

CHAPTER II

THE WHITE-SLAVE TRAFFIC AND THE DRUG TRAFFIC

THE personal rôle of the Préfet de Police is one of selection and control rather than of actual command. It consists chiefly in a discriminating choice of those men whose sagacity, energy, and experience show them as likely to become the best auxiliaries of the magistrates ; and of obtaining each year the budget credits of which the Police have need in order to overcome the difficulties caused by the continual increase of the population of Paris and of the cosmopolitan elements which it incorporates.

However, two special sections presenting especially complex problems are under his direct control. I refer to the services which are concerned with the suppression of the White-Slave traffic, and of the Drug traffic.

At first sight it would seem that the study of these two questions is outside the scope of this book. But as a matter of fact the ignoble individuals who make a profession of kidnapping and exporting women to foreign countries, there to exploit them by obliging them by force or threats to become prostitutes, are criminals of a particularly dangerous type, perfectly capable of murder in order to suppress any one of their victims whose revolt makes them fear a scandal, or the man in whom the unhappy woman has confided and who might denounce them.

I might even say that in the course of Police investigation, when characteristic cases of kidnapping have resulted in arrests, disappearances which are more than suspicious sometimes come to our knowledge. Unhappily, however, the exact cause of these disappearances cannot be established with enough precision to justify a formal accusation of murder. These obscene affairs often take place in distant countries where the Police have available only very rudimentary means of investigation. But they are nevertheless pervaded by what one may call an aroma of crime.

As regards the drug traffic, I will permit myself to say that during the last few years drugs have caused so many fatalities that the people who make a commerce of them can take their place in a work of criminology amongst murderers, even though the Law does not permit of their punishment as such.

THE WHITE-SLAVE TRAFFIC

I hasten to state that, in proportion to the number of cases of this kind which really occur, the topic of the white-slave traffic occupies far too much space in certain newspapers.

The average Frenchwoman is too intelligent and well-educated to allow herself to be easily duped by the marvellous promises of remunerative employment which form the usual bait of the white-slave merchant. At the bottom of most of the cases that a section of the Press delights in relating (much dramatized and amplified), because they thus supply a demand of their readers, there are usually to be found the pitiful inventions of a family which wishes to account to the neighbours for the flight of a profligate child who has run away willingly and knowing exactly what she was doing.

It is none the less true that I have knowledge of several cases in which young girls—minors—were genuinely deceived as to the fate which awaited them, were taken abroad by means of false passports, were sold in the literal sense of the term, money down, by their kidnapper, and were afterwards forced by the buyer to prostitute themselves for his profit.

There was the notorious case of the Parisian Jewess, aged 18, whom I will call Rachel, a pretty girl, not unduly frivolous, who lived at home with her mother. Sometimes, however, she would venture secretly to go to a *bal musette* in Montmartre. It was there that, towards the end of 1923, she met a certain M. L—, a man of elegant manners, very well dressed and a clever talker. The possession of a luxurious automobile added to his prestige. He informed her that he was a business man and on the point of leaving for America on business. Rachel soon became his mistress and agreed to accompany him, it being understood that he would marry her on their return.

As she was under age and so could not obtain a passport without her mother's consent, he persuaded her to say nothing to the latter and to pass herself off as another woman whose papers he possessed. This was done, and shortly afterwards Rachel joined her lover at Mendoza in the Argentine. He had preceded her by several days, having taken the precaution of not travelling with her.

L— at once introduced his " fiancée " to " friends—a married couple."

In reality the woman was a *fille soumise* (that is to say that she was inscribed in Paris as a prostitute) and she was exercising her profession in a brothel of the town. The man—her lover, a certain F—, was a deserter from the French Army. The couple had previously received instructions to initiate Rachel into a life of gallantry, and to persuade her to enter a brothel in order to make money for her lover.

The girl refused, protested, wept; then, threatened and

beaten, knowing nobody to whom she could appeal for help and still very much in love with her seducer, who told her that he was in monetary difficulties and greatly in need of her assistance, she resigned herself.

She was shut up in the same house as F——'s mistress, who kept an eye on her, and L—— came punctually every day to fetch her earnings.

Then L—— went to France on a visit, but charged his friend F—— to collect daily every penny earned by the victim.

When he came back to Mendoza Rachel, exasperated and entirely out of love with him, informed him that she did not intend to prostitute herself any longer and that she meant to leave the brothel. He calmed her, promising that he would marry her as soon as he returned from a short journey which he proposed to take. In reality he judged that the time had come when to disappear would be the wisest course open to him.

But before leaving he suggested that F—— should buy her. The bargain was struck. He departed, and Rachel found herself obliged to continue to "work" under the superintendence of F——'s mistress for the benefit of their common *souteneur*.

Happily for her, the latter had the idea of conducting his two mistresses to Paris, where the Olympic games were to take place. They would be certain, he thought, to provide a numerous and wealthy clientèle of foreigners.

He was confident that Rachel was too afraid of him to dare denounce him to the Police. She did so, however, immediately on her arrival. Two days afterwards F—— and his accomplice were arrested, and soon L—— himself, his address having been found in F——'s possession. The trio were conducted to the prison of the Santé.

A voluminous correspondence found in their baggage proved that they formed part of an international gang of traffickers in women.

L—— was condemned to three years' imprisonment, five years' expulsion from France, ten years' loss of civil rights, and heavy damages to be paid to Rachel. F——, who had fallen ill in prison, died before the trial. The woman was acquitted as having acted under the constraint of her lover.

In another affair of the same sort the individual pretended to be a Parisian journalist charged by his Government with a mission to Paris.

He had placed advertisements for young lady companions in several newspapers. He could thus choose among the idle or

unemployed women in search of work those whose physique was most suited to his designs.

A young girl, a minor, guessed his intentions and denounced him. He had had the audacity to present himself at her parents' house, and he proposed successively to falsify her birth certificate, to lend her another woman's papers, and to smuggle her secretly over the Italian frontier. Unhappily she had been imprudent enough to warn him that she meant to denounce him, and when the detectives of the Prefecture went to arrest him he had already fled.

A search among his papers revealed (as in the case of L—— and F——) proofs of the existence of an international association living on the export of women.

A case very characteristic of the white-slave traffic was brought to light in the complaint made by a young woman, twenty years of age, returned from Colombia.

She had been a little work-girl living honestly on her earnings, and had left her father's house four years previously because she could not get on with her stepmother. One evening, for the first time in her life, she yielded to the temptation of going to a dance-hall with a young Alsatian girl—a friend of hers—eighteen years of age. The two met three young men who offered to take them to Spain and find them situations in a large business house, where they would be much better paid than in France. The next morning they took the train with their companions of the night before and a third young girl whom they did not know. In Bordeaux a fourth girl joined them escorted by two other young men and the party continued the journey to Hendaye. Next morning, after a night passed in an obscure hotel where the servants could speak only Spanish, two of the young men (two others had disappeared) took the four women by motor-boat to San Sebastian and then by train to Santander.

Up to this time all four imagined that they would be employed in the lingerie business and very well paid. At Santander their companions made them understand that their work would be in a South American brothel, to which they would be taken in a steamer leaving the following week. Meanwhile they were to serve their apprenticeship in a local brothel. The keeper of the place came to fetch them at the station and there, closely guarded and forbidden to go out, they were forced to submit to all the desires of their gaolers, who pretended to initiate them into all the special vices which they would have to satisfy in South America.

One evening, however, two of them managed to escape, and they wandered about the streets not knowing which way to turn. As luck would have it, the first passer-by who could speak French was a friend of their seducers. He said nothing, but took them straight back to the house from which they had just escaped.

Some days afterwards they were on an English passenger vessel. They all had false passports procured by the keeper of the brothel. The day before the ship arrived at Havana the young girl who eventually told her story to the Police was separated from her companions and sold to a passenger who knew her ravishers. Her buyer took her into his cabin and kept her shut up till the boat arrived in port.

She stayed with this man while the ship continued its voyage, but before leaving it at Colon he gave her an envelope with the name and address of a local resident who was to come to meet her and pretend that she was a member of his family. In order to avoid all risk the man himself kept at a distance, after having threatened to kill her if she tried to escape or if she gave him away. She promised all he asked, but as soon as she found herself in the presence of the authorities of the port—Police—she denounced him. He succeeded in escaping, but one of the other men was arrested some days later, brought before the tribunal at Colon, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. The immigration authorities took charge of the girl. She fell very ill and was only able to return to France several months later. On the boat going back she met a keeper of brothels in Colon and Panama who tried to persuade her to return with him. She pointed out the man to the police-superintendent of the port of Saint-Nazaire who at once arrested him.

It was discovered that the other three girls had been landed in Havana by the traffickers.

Does it ever happen that women are *imported* from abroad to France and forced to prostitution in order to earn money for French or foreign *souteneurs*?

Doctor Bizard, chief medical attendant of Saint Lazare, the women's prison, is convinced of this and his position gives unique value to his opinion.

But prostitution is carried on in a way which makes the rôle of the Police more and more difficult.

In the *maison de tolérance* (the brothel) only girls who are inscribed on the Police records are supposed to be admitted. They live in the house but are free to go out one day every week. It is against the law to take a foreign girl on to the "staff" of one

of these houses, but in spite of this they do sometimes receive girls from abroad who are not inscribed.

The brothel also is being more and more rivalled by the *maison de rendezvous*, which is often an ordinary flat frequented not only by regular professionals but by numerous clandestine prostitutes who resort there to earn extra money, and who have other professions. They belong to the world of the music-hall, of the theatre, of commerce, sometimes (it is well known), to the world of Society. Many of these women are married and it is impossible—or at any rate extremely difficult—to exercise any control over them or to impose on them anything more than an occasional very discreet visit to a doctor. Even this is not always possible.

THE DRUG TRAFFIC

The Laws of 12th July 1916, and 13th July 1922, operate against both the traffic in and the use of a series of toxic substances much in demand among those persons of both sexes who are in quest of an artificial paradise. Of these substances the best known are *opium*, *morphine*, diacetyl-morphine or *heroin*, and—lastly and chiefly—*cocaine*. An exception is made for such of these drugs as are required for medical purposes.

The laws provide for periods of imprisonment of from three months to two years, together with fines of from one thousand to one hundred thousand francs, to be inflicted on such persons as have sold, hoarded, or irregularly employed these substances. These laws also empower the courts to sentence offenders to expulsion from France for not less than five, nor more than ten, years.

In practice the Tribunal of the Seine makes a distinction between the drug trafficker and the drug addict. Traffickers are generally sentenced to from one year to eighteen months' imprisonment and five years' expulsion from France. The drug addict is sentenced to a fine, or to imprisonment "*avec sursis*," that is to say, the accused person does not go to gaol at all. It is only after several such sentences that the judge condemns the drug addict to imprisonment "*sans sursis*" and then only to a period of six months at most.

This difference of treatment is justified by the fact that the Court is dealing in the one case with men trafficking in degradation and death, and in the other with sick people who must be cured. To hasten this cure the ingenious method of preventive prison is employed. Provisional liberty, always refused to traffickers, is only rarely accorded to addicts. As a general rule

the latter are sent to prison while awaiting trial, and this severe treatment generally hastens their cure. It is not at all uncommon to find that, after a month or six weeks' detention, they appear before the Court completely cured, whilst this is never the case when they are left at liberty. The drug addict is an individual whose will power is annihilated and he is incapable of following a cure seriously if he is not forced to do so.

The task of the Police is here very complex. Their methods must vary according to the nature and source of the drug, according to the various tricks employed by the men, sometimes dangerous, who trade in it, according to the social sphere, varied in the extreme, in which they find their clientèle.

Opium oozes in drops from incisions made in the seed pods of various species of poppies, especially the white poppy. It thickens rapidly when exposed to the air. The raw opium of commerce is a reddish tablet, bitter and irritating to the taste. It comes chiefly from Smyrna, Constantinople, Egypt, and Persia. In this form the drug maniac eats it—it is only smokable after a certain amount of preparation.

In France, opium is rarely eaten, it is smoked. The smokers are mostly colonials, sailors, and the people whom they have managed to convert—snobs, artists, demi-mondaines. It is a drug for the rich and demands luxurious surroundings.

The smoking-room is usually furnished in Indian style with a Buddha, hangings of thick silk, one or several low divans, a multitude of embroidered cushions, and lights softly veiled. The utensils of smoking—the lamp, the pipe, the pipe-cleaner, the poker, the box or pot for containing the opium—are of valuable materials and are often works of art. In some ports, notably at Toulon, there are opium dens which to all intents and purposes are open to the public. In Paris, on the contrary, opium is only smoked among initiates and often the smoker is solitary.

The drug comes from Marseilles or from London. The average price of extract of opium ready for the pipe was, in 1922, from 220 francs the kilogramme on arrival in France. It was re-sold at prices varying between 3000 and 4500 francs. The price has, of course, greatly increased since that time.

The difficulty here is to discover the places where the opium fiends meet to smoke, and to catch them red-handed; at any rate, to arrive in time to find proofs of the existence of an opium den.

Opium-parties start late, near midnight, and end at three or

four o'clock in the morning. The smoker who acts as host generally lives in a big flat and finds it easy to take precautions. At the first alarm everything that may be compromising can be quickly hidden.

Here are some of the hiding-places discovered by my detectives in their search of ultra-elegant opium dens: an admirably camouflaged box covered with soot which replaced a brick in the fireplace, an actual brick, but one that was hollow and easily removed from the wall, a shell case, a framed picture—one among several—which hid the door of a cupboard in which was found a kilogramme of raw opium, the pot for cooking it, dross, needle, pipes, etc.

Morphia is an extract of inodorous opium. It is of bitter flavour and very poisonous, and it is used in the form of salts, especially of chlorhydrate, or in a solution for hypodermic injections.

Like its substitute heroin (diacetyl-morphine) this substance comes ready prepared from the East, where the poppy is cultivated for the exportation of opium. But it sometimes happens that it is manufactured in neighbouring countries whence its introduction into France is easier, or even in France itself. It was in this manner that, towards the end of 1925, the special superintendent of Mulhouse discovered at Morschviller-le-Buc (Haut Rhin) a factory of chemical products which had been manufacturing large quantities of heroin for several months and dispatching the drug to Shanghai and to France. This was done almost openly, advantage being taken of the fact that at the Prefecture of Police at Mulhouse nobody was quite certain whether the Law of 1916 was applicable to Alsace-Lorraine. When the place was searched more than eight hundred kilogrammes of raw opium, ten kilogrammes of morphine, and a hundred kilogrammes of heroin were seized. To realize the importance of this coup it is sufficient to state that heroin and morphine are generally sold in packets of a gramme or even a demigramme and that the usual price of a gramme at this time was about twenty francs. But, in spite of the relatively high price, morphinomaniacs are found in every class of society, and their number has much increased since the War. Many of the sick and wounded then discovered, and remember only too well, the feeling of happiness which resulted from the use of chlorhydrate of morphine. When they suffer they are greatly tempted to have recourse to the drug. Given a certain weakness of character and a complacent doctor or chemist, they become inveterate drug-takers. Certain doctors exist—about a dozen

were concerned in an inquiry made by the Prefecture in 1923—who deliver prescriptions of drugs for exorbitant fees to anybody without previous examination, and sometimes to the same persons under different names. These people send their clients to certain chemists (their accomplices) who are equally devoid of scruple.

But opium fiends and morphinomaniacs represent only a small minority of drug-takers and they cause comparatively little trouble to the police. The real scourge, the widest spread, the most difficult to fight against, is cocaine mania.

In fact, the passion for cocaine—a terrible poison which has not even the excuse of temporarily abolishing physical suffering—contaminates all classes of society. Its first ravages were amongst intellectuals, doctors, writers, artists, who used it as a cerebral stimulant. Then its use invaded other spheres. A large traffic sprang up in cocaine, and its suppression was particularly difficult.

Cocaine is an alkaloid extract of the coca leaf, coca being the vulgar name of the *Aymara Koka*, also called Hayo and Empatu, a native of Peru. In its wild state it is found in the Andes, but it is also cultivated in Bolivia, and in the Far East.

Coca leaves can be employed for inoffensive, even for beneficial, purposes. They are utilized for an infusion like tea, and form a constituent of several medicinal wines. But when subjected to certain processes invented by the French chemist Bigniou, and afterwards brought to perfection by German chemists, small crystals can be made from them. These crystals are prismatic and colourless. They are soluble in alcohol or in ether, but not readily so in water. The crystals are cocaine in its pure state and—transformed into chlorhydrate—a white powder can be made from them which can be sniffed up the nose. This is the dangerous product which Parisian slang has baptized “coco” and “la neige” (snow).

It is most often imported from Germany, the most sought-after brands being the “Merck” of Darmstadt, and the “Böhrringer” of Nieder-Ingelheim. Just after the War it was often said that the Germans were using cocaine as a means of enfeebling the French race. It is introduced into France sometimes by professional smugglers who bring it in by aeroplane, sometimes by the employés of the big European express trains, sometimes by soldiers of the Army of Occupation in the Rhine Area. Sometimes it reaches France after a detour to Holland or Belgium. At one time we were advised that it was arriving by post via Morocco or Spain.

In Paris the quarters the most notorious for drug trafficking are to be found in Montmartre, where the night cafés of the Place Pigalle, the Place Blanche, the Place Clichy, and the neighbouring streets cater for a clientèle very much disposed to take drugs. At one time it was said—and official reports have confirmed this—that all the staff of these establishments, chasseurs, head waiters, telephonists, women attendants in the cloakrooms, sometimes even the managers and proprietors themselves, were traffickers or intermediaries.

Other localities where the traffic flourishes are the Halles, where it is a long-established custom to finish up a night out ; the Latin Quarter because of the traditional curiosity of students concerning everything that is strange or forbidden ; and finally the neighbourhood of the Etoile, a district which has become very cosmopolitan, and where the big hotels and luxurious flats shelter a large number of foreigners whose wealth is often of recent date and who are urged by snobbishness to search for all that a certain class of literature represents to them as the joys of the expensive life.

But if the use of cocaine is more widely spread than that of any other drug, thanks to the ease with which it is taken and the fact that it can be hidden without difficulty (in a bracelet with a false watch, a medal, a powder box, etc.), it must be admitted that its deadliness is almost always modified to a certain degree by the lucrative adulteration to which it is submitted by the traffickers and intermediaries—one process sometimes succeeding another. A large proportion of the little packets of "snow" which I caused to be seized from the seller or were found on the toximaniac revealed about 60 per cent of sulphate of soda—or even simply of starch—when they were analysed.

As the price of cocaine was then about 1300 francs the kilogramme, and as each little packet of a gramme—adulterated in the way I have mentioned—was sold for between 20 and 30 francs, the merchant and his intermediary were able to divide about 20,000 francs profit per kilogramme. Sometimes, when the successful operations of my detectives had rarefied the drug, it was sold for as much as 60 or even 80 francs the gramme.

These large profits increased the traffic in cocaine, and the traffickers thought out the most ingenious stratagems to escape from Police interference.

At first the detectives of the Prefecture were able to work easily enough. They watched the places which had been revealed to them as sources of supply, shadowed the persons who frequented these places, and sooner or later succeeded in catching them in

the act of a sale. At other times a man would be reported as a trafficker. The detectives would shadow him, suddenly appear at the right moment, arrest both seller and buyer, and confiscate the merchandise. These shadowings were veritable man-hunts. The trafficker, who very quickly became suspicious and on his guard, would take the Métro (the underground railway of Paris), leave it after a few stations at a point where the density of the crowd gave him the best chance of escaping the Police, hail a taxi, drive to some house with two entrances, take another taxi, again engulf himself in the Métro. . . . Arrived at last on the terrace of a café, he would lift his hat as though saluting someone or light a cigarette or look at his watch—some preconceived signal would be given. Then one of the people on the terrace would leave his seat, hail a taxi, and the two, buyer and seller, would enter the car. At this moment the Police would dart forward and give the driver of the taxi the address of the Prefecture. Not seldom the trafficker thus attacked would draw a revolver and try to resist arrest by force.

Soon, however, the activity of the Police forced their quarry to evolve other methods. The merchants of "coco" who plied their trade near the night resorts no longer carried supplies of the drug. They contented themselves with seeking clients and were followed by some poor devil who seemed to have no other purpose in life but opening doors or picking up cigarette ends. When they had found a buyer they would take one or two packets from this individual, who was trained to make himself scarce at the first alarm, and who would be paid 50 or 60 francs a night.

Or—and this was even more ingenious—they would exact payment in advance and simply indicate to the buyer the place where the packets were hidden—at this address, under the seat of such and such a taxi, in such and such a railway station, and so forth. It is a curious fact that the person buying under such conditions was never cheated. Even the worst commerce seems to have its traditions of honesty, its point of honour.

Another precaution taken by the traffickers was to hide the largest part of their stock outside Paris and the Department of the Seine, the geographical limits of the jurisdiction of the Préfecture de Police. We could then only order a seizure after some delay, and when the Police at last arrived to confiscate the cocaine nothing was to be found.

In spite of all these difficulties the Police section dealing with drugs seized in 1927 more than 150 kilogrammes of prohibited substances and made eighty arrests.