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1
Technology of Change

The people who lived in the decades between 1881 and 1914 were the first to experience the global society. Trans-continental railways, linked with steamship routes, enabled worldwide transportation. Newspapers achieved mass circulation, and books, letters and pamphlets circulated worldwide by means of the first international postal agreement. Undersea cables carried messages from continent to continent in minutes. Commercial interests made use of transportation and communication, leading to the emergence of multi-national corporations and planetary consumer culture. Newspapers brought news of radio waves, x-rays, radiation and other amazing discoveries. People got their first look at the inventions that would in the twentieth century define everyday life: wireless, cinematographs, phonographs, aeroplanes and motor cars.[1]

These internationalising technologies contributed to the appearance of novel crime problems, including white slavery, alien criminality and anarchist outrages. In later chapters, each of these will be explored. This chapter deals with the impact of internationalising technologies on 'ordinary crimes'. Specifically, the aim is to glimpse what the future held from the perspective of the late nineteenth century looking forward; what leaders thought was happening, what would happen or might happen to criminality given the scale and scope of technological change. Police and prison authorities, lawyers, professors and other specialists described an emerging class of 'professional criminals'. These individuals took advantage of advances in transportation, communication and commerce to carry out theft, fraud and other property-related crimes. The concern about professional criminality reflected an awareness of unconventional developments in conventional crime: crime was becoming international.[2]

Amplification in mass circulation newspapers made it difficult to assess the reality of the new threat. Local and national crime stories became international crime stories in the late nineteenth century. Police and prison authorities spotlighted the threat of criminals who made use of new technology, but they also claimed to have secured the power of technology for law enforcement in the form of 'scientific policing'. The police wanted the public to perceive the crime-fighting properties of the new technologies and that they were more than a match for the professional criminals. In reality, police did not achieve anything close to scientific policing or international cooperation. Problems related to extradition, persistent reliance on informers and reluctance to share information with other police forces meant that international criminality probably was a problem of some significance.

A kind of social revolution

Millions gathered at international exhibitions between 1876 and 1904 to celebrate scientific breakthroughs and technological marvels. Paris, Philadelphia, Antwerp, Vienna, Chicago and St Louis welcomed the world to spectacular venues featuring daring engineering feats of glass, iron and steel. Fair organisers built fabulous palaces of industry to showcase the latest technological wonders. The Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876 introduced the sewing machine, telephone and typewriter. Expositions at Paris in 1878 and 1899, and Antwerp in 1885, paraded electric lighting, the gasoline engine and the phonograph. The World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 displayed the handheld camera and radio; the Exposition Universelle at Paris in 1900 the moving sidewalk and panoramic moving pictures; and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St Louis in 1904 promised an aeronautical competition with an array of flying machines. These grand events celebrated the emergence of an international culture, tied together by unprecedented advances in transportation, communication and commerce. They also trumpeted scientific progress. To emphasise the advantages of modern civilisation, every international exposition from Amsterdam in 1883 included an anthropological exhibit with 'savages', taken from the host nation's overseas colonies or indigenous peoples.[3]

By the end of the nineteenth century, railway lines and steamship routes criss-crossed the surface of the planet. Between 1870 and 1914, the number of European railways more than tripled. Russia had completed its transcontinental railway, and the Orient could be reached from European cities in about three weeks. Passengers could

travel to Peking, Shanghai or Yokohama from London, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest and St Petersburg on the great trans-Siberian railway. In Africa, the Cape to Cairo railway joined with numerous eastward and westward branches, like the mid-rib of a leaf. A steel bridge went up over the Zambesi, to further the line to Victoria Falls, which builders expected would become a regular tourist attraction. Construction of the Bagdad railway in 1900 brought European engineers to Constantinople who perused recent editions of the London *Times* and *Die Fliegende Blätter* in their hotels. In South America, the Transandine railway was also underway, with termini at Buenos Aires and Valparaiso. In North America, transcontinental routes in Canada and the United States connected eastern cities with western cities. Meanwhile, in England, railway management attracted considerable criticism for adherence to antiquated carriages and locomotives. European and American critics labelled English railway management as 'the poorest of any in the civilised world'.[4]

The trans-continental railways linked to port cities and steamships that skated across oceans and seas. By the early twentieth century, steamships could cross the Atlantic nearly twice as quickly as in the mid-nineteenth century. Rivalry between the major lines, Cunard, Inman, Guion and White Star generated great public interest in ocean liners. Steamships raced for the honour of flying the Blue Riband, awarded to the ship with the fastest Atlantic crossing. Festive crowds cheered the launch of each new contender and wager pools formed in New York restaurants frequented by commercial glitterati. The Guion fleet produced the first vessel to make the crossing in a week, before the Inman Company made the voyage in less than six days. The chairman of the Guion Line predicted in 1886 that the day was not far away when the Atlantic would be crossed in four days. He reassured the sceptics, who wondered about the 'almost insane desire for speed in locomotion by land and sea', that such speed could be sustained without risk to the safety of passengers. Through watertight compartments and powerful pumps, each vessel became its lifeboat. Travelling aboard a well-appointed steamship, he contended, was safer than aboard a railway train.[5]

In the 1890s, two great German shipping companies, North German Lloyd and Hamburg-American, joined the competition on the Atlantic route. The North German Lloyd had five distinct services between Europe and America, and the Hamburg-American covered the whole of the American routes from Hamburg and Southampton to New York, Mexico and Brazil. After the Atlantic, the most crowded routes led to

the East. The Penninsular and Oriental line ran regular routes between London, India, the Far East and Australia, and the Japan Mail Steamship Company crossed between Antwerp, London and the East via Suez, and from Yokohama to Seattle. These steamship routes connected the mammoth railways of Canada and the United States with the Orient. The Canadian Pacific Railroad owned vessels with the Empress line which operated regular routes from Vancouver to China and Japan and the Northern Pacific and Union Pacific Lines passed through Utah to San Francisco where travellers had a choice of steamship lines to Asia. By 1900, the world's steamship services were so numerous that there was hardly a port or coastal town at which the great ocean-liners, or their tributaries, did not call. It was possible to sail around the world in just a little more than 80 days.[6]

The *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, launched in 1897, became one of the first passenger ships to be fitted with wireless. Marconi first experimented with Herztian waves in 1895, and by 1897, he had formed the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company for the construction of coastal stations. Ships fitted with wireless could correspond with other ships en route, as well as with lighthouses and ports. By 1903, the first 'official' wireless message crossed the Atlantic: President Roosevelt congratulated King Edward VII on the 'wonderful triumph of scientific research and ingenuity'. Within three years, a specialist in the field had seen enough to declare that 'a severance of communication with any part of the earth . . . will henceforth be impossible'.[7] J.A. Fleming, professor of electrical engineering at University College London, explained that wireless technology had been enabled by modern scientific understanding of the physical universe. The interaction of three elements—matter, energy and ether—explained all physical events in the universe. Archaeologists spoke of the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age in the history of the world, and the twentieth century, he felt confident to say, 'would surely claim the title to be called the Ether Age'.[8]

By the first decade of the twentieth century, travellers also looked forward to the day when they would fly across the ocean. Aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont described in 1905 the twentieth-century airship. The 'aerial yacht', a balloon fitted with a boiler and condenser, and a sleeping car with two cots, would be able to remain aloft for 30 days. His machine would be able to travel to Russia, by way of Vienna, then to Constantinople before returning to Paris. He predicted a new century filled with airships, made by hundreds of engineers and mechanics in factories devoted solely to their manufacture.[9] The successful flights of Count Zeppelin's machines stirred an interest in the

dirigible throughout Europe. In October of 1908, the LZ-4 flew over 240 miles in 12 hours and secured for the airship a bright future. But a rumour circulated that the secretive Wilbur Wright had flown some 24 miles in a heavier-than-air machine, and when Louis Blériot made his well-publicised aeroplane flight across the English Channel, it became clear the aeroplane would supplant the airship.[10] At the 1909 aeronautical show in Reims, France, nearly two dozen aviators made more than 100 take-offs; seven flights covered 60 miles at top speeds of nearly 50 miles per hour. In *The Condition of England* (1909), C.F.G. Masterman recognised powered flight as the most obvious scientific advance visible on the horizon. 'The invention of flying . . . ' he wrote, 'may eliminate natural boundaries which have exercised a dominant influence upon human life since human life first was'.[11]

Motor cars contributed to this shrinking of the world. The motoring age in Britain began in 1896 with the Locomotives on Highways Act, which removed the last barriers to cars on roads. That said, few people had actually seen a car. When the mayor of Tunbridge Wells organised a 'motor show' in October 1895, more than 10,000 people turned out to see the curiosities on exhibition. The development of the motor-powered vehicle from the horseless carriage to modern motor car took place swiftly. The number of cars on roads doubled to 16,000 in 1906, doubled again in 1907 and by 1909 reached 48,000. 'Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say the advent of the motor-car may create a kind of social revolution in this country' remarked one observer in 1903. But from this point in time, it was difficult to imagine the pace of technological change and the extent of the social revolution that would unfold. It was not clear whether steam, electricity or the petrol motor would power cars in the future. 'There are many who would hold that the petrol motor is only a transitional type, and that the future lies with the electric car . . . Others dream of a time when power will be supplied through the ether, on the principle of Mr Marconi's wireless telegraphy'.[12]

Before cars appeared on British roads, the bicycle captured the imagination of residents in cities across Europe and America. Mass-produced bicycles with rubber tyres became available in the 1880s and set off a 'bicycle craze'. In England, enthusiasts outdid themselves in setting records for speed and distance. *Gentleman's Magazine* reported in 1889 that 'Mr Marriott' had pedalled a 100 miles in 20 hours, then 183 and later 214. Even ladies had covered impressive distances. 'Mrs Allen' made 153 miles in 24 hours.[13] The following year, two university students from St Louis, William Sachtleben and Thomas Allen, arrived in Liverpool with their bicycles for the beginning of their 'around the

world tour'. Three years later, they arrived back in the United States, having pedalled across Europe, Asia and America. At 15,044 miles, they had completed the longest continuous land journey on bicycle.[14] But even they were not the first to circle the earth on two wheels. At least four other men had completed around-the-world bicycle tours in the 1880s.

The establishment of modern communication and transportation links transformed the world in other ways as well. Modern forms of transportation and communication changed production and distribution and enabled businesses to expand across national borders. Mass marketing and mass production, in turn, brought about unprecedented increase in the volume of production and the number of transactions. The United States, Germany and Great Britain were at the centre of this economic transformation; together, their economies accounted for three-fourths of the world's industrial output before 1870. Before the First World War, American tyre, food and consumer-chemical companies moved into Europe, and European firms entered the American market. Nestlé, Stollwerck and Lever Brothers placed their products in American homes. Shell established itself in the United States, while the Texas Company and Standard Oil of New York established operations in Europe and Asia. Across Europe, the German chemical firm Henkel sold soap powder, and German dye companies marketed pharmaceuticals and film. By promoting a mass consumer culture, the trans-national industrial firm inserted itself into a large portion of everyday activity.[15]

In the area of perishable foods, meat packers, brewers and fruit producers fashioned international networks, using refrigerated ships to distribute their products over thousands of miles from initial processing to tens of thousands of local butchers and grocers. The New Zealand Shipping Company fitted a sailing ship with refrigerators in 1882 and took a large quantity of fish and poultry from London to New Zealand, bringing back a cargo of frozen beef and mutton. The introduction of the frozen meat trade developed new business in butter, cheese and fruits, leading other ocean lines to set up refrigerating chambers on their vessels.[16] By 1914, at least 41 American companies, clustered in machinery and food industries, had built two or more operating facilities abroad. While most of the factories were in Canada, half of these firms had factories in Britain or Germany. British multi-national firms developed in chemical and food industries where they sold low-priced, packaged products to rapidly growing urban markets. These included manufacturers of chocolates, biscuits and confectionary, jams and sauces, condiments, meat products, aerated drinks, soaps and pharmaceuticals. Nearly all were family partnerships

well-established before new transportation and communication facilities opened national and overseas markets. Branded products became familiar in households across Britain and overseas. Cadbury, Rowntree, Colman, Yardley and Beecham went first into the Commonwealth nations of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa, then into the American and continental markets.[17]

Amongst British firms, none succeeded more in creating and operating in an international theatre than Lever Brothers. In the 1880s, William Lever began selling individual packages of 'Sunlight' soap in Lancashire. Before then, consumers bought groceries without packages and advertising. Brand names seldom appeared. Soap had been sold in bulk, and retailers sold slices to consumers in the way cheese and butter had been sold. Lever and Company targeted their advertising to appeal to the households of the industrial working class, using advertising copy aimed at women and district agents to arrange delivery to local merchants. From the north of England, the business spread to Europe, then to the United States. To assure supply of the vegetable oil needed to feed production at his factories, Lever began to look overseas for palm oil and palm kernels. In 1905, he purchased cocoanut plantations in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific and in 1911 obtained large concessions in the Belgian Congo. By the First World War, Lever Brothers not only had plants in Australia, Canada and the United States but also in Switzerland, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Sweden, Norway and Japan. People began to smell the same, whether in Europe, North America or Asia.[18]

Theft must be international

The pace and extent of technological change in the late nineteenth century entailed anxieties about novel means of perpetrating crimes and evading the police. Police officials, prison authorities, lawyers and law professors described a generation of criminals empowered by the very latest advances in science. Clever professionals took advantage of the opportunities for mobility and anonymity and a vast pool of potential victims with a limited grasp of the implications of the new technologies in daily life.

The Thief (1897), a French novel, described the *fin de siècle* criminal, the professional comfortable with technologies for travel and conversation. The central character, Georges Randal, had been born into a well-to-do bourgeois family, but when his parents die, he finds himself with nothing, having been cheated out of his inheritance by a guardian.

While at school, he turns to theft, and once an adult, he becomes a thief. But Randal is no ordinary thief: he is a thief with a philosophy of life and a professional technique. His criminality derives from his conclusion of the impossibility of living within the strictures of a society lacking any intellectual or moral foundation. 'We live in a criminally stupid world, our society is antihuman and our civilisation is nothing but a lie'. He takes advantage of the anonymity and efficiency of public transportation to avoid capture. Randal and his partner engage a train, boat or a combination of the two, to put themselves miles away from the scene of the crime. He relies on rapid exchange of information, notification of telegrams, of opportunities for burglaries. Randal embodies the ultimate modern criminal, one whose criminality cannot be confined to a city, nor even to a country. His criminality is international: 'One has to help oneself in diverse languages under different skies, to go from Belgium into Switzerland, from Germany into Holland and from England into France. Theft must be international or not at all'.[19]

The novel coincided with an awareness of international criminality amongst police authorities. *The Police Code*, published for provincial police forces in the United Kingdom, urged proper utilisation of the telegraph and telephone in the detection of crime. The code contained these instructions: To obtain arrest of an offender of whom a good and recognisable description is available, multiple telegrams should be sent to every adjacent force along the most likely escape route. Where serious burglaries occur in the provinces, the fact should be telegrammed to neighbouring towns, as criminals often sought refuge in nearby but unsuspected places. At the same time, a telegram should always be sent to the Metropolitan Police where officials were on hand to distribute information to all districts. It included an appendix showing the routes out of England for major railways into London and ports of embarkation. The chart showed the nearest police station where a telegram could be sent asking that train, which had already started from the provinces, to be met by London police constables (Figure 1.1).[20] Once the criminal had made it out of the country, it was too late. Thomas Byrnes, Superintendent of the New York Police Department, conceded that escaped criminals arrived in the city. And once in New York, lost among two million people, it was possible to renew a criminal career. Not only would such a criminal escape notice of the authorities, the fugitive from Europe possessed the added advantage of knowing 'foreign methods of crime' with which American police were not familiar.[21]

Police and prison officials spoke of the emerging threat of 'professional criminals'. Robert Anderson, who had been in charge of the

Railway	London Termini	Nearest Police Station	Route
Brighton and South Coast	London Bridge, Victoria	Borough High St, Southwark; Gerald Rd, Chelsea	France *via* Newhaven and Dieppe, and *via* Littlehampton and Honfleur
South Eastern and Chatham	London Bridge, Cannon St, Holborn Viaduct, Charing Cross, Victoria	Borough High St, Southwark; Seething Lane (City); Snow Hill (City); Bow Street or New Scotland Yard	France and Belgium, *via* Dover and Calais, or Ostend; to Dover for Calais and Ostend, and to Boulogne and Paris *via* Folkestone
North Western	Euston, Willesden Junction	Albany St, Regent's Park; Harlesden	Scotland and Ireland *via* Holyhead, and America, *via* Liverpool
Great Eastern	Liverpool St, Bishopgate	Bishopgate (City); Commercial St, Shoreditch;	Rotterdam and Antwerp *via* Harwich
South Western	Waterloo, Vauhall, Clapham Junction	Kennington Rd, Clapham, Lavender Hill, Somers Town	Havre, Channel Islands and America, *via* Southampton
Great Northern	King's Cross	Somers Town	Scotland and Ireland and America, *via* Glasgow
Midland	St Pancras, Derby	Somers Town	Ireland and America, *via* Liverpool
Great Western	Paddington, Westbourne Park	Paddington, Harrow Rd	Ireland, *via* Holyhead, Bristol, or Milford, and France, *via* Weymouth
Great Central	Marylebone	John St	Ireland and America, *via* Liverpool, and the Continent, *via* Grimsby and Hull
Tilbury and Southend	Fenchurch St	Minories (City)	The continent, colonies and most countries

Figure 1.1 Routes out of England *via* London, 1912
Source: Howard Vincent, *The Police Code and General Manual of Criminal Law* (London: Butterworth, 1912), p. 264.

Criminal Investigation Division at Scotland Yard, stressed that while crime overall was decreasing, crime committed by a new class of prolific and specialised criminals was increasing. The criminals Anderson had in mind were not to be confused with 'habitual criminals'; these were hopelessly wicked individuals, too weak to resist social forces compelling them into criminality. Professional criminals pursued a life of crime as a matter of calculation and daring; they approached the risks of crime as a matter of sport and adventure. They carried out elaborate frauds, great forgeries, jewellery thefts and bank robberies. The elite among this group visited Brighton regularly and wintered in Monte Carlo as a matter of course. The aggregate crime rate could be decreased considerably, Anderson insisted, if the government built a single prison for professional criminals and consigned them to it for life.[22] Similarly, Evelyn Ruggles-Brise, chairman of the Prison Commission, saw an emerging class of acquisitive criminals. Like Anderson, he distinguished this category of 'dangerous malefactors' from the 'petty vagrants' that comprised habitual offenders. He too believed that while crime had decreased generally, the number of professional criminals had increased significantly. The present stage of world history entailed a category of men and women that made criminality a profession and chose to make a living from stealing, embezzling and defrauding. He urged the delegates at the international penitentiary congresses at Paris (1895) and Brussels (1900) to support indeterminate sentencing schemes as a defence against the professionals.[23]

Blackwood's Magazine welcomed this awareness of professional criminality. The magazine offered tales of modern highwaymen who achieved their 'success' by being scientific as well as intrepid. One of these, Henry J. Raymond (*née* Adam Worth), had been given the moniker, 'the Napoleon of Crime', by Anderson for managing to steal £90,000 worth of diamonds. He profited from the knowledge of how diamonds left the mines of South Africa for Europe. Diamonds were sent from Kimberley to the coast just in time to catch the steamer for Europe. When the steamer was delayed, the gems were locked in the post office until the next steamer left the harbour. Raymond befriended the postmaster, studied his daily habits, and managed to make a wax impression of his keys. He returned to Europe, leaving behind memories of pleasant conversations. A few months later he returned to South Africa, disguised, where he made his way up country where the diamonds had to be ferried to the coast. He loosened the chain of the ferry, sending the boat downstream and guaranteeing the convoy of diamonds would miss the mail packet. All that remained was for him to unlock the safe

in the post office, and travel to London, where he had the cheek to sell his treasure back to its rightful owners.[24] In the fiction of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Raymond became Professor James Moriarty, the nemesis of Sherlock Holmes.[25]

The idea that a generation of criminals took advantage of modern means of transportation and communication to further their exploitation of society received support from police specialists abroad. S.J. Banarji, a regular contributor to the *International Police Service Magazine*, outlined a number of schemes and frauds perpetrated with the use of railways and telegraph lines. Railway thieves appeared on platforms as smartly dressed persons, seemingly awaiting a friend or the next train. Other crooks took advantage of the anonymity of telegraph communication, often pretending to be persons of high social status. Telegram forgers contacted housekeepers of affluent persons known to be away. The telegram instructed the housekeeper to receive a dear friend of their employer with specific details about name and time of arrival. The 'friend' arrived, but remained long enough to identify and make off with valuables. Card swindlers took advantage of travellers on board ships, in hotels and at race courses. Working with accomplices, they relied on 'gentle manners' to snare their victims into high-stakes games. 'These rogues have made the Atlantic boats their favourite resorts' he explained.[26]

Inspector John Bonfield of the Chicago Police told a local newspaper in 1888 about criminals who used the telephone to deceive and defraud businessmen. 'It is a well-known fact that no other section of the population avail themselves more readily and speedily of the latest triumphs of science than the criminal class. The educated criminal skims the cream from every new invention, if he can make use of it'.[27] (And, coincidentally, the first telephone swindle in France took place that same year).[28] Following the announcement that Chicago had won the opportunity to host the World's Columbian Exposition, Bonfield became chief of the secret service in charge of security. Immediately, he recognised that the 'temporary influx of strangers from every quarter of the globe' presented a 'problem of international significance'. Experience policing previous exhibitions had demonstrated that such events 'invariably attract an international gathering of the dangerous classes of society'. He invited police authorities across Europe to send a couple of men to serve with Chicago police during the exposition (travel expenses to be paid by the host, salaries maintained by home department). The departments responded positively. The fair offered a means of acquiring tactical knowledge of policing an international event and

provided an introduction to policing methods used across America and Europe. Bonfield boasted a multi-national force of 600 to outwit the thieves, pickpockets and con men who had made their own plans for marking Columbus's discovery.[29]

American Raymond Fosdick called for an international bureau of criminal identification for identification and tracking of professional criminals. National systems of criminal record-keeping were not good enough. 'The criminal world is today characterized by a remarkable solidarity', he said; 'The professional criminal is a cosmopolitan. He knows no national boundaries. He can counterfeit French money as easy as Austrian or English. He can work a commercial fraud in Germany as well as Italy'. Attempts at international cooperation had proved ineffective. While the police of cities within England and Germany had reached information-sharing agreements, broad cooperation among nations on a systematic basis had not yet occurred. Diplomatic agreements for formal communication between nations had complicated the task of apprehending the cosmopolitan criminal. Disagreements between nations about the preferred system of criminal identification made a coordinated response possible. 'The problem of the criminal is thus no longer national but international . . . The struggle against crime and the criminal is the struggle of civilized society rather than of individual nations or states'.[30]

In Britain, official conceptions of professional criminality generated serious discussion amongst legal reformers and social observers. M. Laing Meason urged the government to employ detectives, following the French paradigm, to combat the new threat. Crime, like everything else, had become more scientific and clever in the way it worked, and to keep order it was necessary to adopt similar methods. He described a population of thieves and exporters of stolen goods from all parts of Europe in London. The size of 'Foreign London' increased every day and had a hand in nearly every robbery of magnitude. This class of criminal should not be allowed to become masters of the situation. 'Crime is gradually, and by no means slowly, gaining the upper hand amongst us', Meason contended, 'The criminal classes march with the age; the cause of order has not done so'. He realised that the establishment of a detective force would meet with opposition in England as the English objected to anything private or secret but stressed the need for detectives who could operate effectively. 'Neither crime nor criminals are the same as they were a quarter of a century ago. Both have kept pace with the age, and have brought to their assistance knowledge, science, and practical experience of men and things'.[31]

London was thought to be a magnet for 'confederated thieves directed by superior intelligence'. Bands of thieves were certainly nothing new to the metropolis, but availability of international travel and communication made detection and capture that much more difficult. The accomplices profited directly or indirectly from theft by receiving stolen property and housing gangs. In London, houses had been adapted for the reception of thieves and their loot. They included adaptations such as a duplicate staircase or a bell-wire to an adjacent house, from which the managers received early notice of approaching police. In the state of New York, these houses were found in towns along railways and canals, and professional criminals knew as much about their whereabouts as professional businessmen knew of comfortable hotels. There was a pressing need for attacking the organisational base of logistical support behind property crime rather than confining attention to individual thieves. The police needed to go after the 'capitalists of crime' rather than 'mere operatives'.[32] Cosmopolitan criminals specialised in stealing watches and jewellery; they made their way past door locks without being noticed. They traded their illicit goods with regular receivers of stolen property who sent the goods into the countryside or to the continent (Holland or France). Thieves of this level of skill and knowledge proved difficult to catch because they were as quick-witted as the police and made tracks to foreign countries. Generally, they escaped to nearby countries without extradition treaties or took passage on steamers to English-speaking countries far away, either America or Australia.[33]

Montague Crackanthorpe, barrister and journalist, did not discount the idea of professional criminality; there was a population of habitual offenders, some of whom knew what they were doing. But he did question the wisdom of singling them out for special sanctions: judges and juries would be reluctant to declare an individual a professional criminal. Professional criminals officially labelled as such would become social outcasts on release, resulting in more criminal behaviour, not less.[34] A former prisoner, who, after release, took up writing scoffed at Anderson's claims. Most of those in prison known to be professional criminals were so because no other profession was open to them. To contend that men became burglars, housebreakers, pickpockets and the like because they 'hanker after pursuing these occupations' was nonsense. Anderson's reference to a round-table of burglars who directed thefts according to skill and ability did not contain a word of truth. But there was, none the less, an organisation of those who received stolen property. Thieves would be out of business if there were no one to accept their proceeds, and if the government targeted them, rather than thieves, the amount of property crime would drop by

two-thirds.[35] The discussion registered anxieties about whether the current legal and political system could cope. The difficulty of prosecuting an offence of 'receiving stolen goods' absorbed a great deal of discussion at a number of international forums; it was taken up by the international penitentiary congresses at London (1872), Rome (1885), St Petersburg (1895), Brussels (1900) and Budapest (1905). The Budapest congress also devoted significant discussion to problems of defining, identifying and punishing 'swindlers'. Delegates agreed that laws concerning fraud needed amendment to reflect changes in financial, commercial and industrial affairs.[36]

As exaggerated as the threat of professional criminality may have been, the idea that some wrongdoers took advantage of the gap between technological advances and legal structures did present cause for concern. French social thinker Gabriel Tarde claimed criminals 'used more intelligently than the police the resources of our civilisation'. German law professor Franz von Liszt made a similar claim. Criminals specialising in crimes for financial gain roamed the world in search of victims and the police response had to be international to stop them.[37] Enrico Ferri said that scientific developments provided 'fresh instruments of crime', such as firearms, the press, photography, lithography, poisons, dynamite, electricity and hypnotism, although he believed science would, sooner or later, provide the solution.[38] Even the champion of atavistic criminality, Cesare Lombroso, conceded the rise of professional criminality (Chapter 6). He began talking about a new form of criminality rooted in social evolution, rather than in biological evolution, and specifically, crimes enabled by 'progress along technical, scientific and economic lines'. The telegraph, telephone, railway and automobile had become tools for twentieth-century crime. The individuals in a position to carry out crimes by means of modern transportation and communication were not the poor and unemployed but those in the professions and business management. He pointed to a series of murders perpetrated by a Chicago doctor as representative of the type of 'criminals of the coming century'. The evil doctor had used the telephone, telegraph and newspaper advertising to lure victims to his grand house where he murdered them, took the identity of a family member and collected their life insurance policies.[39]

Knowledge of evil

Findesiècle concerns about crime coincided with worldwide circulation of news and information. Crime, that is, local crime, had been a regular feature of British newspapers. In London, and in the provincial cities,

items about murder, criminal trials and other aspects of the legal process had been staples of newspaper production since their inception. In the late eighteenth century, newspapers carried advertisements about crimes, usually about rewards, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they became the primary media for informing and shaping public opinion about crime.[40] Journalists emerged as 'criminal investigators', alongside police detectives and private detectives, during the late nineteenth century. News reporters were mediocre professionals, unrecognised and unseen compared to more established professions. But the success of crime stories in the press catapulted individuals within the profession to the status of master reporters. Reporters triumphed over their rivals in constructing the meaning and significance of criminal events.[41]

By 1900, newspapers had developed from low-cost, often subsidised sheets into powerful commercial organisations. Circulations which a generation earlier numbered in tens of thousands now numbered in hundreds of thousands, and the growth of advertising in the Edwardian period generated wealth of which Victorian newspaper proprietors had never dreamed. The *Daily Mail*, founded in 1896 by Lord Northcliffe, became the first newspaper to reach a sale of one million. Northcliffe pursued the idea of presenting news as a matter of entertainment, as well as information, and pursued the editorship of the paper with the idea of reaching the widest possible audience. The *Daily Mirror*, which Northcliffe started in 1903, was an illustrated newspaper without political pretensions.[42]

Undersea cables enabled local crime stories to become international crime stories. By the end of the nineteenth century, telegraphy represented one of the most mundane and taken-for-granted means of communication. What had been hailed as an epoch-making achievement in the 1850s had become, by the 1890s, the 'oldest' of the century's new media.[43] Experiments with submarine cables had started at mid-century, but laying a telegraph line underwater was more difficult owing primarily to the lack of a suitable insulating material. The discovery of gutta-percha, the latex of a tree that grows in southeast Asia, allowed inventors to insulate copper wire with a water-proof material. During the 1860s, European firms established networks of submarine cables and land lines to the Persian Gulf and India, and British and American interests laid the first trans-Atlantic cables. In 1900, a German company opened a cable to the United States, fuelled in part by expanding trade and the large number of German-Americans. By 1904, there were some 13 cables across the North Atlantic, the most profitable area. The cable

companies attracted business from the press and news agencies, trading and shipping companies, governments and their militaries and the general public. The most important customers were the press and news agencies, followed by the shipping and trading companies.[44]

The worldwide circulation of books, newspapers, letters, pamphlets and the like increased with a diplomatic, rather than technological, breakthrough. The railways and steamship companies had carried mail from their beginning in the nineteenth century, and in the case of Cunard, before the beginning, as Cunard had the won the contract for the mail packet when it operated a fleeting of sailing ships. But in the late nineteenth century, leading nations organised the International Postal Service. In 1874, the head of the Prussian Postal Service convened a congress in Berne, Switzerland, to reach an international agreement. Representatives from 22 states at the congress agreed to a convention (based on that of the German Postal Federation) that became in 1876 the Union Postale Universelle. The members agreed to make international borders disappear for the purpose of postal delivery; the postal service of one country had the right to the postal service of every other. Essentially, this amounted to a pooling of transport services throughout the world. The trans-Atlantic services maintained by the British Post Office carried post from every other country and the P & O Mail Service to India, Australia and the Far East carried post for every nation along the way. The trans-continental railway lines between the Atlantic and the Pacific maintained by the United States and Canada, as well as the trans-Siberian Railway, carried mail from the whole of Europe.[45] In 1889, letters from New York reached London within a week of despatch, and by 1901, letters from Bombay made it to London within four days.[46]

The *Edinburgh Review* explained the situation to its readership this way: 'It is one of the results of the quick transmission of news from place to place in this age that men concentrate their attention on events for a short time'. The writer explained that when a number of Italians were lynched at New Orleans in the spring of 1890 (following the murder of the city's chief of police allegedly by Sicilians) 'the attention of the civilised world fixed on this event', and the administration of justice in the United States became a matter of speculation throughout the world.[47] The murders in London's Whitechapel district by 'the ripper' supplied one of the first international crime stories. The columns of *The Times*, with its unrivalled foreign news service, did include crimes committed abroad, particularly murders, but interest in foreign murders peaked around this time. In 1887, the year prior to the ripper murders, *The Times* mentioned twelve multiple murders; seven of the

cases were from abroad. In 1888, there were nine cases of multiple murders, five from abroad. In 1889, links with the ripper case developed: ten cases reported, five from abroad. Six murders of prostitutes in the United States were said to be identical to the Whitechapel atrocities of the previous year, and in 1889, *The Times* printed 24 reports of multiple murders, 14 from abroad. None of these crimes bore similarity to the ripper killings, but this did not seem to matter to editors aiming to attract readers. By 1895, the paper's interest in murder waned and few cases of foreign murders appeared. Foreign murders reported between 1895 and 1920 tended to be limited to the colonies, such as India and Australia, a feature, it would seem, related to the existence of cable networks.[48]

Crime-fighting was one of the first uses suggested for 'telephotography', invented by German scientist Alfred Korn. He began experiments with photographic transmission over land lines between Berlin and Paris beginning in 1902 and in 1907 built a machine for the *Daily Mirror* to send photographs through undersea cable. Photographs sent from the office of *L'Illustration* in Paris to London in November 1907 were the first to be sent by submarine cable. In Paris, photographic film was placed on a glass drum which turned. A powerful light was concentrated through a pin hole in front of the film, and electric current switched on. In London, a similar drum with film received the electrical signal, and the light piercing the hole varied according to the intensities of the sending film, and conveyed the light and shadow to the receiving film, re-producing the portrait. The *Daily Mirror* received a photograph of King Edward in twelve minutes. Paris then sent a photograph of the prime minister followed by one of the French president. The *Daily Mirror* acquired the sole rights to the use of Korn's invention in Great Britain and the colonies and received permission from the British and French governments for the use of postal wires. Korn speculated that the invention would be of use to the illustrated press primarily, and plans for a wire-photo service between Germany, France and Great Britain were put into place.[49]

To demonstrate the usefulness of 'telephotography', the *Daily Mirror* printed a photograph of Countess Marcetti arrested at Boulogue on a charge of receiving false money. The photograph was despatched from Paris to London in twelve minutes using the Korn apparatus set up for the newspaper. The article included a note about a story appearing over the Reuter network that Russian police authorities in St Petersburg proposed developing telephotography with a view to tracking 'hunted criminals'.[50] This photograph later appeared in *Science and the Criminal* (1911), an introduction to the application of science to police work. The author predicted that the ability of the 'telectrograph' to

transmit handwriting, sketches, and photographs would prove a powerful weapon the armoury of the detective. In addition to Korn's device, a simplified, lighter weight machine had also appeared. The photograph could be printed on a flexible plate with the backing of lead foil and attached to the transmission cylinder. This machine transferred thousands of minute points comprising the image by telephone wire or by wireless. When used in this connection, it would be possible for a ship at sea to send or receive portraits of individuals under suspicion.[51]

The public learned about the significance of it for crime fighting in 1910 in the capture of Dr Crippen. Scotland Yard sought the arrest of Hawley Crippen, a London doctor, for the murder of his wife, Cora. Her body parts had been found in the cellar of the residence in which Crippen lived with his secretary-and-lover, Ethel Le Neve. Inspector Walter Dew issued bulletins in England, North America and Europe for the arrest of Crippen and Le Neve. But the pair, in Belgium, booked passage on the *Montrose* bound for Montreal. Crippen and Le Neve registered using aliases to make it appear as if they were father and son; Crippen grew a beard and Le Neve wore men's clothing. But the ship's captain, having seen their photographs in the news, realised their true identity and used the wireless to alert Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard's Inspector Dew boarded a faster ship to intercept the *Montrose* and make the arrest before disembarkation in Canada. While en route he regularly wired information to eager journalists. The public learned not only how Crippen and Le Neve passed their time aboard ship but about wireless telegraphy. As the reporters explained, the ship transmitted a short-range signal that was picked up by another ship, and in this way, relayed back to London. Newspaper illustrations depicted the location of ships with concentric circles to show the range of their signals; lightning bolts appeared above the ships' masts to indicate the power of radio waves.[52]

It would appear, from the exploits of Inspector Dew, that the police welcomed the press as an ally, but the reality was more complicated. More than one observer worried about the impact of the ever-wider coverage of criminal events. C.F.G. Masterman remarked in 1909 about English justice in the news. Seen through the medium of the Sunday press, in which seven of ten readers received their sole picture of the world outside their day-to-day experience, it 'takes upon the appearance of violence and madness. Men and women knife each other in the dark. Children are foully butchered by unknown assailants. Suicides sprinkle every page.'[53] Cyrus Edson, Chief Inspector of the New York Board of Health, worried about the impact of such news on mental health. Modern magazines and newspapers had the effect of a 'mental spur'

that produced an inestimable stream of 'anxious thought' in the typical American reader. 'Think of it a moment' he implored, 'every morning and every evening sheets—four pages, eight pages, sixteen pages—damp from the flying presses—come to him filled with new thoughts, new events, new matter for the mind to dwell on'. Recently, he had encountered a woman immobilised by the news. 'If I find in the paper in the morning some horrible story of a crime or disaster, it interests me very much' she confessed. But after reading such story, she felt so sorry for the sufferers, so overwhelmed by their pain, 'I find I must lie down and rest before I can begin my work for the day'.[54]

In addition to newspapers, people began to acquire some portion of their understanding about crime from the new medium of films. Most of the scientific problems in showing cinematographic films were solved during this era. Even colour films, of a sort, were shown at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1906. There were in 1908 three companies with a capital of £100,000 engaged in film exhibition; in 1909, there were 103 companies with a capital of £1.4 million, and in 1912, 205 companies with about £3 million. By 1914, all the large towns in Britain had many picture theatres; Manchester had one cinema for every eight inhabitants.[55] As crime figured so prominently in late Victorian and Edwardian news print, it is not surprising that it became a theme for early cinema. British film makers introduced crime reconstruction films in the early 1900s. One of these, *Arrest of Goudie*, was shown at the Prince of Wales Theatre in Liverpool in December 1901, three days after the actual arrest of Thomas Goudie had taken place. Goudie, a clerk at the Bank of Liverpool, was arrested and convicted for embezzlement of £170,000 from his employer. After a nationwide manhunt featuring surveillance at train stations and ports, the police concluded that he had either left the country or committed suicide. But just then, they received a tip and made the arrest: 500 yards from a police station. The film makers, Mitchell and Kenyon, recreated known events in actual locations. In aiming for 'reconstructed actuality' rather than 'dramatic reconstruction', they foreshadowed modern documentary cinematography.[56]

La police scientifique

Police and prison authorities believed, or wanted others to believe, that technological achievements in transportation and communication extended the reach of the criminal law. In *A History of Police in England* (1901), William Melville explained that the introduction of railways

in Britain had put the police at a disadvantage. The modern conveniences of travel gave criminals a few hours head start and the ability to find a safe refuge before the police could catch up. There had always been a 'contest between the lawbreaker and the policeman, wherein the fortunes of the day favour first one side than the other'. But he was confident that the arrival of the twentieth century had shifted the balance of power firmly and irrevocably to the police. 'The telegraph beats the steamship, and the international system of police which now mutually provides for the surrender of fugitive offenders has restored the balance'.[57]

Arthur Griffiths, an inspector of prisons, shared this view, but C. Ainsworth Mitchell, author of *Science and the Criminal* (1911), did not. For Griffiths: 'The machinery, the organisation of modern life, favours the pursuers. The world's "shrinkage", the facilities for travel, the narrowing of neutral ground, the secure sanctuary for the fugitive, the universal, almost immediate publicity that waits on startling crimes—all those are against the criminal'. He went on to catalogue the technologies arrayed against the lawbreaker.

> Electricity is his worst and bitterest foe, and next to it rank the post and the Press. Flight is checked by the wire, the first mail carries the particulars everywhere, both to the general public and to a ubiquitous international police brimful of *camaraderie* and willing to help each other. It is not easy to disappear nowadays . . . .

Mitchell was much less optimistic. For all the modern facilities available for crime detection, it was surprising how many remained undetected. In cases of suspicious circumstances, it was impossible to decipher the truth, despite the service of science. 'The law-breaker's primitive weapon of natural cunning has thus often proved more than a match for all the weapons at the disposal of his opponent [the law enforcer]'.[58]

Science afforded opportunities as yet unknown, and in the late nineteenth century, it seemed possible that a scientific breakthrough could enable civilisation to triumph over crime. Electricity appeared to yield an inexhaustible array of services to humanity. The distinguished scientist Sir William Crookes could not explain exactly what it was—electricity might be a kind of matter, or energy or something different, a form of bound ether. But whatever it was, it presented exciting possibilities. Telegraphing messages without wires, posts, cables or any of the present appliances was no longer a matter of philosophical speculation but well within the realm of practical fulfilment. Indoor lighting could

be achieved by creating a powerful, rapidly alternating electrostatic field, in which a vacuum tube could be placed anywhere and lighted without being mechanically connected to anything. Electric currents might exercise a favourable influence on growing crops of grain or fruit; electricity might add vigour to plant life or arrest the activity of parasites. Electrified water afforded the possibility for destruction of disease germs, as was being discussed by public health officials in cities. And, as the human brain demonstrated the ability to transmit and receive electrical signals, yet-to-be discovered electrical rays 'may be instrumental in transmitting thought from one brain to another'.[59] Crookes helped set up the British Society for Psychical Research (while the more pragmatic American electrical pioneer Thomas Edison pioneered the electric chair).

The discovery of x-ray in 1895 caused an immediate sensation. William Röntgen was unprepared, when he published an x-ray photograph of his wife's hand in German scientific journal, for the public interest in 'the new photography'. The London *Standard* carried a short article with the announcement and, given the incredulity of what had been described, assured its readers that 'there was no joke'. The *Edinburgh Review* referred to this discovery of 'photography of the invisible' but explained how x-ray imaging would be better described as 'radiography' rather than 'photography'. Newspaper accounts aroused fears and excitement because of misconceptions about what x-rays could do. Many people imagined that x-ray photographs could be taken in the same way as photographs, and this opened the possibly for seeing through locked doors and under people's clothing. The surgical uses of the 'radiography' occurred to medical professionals and led to the opening of the first radiology laboratory within a hospital. At the same moment, it occurred to observers to engage the power of x-rays for surveillance:

> M. [Paul] Brouardel of Paris has induced it to display the contents of infernal machines; volumes innocent of aspect have in the same way been shown by M.M. Girard and Bordas to be crammed with explosives and projectiles; and thus, the peril of forcing open suspicious parcels can be evaded by merely exposing them to emissions from a vacuum-bulb.[60]

In London, Dr Gilbert Scott proposed the idea of using x-rays to sterilise degenerate criminals. Exposure of ovaries or testicles of inmates within prisons and asylums, he told the Medico-Legal Society, would save the need for a surgical procedures.[61]

X-rays were not the only applied science to be utilised in this way. The potential of technological breakthroughs in this period for enhanced identification and surveillance occurred to any number of people. In America, visitors to the Tribune building in New York in 1875 were the first to witness Edison's 'new talking machine' on exhibition. The first phonograph remained a crude device and many concluded it amounted to nothing more than a toy. By 1889, the possibilities of recording music and theatrical performance, as well as business correspondence, became more apparent, and a commentator in the *Atlantic Monthly* thought of a further use: evidence in court. A little wax cylinder covered with microscopic dots would prove better able to confirm a person's identity than a handwriting contained in a document, as sound recording captured the speaker's voice, inflection and accent. How could there be any doubt, even about a dead man's identity, when jurors could hear his voice? Novelist Henry James pointed to the potential of surveillance over telegraphic communication. In his story *Inside the Cage* (1898), a young woman works as a telegraphist (confined to her booth inside the post office at Cocker's grocery). She takes an interest in the coded messages exchanged between two customers, Lady Bradeen and Captain Everard, and when the telegraphist suggests an amended text, Lady Bradeen realises her love affair has been discovered. The telegraph offered instantaneous communication, but would not replace the letter, because a sealed packet offered secrecy. Commercial and social business depended on the secrecy of communications.[62]

During the 1880s, police departments in Europe and the Americas turned to the French model of 'scientific police'. In 1883, Alphonse Bertillon announced an exact method for determining the identity of an individual based on a system of body measurements. *Anthropometric signalment* gave the police a means of establishing the identity of professional criminals who had tried to escape across international borders. Bertillon founded his bureau of identification within the Prefecture de Police in Paris, and within a few years, the technique spread to police forces across the planet. Chicago and Buenos Aires established an anthropometric-based identification system in 1890, London in 1893 and New York in 1895. Bertillon pointed out that non-universal use of the metric system presented no obstacle to internationalism. The important point was to adhere to the same protocol of measurements, the figures obtained could be readily converted from metric to imperial lengths. To guarantee the system for this purpose, he asked the authorities responsible for identification bureaus in other countries not to introduce modifications as this would destroy the uniformity of the

system. All countries needed to agree on the choice of measurements to lay a proper and useful foundation for an international system.[63]

Frederic J. Mouat, who had been inspector-general of jails in India, shared Bertillon's faith in the importance of the system for defeating international criminals. Extension of the anthropometric method, as developed in France, to other countries, would aid in the detection and punishment of men of different nationalities. 'In these days of rapid and cheap locomotion', such men 'change their venue, and seek new fields in which they are unknown'. The introduction of the French method of criminal identification in England had reduced the number of criminals. He had met men in prison in India who told him they had been to prison in England before. They had left England for India to continue their crimes in a country where their antecedents remained hidden to the authorities. Crime had become concentrated in the hands of professionals who knew how to take advantage of the 'progress of our civilization' to avoid detection.[64] Mouat quoted the French minister in charge of prisons, Louis Herbette. In an address given to the International Penitentiary Congress at Rome in 1885, Herbette declared: 'crime is becoming in a certain way professional in the hands of certain individuals who know how to take advantage of the progress of our civilisation . . . it is natural that society should use all the discoveries of science to thwart their devices'. He offered the recent case of an offender arrested at Lyons under the name Buisson, who, owing to a description sent to Paris by telegram, was found to be the fugitive Bosconi. Police needed to make use of communication and other technology to thwart international criminals who freely change their identities and national residence.[65]

The dream of science triumphing over professional criminality met with a very different reality. Despite the popularity of the French model, police were slow to institutionalise technological marvels within their bureaucratic repertoire, and diplomatic hurdles proved a significant barrier to international police cooperation. Recovery of international fugitives required an advance in extradition law. It was one thing to identify criminals and another to deal with them once apprehended. The principles of extradition had been spelt out in the Extradition Act (1870) and separate treaties with foreign states. Inconsistency in the provisions of these agreements allowed the educated classes committing serious commercial crimes—forgers, embezzlers, fraudulent bankruptcy—to escape from the reach of British law. In 1886, for example, thieves attacked the international mail from London. A gang, mostly composed of British subjects, watched as registered letters from the United States to Russia

were loaded into a van at Ostend. The gang removed the letters on the journey from Ostend to Brussels, took the stolen letters to a railway station in Brussels, and returned to England. The theft had been planned with the knowledge that no British court could recognise a crime committed in Belgian territory. Many inconsistencies in the various treaties allowed crimes to remain unpunished owing to technical difficulties encountered in international relations. There was a call for a central, universal system of extradition. It could be established along the lines of an International Union in which all the parties agreed to mutually surrender fugitive criminals under conditions expressed in an International Convention enabling the Union. Extradition would follow the practie established by the International Postal Union.[66]

The formation of such a union did not take place, although there was a union of sorts within the British Empire. The Fugitive Offenders Act (1881) provided for the surrender of fugitives between the British Colonies and the United Kingdom. This act applied to all offences punishable by imprisonment at hard labour for a year or more and could be activated with documents (warrant, depositions) sent to the Home Office. It also allowed for an empire-wide search on the part of third countries, such as the United States, which had in 1842 concluded the first modern extradition agreement with Britain. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the American search for escaping criminals extended as far as the Mediterranean Sea. In 1907, police on the island of Malta were asked to look for J. Edward Boeck, wanted by the New York City Police on a charge of grand larceny. The circular contained a verbal description of age, height, hair colour, and so on. The description of Ross W. Douglass, formerly a clerk with the US Signal Corps in the Philippine Islands, was distributed in 1908. The announcement included information that '[a] photograph of Douglass with a more detailed description of him and a photograph and description of the woman with whom he practiced are with the Inspector On Duty, Main Station, Valletta'.[67]

At the same time, police forces around the world lacked the organisational capacity to share information. Police departments worked as separate organisations and there were few, if any, exchanges of criminal records between them. Underworld figures, making links along ethnic lines, pursued criminal activities in Brussels, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, London, Paris, New York City and Rio de Janeiro, and they could be fairly sure police in one city would not have exchanged case files with any other. International criminals, exploiting advances in communication and transport, had more information about underworld adversaries and allies than did city police forces. The police may have championed

the use of science on occasion, but they relied on a loose, informal network of professional spies, opportunistic informers and private detectives. These individuals tended to be selected for their ethnic identities and skills at blending unnoticed into underworld circles. It was a shady, secretive world of mistakes and betrayal, but police forces and governments preferred it to surrendering authority in the form of an international organisation or legal agreements.[68] Scotland Yard's Robert Anderson put it this way: 'In certain cases police work is done a la Sherlock Holmes. But the best preventive work, of which the public knows nothing, is accomplished by the methods that enabled the Philistines to solve Samson's riddle'.[69] Sherlock Holmes's creator, Conan Doyle, was among those who believed the law enforcement system of Great Britain to be so imperfect it was incapable of discerning the basic distinction between guilt and innocence. Science never fails to provide the correct result only when practiced by the private detective, not the public police.[70]

Finally, the police were reluctant to rely on new technology because they did not trust it. Alexander Innes Shand, a Scottish lawyer, explained in 1886 that telegraph cables stretched across the oceans, enabling messages to be sent ahead of fugitives. Where there was some certainty the thief had headed in a particular direction, the authorities could send a description to colonial or foreign police at the destination, and surprise the absconder on arrival. But even where the police knew the specific steamship on which the criminal was travelling, they seldom used the cable in this way. Awkward mistakes led to actions for false imprisonment, heavy damages and embarrassment. Rather than take a chance on electric communication, there was less room for mistake with the old strategy of securing a warrant and sending a detective in pursuit. 'The detective following at his [the fugitive's] heels has a far better time of it'.[71] Edward Henry, Assistant Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police, explained the problem of apprehending suspects by means of a description from foreign police. 'We had a wireless message giving very specific details and description of a person' he told the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1903, 'and of his luggage, saying that his luggage contained valuable bonds that he carried away. We searched his luggage and he proved to be an official of very high rank, and I had to go and make the most abject apology to him'. From Henry's perspective, it was too easy for the police to be manipulated by political forces in this way. Supplying information for action by foreign authorities was easily abused.[72]

The grim reality of law enforcement in the late nineteenth century can be seen in the career of Joseph Lis, who operated in the Atlantic

underworld of the late nineteenth century. He was an arsonist, thief, brothel-keeper, gangster, smuggler, white-slave trafficker, as well as a special agent and police informer. Born in an area along the border of Poland and Russia, he emigrated to London in the 1880s. Later travels took him to America, Argentina, Brazil, Belgium, Chile, France, West Germany, South Africa and Norway. While in New York and Pittsburgh, he acquired an American accent and American citizenship that allowed him to assume the identity of Joseph Silver, one of a number of aliases. In New York during the 1880s, he operated as a burglar-detective in concert with a corrupt police department. In Johannesburg during the 1890s, he presided over a trade union of 50 white-slave traffickers. He communicated using coded telegraphic and postal communication with counterparts in Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Great Britain, France, Poland, Russia and the United States. Police departments in New York, Johannesburg, London and elsewhere not only failed to recognise him but they hired him. He worked as a police special agent, informer and spy, earning money from the police payroll in addition to commercial vice.[73]

Crime and civilisation

Concerns about professional criminality and dreams of scientific policing reflected deeper anxieties about technological change. People greeted the inventions of the age with amazement and admiration but also a certain amount of anxiety. Many of those who gazed at scientific demonstrations and technological exhibitions found them incomprehensible, and they worried about the uses to which such power would be put. Public understanding celebrated scientific and technological achievement, while it simultaneously registered anxiety about where it would lead.[74] The end of the nineteenth century had brought devices for improving the lives of many but also inventions that could endanger and destroy on a widespread and sinister scale.

Social commentators expressed profound doubt that technological progress inevitably led to greater civility. Leo Tolstoy worried in 1909 that modern life had reduced humanity to a state of animal existence. Without a uniting spiritual principle, people catered to 'animal instinct which divides'. The nations of the Christian world had already reached the point at which those of the ancient world reached before their downfall. This could be seen in the fact that applications of science had failed to promote the common welfare but increased the misery of humanity. Guided by personal interests and struggles with one another,

Europeans chose to live more like primitive species. But while animals retained the same claws, fangs and the like through the centuries, people had moved from roads to railways, horses to steam, sailing boats to steamers. 'One might invent some new submarine, underground, aerial or super-aerial appliances for carrying people with greater rapidity from place to place; new devices for diffusing human speech and thought', Tolstoy sighed, 'but as the people carried from place to place do not wish and are unable to do anything but evil, so the world's words and thoughts they spread can only encourage people to do evil'.[75]

In 1905, a curious pamphlet appeared entitled *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*. The author, Elliot Mills, presented his text as if he was looking backward from a perspective of hundred years in the future. He identified eight signs of national decay, including the prevalence for city living over the country, the growth of refinement and luxury, the decline of literary and dramatic taste, the gradual decline in the physique and health of the English people and the inability of the British to defend their empire. The people preferred the decadent splendour of music halls and Turkish baths rather than healthful atmosphere of the countryside. Novels dealing with morphine and cigarette addiction had become more widely read than the works of John Bunyan and Sir Walter Scott. Cricket and football had become a matter of spectators watching professionals rather than a form of healthful exercise. In the last days, 'undisciplined sons' rioted in the slums; there existed among them no respect for parents, but an insistence on the right to do as they pleased. Unable to defend their empire, the people fell to foreign rivals. '. . . Till the very night of their doom, the English never realised that, through the increased speed of the modern steamship, the British channel had virtually become a moat, and *Britain had ceased to be an island*'.[76] Reginald Newton Weekes stated the threat in stark and arresting terms: 'The seeking after machinery as a saving of labour is nothing more than a phase of universal love of ease and luxury . . . The nation that cannot see the writing on the wall—and what nation ever did?—rushes on till its madness ends in suicide'.[77]

There was also fear about the purpose to which scientific achievements would be put. As early as 1915, an English chemist, Frederick Soddy, publicly warned about the danger of a future atomic war. Soddy received a Nobel Prize for his research into radioactivity, and he became widely known as a public interpreter of the new science enabled by Marie Curie's discovery. One pound of radioactive material could yield as much energy as 150 tonnes of coal, he explained to an audience in Aberdeen, and he asked them to consider what the present war would be

like if such explosive power was available. In his book, *The Interpretation of Radium* (1908), Soddy suggested the new science of radioactivity had tremendous teleological consequences. Science had reconstructed the story of human history as the continuous ascent of mankind away from the traditional view of the Fall in the Garden of Eden from a higher state. Once in possession of the power to 'transmute matter', human beings could reclaim not only this garden utopia on earth but also explore the outer realms of space and find, perhaps, an even better planet to inhabit. But, then again, a single mistake could reverse the positions of human as master and slave as servant. Curiously, Soddy suggested this 'mistake' had already happened in human history. The texts surviving from the ancient world suggested 'some forgotten race of men attained not only the knowledge we have recently won, but also the power not yet ours'.[78]

Crime presented a signpost, a signal that expanding frontiers of transportation, communication and commerce did not necessarily lead to advanced civilisation. William Douglas Morrison, a prison chaplain and prolific writer, insisted that the progress of civilisation would not eliminate crime. Many 'savage tribes' living under primitive conditions demonstrated more respect for person and property than the 'most civilised classes' of Europe and America. Civilisation had managed to shift the form in which crime was perpetrated, while in substance, it remained. He offered statistics to show the increase of crime in America and Germany, and compared England with Ireland, and questioned the belief in poverty as the leading cause of crime.[79] In an article, he took a step further. Morrison referred to statistics of the number of cases tried in English courts from 1860 to 1889 as evidence of an alarming increase in crime. During the 1860s, the yearly average was 466,687 cases tried, and during the 1880s, this figure had jumped to 701,060. This rise confirmed Rousseau's contention that high civilisation made people worse than better. Fluctuations in crime statistics over a period of a few years reflected variations in social conditions, the rise or decline of political or industrial action, the ebb and flow of commercial prosperity or the violent emotions aroused by a state of war. But a steady climb over three decades pointed to a more profound cause. 'The great centres of modern civilisation are large cities, but it is a melancholy fact that splendid capitals like London, Paris and Berlin contain in proportion to their population by far the largest number of criminals and the criminally disposed'. Statistics showing the number of police required to suppress criminal activity in London, compared to the countryside, also lent 'enormous support to the theory that where there is most civilisation there is also most crime'.[80]

The times called for a new science to comprehend the impact of modern life on crime. Whereas crime in primitive society had been rare, modern civilisation gave rise to specific forms of criminality and insanity. 'In our epoch of stress' Havelock Ellis wrote in 1910, 'and of much change and readjustment in the social surroundings and relations of individuals, ill-balanced natures become more frequent, and the anti-social and unlawful instincts are more often called out'. The professional criminals, the elite among criminal groups, devised skilful plots directed at property on a large scale. Professional criminals flourished in a rapidly changing civilisation society, such as the United States, where wild and unprincipled speculation ruled. What was worse, the attention to crime generated by mass circulation of news threatened to stir up criminality in an ever-wider population. The minute details of every horrible crime had become known to children in remote villages. This activated evil instincts in ill-balanced natures and portended an amplification of these evils. A community obsessed with crime news tended to reproduce crimes, beginning with children. The popular excitement over the Whitechapel murders by the 'ripper' served as one of any number of examples.[81]

Max Nordau explained the pessimism and anxiety about the pace of social change in his book, *Degeneration*, the international best-seller of the 1890s. 'In our times,' Nordau wrote, 'steam and electricity have turned the customs of life of every member of the civilised nations upside-down'. He pointed to dramatic differences in life earlier in the nineteenth century to contrast the difference with life at its end. Just a few decades ago, the most sophisticated Europeans travelled by horse and attempted to light tallow candles without matches. He related statistics to show the growth of railways in Europe, increase in postal traffic, proliferation of books and circulation of newspapers. The humblest villager confronted a geographical horizon wider than the prime minister of a small state a century ago. A cook sent and received more letters than a university professor did formerly, and a petty tradesman travelled more widely than did a prince. Such a level could not be sustained. All these activities overwhelmed the nervous system, wore down the body. New discoveries and the pace of progress had taken humanity by surprise. Organs had insufficient time to evolve.[82] This led to an increase in insanity, alcoholism and crime (Chapter 6).

But for others, the talk of professional criminals rather missed the point. It was not that advances in transportation, communication, industry and commerce produced a new category of professional criminals, but rather that crime was a bigger problem than had been

recognised, and the wrong people were made to suffer for it. 'In none of the books on crime and its causes which I possess is there any mention of a low standard of commercial morality as a great cause of offences against property', remarked a former chaplain at Clerkenwell Prison. It was a mistake to attempt to divide morality from religion and pointed to widespread practices of fraud and deceit in trading to illustrate the need for moral education.[83] More disturbing than the furtive rise of underworld figures was the trumpeted success of those who made astonishing fortunes in trade. 'Many of the large fortunes which have been amassed by mushroom financiers and promoters during the last few decades', remarked one observer in 1912, 'have been built upon foundations of trickery, deceit and fraud, and if we examine the means employed we find them little different from those of the racecourse thimble-rigger'.[84]

Conclusions

Internationalising technologies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave ordinary crime extraordinary dimensions. Advances in transportation, communication, and commercial affairs held the promise of unprecedented power, and the first to master them could achieve spectacular success. Would the dizzying pace of scientific and technological achievement present a force for good and enable a brighter future across the planet? Or, would it unloose into the world sinister forces of evil, empowered by unprecedented devices for exploiting a greater number of victims on a wider scale?

Police and prison authorities became aware that in a shrinking world, crime had become increasingly international. A category of cosmopolitan individuals took advantage of opportunities for travel and correspondence. These professionals operated in an international space, ahead of the public, hidden from the police and beyond the prosecution of authorities. They seized the new technologies of the era to perpetrate age-old crimes of theft and burglary by novel means of deception and deceit. Mass circulation of news amplified the emerging threat. A popular theme in newspapers throughout the nineteenth century, crime had become international news by the start of the twentieth century. Did the police and the press exaggerate the threat of professional criminality? Perhaps. For both the police and press, exaggerating the scale and scope of professional criminality afforded a means of inflating their own significance. But whether crime was increasing in particular ways is not clear. It is clear that both exaggerated the use of technology for crime fighting and that scientific policing failed to bring about an

international approach. Political, legal and other issues presented barriers to meaningful international police cooperation, as did adherence to familiar methods of detective work. In understanding why international police cooperation did not work, it is possible to understand why professional criminals would have been able to work as effectively as was claimed.

There was, overall, no panic about the impact of world-shrinking technologies on crime. There were a number of people during this period engaged in science, business or politics, who were prepared to bet on a brighter, fresher, faster, easier and better tomorrow. But there were also those, who held positions in police, prisons or criminal law, who spotted a specific weakness in the infrastructure of that tomorrow. Concern about changes in criminality reflected deeper anxieties about the pace and direction of civilisation. Advances in science and industry promised a bright future, a future without, or certainly with less, crime, disease and suffering. But it also contained the possibility for victimisation on a wider scale.

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