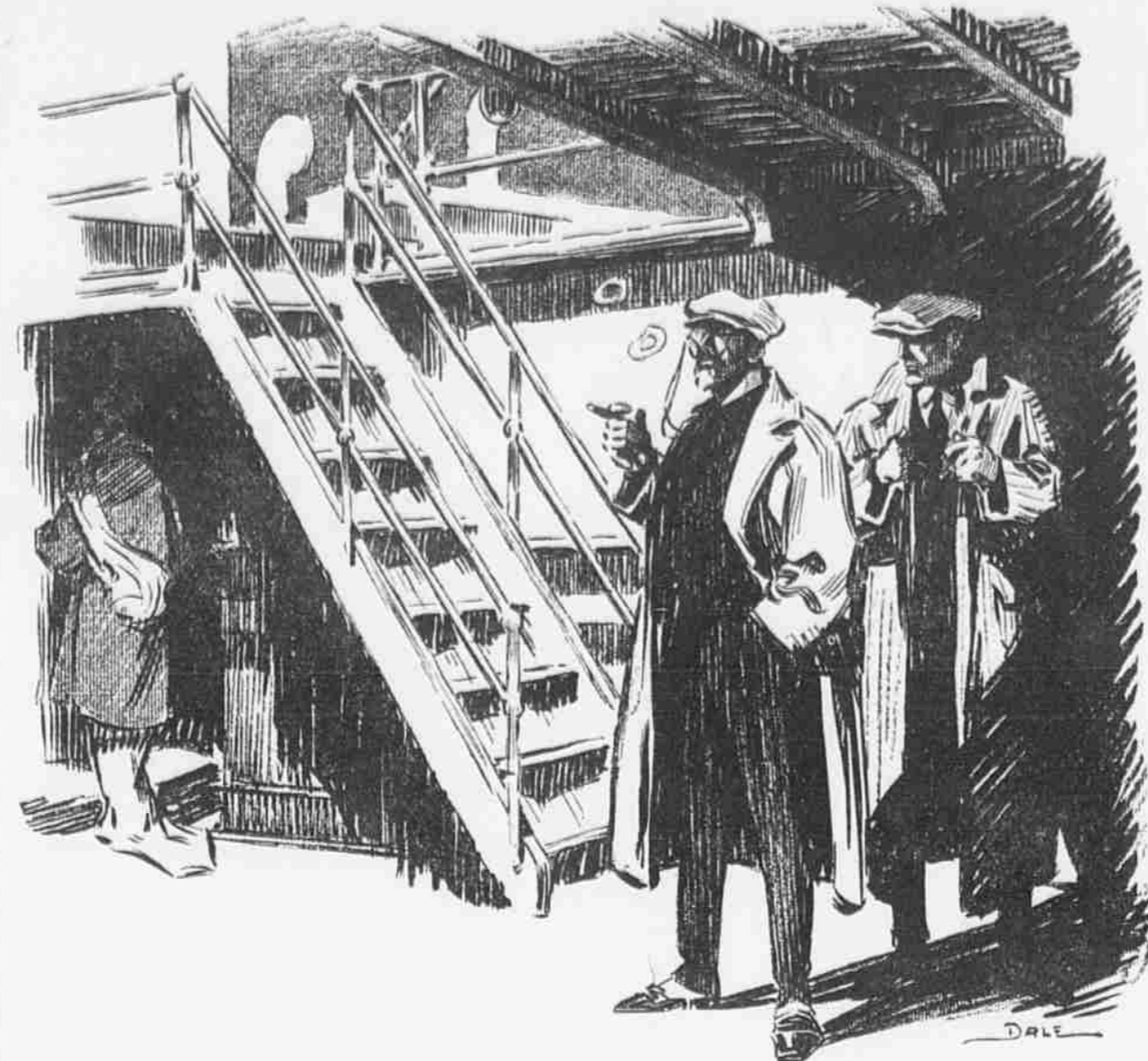


THE BLUEBUCKLE

A BAFFLING MYSTERY AND BREATHLESS TALE OF ADVENTURE

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE

Author of "The Red Mouse," "The Running Fight," "Catspaw," Etc.



"I TELL YOU SHE'S A DANGEROUS WOMAN"

from deep, in large, black letter type, in heavy deep engraving he read the following:

J. BARON HELDERMAN, BANKER. U. S. A.

"So you are that Helderman," commented Craig. He remembered now, vaguely, something about Helderman and Wall Street—he recalled some coup d'état, some stroke of genius. But it was a memory that eluded him—the details he could not recollect. The eye behind the monocle gleamed with a cynical smile. "Yes, I am that Helderman. Does it make any difference?" he asked, looking at Craig. "It signifies whether one is just Helderman, or Helderman the banker of U. S. A. That is, it does to most people."

CHAPTER I. THE LADY OF THE BLUEBUCKLE. "Nowhere are they safe—nowhere, do you understand?" Craig Rutherford, lying in the shadow of his elbow on the steamer rail, gazed dreamily at the glory of a moonlit night at midnight in midocean, heard this remark—could not tell whence it came. In fact, he heard without hearing. Later he recalled the tone, the words— "You are a woman. You talk too much—too loud, I tell you, when we are alone."

A lively interest in Mr. Talcott or was assuming in order to arouse him and draw him out. He must meet cold steel with cold steel; in other words he must hold himself in hand. The sinister glint of the moonlight flashed him a look of oblique amusement, as if it were following the young man's mental processes. "If you will allow me to mention one more matter," remarked Helderman. "It concerns the lady we are not to discuss."