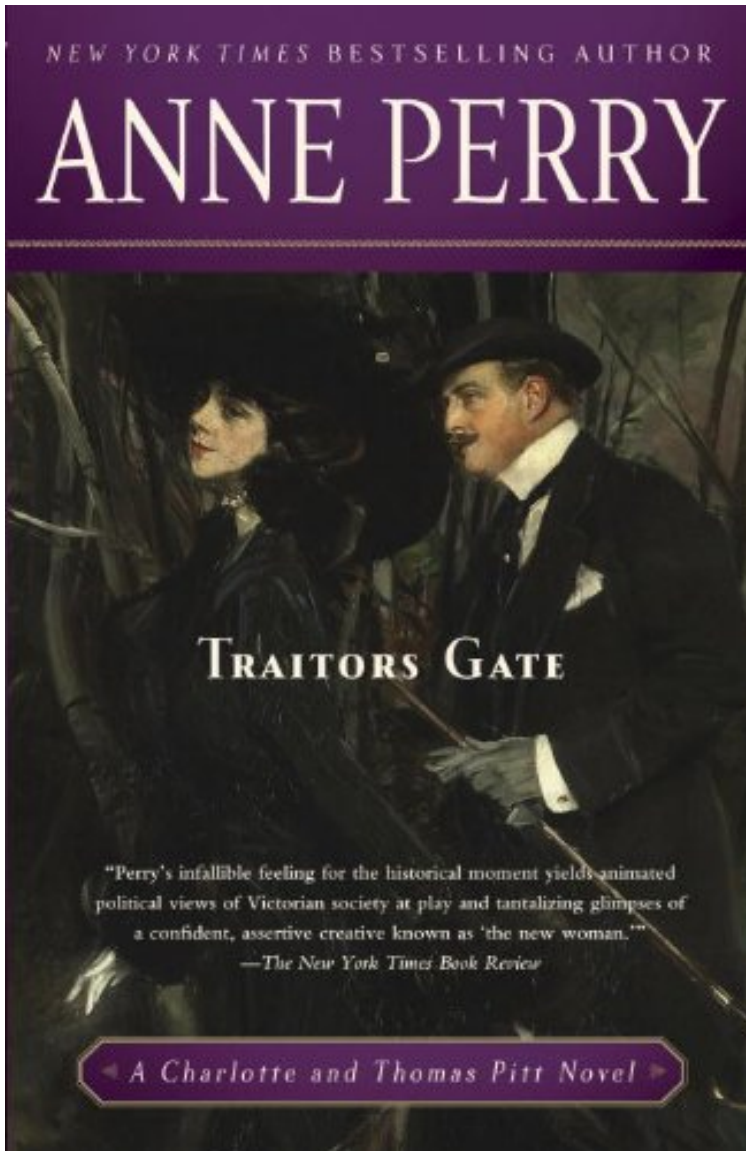


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# Traitors Gate: A Charlotte and Thomas Pitt Novel



Par Anne Perry  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurSomeone in the Colonial Office is passing secrets to Germany about Englands strategy on Africa. While Police Superintendent Thomas Pitt investigates this matter of treason, he is quietly looking into the tragic death of his childhood mentor, Sir Arthur Desmond. Pitt believes that Sir Arthur was murdered, and that the crime is connected with the treachery in the government. And when the strangled body of an aristocratic society beauty is found floating near lonely Traitors Gate, Pitt and his clever wife, Charlotte, begin to see clearly the pattern of tragedy and frightening evil that Pitt must deal with, at the risk

of his career and his life. From the Trade Paperback edition. Pitt sat back on the wooden seat and watched with profound pleasure as the sun faded on the old apple tree in the center of the lawn and for a few moments gilded the rough bark. They had only been in the new house a matter of weeks, but already it had a familiarity about it as if he were returning rather than moving in for the first time. It was many small things: the light on the patch of stone wall at the end of the garden, the bark of the trees, the smell of grass deep in the shade under the branches. It was early evening and there were moths fluttering and drifting in the early

May air, which was already cooler as twilight approached. Charlotte was inside somewhere, probably upstairs seeing the children to bed. He hoped she had also thought of supper. He was surprisingly hungry, considering he had done little all day but enjoy the rare full Saturday at home. That was one of the benefits of having been promoted to Superintendent when Micah Drummond had retired: he had more time. The disadvantages were that he carried far more responsibility and found himself, rather too often for his wishes, behind a desk in Bow Street instead of out investigating. He settled a little lower in the seat and crossed his legs, smiling without being aware of it. He was dressed in old clothes, suitable for the gardening he had done through the day very casually, now and then. There was a click as the French doors opened and closed behind him. Please, sir . . . It was Gracie, the little waif of a maid they had brought with them, and who was now filled with importance and satisfaction because she had a woman in five days a week to do the heavy scrubbing and the laundry, and a gardeners boy three days. This fell under the heading of a considerable staff. Pitts promotion had been hers as well, and she was immensely proud of it. Yes, Gracie, he said without getting up. There's a gentleman to see you, sir, a Mr. Matthew Desmond . . . Matthew Desmond? he repeated incredulously. Yes sir. She looked startled. Shouldn't I have let him in? Yes! Yes, certainly you should. Where is he? In the parlor, sir. I offered him a cup of tea but he wouldn't have it. He looks awful upset, sir. Right, he said absently, brushing past her and striding to the doors. He pulled them open and went into the sitting room. It was now filled with the last sunlight and looking oddly golden, in spite of its green and white furnishings.

Thank you, he added over his shoulder to Gracie. He went into the hall, his heart beating faster and his mouth suddenly dry with anticipation and something not unlike guilt. He hesitated for a moment, a confusion of memories teeming through his mind and stretching as far back as consciousness would take him. He had grown up in the country, on the Desmond estate, where his father had been gamekeeper. He was an only child, as was Sir Arthur's son, a year younger than Pitt. And when Matthew Desmond had longed for someone to play with in the huge and beautiful grounds, Sir Arthur had found it natural enough to choose the gamekeeper's son. It had been an easy friendship from the beginning, and in time extended to the schoolroom as well. Sir Arthur had been pleased enough to include a second child and watch his own son's application improve, with someone to share his lessons and to compete against him. Even with Pitt's father's disgrace when he was unjustly accused of poaching (not on Sir Arthur's lands, but those of his nearest neighbor), the family were permitted to remain on the estate, with rooms in the servants quarters, and Pitt himself had not been denied his continued education while his mother worked in the kitchens. But it had been fifteen years now since Pitt had been back, and at least ten since he had had any contact with Sir Arthur or Matthew. As he stood in the hallway with his hand on the doorknob, it was not only guilt that stirred in his mind but a sense of foreboding. He opened the door and went in. Matthew turned from the mantelshelf, which he had been standing near. He had changed little: he was still tall, lean, almost narrow, with a long, erratic, humorous face, although all the laughter was bleached out of him now and he looked haggard and intensely serious. Hello, Thomas, he said quietly, coming forward and offering his hand. Pitt took it and held it firmly, searching Matthew's face. The signs of grief were so obvious it would have been offensive and ridiculous to pretend he had not seen them. What is it? he asked, sickeningly sure he already knew. Father, Matthew said simply. He died yesterday. Pitt was completely unprepared for the sense of loss which swept over him. He had not seen Arthur Desmond since before he had married and had children. He had only written letters to mark these events. Now he felt a loneliness, almost as if his roots had been torn away. A past he had taken for granted was suddenly no longer there. He had kept meaning to return. At first it had been a matter of pride which had kept him away. He would go back when he could show them all that the gamekeeper's son had achieved success, honor. Of course it had taken far longer than in his innocence he had supposed. As the years passed it had become harder, the distance too difficult to bridge. Now, without warning, it had become impossible. I . . . I'm sorry, he said to Matthew. Matthew tried to smile, at least in acknowledgment, but it was a poor effort. His face still looked haunted. Thank you for coming to tell me, Pitt went on. That was . . . very good of you. It was also far more than he deserved, and he knew it in a flush of shame. Matthew dismissed it almost impatiently with a wave of his hand. He . . . He swallowed and took a deep breath, his eyes on Pitts

face. He died at his club, here in London. Pitt was going to say he was sorry again, but it was pointless, and he ended by saying nothing. Of an overdose of laudanum, Matthew went on. His eyes searched Pitts face, seeking understanding, assurance of some answer to pain. Laudanum? Pitt repeated it to ascertain he had heard correctly. Was . . . was he ill? Suffering from No! Matthew cut him off. No, he was not ill. He was seventy, but he was in good health and good spirits. There was nothing wrong with him at all. He looked angry as he said it and there was a fierce defensiveness in his voice. Then why was he taking laudanum? Pitts policemen's mind pursued the details and the logic of it in spite of his emotions, or Matthews. He wasn't, Matthew said desperately. That's the point! They are saying he was old and losing his wits, and that he took an overdose because he no longer knew what he was doing. His eyes were blazing and he was poised ready to fly at Pitt if he even suspected him of agreeing. Pitt remembered Arthur Desmond as he had known him: tall, ineffably elegant in the casual way of those who have both confidence and a natural grace, and yet at the same time almost always untidy. His clothes did not match each other. Even with a valet's best attention, he managed to select something other than whatever was put out for him. Yet such was his innate dignity, and the humor in his long, clever face, that no one even noticed, much less thought to criticize. He had been highly individual, at times eccentric, but always with such a basic sanity, and tolerance of human frailty, that he should have been the last man on earth to resort to laudanum at all. But if he had, then he was quite capable of absentmindedly dosing himself twice. Except that surely once would have sent him to sleep anyway? Pitt had vague memories of Sir Arthur's having long wakeful spells even thirty years ago, when Pitt had stayed overnight in the hall as a child. Then Sir Arthur had simply got up and wandered around the library until he found a book he fancied, and sat in one of the old leather chairs and gone to sleep with it open in his lap. Matthew was waiting, staring at Pitt with mounting anger. Who is saying this? Pitt asked. Matthew was taken aback. It was not the question he was expecting. Uh, the doctor, the men at the club . . . What club? Oh, I am not being very clear, am I? He died at the Morton Club, in the late afternoon. In the afternoon? Not at night at all? Pitt was genuinely surprised; he did not have to affect it. No! That's the point, Thomas, Matthew said impatiently. They are saying he was demented, suffering from a sort of senile decay. It's not true, not even remotely! Father was one of the sanest men alive. And he didn't drink brandy either! At least, hardly ever. What has brandy to do with it? From the Paperback edition. *Revue de presse* Perry's infallible feeling for the historical moment yields animated political views of Victorian society at play and tantalizing glimpses of a confident, assertive creature known as the new woman. *The New York Times Book* A tale of mystery, corruption, detection, and justice as complex as the colorful characters who populate its pages. *Mystery News* In the tradition of Margaret Millar and Ruth Rendell, Perry saves her largest, tastiest revelation for the very last paragraphs. *Los Angeles Times* Riveting . . . devious . . . fascinating . . . soars with pathos and humor and, of course, a crackerjack mystery. *Mobile Register*