

# IN AN OPIUM TRAP.

Two Young Women Who Say They Were Victims of Their Own Curiosity.

AS A RESULT THEY ARE SOJOURNING ON BLACKWELL'S ISLAND.

Two young women looked out last night through workhouse bars over the troubled waters of Hell Gate.

They were part and parcel of a police capture at a recent raid on an opium den. They claim that they are not opium smokers, but that all their misfortunes are due to an indulgence in a somewhat excessive feminine curiosity.

The blotter at the Elizabeth street station the other morning bore the names of Carrie Nelson and Lily Harris, with a charge of smoking opium and being found in an opium resort at No. 17 Deyers street. At 1 o'clock that day they were led to the Tombs. Tuesday evening they were tried and sentenced by Justice White. Yesterday they drank the bitterness of the cup which chance or curiosity or evil-mindedness had

put to their lips.

The story of their capture in the notorious opium trap on Deyers street, and of the tangled web of love and intrigue in which their young feet had been gradually enmeshed, is strange and full of warning.

Carrie Nelson, who said she lived at No. 118 Eldridge street, is a slender, blue-eyed and fair-skinned girl, alert of speech and action, as are most young women, who, finding themselves thrown on their own resources in New York, manage to make their way fairly well.

"I have no ever time in the world," said she, and she talked like a young woman of considerable education as she sat near the threshold of her cell in the Tombs. "Nor has my lot been harder than that of many another. But, oh, the shame to which I

have been subjected since an innocent walk I took last Sunday night out of idle curiosity! Shame! Yes, the inebriate conversation of the people among whom I have been thrown has made me shudder. And that night in the police station in Elizabeth street—can I ever forget what I was compelled to see and hear there!

"A girl who has earned her own living in New York for a half-dozen years is not a lily or a sensitive plant. She is compelled to learn a good deal that had been better left unlearned about men and women and life. But suppose I had been some unsuspecting, uninitiated girl, who accidentally found herself in the way of a raid on an opium den! What tortures, what mental and moral infamy would I not now be the innocent victim of! Why is it that, when the law says every accused person shall be innocent until proved guilty, the victims of accusations are compelled to endure such degradation before trial?

"I learned to act type when I was sixteen." The girl sighed as if it seemed so very, very long ago. Such an experience as hers from Friday up to last night must leave the scars of years.

"I worked at the cash and then in a publishing office, and made good wages until about three years ago. I had read so much in the newspapers about opium smoking, and had seen so many commentators who said they had 'hit the pipe just for fun,' that I determined, if I ever had an opportunity of satisfying my curiosity in a quiet way, I would improve it. The opportunity came last Sunday evening. My curiosity got the better of me.



THE OPIUM DEN AT 17 DEYERS STREET, WHERE FEMININE CURIOSITY LED CARRIE NELSON AND LILY HARRIS.

"A runner man in whom I am interested called on me Sunday evening. In the course of conversation he said: 'Carrie, the Chinaman who washes for me says that a Chinese friend of his, at No. 17 Deyers street, will show us how opium is smoked any evening if we go there about 10.' So we started just before 10.

"The 'joint,' as I believe such places are called, is a three-story high-sloped house. We rang a bell and were shown up one flight of steps to a small, dingy room opening at our left.

"The air was thick with a pungent smoke when we entered, and an old stove, nearly red hot, kept the temperature up to an almost insufferable point. But after we had been there a moment and had taken off our wraps we didn't seem to mind it much. There were two rough bunks built against the wall at the further end of the apartment, about four feet from the floor. Several Chinamen were there, smoking silently. As the proprietor—so he seemed to be—came towards us I noticed a young girl seated on a chair near the stove. She was not smoking and was saying nothing. Afterwards I found out her name was Lily Harris, and she and I have since endured the horrors I shudder to tell you since Sunday night."

"As my companion and I climbed the stairs I thought I heard a stealthy footfall behind us. I turned and looked down the stairway hallway, but could see no one. My friend gave the Chinaman a dollar to burn a pipe of opium for me, and while the seasoned old Celestial was getting his 'dope,' as he called it, ready my friend went downstairs and out of the house to buy a package of cigarettes. That was a lucky trip for him.

"Hardly had I heard the front door close behind him when two men in ordinary dress jumped into the room, slammed the door

behind them, and one of them, evidently the assistant in the raid, approached where I sat, said with a sneer: 'An' wet 'ar you got yer snuffery up yer face for, missy?' I had put my handkerchief up when I saw them come in, to avoid being recognized.

"I don't know you," I replied.

"Then the other man, who seemed to be in authority, said: 'I'm an officer and you will have to come along with me.' 'I put on my hat and gloves, thanking heaven my friend hadn't come back yet. A detective took hold of my arm and led me downstairs. The girl who sat in the chair was seized in a similar way by the other one of the two men who had jumped so suddenly into the room. A half-dozen police officers in uniform rushed up the steps and dragged the Chinamen, of whom it seems there were five in the bunks, to the Elizabeth street station. The detectives walked ahead with us two poor girls to the station-house.

"There was no resistance by anybody to the officers. Lily and I were too dazed to say anything; I was overcome by shame. There were several hundred people about the door when we came down. The 'raid' had evidently been expected. It was with difficulty we were forced through the crowd, each Chinaman being hustled along by a policeman.

"Don't ask me what we saw and heard during that fearful night at the Elizabeth street station-house. And by law we were then, as we now are in fact, innocent of any offense!

"The thing that seemed to be most against us was our protestations of innocence, the very thing which should have prevailed in our favor. I had asked on the way to the station-house that I might not be subjected to the disgrace of being led through the streets by the side of a police officer. But there was no help for it. We had to endure the shame and disgrace.

Such was the result of an idle curiosity that led me for that time only to the opium den. Evidently, from the force and entire propriety of the language she used, Carrie Nelson is a woman of fairly good education and sound sense. More than once she was carried away by the bitterness and indignation of her feelings.

"Monday morning, as we were marched two by two to the Tombs, the detective, Carrie Nelson went on, 'said we would be put away for four or five days on the island, where we would get no more visitors, as if I would ever touch it again after that terrible experience.'

"When we were arraigned in the Tombs here the Chinamen had engaged a lawyer, who offered to bail us all out. But would you believe it, no surety would be received for us, because, as I was told, it was necessary to hold us and 'make out a case' against the house where we had been found."

Lily Harris, who gave her address as 4 Eldridge street, had sat by and heard the sad story of her companion in misery. "I have never smoked opium, and I went to No. 17 Deyers street, not to smoke but simply out of curiosity and to meet a friend. Wrong? Of course it was, but it wasn't smoking opium for which I am to be punished. It was simply my ill luck to be in that room when the raid was made. I had been there about a half hour, but had not smoked, when the arrests were made. The man I was waiting for didn't come and so escaped arrest. Why did I not realize his visits at my home? I could not bear to have him come where my parents were."

Such are the stories of these two young women. They are given here substantially in their own words. If they tell the truth their case is a remarkable manifestation even of feminine curiosity—a curiosity that led them into an opium den and finally lands them on Blackwell's Island.