

Describe Law and Order in the late 19th Century

Law and order began to improve in the late 19th Century after the CID was set up and that Police Forces were springing up around Britain. In the 1880's, police forces in Britain were very much in their infancy. Almost all of the methods of tackling and solving crimes that we now take for granted were unknown. Police work was mostly concerned with the prevention of crime by officers on the beat. But even very regular patrols did not stop a determined criminal.

The police forces had to deal with a range of crime and disorder ranging from petty theft to major public disturbances. The main duties of the Metropolitan Police Force were to deal with drunkenness, beggars, vagrants and prostitutes. The force also had to deal with major disturbances, and soon got the reputation for heavy handedness and violence, for example: in February 1886 the Metropolitan Police Force had to deal with a mass demonstration of Unemployed in Trafalgar Square, however this was not the most serious incident to occur. On Sunday 13 November 1887 the Metropolitan Police Force charged a demonstration by the Metropolitan Radical Federation. This riot in Trafalgar Square on in 1887 caused many injuries and some alleged loss of life. There was an estimated 300 arrests, 150 injuries and one death. There were 4,000 Constables, 300 Mounted Police, 300 Grenadiers and 300 Life Guards with 7,000 Constables in reserve were used to disperse a giant mob.

It seemed that the public's views on the Police Force were mostly negative but still there were some positive views on them mainly from the upper class. The reputation of the policeman as the "friendly bobby" was not shared in many working class districts in London and other Cities. These negative views may have been put forward by the victims of crime where the policeman was unable to get there in time to catch the criminal and also they had gathered a reputation throughout Britain with their heavy handedness and violence. However there were positive views, the famous magazine name "Punch" wrote: "The police are beginning to take that place that the soldiers and sailors used to occupy. In these happier days of peace, the blue coats, the defenders of order, are becoming the national favourites." This view is very one sided, but the key reference was to "defenders of order," which was how many upper class saw the police.

Towards the end of the 19th century the Police Force was getting more advanced with the introduction of the police whistle, telegraphs and photographs. Another great advantage that the police had over the criminal offenders was the use of dogs especially bloodhounds as they have a very good sense of smell and they help to track the criminals down. Police Constables throughout the country received very little training. Before they went on the beat, most time was spent learning military drills. Inspections were based on parades rather than on police work. Great effort was put on personal appearance and good behaviour. However they did have a little training manual that they carried around with them. The manual was very simple and wasn't a great help to them when they were in a hard situation. This is when the policeman's whistle was introduced, they were to blow on it when they were in trouble and they had to hope that another police officer was near by or a member of the public would come and help them.

The Silent System was introduced in the 1860's. They just had to be scared enough by prison never to offend again. The purpose of the silent system was to break convicts' wills by being kept in total silence and by long, pointless hard labour. There were prisons, but they were mostly small, old and badly run. The most common punishments were transportation – sending the offender to Australia, or execution – hundreds of offences carried the death penalty. They then realised that sending the convicts to Australia wasn't helping and Australia started to complain about this. The answer was to reform the police and to build more prisons; in 30 years 90 prisons were built. It was a massive building programme, costing millions of pounds. Before the prisons were changed around and made harder to live in many people purposely got caught doing something against the law to go to prison, because then it was a better place to live in rather than a doss house in Whitechapel. After the new prisons were introduced nobody wanted to live there as it became very harsh and led to solitude, isolation and labour. They realised that still criminals were re-offending so in the 1860's prison reform and rehabilitation was introduced.

Around the 1860's is when the detective work began to be organised. In 1860 an inspector and sergeant were sent to investigate a murder in Wiltshire that created the same motive of the killer than a previous murder. In 1862 the police force and prisons were introduced with photographic material, they began taking pictures of the criminals in prison, they were then sent to Scotland Yard. In 1869 the Detective Department was created