

Describe law and order in London in the late nineteenth century



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Law and order in the nineteenth century in the late nineteenth century in Great Britain was enforced as it had been during the Middle ages. The Justice of the Peace , who were chosen by the King were the main people incharge of law and order. Crime was gradually rising, however whenever there was a serious problem in London, the government called the army in. Then in 1829 the Metropolitan police force was setup because of uprising chartists and the apparent growth of homocide , robbery and bulgary. There were many problems that the Metropolitan police force faced. Early police recruits were unsuitable and were consequently sacked. The police were loathed , subsequently they suffered vicious attacks. People didn't like getting told what to do. So in 1833 a police man was stabbed to death and the judge bizzarely claimed that he deserved it because it was an overreaction to crowd control that caused it. However in the late nineteenth century there were many police reforms and developments to the Metropolitan police force. One of the early changes was a detective department was setup within the force, gradually more departments were setup over time. Like the Criminal Investigation Department was setup in 1877 and the National criminal record was setup in 1869 which dealt with the most notorious criminals. Then in 1867, communication was speeded up with the introduction of the telegraph. The Metropolitan police force had other responsibilities except for preventing and solving crimes. They were providing other public services, lighting London's lamp and calling time out. Furthermore, they had to control civil disturbances and riots, watch out for starting fires and generally keeping an eye out for trouble on the streets.

The percentage of recorded crime in nineteenth century London for petty theft was seventy-five percent. However, the percentage of recorded crime in nineteenth century London for violent crimes was a small ten percent. Many middle class Londoners were encouraged to believe that violent crimes and murder were on the increase because newspapers were filled with in depth descriptions of horrible crimes. There were two main popular petty crimes these were pick pocketing and garrotting. Pickpockets were people who stole purses and pocket-handkerchiefs and rookeries were homes to organise gangs of pickpockets. A garrotter was someone who half strangled their victim so that it would make them easier to rob. Newspapers played a big role in the nineteenth century in regards to murder for various reasons. They scared many readers because they sometimes blew attacks out of proportion. They would intrigue many people with gruesome details and conspiracies. They helped to spread waves of panic about murder. Several protest groups that caused the government and the police trouble during the nineteenth century were the Chartists, Luddites , Swing riots and the Anti-Corn league.

The British system of trials and the role of the justice system of the Justice of the Peace were one of the areas of law enforcement that did not change greatly. The Old Bailey was where the majority of court cases were held. Solicitors were too expensive and consequently were not used in cases. Prosecuting criminals was rarely the police's job. The normal length of cases was a couple of minutes. No legal aid was provided so most criminals were not taken to court as the victim had to pay for the case to be held. Judges were limited to only a few punishments. As over 200 offences held a capital

punishment, the usual punishment at the start of the nineteenth century was public execution. However, in 1868 public execution was ended. The number of offences punishable by death decreased as a result. Imprisonment and a fine system left the Judiciary with further sentencing options.

Punishments in Great Britain were changing greatly because people thought that the criminals should not be distressed but merely rehabilitated. People in the mid nineteenth century started to think that public executions were escalating more crime. Not because it was widely anticipated, but it was so that the prostitutes, robbers and pickpockets could carry out their trade because it was easy to find business with nearly 200, 000 people turning out to public executions. In 1850, the number of prisoners grew so rapidly that a new London prison was built; called Pentonville. By the 1870's over ninety percent of guilty criminals in London were sent to rehabilitating prisons. However there was a total different system for the rich, there were ways in which they could settle the law, particularly with acts of violence. A somewhat rare punishment in the nineteenth century was whipping, which was only used for the commoners.

In the 1840's the British government finally realised that more prisons needed to be built because of increasing numbers of sentences to prison. The first prisons had punishment sheds, separate cells and exercise yards. Nevertheless, by the 1850's two new prison systems were becoming dominant in British systems. There was the separate system was when the prisoners were left to think about what they have done and to reflect on it. This would break them down into an emotional state and then they would ask for reform by the prison chaplain. This system had a lot of opposition

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because it apparently drove the criminals insane. Then there was the silent system, this is where prisoners were prohibited to talk to one another. This was theoretically supposed to stop criminals from exchanging tactics and plans. They were set harsh and droning tasks, which would stop the criminal from repeating crimes. There were various changes that were made after 1850 to the British prison such as the ending of transportation in 1852, in 1877 all prisons were put under direct control. Then in 1898-1899, the crank handle and the treadmill were banned. An finally in 1900 the modern system of imprisonment had been established.