

Through the Wall

By CLEVELAND MOFFETT

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE LOST DOLLY.

"I've been so frightened," Alice said to him. "The man said you wanted me, and I came at once, but in the automobile. I felt something was wrong, and you know he is outside!"

"Does Pougeot know about this?" She shook her head. "The man came for M. Pougeot first. They went off together. I'm afraid it was a trick. Then about twenty minutes later the same man came back and said M. Pougeot was with you and that he had been sent to bring me to you. He showed me your ring and—"

"Yes, yes, I understand," interrupted Coqueni. "My poor child!" he muttered. Taking the candle, Coqueni went through the arched opening into the larger chamber and made a hurried inspection. The room was about fifteen feet square and ten feet high, with everything of stone—walls, floor and arched ceiling. Save for the passage into the smaller room there was no sign of an opening anywhere except two small square holes near the ceiling, probably ventilating shafts.

Around the four walls were logs piled evenly to the height of nearly six feet, and at the archway the pile ran straight through into the smaller room. The logs were in two foot lengths, and as the archway was about four feet wide the passage between the two rooms was half blocked with wood.

Coqueni walked slowly around the chamber, peering carefully into cracks between the logs, as if searching for something. As he went on he held the candle lower and lower and presently got down upon his hands and knees and crept along the base of the pile.

"What are you doing?" asked Alice, watching him in wonder from the archway.

Without replying, the detective rose to his feet and, holding the candle high above his head, examined the walls above the wood pile. Then he reached up and scraped the stones with his finger nails in several places and then held his fingers close to the candle-light and looked at them and smelled them. His fingers were black with soot.

"M. Paul, won't you speak to me?" begged the girl.

"Just a minute, just a minute," he answered absently. Then he spoke with quick decision. "I'm going to set you to work," he said. "By the way, have you any idea where we are?" She looked at him in surprise. "Why, don't you know?"

"I think we are on the Rue de Valenciennes—a big hotel back of the high wall."

"That's right," she said.

"Ah, he didn't take me away!" rejoiced M. Paul. "That is something. Pougeot will scent danger and will move heaven and earth to save us. He will get Tignol, and Tignol knows I was here. But can they find us?"

Suddenly he said to the girl: "I may as well tell you our lives are in danger. He's going to set fire to this wood and—"

"Oh!" she cried, her eyes starting with terror.

"See here," he said sharply. "You've got to help me. We have a chance yet. The fire will start in this big chamber, and I want to cut it off by blocking the passageway. Let's see!" He searched through his pockets. "He has taken my knife. Ah, this will do!" And, lifting a plate from the table, he broke it against the wall. "There! Take one of these pieces and see if you can saw through the rope. Use the jagged edge—like this. That cuts it. Try over there."

Alice fell to work eagerly, and in a few moments they had freed a section of the wood piled in the smaller chamber from the restraining ropes and stakes.

"Now, then," directed Coqueni, "you carry the logs to me, and I'll make a barricade in the passageway."

The word passageway is somewhat misleading. There was really a distance of only three feet between the two chambers, this being the thickness of the massive stone wall that separated them. Half of this opening was already filled by the wood pile, and Coqueni proceeded to fill up the other half, laying logs on the floor lengthwise in the open part of the passage from chamber to chamber and then laying other logs on top of these, and so on as rapidly as the girl brought wood.

They worked with all speed. Soon the passageway was solidly walled with closely fitted logs to the height of six feet. Above this, in the arched part, Coqueni worked more slowly, selecting logs of such shape and size as would fill the curve with the fewest number of cracks between them. There was danger in cracks between the obstructing logs, for cracks meant a draft, and a draft meant the spreading of the fire.

"Now," said M. Paul, surveying the blocked passageway, "that is the best we can do—with wood. We must stop these cracks with something else. What did you wear?" He glanced at the chair where Alice had thrown her things. "A white cloak and a straw

hat with a white veil and a black velvet ribbon. Tear off the ribbon and—we can't stand on ceremony. Here are my coat and vest. Rip them into strips and— Great God! There's the smoke now!"

As he spoke a thin grayish feather curled out between two of the upper logs and floated away; another came below it. Somewhere De Heidebrunn-Bruck had pressed an electric button, and under the logs deadly sparks had jumped in the waiting tinder. They were prisoners in a huge, slowly heating oven stacked with tons of dry wood.

"We must stop this," he cried, and, tearing the shirt from his shoulders, he ripped it into fragments and wedged these tight between the logs.

"We must have more cloth," he said gravely. "It's our only chance, little friend. I'll put out the candle! There! Let me have—whatever you can and—be quick!"

Again he worked with frantic haste, stuffing in the last shreds and rags that could be spared from their bodies whenever a dull glow from the other side revealed a crack in the barricade.

"There," he panted; "that's the best we can do! Now it's up to God! I believe we have stopped the draft," he said after a moment.

Suddenly a faint sound broke the stillness, and the detective started violently. It was a low, humming sound that presently grew stronger and then sang on steadily like a buzzing wheel.

He moved about in perplexity. It seemed to him that he felt a current of air.

"Alice, come here!" he called. "Stand where I am. That's right. Now put out your hand. Do you feel anything?" "I feel a draft," she said.

As she spoke the humming sound strengthened, and with it the draft blew stronger.

"Merciful God," cried Coqueni in a flash of understanding. "It's a blower!" M. Paul turned his face upward and listened attentively. "No doubt of it! It's sucking through an air shaft up there in the ceiling."

"—I don't understand."

"He's forcing a draft from that room to this one. He has started a blower, I tell you, and—"

"What is a blower?" put in Alice.

At her frightened tone Coqueni calmed himself and answered gently: "It's like a big electric fan. It's drawing air out of this room very fast with a suction, and I'm afraid unless—"

Just then there came a sharp pop, followed by a hissing noise, as if some one were breathing in air through shut teeth. "The blower has sucked out one of our cloth plugs. There goes another!" he said as the popping sound was repeated. "And another! It's all off with our barricade, little girl."

"The fire may come through a little," he told her comfortingly, "but I'll fix it so you will be—all right. Come! We'll build another barricade. You know wood is a bad conductor of heat, and—if you have wood all about you and—ever you, why, the fire can't burn you."

"Oh!" said Alice.

"We'll go over to this door as far from the passageway as we can get. Now bring me logs from that side pile. That's right."

Most of the smoke at first was borne upward by the blower's suction, and Alice was able to help Coqueni with the new barricade. They built this directly in front of the iron door with only space enough between it and the door to allow them to crouch behind it. They made it about five feet long and three feet high.

"Lie down there," he directed. "Stretch right out behind the logs and keep your mouth close to the floor and as near as you can to the crack under the door. You'll have plenty of cool, sweet air. Now I'll fix a roof over this thing. Just shut your eyes and—rest. Understand, little friend?"

"Ye-es," faintly.

(To Be Continued.)

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By order of the President,
G. P. HUMPHREY,
Secretary.

REDUCED RATES FOR AVIATION MEET.

The Southern Pacific company has announced a rate of a fare and a third for round trip, points Roseburg to Ashland, for the aviation meet to be held here May 27, 28 and 29. Tickets returning good up to and including May 30.

HOOD RIVER WOMAN WOULDN'T TELL AGE

Coy Maiden Refused to Answer Census Enumerator, So Warrant Is Sworn Out for Her Arrest.

PORTLAND, Or., May 26.—Miss Mabel Lake of Hood River, Or., was brought to Portland today for preliminary examination on a warrant issued last night on complaint of C. E. Markham, a census enumerator, who alleged that Miss Lake refused to tell her age to the census enumerators.

The warrant was issued by United States Commissioner Marsh only after he had received strongest assurances that the census officials had exhausted every other possible means to persuade the woman to tell her age.

The official counter reported that he had tried flattery, cajolery and other different means of persuasion before he asked for a warrant.

Miss Lake is the first woman in Oregon for whom a warrant has been sworn out by the census officials.

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CRAP BONES, RAZORS AND CHICKENS STOLEN

Negroes Rob General Store, Taking Gaudy Shirts, Banjos and Watermelon Seeds.

RUGBY, Colo., May 26.—One of more negroes robbed the general store here in the night, if the deductions today of local emulators of Sherlock Holmes prove correct. The burglars left no telltale footprints, no fingerprints—in fact, they left nothing. That they are negroes is suspected from the things that they stole.

A dozen of chickens, probably with necks duly wrung; several gaudy shirts and neckties; an entire tray of "crap bones"; all the razors in stock, a dozen packages of watermelon seeds and two banjos.

This array of missing articles put the country detectives on the scent, but their deductions were clinched when they came upon a mutilated and torn picture of James J. Jeffries, while beside it was a bare space of wall where formerly hung a picture of Jack Johnson.

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