

Through the Wall

By CLEVELAND MOFFETT

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CHAPTER II

COQUEUIL'S GREATEST CASE.

AFTER leaving Notre-Dame Paul Coqueuil directed his steps toward the prefecture of police, but halfway across the square he glanced back at the church clock that shows its white face above the grinning gargoyles, and pausing, he stood a moment in deep thought.

"A quarter to 7," he reflected; then, turning to the right, he walked quickly to a little wine shop with flowers in the windows, the Tavern of the Three Wise Men.

"Ah, I thought so!" he muttered as he recognized his friend and assistant, Page Tignol, at one of the tables on the terrace. And approaching the old man, who had a red face and a purple blazed nose, he said in a low tone, "I want you."

Tignol looked up quickly from his glass, and his face lighted. "Ah, M. Paul again!"

"I must see M. Pougnot," continued the detective. "It's important. Go to his office. If he isn't there go to his home. Anyhow, find him and tell him to come to me at once. Hurry on. Tell me for this. And run across to the church and tell Bonneton that he needn't come either."

"I knew it; I knew it," chuckled Page Tignol as he trotted off. "There's something doing."

With this much arranged Coqueuil, after paying for his friend's abstinence, strolled over to a cab stand near the statue of Henry IV, and selected a horse that could not possibly make more than four miles an hour. Behind this deliberate animal he seated himself, and, giving the driver his address, he charged him gravely not to go too fast and settled back against the cushions to comfortable meditation. "There is no better way to think out a tough problem," he used to insist, "than to take a very long drive in a very slow cab."

It may have been that this horse was not slow enough, for forty minutes later Coqueuil's frown was still unrelaxed when they drew up at the Villa Montmorency, really a collection of villas, some dozens of them, in a private park near the Bois de Boulogne.

The detective occupied a wing of the original Montmorency chateau, a habitation of ten spacious rooms, more than enough for himself and his mother and the faithful old servant Mileau, who took care of them, especially during these summer months, when M. Coqueuil was away at a country place in the Vosges mountains that her son had bought for her. Paul Coqueuil had never married, and his friends declared that, besides his work, he loved only two things in the world—his mother and his dog.

At 8 o'clock the detective rose from the dinner table and withdrew into his study, a large room opening off the dining room and furnished like no other study in the world. Around the walls were low bookcases with wide tops, on which were spread, under glass, what Coqueuil called his criminal museum. This included souvenirs of cases on which he had been engaged, wonderful sets of burglar's tools, weapons used by murderers—saws, picks, jointed files of tempered steel, that could be taken apart and fitted up in the space of a thick cigar and hidden about the person.

Mileau entered promptly with coffee and cigarettes, which she placed on a table near the green shaded lamp, within easy reach of the great red leather chair where M. Paul was seated.

Suddenly there came a clang at the iron gate in the garden and the sound of quick, craning steps on the gravel walk. M. Pougnot had arrived.

M. Lucien Pougnot was one of the eight police commissioners who, encl in his own quarter, oversee the moral training of Paris' dirty linen. M. Pougnot was one of the most distinguished and intelligent members of this interesting body. He was a devoted friend of Paul Coqueuil.

"Well," remarked the commissary when they were settled in their chairs, "I suppose it's the Rio de Janeiro thing? Some parting instructions, eh? And he turned to light a cigar."

Coqueuil shook his head.

"When do you call?"

"I'm not calling."

"What?"

"For once in his life M. Pougnot was surprised. He knew all about this foreign offer, with its extraordinary money advantages. He had rejoiced in his friend's good fortune after two unhappy years, and now—now Coqueuil informed him calmly that he was not calling."

"I have just made a decision, the most important decision of my life," continued the detective, "and I want you to know about it. You are the only person in the world who will know—everything. So listen! This afternoon I went into Notre Dame church. I saw a young girl there, who sells candles. I didn't know her, but she looked up in a queer way, as if she wanted to speak to me. So I went to her, and—well, she told me of a dream she had last night."

"A dream?" snorted the commissary.

"No," she said. She may have been

lying, or she may have been put up to it. I know nothing about her, not even her name, but that's of no consequence. The point is that in this dream, as she called it, she brought together the two most important events in my life."

"What was the dream?"

"She says she saw me twice—once in a forest near a wooden bridge, where a man with a beard was talking to a woman and a little girl; then she saw me on a boat going to a place where there were black people."

"That was Brazil."

"I suppose so. And there was a brawling man with a wicked face inside that kept looking down at me. She says she often dreams of this wicked face. She sees it first in a distant star that comes nearer and nearer until it gets to be large and red and angry. As the face comes closer her fear grows until she wakes with a start of terror. She says she would die of fright if the face ever reached her before she awoke. That's about all."

"For some moments the commissary did not speak. Did she try to interpret this dream?"

"No."

"Why did she tell you about it?"

"She acted on a sudden impulse, so she says. I'm inclined to believe her. But never mind that. Pougnot—he rose in agitation and stood leaning over his friend—"In that forest scene she brought up something that isn't known, something I've never even told you, my best friend."

"What is that?"

"You think I resigned from the police force two years ago, don't you?"

"Of course."

"Every one thinks so. Well, it isn't true. I didn't resign. I was discharged."

M. Pougnot stared in bewilderment, as if words failed him, and finally he repeated weakly: "Discharged? Paul Coqueuil discharged?"

"Yes, sir, discharged from the Paris detective force for refusing to arrest a murderer. That's how the accusation read."

"But it wasn't true?"

"Judge for yourself. It was the case of a poacher who killed a guard. I don't suppose you remember it?"

"Down near Saumur, wasn't it?"

"Exactly. And it was near Saumur I found him after searching all over France. We were clean off the track, and I made up my mind the only way to get him was through his wife and child. They lived in a little house in the woods not far from the place of the shooting. I went there as a peddler in hard luck, and I played my part so well that the woman consented to take me in as a boarder. For weeks it was a peddling tour, and then came back as a boarder. Nothing developed, but I could not get rid of the feeling that my man was somewhere near in the woods."

"One of your intuitions. Well?"

"Well, at last the woman became convinced that they had nothing to fear from me, and she did things more openly. One day I saw her put some food in a basket and give it to the little girl. And the little girl went off with the basket into the forest. Then I knew I was right, and the next day I followed the little girl, and, sure enough, she led me to a rough cave where her father was hiding. I hung about there for an hour or two, and finally the man came out from the cave, and I saw him talk to his wife and child near a bridge over a mountain torrent."

"The picture that girl saw in the dream?"

"Yes; I'll never forget it. I had my pistol ready, and he was defenseless, and once I was just springing forward to take the fellow when he bent over and kissed his little girl. I don't know how you look at these things, Pougnot, but I couldn't break in there and take that man away from his wife and child. The woman had been kind to me and trusted me, and—well, it was a breach of duty, and they punished me for it. But I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it, and I didn't do it."

"And you let the fellow go?"

"I let him go then, but I got him a week later in a fair fight, man to man. They gave him ten years."

"And discharged you from the force?"

"Yes—that is, in view of my past services they allowed me to resign." Coqueuil spoke bitterly.

"Outrageous! Unbelievable!" muttered Pougnot.

Coqueuil looked at Pougnot with an odd little smile. "You take it just as I thought you would—just as I took it myself until today. It seems like a stupid blunder, doesn't it? Well, it wasn't a blunder; it was a necessary move in the game."

"The game! What game? The commissary stared.

"A game involving a great crime."

"You have the facts of this crime?"

"No; it hasn't been committed yet."

"Not committed yet!" repeated the other, with a startled glance. "But you know the plan? You have evidence?"

"I have what is perfectly clear evidence to me—so clear that I wonder I never saw it before. Lucien, suppose you were a great criminal, wealthy,

educated, daring and resourceful, and suppose there was one person in this city who was thwarting your purposes, perhaps jeopardizing your safety. What would you naturally do?"

"I'd try to get rid of him."

"Exactly." Coqueuil paused, and then, leaning closer to his friend, he said with extraordinary earnestness, "Lucien, for over two years some one has been trying to get rid of me!"

"The devil!" started Pougnot. "How long have you known this?"

"Only today," frowned the detective. "I ought to have known it long ago."

"Hm! Aren't you building a good deal on that dream?"

"The dream? Heavens, man," snapped Coqueuil. "I'm building nothing on the dream and nothing on the girl. She simply brought together two facts that belong together. Why she did it doesn't matter; she did it, and my reason did the rest. There is a connection between this Rio de Janeiro offer and my discharge from the force. I know it. I'll show you other links in the chain. Three times in the past two years I have received offers of business positions away from Paris, tempting offers. Notice that—business positions away from Paris! Some one has extraordinary reasons for wanting me out of this city and out of detective work."

"And you think this 'some one' was responsible for your discharge from the force?"

"I tell you I know it. M. Giroux, the chief at that time, was distressed at the order—he told me so himself; he said it came from higher up."

"The commissary raised incredulous eyebrows. "You mean that Paris has a criminal able to overrule the wishes of a chief of police?"

"Is that harder than to influence the Brazilian government? Do you think Rio de Janeiro offered me a hundred thousand francs a year just for my beautiful eyes?"

"You're a great detective."

"A great detective repudiated by his own city. That's another point. Why



HE BOSE IN AGITATION AND STOOD LEANING OVER HIS FRIEND.

should the police department discharge me two years ago and recommend me now to a foreign city? Don't you see the same hand behind it all?"

"It's queer," Pougnot muttered. "But you think some great crime is preparing?"

"Don't you?" asked Coqueuil abruptly.

"Why—er—" hesitated the other. "Look at the facts again. Some one wants me off the detective force, out of France. Why? There can be only one reason."

"And when—when do you think this crime may be committed?"

"Who can say? There must be great urgency to account for their insisting that I sail tomorrow. Ah, you didn't know that? Yes, even now, at this very moment, I am supposed to be on the steamer train, for the boat goes out early in the morning before the Paris papers can reach Cherbourg."

M. Pougnot started up, his eyes widening. "What!" he cried. "You mean that—that possibly—tonight?"

And then came one of the strange coincidences of this extraordinary case. On the silence of this room, with its tension of overwrought emotion, broke the sharp summons of the telephone.

"My God!" shivered the commissary. "What is that?" M. Pougnot aroused himself with an effort. He put the receiver to his ear. "Yes, this is M. Pougnot. What? The Ansonia? You say he's shot? In a private dining room? Dead? Quel malheur!" Then he gave quick orders. "Send Papa Tignol over with a doctor and three or four agents. Close the restaurant. Don't let any one go in or out. Don't let any one leave the banquet room. I'll be there in twenty minutes. Good-by."

He put the receiver down and, turning, white faced, said to Coqueuil, "It has happened."

(To Be Continued.)

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RESOLUTIONS FOR WATER MAINS

Be it resolved, by the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon: that it is the intention of the council to lay a . . . inch water main on Ninth street from Orange street to Hamilton street, and to assess the cost thereof upon the property fronting on said portion of said street in proportion to the frontage of said property.

The council will meet at the council chamber in the city hall in said city on April 13th, 1910, at 7:30 p. m., at which time all protests against the laying of said water main on said portion of said street and the assessment of the cost thereof upon the property fronting thereon will be heard.

The foregoing resolution was passed by the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon, on the 6th day of April, 1910, by the following vote: Welch, aye, Merrick absent, Emerick absent, Wortman aye, Eifert aye and Demmer aye.

Approved April 7th, 1910.
W. H. CANON, Mayor.
Attest:
ROBT. W. TELFER,
City Recorder.

RESOLUTIONS FOR WATER MAINS

Be it resolved, by the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon: that it is the intention of the council to lay a . . . inch water main on Tripp street throughout its entire length, and to assess the cost thereof upon the property fronting on said portion of said street in proportion to the frontage of said property.

The council will meet at the council chamber in the city hall in said city on April 19th, 1910, at 7:30 p. m., at which time all protests against the laying of said water main on said portion of said street and the assessment of the cost thereof upon the property fronting thereon will be heard.

The foregoing resolution was passed by the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon, on the 6th day of April, 1910, by the following vote: Welch aye, Merrick absent, Emerick absent, Wortman aye, Eifert aye and Demmer aye.

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City Recorder.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned will apply at the next regular meeting of the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon, for a license to sell spirituous, vinous and malt liquors in quantities less than a gallon, at his place of business at No. 22 Front street, North, in said city, for a period of six months.

JOHN HARRINGTON.
April 8, 1910.

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Wanted—A man to furnish capital to start a poultry ranch.
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Duluth, direct	\$66.90
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