

The Lure of Smuggling

The Romance of the Sleeper Trunks

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SMUGGLING geniuses of the calibre of the famous conspirators who robbed the United States of \$1,000,000 annually between the years 1904 and 1905 made a mistake in the reading of human nature. That is the reason why they did not hesitate to ask into their confidence and appoint as a very special and particular agent, Hortense Delaro, the ebony-eyed, determined, olive-skinned daughter of a Parisian grisette by a Sicilian athlete.

The girl proved her mettle immediately. Never had the Secret Service agents of Uncle Sam at the gay capital been hoodwinked so cleverly. Never had such quantities of costly goods destined for duty evasion been so expeditiously and effectively forwarded to French piers. Hortense was a wonder, and her appointments swelled and chuckled in self-consultation.

And even when the bombshell of revelation was exploded in the camp of the conspirators one could not have justly criticised the wisdom and foresight of her smuggling sponsors. They could hardly be expected to anticipate that Armand Garrier, their general pier confederate, after five years of affectionate and profitable association with the girl, would cold-bloodedly decide to cast her off. Could they have foreseen it is possible they might have taken steps to prevent the Garrier episode by the astute use of the oil of diplomacy and procrastination. For the loyalty of Hortense was a vital factor in the successful consummation of the conspiracy. She knew better than any one else the secret of the sleeper trunks.

A Sleeper Trunk Defined.
A steamship trunk is not of the animal kingdom, yet it may repose and doze. When such it does on the pier of an Atlantic transportation company it is fittingly called a sleeper. Sometimes it is first observed in slumber just after the departure of a steamship, on which, by presumption, it is to have been forwarded had it not been brought to the pier too late for luggage loading. Its legitimate slumber is supposed to continue on the pier until it is placed aboard the next outgoing steamship. This makes it a valuable "sleeper" trunk.

"Let sleeping dogs lie, lest they wake and do harm" is an old adage, concededly wise. In the interest of the smuggling conspirators the maxim should be applied to "sleeper trunks." In the interest of the United States the saying should be cast into the rubbish heap. For there are counterfeits "sleeper trunks" which would do harm to the government by "sleeping." It was through not disturbing their slumber that Uncle Sam was robbed of the million dollars a year for five years. This is how it came about and this is how Hortense Delaro, the girl who had been brought to the pier too late for luggage loading, reached the pier in time to be taken along.

A Counterfeit "Sleeper."
But even with all this skillfully plotted arrangement there was a dangerous little gap at one point. This was where the counterfeit "sleeper" first arrived in New York. Customs inspectors, although easily convinced that it did not belong to the passengers present, whose baggage they must of course examine first, nevertheless might recall after the burly-burly on the pier was over that they had come upon a trunk. If they did so, recollecting that it was a counterfeit "sleeper," they would have to be made either on the pier or at the United States storehouses.

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Smugglers' Headquarters.
One of the heads of the smuggling conspiracy died in 1909 and Garrier was promoted. He was placed in charge—rather had power enough to place himself in charge—of the Paris headquarters. He had grown wealthy. Big smuggling was so easy that he had grown a trifle sluggish in his transactions. His mind was occupied with a more important matter. He had fallen in love again. It took up much of his time. It also took up a great deal of his time in the line of the suspicions of Hortense Delaro, who followed his move-

ments with jealous closeness. It became harder and harder to keep his new affair a secret. He was being closely watched and he chafed at the espionage. He must get rid of Hortense.

He convinced the other conspirators that their business could be doubled by a diplomatic drumming up of trade among more of the higher class establishments in New York. Hortense could do it. She was the very one for the mission. She ought to be sent out at once and before the close of the year they could add a quarter of a million to their revenue. The conspirators hailed the suggestion with enthusiasm. Hortense did not fancy the mission altogether, but it was plausibly conceived, and she could not find a good argument against it—just her woman's intuition. So she went to New York after a final meeting with Garrier in which he so cleverly dissembled that the girl left France almost persuaded

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Woman Reveals All.
Murat found Hortense just as she had successfully ended her mission and had obtained orders increasing the business of the conspirators more than a million dollars a year. She readily went with Murat to dinner, and in a cozy corner of a little Italian restaurant as they sipped a glass of their native wine he broached his purpose. At first it was only a hint. Hortense set down her glass and turned a searching gaze upon the man whose words at one time had unlimited power to thrill her. As he unfolded his story she permitted him to play one card about her. She was waiting for all the story.

"You are lying," she said at the finish as she unclasped her arm. "Garrier loves me and there are business reasons why he would not be so foolish." Then Lucien showed the letter. The girl read it with contracted brows and her gleaming eyes. She turned on Murat.

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She wasted no time. In twelve hours an anonymous letter was placed upon the desk of General Nelson A. Harty, Surveyor of the Port. The entire workings of the great smuggling conspiracy were laid bare. The names of twenty modistes, of a dozen milliners, half a dozen big silk importers and three United States employees were given. The methods employed were explained in full. The revelations confirmed information previously offered by Austin F. Montagne, convicted of smuggling, but which was still being investigated. Every hour of new inquiry following the girl's revelations showed the case growing in proportions. Collector Loeb's special attention was called. The smugglers were run down.

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But the revelation of Hortense had sprung the mine. The counterfeit "sleeper" was clearly detected. The conspirators, alarmed by questions and a generally suspicious atmosphere, dared not call an expressman and have the trunk taken away. Finally the customs officials opened the trunk. It contained forty-three princess costumes, one lace cloak, one silk cloak, one silk coat, one blue cloth coat, eight evening gowns, sixteen lace waist, nine pieces of valuable trimming, two garnitures, three costumes, one red coat, three pieces of dress goods and five ornaments.

A letter of inquiry was sent to Mrs. Mason. She declared the trunk did not belong to her. The next day she was taken off her luggage with her to San Francisco when she had arrived March 2. The customs label on the counterfeit sleeper trunk was that of Inspector Robert Burke. He was grilled, and although protesting his innocence, was dismissed.

Burke has a scorecard and a resolute way. He would not stay dismissed. He went about ferreting. He spent his own time and his own money. The baggage-master, Schwartz, was dismissed, likewise denying at the time that he had done anything wrong. Burke kept at his hunt until he had accumulated enough evidence to show that he was entirely innocent and to corroborate the report of how the thing "as done." Then he was reinstated. One after another the modistes, the milliners and the importers were all rounded up. All catered to exclusive trade and their exposure and fine was a crushing blow. The law stretched out its hand and grasped the New York and Paris smuggling chiefs. Garrier was taunting his new sweetheart in her favorite wine when a code table told him of the blasting of the conspiracy. He had hardly recovered his composure when a second cable was placed near his plate—this time not in code. It read:

"Armand Garrier, Paris.
"You need not have any doubt as to who did it.
HORTENSE."
As he staggered out of the restaurant with his companion Garrier's glance rested on a bulletin giving the result of the Grand Prix race. He ground his teeth for the bulletin made it plain he was penniless.

Government Loses Millions.
The case of the "puckering" of the United States to the tune of \$1,000,000 a year for five years is fairly chronicled in the customs archives. When the crash of discovery came you heard all about the twenty modistes, and the dozen milliners and the half dozen importers and the employees all implicated. But you did not hear a word about Hortense Delaro. She was anonymous from start to finish, and her identity was only revealed through minor confederates in France. The official history of the case, however, does not include her. That is the work manlike way she arranged it all.

The wonder is about the simpleton Garrier. How a man with brains enough for a first grade smuggling conspirator could plot coolly to lose aside a career, as the street saying goes, "he could get away with it" will have to be docketed with many more of the unrevealed mysteries.

NEXT WEEK.
Chase of the Counterfeit "Sleeper Trunk."

the next steamship going to France. It was thus eastbound baggage with which the customs inspectors need not bother. It was outgoing, and duty is imposed only on the incoming. When the next steamship left for France the counterfeit "sleeper" would be left behind again—only this time left behind in New York. Presumably its owner did not wish it to be sent after him, for shortly following the departure of the ship it would be expressed from the pier to the owner's residence no doubt. Too bad it had not

reached the pier in time to be taken along.

A Counterfeit "Sleeper."
But even with all this skillfully plotted arrangement there was a dangerous little gap at one point. This was where the counterfeit "sleeper" first arrived in New York. Customs inspectors, although easily convinced that it did not belong to the passengers present, whose baggage they must of course examine first, nevertheless might recall after the burly-burly on the pier was over that they had come upon a trunk. If they did so, recollecting that it was a counterfeit "sleeper," they would have to be made either on the pier or at the United States storehouses.

So on the counterfeit "sleeper" trunk a label was quickly pasted that made all clear sailing. This label was one that had been pasted upon another trunk after a legitimate examination, and such trunk was a bona fide trunk of a passenger. Thus a New York modiste through Hortense Delaro could have a trunk full of valuable merchandise sleep upon the pier in France for two or three weeks and upon the pier in New York a few days, finally receiving it by express without having paid a cent of duty. After paying the fee to the smuggling conspiracy she would still be so much in pocket that she could undersell her rivals in New York and reap a handsome profit, or not undersell them at all and reap still a handsome profit.

Smugglers' Headquarters.
One of the heads of the smuggling conspiracy died in 1909 and Garrier was promoted. He was placed in charge—rather had power enough to place himself in charge—of the Paris headquarters. He had grown wealthy. Big smuggling was so easy that he had grown a trifle sluggish in his transactions. His mind was occupied with a more important matter. He had fallen in love again. It took up much of his time. It also took up a great deal of his time in the line of the suspicions of Hortense Delaro, who followed his move-

ments with jealous clos