and professional or Gentlemen and Players (after the famous annual match inaugurated in 1806 and played until 1962) sat so easily on the game that it impressed itself upon the national vocabulary as a synonym for mutual and amiable discrimination. A Tory politician seeking to specify Disraeli's status within the Conservative party concluded thus: "We know he does not belong to our Eleven, but we have him down as a professional bowler."\textsuperscript{106}

Much of the practice of sport in England remained segregated along class lines. The new athleticism had provided sport with credentials which gave unprecedented emphasis to its capacity for imparting the highest moral and social values. Despite these recommendations, there had been no extensive move to propagate the new games codes among the masses. The middle-class enthusiasts of the new athleticism mostly discouraged working-class participation, in order to prevent contamination from the corrupt practices attributed to popular sport, and to reserve the new games as a medium for defining class status. In the much vaunted 'republic of sport', only cricket received special dispensation as the one game whose mystique resisted popular corruption and kept the base mechanicals in their place; otherwise, the working classes were to be left the basic commons of
military drill and calisthenics. Despite the antipathies of its self-appointed governors, the working classes took up the new athleticism with avidity. The process of diffusion needs further research and explanation, but it seems clear that reformers played a more limited role than has previously been suggested. There was a strong appetite for sport among English working men and, while they took readily to the new models, they showed in the case of football a determination to adapt them to the circumstances and needs of their own culture.
FOOTNOTES


3 E.g., G. Magnane, Sociologie du Sport (1947), p. 43: "Sport is the chief pole of attraction toward approved activities: licit, consciously social and, in the broadest sense of the term, docile." Quoted in E. Weber, "Gymnastics and Sports in Fin de Siecle France: Opium of the Classes?", American Historical Review 76 (February 1971): 91. See also Sport and the Community, Report of the Wolfenden Committee on Sport for the Central Council of Physical Recreation (London, 1960), p. 6: "Sportsmanship ... in its deeper (and usually inarticulate) significance ... still provides something like the foundations of an ethical standard ... in hard practice it is no bad elementary guide to decent living together in society." For critical discussion of this contemporary orthodoxy see the articles in E. Dunning, ed., Sport: Readings from a Sociological Perspective (Toronto, 1972), pp. 233-78.


6 M. Shearman, Athletics and Football (London, 1889), p. 241. This is one of the Badminton series of handbooks which provides a useful introduction to Victorian sport. Contemporary material is too diffuse to admit of a meaningful select bibliography in the space available here. Scholarly research of the history of nineteenth century sport is beginning to surface in journal literature and is noted in passing.

7 See above, chap. II, pp. 69-70.

8 J. S. Smith, Social Aspects (London, 1850), pp. 1, 43.


15W. Hardwicke, "In What Form Should the Public Provide Recreation for the Working Classes?" Trans N.A.P.S.S., 1867, pp. 471-77, 552-57; Brabazon, "The Decay of Bodily Strength in Towns," Nineteenth Century 21 (May 1887) : 673-76. Lord Elcho had tried, unsuccessfully, to pass a bill through the Commons in 1862 to organise a national programme of gymnastic training. The big railway companies instituted a physical test for job applicants in the mid-seventies and were also reporting a large number of rejects.


"The sand of the desert is sodden red;  
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;  
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,  
And the Regiment blind with dust and smoke,  
The river of death has brimmed its banks,  
And England's far, and Honour a name,  
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:  
'Play up! Play up! and play the game!'

Another sentiment of the games' cult was immortalised in Grantland Rice's verse:
"For when the one Great Scorer comes  
To write against your name,  
He marks—not that you won or lost—  
But how you played the game."


Dunning, "Modern Football," loc. cit., provides a useful explication of Victorian games ideology.


G. J. Cayley, The Working Classes : Their Interest in Administrative, Financial and Electoral Reform (London, 1858). Cricket had in fact been criticised in its early years for mixing inferiors and superiors, see J. Strutt,
The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England (London, 1801; 1903 ed.), p. 102. For its mythical qualities, see e.g. T. Sparks (C. Dickens), Sunday Under Three Heads (London, 1836), pp. 39-44.

29 J. Lawson, Letters to the Young on the Progress in Pudsey during the last Sixty Years (Stanninglen, 1887), p. 63. The claims made for cricket were many and remarkable. "Every county cricket match," claimed the Spectator, quoted in Pall Mall Gazette, 13 September 1884, "is a lightning conductor against revolution." The French Revolution would, so the writer continued, have been averted if the French nobility had played cricket instead of tennis. One irresistible testament comes from Thomas Hughes, reporting a letter from an officer in the engineers before Sebastopol: "The round shot which were ever coming at him were very much like cricket balls from a moderately swift bowler; he could judge them quite as accurately, and by just turning round when the gun, which bore on him was fired, and marking the first pitch of the shot, he could tell whether to move or not, and so got on with his work very comfortably." "Physical Education," Working Men's College Magazine, May 1859.


31 Hansard, CCXXV, 1 July 1875. See also Brabazon, loc. cit: "I believe that it is because our middle and upper classes hold such a high place among the athletes of the world, that we are blind to the deficiencies in this respect of their brothers of a lower station in life."


33 The Times, 13 September 1861; T. Okey, A Basketful of Memories (London, 1930), pp. 22-23.

34 Philpott, op. cit., pp. 115-33.


W. McLaren in the preface to A. McLaren, *Physical Education* (London, 1895), p. vi, quoted in McIntosh, op. cit., p. 120.

H. F. Wilkinson, ed., *The Athletic Almanack*, 1868; Shearman, op. cit., pp. 48-53. The Almanack for 1872 provides a useful list of clubs registered with AAC, pp. 214-21. Of 263 English clubs, just over 100 were attached to schools and university colleges. Of the rest, 98 were located in the provinces, mostly in Northern towns, while London and its suburbs claimed 58. A number of metropolitan clubs were sponsored by law firms in the City and local volunteer battalions.

The barring of mechanics, artisans and labourers was also standard policy for the Amateur Rowing Association and the Bicycle Union.


Era, 5 January 1862.

See above, chap. IV, pp. 162-64.


See e.g. *All-England Cricket and Football Journal* (Sheffield), March 1879, quoted below, on athletics as "a reliable gauge of man's physical powers."

H. Jones, "Recreation," *Good Words* 22 (1881): 43-49; *The Times*, 22 August 1873, on "Studies versus Sport."


The Times, 30 May 1868.

For the bookmaker's increasingly pervasive presence, his displacement of the noble patron, and his refinement of functions previously served by the publican, see Esquiros, loc. cit., Shimmin, *Liverpool Life*, pp. 96-128; "The Sporting Writer of the Past," *Saturday Review*, 13 February 1875; Gale, op. cit., pp. 43-46; the obituary of W. Davis, bookmaker, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1879.


*The Times*, 26 April 1880, italics in the original.

Such a case, involving "the second rate professionals" of the Prince of Wales and White Star clubs (public houses clubs obviously) in London, is reported in the *Athletic Record and Monthly Journal of Amateur Amusements* (London), September 1876.

"It is to be hoped that a rigid scrutiny will be made into the qualifications of all strangers who aspire to take part in these meetings. The mere fact of a man's belonging to an athletic club or a gymnasium in some large town is quite insufficient. The doors would be opened to hundreds of persons who ought to be excluded, and the character of these contests would be irretrievably degraded."

Referee (London), 27 January 1878.

Letter to Athletic Record and Monthly Journal of Amateur Amusements, June 1876, italics in original. See also, editorial in Wheel World, June 1880.


See above, p. 256, and Brabazon, Social Arrows (London, 1886).

For sports propaganda in the Anglican church, see Canon Money, "The Church in Relation to Public Amusements," at the Croydon Church Congress, The Times, 11 October 1877; Rev. H. C. Shuttleworth, "Popular Recreations and How to Improve Them," at the Leicester Congress, ibid., 2 October 1880. Shuttleworth was "the perfect exemplar of the liberal athletic Anglican parson ... of which Charles Kingsley was the early mode." P. Jones, op. cit., p. 118. For the early mode see Dickens' parody of Septimus Crisparkle, minor Canon of Cloisterham in Edwin Drood (London, 1870),
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70 Elsworth, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

71 B. C., 24 July 1875. Bolton's Peel Park charged a rent for pitches, which discouraged working men's teams. Ibid., 27 April 1861.


73 Marriott, op. cit., p. 29.

74 Dean of York speaking on the Church and the upper classes at the Church Congress at Derby, The Times, 6 October 1882, and the Dean of Buxton on the Church and the rural population at the Congress at Wakefield, ibid., 7 October 1886.

75 Jackson, op. cit., pp. 21-23; Elsworth, op. cit., p. 48. Imposing such conditions could mean the forfeit of goodwill: H. G. Wells, whose father was a professional cricketer, recalled the "malignant respect" extended to cricketing parsons. Certain Personal Matters (London, 1898), pp. 104-11.


77 There was of course an existing popular sporting ethic—"the code of a rude but firmly established honour"—for the new games ideology to build upon. The quote is from "The Sporting Press," an appreciation of Bell's Life


79 Thorne, op. cit., p. 25.

80 Athlete (London), March 1871.

81 The controversy can best be followed in Athletic News, a Manchester paper which emerged from the ruck of lesser rivals as the most influential provincial sports weekly. See ibid., 11 June, 9 July, 1 October, 3 December 1879. See also Shearman, op. cit., pp. 216-21. The Bicycle Union dropped the mechanic clause two years previously, Wheel World, May - September 1878.

82 Professional pedestrianism survived longer in Scotland, see Jamieson, op. cit., who also gives examples of the scandals and riots which accelerated its decline in England, pp. 46, 63-65.

83 Marples, op. cit., p. 172.


85 McIntosh, op. cit., p. 25.


88 Green et al, op. cit., pp. 50-1, 66; Marples, op. cit., p. 168.

89 Again, the Athletic News is the best primary source. See also Green et al, op. cit., pp. 95-109.
The first protest meeting was held in Bolton.

Athletic News, 29 October 1884.

Middle-class players in the North were also offended by the patronising attitude of the Southern officials, see Wall, op. cit., p. 31. There was a similar animus in athletics, see Athletic News, 9 July 1879.

Athletic News, 29 November, 6 December 1884.


Sutcliffe and Hargreaves, op. cit., p. 21.


E. Ensor, "The Football Madness," Contemporary Review 74 (November 1898) : 751-60; 'Creston,' "Football," Fortnightly Review 55 (January 1894) : 24-38; C. Edwardes, "The New Football Mania," Nineteenth Century 32 (October 1892) : 622-31. For the frequency of assaults and abuse of the referee—a symbolic proxy for the rent collector or school board man, and thus an immediate ritual scapegoat in the working-class game, see Green et al, p. 71. Reports of brawling in the crowd and altercations on the field cropped up regularly in the Bolton press. "The frequent quarrellings," declared the local sports correspondent in one review of the season, "have been as a black badge on the game," B. C., 3 June 1882. For the distinctions between soccer and rugby (Union) football, one need only repeat the old adage: 'Soccer is a game for gentlemen, played by hooligans; rugger is a game for hooligans, played by gentlemen.'


For soccer as a sub-culture which preserved a significant continuity of experience in working-class life, see I. R. Taylor, "Soccer Consciousness and Soccer Hooliganism," in S. Cohen, ed., Images of Deviance (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp. 134-64.

Recalling the conversation of the masters and foremen in a Leeds engineering shop of the period, E. K. Clark noted: "There was no division of opinion as to the importance of football, though that appreciation was by no means reflected in the hierarchy, where football was associated with the lower as cricket with the higher instincts." Kitsons of Leeds, 1837-1937 (London, 1937), pp. 145-46.


VII. RATIONAL RECREATION AND THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF THE VICTORIAN MUSIC HALLS

While organised sport increased its following among the working classes, it was undoubtedly the music hall which dominated popular recreations in the second half of the nineteenth century.\(^1\) Developed from the singing saloons by a new breed of publican entrepreneurs, this prototype modern entertainment industry provides a strong example of the capacity of working-class culture to meet the leisure needs of its constituency. Middle-class observers reacted to the demotic vigour of the halls with mixed feelings: some derived a measure of encouragement from the new phenomenon, but the bulk of reformers were disturbed by the halls as a further manifestation of the generally debased tastes of the masses. Next to the pub the music halls became the most embattled institution in working-class life, as reform groups strove variously to close them, censor them, or reproduce their essential appeal in facsimile counter attractions purged of vulgarity. Though the halls proved remarkably resilient, they did yield some ground to the pressures of rational recreation; significantly, the more effective pressures came from within the industry itself.
The take-off in growth for the music halls came in the 1850s. In recognition of a growing popular demand for entertainment, some of the more enterprising publicans expanded the operations of the singing saloon. They abolished the refreshment check in favour of a straight admission charge thus de-emphasising the trade in liquor, and relying on the pulling power of the entertainment and the superior appointments of the new establishments—the music hall label was meant to indicate an advance in taste and amenities upon the singing saloon. A certain Thomas Harwood (member of a family later prominent in East End music hall management) explained to a government licensing committee in 1852 how realisation of the potential of this new formula had prompted him to open a new concert room:

I was about leaving business, and it always struck me that the working classes could have a better description of recreation, supposing a person could speculate sufficiently largely, and give the recreation at a low price.\(^2\)

The smell of big money was in the air in the licenced trade; increased business in the forties had accelerated capital accumulation, and the publican was well placed to subsidise his ventures into music hall proprietorship from other enterprises such as sports promotion or outside catering in food and drink.\(^3\)

The best known of the new wave of publican entrepreneurs ('caterers' in contemporary jargon) was
another Londoner, Charles Morton, who opened his Canterbury Hall in 1851 in Lambeth. Originally an annexe built on the site of his pub's skittle alley, the hall proved such a profitable success that Morton reconstructed the whole premises in 1854 at a cost variously estimated at between twenty-five and forty thousand pounds. The new hall had a capacity of over 1500 and boasted its own library, reading room and picture gallery; admission charges started at 6d. In 1861 Morton duplicated his success when he opened the Oxford in Oxford Street, the first purpose-built music hall, complete with a fully equipped stage and fixed stall seating (the latter a significant change from the free standing tables and chairs of most halls). The lavish appointments of the Oxford were the talk of the West End; not the least attractive feature was its bevy of remarkably handsome barmaids.

But the leading showpiece of the new era was the Alhambra in Leicester Square (the choice of Billy Banks and his party for their night out in the late sixties). Converted from the Panopticon of Science and Art into a 3500 capacity music hall in 1860, the Alhambra eventually outdid the Oxford in the scale and spectacle of its productions and the range of its amenities, and claimed a yearly attendance outstripping South Kensington Museum or the Zoo. It retained the patronage of a solid core of
working-class Londoners, but also benefited from the capital's increasing tourist traffic (there was a further Exhibition in 1862). In 1864 it became the first music hall operated by a limited liability company, and proceeded to pay handsome dividends.  

The introduction of limited liability in 1862 released a flow of venture capital into music hall promotion, encouraged by the flourishing examples of the Oxford and Alhambra. By 1866 when the boom seems to have levelled out, the solicitor to the London Music Hall Proprietors Association could list thirty three large halls in town with an average capitalisation of ten thousand pounds and an average capacity of 1500. The existence of such an association is a further indication of the success of the halls, for it was founded to protect proprietors from legal actions brought by theatre interests in central London who were suffering from the competition of the new entertainments (informers laid information that the halls were offering episodes of straight drama which encroached upon territory reserved for the legitimate stage under the Theatre Act of 1843). At the hearings before the select committee appointed to reconsider theatrical licencing in 1866, it became clear that the music halls were incomparably better appointed and better run than the theatres. From his experience of theatre management in London, Stephen Fiske,
the American, concluded that "almost the only managers who display extraordinary enterprise and ability are those of the music halls and east end theatres."\(^8\)

There was also considerable growth and enterprise in music hall promotion outside of London. Though there were problems of undercapitalisation, the number of provincial halls more than doubled during the sixties, and the big establishments in the Midlands and the North rivalled those of the capital in size and popular success.\(^9\)

Below the larger halls stretched a dense undergrowth of smaller establishments, mostly pub music halls still operating by refreshment check, many of them probably without the necessary music and dancing licence. The Licenced Victuallers' trade paper, the *Era*, calculated that there were between two and three hundred small halls in London in 1856. Figures derived from a sample of entries in Howard's inventory of London's halls indicate that their mushroom growth ended in the early sixties when they went into a general decline; the great number of entries of only two to three years' operation suggests an extremely hazardous and competitive market.\(^10\) There was a further abrupt fall-off in the late eighties when the London County Council began the rigorous enforcement of safety requirements under a Board of Works act of 1878 and the concert areas in many pub music halls reverted to billiard rooms. Municipal
improvement also threatened the small fry in the provinces.\footnote{11}

The big establishments consolidated their grip at the expense of their smaller rivals, and the opening of the rebuilt London Pavilion in 1885 signalled a new bout of investment in music hall properties. The \textit{Financial News} recommended the music hall for those investors recently frightened off the foreign market and confided that:

\textit{... wherever it has been decently and prudently managed, it has yielded large fortunes. If it paid well ten years ago it should pay much better today, for many more people now frequent it and people of a better kind than formerly--if it continues to refine itself and to heap novelty on novelty as it does, it will go on growing.}

Given such encouragement the money poured in, and within a decade or so the publican and his check-taker were finally superseded by the theatrical capitalist and his accountant.\footnote{12}

The Victorian music hall qualifies as a prototype modern entertainment industry, not just because its capital investment allowed economies of scale which secured it a mass paying audience, but because of the thorough-going commercialisation which accompanied its growth and affected all facets of its operation. Commercialisation had, for example, important consequences for the performers, who were reconstituted as a fully professional labour force. At the top were the stars, already by the sixties earning thirty pounds a week or more, and enjoying some useful perks--
allowances from wineshippers for the champagne which was the indispensable fuel of the 'swell', free suits from tradesmen in return for a mention in the act, and royalties from publishers' agents anxious to push a new song. Among the lower ranks of performers, rewards were often niggardly and the competition much more severe. The pub music halls provided a constant flow of aspiring talent which kept the profession permanently overcrowded. Though the halls paid better than the theatres, performers found themselves increasingly squeezed by managements.

The turns system exemplifies the monopoly effect exerted by the big halls and the increased demands placed on performers. The system was introduced by Morton when he opened the Oxford; he filled his bill with artists already employed at the Canterbury, who thus played in Lambeth and Oxford St. on the same night, crossing the river by cab. It became customary for an artist to do four or five turns a night, and the system played into the hands of the big proprietors and agents who could secure exclusive control of performers where they enjoyed an interest in more than one hall. Artists had to meet their own expenses for costume and transport between turns, and the practice of matinees (legal after 1866) and twice-nightly performances (introduced in the 1870s, though the early history is obscure and contentious) increased the workload without any guarantee.
of a proportionate increase in earnings. Growing alienation within the profession produced spasms of militant trade union activity among performers in the seventies and eighties, but the exploitative grip of management was unshaken.  

The increased scale of operations and the pervasiveness of commercial values under the authoritarian control of the caterers affected in turn the nature of the entertainment offered by the halls. As the simple platform of the singing saloons was gradually superseded by the full theatrical apparatus of a stage and proscenium arch, the big halls were encouraged to introduce greater show and theatricality into their programmes—lavish tableaux of famous battle scenes, hundred-strong corps de ballet, troupes of Can-Can dancers from Paris, and Blondin cooking omelettes on the high wire. The Music Halls' Gazette for August 1868 detected "a feverish excitement abroad ... which sacrifices everything to sensation, a constant hankering after something, not only novel but more or less terrible," conditions bred by the hectic pace of change in modern city life; Louis Blanc, in less charitable mood, implied that dangerous trapeze acts met an English taste for violence which could no longer be satisfied with blood sports.  

Whatever the source of the audiences' apparent needs, the caterers, by their increasing use of publicity and show business hyperbole, sharpened the demand for spectacle and
novelty.

This manipulation was applied not only in production techniques but in the making of the stars. The distancing of the performer from the audience, one of the essential conditions of star appeal, began with the introduction of the formal stage at the Canterbury. The turn system further removed the performer from his original place among the audience for, with the need to keep to a strict schedule, there was no time to spend hob-nobbing with the groundlings by the singers' table (a hangover from the singing saloons which, together with the office of chairman, gradually disappeared from the halls). Morton began the projection of the star performer as something larger than life with his promotion of the Great Mackney. Another leading London proprietor, William 'Billy' Holland, the 'People's Caterer', took the process a step further and persuaded the star to live the role he had created on stage. Thus he insisted that George Leybourne ride everywhere in his personal brougham, displaying his fur-collared coat, a fistful of gold rings and a glad hand with the drinks, as befitted the style of 'Champagne Charlie'. As a star, the performer became more important than his material; he was the agent who transformed the dross of a prolific cheap sheet-music market into gold for, as the *Music Halls' Gazette* advised, 'a good song must be written, not for its own sale, but for that of the singer...
It must simply be a vehicle. Moreover, once the leading performers took care to copyright hit songs under their name, and the Performing Rights Society proved capable of prosecuting infringers among even the minor professionals in the back rooms of pubs, songs ceased to be common property and the star's position was reinforced. The spread of the railways and the cheap press opened up the provinces to the touring London star and company, and standardised much of the style and content of music hall performances across the country.

The modernisation of popular entertainment taking place in the music halls in this period was remarkable; yet just as remarkable was the extent to which the intimate congeniality inherited from the antecedent singing saloons remained unimpaired. Only gradually did fixed seating facing the stage become the norm, and many halls continued to seat their public at rows of tables which allowed easy access for waiters and customers alike; thus for many audiences the music hall remained a face to face encounter—drinking, smoking, eating and general good fellowship went on unabated during the performances. Moreover, only in a few of the very largest halls such as the Alhambra could spectacle eclipse the appeal of the individual artist as the staple attraction; all the accretions of the new show business mystique had not yet removed even the most exalted of these
from active contact with their public, for the essence of music hall entertainment remained the dialogue between performer and audience. Several middle-class visitors noted this, for it stood in marked contrast to the conventions of the legitimate theatre. At a Bradford music hall, the northern writer James Burnley was struck by the way artists would single out individuals in the crowd for particular attention, and was critical because they played so directly to the audience, "instead of trying to be natural." An American, Daniel Kirwan, reported that everyone in the audience at London's Royal Victoria "seemed to be on speaking terms with each and all of the performers." The dialogue was robust, as Edgar Jepson recalled:

The old music hall was a place of freedom and ease, and I have heard a soprano, when her accompaniment was bungled, pause in her song to curse the conductor, the orchestra, the manager, the proprietor and his hall, and the audience, with a brilliance of invective never attained on the legitimate stage.

In similar fashion the stars themselves were not immune to the traditional sanctions of a dissatisfied audience. Charles Coborn muttered darkly about certain halls in Liverpool where "the customers were as rough as the furniture." At Glasgow the locals despatched the Great Vance from the stage by hurling handfuls of rivets; at Harwood's in London's East End—'the Sods' Opera'—the favoured missiles were trotter bones. Popular control did
not stop short with the performers—at Chester Music Hall in the seventies, the audience proceeded to dismantle all the stage machinery when a dioramic entertainment of the Zulu War failed to please and they were refused a refund of their admission money. Audiences could of course be extremely generous in their attentions, cheering the favoured artist on into innumerable encores, and in some halls the performers were wired in so that the audience could not jump on stage and dance with them.24

The point in any performance at which the audience asserted its presence came with the chorus singing. Then the songs of the music hall would be reclaimed as common property; often the audience would alter the words to their own liking and the revised version would supersede the original. One common type of song demanded audience response: the Great Vance enjoyed considerable success with his number 'Is He Guilty?' into which he would introduce topical events and personalities, and refer such subjects to the cheers or hisses of popular judgment. Stephen Fiske recorded this phenomenon in the sixties:

... at a music hall the singer turns the news of the week into rhyme. Nowhere can you hear the Duke of Edinburgh more heartily cheered, the opinion of the people in regard to the disestablishment of the Irish Church more frankly expressed, the bills before Parliament more freely criticised, the general national feeling more truly manifested, than at the music halls. Public sentiment is often better represented there than in the newspaper.
The applause and hisses are surer criteria of popular favour or disfavour than the cheers of packed meetings, or the groans of suborned disturbers of the peace. Disraeli, Gladstone, Bright and Beales go for precisely what they are worth at these places of amusement.25

The demonstrative involvement of the audience was a fundamental and persistent characteristic of the music hall experience. Recalling the halls before they succumbed to the respectable programming of the eighties and nineties, one music hall regular put the matter succinctly: "We went there not as spectators, but as performers."26

Despite some contemporary contentions to the contrary, the music hall public remained predominantly working and lower middle class. Addressing the audience at his annual benefit night in 1862, John Wilton, proprietor of Wilton's Music Hall in Whitechapel, apostrophised on the great social and moral improvement that the halls had wrought among the working classes, "for it is the working classes alone," he concluded, "who are the great support of them."27 A decade or so later, in a novel by Walter Besant, Emmanuel Leweson, owner and manager of the North London Palace itemised his clientele thus: "City clerks, dressed a la mode, young shopmen, making half-a-crown purchase nearly as much dissipation as a sovereign will buy in the West; with a good sprinkling of honest citizens, fond of an evening out, neither they nor their wives averse to the smell of tobacco
and the taste of beer." The weight of other evidence confirms this picture of an audience comprising the better-off artisans and tradesmen with their wives, together with the sprigs of clerkdom from office and shop; in the provinces we can note more of the same. Note should also be taken of the gallery—'the top shelf'—which few observers visited. The composition of its audience comes to us via the casualty lists of music hall fires and crowd disasters: of twenty killed in a crush at Dundee in 1865, the greater number were factory hands between twelve and eighteen years of age; of twenty-three killed in a fire panic at the Victoria Music Hall, Manchester three years later, few were more than twenty years old.

The major caterers did strive to draw in a higher class audience. Morton had intended that the superior amenities of the Canterbury would lure the fashionable supper-room set from the Strand across the river to Lambeth. The price differential at the Oxford advertised his continuing bid for the quality, and the newly emerged music hall press of the sixties regularly trumpeted the halls' breakthrough to respectability—"audiences," announced the Music Halls' Gazette in 1868, "are in the main formed of the middle-class members of society." These claims were a public relations fiction. The novelist James Greenwood saw through the caterers' myth on a visit to the 'Oxbridge' in
"The bulk of the people there," he concluded, "were mostly people not accustomed to music halls, and only induced to pay them a visit on account of the highly-respectable character the halls are in the habit of giving themselves in their placards and in their newspapers."  

Fifteen years later The Times remarked that no gentleman would wish to patronise the music halls by choice; a cartoon of this later period showed a middle-class couple deciding to risk a visit, but only after the close of the London season, when none of their friends would be in Town to catch them slumming.

It was the working classes whose presence set the tone of the halls. This was true even in the West End halls which attracted a regular contingent of fringe elements from the middle-classes—journalists, bohemians, officer cadets, undergraduates and medical students. At the Oxbridge, Greenwood noted the stalls full of champagne-swilling men about town and their painted ladies, but awarded greater significance to the more numerous complement of working men and their families in the 6d seats in the body of the hall:

Not but that the frequenters of the sixpenny part are very useful; indeed, to speak the truth, the Oxbridge could not get on well without them. They keep up appearances, and present a substantial contradiction to the accusation that the music hall is nothing better than a haunt for drunkenness and debauchery.
The smaller halls were often well meshed into the fabric of the local working-class community. Artists who worked the provinces in the sixties and seventies reported sharing the bill with tests of local skills: a bootmaking contest in Northampton, netmaking in Grimsby. Prizes were practical—blankets, bags of flour, buckets of coal—and often constituted thinly disguised hand-outs to the needy; in the same spirit, benefit nights brought in cash for local families hit by death or injury. Some music hall managers in the East End gave working men's trade and philanthropic societies special rates for their meetings, and Crowder of the Paragon in the Mile End Road received a special presentation from the unions for allowing them free use of his premises during trade disputes in the eighties.

Even if they chose not to visit them, the inhabitants of the Victorian town or city could hardly have remained unaware of the music halls and their popularity. Built on the main thoroughfares and emblazoned with posters, they ranked second only to the new town halls in size and capacity as places of indoor assembly. Music hall advertising was ubiquitous—Morton even succeeded in placing copy with *The Times*—and the barrel organ and the whistling errand boy brought the hit songs out onto the streets. Those with first hand acquaintance of working class taste knew well the extent of the music halls' appeal:
"One place of its kind," reported a rueful James Hole from Leeds in the early sixties, "has a larger nightly attendance than the evening classes of all its seventeen Mechanics' Institutes put together." The report of the select committee of 1866 made the statistics of success better known, and received considerable attention in the press (most periodicals of the period, whatever their leanings, carried occasional reports from correspondents who had seen the inside of a music hall and lived). Fires, accidents to trapeze artists, and the patronage of the Prince of Wales kept the halls in the news, and the mounting hostility of reform interests captured wide public attention in the mid-eighties with the cluster of demonstrations and court actions which the press declared the 'Battle of the Music Halls.'

Though the most publicised reaction, hostility was far from being the sole or necessarily the commonest response to the rise of the halls. The magistrates, for example, when not under immediate pressure from reform lobbies, were generally tolerant. In the mid-fifties, the Era reported: "The magistracy of the metropolis and districts have relaxed their former stringency in respect to the music licencing system and, with a liberality highly to be appreciated, regranted all the old licences and acceded to new applications." William Lovett, whose Chartist National Hall in Holborn had been repeatedly denied
a licence for music and dancing, noted that the local publican who evicted him and opened Weston's Music Hall on the premises met with no licencing problems; in Lovett's opinion the bench was facilitating the spread of cheap entertainment as an antidote to political excitement.  

Further evidence from Liverpool in the fifties suggests that magistrates were also becoming aware of the efficacy of the halls as a brake upon intemperance. This estimation certainly confirmed itself to the Chief Magistrate at Bow Street, who told the 1866 committee that he received "scarcely ever a case of drunkenness from any of the music halls." Similarly, chief constables had few complaints about the conduct of the halls, and caterers could often be sure of police testimony to the good order of their establishments when their licence was challenged.

Some observers saw more of value in the music hall experience than the negative controls discerned by the harder-headed members of society—they saw the halls as valuable new socialising agencies for the city dwellers. In the first place, they accepted that the logic of an industrial society honouring free trade principles meant that entertainment, like any other commodity, was subject to the dictates of a self-operating market. Accordingly, the halls were a legitimate operation, sanctioned by popular demand. What was encouraging was not just the good
order and temperate thirst which marked these mass assemblies, but the flux of direct and open social intercourse maintained within them. Furthermore, the halls were not exclusively male territory, as the pubs and clubs tended to be; working men went there with their wives, and sometimes families, and as Matthew Browne remarked, "with wives there come the first lessons in courtesy." Might not the halls serve as a milieu for repairing the estrangement of the classes and the isolation of the individual which disfigured modern city life?

The proposition appealed to the Christian Socialist leader, the Reverend Stewart Headlam, who attempted to convert churchmen from their general abhorrence of the stage, and sought to encourage the attendance of clergy and the respectable classes at the theatre and the music hall. Headlam founded the Church and Stage Guild in London in 1879 and lectured regularly on this theme, drawing upon the evidence of his own frequent visits to popular entertainments, where he met and talked with artists and managers. He was dismissed from his curacy for publishing his lectures, and the Guild was never a very effective body, but Headlam continued as an outspoken defender of the halls, and in this role he became one of the few clerical speakers welcome to the East End radical workingmen's clubs. For Headlam, the music halls brought pleasure into a brutal
industrial society; "Those who work on the music hall stage are," he contended, "genuine servants of humanity."\(^{48}\)

Stewart Headlam was no doubt exceptional in the intensity of his support, but there was a sizeable body of opinion which was generally sympathetic to the music halls, yet found certain features of their operation disturbing. The principal misgiving was that the halls were being run primarily as speculative ventures by men whose avarice led them to corrupt the popular taste. Headlam himself was disquieted on this point, and attacked what he called "the plutocratic evil—the power which money had in comparison with worth and talent."\(^{49}\) Similarly, Hodgson Pratt, among others, complained that the halls had "been started and managed by men who cared only for bringing money into the till":

They have only thought of what would 'take', whether it was bad or good, false or true in taste, refined or coarse; idiotic or indecent stuff.\(^{50}\)

The caterer was cast as the villain of the piece, a gross and insidious mutation of the publican. Distaste for this despicable new archetype of capitalism was combined with another, older prejudice in the picture which Walter Besant drew of Emmanuel Leweson, music hall proprietor, in the early seventies:
He was gorgeously attired in a brown velvet coat and white waistcoat, with a great profusion of gold chain and studs ... . His features were highly Jewish, with the full lips and large nose of that Semitic race. His hair, thick and black, lay in massive rolls on an enormous great head, the biggest head, Frank thought, that he had ever seen. In his hand, big in proportion, was a tumbler of iced soda and brandy.

Leweson supervised performances from the wings, "contemplating his patrons with an air of undisguised contempt." 51

Disclosing the cynical manipulations of the caterer could not, however, explain away completely what seemed to many to be the lamentably low nature of music hall entertainment. Most disquieting were the frequent charges that much of it was morally offensive. Observers objected to the semi-nude tableaux or poses plastiques, and the "indecent elevation of the leg" in the Can-Can; there was, reported one witness, "a predominance of 'fleshings' and female shamelessness." 52 It is less easy to discover the specific offence in other features of the entertainment for, though many writers did their duty under fire by recording the alleged indecencies on the halls, they were seldom explicit. Characteristically Henry Mayhew contained his distaste long enough to record a song sung in a London penny gaff, "the whole point of which consisted in the mere utterance of some filthy word at the end of each stanza--'Pineapple Rock' was the grand treat of the night and offered greater scope to the rhyming powers of the
author than any of the others." There were other occasions for vulgarities, as had once been explained to a parliamentary committee: "There are certain things which, in technical phraseology, are called 'gags', and in which there are often vulgarisms and lewd expressions." A later committee risked defilement and asked for an example; E. T. Smith, the unlikely son of an admiral, and a music hall proprietor who had once fitted his barmaids out in the unholy bloomers, obliged:

Perhaps a man comes on stage, and he has a clock under his arm, and he says "This is the way I wind the old woman up on Saturday nights," and all kinds of allusions and bestialities in a mild way. Sometimes they have an organ, and make the same remarks.

Given the low threshold of moral indignation which obtained among the Victorian bourgeoisie, such repartee must clearly have put the halls beyond the pale for the respectable middle-class family. It was this failure of propriety which The Times identified as a kind of class discrimination in reverse, when it charged that the halls "intensify the tendency of the nation to become two."

Almost as affronting to the well disposed outsider was the inanity of many music hall songs. Middle-class critics applied their own standards of literary judgment in separating the song from its performance, and the unadorned lyrics were dismissed with disdain in the periodical press--
"arrant nonsense," was the verdict of the Saturday Review, which otherwise looked kindly if condescendingly on the halls. Working-class writers who thought the halls represented some advancement in popular manners were embarrassed by the low intellectual content of the entertainment, and respectable opinion in general was discouraged by the halls' unedifying repertoire—all the more so because the Victorians believed music to be the least corruptible and most civilising of all arts. An article in the Dublin University Magazine of 1874 expresses the disillusionment with the halls in this respect:

At the time when Music Halls were first started, high expectations were formed of their capabilities in this direction. It was thought that, by coming within the reach of the general public, instead of being a luxury confined to the favoured few, good music and true art would flourish more widely and beneficially than ever they had done before. Literature, which has on the whole done such immense good by becoming cheap and universal, afforded a parallel instance, giving substantial grounds for this hope. . . . We cannot but lament especially the disappointment of the expectations that were once entertained of the Music Halls as means of elevating recreation for the people. Thus were erstwhile friends of the halls reduced to accepting them on sufferance.

Declared friends of the halls were fewer in number and quieter of voice than the root and branch men of the religious and temperance groups to whom the halls were anathema. Their principal objection to the music hall was
the sale of strong drink. The association of drink and public entertainment confirmed the publican as the controlling interest and, it was claimed, fatally sapped the work of moral improvement. Songs which extolled the attractions of drink, and the extravagant wages paid to those who sang them, encouraged prodigality in the audience. On this point, we may recall the indignation of Ewing Ritchie (an inveterate music hall hater) at what he considered the excessive expenditure of an East End working-class audience, "when people in the middle ranks of life are in despair at the hard prospect before them." Opponents of the halls were particularly worried by the susceptibility of shopmen and clerks to the temptations of the fast life as extolled by the star in his recurrent role of the Swell. Contemplating the rootless army of young lodgers who aped the manners and style of Champagne Charlie, one critic fulminated against the halls for promoting "a sham gentility among the striplings of the uneducated classes." They should, he recommended, "be stripped of the sham finery and sham jewelry they wear on their indifferently cleaned fingers ... and sent to serve a couple of years before the mast." Predictably offensive were the sexual innuendos of music hall entertainment, which were alleged to corrupt working-class girls and make them easy prey for prowling roués; the enemies of the halls were generally convinced that,
in the words of one of their number, they were mostly "anterooms to the brothels."63

The opposition drew little comfort from evidence of good order and incipient respectability. A Liverpool vicar confronted by singing saloons in which all was drunken confusion, found such scenes "too disgusting to be very dangerous," maintaining that "the best conducted of the rooms I fear the most ... where there is more attention to appearances, and a thin gauze of propriety is thrown over all."64 Another reformer, who recorded an increase in the number of respectably dressed women going in to the halls, found this disturbing testimony to the latter's ingenuity in the refinement of old temptations, rather than evidence of real improvement upon the gin shop.65 This witness drew his conclusions from vigils passed outside the music halls. Few reformers felt the need to go inside in order to prove their case; as one of them remarked: "One does not want to taste poison to know that it exists in a chemist's shop."66 Prejudice against the halls was served by imaginations well practiced in discerning the worst--reviewing hostile evidence to the 1866 select committee, Browne remarked shrewdly: "Good people have too often an exaggerating pruriency of their own."67
The major strategy of the reform lobbies was to contest the annual renewal of music hall licences on the grounds of the moral dereliction of the proprietor. The strategy grew more menacing as the number and scope of licencing regulations increased. Before the 1850s it had been only in London and the area within a twenty mile radius of its centre that a music and dancing licence had been required in addition to a liquor licence. In 1851 Birmingham introduced music licences, and the rest of the country gradually followed suit. Bolton's magistrates received the new licencing powers in 1872 as a result of a Corporation Improvement Bill. Faced with a petition from the town's Sunday school leaders they refused a music licence to the Museum Music Hall, the descendant of the famous Star, and thus reactivated the controversy which had split Bolton twenty years earlier. The magistrates recanted in the face of public protest meetings, but imposed a form of censorship on all music hall entertainment in the town. Proprietors who learned to negotiate the hazards of the magistrates' sessions faced new difficulties as the administration of music licences passed to elective town and county councils which were more sensitive to organised public opinion. The London County Council in particular won itself a reputation for the stringency of its licencing committee; it had a further powerful sanction
to hand in its fire and safety regulations which, as noted previously, caused the closure of many smaller halls unable to afford the alterations necessary to meet them.

In London in the eighties certain reformers went further than petitioning licencing authorities. For Frederick Charrington, scion of the famous brewing family and convert to temperance, the road to Damascus lay past the door of his own pubs; shouting "This way to Hell," he carried out a personal campaign of picketing East End music halls. Hired mobs pelted him with salvoes of flour and pease pudding, but he stood his ground, and was eventually taken to court by one proprietor for injuring his trade. Though found guilty of libel Charrington was undeterred, and his concern to mount a sustained offensive on the halls found ready support from the Methodist Times, which called on the LCC for a general purge of the halls as part of the programme of a new Social Purity movement. Stewart Headlam mounted a counter attack with some support from the working-men's clubs. This was the Battle of the Music Halls.

Frontal assault did not, however, recommend itself to all reformers, and the same decade witnessed an attempt to defeat the halls by providing rival entertainment of an improved nature. In 1880 the Coffee Music Hall Company was founded in London, as an extension of the temperance
based coffee public house movement. A company circular explained its intentions to provide several large music halls in various parts of London, to which workingmen could take their wives and children "without shaming or harming them." No intoxicant drinks were to be sold. The company's first (and only) venture was to rent the famous South London theatre, the Royal Victoria, which after extensive redecoration and heavy advertising opened as the first Coffee Music Hall in December 1880. The company was meant to pay its own way, but within seven months it was badly in debt, and the counter music hall only survived through the generous subventions of Samuel Morley.

The faltering career of the Victoria Coffee Music Hall illustrates the growing difficulty of effective direct competition with an institution as commercialised as the regular music hall; it demonstrates too how authentic reproduction of a vigorous popular ritual eluded outsiders whose principal concern was control and dilution. "In the first place," to quote one of the post mortems of the Coffee Music Hall's initial collapse, "there was an evident want of real, bona fide commercial energy in the management." The promoters shied away from engaging professional expertise; John Hollingshead, a respected theatre manager with considerable knowledge of the music hall business, was
approached for his advice, but was obliged to stay in the background because of doubts about the "safeness" of his associations. The promoters claimed that they were unable to afford top artists because, unlike the regular halls, they did not enjoy the substantial additional revenue which came from drink sales. This claim, and the assertion that managements elsewhere were warning their artists off the Royal Victoria, may have been true, but it is at least as likely that the coffeemen refused to pay what they condemned as "reckless wages" on principle (Arthur Roberts, the comedian, recalled how he got 1s - 6d, a cup of coffee and a piece of cake for performing at a temperance music hall, compared to the half a guinea he had made as a beginner on the regular halls).

The entertainment was as unsatisfactory as the management, and attendances were often poor. Friendly critics pointed to one familiar failing: "There was an air of patronage about the place, which the Briton, even in his most unpolished condition, will at once detect; and woe then to success!" Then too, the temperance propaganda which alternated with the regular acts was too obtrusive: "At the Victoria," said one complainant, "you were likely to get, not art, but a huge illuminated diagram of the liver of a Drunkard." In the further interests of improvement, the artists were obliged to submit to censorship of their
material by rehearsing their acts in private for the manager. On stage restraints vanished, and the popular voice broke through:

Yet, in spite of all these precautions, let there come a chance such as an encore verse, such as some slip or stoppage in the stage machinery, and out will come something, not in the programme and never heard or seen before, which will bring down a thunder of enjoyment from the audience, and at the same time fill the manager's box with sorrow and humiliation.78

Audience and performers were never completely tamed, but the music halls were reformed nonetheless; the industry had little to fear from the inept experiments of the Royal Victoria, but it did respond to the pressures of hostile opposition as the caterers discovered that improvement made for better business as well as sound defence.

Music hall interests had from the outset sought to disarm their critics by advertising the moral superiority of their operations to the older tavern entertainments. The Era became well practiced in defending the licenced trade's new offspring, declaring in effect 'We are all Improvers now.' Speaking up for Sharples against the opponents of the Bolton Star in the fifties, the paper argued: "Public amusements must be left to individual knowledge and private enterprise, where they will be well
directed and controlled by wholesome competition and authoritative public opinion." Stewardship was safe in the hands of the responsible publican like Sharples because of his proven competence in a field best left to professionals. "Public amusement," continued the Era, "is a trade and a mystery and requires to be learned like any other trade ... no amateur ever ventured into it without damaging its character and injuring its professors." Charles Morton had been the prime example of the modern reconstructed publican. Although an inveterate gambler, he maintained an impressively respectable front. As one music hall habitue recalled: "No man was ever half so respectable as Charles Morton looked--his sense of decorum would have done credit to a churchwarden." But this kind of protective colouring was poor defence against the intensified attacks of reformers. Alarmed at the threat to their licences and livelihoods, the major London proprietors reconstituted their Protection Association in 1876, and memorialised the Home Secretary with a scheme for an official censor for the halls. At the same time the proprietors asked again to be allowed to play the legitimate drama so that they might introduce dramatic (and improving) sketches. This concession, so it was claimed, would lessen their dependence on the comic
singers, who could not be effectively controlled under the current state of the law. When the project collapsed, the proprietors cast themselves as moral vigilantes. House rules of the eighties warned "Any artiste giving expression to any vulgarity, in words or actions, when on stage, will be subject to instant dismissal, and shall forfeit any salary that may be due for the current week," and programmes on sale in the halls invited the public to inform the manager of any suggestive or offensive word or action that might have escaped his notice. The Era lent its weight to the internal improvement campaign with a progressive editorial which identified a further matter for reform:

It is one of the greatest nuisances possible to sensible people who go to places of amusement to divert their minds from politics and business alike to have the opinions of the daily papers reproduced in verse and flung at their heads by a music hall singer ... persons who go to a place of amusement to be amused, and these we believe, form the steadily paying class, are too sensible to care to proclaim their private opinions by applauding senseless rubbish with a political meaning. Proprietors who cater (as it is in their interest to do) for the tastes of the general public would do well to keep the political song nuisance decidedly in abeyance, and we do not despair of the day when such allusions shall be as severely reprobated as, from the manifesto now so often to be read on music hall programmes, we see that impropriety is.

Such proscriptions were soon in practice. At the New Sebright Wholesome Amusements Temple in London, artists were warned to observe the following house rules:
...No offensive allusions to be made to any Member of the Royal Family; Members of Parliament, German Princes, police authorities, or any member thereof, the London County Council, or any member of that body; no allusion whatever to religion, or any religious sect; no allusion to the administration of the law of the country.  

The give and take between the performer and his public continued to pose a challenge to house discipline. Some managements obliged artists to sign contracts forbidding them to 'address the audience.' Just as the entertainers and the entertainment had been censored, so too did the audiences themselves eventually come under restraint: encores were limited, chorus singing was discouraged, and uniformed commissionaires policed the auditorium. Will Thorne recalled proprietors in Birmingham who refused entry to any man not wearing a collar, and the Order and Decorum which became the cliche of every music hall advertisement were so rigidly enforced in Collins Music Hall in Islington that it became known locally as the Chapel.

Despite this conspicuous concern for respectability, the music hall proprietor still remained vulnerable in his role as drink seller. Although, from the fifties, entertainment had revealed itself as a potentially viable undertaking in its own right, drink seemed essential to the commercial success of the halls. At the Canterbury,
Morton had kept a sharp eye on the flow of 'wet money'; when the volume of female attendance (another much advertised guarantee of respectability) had seemed to inhibit the sale of drink, he had been quite ready to turn the ladies away. The trade claimed that ginger beer sold better than the intoxicants, and that door rather than bar receipts provided the greater part of their revenue, but it was not until the eighties that music hall managements began to phase out the sale and consumption of strong drink in the auditorium. By then, changes in the domestic economy were affecting traditional consumption habits in such a way as to displace strong drink as the prime commodity of working-class leisure time, and the modest but significant increment of a more respectable clientele also seemed to allow a safe retreat from the previously considerable reliance on liquor sales. As the solicitor for the London proprietors' association explained: "Every year we find that so soon as we raise our prices and increase our better class accommodation, so soon does the drinking go down." Thus the phasing out of drink in the auditorium is not to be solely explained as a nervous reaction to the increased militancy of reformers.

The caterer's concern to qualify the music halls as a rational recreation was variously motivated. He was, it is true, anxious to disarm his reform opponents, and the
protestations of respectability can be interpreted most obviously as a defensive response. Some of these protestations were undoubtedly disingenuous and misleading, of a piece with the hyperbole of showmanship—in this count we may adduce the trade papers' unsubstantiated claims for extensive middle-class patronage in the sixties—yet, for the most part, the caterer was a man of honourable intention in his courtship of respectability. Despite his frequent occupational posture of man of the people (an initially valuable role which he derived from his antecedent office of publican) he was pricked by bourgeois ambition and keen aspirations to gentility, and respectability was a necessary condition for their achievement. That the caterer's affirmations of respectability involved the enforcement of operational controls of the music hall more far-reaching and stringent than either the threat or calibre of the reform opposition necessarily justified or the traditions of its antecedent institutions sanctioned, gives the measure of the caterer's maturation as dynamic entrepreneur. Respectability served as a defensive umbrella for the music hall industry and a status lever for its tycoons, but its practice also made for the more efficient and profitable management which was necessary to realise the spectacular new growth opportunities of the mid-eighties.
Applying the disciplines of respectability to audience and performer was part of a general rationalisation of music hall operation. Banishing drinking from the auditorium—'Abandon hops, all ye who enter here' was the wag's lament—made it less visible and therefore less offensive, but it also facilitated the replacement of free standing tables and chairs with fixed stall seating facing the stage which made for more efficient logistics: stall seating brought higher audience capacities, allowed for more effective price differentials, encouraged the habit of seat reservation, and simplified the running of twice nightly houses. Diminishing the flow of drink may also have had some effect in controlling the volatility of the audience and its random interruptions of the performance. Censoring the artist and restraining the audience was meant to purge the halls of vulgarity, but in cutting down ad libs and encores it also helped ensure the predictable time-tabling of acts. This was important, for the development of the turns system, and twice-nightly and matinee performances indicated a managerial concern for the maximum exploitation of time and resources which demanded their efficient scheduling and co-ordination. Eschewing the controversial as well as the vulgar also affirmed the respectability of the reformed music hall (or variety theatre as it was now styled), but it marked,
too, the entrepreneurs' bid for the patronage of 'the general public,' a clientele more passive, more predictable and more numerous than that defined by the categories of class.  

The credo of the new regime was put by John Hollingshead, dramatic critic, author and sometime music hall manager, in contemplating the formation of the Moss Empires music hall syndicate in 1900 with a capitalisation approaching two million pounds:

This interest has been created by commercial instinct for the supply of wholesome amusement for the people. Its work, without any false veneer, is entirely commercial. Its first duty, which it strictly observes, is to conduct its business according to the rules of good citizenship; and its second duty, which it performs to the best of its ability, is to earn a satisfactory dividend for its shareholders.

Thus by the late Victorian period it could be claimed that the music hall had been assimilated to the cultural apparatus of a bourgeois society. In reality the conversion was far from complete. The particular chemistry of artist and audience which characterised the essential music hall experience was, for example, not easily extinguished, and the greatest of all music hall stars, Marie Lloyd, derived no little of her popular success in these years through flouting the new proprieties, and maintaining the traditional flow of ribaldry. But many
knowledgeable contemporaries recorded distinct changes in tone as well as those of scale and lay-out in the music hall of the eighties and nineties. Managements had succeeded in impressing something of a more compliant manner upon the members of this robust institution. In a sense, big business had succeeded where the social reformers of recreation had failed. The improvements fell far short of the grand designs of the reformers, and proceeded from motives less scrupulously high-minded and compassionate than theirs, but the manipulations of the music hall entrepreneur manifested a potential for defining and enforcing socially appropriate behaviour—"the rules of good citizenship"—which identify the emergent mass entertainment industry as a conscious and effective agency of rational recreation. Addressing the Public Morals Conference in London in 1910, the Reverend Thomas Phillips remarked, without flippancy, "If you bring a puritan saint and a music hall manager into contact, it is wonderful how well they get on together."
FOOTNOTES

1 This chapter is based upon my long essay "Profit and Morality in a Nineteenth Century Entertainment Industry: The Case of the Victorian Music Halls," in R. Samuel, ed., Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century England, Ruskin Studies in Social History, 2 (London, forthcoming), and I would like to thank Rafael Samuel for his kind and informed encouragement of my research in this field. Though material for the study of the halls is abundant, most secondary work is disappointing, and modern scholars have afforded them no more than incidental attention. The best point of departure is C. D. Stuart and A. J. Park, The Variety Stage: A History of the Music Halls from the Earliest Period to the Present Time (London, 1895). To a great extent subsequent historians have merely reworked their material, but H. Scott, The Early Doors: Origins of the English Music Hall (London, 1946), and R. Mander and J. Mitchenson, British Music Hall (London, 1965) are honourable exceptions. The most valuable recent work is D. Howard, London Theatres and Music Halls, 1850-1950 (London, 1970), which provides a comprehensive listing for the capital and an excellent bibliography.


3 C. M. Smith, Curiosities of London Life (London, 1853), pp. 166-67 noted the career of one young publican who had netted ten thousand pounds in seven years. Frederick Strange, later manager and proprietor of the Alhambra, see below, started out as a waiter before landing the refreshment contract at the Crystal Palace, from which he was reputed to have made fifty thousand pounds personal profit, J. Riviere, My Musical Life (London, 1893), p. 133. See also 'Baron' Nicholson, Autobiography of a Fast Man (London, 1863), p. 284-87.

4 Though important, Morton was not the solitary pioneer that music hall mythology has made him out to be. He acceded to the title of Father of the Halls in the nineties by the happy contrivance of outliving his rivals; apotheosis was completed in W. H. Morton and H. C. Newton, Sixty Years of Stage Service: The Life of Charles Morton (London, 1905). Scott, op. cit., pp. 131-41 gives a more realistic appreciation. A good contemporary account of the Canterbury is provided by J. E. Ritchie, The Night Side of London (London, 1854), pp. 58-65.
5 E. Soldene, *My Theatrical and Musical Recollections* (London, 1897), p. 32. Changes in lay-out are extremely important in music hall history, see below, p. 337. To some extent they can be traced in the collection of illustrations in Mander and Mitchenson, op. cit., though the absence of any comprehensive identification of the sources and dates for the illustrations is an obstacle to the establishment of a precise chronology of music hall development.


9 The provinces have been much neglected in music hall history. G. J. Mellor, *The Northern Music Hall* (Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1971) makes a start in remedying this deficiency though, as in much of this kind of writing, the style and method are too anecdotal and uncritical. For the growth of these years see Stuart and Park, op. cit., pp. 86-92. "The Cost of Amusing the Public," *London Society* 1 (April 1862) : 193-98, arrives at a figure of 119 halls outside of London; six years later the *Era Almanack*, 1868, lists over 300.

The provinces also produced some notable entrepreneurs—it was successful provincial operators, Moss, Stoll and Thornton, who built up the big music hall syndicates that took over the London halls in the nineties. For details of these and other less well documented figures—Day and Holden in Birmingham, Burton and Youdan in the North—see Mellor, op. cit., and Bailey op. cit. Useful sources include obituaries in the *Era*; F. Boase, *Modern English Biography*, 6 vols. (Truro, 1892-1921).
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10 Era, 7 September 1856; S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, q. 1006; Howard, op. cit.


13 G. H. McDermott, who introduced the notorious 'By Jingo' hit of the seventies, went bankrupt in 1885 after twenty years on the halls, during which time he estimated his earnings at between twelve and fifteen hundred pounds per annum. Era, 8, 29 August 1885. A helpful source for details of wages, contracts, working conditions and various abuses within the business which artists were generally obliged to suffer is C. Coborn, 'The Man Who Broke the Bank': Memories of Stage and Music Hall (London, 1928). Coborn was a déclassé fugitive from the City who was prominent as a militant unionist in the eighties, see below, n. 14. His autobiography is one of the readable few in what is generally a dismal genre (theatrical reminiscence, warned Beerbohm, is the most awful weapon in the armoury of old age).

14 The profession organised various provident and benevolent societies in the fifties and sixties, but more militant organisations appeared in the summer of 1872, with the formation of the Music Hall Co-operative and Anti-Agency Union in Leeds, Manchester and the East Midlands, and the Music Hall Artists Protection Society in London. The unions proposed to by-pass the much detested agent (another product of the commercialisation of entertainment, for whose history, see Stuart and Park, op. cit., pp. 114-42), end the turn system, control entry to the profession and, in the case of the Leeds group, open their own co-operative music hall. The brief careers of these unions is recorded in Magnet (Leeds), 17 August - 28 December 1872; Era, 7 September to 21 December 1872. For militancy in the eighties, see the Music Hall Artists' Association Gazette, 30 August - 3 November 1886, and Coborn, op. cit., pp. 109-15.


Holland was certainly as important a figure as Charles Morton. A brilliant publicist, he managed or owned a succession of London music halls, theatres and pleasure gardens before moving on to the new frontier of entertainment in Blackpool in the eighties. Details of his career may be gleaned from Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, 9 January 1875; Era, 13 December 1890; Blackpool Gazette and News, 3 December 1895.

Music Halls' Gazette, 27 June 1868.

For cases brought by the society, formed in 1875, see The Times, 10 June 1882. Artists' advertisements in the professional press listed songs that were their property and could not be sung without their written permission.

As the comedian Arthur Roberts recalled, "It was all uproar whether they liked you or not," Fifty Years of Spoof (London, 1927), pp. 28-29.


D. J. Kirwan, Palace and Hovel, or Phases of London Life (London, 1963), pp. 161-62, first published in the U.S. in 1870. The Victoria is an example of a popular theatre which played music hall entertainment.


Coborn, op. cit., pp. 111, 159; The Times, 29 December 1879; Mellor, op. cit., pp. 30, 142.

Piske, op. cit., pp. 133-34. At election time, artists offered advice on the choice of candidates, Era, 24 October 1885. Topical issues occasionally provoked a furor--there were broken heads in the Alhambra in 1870 over the Franco-Prussian War, see 'One of the Old Brigade,' London in the Sixties (London, 1908), pp. 52-56.

Fiske, op. cit., pp. 133-34. At election time, artists offered advice on the choice of candidates, Era, 24 October 1885. Topical issues occasionally provoked a furor--there were broken heads in the Alhambra in 1870 over the Franco-Prussian War, see 'One of the Old Brigade,' London in the Sixties (London, 1908), pp. 52-56.

W. R. Titterton, From Theatre to Music Hall (London, 1912), p. 121. A further consideration of the style and substance of music hall entertainment is provided in C. McInnes, Sweet Saturday Night (London, 1967) and my essay on the halls.

Era, 23 March 1862.

29. See e.g., S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, q. 7436, for Birmingham, and Burnley, op. cit., pp. 55-63 for a northern city.

30. The Times, 5 January 1865; Music Halls' Gazette, 8 August 1868.

31. Music Halls' Gazette, 23 May 1868. See also Musician and Musical Hall Times (London), 28 May, 11 June 1862, and Glowworm (London), 6 September 1865. These were some of the short-lived music hall papers of the sixties; the staple professional papers were the Era, the well established trade paper of the licenced Victuallers, which overcame its initial distaste for the halls in the late fifties, and the Leeds Magnet, which first appeared in 1866, but outlived the other newcomers.


33. The Times, 15 October 1883; Judy (London), 2 September 1885.


35. Greenwood, loc. cit. See also Hollingshead's evidence on the Alhambra, S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, q. 5263.


37. Era, 19 September 1885. Bill Holland granted free use of the North Woolwich Pleasure Gardens to engineers and their families who held a benefit for striking Newcastle engineers, The Times, 4 October 1871.

38. For this coup, see Morton and Newton, op. cit., pp. 48-49.


Era, 26 October 1856.

Lovett, Life and Struggles, pp. 288, 372-75.


S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, 956.


Proponents of this theory included Dion Boucicault, the playwright, S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, qq. 4237-38; Browne, "Theatres and Music Halls," and Views and Opinions, pp. 266-68; J. Valentine, op. cit.; the anonymous author of "Music Halls," All the Year Round 25 (October 1880) :520-24; and Stewart Headlam, see below, pp. 320-21.

Browne, Views and Opinions, loc. cit.


Headlam, report of speech at Newcastle, Church Reformer, 15 September 1884.


Besant and Rice, op. cit., 2 :159-66, 260-74. A number of London caterers and a leading agent, H. J. Didcott, were Jewish. Charles Morton's biographers were rather coy on this matter. He was, said Chance Newton, "not altogether un-Hebraic," Newton, Cues and Curtain Calls (London, 1927), p. 270.

Shimmin, Liverpool Life, pp. 28-29; Ritchie, Days and Nights in London (London, 1880), pp. 61-63; "Our Popular
Amusements," *Dublin University Magazine* 84 (1874) : 233-44.


55 S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, q. 3607.

56 The *Times*, 15 October 1883.


59 Jevons, op. cit.; J. Valentine, op. cit.; Gissing, op. cit., p. 109 on "music the civiliser."

60 "Our Popular Amusements," loc. cit.


63 The quote is from Shimmin, *Town Life*, pp. 152-54. There was undoubtedly some prostitution in the halls, though the metropolitan police gave them a clean bill of health before the 1866 committee, S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, qq. 916, 1215. But the easy sociability of the young audience in the galleries, where a good deal of flirtation and courting regularly took place, could well have been construed as promiscuity or vice by the uninitiated visitor.


Browne, "Theatres and Music Halls." A good example of this pruriency comes from Shimmin, Liverpool Life, pp. 47-49, in his description of a popular dance hall.

B.C., 18 January - 22 February 1873.

Ibid., 29 January 1876. For other campaigns against provincial halls see respective reports from Gosport, West Hartlepool and Bristol in Era, 5 October 1862; The Times, 14 November 1871; S.C.H.L. on Intemperance, Parl. Papers, 1877, XI, qq. 5301-20. New music hall companies drew the attention of investors to any features of local licencing laws which might protect them from such campaigns, see prospectus for a Brighton music hall in Capital and Interest (London), 10 January 1887.


The idea was mooted in the previous year, see The Times, 15 July 1879; among those supporting the formation of the company were Frederic Harrison, Tom Hughes, Samuel Morley and Dean Stanley. Its history is recorded in C. Hamilton and L. Bayliss, The Old Vic (London, 1926), pp. 176-88.


Coffee Public House News, 1 February 1881.

The charge of a trade boycott was made by William Poel, the Victoria's manager, in "Entertainments for the People," Church Reformer, October 1884, in the course of a general attack on the regular halls which drew some sharp retorts from Headlam. Roberts' remarks are in R. Morton, The Adventures of Arthur Roberts (Bristol, 1895), pp. 17-18.
76 From a report of a national conference of coffee tavern workers held in Birmingham, Coffee Public House News, 1 May 1884.

77 Church Reformer, October 1884.


79 Era, 29 August, 12 September 1852.

80 'A Journalist,' (W. Mackay), Bohemian Days in Fleet Street (London, 1913), p. 23. For Morton as a paragon of moral propriety see the testimony of Frederick Stanley, solicitor to the London Music Hall Proprietors Protection Association (and Morton's partner and brother-in-law), S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, q. 2868 and appendix no. 3, pp. 306-13. Morton had repealed a previous 'men only' ruling and let wives in to the Canterbury.


82 House rules of the early eighties are reproduced in S.C.H.C. on Theatres and Places of Entertainment, 1892, appendix 4, pp. 437-44. See also ibid., qq. 2948-54. Punch was later moved to produce a collection of irreproachable ditties for the reformed music hall, calculated to forestall "those active and intelligent guardians of middle-class morality, the L.C.C." F. Anstey, Mr. Punch's Model Music Hall Songs and Dramas (London, 1892), p. 3.

83 Era, 28 November 1885.


85 Coborn, op. cit., p. 232.


89 Scott, op. cit., pp. 131-41.

90 Sharples claimed ginger beer as his best seller at the time of the controversy over the Star, B.C., 11 September 1852, and his account books, though often unintelligible, do frequently itemise 'pop'. Music hall managers told Headlam the same, Church Reformer, November 1889, but added that soft drinks also brought them the largest profit in refreshment sales, a point germane to the shift in management policy on strong drink. Estimates of the relative revenues of refreshments and admissions are given in S.C.H.C. on Theatrical Licences, 1866, qq. 1349-1758. See also Hollingshead to The Times, 17 October 1883.


93 See above, pp. 315-16.

94 Signs of status gratification show in several careers: Henry Holden, erstwhile Brummagem butcher, retired to a country estate at Malvern; Sam Lane of the Britannia in Hoxton became president of the Royal Thames Yacht Club; several London caterers--Morton, William Purkiss and Frederick Strange--took commissions in the Volunteers. The ultimate reward came in the 1900s with the creation of three music hall knights.


96 The sale of intoxicants was not, it should be noted, dispensed with; it was removed to the relative quarantine of ante-room bars. Proprietors of new purpose-built halls in London circumvented some of the hazards of the licencing procedure by taking out a theatre licence from the Lord Chamberlain's office, and obtaining permits for as many bars as they needed under a simple Excise licence; they were covered for music and liquor but could not serve drink or allow smoking in the auditorium, thus
destroying one of the characteristic features of the classic music hall. *Entr'acte Annual* (London, 1897), pp. 11-13.

97 The apostle of the new conformity was Oswald Stoll (later Sir Oswald) who stood outside Charing Cross Station with a notebook, counting the suburban commuters and calculating the common denominator of a reformed popular taste, F. Barker, *The House that Stoll Built* (London, 1957), p. 11.


CONCLUSIONS

Rational recreation was a serious matter. Not everyone would have followed Bishop Fraser in adjudging it "the great question of the day,"¹ but the debate it generated, if not the actual support it won, testified to a general acknowledgment of its importance to social reform in Victorian England. Traditionally, a nation's recreations were taken as a test of its people's character: "... when we follow men into their retirements," pronounced Joseph Strutt in 1801, "we are most likely to see them in their true state, and may judge of their natural dispositions."² Most observers who applied this test in the thirties and forties found the recreations of the working people in a general state of physical and moral degeneracy. This state of affairs reflected poorly not only on the natural dispositions of working people, but on the general ability of the nation to match its astonishing material advances with commensurate social improvements. In repairing popular recreations, therefore, reformers were engaged in the responsible tasks of servicing national self-respect and demonstrating the efficacy of human agency in broadening and accelerating progress.
Contributing to the renovation of society was an exciting undertaking which encouraged, and indeed demanded, bold and sanguine expectations; yet it was characteristic of the propaganda of rational recreation that it produced no extensive scenarios of the future society that would reap the benefit of its endeavours. Visionary indulgence was limited to the occasional invocation of a bowdlerised Merrie England. We can understand why the reform literature produced no new Cockaigne, but why, from among ruling classes raised on a classical education, were there so few glimpses of the Good Life, of any modern equivalent of the *otium cum dignitate* of antiquity? This deficiency (for which, for example, one could not chide Free Traders) suggests how strongly the prospect of an increasingly leisured society was a matter of disquiet rather than gratification.

In the bourgeois ideology of the reformers, leisure was less the bountiful territory in which to site Utopia, than some dangerous frontier zone beyond the law and order of respectable society. Traditionally it dispensed its own licence, and it was its abuse which had imprinted itself most deeply in middle-class consciousness; in a work-oriented culture it represented an invitation to idleness and dissolution—the weakness of an ill-disciplined working class, the badge of an unduly privileged aristocracy. The prospect of leisure in abundance was therefore alarming, for
it promised to extend a domain of free choice wherein the customary restraints of morality were more honoured in the breach than the observance, at a time when traditional primary and community controls were being atrophied by the strains of industrialisation and urban growth. The corruptions of leisure threatened to undo the painstakingly fashioned bonds of a new work-discipline in the labour force, and its blandishments seriously unsettled the internal disciplines of the middle-class world.

Rational recreation was an attempt to forge more effective behavioural constraints in leisure. Popular recreations were to be improved, not through repression, but through the operation of superior counter attractions. Within the new controlled environments, reformers would instruct working men in the elementary accomplishments of social economy--time-budgeting and money management--and introduce them to the satisfactions of mental recreation, thus immunising them against the contagion of the pub and the publican, and the animal regression of 'sensuality'. Building the new play discipline depended upon motivating the resources of self-help, but reformers recognised the need to provide some collective reinforcement for individual initiative in the fluid and open milieu of leisure. Accordingly, rational recreation was to be fostered by a fraternal association of the classes. The middle classes
were to be the superintendents of the reformation, taking
the lead in providing new amenities, and ensuring by their
presence the display and projection of approved standards
of leisure conduct to their inferiors; in the enaction
of the superior example, the middle classes would be
reminded of their own moral responsibilities. The taking
of recreation in common would, it was claimed, assuage the
hostilities of capital and labour, and restore a sense of
community between the classes.

Conceived as a measure of humanitarian relief and
an antidote to political subversion in the Chartist era,
rational recreation became more than an exercise in repair
or pacification: it became part of the ongoing and
fundamental re-socialisation of the working classes. For
Henry Solly, it was one of the three vital fronts upon
which working-class improvement had to proceed. Recreation,
Temperance and Education, he claimed, were like a three-
legged stool—remove one and the whole project collapsed. 4
To the reformer, Francis Fuller, the question of popular
recreations went "to the root of the social tree--to the
deepest foundation of the political fabric." 5

Implementing the new regimen of rational recreation
was a difficult business. The reformer's counter-attractions
had to supersede those of a powerful rival. With his
manoeuvrability along the margins of the class line, his
commercial expertise, and his historical capital of social
skills, the publican still enjoyed the strategic advantage
in the expanding world of popular leisure. The history
of the music hall shows how well some men in the trade
seized the new market opportunities, transforming the
recreational function of the publican from obliging pedlar
of popular merry-making to large scale manager and entre­
preneur. The reformers were unable to attract capable
management for schemes like the coffee taverns and palaces,
which anticipated later successful enterprises by commercial
interests, but which could not survive as essentially
amateur ventures in the competitive retail sector which
formed a growing adjunct to the leisure market. Neutral
suggestions that reformers seek the assistance of respectable
publicans and caterers came to nought, for both parties were
accustomed to confrontation rather than cooperation.

It was difficult too, to supplant the public house
in the affections and habits of the working man. Despite
some legislative curtailment, the pub continued to offer a
wide range of services which, with the staple attractions of
drink and good fellowship, still qualified it, in Brian
Harrison's phrase, as "the working man's voluntary association."
Some club promoters tried to encourage new loyalties by
urging members to regard their club "as a schoolboy regards
his school, or the university man his college," but even
with the allowance of beer, the club movement found it hard to approximate the comforting rituals and ambience of the public house and the traditional mediations of its steward. Because many institutions of rational recreation duplicated the material apparatus of the pub with considerable authenticity, the shortcomings in social warmth were all the more obvious.

A major impediment to the achievement of sociability in rational recreation was the heavy prescriptive burden that the reform experiments were obliged to bear. Although the formula of the club movement represented a tactical modification of the didactic design, much of C I U literature, in general with that of other reform sources, is like an admonitory finger held under the reader's nose. Coffee taverns which provided refreshment and entertainment put across their fundamental raison d'être in the friezes of improving tracts which covered their walls. Striking a balance between easy congeniality and earnest improvement—"How to steer between weak tea and good behaviour and a rollicking free and easy"—was a social exercise for which the bourgeois philanthropist was ill-equipped.

A further problem in achieving a fruitful modus vivendi in a reform setting sprang from the reformer's impatience with the culture he sought to reform. The
working classes were credited with the fundamental potential which allowed of their ultimate perfectability, but this acknowledgment was often compounded by an insistent note of moral censure at their current delinquency.\textsuperscript{11} Henry Solly could discern the angel in marble, the new Greeks among the roughs and toughs of Victorian London, but realisation of the ideal was slow and frustrating. Thus Samuel Greg could talk in one breath of "gently leading" his workmen, and "breaking them into my system." In promoting reform through voluntary association, the reformers settled for a normative authority which provided few effective sanctions, certainly nothing like the statutory power of temperance and education legislation, or the coercive power implicit in the semi-custodial institutions of factory villages or board schools. In their concern to expedite improvement, reformers frequently rejected the osmosis of example-setting and adopted an autocratic manner which alienated working men—"We have masters all day long," came the cry of one club member, "and we don't want them at night."\textsuperscript{12} Obtrusive patronage evidenced the best intentions perhaps, but it was also symptomatic of a social distance between the classes which disallowed of any easy informality of address. Autocracy was the mode which sat most comfortably with an upper bourgeoisie that saw itself as a new urban gentry.\textsuperscript{13}
The middle classes in general failed to answer the reformers' call to community. A good deal of the debate on recreation in middle-class family periodicals was concerned only to legitimise bourgeois leisure, and while the middle classes acknowledged the need for improved and expanded amenities for working people, they refused the role of superintendent. Whatever assurances reformers gave to the contrary, popular recreation seemed unlikely ground whereon to preserve one's own respectability, let alone impress it successfully upon the strident mob that was Matthew Arnold's populace:

... that vast portion ... of the working class which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes, and is beginning to perplex us by marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking what it likes.14

Popular recreations were viewed by middle-class opinion as a series of nuisances. If the commonest bourgeois experience was that of being jostled by rowdies on the promenade or offered contumely by the loafers in the street, one can understand the distaste for joining in what Matthew Browne described--accurately enough, but to the detriment of his recommendation--as "monstrous symposia of the people."15

It was no consolation that recreational improvement promised to remake the working man in the image of his
master. Encouraging working people to 'ape their betters,' as Stanley-Jevons recommended, was acceptable where it fostered moral rectitude, but not where it produced the "sham gentility" that Tinsley's Magazine noted among the music hall crowds. Here, emulation parodied the status insignia of the superior classes, threatening class and status differentials that the latter were trying anxiously to reinforce. Defending social frontiers became increasingly important as the economic and political primacy of the middle classes seemed jeopardised by business depression and the extension of the franchise—"The destruction of a political privilege," said the Saturday Review, "is tacitly compensated by an increase of social exclusiveness." Leisure in particular represented an area where social distinctions were vulnerable. It was here, in 1860, that The Times had discerned the makings of "a great revolution ... great displacement of masses, momentous changes of level." The defence of the reformed athletic sports against infiltration from below is a good example of middle-class determination to maintain existing levels. Thus the bourgeoisie refused to indulge in 'working-man worship,' and withheld their active support from a reform programme, which appeared as much a social solvent as a social anodyne.

Despite the many difficulties which dogged reformers, popular recreations had much improved by the mid-eighties,
and afforded one of the major proofs of national progress in the Jubilee year. With certain gross exceptions, drink was becoming more of an incidental social lubricant and less of a total experience. Though it was true that, as Chesterton later remarked, the Englishman was more interested in the inequality of horses than the equality of man, a broad sector of popular sport had been purged of gambling under the new reformed codes. Bolton's butcher boys no longer undertook bizarre eating contests, and no latter-day Ben Hart emptied the mills in working hours; if there were still loungers in the street, passers-by were no longer "slutched and stoned by wild natives," as one of the town's chroniclers had recorded in the thirties. In Bolton, as in England, popular recreations had undergone a considerable transformation—"From the Roaring Boys to the Boys' Brigade," as the social anthropologist, Geoffrey Gorer, has neatly put it.

What had the various campaigns for rational recreation contributed to this? The club movement and innumerable individual and municipal benefices were owed to reforming zeal, and in their conception, if not always their propagation, the new sporting codes can be credited to rational recreation. It would, however, be impossible to arrive at a precise balance sheet, for reformers were only one element in a broader process of social change.
The development of other important agencies of social control in education and policing, improvements in working-class purchasing power, and an increasing availability of cheap consumer goods—all contributed to the house-training of the English proletariat in this period, and the rationing and rationalisation of its leisure. It is clear that the prescriptions of rational recreation were on occasions counter-productive. Certainly, reformers did not achieve the moral monopoly of working-class recreation that they had hoped for and, on the face of it, they had little success in effecting a fraternal association of the classes in play. Yet, if rational recreation failed to achieve regular occasions of social community, it was likely to have played an important part in the dissemination of those middle-class values of discipline and conformity which, in the opinion of modern social historians, linked the upper sections of the working classes to the bourgeoisie in a common vertical allegiance to the tenets of respectability. Thus if the practice of leisure was still compartmentalised according to class, it may nonetheless have answered to the authority of a shared ideology which cut across class lines.

According to Geoffrey Best, respectability—Respectability—was "a style of living understood to show a proper respect for morals and morality." Essentially a secular distillation of evangelical disciplines, it exerted
"a socially-soothing tendency, by assimilating even the most widely separated groups (separate socially or geographically) through a common cult." Best concludes:

Here was the sharpest of all lines of social division, between those who were and those who were not respectable: a sharper line by far than that between rich and poor, employer and employee, or capitalist and proletarian.

The spread of respectability, it is argued, secured the social compliance of the upper strata of the working classes, and opened up a gulf between them—the respectable poor—and their inferior brethren—the roughs. The gulf was particularly noticeable, according to Brian Harrison, in the public conduct of recreation. Harrison argues that the Temperance movement, with its strong presence in rational recreation, consolidated bonds between middle and working-class respectables, who then worked in concert to improve the residuum. Other researchers have identified distinct temperance communities in working-class areas which preserved a complete sub-culture of respectability over several decades.

Schemes of rational recreation outside the sphere of the major temperance organisations recruited from the 'respectable' working class. Henry Solly, though not always discriminatory on this count, appealed to "the more prudent, worthier members of the working class" to seek refuge in the clubs, away from "their reckless, drinking,
cowardly or dishonest neighbours," and a guest M.P. at the C I U's first annual meeting distinguished between 'Thinkers and Drinkers' among the Union's prospective clientele. The enforcement of standards of dress, cleanliness and previous good conduct as conditions of membership in certain schemes, while perhaps designed to encourage a wholesale improvement in manners, seems aimed at recruiting those working men who had made some important elementary accommodations to respectability. The specific social and occupational membership of the institutions of rational recreation requires further research, but we may assume that except in the case of casual or itinerant working-class custom, such as that drawn to the coffee taverns, the clientele was self-selective, comprising the superior working men who actively sought improvement. The fragmentary evidence of the composition of committees and teams in working men's social and sports clubs suggests the dominance of the artisanat, the element in the working classes most susceptible to the embraces of respectability.

Thus far, we may allow that rational recreation assisted in extending and reinforcing the constituency of respectables: what is much less certain is whether or not the respectability of working men represented a stable and consistent pattern of social behaviour which marked real attachment to bourgeois norms. The distinction between the
rough and the respectable working classes, denoted by this or other similar apppellations, was a commonplace of contempo-
rary social reportage, fiction, and working-class auto-
biography. We would expect some mobility between the groups,
in both directions, if only as a function of the often severe fluctuations of economic fortune characteristic of working-class life, and these sources provide examples of this traffic; but the contemporary literature places major emphasis upon cases of tenacious attachment to the ideals of respectability in the face of economic and other adversities. Such records of respectability, mostly fictional, are clearly didactic in intention, and are too tendentious to admit as reliable evidence of the actualities of working-class life.\textsuperscript{27} There are other serious short-
comings to the literary evidence: explications of the working-class condition were often ventured by men who, on their own admission, knew little or nothing of the social life beyond the workshops,\textsuperscript{28} and working-class autobiographies are the records of exceptional men—as exceptional as the temperance enclaves in popular culture—which do not speak for the generality of their kind. The impressions thus gained of the operation of respectability in working-class life is only one-dimensional at least. What is missing is sensitivity to the situational context of respectable behaviour, and the allowance that respectability could as
well function as a role as a total life-style.

The evidence for this last contention is circumstantial and impressionistic, but suggests some necessary modification of the respectability thesis. The expansion of urban population in terms of space, number and occupational diversity fragments social interaction, and insulates role activities from the continuous observation of actual and potential role-others.29 This combination of factors in mid-Victorian Birmingham allowed one of Sargant's employees to maintain the role of steady workman in the shop, while acting out any number of the roles attendant on drink and drinking in his leisure time, unbeknown to his boss.30 Sargant's bewilderment on his accidental discovery of this aberration suggests how little cognisant of role discontinuities contemporaries could be, particularly in class relationships. The role progression of Billy Banks on his day off suggests how readily a working man could move in and out of respectability as a succession of situations dictated. In his social classification of The Nether World, George Gissing offered that the broad distinction lay between two great sections of working men: "... those who do, and those who do not, wear collars."31 It is plausible that respectability was assumed or discarded, like a collar, as the occasion demanded.
If we approach respectability as a role rather than an ideology, the nature of class relationships in recreation takes on a new light. Thus working-class membership of church football teams can be seen as a purely instrumental attachment, calculated to extract certain benefits often unobtainable from the resources of working-class life. In this case, working-class behaviour which might have appeared as deferential mimesis from above, functioned as a kind of exploitation in reverse for its actors, who assumed respectability to meet the role demands of their class superiors. It is possible that the unease of the bourgeois patron in the company of working men derived in part from his vague perception of the latter's capacity for dissembling; in C I U official reports, the emphasis placed on the well-mannered behaviour of club audiences at lectures, and on the respect accorded visiting middle-class speakers, suggests a need for reassurance that all was truly what it seemed.

I do not want to suggest here that respectable behaviour was always superficial and calculative, but that there were degrees of commitment to its norms, and that we are unwise to assume that respectability commanded a consistently reliable constituency in working-class life. Its elevation as a key concept in the ordering of our understanding of the social history of nineteenth century England reflects the current scholarly concern to acknowledge
and explain other major determinants of group behaviour than simply class. But in the more sophisticated social map of Victorian society that is emerging, class will not go away, and in the world of recreation its differentials are more striking than those of the other significant social categories that have recently been explored.

Popular recreations in the latter years of the period under consideration were marked by a strong class character; though they conformed to certain features of the reform design, the marks of rationalisation and respectability which they bore were no proof of cultural embourgeoisement. In part, the rationalisation which overtook working-class recreation—the regular programming of sport, for example, and the stabilizing of the week-end break—represented an internal adjustment to the irreversible pressures on time, space and energy brought by a modern industrial society. In part, rationalisation was an extension of existing disciplines in working-class life, an amplification of the rules and regulations that had long ordered the good fellowship of the friendly societies. Within these constraints the working classes maintained a considerable autonomy of style and jurisdiction. Thus the early clubmen secured important modifications of Solly's original prescription, and a later generation won democratic control of the C I U administration. Working-class
enthusiasm brought professionalism to association football, and infused the game with an atavistic tribalism which put it beyond the reach of middle-class tolerance or understanding. The beleagured music halls nourished a vigorous popular sub-culture that celebrated life with such unabashed vulgarity that the halls were accused of practicing inverted class discrimination.\textsuperscript{33}

Leisure, therefore, was an important milieu for preserving the identity of a working class which effectively resisted the cultural hegemony of its superiors. The stubborn reality which confronted all campaigns to reform the social life of the workers was well described by the \textit{Saturday Review} in the sixties:

As classes rise in social importance (as our working classes undoubtedly do), as they acquire a position and make a law and society for themselves, they almost necessarily become more inaccessible to external influence. They grow in a sense more sufficient for themselves, and the sympathy implied by mixing of classes becomes more difficult. We suspect the great working classes as a body become every day a firmer phalanx, not really impresisible or subject to change—or rather, only to be changed through causes which go deeper than their 'betters' can easily get at.\textsuperscript{34}

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the broadening impact of technology and the quickening of commercialisation constituted forces which impressed themselves more deeply on leisure and popular culture than any middle-class reform campaign. But the convergence of profit incentive and
moral mission in the reformed music halls of the nineties
adumbrated a formula which was to make the mass entertainment
industry of the present century a more formidable agent
of social control than anything experienced in Victorian
society.
For Fraser see above, p. 192. Mill informed
Henry Solly that the C I U could not count on his support
while the more urgent matter of working-class housing
demanded his attention. H. S. R. Elliott, ed., Letters of

2 J. Strutt, Sports and Pastimes of the People of

3 Solly predicted that the club movement was
"destined to revolutionise the country." "Working Men's
Clubs in Relation to the Upper Classes and to National

4 Solly, These Eighty Years, 2 : 160.

5 The title of her address is instructive. "On Our
Paramount Duty to Provide Wholesome and Pure Recreations and
Amusements for the People, and the Dire Results and Dangers
which Attend our Neglect of It," Trans. N.A.P.S.S., 1874,

6 "How could any reasonable man expect the working
man to frequent the coffee palaces which neither for
brightness, celerity, civility, sweetness, nor also, remember,
for non-intoxicants at less than public house prices,
offered an advance." H. L. Williams, "Coffee Palace
Failures," Social Notes and Club News, 16 July 1881. See
also B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 303.

7 H. A., "The Middlesex Music Hall," Social Notes,
16 July 1881; The Times, 15 October 1883.

8 Viscount Cranbrook at the opening of his Bradford
W M C, C.I.U.J., 3 August 1883, and an anonymous article in
ibid., 25 April 1884. Solly spoke of the need to develop
"esprit de corps ... leading working men to take pride in
the Society or Order to which they may belong," How to Deal
with the Unemployed Poor.

9 B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, p. 209.

10 J. K. Cook, "The Labourer's Leisure," Dublin
University Magazine 90 (1877) : 174-92.
See the important article by R. Johnson, "Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England," Past and Present, no. 49 (November 1970), pp. 102-103, for the atmosphere of reproof: "The very term "morals" (or "moral") itself, which Kay usually preferred to the kindlier, more neutral eighteenth-century term "manners," was deeply ambiguous. It served at once as a synonym for "culture" (or "cultural") and to impute blame."

See above, p. 225, and Robert Baker, Factory Inspector, who recorded a similar phrase in the sixties as "Labour's great motto," Factory Inspectors' Reports, Parl. Papers, 1867, XVI, p. 376. Wright offered a further explanation of the working man's resentment in Our New Masters, pp. 156-57. In extenuation of the promoter's importunity, Solly wrote: "It would not be well to leave the movement to ordinary demand and supply, because we have to a considerable extent to create that demand as in many other important social reforms... a few must lead the way, must do a species of missionary work." Undated draft article on coffee taverns, probably from the eighties, Solly Collection, 14, section 12.

G. Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society (Oxford, 1971), pp. 240-61. W. T. Marriott, Some Real Wants of the Working Classes (Manchester, 1860), p. 27, noted that philanthropists were "paternal not fraternal—they will do great things for the working classes—for them, but not in cooperation with them."


Browne, Views and Opinions, p. 280.


"Vulgarity of the coarsest kind," continued the article, "is preferable to the vulgarity gilded which the music halls have introduced." "Our Music Halls," Tinsley's Magazine 4 (1869) : 216-33.
18 "Social Barriers," Saturday Review, 26 April 1873.

19 The Times, 30 August 1860.

20 See e.g., J. Lawson, Letters to the Young on Progress in Pudsey (Stanningley, 1887); W. E. Gladstone, "Locksley Hall and the Jubilee," Nineteenth Century 21 (January, 1887) : 1-18.

21 J. Black, A Medico-Topographical Sketch of Bolton (Bolton, 1837), p. 32.


24 B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians, pp. 23-26, 395.


26 See above, p. 218; The Times, 13 July 1863 for the address of W. Cowper, M.P.

27 There are other examples, which would have to be adduced here, but I am thinking of the case of Henry Kirkwood in Gissing's Nether World, and the respectable hero of Robert Tressel's Ragged Trousered Philanthropists. Both works provide authentic insights into working-class life, but their characterisation often smacks of the moral or personal parable.


30 Sargant, loc. cit.; see also above, p. 100.


33 See above, p. 323.

34 "How to Win Our Workers," *Saturday Review*, 5 July 1862.
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