

# THE BAT

## CHAPTER I

### The Shadow of the Bat

"You've got to get him, boys—get him or bust!" said a tired police chief, pounding a heavy fist on a table. The detectives he belted the words at looked at the floor. They had done their best and failed. Failure meant "resignation" for the police chief, return to the hated work of pounding the pavements for them—they knew it, and, knowing it, could summon no gesture of bravado to answer their chiefs. Gunmen, thugs, hijackers, loiterers, murderers, they could get them all in time—but they could not get the man he wanted.

"Get him—to hell with the expense—I'll give you carte blanche—but get him!" said a haggard millionaire in the sedate inner offices of the best private detective firm in the country. The man on the other side of the desk, man-hunter extraordinary, old servant of government and state, sleuth-hound without a peer, threw up his hands in a gesture of odd hopelessness. "It isn't the money, Mr. de Courcy—I'd give every cent I've made to get the man you want—but I can't promise you results—for the first time in my life." The conversation was ended.

"Get him? Huh! I'll get him—watch my smoke!" It was young ambition speaking in a certain set of rooms in Washington. Three days later young ambition lay in a New York gutter with a bullet in his heart and a look of such horror and surprise on his dead face that even the ambulance doctor who found him felt shaken. "We've lost the most promising man I've had in ten years," said his chief, when the news came in. He swore helplessly, "D—n the luck!"

"Get him—get him—get him—get him!" From a thousand sources now the clamor arose—press, police and public alike crying out for the capture of the master-criminal of a century—lost voices hounding a specter down the alleyways of the wind. And still the meshes broke and the quarry slipped away before the bounds were well on the scent—leaving behind a trail of shattered safes and rifled jewel cases—while ever the clamor rose higher to "Get him—get him—get him—"

Get whom, in God's name—get what? Beast, man or devil? A specter—a flying shadow—the shadow of a Bat.

From thieves' hangout to thieves' hangout the word passed along stirring the underworld like the passage of an electric spark. There were bright stars and flashing comets in the world of crime—but this new planet rose with the portent of an evil moon.

The Bat—they called him the Bat. Like a bat he chose the night hours for his work of rapine—like a bat he struck and vanished, pouncing, noiselessly—like a bat he never showed himself to the face of the day. He'd never been in stir—the bulls had never mugged him—he didn't run with a mob—he played a lone hand and fenced his stuff so that even they the fence couldn't swear he knew his face. Most lone wolves had a moll, at any rate—women were their ruin—but if the Bat had a moll, not even the grapevine telegraph could locate her.

Bat-faced gunmen in the dingy back rooms of speak-easies muttered over his exploits with bated breath. In tawdry gorgeous apartments, where gathered the larger figures, the consuls of the world of crime, cold, conscienceless brains dissected the work of a colder and swifter brain than theirs, with suave and bitter envy. Evil's Four Hundred chattered, discussed, debated—sent out a thousand invisible tentacles to clutch at a shadow—to turn this shadow and its distorted genius to their own ends. The tentacles recoiled, baffled—the Bat worked alone—not even Evil's Four Hundred could bend him into a willing instrument to execute another's plan.

Where official trailer and private sleuth had failed, the newspapers might succeed—or so thought the disillusioned young men of the Fourth Estate—the tireless foxes, nose-down on the trail of news—the trackers who never gave up till that news was run to earth. Star-reporter, leg-man, cub, veteran gray in the trade—one and all they tried to pin the Bat like a caught butterfly to the front page of their respective journals—soon or late each gave up, beaten. He was news—bigger news each week—a thousand ticking typewriters clicked his adventures—the brief, staccato recital of his career in the "morgues" of the great dailies grew longer and more incredible each day. But the big news—the scoop of the century—the yearned-for headline, "Bat Nabbed Red-Handed," "Bat Slain in Gun-Duel With Police"—still eluded the ravenous maw of the linotypes. And meanwhile the red-scored list of his felonies lengthened, and the rewards offered from various sources for any clue which might lead to his apprehension mounted and mounted till they totaled a small fortune.

Columnists took him up—played with the name and the terror—used the name and the terror as a starting-point from which to exhibit their own particular opinions on everything from the immortality of the soul to the merits of the Lucy Stone league. Ministers mentioned him in sermons—cranks wrote fanatic letters denouncing him as one of the seven-headed beasts of the Apocalypse and a forerunner of the end of the world—a popular revue put on a special Bat

number wherein eighteen beautiful chorus-girls appeared masked and black-winged in costume of Brazilian bat-fur—there were Bat club sandwiches; Bat cigarettes and a new shade of silk hosiery called simply and succinctly "Bat." He became a fad—a catchword—a national figure. And yet—he was walking Death—cold, remorseless. But death itself has become a toy of Publicity in these days of limelight and jazz.

A city editor, at lunch with a colleague, pulled at his cigarette and talked. "See that Sunday story we had on the Bat?" he said. "Pretty tidy—huh—and yet we didn't have to play it up. It's an amazing list—the Marshall Jewels—the Allison murder—the mail-truck thing—two hundred thousand he got out of that, all negotiable, and two men dead. I wonder how many people he's really killed—we made it six murders and nearly a million in loot—didn't even have room for the small stuff—but there must be more—"

His companion whistled.

"And when is the Universe's Finest Newspaper going to burst forth with 'Bat Captured by Blade Reporter'?" he inquired, sardonically.

"Oh, for—lay off of it, will you?" said the city editor, peevishly. "The Old Man's been hopping around about it for two months till everybody's plumb cuckoo. Even offered a bonus—a big one—and that shows how crazy he is—he doesn't love a nickel any better than his right eye—for any sort of exclusive story. Bonus—huh!" and he crushed out his cigarette. "It won't be a Blade reporter that gets that bonus—or any reporter. It'll be Sherlock Holmes from the spirit world."

"But look here, Bill—you don't mean to tell me he'll keep on getting away with it indefinitely?"

The editor frowned. "Confidentially—I don't know," he said with a chuckle. "The situation's this: for the first time the super-crook—the super-crook of fiction—the kind that never makes a mistake—has come to life—real life. And it'll take a cleverer man than any Central Office dick I've ever met to catch him!"

"Then you don't think he's just an ordinary crook with a lot of luck?"

"I do not," The editor was emphatic. "He's the Chapman type—but he's brainier than Chapman. Got a ghastly sense of humor, too—look at the way he leaves his calling card after every job—a black-paper bat inside the Marshall safe—a bat drawn on the wall with a burnt match where he'd fiddled the Cedarburg bank—a real bat, dead, tacked to the mantelpiece over poor old Allison's body. Oh, he's in a class by himself—and I very much doubt if he was a crook at all for most of his life."

"You mean?"

"I mean this. The police have been combing the underworld for him—I don't think he comes from there. I think they've got to look higher—up in our world—for a brilliant man with a kink in the brain. He may be a doctor, a lawyer, a merchant, honored in his community by day—good line that, I'll use it some time—and at night, a bloodthirsty assassin. Well—that's our man."

"But, Bill—"

"I know. I've been going around the last month, looking at everybody I knew and thinking—are you the Bat? Try it for a while—you'll want to sleep with a light in your room after a few days of it. Look around the

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The Super-Crook of Fiction.

University club—that white-haired man over there—dignified—respectable—is he the Bat? Your own lawyer—your own doctor—your own best friend. Can happen, you know—look at those Chicago boys—the thrill-killers. Just brilliant students—likeable boys—to the people that taught them—and cold-blooded murderers, all the same."

His companion laughed uncertainly.

"How about you, Bill—are you the Bat?"

The editor smiled. "See," he said, "it's got you already. No—I can prove an alibi—the Bat's been laying off the city, recently—taking a fling at some of the swell suburbs. Besides—I haven't the brains—I'm free to admit it." He struggled into his coat. "Well—let's talk about some-

## A Novel from the Play

By Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood

"The Bat," copyright, 1926, by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood.

WNU Service

thing else—I'm sick of the Bat and his murders."

His companion rose as well, but it was evident that the editor's theory had taken firm hold on his mind. As they went out the door together he returned to the subject.

"Honestly, though, Bill—were you serious—really serious—when you said you didn't know of a single detective with brains enough to trap this devil?"

The editor paused in the doorway. "Serious enough," he said. "And yet there's one man—I don't know him myself—but from what I've heard of him, he might be able—but what's the use of speculating?"

"I'd like to know, all the same," said the other, and laughed nervously. "We're moving out to the country next week ourselves—right in the Bat's new territory."

"We'll," said the editor, "you won't let it go any further? Of course it's just an idea of mine—but if the Bat ever came prowling around our place, the detective I'd try to get in touch with would be—" He put his lips close to his companion's ear and whispered a name.

The man whose name he whispered, oddly enough, was at that moment standing before his official superior in a quiet room not far away. Tall, recently good-looking and well, if inconspicuously clothed and groomed, he by no means seemed the typical detective that the editor had spoken of so scornfully. He looked something like a college athlete who had kept up his training—something like a pillar of one of the more sedate financial houses—he could assume and discard a dozen manners in as many minutes, but, to the casual observer, the one thing certain about him would probably seem his utter lack of connection with the seamier side of existence. The key to his real secret of life, however, lay in his eyes. When in repose, as now, they were velled and without unusual quality—but they were the eyes of a man who can wait and a man who can strike.

He stood perfectly easy before his chief for several moments before the latter looked up from his papers.

"Well, Anderson," he said at last, looking up. "I got your report on the Wilberly burglary this morning. I'll tell you this about it—if you do a neater and quieter job in the next ten years you can take this desk away from me—I'll give it to you. As it is, your name's gone up for promotion today—you deserved it long ago."

"Thank you, sir," said the tall man, smiling and sitting down. He took a cigar and lit it. "That makes it easier, sir. Because—I've come to ask a favor."

"All right," said the chief, promptly. "Whatever it is, it's granted."

Anderson smiled again. "You'd better hear what it is first, sir. I don't want to put anything over on you."

"Try it," said the chief. "What is it—vacation? Take as long as you like—within reason—you've earned it—I'll put it through today."

Anderson shook his head. "No, sir—I don't want a vacation. I want to be assigned to a certain case—that's all."

The chief's look grew searching. "It's," he said. "Well—as I say—anything within reason. What case do you want to be assigned to?"

The muscles of Anderson's left hand tensed on the arm of his chair. He looked squarely at the chief. "I want a chance at the Bat!" he said, slowly.

The chief's face became expressionless. "I said—anything within reason," he said, softly, regarding Anderson keenly.

"I want a chance at the Bat!" repeated Anderson stubbornly. "If I've done good work so far—I want a chance at the Bat!"

The chief drummed on the desk. Annoyance and surprise were in his voice when he spoke.

"But look here, Anderson," he burst out finally. "Anything else and

I'll—but what's the use? I said a minute ago, you had brains—but now, by Judas, I doubt it! If anyone else wanted a chance at the Bat—I'd give it to them gladly—I'm hard-boiled. But you're too valuable a man to be thrown away!"

"I'm no more valuable than Wentworth would have been."

"Maybe not—and look what happened to him! A bullet-hole in his heart—and thirty years of work that he might have done thrown away! No, Anderson—I've found two first-class men since I've been at this desk—Wentworth and you. He asked for his chance—I gave it to him—and turned him over to the government—and lost him. Good detectives aren't so plentiful that I can afford to lose you both."

"Wentworth was a friend of mine," said Anderson, softly. His knuckles were white dints in the hand that gripped the chair. "Ever since the Bat got him—I've wanted my chance. Now my other work's cleaned up—and I still want it."

"But I still tell you—" began the chief in tones of high exasperation. Then he stopped, and looked at his protégé. There was silence for a time.

"Oh, well—" said the chief, finally, in a hopeless voice. "Go ahead—commit suicide—I'll send you a 'Gates Ajar' and a card—'Here lies a d—n fool who would have been a great detective if he hadn't been so pig-headed.' Go ahead!"

Anderson rose. "Thank you, sir," he said in a deep voice. His eyes had light in them, now. "I can't thank you enough, sir."

"Don't try," grumbled the chief. "If I weren't so much of a d—n fool as you are, I wouldn't let you do it. And if I weren't so d—n old, I'd go after the slippery devil myself and let you sit here and watch me get brought in with an infernal paper bat pinned where my shield ought to be. The Bat's supernatural, Anderson—you haven't a chance in the world—but it does me good all the same to shake hands with a man with brains and nerve," and he solemnly wrung Anderson's hand in an iron grip.

Anderson smiled. "The angiest bat flies once too often," he said. "I'm not promising anything, chief, but—"

"Maybe," said the chief. "Now wait a minute—keep your shirt on—you're not going out bat hunting this minute, you know—"

"Sir? I thought I—"

"Well, you're not," said the chief, decidedly. "I've still some little respect for my own intelligence and it tells me to get all the work out of you I can, before you start wild-goose chasing after this—this bat out of hell. The first time he's heard of again—and it shouldn't be long from the fast way he works—you're assigned to the case. That's understood. Till then, you do what I tell you—and it'll be work, believe me."

"All right, sir," Anderson laughed and turned to the door. "And—thank you again."

He went out. The door closed. The chief remained for some minutes looking at the door and shaking his head. "The best man I've had in years—except Wentworth," he murmured to himself. "And throwing himself away—to be killed by a cold-blooded devil that nothing human can catch."

He turned back to his desk and his papers. But for some minutes he could not pay attention to the papers. There was a shadow on them—a shadow that blurred the typed letters—the shadow of bat's wings.

## CHAPTER II

### Miss Van Gorder

Miss Cornelia Van Gorder, indomitable spinster, last bearer of a name which had been great in New York when New York was a red-roofed Nieuw Amsterdam and Peter Stuyvesant a parvenu, sat propped up in bed in the green room of her newly rented country house, reading the morning newspaper. Patricia to her fingertips, independent to the roots of her hair, she preserved, at sixty-five, a humorous and quenchless curiosity in regard to every side of life, which even the full and crowded years that already lay behind her had not entirely satisfied. She was an Age and an

## Jack Rabbit Forced to Succumb to Auto

A western physician returning from a professional call across the country stirred up a Jack rabbit, says the Evansville Journal. The animal trotted along in front of the physician's car undisturbed apparently while it was traveling 25 miles an hour. Here was a sporting chance to try out the runner made famous by Mark Twain. The physician speeded his car from 25 to 30 miles, and then to 35. The rabbit held its place in the road apparently enjoying the race at that pace. Then the doctor turned on the gas to a speed of 40 miles an hour. The rabbit held the road until it sensed the car was gaining upon it and then leaped off into the brush at the side of the road. Thus it appears that the unknown speed of the famous animal has been established. Many a good hound dog has run itself almost to death in pursuit of a Jack rabbit before it would give up the chase. Even the greyhound has never been able to carry on with a Jack rabbit. It has taken an automobile to drive the Jack from the field in a race for

speed. No doubt the Jack is wondering what sort of a dog has come into its field to defeat it in a trial of speed.

### Too Generous

Two prominent clubwomen recently gave a program by reading, in dialogue form, a series of short paragraphs each had written on a special theme. First one would read, and then in response the other would give her offering. Each had worked out her part of the program cleverly and tried to put her share over with good effect. Imagine the consternation of Mrs. A when a friend, thinking she had written the entire thing, rushed up at the close and said: "Oh, your program was so interesting, but you gave all the cleverest parts to Mrs. B to read. Why didn't you keep those for yourself?"—Indianapolis News.

The elephant is the last of his kind, and he is in a fair way toward extinction.

Attitude, but she was more than that—she had grown old without growing dull or losing touch with youth—her face had the delicate strength of a fine cameo—and her mild and youthful heart preserved an innocent zest for adventure.

Wide travel, social leadership, the world of art and books, a dozen charters, an existence rich with diverse experience—all these she had enjoyed, energetically and to the full—but she felt, with ingenuous vanity, that there were still sides to her character which even these had not brought to light. As a little girl she had hesitated between wishing to be a locomotive engineer or a famous bandit—and when she had found, at seven, that the ac-



Lizzie Could Go Hysterical Over a Creaking Door.

dent of sex would probably debar her from either occupation, she had resolved, fiercely, that some time before she died she would show the world in general and the Van Gorder clan in particular that a woman was quite capable of dangerous exploits as a man.

She threw down the morning paper disgustedly. Here she was at sixty-five—rich—safe—settled for the summer in a delightful country-place—a good cook—excellent servants—beautiful gardens and grounds—everything as respectable and comfortable as—as a limousine! And out in the world—people were murdering and robbing each other—floating over Niagara falls in barrels—rescuing children from burning houses—taming tigers—going to Africa to hunt gorillas—doing all sorts of exciting things! She could not float over Niagara falls in a barrel—Lizzie Allen, her faithful old maid, would never let her! She could not go to Africa to hunt gorillas—Sally Ogden, her sister, would never let her hear the last of it. She could not even, as she certainly would if she were a man, try and track down this terrible creature, the Bat!

She smiled disgustedly. Things came to her much too easily. Take this very house she was living in. Ten days ago she had decided, on the spur of the moment, to take a place in the country for the summer. It was late in the renting season—even the ordinary difficulties of finding a suitable spot would have added some spice to the quest—but this ideal place had practically fallen into her lap, with no trouble or search at all. Courtleigh Fleming, president of the Union bank, who had built the house on a scale of comfortable magnificence—Courtleigh Fleming had died suddenly in the West, when Miss Van Gorder was beginning her house-hunting. The day after his death her agent had called her up—Richard Fleming, Courtleigh Fleming's nephew and heir, was anxious to rent the Fleming house at once—if she made a quick decision it was hers for the summer, at a bargain. Miss Van Gorder had decided at once—she took an innocent pleasure in bargains. The next day the keys were hers—the servants engaged to stay on—within a week she had moved. All very pleasant and easy no doubt—but adventure—pooh!

And yet she could not really say that her move to the country had brought her no adventures at all. There had been—things. Last night the lights had gone off unexpectedly, and Billy, the Japanese butler and handy-man, had said that he had seen a face at the kitchen window. Servants' nonsense, probably—but the servants seemed unusually nervous for people who were used to the country. And Lizzie, of course, had sworn that she had seen a man trying to get up the stairs—but Lizzie could grow hysterical over a creaking door. Still—it was queer! And what had that affable Doctor Wells said to her—"I respect your courage, Miss Van Gorder—moving out into the Bat's home country, you know!" She picked up the paper again—there was a map of the scene of the Bat's most recent exploits and—yes—three of his recent crimes had been within a twenty-mile radius of this very spot. She thought it over and gave a little shudder of pleasurable fear. Then she dismissed the thought with a shrug. No chance! She might live in a lonely house, two miles from the railroad station, all summer long—and the Bat would never disturb her—nothing ever did

## Improved Uniform International Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.) (Ed. 1927, Western Newspaper Union.)

### Lesson for November 6

#### AMOS PLEADS FOR JUSTICE

LESSON TEXT—Amos 5:1-27. GOLDEN TEXT—Let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.

PRIMARY TOPIC—Treating Every-body Right.

JUNIOR TOPIC—The Kind of Man God Hears.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—A Squaring for God Against the Crowd.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—The Conditions of Divine Approval.

#### I. Israel's Desolation Predicted (vv. 1-3).

Amos lamented over the doom which was to overtake the nation. Israel is called a virgin because she had never been subdued by any foreign nation (see Isa. 23:12). Her falling to rise no more sets forth the utter desolation and helplessness to which the Assyrians subjected the nation. From this captivity Israel never returned. Those who came back from the Babylonian captivity were largely from Egypt.

#### II. The Call to Return to God.

God through the prophet says, "seek ye me and ye shall live." The implication is that while the divine judgments are not executed, an opportunity is offered for them to turn to God. In their turning to God they were to renounce:

1. Idolatry (vv. 5, 6).

They were to turn away from the places of idolatry—Bethel, Gilgal and Beersheba. God's judgment was to strike these places.

If they would not come to Him for life He would be their destroyer. "Our God is a consuming fire." The only one who can give life to those who seek Him is the one who shall destroy.

2. Cease to pervert judgment (v. 7).

"Turn judgment to wormwood" implies the bitterness of the perversion of justice to the injured.

3. Cease to dethrone righteousness. "Leaving off righteousness" is thought to mean that unrighteousness was allowed to take its place. In this third exhortation the Lord's name is given with the following statement of some of His works:

1. "Maketh the seven stars and Orion;" 2. "Turneth the shadow of death into morning;" 3. "Maketh the day dark with night;" 4. "Callest them out upon the earth," both in rain and deluge; 5. "Strengthened the spoil against the strong."

III. The Sins Committed by the Wicked Nation (vv. 10-13).

1. They hated the judge who condemned their wicked practices (v. 10).

2. They abhorred him that spoke uprightly (v. 10).

This most likely referred to the prophets themselves who told them of their sins and urged uprightness of life.

3. They trampled upon the poor (v. 11).

The rich built magnificent houses out of the proceeds extorted from the poor.

4. They afflicted the just (v. 12).

This they did by taking a bribe.

5. They turned aside the poor in the gate (v. 12).

Because they had no money the poor were turned aside.

It was most difficult for the poor to get justice. The times were so evil that the prudent would best keep silence.

IV. The Conduct of the Righteous (vv. 14, 15).

No condition in the world, religious, social or political can become so difficult that the righteous are shut off from help. The righteous can:

1. Seek God (v. 14).

Those who seek good shall have with them the Lord God of Hosts.

2. Hate the evil (v. 15).

Evil must be hated. The sin question must be settled before God can bestow His blessings.

3. Establish judgment in the gate.

It was the custom in that day for the courts of justice to sit in the gate of the city. The prophet urges upon them the responsibility to place honorable men in charge of public affairs.

V. The Judgment to Fall (vv. 16-20).