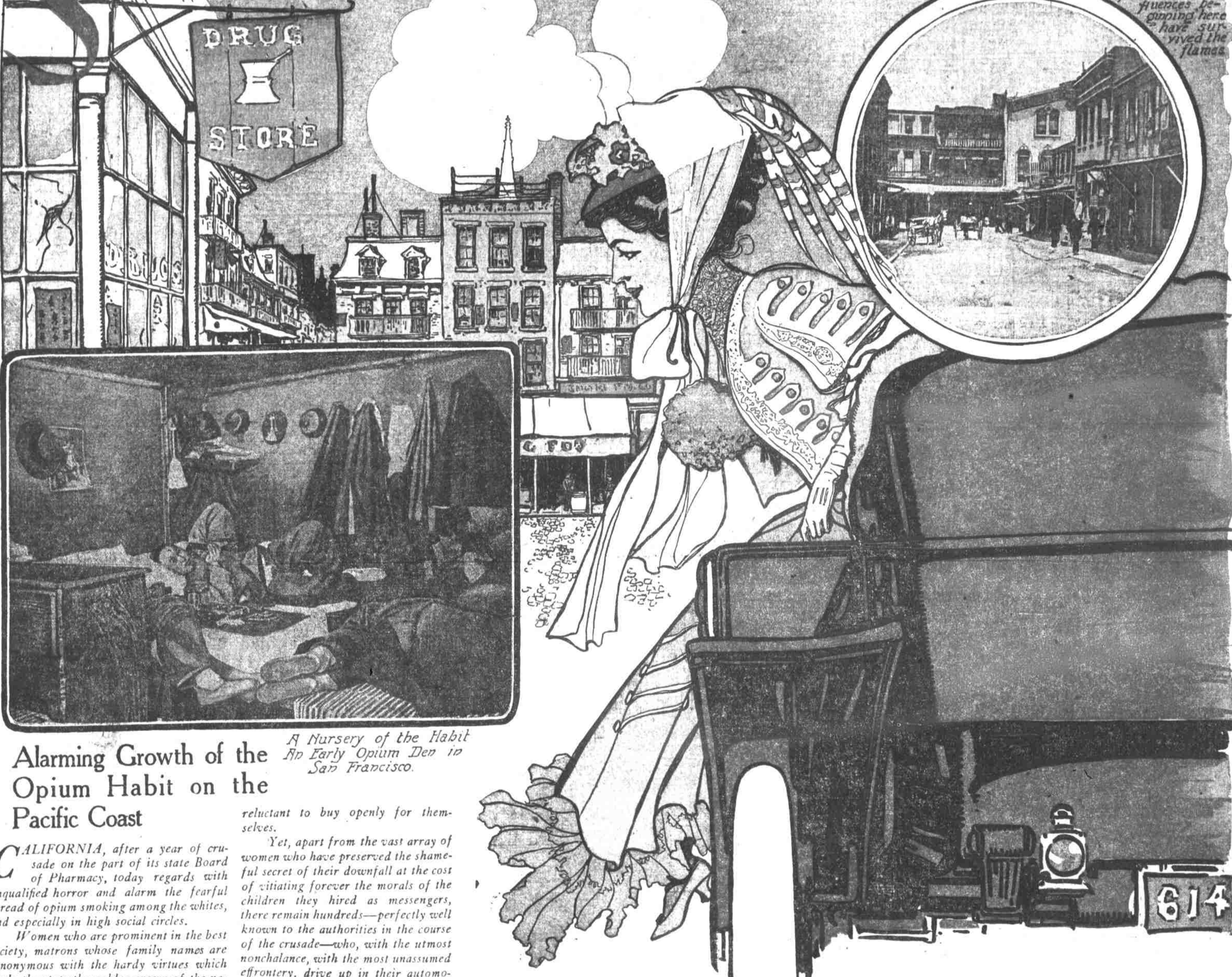


PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 9, 1908

"SMOKING UP" IN SOCIETY'S RANKS



Alarming Growth of the Opium Habit on the Pacific Coast

A Nursery of the Habit An Early Opium Den in San Francisco.

CALIFORNIA, after a year of crusade on the part of its state Board of Pharmacy, today regards with unqualified horror and alarm the fearful spread of opium smoking among the whites, and especially in high social circles.

Women who are prominent in the best society, matrons whose family names are synonymous with the hardy virtues which made the state the golden crown of the nation's western empire; young girls, delicate and sweet as the perfumed flowers they wear at their bosoms when presented in their innocence to the world at their debut—all these, and thousands more in every class of California society, and young men at the threshold of usefulness, have fallen victims to the enslaving habit of the poisonous drug.

Corrupt, and in their turn corrupting, these distinguished, loathsome failures of the white civilization, in its contact with the vice of the barbaric Orient, have set on the road to the penitentiary the feet of the very messenger boys whom they hired to procure for them the opium they were

reluctant to buy openly for themselves.

Yet, apart from the vast array of women who have preserved the shameful secret of their downfall at the cost of vitiating forever the morals of the children they hired as messengers, there remain hundreds—perfectly well known to the authorities in the course of the crusade—who, with the utmost nonchalance, with the most unassumed effrontery, drive up in their automobiles, alight at the favorite druggist's, and buy their "dope" as coolly as ignorant mothers used to buy paregoric in the days when it was fashionable to have children instead of pipe dreams.

Scores of pharmacists—the most prominent of San Francisco and other large cities—have been convicted of poisoning the people for the sake of the increased revenue which the illegitimate sale of opium brought. The trail led straight to the American drug store from the place of its unsavory origin, in vile and criminal Chinatown.

And the end of the crusade is still afar. The cure of the vice is not even within the range of hope.

IT WAS an early Sunday morning, still dark with the passing night, and chill with the earliest air of the dawn, when a mad babel of cries and yells and thudding blows turned the shanties of San Francisco's renaissance Chinatown into a grotesque fantasy of the turmoil of dissipation that had fallen quiet toward midnight, a few hours before.

Presently the doors gave way, and the shanties vomited the police and their captives—half naked white men, collapsing at every other step under the opium stupor, the opium sweat on their bare chests turning icy in the morning air; slant-eyed Chinamen, parchment-dried and malodorous with the stench of the stale, burped drug, but alert as ferrets surprised at a feast of blood; boys, white boys, partly dazed, half scared and half impudent—the vile, unutterable spew of the opium dens, disgusting to see, sickening to

smell, objects of horror to every normal sense with which humanity is endowed.

And in their midst was a girl, young, beautiful, fashionably attired, whose patent refinement and seeming innocence shocked even the varied experience of the policemen who arrested her.

Her eyes dulled with the poisonous fumes she had inhaled, her young, graceful figure swaying in the effort to walk unaided by the degrading touch of the law that was rescuing her from the deepest degradation possible for a woman, this girl, who had come from an interior town to enjoy a complete debauch, impossible for her in her own home, was led to the police station with the rest, registered with the rest, and only separated from them when the authorities, pitiful and hopeful, released her on the chance that home influences might save her, where imprisonment would doom the last remnants of her self-respect.

She was the extreme type, yet only one of hundreds of women of the Pacific slope who are now falling victims to the curse of opium.

For a year the coast has been subjected to a continual series of shocks over the discovery that the vice of the Orient, against which the unmitigated despotism of China has struggled in vain through the generations, has fastened itself upon the best of its population.

Women who are the mothers of today, girls who are to be the mothers of tomorrow, alike succumb to the baleful influences of the destructive drug.

Nor are they poor women. The spread of the opium habit has been most astounding, most alarming, among women of those classes whose wealth, intelligence and refinement should have most effectively safeguarded them from its dangers.

The case of the beautiful girl mentioned—her name is withheld for charity's sake—drawn by her mad infatuation from a quiet, respectable interior home to the stews of San Francisco's filthy Chinatown and plunged into companionship with the most abandoned and lascivious wretches the world knows, served merely to point the moral to which all California has been aroused.

Her arrest simply afforded the "horrible example" that so infamously crowns widespread indulgence in any vice, from alcohol to opium.

The police of San Francisco could quote scores of similar downfalls of girls quite as young, of women equally charming. But the rule has been that their moral degeneration was a thing very thoroughly accomplished long before their bloated or emaciated bodies sank to the depths of the Chinatown opium den.

Chinatown is usually the ultimate inferno of the female "dope fiend," reached after she has been abandoned by even the most reckless and least discriminating of white admirers,

when she is so utterly lost to even her pride of race that she will consent to become the familiar associate of the Chinese, yet, oftentimes, disdained even by those carrion craving sensualists.

The cocaine and opium habits appear to go hand in hand toward the enervation of communities, cocaine claiming more victims in the East, opium appearing the master vice in the West.

In San Francisco, particularly, the use of opium in the form imported by the thousands constituting the more degraded element of the Chinese colony, as a frankly inhaled smoke from the opium pipe, has set upon the white race the stamp of quick corruption by the inferior yellows it has so long tolerated and despised.

A strange, almost unique spectacle in sociology has been presented in San Francisco during the prime of the generation past and the maturity of the generation present.

Set in the midst of the most perfect environment nature has ever afforded mankind since humanity knew itself for a species distinct and apart, inspired to physical perfection by the most favoring climate that has ever impelled man toward perfect development, the children of the most hardy and daring pioneers ever sent forth by a hardy nation of pioneers have grown and thrived with a luxuriance of strength which remains the wonder of all travelers.

To them, and to their prodigal wealth of natural resources, beside which the gold of California has proved to be the trivial hoard of some barbarian chief as compared with the sands of Pactolus or the treasures of the Indies, came the lean, starved, vulture-taloned yellow coolies of China, stringy-muscled with ages of hunger, desperate with the need for a bare living, and cursed with the ineradicable

curse of the opium.

It was the curse that had been thrust upon their race by Great Britain, the nation that never ceased to enslave human bodies so long as her arms could rivet the chains of their slavery, and never refrained from cankering human souls so long as another canker of their ruin could put another shilling in her pocket.

The curse, originating in the British Parliament, foisted by British bayonets upon the helpless, ignorant, readily corrupted East, came with the coolies to San Francisco, a trail of poisonous blight that lay more than 21,000 miles around the habitable globe—as far, indeed, as the House of Parliament, in London.

And San Francisco—at first welcoming because it needed labor, then tolerant because the strangers had the cunning to dissemble their strength, then riotous because the Sand Lots felt that strength in their very stomachs, and declared the Chinese must go, and finally vain of the barbaric colony that flaunted its incongruities amid the bald prose of an Anglo-Saxon community—accorded to the silent, bribe-giving, secret, alien oligarchy of its Chinatown the rights and privileges of some impregnable city.

Frankly, San Francisco became proud of its Chinatown, as Chicago was proud of its shanties, as New York was proud of its Tenderloin, as Africa might be proud of its jungles.

In spite of herself, she had nourished and fostered another wonder of the world, and all the world dwelt, in imagination, upon the mysterious romance of San Francisco's Chinatown, even as, in imagination, it dwelt upon the cruel sports of the bull fight in Spain and upon the marvels of the shops in Lahore.

Of the strange and wondrous romance that dwelt hidden there in Chinatown, the vicious

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