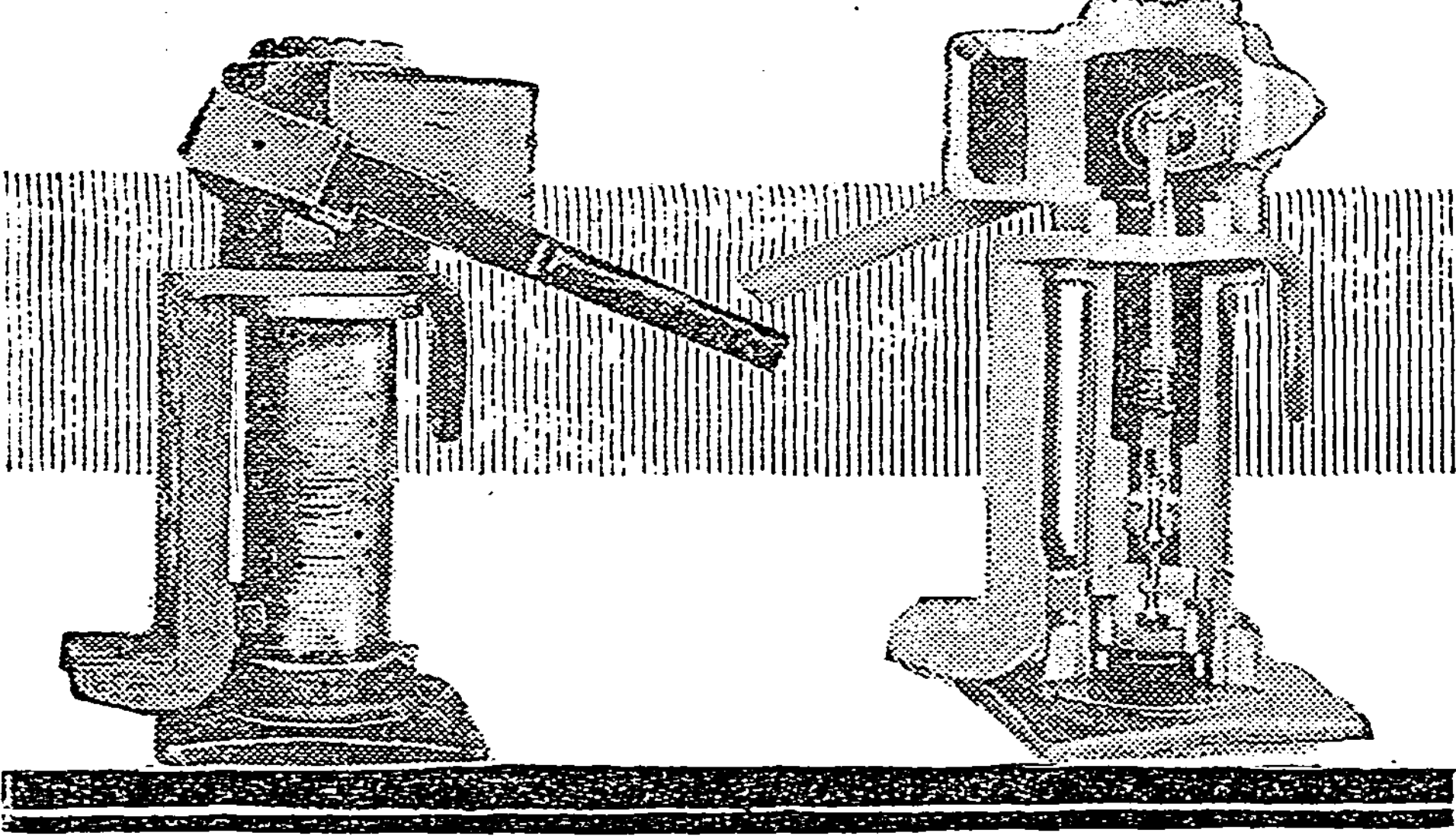


SECRET SERVICE METHODS IN NEW YORK'S POLICE SYSTEM

What Deputy Commissioner Flynn Has Done and Is Doing in Reorganizing the Detective Force Along Lines Followed by the U. S. Government.



Two Views of "Jacks" Used in Raiding.

SECRET Service—I thought it well to reorganize the secret service on a new plan, but did it only after much careful preparation. The staffs of so-called plain-clothes men, which were assigned to Captains and Inspectors, have been abolished, and the entire detective or secret service force put under one head. The result seems to be good, but we are still watching the change with interest.

Thus wrote Mayor Gaynor in his message to the Board of Aldermen last Tuesday. He could not go into details in the limits of such a document. His statements were a bare outline of one of the very big things being done in a city of big things.

Some of the details Mayor Gaynor might have added were these: In a little more than three months, "Secret Service Flynn"—officially, Second Deputy Commissioner William J. Flynn—head of the city's detective force, has revolutionized the methods of detecting crime in New York. He is perfecting a secret service that is really secret. He is doing it in spite of legal limitations that force all of his men into one physical mold. It is being done without precedents, except the Federal Secret Service. The results have been arrests of gamblers by hundreds and other offenders by scores, even while the reorganization was in progress.

"It's a tough job, but I'm going to give it a wrestle," remarked Flynn when he took the office last October. "I'll stake my reputation and a lot of hard work on making good. I have in mind an entirely new plan of work—new to the Police Department. Haven't got the details worked out yet."

A few days ago, with a long list of raids and arrests to his credit and his new system a "going concern," Mr. Flynn said to a Times reporter:

"The detectives and the lawbreakers here in New York are just about evenly matched. It is really a battle of wits between them. I could go along faster, though, if I had money to hire people outside of the Police Department for detective work."

There was no suggestion of triumph in his words or manner. He may not have realized the victory that lay in a New York detective and a crook being evenly matched, with the informers, graft and politics cut out. The changes Mayor Gaynor and Commissioner Flynn have made in detection of crime, indeed, seem more radical the deeper one goes into them. It is easy enough for critics to say: "Flynn has merely used Secret Service methods in a municipal department." He has done this—with variations. But except for general ideas, the differences are more numerous and important than the points of similarity.

The growth of New York's detective system was inevitable a thing as the increase in the city's population and area, the substitution of electric lights for tall dips, of subways for Broadway buses or complicated business systems for a one-man business.

The first of Mayor Gaynor's reforms in the Police Department was almost coincident with the death of ex-Superintendent of Police Thomas Byrnes last Spring. Byrnes was, in his day, a great policeman. He took an undisciplined force and developed it into a modern police system. His ideas on detecting crime largely reigned in force when Commissioner Flynn took the job. The late Inspector James McCafferty was one of Byrnes's men. Capt. John H. Russell was not head of the detective force long enough to make radical changes.

But the years that had passed since Chief Byrnes's retirement had brought utterly different conditions with them. The city's population increased from 3,377,212 in 1900 to 5,796,583 in 1910, or 25.7 per cent. In the ten years, the foreign population scattered from a restricted area on the east side to Harlem, the Bronx, Brownsville, Williamsburg, and Staten Island. Suburbs that were mostly open fields with a few farms were covered with crowded tenements. Within 227 square miles New York shelters more people to-day than there are in Bulgaria, Denmark, or Greece; her population outnumbered the white people in Australia.

Crime kept pace with this development. It was no longer a matter of individuals whom the detectives could list and learn to know, like those in Chief Byrnes's book on "Criminals of America." The perfection of devices to keep out thieves have reduced the number of spectacular crimes. Lawbreakers have become a matter of classes—the "Black Hand," tongs, negroes, "lighters," Slavs, Turks or Armenians, and of styles of kidnaping, robberies, mendicancy, counterfeiting and the like, each class following its groove with scores of offenders.

To catch the criminals among the city's millions it was found necessary to add to the old detective system departments that may be called experiences on the original idea. There was the Italian squad, with Petrosino as the fly wheel. The Homeless Bureau was established, to be abolished last July. Former Commissioner Bingham opened branch detective bureaus in each of the boroughs, with four in the outlying regions of Manhattan.

More important in the general scheme, was the plain-clothes man, horn of the calls for detectives quickly at points far from Headquarters at 399 Mulberry Street when transportation was slow, and flourishing as precinct go-betweens and secret agents, tempted to intrigue and graft. Police information was spread so widely that absolute secrecy became next to impossible. There were too many arrests by policemen seeking glory or in response to public clamor, too many men to tip off crooks and defeat the law. Gen. Bingham fought against the "system" in vain during his stormy administration. The detective bureau of New York was still suffering from growing pains. Ex-Commissioner William McAdoo, when he left Police Headquarters in 1906, said that to ask a Precinct Captain to close a gambling house with a uniform force would be as

foolish as to suggest that he stop the tide rising in the North River and that a policeman would no more be admitted to such resorts than he would be allowed to raid the White House.

What this lack of secrecy meant for the detective system as a whole, and the interchange of information, or worse, by gangsters, burglars, yeggs, mendicants, and other lawbreakers and the police and politicians have been made familiar by scores of newspaper reports. Mr. McAdoo's statements regarding the gambling houses in his book "Guarding a Great City," are typical of these and germane at the moment, in view of Mr. Flynn's recent raids. "A man would not as a rule," observed Mr. McAdoo, "open a poolroom in any Assembly District unless he had some sort of assurance of friendship and protection from the political leader, or knew, at least, that he was not an enemy, and in return the leader is allowed to name the employees, the number and their salaries which, on the average, is about \$5 per day per man. Sometimes a thriving poolroom will carry a payroll of ten of these men."

"The only hope a Police Captain would have of getting evidence would be through his plain-clothes men. These are not long in a precinct before they become thoroughly well known. The crooked element in a precinct keeps close tabs on the plain-clothes men; they know every member of the Captain's staff within an hour after they are assigned to the precinct. In some cases they have been known to photograph them when they appeared at court. Even if they are not known, the Captain cannot be sure of them. A plausible, clever-talking plain-clothes man will often fool an honest Captain and be doing business on his own account. Then, if there

are a number of them and any one of them is dishonest, he will simply be a spy on his fellows, and tip off their movements to those interested.

"If pooling in New York is unmomentous and the police connive by allowing it to run and flourish, and the Commissioner tells them they can employ no outside agents, but must find legal evidence to convict, then the situation is simply one of entire surrender. The law has hoisted the white flag, the army has disbanded, economy is triumphant, vice and crime reign."

Mayor Gaynor and Mr. Flynn, who for ten years has been at the head of the Federal Secret Service branch in New York, spent an hour one day last April at City Hall talking over the situation. The meeting caused a lot of mystery and gossip at the time. What happened is plain enough now. Big of body as Flynn is, one does not talk long with him before realizing that his ideas are big too. He shows it by the way he sweeps aside minor details and goes to the very heart of a subject. The Mayor also saw a man, with suggestions of a bulldog's tenacity and words fewer than those of the average New Yorker.

Flynn told the Mayor frankly what was wrong with the city's detectives. Mayor Gaynor announced these points during the following weeks. They follow closely the lines of Commissioner Flynn's reforms. Summarized, the defects were these:

The plain-clothes men attached to each precinct dissipated rather than concentrated the city's detective energies. Even if they did not have business relations with crooks, they could become sieves for spreading police secrets and thus defeat the law. So Mayor Gaynor abolished the plain-clothes men. Eighty of them went back to their uniforms in April. An order by Police Commissioner William F. Baker on June 21 sent the rest of them—209 in all—to patrol duty again. The official reason given was a desire to centralize the detective force as far as possible and separate that branch of the service from the police generally.

Then there was the question of methods. Mayor Gaynor was of the opinion that the ideas of the Federal Secret Service were superior to those of the city's detectives. Commissioner Flynn has put these ideas into operation at the Detective Bureau under two general headings:

First, Hide your evidence-getting methods. Second, Make the detection of crime not so much the result of one-man cleverness as a mosaic of information gained from many sources by specialists.

Mr. Flynn illustrated what he meant in his chat with THE TIMES reporter. There was the case, for instance, of John Davis, arrested recently in Revere, Mass., for counterfeiting.

"The Secret Service men found him first in this city in 1909," said Mr. Flynn. "He passed a counterfeit \$10 bill at a restaurant. We traced it to a tenement in the east side. Davis was known as Leiberman then. He got away before we could prove anything on him. "Next he turned up in England under the name of Davis, being arrested with several people suspected of passing counterfeit \$5 notes. Davis turned State's evidence, confessed to counterfeiting and testified against his associates on the promise of a pardon. When the time came to free him, a Scotland Yard man took him to Brussels, gave him \$1,500, or £300, and told him never to show his face in England again. Davis drifted to Australia, then finally came to America and set up a counterfeiting plant at Revere, where we caught him. "You had kept track of him as he traveled around the world?" asked the reporter.

"Oh, yes, many of them, such as office employees, postal clerks, steamship agents and the like. In the Secret Service, too, there are agents who are specialists in dealing with certain callings. There are, for instance, the 'lawyer,' the 'doctor,' and the 'engineer.' They can pass themselves off as doctors, lawyers or mechanics as the case requires."

In the Kendig-Jacobs case in Pennsylvania, on which Mr. Flynn also worked, fully forty men, women and children were employed in unearthing a counterfeiting conspiracy some years ago which led to the imprisonment of two lawyers of standing and two expert engravers, besides nine conspirators, in Lancaster, Penn. What Mr. Flynn said of this illustrates the newer detective methods.

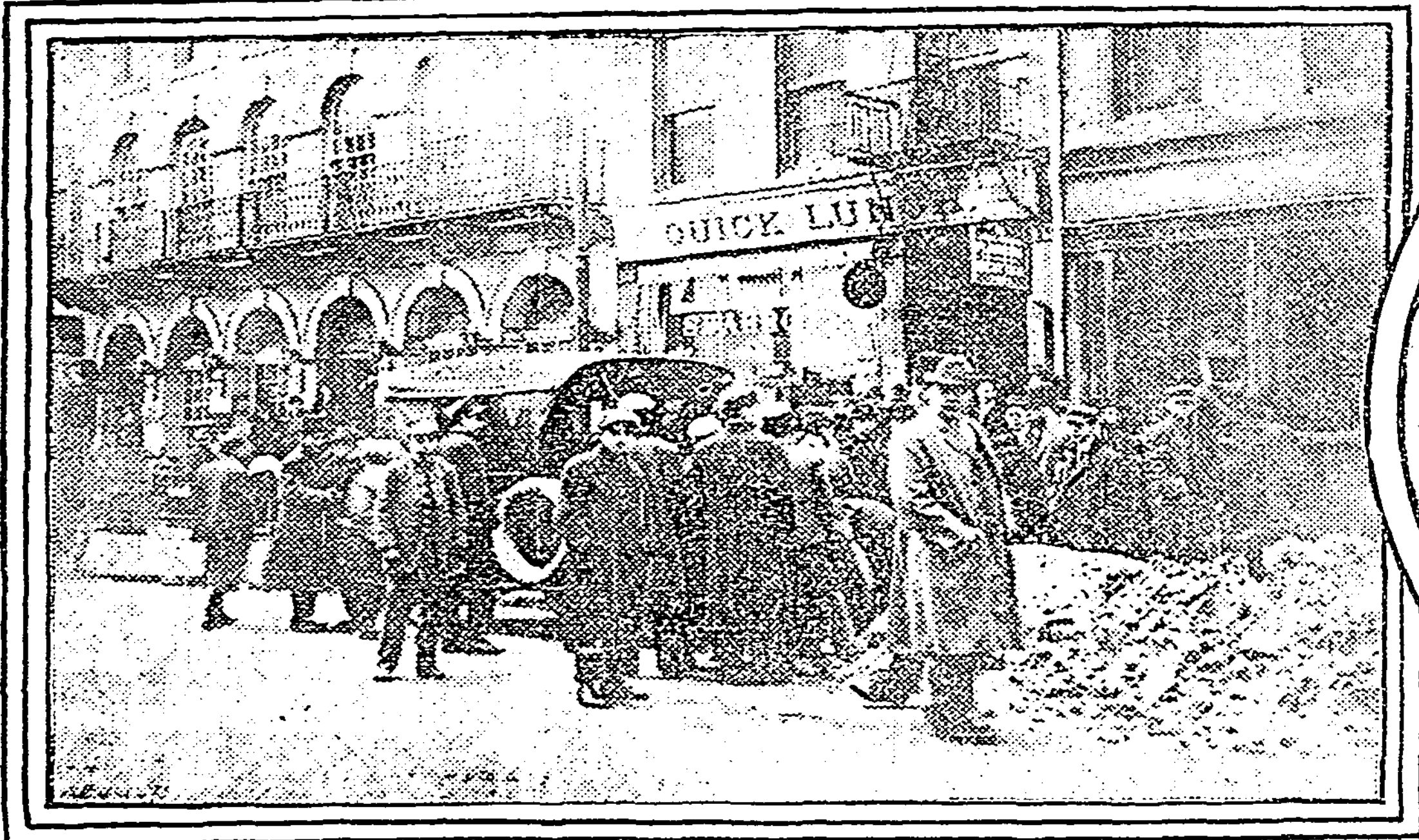
"We had several women and girls working for us," he explained. "I remember there were a Mrs. Flannigan and her daughters. They lived opposite the shop in Lancaster where Kendig and Jacobs made the counterfeit. We—the Secret



Deputy Police Commissioner William J. Flynn.



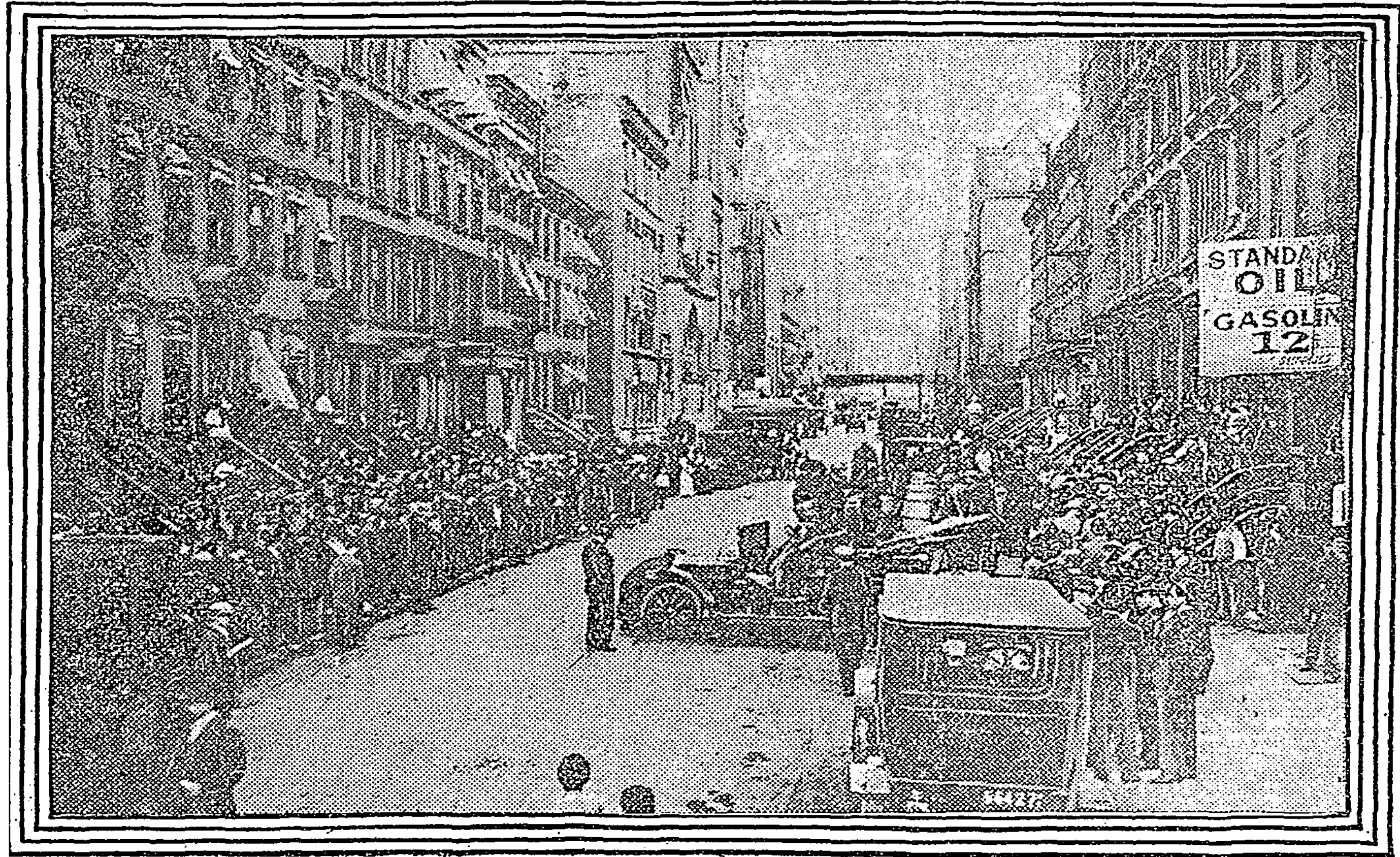
Gen. Bingham.



Raid in State Street.



Former Commissioner McAdoo.



Raid on West Forty-sixth Street.

the limitation of the law. Every city detective must qualify as a patrolman. This means that a candidate must be 5 feet 8 inches tall, weigh 145 pounds and pass certain physical tests. Such big, lusty fellows with the manner of a policeman—"flat foots" they are called—can be picked out a block away by a crook. He rises head and shoulders above the small-sized foreigner, his square jaws or ruddy face betrays him at once in a group of criminal degenerates.

Mayor Gaynor had this limitation in mind—and the necessity for secrecy for the detectives at work—when he urged last Spring the separation of the detective bureau from the uniformed force, the hiring of detectives who had talent for the work, without forcing them to qualify as patrolmen and the use of "singed cats"—under-sized men of stunted bodies who could live with or pass unnoticed among the criminal classes.

Despite these limitations, Commissioner Flynn developed his secret service methods in the municipal force. He employs many men on a case and is developing a corps of specialists. More important still, he has surrounded the work of his detectives with secrecy.

Mr. Flynn first rearranged his forces. When the plain-clothes men were abolished the precinct officers said that they would be handicapped in giving prompt response to alarms for criminals. As they put it, much valuable time would be lost between the time a murder or robbery occurred and the arrival of a man summoned from one of the detective bureaus. So Mr. Flynn made the precinct station houses the centers for his new squads. When ex-Commissioner Bingham left Police Headquarters there were 700 men divided into seven detective sub-divisions. Independent of the plain-clothes men attached to the precinct station houses. Besides the Central Bureau at Police Headquarters, there were the Italian squad, the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Sixth Divisions in Manhattan, and Bureaus for Brooklyn, the Bronx and Richmond.

Commissioner Flynn, under his new plan, put into effect on Nov. 17, placed detectives in each of the ninety-six precinct station houses, where they take the place of the plain-clothes men for emergency work. There are two Italian branches instead of one—in Manhattan and Brooklyn respectively—as well as Wall Street and Maiden Lane Branches. One lieutenant and from three to six detectives are assigned to each station. In the busiest sections of Manhattan there are two main divisions of ten precincts each under an acting Captain. The force has been reduced from 700 to approximately 550 men.

Then Mr. Flynn threw around his force a barrier of secrecy by keeping most of this force away from Police Headquarters. The reporter brought this out when he asked:

"Do the crooks use a spy system in following detectives and learning to know them by sight?"

"No," Mr. Flynn replied with the remark already noted, of the two classes—detectives and lawbreakers—being about equally matched in cleverness. "Why, when I came here," he continued, "a spy for a crook could stand outside the door of Headquarters at certain hours in the day and learn to know every detective in the city by sight and of his going and coming. The detective force from all over the city gathered at Headquarters to report and look over the prisoners. You can see how a crook or his spy could learn to know all by sight as they left. It was easy, too, to follow them."

"Now the larger part of the force don't come to Headquarters. One man from each precinct—either a Lieutenant or Sergeant—reports here. A spy may watch outside all day and never know what our detectives are doing elsewhere. The head of a precinct squad, too, comes here and returns to his office, and can have all sorts of excess on hand and the spy be none the wiser, even by following him."

The secret service method was developed, too, of having detectives work up cases without appearing publicly in them. While the head of the Federal agency here Mr. Flynn outlined this policy as follows: "I have detectives who never make arrests and who never appear as witnesses against our prisoners. For them to do either would, in many cases, destroy their usefulness to the Government. It is a most obvious thing that the larger the number of criminals who know a detective by sight or by his habits, the less is his ability to detect. Many of my best men do nothing but get evidence. They take all the time that is necessary to make the work sure. They live and work, perhaps, in a neighborhood, sometimes in the very house with the criminals and learn their ways so well that when the time comes they may give such accurate information to other detectives that the second group can choose the right time to jump in and get the criminals in the act. That gives them both evidence and prisoners, which is all we need."

To find specialists like the "Doctor" the "Lawyer" or the "Engineer" of the Federal Service also proved to be a matter of persistent effort and system in the regular force rather than depending on the aid of outsiders. The city's detectives come from all sorts of occupations. Some have been electricians, others plumbers, stenographers, broker's clerks, mechanics, tinmiths and the like. Commissioner Flynn has learned the previous occupation or specialty of each man and keeps the list handy. When a purely technical detail develops in a case the man on the

list with special knowledge is called in to answer the question.

There was a case in the Wall Street Bureau some time ago, for instance, in which it was necessary to send a detective into a broker's office. Glancing through his list, Mr. Flynn found that one of his men had been a broker's clerk. Coached regarding his duties, this detective took his place in the broker's office as if that was his business and always had been. A detective of the type made familiar by the story books—the "obvious sleuth"—would have been noted and suspected at once.

Another case concerned an express robbery in which a copper box had been used. The question was asked: "Did the thief make the box himself, or did he get it outside, with a possible accomplice?"

Among Flynn's men was found one who had been a worker in copper. He was sent for and told to examine the box. "Is the thief a metal worker?" the detective was asked.

"No," the man who made his knowledge known of working in copper," he replied. "You see this groove? And the way the lid is fixed? The man who used the tool for this groove didn't know his business. He has put the lid on upside down."

Finally, the city detective who has been a patrolman is valuable for special details in neighborhoods where he is known. He can make inquiries there which seem to have no bearing on police work, but which supply more needed detail. Or, reversing this process, a detective unknown to crooks and not frequenting Headquarters can be shifted to distant points to gain unnoted the evidence needed for raids on gambling houses or illegal resorts.

With the details of a case worked out in this way and summarized like the balance sheet of a big corporation, most of a detective's work is done.

Under the new plan, too, the city's Detective Bureau never sleeps. It is much more nowadays than Pinkerton's bromidiom. It is the practical application of the idea that the detective works faster and better when the thief is working most—at night.

The old way was for the police to make arrests of criminals "with the goods" or otherwise, between midnight and eight the next morning—25 per cent. of all the arrests in New York and Brooklyn are made within these hours—and herd them in the City Courts or at Police Headquarters the next morning, have the detectives look them over, then start out, usually hours later, to get evidence. The investigation at Headquarters was varied by the opera bouffe trimming of the detectives in masks so the prisoners would not know them.

Now, the beginning of the chase is not the next day but within an hour. The report to the detective and eight the next morning—25 per cent. of these cases will illustrate:

A patrolman was walking along a Brooklyn street at one o'clock one morning recently trying the shop doors. He found the entrance to a moving picture theatre open. The disarray inside made him suspicious. He telephoned to his precinct station house. The detective on duty there found the manager of the theatre, met him at the show house and learned that nine rolls of moving picture films worth \$2,000 had been stolen. The detective got a clear idea how large a robbery these rolls would make, found they would be too large and heavy for one or even two men to carry, and sent out a general alarm for three men with a bundle of specified dimensions. The robbery was discovered at 1 A. M. The general alarm was out an hour later. Three men carrying the films were arrested at 8 A. M.

Much the same thing happened when the police discovered that a downtown shop had been robbed of a lot of valuable ostrich plumes.

Meanwhile the legislation need to put the Detective Bureau on the same footing as that of the Federal Secret Service is being drafted. A few words in the revision of the City Charter, now before the Legislature, would serve the purpose. They would authorize the hiring of detectives who need not qualify as patrolmen and the spending of money for work by others than the staff detectives. The model for such a law, as indicated by Commissioner Flynn, is a special act of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, whereby men outside of the Police Department of Philadelphia can be hired as detectives. Pittsburg also gets the benefit of a similar plan.

Even statistics at hand New York would also seem to be behind other American cities in separating her detectives from the police force. A chart was recently prepared by Dr. Leonard Felix Fuld, examiner of the Municipal Civil Service Commission, and printed in his book, "Police Administration," showing the distribution of the detective forces in 75 American cities. The detectives were separated from the police force in 31, and joined to it in 22 cities, with 22 more municipalities not specified. The Central Office police squads were found in 23 cities, the precinct forces only in Detroit, and 51 municipalities not specified. In 32 cities the detective forces were permanent appointments, and were details in 20 cities, and appointments in 1, with 2 cities not specified.

The altered city charter is with the Drafting Committee of the Legislature at Albany for verification and checking up technical details. The committee is likely to hold it for about two weeks. In the meantime the announcement of revision for the Police Department rests with Mayor Gaynor.