

THE BAT

STORY FROM THE START

Defying all efforts to capture him, after a long series of murders and robberies, a super-crook known to the police only as "The Bat" has brought about a veritable reign of terror. At his wife's end, and at the man's own request, the chief of police assigns his best operative, Anderson, to get on the trail of the Bat. With her niece, Dale Ogden, Miss Cornelia Van Gorder is living in the country home of the late Courtleigh Fleming, who until his recent death had been president of the Union bank, wrecked because of the theft of a large sum of currency. Miss Van Gorder receives a note warning her to vacate the place at once on pain of death. Dale returns from the city, where she had been to hire a gardener. Miss Cornelia tells Lizzie Allen, her faithful Irish maid, who is decidedly nervous, that a detective is coming that night. The gardener arrives, giving his name as Brooks.

CHAPTER III—Continued

"I could not verify your references, as the Brays are in Canada—" she proceeded.

The young man took an eager step forward. "I am sure if Mrs. Bray were here—" he began, then flushed and stopped, twisting his cap.

"Were here?" said Miss Cornelia in a curious voice. "Are you a professional gardener?"

"Yes." The young man's manner had grown a trifle defiant; but Miss Cornelia's next question followed remorselessly.

"Know anything about hardy perennials?" she said in a soothing voice, while Lizzie regarded the interview with wondering eyes.

"Oh yes," but the young man seemed curiously lacking in confidence. "They—they're the ones that keep their leaves during the winter, aren't they?"

"Come over here—closer—" said Miss Cornelia, imperiously. Once more she scrutinized him and this time there was no doubt of his discomfort under her stare.

"Have you had any experience with rubella?" she queried finally.

"Oh, yes—yes—yes, indeed," the gardener stammered. "Yes."

"And alopecia?" pursued Miss Cornelia.

The young man seemed to fumble in his mind for the characteristics of such a flower or shrub.

"The dry weather is very hard on alopecia," he asserted, finally, and was evidently relieved to see Miss Cornelia receive the statement with a pleasant smile. She leaned forward—her next question was obviously to be a weighty one.

"What do you think is the best treatment for urticaria?" she propounded with a highly professional manner.

It appeared to be a catch-question. The young man knotted his brows. Finally a gleam of light seemed to come to him.

"Urticaria frequently needs—er—thinning," he announced decisively.

"Needs scratching, you mean?" Miss Cornelia rose, with a snort of disdain, and faced him. "Young man, urticaria is hives—rubella is measles—and alopecia is baldness!" she thundered. She waited a moment for his defense—none came.

"Why did you tell me you were a professional gardener?" she went on, accusingly. "Why have you come here at this hour of night, pretending to be something you're not?"

By all standards of drama, the young man should have wilted before her wrath. Instead he suddenly smiled at her, boyishly, and threw up his hands in a gesture of defeat.

"I know I shouldn't have done it!" he confessed with appealing frankness. "You'd have found me out anyhow! I don't know anything about gardening. The truth is," his tone grew somber, "I was desperate. I had to have work!"

The candor of his smile would have disarmed a sterner-hearted person than Miss Cornelia. But her suspicions were still awake.

"That's all, is it?"

"That's enough, when you're down and out." His words had an unmistakable accent of finality. She couldn't help wanting to believe him—and yet—he wasn't what he had pretended to be—and this night of all nights was no time to take people on trust!

"How do I know you won't steal the spoons?" she queried, her voice still gruff.

"Are they nice spoons?" he asked with absurd seriousness. She couldn't help smiling at his tone. "Beautiful spoons."

Again that engaging boyish manner of his touched something in her heart.

"Spoons are a great temptation to me, Miss Van Gorder—but if you'll take me, I'll promise to leave them alone."

"That's extremely kind of you," she answered with grim humor—knowing herself beaten. She went over to ring for Billy.

Lizzie took the opportunity to gain her ear.

"I don't trust him, Miss Nelly! He's too smooth!" she whispered, warningly. Miss Cornelia stiffened. "I haven't asked for your opinion, Lizzie," she said.

But Lizzie was not to be put off by the Van Gorder manner.

"Oh," she whispered, "you're just as bad as the rest of 'em. A good-looking man comes in the door and your brains fly out the window!"

Miss Cornelia quelled her with a gesture and turned back to the young man. He was standing just where she had left him, his cap in his hands—but, while her back had been turned, his eyes had made a stealthy survey of the living room—a survey that would have made it plain to Miss Cornelia, if she had seen him, that his interest in the Fleming establishment was not merely the casual interest of a servant in his new place of abode. But she had not seen—and she could have told nothing from his present expression.

"Have you had anything to eat lately?" she asked, in a kindly voice.

He looked down at his cap. "Not since this morning," he admitted, as Billy answered the bell.

Miss Cornelia turned to the impassive Japanese.

"Billy, give this man something to eat and then show him where he is to sleep."

She hesitated. The gardener's house was some distance from the main building, and with the night and the approaching storm she felt her own courage weakening. Into the bargain, whether this stranger had lied about his gardening or not, she was curiously attracted to him.

"I think," she said slowly, "that I'll have you sleep in the house here, at least for tonight. Tomorrow we can—the housemaid's room, Billy," she told the butler. And before their departure she held out a candle and matches.

"Better take these with you, Brooks," she said. "The local light company crawls under its bed every time there is a thunder storm. Good night, Brooks."

"Good night, ma'am," said the young man, smiling. Following Billy to the door, he paused. "You're being mighty good to me," he said, diffidently, smiled again, and disappeared after Billy.

As the door closed behind them, Miss Cornelia found herself smiling, too. "That's a pleasant young fellow—no matter what he is," she said to herself, decidedly, and not even Lizzie's feverish "Haven't you any sense taking strange men into the house? How do you know he isn't the Bat?" could draw a reply from her.

Again the thunder rolled as she straightened the papers and magazines on the table and Lizzie gingerly took up the ouija-board to replace it on the bookcase with the prayer-book firmly on top of it. And this time, with the roll of the thunder, the lights in the living room blinked uncertainly for an instant, before they recovered their normal brilliance.

"There go the lights!" grumbled Lizzie, her fingers still touching the prayer-book, as if for protection. Miss Cornelia did not answer her directly.

"We'll put the detective in the blue room when he comes," she said. "You'd better go up and see if it's all ready."

Lizzie started to obey, going toward the alcove to ascend to the second floor by the alcove stairs. But Miss Cornelia stopped her.

"Lizzie—you know that stair rail's just been varnished—Miss Dale got a stain on her sleeve there this afternoon—and Lizzie—"

"Yes'm?"

"No one is to know that he is a detective. Not even Billy." Miss Cornelia was very firm.

"Well, what'll I say he is?"

"It's nobody's business."

"A detective," moaned Lizzie, opening the hall door to go by the main staircase. "Tiptoeing around with his eye to all the keyholes. A body won't be safe in the bathtub." She shut the door with a little slap and disappeared. Miss Cornelia sat down—she had many things to think over—"if I ever get time really to think of anything again," she thought, "because with gardeners coming who aren't gardeners—and Lizzie hearing yells in the grounds and—"

She started slightly. The front-door bell was ringing—a long trill, uncannily loud in the quiet house.

She sat rigid in her chair, waiting. Billy came in.

"Front-door key, please?" he asked urbanely. She gave him the key.

"Find out who it is before you unlock the door," she said. He nodded. She heard him at the door—then a murmur of voices—Dale's voice and another's—"Won't you come in for a few minutes? Oh, thank you." She relaxed.

The door opened—it was Dale.

"How lovely she looks in that evening wrap!" thought Miss Cornelia. "But how tired, too. I wish I knew what was worrying her."

She smiled. "Aren't you back early, Dale?"

Dale threw off her wrap and stood for a moment patting back into its smooth, smart bob, hair ruffled by the wind.

"I was tired," she said, sinking into a chair.

"Not worried about anything?" Miss Cornelia's eyes were sharp.

"No," said Dale, without conviction, "but I've come here to be company for you and I don't want to run away all the time." She picked up the evening paper and looked at it without apparently seeing it. Miss Cornelia heard voices in the hall—a man's voice—affable—"How have you been, Billy?"—Billy's voice in answer, "Very well, sir."

A Novel from the Play

By Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood

"The Bat," copyright, 1925, by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwood.

WNU Service

"Who's out there, Dale?" she queried.

Dale looked up from the paper. "Doctor Wells, darling," she said in a listless voice. "He brought me over from the club—I asked him to come in for a few minutes. Billy's just taking his coat." She rose, threw the paper aside, came over and kissed Miss Cornelia suddenly and passionately—then, before Miss Cornelia, a little startled, could return the kiss, went over and sat on the settee by the fireplace near the door of the billiard room.

Miss Cornelia turned to her with a thousand questions on her tongue, but before she could ask any of them, Billy was ushering in Doctor Wells.

As she shook hands with the doctor, Miss Cornelia observed him with casual interest—wondering why such a good-looking man, in his early forties, apparently built for success, should be content with the comparative rustication of his local practice. That shrewd, rather aquiline face, with its



"Have You Had Anything to Eat Lately?"

keen gray eyes, would have found itself more at home in a wider sphere of action, she thought—there was just that touch of ruthlessness about it which makes or mars a captain in the world's affairs. She found herself murmuring the usual conventionalities of greeting.

"Oh, I'm very well, doctor, thank you—Well, many people at the country club?"

The doctor sat down. "Not very many," he said, with a shake of his head. "This failure of the Union bank has knocked a good many of the club members sky high."

"Just how did it happen?" Miss Cornelia was making conversation.

"Oh, the usual thing." The doctor took out his cigarette case. "The cashier, a young chap named Bailey, looted the bank to the tune of over a million."

Dale turned sharply toward them from her seat by the fireplace.

"How do you know the cashier did it?" she said in a low voice.

The doctor laughed. "Well—he's run away, for one thing. The bank examiners found the deficit, Bailey, the cashier, went out on an errand—and didn't come back. The method was simple enough—worthless bonds substituted for good ones—with a good bond on the top and bottom of each package, so the packages would pass a casual inspection. Probably been going on for some time."

The fingers of Dale's right hand drummed restlessly on the edge of her settee.

"Couldn't somebody else have done it?" she queried tensely.

The doctor smiled, a trifle patronizingly.

"Of course the president of the bank had access to the vaults," he said. "But as you know, Mr. Courtleigh Fleming, the late president, was buried last Monday."

Miss Cornelia had seen her niece's face light up oddly at the beginning of the doctor's statement—to relax into lassitude again at its conclusion. Bailey—Bailey—she was sure she remembered that name on Dale's lips.

"Dale, dear, did you know this young Bailey?" she asked, point-blank.

The girl had started to light a cigarette. The flame wavered in her fingers—the match went out.

"Yes—slightly," she said. She bent to strike another match, averting her face. Miss Cornelia did not press her.

"What with bank robberies and bolshevism and income tax," she said, turning the subject, "the only way to keep your money these days is to spend it."

"Or not have any—like myself!" the doctor agreed.

"It seems strange," Miss Cornelia went on, "living in Courtleigh Fleming's house. A month ago, I'd never even heard of Mr. Fleming—though I suppose I should have—and now—why, I'm as interested in the failure of his bank as if I were a depositor!"

The doctor regarded the end of his cigarette.

"As a matter of fact," he said, pleasantly, "Dick Fleming had no right to rent you the property before the estate was settled. He must have done it the moment he received my telegram announcing his uncle's death."

"Were you with him when he died?"

"Yes—in Colorado. He had angina pectoris, and took me with him for that reason."

"I suppose," pursued Miss Cornelia, watching Dale out of the corner of her eye, "that there is no suspicion that Courtleigh Fleming robbed his own bank?"

"Well, if he did," said the doctor amiably, "I can testify that he didn't have the loot with him." His tone grew more serious. "No! He had his faults—but not that."

"Miss Cornelia made up her mind. She had resolved before not to summon the doctor for aid in her difficulties—but now that chance had brought him here, the opportunity seemed too good a one to let slip.

"Doctor," she said, "I think I ought to tell you something. Last night and the night before, attempts were made to enter this house. Once an intruder actually got in and was frightened away by Lizzie at the top of the staircase." She indicated the alcove stairs. "And twice I have received anonymous communications threatening my life if I did not leave the house and go back to the city."

Dale rose from her settee startled.

"I didn't know that, auntie! How dreadful!" she gasped.

Instantly Miss Cornelia regretted her impulse of confidence. She tried to pass the matter off with tart humor.

"Don't tell Lizzie," she said. "She'd yell like a siren. It's the only thing she does like a siren, but she does it superbly!"

For a moment it seemed as if Miss Cornelia had succeeded. The doctor smiled—Dale sat down again, her expression altering from one of anxiety to one of amusement. Miss Cornelia opened her lips to dilate further upon Lizzie's eccentricities. . . .

But just then there was a splintering crash of glass from one of the French windows behind her!

"And threw in a stone!"

"Wait a minute, I'll—" The doctor, all alert at once, darted up into the alcove and jerked at the terrace door.

"It's bolted at the top, too," called Miss Cornelia. He nodded, without wasting words on a reply, unbolted the door and dashed out into the darkness of the terrace. Miss Cornelia saw him run past the French windows and disappear into blackness. Meanwhile Dale, her listlessness vanished before the shock of the strange occurrence, had gone to the broken window and picked up the stone. It was wrapped in paper—there seemed to be writing on the paper. She closed the terrace door and brought the stone to her aunt.

Miss Cornelia unwrapped the paper and smoothed out the sheet.

Two lines of coarse, round handwriting sprawled across it:

"Take warning! Leave this house at once! It is threatened with disaster which will involve you if you remain!"

There was no signature.

"Who do you think wrote it?" said Dale, breathlessly.

Miss Cornelia straightened up like a ramrod—indomitable.

"A fool—that's who! If anything was calculated to make me stay here forever, this sort of thing would do it!"

She twitched the sheet of paper angrily.

"But something may happen, darling!"

"I hope so! That's the reason I—"

"She stopped. The doorbell was ringing again—thrilling, insistent. Her niece started at the sound.

"Oh, don't let anybody in," she besought Miss Cornelia, as Billy came in from the hall with his usual air of walking on velvet.

"Key, front door please—bell ring," he explained tersely, taking the key from the table.

Miss Cornelia issued instructions.

"See that the chain is on the door, Billy. Don't open it all the way. And get the visitor's name before you let him in."

She lowered her voice.

"If he says he is Mr. Anderson, let him in and take him to the library."

Billy nodded and disappeared. Dale turned to her aunt, the color out of her cheeks.

"Anderson? Who is Mr.—"

Miss Cornelia did not answer. She thought for a moment. Then she put her hand on Dale's shoulder in a gesture of protective affection.

"The man in the library is a detective from police headquarters," she said.

She had expected Dale to show surprise—excitement—but the white mask of horror which the girl turned toward her appalled her.

"Not—the police!" breathed Dale in tones of utter consternation. Miss Cornelia could not understand why the news had stirred her niece so deeply. But there was no time to puzzle it out—she heard crunching steps on the terrace—the doctor was returning.

"Sh!" she whispered. "It isn't necessary to tell the doctor. I think he's a sort of perambulating bedside gossip—and once it's known the police are here we'll never catch the criminals!"

When the doctor entered from the terrace, brushing drops of rain from his no longer immaculate evening clothes, Dale was back on her favorite settee and Miss Cornelia was poring over the mysterious missive that had been wrapped about the stone.

"He got away in the shrubbery," said the doctor, disgustedly, taking out a handkerchief to flick the spots of mud from his shoes.

Miss Cornelia gave him the letter of warning. "Read this," she said.

The doctor adjusted a pair of pince-nez—read the two crude sentences over—once—twice. Then he looked shrewdly at Miss Cornelia.

"Were the others like this?" he queried.

She nodded. "Practically."

He hesitated for a moment like a man with an unpleasant social duty to face.

"Miss Van Gorder, may I speak frankly?"

"Generally speaking, I detest frankness," said the lady, grimly. "But—go on!"

The doctor tapped the letter. His face was wholly serious.

"I think you ought to leave this house," he said bluntly.

"Because of that letter? Humph!" His very seriousness, perversely enough, made her suddenly wish to treat the whole matter as lightly as possible.

"There is some devilry afoot," he persisted. "You are not safe here, Miss Van Gorder."

But if he was persistent in his attitude, so was she in hers.

"I've been safe in all kinds of houses for sixty-odd years," she said lightly. "It's time I had a bit of a change. Besides," she gestured towards her defenses, "this house is as nearly impregnable as I can make it. The window locks are sound enough—the doors are locked and the keys are there," she pointed to the keys lying on the table. "As for the terrace door you just used," she went on, "I had Billy put an extra bolt on it today. By the way, did you bolt that door again?" She moved toward the alcove.

CHAPTER IV. Detective Anderson Takes Charge.

"What's that?"

"Somebody smashed a window pane!"

Child Training That Has Harmful Effects

Too much or too little affection of parents is equally harmful and both spoil character. The training that produces docile obedience spoils the child's native aggressiveness and leaves him to be easily beaten in the later competitions of life by minds superior only in their inner preparation. The authority of a parent is a responsibility rather than a privilege.

Another risk assumed by parents, which is not so commonly understood, is that of hurting their children by affection. With human beings the love attitude may persist in such a way that the child never actually matures and comes to have a fully developed self-life, or indulgence heaped upon the child by the parent may spoil the zest of life and keep the child emotionally infantile. He may become fixed upon the parent so that he is essentially parasitic in his inner emotional cravings and cannot maintain normal relationships in business, social contacts or later family life if he ever attempts to establish a home of his own.—From "Social Problems of the Family" by Prof. Ernest R. Graves.

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No Home-Made Bread

It is frequently said men run their homes. How about home-made bread? I scarcely know a man who does not want home-made bread and cannot get it; the bakers have persuaded the women that bakery bread is better, as bakers have persuaded them about bobbed hair. And look at the clothes the man milliners have persuaded the women to wear.—E. W. Howe's Monthly.

No Wolf in Police Dog

German police dogs are German shepherd dogs police-trained. The history of the German shepherd dog breed dates far back into antiquity. In the opinion of Max von Stepenitz, a noted authority, it is a descendant of the Bronze age dog. This theory refutes the more or less popular present-day idea that the wolf has been largely instrumental in the development of the breed, and is in line with the beliefs of other authorities who consider it very doubtful that wolf crosses were ever made with the German shepherd dog, and that if such were the case the relationship is remote and of minor importance.

A hair from a white woman's head is lighter in weight than a white man's hair.

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Improved Uniform International Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

(© 1927, by Western Newspaper Union.)

Lesson for December 4

ISAIAH TEACHES RIGHT LIVING

LESSON TEXT—Isa. 5:1-23.
GOLDEN TEXT—Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.
PRIMARY TOPIC—How to Please God.
JUNIOR TOPIC—A Life That Pleases God.
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—A Life That Pleases God.
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—The Elements of Right Living.

I. Israel, the Favored Nation (vv. 1-7).

Their unique relation to God is presented under the figure of a vineyard. Observe:

1. God's peculiar favor (vv. 1, 2). God did for this nation what He did for no other nation in the history of the world. He evidenced it when He assigned the boundaries of Israel's inheritance (see Num. 34:1-13).
- He gathered out the stones when the Canaanites were exterminated. The choicest vine which was planted therein was the Israelitish nation which had gone through the disciplinary process in Egyptian bondage. He built a tower in it when under David Jerusalem was made its capital city.
2. The obligation of the nation (v. 2). The purpose of a vineyard is to bear fruit. The object of the husbandman in planting a vineyard and nurturing it is that it might bear fruit. The purpose of God in the selection and the blessing of the Israelitish nation was that it might bring forth fruit to His glory.
3. It bore only wild grapes (v. 4).
4. The desolation of the vineyard (vv. 5-7). Since all efforts had been wasted, the owner of the vineyard now resolves to abandon it to the wild beasts of the forest.
11. The Sins Which Brought Ruin to the Nation (vv. 8-23). The causes of this destruction are presented under six woes, each was pronounced against a particular sin.
1. Monopoly and oppression of the poor (vv. 8-10). The crime against which the first woe was denounced is that of the avaricious grasping after property which leads to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few. "Joining house to house" and "laying field to field" means the sin of the greedy monopolist who in the agricultural district takes the form of the land grabber, in the commercial centers, the form of the big men crushing out the small ones.
2. Dissipation (vv. 11-17). The sin here denounced is drunkenness. Several features are connected with this one sin.
- (1) Drinking made the life business of some (v. 11). They get up early and continue until late at night, until their whole being is inflamed.
- (2) The effort to give their hellish business a show of refinement (v. 12). This is why pleasing music is heard pouring forth from the dens of infamy over our land.
- (3) Blindness to God's warnings and judgments (v. 12).
- Their drinking and dissipation rendered them insensible to the dealings of Providence.
- (4) God's judgments for such sins (vv. 13-17). They went into captivity. The immediate cause assigned is ignorance, but it is a willful ignorance for which they are held responsible. They not only go into captivity, but there is great mortality among those who drink (v. 14). The records everywhere show a much higher death rate among drinking men. Drinking degrades all classes (v. 15). The country itself was made a waste (vv. 18, 19). So daring do they become that they defy the judgments of the Almighty (v. 19).
3. Moral confusion (v. 20). This woe is pronounced against those who try to adjust moral conditions to suit their sensual appetites.
4. Conceit (v. 21). The fifth woe is pronounced against the sin of self-conceit. Many today have become so affected by sin that they are unable to make moral discriminations. Having a false estimate of their own wisdom they plan and act without reference to God.
5. Perversion of justice (vv. 22, 23). The sixth woe is denounced against those who are in places of justice as judges. Because of their lack of moral discrimination, and because of desire for temporal gain they cause justice to miscarry.

Treatment of Sin

Use sin as it will use you. Spare it not for it will not spare you. It is your murderer, and the murderer of the world. Use it, therefore as a murderer should be used.—Richard Baxter.

Fear of Mistakes

Some of us know what it is to be miserably afraid of making mistakes in our work. How graciously He meets this with "I will direct their work in truth."—Frances Ridley Havergal.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)