In 1914, the home office of Scotland Yard received a request from a small town in the Midlands for assistance with a case involving a doctor and his family being threatened. The family had received ominous letters signed by their previous lady’s maid, but they did not believe the letters were from her because the family and the maid had parted on amicable terms. In addition to these ominous letters, the doctor’s household experienced other problems. They all had lost various items in mysterious ways, and the house had been ransacked once. The family believed their house was bewitched. The local authorities worked on the case for some time, but when their efforts did not produce adequate results, the chief constable sent in a request for assistance from the Yard.

Sir Basil Thomson, then the Assistant Commissioner of the Criminal Investigation Department, sent Detective-Inspector Crutchett to assist authorities in solving the case. The only evidence produced by the local authorities in the Midlands was the seventeen letters that had been mysteriously delivered to the doctor’s family. While on the train to the Midlands, Detective-Inspector Crutchett reviewed these letters, making notes of the misspelled words and grammar errors. When he arrived in the Midlands, he called the entire household together, dictated a short speech to them, and asked them to write out what he was saying. After this exercise, he took up their papers, and recognized that the in-between maid had made the same mistakes that he had found in the letters delivered to the family. Just as the detective had suspected, the in-between maid confessed when confronted with her crime. She had been jealous of the previous maid, and wanted to ruin her reputation with the family with the letters. Thus, in

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1 “Changes at Scotland Yard,” *The Times*, April 24, 1919; pg 12; Issue 42082; col. C.
less than two hours with the case, Scotland Yard’s Detective-Inspector Crutchett solved the case that the Midlands authorities had been working on for weeks.²

Stories similar to this one commonly exist, which is a tribute to the efficiency and widespread success of Scotland Yard. Criminals in Victorian England were on the rampage until Parliament finally protested their actions by enacting a unified police system. Through the years, historians have debated the varying impact of Scotland Yard on modern society, but none have denied the organization credit for significant change in law enforcement. Although Scotland Yard brought about significant change to methods common to policing in the Victorian Era, it also enforced long-standing ideas emphasized for centuries in the English legal system.

Crime was widespread during the Victorian era. Prior to the establishment of Scotland Yard, every parish in London was expected to maintain its own police force.³ The men in these units, commonly referred to as watchmen, were not paid well, and were therefore often susceptible to bribes, or other immoral forces. Some watchmen were even accused of being criminals themselves. In some areas, a member of a criminal gang would endeavor to obtain a post as a watchman in order to enable his gang to possess a monopoly on crime.⁴ Even if this accusation was not true, watchmen were often not fit for a career in law enforcement because many of them were reputed to be very old, or otherwise physically unfit for a post in defending the city against crime. According to George Dilnot in his book, The Story of Scotland Yard, watchmen were looked upon with distain, and laughed at by the London criminal element.⁵

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⁵ Dilnot, Story of Scotland Yard, 9.
The idea of the watchman originated from an old English principle that gave the responsibility of the protection of society to the people. Ideally, every man in the society would give up some of his time to help maintain the laws of the parish. This principle worked well in the Middle Ages; however, as time passed, men became too busy to perform this task, and so they paid watchman to take their places. This system evolved into the Victorian watchman system.\(^6\)

However, despite the poor reputation of watchmen overall, the entire system was not completely disreputable. For example, the Bow Street Runners, established by Sir Henry Fielding, tried to maintain law and order in their parish. These men developed into an organized force, and even had some success in combating crime. However, crime was becoming more powerful than ever before, and the parish police forces had no unity to defend society from these criminals.\(^7\)

Thievery in London in the early 1800s became increasingly common. Some areas of the city like Drury Lane and Covent Garden were so populated by criminals that one expected to be robbed or attacked there.\(^8\) Pick-pocketing was common, especially in large crowds.\(^9\) Everyone from children to servant girls to idle women was suspect.\(^10\) Because these criminals were not stopped, and had nothing to fear from the government, conditions continued to worsen, and the

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\(^7\) Ibid, 12-14.
\(^10\) Mayhew, *London’s Underworld*, 142-143.
people of London became increasingly dissatisfied. Finally, in 1829, Sir Robert Peel introduced his “Act for Improving the Police in and near the Metropolis” to the House of Commons.¹¹

Sir Robert Peel, then the Home Secretary, had a record of previous dealings with police forces. Peel had served for a time in Ireland as chief secretary. During his service in Ireland, Peel had improved the acting police force and had renamed it the Royal Irish Constabulary. This background gave him the base he needed create a unified London police force.¹² In addition to his previous experience with police forces, Peel had a significant interest in criminal law. In 1823, Peel helped to pass new laws changing the penalty for on hundred felonies from capital punishment to a lesser and more just penalty, a significant reform in criminal code.¹³ By 1837, counsel could represent criminal defendants, and the defense lawyers could even cross-examine witnesses and speak directly to the jury.¹⁴ Sir James Mackintosh, a fellow politician, said in reference to the substantial changes that Peel had helped to enact that the difference between the system before Peel’s reforms and the system that existed after them was so marked that, “He could almost think that he had lived in two different countries, and conversed with people who spoke two different languages.”¹⁵

After Peel made a rousing speech in the House of Commons, his bill was soon enacted.¹⁶ The Home Secretary carefully set up the Metropolitan Police Force under his personal watch.¹⁷

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¹¹ Dilnot, Story of Scotland Yard, 15.


¹³ Ibid, 61.


¹⁵ Thursfield, Peel, 62.

¹⁶ Dilnot, Story of Scotland Yard, 28-29.
The Home Secretary would appoint two magistrates to oversee the new organization, and a financial overseer to make sure all the finds were in order.\(^{18}\)

Scotland Yard differed from other policing agencies of the day because of the idealistic premises it was built on. Dr. Patrick Colquhoun wrote extensively on the subject of organized policing shortly before the Metropolitan police came into existence. In his “Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis,” Colquhoun discusses his basic philosophy of policing: be stronger and more organized than the criminals. Though this idea appears obvious to the modern observer, it was revolutionary when Colquhoun developed it, because there was no such organization in police forces in his time. He insisted that there should be supervision and licensure of public carriages and other tradesmen. According to George Dilnot, Sir Robert Peel and the Metropolitan Police may have borrowed Colquhoun’s ideas and put them into action.\(^{19}\)

However, two other principles laid down by the Metropolitan Police’s first leaders, Mayne and Rowan, were far more revolutionary. The first of these principles was that the police are not above the law; and in fact they are under it, just like every other British citizen. This principle advocated the police being forced to answer for actions that went outside their legal right to perform. In addition to this principle, Scotland Yard idealists also contended that the police force must be completely impartial toward offenders. This idea included not allowing officers to receive bribes or to be discriminatory in regard to religion, race, or any other distinguishing factor.\(^{20}\) These two principles were in keeping with British ideology, but had

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\(^{17}\) The Metropolitan Police Force was originally located on Great Scotland Yard Street in London. This is the reason that the force became known as Scotland Yard. Though the location of the Metropolitan Police Force later changed, the name stuck. Both of these names are used interchangeably in England, even today.


\(^{19}\) Ibid, 26.

never been enforced in the previous police forces. In fact, some went so far with these ideas that they tried to persuade the public that the officers were merely acting in their individual capacities as private citizens when they arrested criminals. Though this point of view may have been an exaggeration, Scotland Yard did depend on the public’s involvement to help in their fight against crime in London.21

Despite the good intentions that were behind beginning the Metropolitan Police Force, the public opinion of the officers was not favorable. British citizens feared that the police force was going to be an extension of the government and invade their personal rights.22 Because of the lack of respect the officers received from the general population, the criminal element of London regarded the officers of the Metropolitan Police force with disdain, and was not above treating the officers violently. For example, Liza Picard tells of an officer who asked a prostitute known as “Cross-eyed Bet” to move along and refrain from loitering in the park. Instead of obeying, she took her handkerchief that she had previously drenched in chloroform and placed it over the officer’s face, immediately causing him to be unconscious. Bet then proceeded to rob him, and would have gotten away (modify) with the entire affair if two other officers had not happened upon her.23 The fact that a criminal was willing to enter into this type of violent conflict with an officer is evidence of the disrespect that was rampant among criminals in London at the beginning of the force.

Peel and his colleagues foresaw the distrust of the public, and took precautions to avoid confirming Londoners suspicions. The way the Metropolitan Police Force was structured helped

win over the London public. Sir Robert Peel appointed two magistrates to oversee the activities of Scotland Yard: Sir Richard Mayne and Sir Charles Rowan. Both of these men were highly respected in British society for previous acts of law and order in the military and in judicial positions. Together, they oversaw the hiring of the police force, and made sure that the public could find no fault in it.24

Technically, the head officer of Scotland Yard was the Home Secretary. His superintendents reported directly to him, and they received their reports from the inspectors, who received their reports from the sergeants. The list goes on all the way down to the lowly constables.25 The unique aspect of the ranking system of Scotland Yard is that the majority of the promotions come from within the organization.26 The thought that promotions would be based on merit and not patronage was not common in the Victorian world, and hardworking lower class men welcomed the change.27 This principle had a decided effect on public opinion because it determined who Scotland Yard hired. Instead of being forced to hire an important person’s relative based on patronage, the Scotland Yard officials hired the men qualified for the job, regardless of class.28 This hiring system meant that the organization hired quality employees, not unqualified people with prestigious names.

Scotland Yard never lacked applicants for positions as police officers, even at the beginning of their organization. Though the application process was not an easy one to go

24 Dilnot, Story of Scotland Yard, 30.
27 Ibid, 185.
28 Scott, Scotland Yard, 17.
through, Scotland Yard offered positions for all social classes, as well as the chance for upward mobility. The agency also did not require that an applicant have any special skills or prior experience in order to obtain a position. Because of the plethora of applicants, the officials at Scotland Yard could afford to be particular. The physical requirements for becoming an officer were specific and absolutely essential. In order to even be considered for a position with the Metropolitan Police Force, a man had to be tall - at least 5 feet 8 inches – and in good physical shape. Scotland Yard required these physical attributes for multiple reasons. One obvious reason was that Metropolitan Policemen would be required to go to work in all sorts of bad weather and help the public with various difficult problems. In order to deal with such a taxing work environment, the men had to be physically capable. In addition to this reason, Scotland Yard wanted its officers to be noticeable to the public. The officials at Scotland Yard thought that merely seeing an intimidating figure would serve as a deterrent to criminals, and help maintain public order. The officer would remind everyone of the authority he carried to enforce the peace merely by his presence on the street corner. Also, if the officer was easily detectable to citizens on the street because of his physic, he was accessible to citizens who were wishing to report a crime or who were in need of service. Scotland Yard hoped that this presence would calm the public animosity toward their officers, and ensure the people of London that the officers were civil servants.

Though physical attributes were important in the selection of an officer of Scotland Yard, they were nowhere near as significant as the character quality of applicants. When a man

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applied for a job with the Metropolitan Police Force, he was required to provide previous addresses, employments, and other vital information. The applicant was also asked to provide two character references. Scotland Yard then sent out investigators to check the applicant’s character references and other information. If all was found to be in order and Scotland Yard determined that the applicant was, in fact, a “respectable man,” then he would be seriously considered for a position in the Metropolitan Police Force.32

Most officers started out as constables, the lowest rank in Scotland Yard. These men were generally paid about 19 shillings a week, which was not an outstanding amount for the time period, but had the advantage of being a constant source of income not affected by wars or the fluctuating economy.33 The officer’s uniform consisted of a dark blue suite sometimes referred to as a “blue bottle” and a black stovepipe hat.34 The “bobbies,” as the officers were called in reference to Sir Robert Peel, were reported to have hats that were so stiff that the officer could stand on top of them to see over walls or perform other duties.35 Some speculated that the top hat worn by the Metropolitan Policeman actually possessed a metal frame that could support the weight of a man, whether he be standing on the hat and looking over a wall on official business or sitting on his hat and taking a nap while his superior is away.36 The officer carried with him a truncheon as a weapon, a lantern so he could see in dark alleys, and a rattle to enable him to alert other officers if he was ever in need of assistance.37 Overall, the bobby’s ensemble was

32 Ibid, 34.
33 Dilnot, Story of Scotland Yard, 31.
34 Paterson, Voices, 218.
36 Thomson, The Story of Scotland Yard, 72.
unimpressive, but this uniform was simple for a reason. The public’s aversion to losing their rights, and their constant worry that the new police force was actually a military force influenced the officials at Scotland Yard to develop plans for a simple and unobtrusive uniform, to avoid any more speculation by the public.\textsuperscript{38}

Scotland Yard officials fought to win over public opinion by the way they enforced the guidelines of officer conduct as well as the process by which they selected their officers. Especially in the early days of the Yard, Metropolitan Police officials tolerated no departure from the rules laid down for the police officers. Officials would not hesitate to dismiss an officer for only one offense, even a minor one such as drunkenness.\textsuperscript{39} Officers were required to follow rules that specified what they could and could not do in their personal lives, such as what pets they could own, and how these animals were to be kept. Scotland Yard officers could not engage in conversation with servant girls or other women while on duty. In addition to these specific rules, the officers were asked to conduct themselves in a “quiet and determined manner,” ensuring that the public peace was not disturbed by criminals or the officer.\textsuperscript{40} Scotland Yard observed all of these rules strictly because they desired to put forth a disciplined front to the suspicious public.

Not only did Scotland Yard have to prove itself to the people of London, it also had to deal with the competing police forces already in existence. These forces did all they could to disparage Scotland Yard and keep public opinion of the force far from favorable. Many of the old forces stayed in existence, even after they had technically been disbanded when the Yard was

\textsuperscript{38} Thomson, The Story of Scotland Yard, 72.


\textsuperscript{40} Dilnot, Story of Scotland Yard, 35.
established.\(^{41}\) These old forces and the new forces of the Metropolitan Police clashed on positions of authority frequently in the early days of Scotland Yard. According to George Dilnot, many of the officers were not above using improper methods to maintain their authority.\(^{42}\) However, eventually the majority of the old forces were incorporated into Scotland Yard without too much difficulty with the recommendation of 1838.\(^{43}\) The City Police was the exception. Though the Metropolitan Police Force desired to incorporate the City Police, the city force remained independent. The only reasons this action was allowed by the officials in Parliament were that the City Police modified their force to resemble the Metropolitan Police Force, and it took on responsibility for its own expenses.\(^{44}\)

Despite all of the problems the organization faced from the public, Scotland Yard eventually won over public opinion. This slow process was the result of the determination of the officials at Scotland Yard to enforce the regulations they had set up for their officers and the decided decrease in crime.\(^{45}\) In 1831, when the force had existed long enough to establish its presence in London, the average constable took eighteen to twenty criminals into custody annually. This figure is much higher than modern-day records of Scotland Yard, when an officer may patrol for an entire year without conducting a single arrest.\(^{46}\) The majority of these criminals were not convicted of any crime, their only fault being drunkenness or some other

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\(^{42}\) Dilnot, *Story of Scotland Yard*, 32.

\(^{43}\) Ibid, 34.

\(^{44}\) Ibid, 34.


\(^{46}\) Ibid, 48.
petty misconduct. However, just fewer than 3,000 of the criminals caught by the Metropolitan Police Force were convicted of serious offenses.\textsuperscript{47} This number is significantly larger than the conviction number before Scotland Yard was in existence. [LOOK UP LONDON CRIME RATES]

Perhaps the simplest way to see the embodiment of the respect that the public gained for Scotland Yard is to look at their conduct toward the agency. In August of 1830, a Scotland Yard officer, Constable Long, was murdered in cold blood. The reaction of the public was tremendous. The people who observed the crime chased the offender, caught him, and handed him directly over to the police. Many of these same people testified against the man at the criminal’s trial, even though some of them lived lives of crime themselves. The man was convicted and executed. Many people attended his execution, but none of them showed him any sympathy at all, while the entire public mourned with Long’s widow.\textsuperscript{48} The response of London in this instance shows a marked respect for the new police force because they cooperated so well with Scotland Yard and also because they were so disdainful of the criminal who murdered the officer. Even other criminals condemned his actions as “below the belt,” and approved of his conviction.\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{The Times} documented the public’s growing respect for Scotland Yard. In the early 1900s, \textit{The Times} published several articles with favorable feeling toward Scotland Yard. One of these was a simple retirement announcement of an older officer of the Yard. In this article, the author gives a brief history of the man, Inspector John Walsh’s life, including an important arrest of a French criminal. Though this article does not say anything about the public’s appreciation

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 49.

\textsuperscript{48} Thomson, \textit{The Story of Scotland Yard}, 77-78.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, 79.
for this man’s service outright, the tone of the article is such that the reader understands the service the officer provided to British society, and the appreciation the people felt to him for his service.\textsuperscript{50} This article is a perfect representation of the respect Scotland Yard enjoyed after the early years of the organization.

When given the respect they deserved by the London public, the officers of Scotland Yard showed an even greater dedication toward their work than they had previously. In his recollections of his time spent with the Metropolitan Police Force, Sir Harold Scott says that the core principle to Scotland Yard was discipline. He suggests that the police force of London was even more disciplined than the army because an officer must think through the action he must take while he is alone, and perhaps no one would know if he chose to ignore a crime and go on his way. However, instead of performing the simple act, a Metropolitan Policeman, in his experience, would follow after a criminal into the unknown while unarmed and unaware of what he might encounter.\textsuperscript{51} However, Scott asserts that these policemen look upon conducting their jobs with this sort of discipline as average, and nothing out of the ordinary. When Scott had occasion to congratulate an officer on a particularly dangerous arrest, the officer merely stated, “Well Sir, there really wasn’t much to it. It was part of a day’s work.”\textsuperscript{52} This attitude combined with the rise of public opinion in support of Scotland Yard made the organization a lasting component and influential contributor to British society.

Since Scotland Yard came into existence in 1829, historians have debated about the impact the organization has had on society. Views vary from scholars who focus on procedural matters the Metropolitan Police Force originated to giving them credit for the organization of all

\textsuperscript{50} “The Retirement of a Scotland Yard Detective,” \textit{The Times}, April 15, 1907; pg. 11; Issue 38307; col. E.


\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 16.
modern police forces and concentrating primarily on the innovative way they combated crime in London. While none of these views historians hold are incorrect, they must be examined so one can best understand what impact of Scotland Yard on modern society. One of the most recent scholars to have researched Scotland Yard extensively is Haia Shpayer-Makov. In the book The Making of a Policeman: A Social History of a Labour Force in Metropolitan London, 1829-1914, this author focuses mainly on the employment policies of the Metropolitan Police Force.53 Shpayer-Makov does discuss the factual beginnings of Scotland Yard as well as how the new policing policies effected crime and influenced other countries’ police forces, but throughout the book the central focus is the employment benefits of the Metropolitan Police Force.54 In the introduction, Shpayer-Makov sets the stage for her argument by reviewing how difficult employment often was for the average individual in Victorian London. When an average citizen of the lower class did obtain employment, the conditions were very poor and the worker was almost always underpaid. These conditions led to malnourishment and depression in the lower class parts of the city.55 Because of this employment problem, according to Shpayer-Makov, the employment opportunities the Metropolitan Police Force offered to the lower class were a welcome possibility.56 One of the revolutionary employment ideas that Shpayer-Makov emphasizes in this book is the clash between the old, patronage system of hiring and the new idea of merit-based employment. Throughout the work, Shpayer-Makov emphasizes what a change this idea was for the British people, and how it brought hope of social mobility to the

53 Shpayer-Makov, Making of a Policeman, 7.
54 Ibid, 2.
55 Ibid, 4.
56 Ibid, 25.
lower classes.\textsuperscript{57} Professor Shpayer-Makov reemphasizes this point in particular detail in her scholarly article entitled “Career Prospects in the London Metropolitan Police in the Early Twentieth Century.”\textsuperscript{58} In this article, Shpayer-Makov gives specific statistics on the rate of promotions and figures stating who was promoted more often. However, the thesis of the article again reiterates the thesis of her book, which says that the employment opportunities available at Scotland Yard were tremendously above what other businesses were offering.

Shpayer-Makov again emphasizes her idea that a secure employment opportunity and a regular income was a rare and treasured thing for a working-class man in Victorian London in the article “Making of a Police Labour Force.”\textsuperscript{59} However, in this article, the professor also includes the fact that Scotland Yard employees received free medical care as well as sick leave and sick pay. These employee care options were virtually unheard of in other businesses in the Victorian Era.\textsuperscript{60} Overall, Haia Shpayer-Makov gives very clear examples of the revolutionary employment policies of Scotland Yard, and supports her thesis concerning these policies very well in her three works.

In 1990, a few years before Shpayer-Makov’s book was published, Joan Lock wrote \textit{Dreadful Deeds and Artful Murders: Scotland Yard’s first Detectives}. Though Lock fully appreciates the significance of Scotland Yard’s organization, she contends that instead of creating new innovative ideas, Scotland Yard consolidated policing ideas that already existed.\textsuperscript{61}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Sphayer-Makov, “Career Prospects in the London Metropolitan Police in the Early Twentieth Century,” 380.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Sphayer-Makov, “Making of a Police Labour Force,” 112.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid, 113.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Lock, \textit{Dreadful Deeds}, 7.
\end{itemize}
While she recognizes the fact that crime was spiraling out of control in London during the early 1800s, Lock proposes that this was not because of a fault with the character of the established police system. Instead, this author proposed that the police forces had insufficient numbers to deal with all of the crime, as well as a general lack on communication between the varying parish police forces.\textsuperscript{62} To give evidence to her claim, Lock cites the “Bow Street Runners,” a respected police organization that existed before Scotland Yard.\textsuperscript{63} However, though Lock’s idea may have some merit, she fails to take into account the lack of character that many of the other parish forces possessed. According to several sources, many of the parish police forces that were responsible for keeping the peace before 1829 consisted of men whose characters were weak.\textsuperscript{64} Because of the corrupt men who permeated these forces, the organizations had limited effects on crime, and they certainly did not participate in the development of modern policing ideas. The “Bow Street Runners” were the exception to this generalization, and their attitude towards crime prevention cannot be extended to all other parish forces, as Lock attempts to state in her work.\textsuperscript{65}

In the book \textit{The Story of Scotland Yard}, published in 1927, George Dilnot idealizes the Metropolitan Police Force. When describing the magnitude of the role Scotland Yard has played in the history of the modern world, Dilnot says, “The evolution of the police of London is largely the tale of modern civilization.”\textsuperscript{66} Obviously, Dilnot holds Scotland Yard in high esteem. Later in his introduction, the author attributes “scores of countries” the state of law and order in the

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid, 8.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid, 7.


\textsuperscript{65} Thomson, \textit{The Story of Scotland Yard}, 34.

\textsuperscript{66} Dilnot, \textit{Story of Scotland Yard}, 1.
establishment of the Metropolitan Police Force. The author continues to praise Scotland Yard highly throughout his introduction and the rest of his book. Though he does admit that the Yard possesses some faults, he is quick to remind the reader that the organization has also taken more than its fair share of poor publicity as well as lack of credit for some of its great triumphs. Dilnot’s book is well documented and has extremely accurate facts throughout it, but the bias of imperial British thought is evident, so the reader must look at the book through that lens. This author obviously comes from an English background because he often refers to Britain as the most prestigious country in the world, and to London as the greatest city. Scotland Yard, in Dilnot’s opinion, serves as an extension to the British Empire, influencing law enforcement agencies of all other nations in the correct and British way of enforcing the law. While his thesis has merit because Scotland Yard has been so influential in many other police forces throughout the world, Dilnot overstates his thesis by giving Scotland Yard too much credit. However, when the reader takes into consideration the time period in which Dilnot was published this work, his argument is understandable in the historical context.

Perhaps the most interesting perspective to consider when examining Scotland Yard is the perspective of the officers themselves. The way in which police officers of Scotland Yard approached their jobs affects the way historians view Scotland Yard, so looking at a first hand account of an actual officer is perhaps one of the purest forms of historiography. In his memoir A Life’s Reminiscences of Scotland Yard, originally published in 1890, Andrew Lansdowne gives a detailed account of his service to the Metropolitan Police Force. In his work, Lansdowne portrays himself as an average British citizen, merely doing his job like anyone else would when

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67 Ibid, 2.  
68 Ibid, 3.
walking his beat, or doing other tasks for Scotland Yard. Lansdowne disagrees with the romanticized version of police officers that is often invented by novelists and other popular writers. Instead, he argues that the Metropolitan Policeman is merely conducting his duty, and is not doing anything out of the ordinary. When describing his feat of arresting over 300 criminals, Lansdowne describes most of the captures as “commonplace and uninteresting.” Lansdowne does admit that he had some exciting experiences with the Metropolitan Police Force; however, he suggests that these incidents were not the norm in his service.

Though Lansdowne does not seem overly impressed with his specific roll as a constable in Scotland Yard, he shows great respect for the Metropolitan Police Force as a whole. Whenever speaking of another officer, Lansdowne shows extreme reverence and seldom complains about any experience he went through while with the force. On several occasions, Lansdowne refers to Scotland Yard as a great organization that made a significant mark on criminal history. Overall, in his memoir, Lansdowne thinks very highly of Scotland Yard, and feels honored to have served with the organization. This attitude was common among Metropolitan Policemen, and is perhaps part of the reason that Scotland Yard has become such a significant force in criminal history.

Sir Robert Peel and other early officers of Scotland Yard founded the organization principles of equality. The Metropolitan Police Force specifically emphasized that the police

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69 Lansdowne, A Life’s Reminiscences, 3.
70 Ibid, 3.
71 Ibid, 4.
72 Ibid, 4.
73 Ibid, 10.
74 Ibid, 5.
were not above the law, and that every citizen was equal under the law.\textsuperscript{75} Though the public did not welcome Scotland Yard in the beginning, London public opinion eventually turned and supported Scotland Yard. What was the reason for this change? The majority of the historians overlook this question; however, finding the answer to it may show the reason that Scotland Yard was such a success and was able to influence criminal history in such a positive light.

The English have always been lovers of law and order. At the root of this obsession was a prominent desire for equality among men. Henry II began the tradition of this equality. When Henry II took the throne in England in 1154, the legal courts of the country presided over the people of Britain with complete inequality.\textsuperscript{76} This inequality permeated the courtrooms, the statutes, and the punishments of the country. The largest problem that Henry II encountered concerning the legal courts during his reign pertained to the church. At this point in history, England was strongly Roman Catholic. The Church presided over a separate court, and during Henry II’s reign, it was using this court to disrupt the already complex legal system established in England.\textsuperscript{77} However, Henry II was determined to consolidate the legal system, and even the Catholic Church could not stand in his way.\textsuperscript{78} By the end of his reign, Henry II had obtained his goal. Though the legal system was not completely equal, a relative state of order had been established. Henry II established a court at Westminster called the “superior court,” which acted as a court of appeals.\textsuperscript{79} In addition to this modern concept, Henry II also enacted a form of a modern jury trial. At these proceedings, the defendant was allowed to object to specific jurors,

\textsuperscript{75} Scott, \textit{Scotland Yard}, 18.


\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 327.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 328.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 331.
and even speak on his own behalf.\textsuperscript{80} Though the defendant certainly did not have rights equivalent to those he would expect today, the fact that all defendants ideally possessed rights at this early date is very rare. Henry II’s legal modifications in England began the expectation of the English for equality and fairness in the legal system.

In 1215, the next significant mark of the English love for equality comes to the scene. At the battle of Runnymede, the barons of England required King John I to sign the Magna Carta.\textsuperscript{81} They forced him to sign this document because they felt he had been treating the English people unfairly by placing himself above the law. When Henry II had enforced legal reforms in England several years before, the people had begun to cling to the ideal of equality under the law. They now felt that this equality should extend to the King of England. The Magna Carta came to be known as an icon of British society and an embodiment of British ideals. After King John, whenever the English people felt their rights were being violated, they would turn to the Magna Carta. In fact, the Magna Carta was reinstated officially several times throughout the ages.\textsuperscript{82} The British value this document more than in any other legislation in their history because the Magna Carta emphasizes the core of British thought: equality.

Another significant contributor to the English legal system was King Edward I. When he came to power in 1272, the legal system consisted of complex, unstandardized statutes. Many of the courts took immense amounts of time to go through trials, and the entire system was completely inefficient.\textsuperscript{83} During his reign, Edward I determined to make the statutes more clear and concise. He also wanted to modify criminal penalties, making them harsher in order to deter

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid, 339.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, 32.
\end{flushright}
Edward I increased punishments specifically for the crimes of rape, abduction of children, and poaching of salmon. Unfortunately, many historians say that these harsher penalties did little to slow the flow of crime in England. Instead, these penalties made it more difficult to obtain a conviction of a perpetrator. Because of the harsher penalties in place, the magistrates felt that they needed even more evidence that the defendant committed the crime. In several instances, especially rape cases, the defendant was acquitted on a small technicality. For example, in one instance, a woman was abducted, raped, and assaulted with a knife. She recalled the incident with remarkable clarity, even telling what dress she was wearing and specifically where the incident took place. However, the charges against her assailant were dropped because the victim was unable to identify what type of metal the knife the criminal attacked her with. This type of problem became increasingly common because of Edward I’s criminal reforms. Despite these criticisms, Edward I’s other penal reforms positively impacted the English legal system. His reforms left the law more efficient, gave the public access to speedier justice, and corrected various errors and contradictions in statutes. Most importantly, Edward I’s legal reforms solidified the English feeling of equality toward the justice system.

Scotland Yard embodied the English desire for equality and justice, bringing these principles down to a level the people could experience in every day life. Before the establishment of the Metropolitan Police Force, British subjects were content to leave the principles of Magna Carta and the implications of Henry II and Edward I’s reforms at a national level, perhaps unsure

84 Ibid, 279.
85 Ibid, 280.
86 Ibid, 281.
87 Ibid, 282.
88 Ibid, 296.
of how exactly to bring them down to a level that every citizen could access. By enforcing their promise of equality in the way the force exhibited its behavior, Scotland Yard showed England, and, consequently the world that every citizen deserved justice and equal protection under the law, not only at a governmental level, but on a personal level as well. Because of this attitude, Scotland Yard became a solid establishment, changing the way police conducted their duties and the way citizens viewed policemen forever.

Before 1829, crime ran British society, and no one could even trust the local policemen. The police forces that did exist were disorganized and not a deterrent to criminals on the streets. However, after Sir Robert Peel established the Metropolitan Police Force, the entire view of crime and society in Britain changed. Though the public suspected the police at first, eventually the force showed London that crime could be controlled and combated if fought with the right tools. Scotland Yard showed Britain that the principles laid out in the Magna Carta not only applied to kings and nations, but to individuals in their neighborhoods and homes. When England understood these facts, she gladly accepted Scotland Yard into her society, making the force a complete success. With the country behind it, Scotland Yard began its battle against crime in Britain, and set out to change how the world saw criminal justice.
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The Victorian Web is a scholarly website created by George P. Landow, a professor of English and the history of art at Brown University. The site uses primary sources as well as a variety of scholarly articles applicable to topics from Victorian England. This site is very useful and helpful in researching the Victorian Era, and, because it is authored by such a credible source, can be trusted as a credible source for research.


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