



## Collected Works of Mary Roberts Rinehart (Illustrated)

*By Mary Roberts Rinehart*

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Wikipedia on Mary Roberts Rinehart:

Mary Roberts Rinehart (August 12, 1876 – September 22, 1958) was an

American writer, often called the American Agatha Christie, although her first mystery novel was published 14 years before Christie's first novel in 1922.

Rinehart is considered the source of the phrase "The butler did it" from her novel *The Door* (1930), although the novel does not use the exact phrase. Rinehart is also considered to have invented the "Had-I-But-Known" school of mystery writing, with the publication of *The Circular Staircase* (1908).

She also created a costumed super-criminal called "the Bat", cited by Bob Kane as one of the inspirations for his "Batman".

Rinehart wrote hundreds of short stories, poems, travelogues and articles. Many of her books and plays were adapted for movies, such as *The Bat* (1926), *The Bat Whispers* (1930), *Miss Pinkerton* (1932), and *The Bat* (1959 remake). In 1933 RCA Victor released *The Bat* as one of the earliest talking book recordings. Based on Rinehart's novel *Lost Ecstasy* (1927), *I Take This Woman* (1931), starring Carole Lombard and Gary Cooper, was an early sound film based on Rinehart's works.

While many of her books were best sellers, critics were most appreciative of her murder mysteries. Rinehart, in *The Circular Staircase* (1908), is credited with inventing the "Had-I-But-Known" school of mystery writing. In *The Circular Staircase* "a middle-aged spinster is persuaded by her niece and nephew to rent a country house for the summer. The gentle, peace-loving trio is plunged into a series of crimes solved with the help of the aunt." The Had-I-But-Known mystery novel is one where the principal character (frequently female) does things in connection with a crime that have the effect of prolonging the action of the novel. Ogden Nash parodied the school in his poem *Don't Guess Let Me Tell You*: "Sometimes the Had I But Known then what I know now I could have saved at least three lives by revealing to the Inspector the conversation I heard through that fortuitous hole in the floor."

The phrase "The butler did it," which has become a cliché, came from Rinehart's novel *The Door*, in which the butler actually did murder someone, although that exact phrase does not appear in the work. Tim Kelly adapted Rinehart's play into a musical, *The Butler Did It, Singing*. This play includes five lead female roles and five lead male roles.

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#### **Collected Works of Mary Roberts Rinehart (Illustrated) By Mary Roberts Rinehart Bibliography**

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