

# THE GATES OF CHANCE

Copyright, 1904,  
By  
Harper & Brothers

By  
VAN TASSEL SUTPHEN

## CHAPTER VII.

### The Opal Button

NOW, as a matter of fact, I had no part in the affair of the opal button; for on the very next day following our meeting with Estes I came down with typhoid and spent the next two months in the hospital. I saw little of Indiman during that time, but his seeming neglect was fully explained by the story he told me the night I was well enough to get back to 4020 Madison avenue.

"You remember, of course," began Indiman, "that I went off with Estes that May evening with just an apology to you about a family affair. Really, I knew nothing; but the boy's manner struck me as peculiar, and, while the incident of the opal button was trifling in itself, I was sure that there was something behind it. But when I plumped the question squarely at Estes he had nothing to say except that the jewel had been slipped into his hand while he stood looking into a shop window. 'Where?' I asked. 'I don't know; what it meant he either could not or would not tell. But it came up again of its own accord four days later, the exact date being May 15. So much by the way of preamble; the story proper I will read from my notes.'

"Quincey was right, and murder should be a fine art. But the Burgias—only amateurs! The far-famed Aqua Tofano—pooh! Any chemist will put it up for ten cents. Only be careful how you use it. Chemical analysis has advanced somewhat since the day of the divine Lucretia, and a jury would convict without leaving their seats."

"Rather rough on your business, I should think," said Estes, speaking somewhat thickly, for the port had stopped with him overfrequently of late. "Is poisoning really out of date?" he continued.

"As absolutely as crinoline and the novels of G. P. R. James," answered our host, lightly. "But I, who was watching him closely, saw his eyes harden. Estes had said more than one imprudent thing that evening, and this time he had gone too far. I would have to get the boy away somehow."

"There were three of us dining with Balencourt that evening at his chambers in the Argyle—Estes, Crawford, and myself; and as usual we had an excellent dinner, for Balencourt knew how to live. Who was Balencourt? Well, nobody could answer that precisely, but his letters of introduction had been unexceptionable, and his checks were always honored at Brown Brothers. Moreover, Crawford had met him frequently at the Jockey club in Paris, and there was his name on White's books for any one to read. A man of forty-five perhaps, clean shaven, well set up, an inveterate globe trotter, a prince among racers."

"I have heard him talk Eskimo with one of Peary's natives, and he had collated some of his researches into Iranic-Turkic root forms for the 'Philological Society.' But let us go back to our walnuts."

"Crawford picked up the thread. 'Then the science of assassination is a lost art,' he said, tentatively. 'I would have to get the boy away somehow.'"

"You mean beyond the risk of detection?"

"Perfectly."

"Eliminating the toxic poisons of all kinds?"

"If you like."

"I doubt it," said Crawford, with a little hesitation.

"And I deny it," interrupted Estes, rudely, and stared straight at Balencourt. A quick glance answered his challenge; it was like the engaging of rapiers.

"Perhaps Mr. Estes desires proof," said Balencourt, slowly.

"I do."

"Let us say between—"

"Tonight and the 1st of August."

"That will suit me perfectly. My passage is booked on the Teutonic for the following Wednesday."

"It is also the day set for my wedding to Miss Catherwood," said Estes, quietly.

"Balencourt took it admirably. 'So you have obtained the decision at last,' he said, smiling lightly. 'My congratulations.'"

"per?" interrupted Estes. He pushed his chair noisily back, and we all rose. 'You won't wait for coffee?' said our host, just as you please. He touched the call button, and Jarman entered to help us on with our top coats. Par parenthese, how account for the anomaly of this assemblage of a Balencourt assessing the most perfect of serving men? There never was anybody who could roll an umbrella like Jarman, and I have been around a lot in my time. After the catastrophe I tried my best to locate him, but without success. He was gone; the pearl had dropped back into the unfathomable depths of ocean. Perhaps he followed his master."

"The door closed behind us, and we three stood in the street. 'A cab?' I queried, and a passing hansom swung in towards the curb, and we followed it to the club."

"I'd rather walk along with you, Cousin Estes," said Estes. 'Jump in, Mr. Crawford, and we'll pick you up later at the club.'"

"Crawford nodded and was forthwith driven away. I turned to Estes. 'What is it, George?' I asked. 'Remember, there's Elizabeth to be considered in this.'"

"Now, while Estes is a second cousin of mine, Betty Catherwood is my niece, and so I considered that I had a double right to stick in my oar. But I wasn't prepared for the depth of trouble that I encountered in the glance George Estes turned on me. 'So bad as that!' I finished, lamely."

"It won't take long in the telling," began the boy, desperately. 'You remember that after I left Princeton I went to Germany for a two-years' course in international law under Langlotz; it was a pet idea of the pater's.'"

"The revolutionary society?"

"Yes; it's the active branch of the 'Sunrise League'—the practical work, you know, joined it."

"I had nothing to say. George laughed a little dismally and went on: 'Absurd, wasn't it? I, a citizen of the best and freest country on earth to

me?'"

"We'll work within the limit, then," I said, cheerfully. 'If we three—Crawford, you, and I—can't match wits with one polysyllabic son of the 'Dawn,' we might as well let the bottom drop out of the Monroe doctrine and be done with it.'"

"We had arrived at the club. For an instant our hands met. 'Not a word to Betty,' he whispered."

"Of course." Then we went up a wire to the caretaker tonight, and we'll be off by Thursday. I invite you all for six weeks. Why, of course, George, that includes Betty and her mother; they were to come to me, anyway, in July."

"Hoodman's Ledge is one of the innumerable small islands that dot the Maine coast above Portland. A few years ago the fancy had taken me to buy the island—it was only three acres in area—and later on I had put up a house, nothing very elegant, but everything for comfort, a model bachelor's establishment. For our present need no better asylum could have offered."

"The island was small and occupied only by my own domestic establishment. It lay in the bight of Oliver's Bay, quite a mile from the nearest shore, and there was but one other bit of land anywhere around—an uninhabited islet known as 'The Thimble,' that lay a quarter of a mile due east. Surely the isolation promised security. Here, if anywhere, we might snap our fingers at the machinations of M. Balencourt and the mysterious 'Forty.' It would be rather cold on the Maine coast during this unseasonable season, but there were fireplaces in plenty and stacks of driftwood. The only real difficulty lay in persuading my estimable sister to cut short her Newport visit and come to me a month earlier than usual."

"Finally, I left it to Betty to manage. I can explain myself as clearly as good, my dear, I ended up rather lamely, 'but it will be better for George. Will you do it?'"

"So you won't trust me with the secret? No, you needn't protest—there is a secret here, and you know it. But you have put it so cleverly that I haven't any choice in the matter. 'Better for George' indeed! Very good, my dear; I'll obey your orders. Remember that it will be the worse for you later on, unless you can show good and sufficient reason for this ridiculous mystery. Poor, dear mammal how she will be off by Thursday. I invite you all for six weeks. Why, of course, George, that includes Betty and her mother; they were to come to me, anyway, in July."

"But she can manage it, and by Thursday night the party was actually assembled at 'The Breakers.' There was a sou'easter on that night, but the driftwood burned stoutly in the wide chimney, and a few stray drops sought to immolate themselves in the green and purple flames."

"Not so bad—eh, mamma?" said Betty, as she slipped another pillow behind Mrs. Catherwood's back and handed her the last volume of 'Gyp,' with the pages neatly cut. And then she actually smiled over at me. I think I am beginning to understand Betty."

"Again I pass over many uneventful days. 'Nothing doing,' as Crawford put it, and halber-faire was a good enough motto for our silent otherwise house. The two children, of course, were blissfully happy."

"Three, four, nearly six weeks, and no sign or sound from M'sieur Balencourt. But the evening after the last, when we were living on an island surrounded on all sides by deep water and no land within a mile except that of the white pigeon, I was out on my precautions, Crawford and I kept watch, just as we used to do in the old alert, on the China station, twenty-and-nest entries in red ink, after the accustomed fashion of Central office men. So May and the first two weeks in June dragged uneventfully along; the period of stress was already half over. Then came Monday, the 18th of June, and with it a little shock. Our man—I mean Balencourt—concluded to disappear, and he did it as effectually as though there were no such thing as a 'shadow' in existence. When the head sleuth came that night to report his discomfiture, I cut him short in his theorizing and asked for the facts. But there was only the one—Balencourt was certainly not out, and that was all there was to say. Whereupon we banished the 'shadows' to the outer darkness whence they had come and convened our original council of war."

"One thing was plain—the danger of remaining longer in the city. There are no many things that may happen in a crowd, and especially if our friend Balencourt formed a part of that unknown quantity. There is always a chance of a chimney pot tumbling down over one's ears, or of being run down by some reckless chauffeur. And who is to know the truth? Accidents will happen; they are willful things and in- evitable when they have come and down- dence. Imprimis, then, to get out of town. But where?"

"Hoodman's Ledge," began Crawford, a little doubtfully, but I caught him up with joyful decision."

"The very thing," I said. 'I'll send



Once past the 1st of August, I am safe."

"We'll work within the limit, then," I said, cheerfully. 'If we three—Crawford, you, and I—can't match wits with one polysyllabic son of the 'Dawn,' we might as well let the bottom drop out of the Monroe doctrine and be done with it.'"

"We had arrived at the club. For an instant our hands met. 'Not a word to Betty,' he whispered."

"Of course." Then we went up a wire to the caretaker tonight, and we'll be off by Thursday. I invite you all for six weeks. Why, of course, George, that includes Betty and her mother; they were to come to me, anyway, in July."

"Hoodman's Ledge is one of the innumerable small islands that dot the Maine coast above Portland. A few years ago the fancy had taken me to buy the island—it was only three acres in area—and later on I had put up a house, nothing very elegant, but everything for comfort, a model bachelor's establishment. For our present need no better asylum could have offered."

"The island was small and occupied only by my own domestic establishment. It lay in the bight of Oliver's Bay, quite a mile from the nearest shore, and there was but one other bit of land anywhere around—an uninhabited islet known as 'The Thimble,' that lay a quarter of a mile due east. Surely the isolation promised security. Here, if anywhere, we might snap our fingers at the machinations of M. Balencourt and the mysterious 'Forty.' It would be rather cold on the Maine coast during this unseasonable season, but there were fireplaces in plenty and stacks of driftwood. The only real difficulty lay in persuading my estimable sister to cut short her Newport visit and come to me a month earlier than usual."

"Finally, I left it to Betty to manage. I can explain myself as clearly as good, my dear, I ended up rather lamely, 'but it will be better for George. Will you do it?'"

"So you won't trust me with the secret? No, you needn't protest—there is a secret here, and you know it. But you have put it so cleverly that I haven't any choice in the matter. 'Better for George' indeed! Very good, my dear; I'll obey your orders. Remember that it will be the worse for you later on, unless you can show good and sufficient reason for this ridiculous mystery. Poor, dear mammal how she will be off by Thursday. I invite you all for six weeks. Why, of course, George, that includes Betty and her mother; they were to come to me, anyway, in July."

"But she can manage it, and by Thursday night the party was actually assembled at 'The Breakers.' There was a sou'easter on that night, but the driftwood burned stoutly in the wide chimney, and a few stray drops sought to immolate themselves in the green and purple flames."

"Not so bad—eh, mamma?" said Betty, as she slipped another pillow behind Mrs. Catherwood's back and handed her the last volume of 'Gyp,' with the pages neatly cut. And then she actually smiled over at me. I think I am beginning to understand Betty."

"Again I pass over many uneventful days. 'Nothing doing,' as Crawford put it, and halber-faire was a good enough motto for our silent otherwise house. The two children, of course, were blissfully happy."

"Three, four, nearly six weeks, and no sign or sound from M'sieur Balencourt. But the evening after the last, when we were living on an island surrounded on all sides by deep water and no land within a mile except that of the white pigeon, I was out on my precautions, Crawford and I kept watch, just as we used to do in the old alert, on the China station, twenty-and-nest entries in red ink, after the accustomed fashion of Central office men. So May and the first two weeks in June dragged uneventfully along; the period of stress was already half over. Then came Monday, the 18th of June, and with it a little shock. Our man—I mean Balencourt—concluded to disappear, and he did it as effectually as though there were no such thing as a 'shadow' in existence. When the head sleuth came that night to report his discomfiture, I cut him short in his theorizing and asked for the facts. But there was only the one—Balencourt was certainly not out, and that was all there was to say. Whereupon we banished the 'shadows' to the outer darkness whence they had come and convened our original council of war."

"One thing was plain—the danger of remaining longer in the city. There are no many things that may happen in a crowd, and especially if our friend Balencourt formed a part of that unknown quantity. There is always a chance of a chimney pot tumbling down over one's ears, or of being run down by some reckless chauffeur. And who is to know the truth? Accidents will happen; they are willful things and in- evitable when they have come and down- dence. Imprimis, then, to get out of town. But where?"

"Hoodman's Ledge," began Crawford, a little doubtfully, but I caught him up with joyful decision."

"The very thing," I said. 'I'll send

of dead flesh. There was a disagreeable odor of burned feathers in the air. Mechanically my eye fell on the sun-dial; there was a spot the size of a silver dollar on the side of the pedestal where the stone had crumbled and disintegrated, as though it had been placed at the focus of some immensely powerful burning glass. I stepped behind the sun-dial and looked out to sea. And there, in line with the pedestal of the dial and the dead bird on the path, lay 'The Thimble.'"

"But as I have said, 'The Thimble' was a rocky islet only a few rods in extent, but densely wooded with spruce and blue gum. The general shape of it was as that of a lady's thimble; hence the name. Rather a picturesque object in the seascape, but, of course, utterly valueless except for occasional picnic uses—a bit of No Man's Land whose purpose in the economy of nature had hitherto remained unfulfilled. But now?"

"I went back to the piazza and caught up a pair of stereo-binoculars that were lying on the table. There, shining like a star through the close curtain of green that veiled 'The Thimble,' was the projecting end of a highly polished tube of steel. And even as I gazed a man's face peered out as though in the act of sighting—Aram Balencourt!"

"Then I understood. The tube was the means of projecting some enormously powerful heatbeam whose nature must be akin to that of the so-called X-ray. The article I had been reading, not ten minutes ago—what was the title?—Radium, the Wizard Metal—that incomprehensible substance, forever sending forth its terrible emanations, yet never diminished by even the ten-thousandth part of a grain—a natural force whose properties and functions were but imperfectly understood, even by the learned men who had succeeded in isolating it, an agent of such enormous potency that an ounce or two might serve to put a battleship out of commission—a couple of pounds and the universe itself were endangered. Even now from that steel tube, sighted so carefully on the pedestal of the sun-dial, billions of tons of heat were rushing, invisible to the eye, but certain death to whatever of animal existence they chanced to encoun-

ter. There was the pigeon lying dead on the walk. 'Do hurry, George,' called out Betty's thin, sweet treble. She stood at the entrance to the pavilion and waved a tennis racket impatiently."

"Coming," was the cheerful response, and Estes turned the corner of the house. He took the gravelled path at full speed. In an instant or two at the farthest he would be passing between the sun-dial and the dead pigeon, in line with those deadly radiations."

"We had been playing a little single wicket earlier in the day, and a cricket ball lay on the wicket table at my hand. I could not have uttered a word or a cry to save my life—to save his—but instinct held true. With a full, round-arm sweep the ball left my hand, catching the boy squarely on the forehead. He fell within his stride."

"Betty was with us on the instant, but I sat and held her despite her struggles. Naturally, she thought I had gone mad. Then I looked over again at 'The Thimble,' just in time to see a sheet of palest-colored flame shoot up from the island. The dense mass of green foliage seemed to wither and consume away within the tick of a clock. Through the glass I caught a glimpse of a dark figure that rolled down to the water's edge, clutching feebly at the shifting shingle. Perhaps a log, after all—it lay so still."

"An instant later 'The Thimble' disappeared in a cloud of grayish vapor, the dull sound of an explosion filled the ear, and the ground under our feet trembled. There was nothing to be seen, even with the glass, save a light scum covering the water and some fragments of charred tree branches. But the air about us was full of a fine dust that powdered Betty's hair, as though for a costume ball, and made me cough continuously."

"Naturally, there were quite a number of explanations to make to Miss Betty after George had been resuscitated—a slightly disfigured hero, but still in the ring—but I spare you. The dear girl listened quietly, but at the end she began to tremble, and I won't say but that she cried a bit. It doesn't matter if she did, and I think we all began to feel a little queer when we came to think it over. However, it was over—no possible doubt about that."

"One thing I don't understand," said Crawford. 'There were to be three warnings, and Estes only received two of the red buttons. Whereupon Betty blushed, and drew a little package from her pocket.'

"It came last night directed to George; she nature was giving it to him. It broke open in my pocket and it contained this.' She held out to us the third red button. That was de- cent of Balencourt—to have given the last warning."

"There is only one possible hypothesis to account for the catastrophe, Balencourt was dealing with a terrible force, whose nature was dealing with a terrible force, whose nature was but partially understood, even by science. He had intended to use it to fulfill the vengeance of the 'Dawn,' but some- thing had happened, and in an instant the monster had turned and rended its master. That is all that we can know."

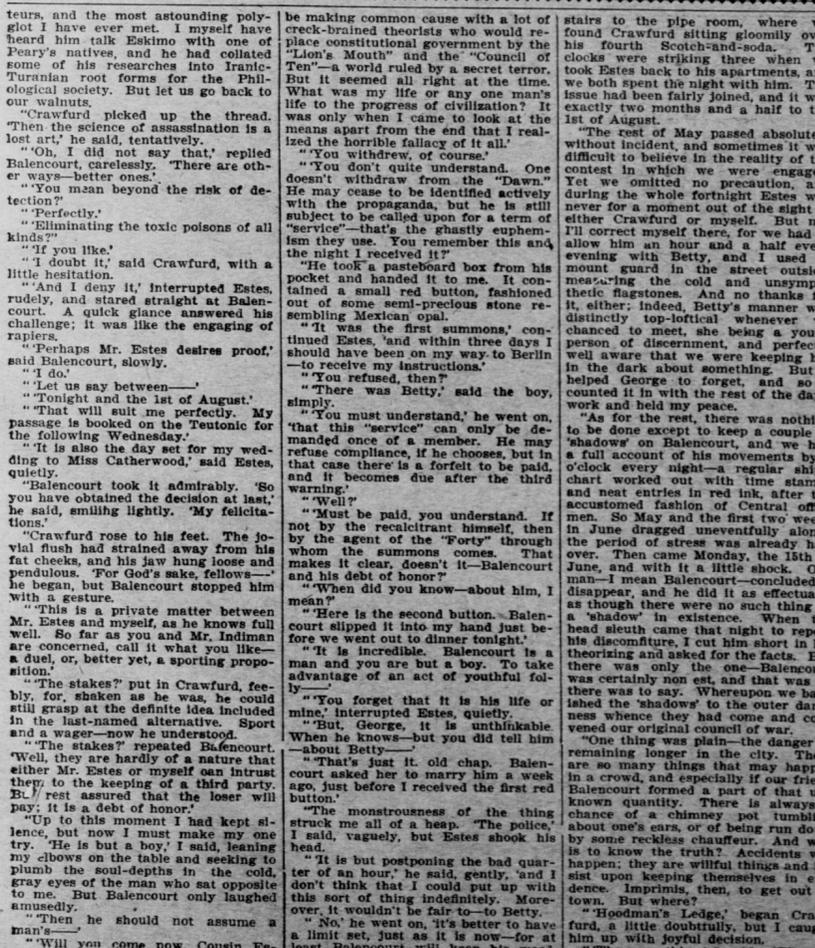
"Two days later George and Betty were married, for they stuck to the original date in spite of the fact that George, with a lump on his forehead as big as the cricket ball itself, did not make a particularly presentable bride- groom. I carried an umbrella at the function whose incomparable rolling was remarked upon by all. Need I say that it was the same umbrella that Balencourt's man, Jarman, had manipulated for me that fateful evening when we dined at the Argyle. I shall never unroll that umbrella, even at the cost of a wetting. To me it is a memento."

"There's melodrama for you," said Indiman, a little shamefacedly as he finished. 'But one feels differently, you know, about taking chances where a nice girl like Betty is concerned. Let me see; it's still early. Do you feel up to taking that long-deferred ride on a trolley car? Good! We'll take the cross-town over to Eighth avenue and get into the heart of it at once.'

"That's an unlucky number," said Indiman, as we boarded a car. Sixteen hundred and twenty-four—the sum of the units is equal to thirteen. 'You're going to lose some money,' I suggested."

"The tip points that way," he re- plied. (To be continued.)

## H. M. S. VICTORIOUS COALING IN CHANNEL



These Actual Photographs Taken on the First Battle-field of Liou-yang Shows: At Top, Russian Battery Wrecked and Captured by Japs, at Bottom, a Squad of Jap Soldiers Guarding Russian Equipment

## SCIENTIST SAYS LOVE IS A MICROBE

### Prosaic Investigator Announces the Divine Passion to Be a Bacillus

PARIS, Nov. 12.—This is truly the age of the microbe. Hardly have we been informed by Prof. Metznikoff that we grow old and feeble because of a mischievous bacillus which develops in our intestines and whose only joy in living is derived from poisoning our blood and depriving us of the eternal youth which would otherwise be ours, when another scientist, Dr. Cotton, with the aid of a powerful microscope, discovers another microbe this time in our brain, which causes us to fall in love.

The doctor, who is evidently a very prosaic character, states that this microbe produces a kind of insanity. It makes us laugh or cry inspires tenderness or jealousy, and makes us commit acts which we would otherwise never dream of. He announces that he hopes to find a serum which will make us immune, but it is believed that most of us will prefer to keep this particular microbe, even if it sometimes does make us miserable.

Have we at last found a remedy against the strange, mysterious, dread disease of sleep, which is slowly but surely killing thousands of people in Africa?

Many French physicians think that Dr. Laveran, of the Institute de France, has made a discovery which will save thousands of human lives. To get an answer to the question the American and Journal correspondent went to see Dr. Laveran the other day.

He said that Prof. Niels Finzen, Prof. Koch and other great benefactors of humanity, Dr. Laveran is exceedingly modest and does not like to talk of his discovery; at least not as long as he is not absolutely sure of having found an infallible cure.

"First of all," he said, "let me ask you to tell your readers that I am not the discoverer of the microbe of the disease of sleep. I have never claimed to be."

In honor of this discovery belongs to the English scientist Durton, who, three years ago, found the first trypanosome, without, however, being able to identify it, a thing which was done a little over a year ago by the Italian, Dr. Castellani. Personally I have tried to devise a cure and believe that I am on the right road.

"It is possible to inoculate animals with the disease of sleep, and I have



These Actual Photographs Taken on the First Battle-field of Liou-yang Shows: At Top, Russian Battery Wrecked and Captured by Japs, at Bottom, a Squad of Jap Soldiers Guarding Russian Equipment

## FRIEND PICKED HER HUSBAND FOR HER

PHILADELPHIA, Pa., Nov. 12.—"I know a man you ought to marry," said a friend of Miss Elizabeth Gallagher, of Bryn Mawr, five days ago. "Well, if you think he'll do, tell him to write to me," replied Miss Gallagher.

The next day Miss Gallagher received a letter from Michael Watterers, of Tower City, Pa. He followed the letter with a personal card and at the end of two hours they liked each other so well that Watterers proposed marriage and was blushing told by the young woman to come back in a day for his answer. The next day the engagement was formally announced.

Last night Miss Gallagher became Mrs. Watterers in the Church of Our Mother, I gather, in the next day the engagement was formally announced.

Accepting the Alternative  
"Wot ye tryin' ter do wid dat dog?"  
"De doc tells me I gott'er quit boozin' er go blind, I gott'er train de purp ter lead me, ain't it?"  
—Houston Post.