THE BLUE BUCKI

A BAFFLING MYSTERY AND BREATHLESS TALE OF ADVENTURE By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE Author of "The Red Mouse," "The Running Fight," "Catspaw," Etc.

the wireless operator to let him take a messar. The pressage he takes is that a valuable. The pressage he takes is that a valuable dismond necklace is being smuggled into this country. An elderly man and a young woman are guilty. Again suspicion is discreted against the Talcotts. Later Mracced against the Talcotts. Later Mracced against the Talcotts. Later Mracced is attacked by a ruffian, who attained in the summary of the property of the pr

worsen he loves when her in Helderman's suite with her arms but his neck.

At the dock, New York, Mrs. Talcott at the dock, New York, Mrs. Talcott sees her way into Craig's cab and asks are to drive her home. As they examine a house Craig attempts to declare his see his Mr. Talcott's voice is heard, spring him of his preset with the has been made a lor the smugglers in his pockets are so his buckle and the string of diamonds, affans break int. The room, and again a voice of the him buckle for sarely side the diamonds over to the secret side when the his buckle for sarely side in the his wow weeks. Craig goes himself in the size was the his wow weeks. Craig goes himself in the historian's house he sees that genited in the historian's house he sees that genited a perfect of the second of the same and the historian which is so the historian of the historian of the historian his books the same perfect the transfer of the second of the second finds out that the men who weeks of finds out that the men who

centrol. They talk about the smuging incident.
Rutherford finds out that the men who
save attacked both him and Mrs. Talcott,
are employed by a Miss Arany who was
also on the boat with him. Mrs. Talcott
enfesses: that she is really Miss Hills
relianting. There are two blue buckles,
esch of which bears half an inscription.
The whole is a clue to a hidden fortune,
is consection with which is a paper free
first father from suspicion of swinding.
Craiz, instating that he will bely Miss
Hallantyne to the fortune which is ightfully hers, confesses his love for were acting
for the firm which has be second blue
buckle, and attempts to get the inscription
from Miss Ballantyne's the inscription
from Miss Ballantyne's the inscription
rest. He villalny is discovered when the
real lawyer appears.

CHAPTER XVII-(Continued). The words were uttered almost in the tene of quiet command. Miss Balantyne

aprang to her feet, her hands clasped against her breast. "Pardon me, sit down please, and hear me out." He had not risen; and the girl. almost against her will, sat down again. "I am a man, as you know, of wide in-fluence and some success in the world of buriness. I have made my success by never deviating from the path I have laid out. While others have hesitated, I have some straight ahead, turning neither to the right nor to the left, until I have obtained what I sought. I tell this not to boast, but in order that you may know with what sort of man you have to

He paused a moment, and she found time to say, somewhat ironically:
"You seem to regard this as merely an-

"You seem to regard this as merely another business matter, sir!"
"Yes, and no." he answered, quietly.
"But I want you to see how essential is my influence to your cause. I can command unlimited financial support, which will assure you of success. My knowledge of this matter, no less than my standing, will be absolutely invaluable to you. Think what it means, my dear Miss Ballantyne. J. Baron Helderman is not Ballantyne, J. Baron Helderman is not accustomed to making such offers as this: nor is he accustomed to being re-

"Nor is Wilhelmina Ballantyne accus-The system of the more of the unstraint of the second to being bargained for, like so much bank stock!" retorted the girl.

As she confronted him with scornful, flashing eyes, Helderman far from being repelled seemed to be attracted all the more of the unstraint of the stock. . It is the charm of the unattain-which makes the prized object all

"I crave your pardon for speaking of the-practical side, first," he said, in low earnest tones, bending toward her. "We the-practical side, first," he said, in low exprest tones, bending toward her. "We men of affairs are too apt to forget that "is love that makes the world go round. Will you give me credit for sincerity when I say that ever since I first saw you, on the Gothic, I have hoped and worked and longed for the moment when I could pour out my heart to you! My desire to serve you is but a part of this expression. I love you, as I never loved gold, or power—as I never believed it

gold, or power—as I never believed it possible to love any woman!"
"Stop, Mr. Helderman! Do you think it is quite honorable to make a business engagement the pretext for any such ayound as this?"
"Can you not believe."

symmal as this?"

"Can you not believe me" he pleaded. Looking at his fervent, adoring eyes, the girl felt with the swift instinct of womanhood that he was telling the truth about his passion, however she might doubt his other pretensions. And granted this premise, he was a man quite desperate enough to go to any extremestern to the betraying of the other woman, if she were his accomplice—to the furnishing of his desires. She resolved once more to be cautious, to temporize. "Yeu—you would not expect me to give you a definite answer tonight, Mr. Heleferman—unless it were a negative one—" rman—unless it were a negative one—"
"At any other time, I should not be so
"sent," he replied, almost flercely, "But

"Do you mean to-threaten me, Mr. Helderman?" "By no means, child-but you need pro-

a great many things hang upon your de-

"By no means, child-but you need protection right now-this week!"

"Why, I am not so alone, so helpless as you would infer!" she blazed up.
"There is my father-and-and-"

"The precious Mr. Rutherford!" he sneered. "Your father does not dare appear in this matter. He is suspected of a serious crime—"

"What do you mean, sir!"

"The young woman had drawn herself

"What do you mean, sir!"

The young woman had drawn herself to her full height, and was looking at him in a blaze of indignation.

"Why I mean—if you must know—a serious smuggling plot. And Mr. Crais Rutherford is also being trailed by Government detectives—"

"False! As false in the one case as in the other!" she stormed.

"Ah! You are quite a champion of his.

"Ah! You are quite a champion of his, I see! But the young man-does he-ah, isturn your trust?"

If was a chance thrust, but a home, thrust.

thrust. The girl could only reply by tap-ping a little bell. Sophie appeared at the

Mr. Helderman cannot be detained

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longer this evening, Sophie. Will you kindly let him have his hat and coat?"

XVIII SHOWING THE USEFULNESS OF AN

ALIBL When Rutherford again opend his even to a dull, insistent sense of suffering, it was broad daylight. Some one was still kneading his tortured frame persistently, "Helderman, you devil, stop!" he comnanded, hearsely

"Reep still" said a voice of authority. Craig tried to turn, to see who it was that spoke, and a tearing pain like the twisting of a three-cornered knife in middle of his back nearly threw middle of his once the series of it, he valinly tried to rise, to leap at this man's throat and end it all. Anythis man's throat and end it all. thing was better than to submit to being played with, like a mouse in the clutches

f a hungry cat. "Keep still, I tell you, or I shan't be answerable for the consequences."

Rutherford peered up through the daze of pain. The man who bent over him of pain. The mar

"Helderman-you scoundrel!" he gaspel.
"No, Pritchard-the surgeon," retorted
the other man. "Now, listen to me: If you don't stop tossing about until I find out what's the matter with you, it will be all up with you about ever walking

Rutherford subsided with a feeling of agony. He could stand a certain amount of pain, but the possibility of heing a helpiess cripple was too much for his present endurance. It was the same alter-native he had faced, that dark day after the accident on the field, and the pain that now tore and shot through him was frightfully like the other.
"You're pretty well done up," the sur-

geon observed, as much to himself as to his patient, after a series of investiga-tions which seemed to the victim like an inquisition.

"It's in the old place," muttered Craigthen he added savegely, "but I will get well-I will walk!" "Good for you! I like your spunk!" said the doctor.

Craig breathed heavily, then he inhaled again and turned his eyes toward the You using chloroform on me?"

"No-some one beat me to it, and has split all the bottle on your man here."
"Gooley?" exclaimed the sufferer anxiously. "Hello, Mike!"

For answer, Mike lifted up a sick-look-ing countenance, then struggled to his feet, saluted, and collapsed back into his

"Whoever it was, he made a thorough job of it," observed Pritchard.

Craig nodded weakly.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'd like you to call my regular physician to help you on my case. He pulled me through before, and knows all about my kinks."
"Good doe." "Good idea," said the surgeon. And seeing that Mike was in no immediate condi-tion to be of service, he paused from his fabors long enough to telephone as Craig directed. This done, he proceeded with a treatment which Craig realized was skfi-ful and intelligent, if painful. It was a

severe but scientific massage, and as he continued the strenuous work, his patient felt in his bones-literally speaking-that the harm he had suffered was not so serious as he had feared.

The physician, too, grew cheerful as he worked. Finally he ceased his mauling long enough for Craig to ask a question that had lone been in had long been in his mind, but he had not breath enough to articulate

"The clerk sent you up, I suppose?"
"Oh, no!" the doctor replied, going after
the left wrist of his patient. "He didn't know anything about it."
"Then who?" Craig was sparing of his

"Some one phored for me to come at

"It was a woman's voice." "A woman!"
"Oh, you bachelors! You always have

at least one woman keenly concerned about your welfare!"
"But no woman c "But no woman could have known-that I was hurt!" puzzled Craig. "Look here, doctor, when did you get the mes-

sage?"
"At a quarter of 3-but I didn't go back that I come at

A quarter of 3! Craig seemed to hear again the dull boom of the big clock, as it chimed out the hour of 2. That was just three-quarters of an hour later!

"Didn't the lady give you her name?" he persisted. "Yes, but I didn't get it clearly. I have the impression that it was Valentine Craig's jaw dropped, leaving the name

perate.

than with his Progress!

achieve nothing, for the cold prohibits.

crowder evidently was keen upon the

unfinished. He groaned, suffering in mind and body. Now he knew why he had been attacked. Helderman had come to search his rooms and his person, for the necklace or the buckle-or both-and, worst of all, with the connivance of a woman who, he had felt more than once, was deceiving him? And moreover, she was so closely advised of all Helderman's movements, that she was actually able to summon a dector for his victim, inside the hour? The fact that she took the

trouble to summon aid was mighty poor The physician must have seen his an guish of body and soul, for he mixed a sleeping draught and gave it to Craig. Under its influence he sank into a troubled but restful slumber.

It was midafternoon when he awoke Mike was sitting by his bed, and now grinned broadly.

"Hello, Mike, yourself again?"
"Sure, sor, and hoping you are enjoying the same blessing!"
"Oh, I'll be better, after I've had something hot to drink. Anything else hap-

"Not just like the last, thanks be-but

"Not just like the last, thanks be—but two men called this morning, who were anxious to see you, and when they found out how banged up you were, they said they'd come back later, sor."

"The secret service men again, Mike. I wish I weren't so popular!"
It was, in truth, the secret service men who called the next morning, but not the imitation ones whom Craig had in mind. Gooley ushered them in about 10 o'clock, and lined them up in the bedroom, where

and lined them up in the bedroom, where his master could see them without turn-ing his head. Although Craig was much better than he had believed he could be. soon after the terrible twist to his sp he was still not inclined to exertion. But he was pleased with his visitors. "Hello, Crowder!" he greeted one of the two men. "I'm jolly glad you've come."

"I'm glad to be here, sir, but sorry you re laid up," the detective responded.
This is Mr. Sims, He knows you, al-

though you don't know him."

Craig nodded and looked more closely at the other man. He acknowedged that he did not remember to have seen him "He's one of ns," commented Crowder

"Another one!" groaned Craig. "Another fellow to trail you around and hide behind lamp-posts and hit you on the back of the head! Oh, Lord!" He was just ill enough to be garrulous. "Come come!" laughed Crowder, "You are confusing us with the phony kind

again! This is a genuine, simon-pure article! But, if it's any satisfaction to you, we've about quit trailing you. We're n a much hetter scent. Now we'd like to ask you a few questions about—"
"About night before last? About Helderman?" Craig interrupted, trying to sit

up, and sinking back again "Keep right, Mr. Rutherford, and don't hurt yourself again. We would not trouble you today, but we have to. we have come to talk to you-about Helderman."

Crowder was regarding him with a shrewd look which masked considerable Rutherford relaxed on his pillow. He had said more than Crowder seemed willing to recognize. He would wait and let the detective reveal the purpose of

"What about night before last?" asked Crowder.
"What do you want to know about Helderman?" Craig evaded.

"Mr. Rutherford, you once told me, in the presence of Mr. Brookfield, at the Barristers' Club, that Mr. Helderman was

Fixtures.

Facts Versus

Fallacies

FACT is a real state of things. FALLACY is an apparently genuine but really illogical statement or argument.

mum. Lassitude and laziness are his portion. For the tropic sun will not permit

N the Temperate Zone, man achieves. Ninety-nine one-hundredths of

all the big, worth-while things in this world have been done by the man who lived in the Temperate Zone.

HE does not blow hot or blow cold. He is Temperate in all things. The elements do not prohibit this, that or the other thing for him.

For, knowing he is Temperate in all things there is no need of Prohibition.

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(The next advertisement will appear Saturday, March 27th)

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TN the Frigid Zone, men are so benumbed by cold that they accomplish

little. They huddle together in small villages, content merely to

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AND so Nature, who does nothing unwisely, placed the Temperate Zone between the two extremes—the Frigid and the Torrid. The

man who is Temperate, touches neither extreme! He believes in true

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ton, Chippendale and Adam de-

the man who read you a wireless mes-sage right off the reel."

Rutherford nodded. He noticed the other man hitch his chair nearer the bed.

'The banker told you that this message was for the secret service man on board?" Crowder continued.

"That's what he said."
"Well, Sims here was a special detail. on board the Gothic, though I didn't Sims shook his head.

"I never got the message or any mes sage like it—and if there was one there ought to have been more about this neck-lace—and never heard about such a messave until I got to headquarters. "You sure of that?" Rutherford de-

"Positive" was the reply Rutherford looked at Crowder. "What do you make of it?" he asked.

"Why, it's easy," affirmed Crowder Telderman invented that message out o the whole cloth; that's what I told you at the time. And Sims is right. So long as Sims didn't answer. Berlin would sent another message to be sure. Helder-man invented it."

"What for?" exclaimed Craig.
"Wasn't suspicion directed preity
pointedly at a couple of passengers on
that ship?"

Rutherford was silent. He seemed to sense a danger that was creeping up on Miss Ballantyne. The very fact that he distrusted her made him the more wary of letting any chance word escape that would incriminate her. Mistaking his silence for a natural bewilderment, Crowder continued:

Crowder continued:
"I have since learned that a Mr. and
Mrs. Talcott were generally believed to
be the smugglers. As it turned out, they
had nothing about them that suggested
an evasion of the customs."

Rutherford was secretly rejoiced that their skirts were at last clear of any lingering doubt in this respect, but a new cause for wonder presented itself.
"But why should such a report have been circulated at all—and who could have been interested in it?" he questioned

"It was all part of a shrewd scheme by your friend Helderman. He was afraid the Secret Service men might have just such a message, and he started it on his own account—to divert suspi-clon—from himself:"
"Then Helderman's a smuggler?" quer-

ied Craig. "I believe you," was the only reply the

Secret Service man vouchsafed. Then he turned and asked, unexpectedly, "Who did you up. Mr. Rutherford?" "Helderman." It was Crowder's turn to jump,

looked at Butherford quickly, to see if this undue excitement were going to his head. But the sick man looked sane enough, and very much in carnest. "You don't mean that," said Crowder, "I just do!" Craig affirmed.

"You fly off, one minute, because we suspect Helderman of a big smuggling game—and in the next breath you accuse him of common, low-down burglary—for that's what the clerk downstairs said it was. How do you make that out, Mr. Rutherford?"

"It does seem queer and inconsistent, but I don't accuse Helderman of burglary in the common sense of the term. I think he's after something he thinks I have—but he didn't get it!"
"He entered secretly?"

"Yes. He chloroformed my man, and probably took his key."
"Your man?" Crowder leaned over to whisper his question. 'Mike's as true as steel," Rutherford asserted.
"What time was this"

"At 2 o'clock in the morning," anwered Craig. "At 2 o'clock, night before last?" re-peated the Secret Service man, in undisguised astonishment "Yes, 2 o'clock exactly."

"You're crazy!" exclaimed Crowder, losing his customary calm.
"I guess I ought to know! I have

reason enough to remember!

reason enough to remember!"
"Why, man alive, it was pitch dark.
Fou couldn't have seen a clock—"
"No, but I heard one. The Tower clock struck two while I held him."
Crowder looked again, to see if Craig could be flighty in his head; but his eyes were clear, and his tone was positive.
"Then it wasn't Helderman!" announced the detective, with equal conviction.

"But it was! There's just one man I've ever known that had such a grip." Craig persisted, vexed at the detective's

The other was smiling. "Ah! That's what you are going by, is it?—a man's

what you are going by, is it?—a man's grip in the dark!"

"You seem to think that such evidence would be thrown out of court," retorted Craig. "But let me tell you, I have made a study of the subject, and I know the characteristic grips of men in wrestling, just as you would know their walk or the tones of their voice. Once before this Lorentz and Malacanara and and the contract Malacanara and series and his I encountered Helderman's grip, and

time also. Nothing could have been more convincing than the manner in which Rutherford stated this; but both the secret service men looked incredulous.
"At two o'clock, night before last," said Sims. "I saw Helderman pacing back and forth before his window, up on Riverside Drive. He did not leave the house."

"And he was there last night, too," added Crowder.

added Crowder.

Rutherford looked at the two detecives and they returned his glance. Seither doubted the sincerity of the other, and yet Craig was unshaken in his conviction, while he knew that the two men were absolutely set in theirs. It was the testimony of a pair of hands against two pairs of trained eyes; and Crais had the sense to know that the average and physically-untrained man would give credence to the eyes.

"What were you doing up there?" he asked.

"We're camping on the job, dry nights and wet, just now-I one night, and Sims the next," replied Crowder. "Phew!" Craig whistled. "Must be

"Phew!" Craig whistled. "Must be getting pretty warm!"
"Yes, and we're not the only ones, either. There's a bull, a plain-clothes man, too. He wants to know my lay, and I'd like to know his—but we don't find out. I've got my suspicions that the State of New York is keeping an eye on him, as well as the United States."

him, as well as the United States."
"Look here, Crowder, if Helderman is under suspicion. I'm going to make a complaint about this affair of mine—"
"Don't do it. Mr. Rutherford! It'll spoll everything:"
"Do you think I'm going to let a man come here and beat me up, and then go scot-free?" demanded Crais indignantly. "What's 'everything,' anyhow?"

"Our case, We haven't get it quite where we want it, yet. Besides, you couldn't prove that he attacked you. I know you think so; but Sims here saw him up at the house at the exact time you are so positive about. The other man saw him, too. There was a woman came up to the house soon after 2-young and pretty. We have seen her there before. She would testify that he was up there, for he left the room with the big platefor he left the room with the big plate-glass window just as she entered the house. So you see you would only make a mess of things!"

Rutherford listened and heeded. He knew that his own testimony would promptly be thrown out of any court, yet he remained unconvinced. "Then the man has a double, worse luck!" he complained. "For I know that

the real Heiderman did me the honor to pay me a visit, at that particular time."

Crowder drew his chair up close, and glanced around the doorways. Then he said, in a low voice:

"Mr. Rutherford, it wouldn't surprise me if what you say is true. Two or three times, of late, I have had conflicting stories about this man's actions, but we haven't been able to prove anything on him as yet. For several months he has been suspected of being at the head of the biggest syndicate of diamond smusgiers in the world. Your necklace gave giers in the world. Your necklace gave us a valuable clue. Now, how do you figure you came by it?"

Craig listened with increasing amaze-ment to the detective. He was almost breathless, as his mind went rapidly back to the few encounters he had had with banker, before landing.

"I have it." he exclaimed. "I felt him touch me on the shoulder, just as I was soing to the gangplank. He slipped the necklace into my pocket—and the two fellows who later attacked me and also tried to get into my safe were his bench-

What part the blue buckle could play in this performance. Craig did not stop to figure out; and he religiously re-frained from mentioning it, for fear of diverting suspicion to the Ballantynes. "About his double, Mr. Sima? Where were you when you saw Helderman-how near, I mean?" asked Craig.

"On the sidewalk."
"Way out in front, you mean?"
"I'm not climbing the fence when
those dogs are loose; but still I am sure it was Helderman."
"The doss are chained in the front hall," affirmed Craig. "I saw them

"That's the way it is sometimes. Other times they are loose, and it would take more courage than I've got to go into the yard. They are always out when Helderman's in, and the gates are looked then. You'd think he was afraid of the public. Then, other times, the gates are unlocked; the dogs are fastened up, and the whole world could run over the lawn unchallenged. But that is never when he's at home. It's mighty strange, I tell you!"

"It sure is!" seconded Crowder,
"It is," assented Craig, more than ever
onvinced that Helderman was a pastmaster in the art of keeping himself se cluded and prominent at the same time. "All the same, fellows, I won't give in that Helderman was not here, night before last." "He couldn't have been here any night

"I know all his queer twitches and odd steps; so does Sims; and there isn't a man living who could imitate them." Rutherford gave over trying to shake the men's conviction, and they rose to go, expressing the hope that he would soon be about again.

"Oh, by the bye, Mr. Rutherford," said Crowder, stopping, hat in hand, "you remember my mentioning a Mr. and Mrs. Talcott as the ones on whom-

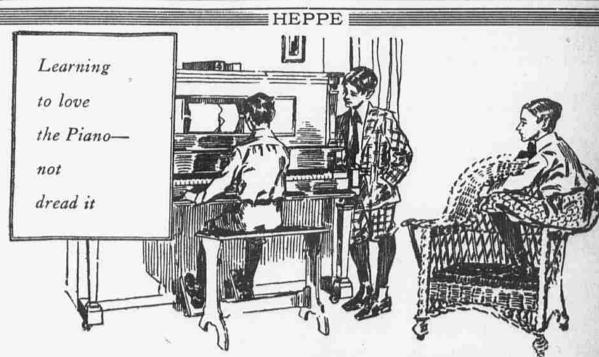
"Yes, yes, I remember!" Craig inter-rupted, with a clutch in his throat. "Well, I've got a hunch that they are just blinds, just being used to divert sus-picion from the real smugglers." "What makes you think so, Crowder?" Craig managed to ask.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW.)



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