

Through The Wall

By CLEVELAND MOFFETT

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Paul Coquenil, famous French detective, meets a mysterious young girl selling candies in Notre Dame cathedral. The girl, Alice, loves an American, Lloyd Kitteridge. Coquenil believes a great crime is about to be committed, and presently it occurs. He has a strange premonition of danger. A man is found murdered in a restaurant. He is recognized as Martinez, well known throughout all Paris as a billiard player.

Lloyd Kitteridge is suspected of having murdered the billiard player. He is arrested at Alice's home and put in prison.

Coquenil starts to solve the case. He discovers the identity of a woman known to have been with Martinez when murdered.

The murderer's pistol is found. Coquenil puts his dog Caesar on the trail and interviews M. Gritz, proprietor of the restaurant, where the crime had taken place. Coquenil discovers two auger holes in the wall in the private dining room where Martinez was killed. They lead into another private dining room, which he visits.

He shows Papa Tignol that the bullet came through one of the holes. A mysterious stranger overpowers Coquenil and robs him of a valuable clew he had got.

Detective Gebelin, Coquenil's rival, discovers valuable clews. Circumstantial evidence thickens about young Kitteridge.

Coquenil cross examines an American woman, Mrs. Wilmott, as to her past relations with the prisoner, Kitteridge. He and Martinez, she said, had had a serious quarrel over Alice. Coquenil begins to demonstrate that Kitteridge is innocent. Coquenil is dismissed from the case by an order from a man "higher up." He continues to work as a private individual. He proves that the assassin had a "long little finger" and that Alice knows him. Coquenil's man hunting dog is shot by a wealthy man in a forest. Coquenil traces Alice's past in Brussels and learns much.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEMORY OF A DOG.

IT was a quarter past 4 and still night when Coquenil left the Hotel des Etrangers. He carried the leather bag taken from the automobile. A hundred yards behind him, in exactly similar dress, came Papa Tignol, peering into the shadows with sharpest watchfulness against human shadow bent on harming M. Paul. Close to Notre Dame the leader paused for his companion.

"There's nothing," he said as the latter joined him. "Take the bag and wait for me, but keep out of sight."

Coquenil walked across the square to the cathedral.

He was pleased and confident as he rang the night bell at the cathedral steps. house beside the cathedral, for he had one precious view—he had the induction of this extraordinarily long little finger, and he did not believe that in all France there were two men with hands like that. And he knew there was one such man, for Alice had seen him. Where had she seen him?

And presently, after a sleepy salutation from the archbishop's servant and a brief examination, M. Paul was shown through a stone passageway that connects the church with the house, and he found himself alone in Notre Dame. As he stood uncertain which way to turn the detective heard a step and a low growl, and peering among the arches of the choir, he saw a lazier than ever, then another crouching figure moving before the lantern. Then he recognized Caesar.

"Phee-er, phee-er!" he whistled softly.

"Good old Caesar! There, there!" murmured Coquenil, fondling the eager head. "It's all right, Bonneton," and, coming forward, he held out his hand.

Wondering, Bonneton led the way to a small room adjoining the treasure chamber.

"Hey, Francois!" He shook a sleeping figure on a cot bed. "It's time to make the round."

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HAY FEVER

Francois looked stupidly at Coquenil, and then, with a yawn and a shrug of indifference, he called to the dog, while Caesar growled his reluctance.

"It's all right, old fellow," encouraged Coquenil. "I'll see you again," whereupon Caesar trotted away resolutely.

"Now, then," began M. Paul, "I want to ask about that girl who sells candies. She boards with you. You know she's in love with this American who is in prison?"

"I know."

"She came to see me the other day, and the result of her visit was—well, it has made a lot of trouble. What I'm going to say you mustn't tell a soul—least of all your wife."

"You can trust me."

"To begin with, who is the man with the long little finger that she told me about?"

"Why, that's Groener," answered Bonneton simply.

"Groener? Oh, her cousin?"

"Yes."

"I'm interested, because I have a collection of plaster hands at my house, and there's one with a long little finger that the candy girl noticed. Is her cousin's little finger really long?"

"It's pretty long," said Bonneton. "I used to think it had been stretched in some machine. You know he's a wood-carver."

"Bonneton," continued the detective mysteriously. "I don't know whether it's from her dream or in some other way, but that girl knows things that—that she has no business to know."

Then, briefly and impressively, Coquenil told of the extraordinary revelations that Alice had made not only to him, but to the director of the Sante prison. She's possessed of dangerous knowledge, and I want to know where she got it. I want to know all about this girl."

Bonneton shook his head. "We know very little about her, and the queen that she seems to know very little about herself. I believe she is perfectly honest. Anyhow, her cousin is a stupid fellow. He comes on from Brussels every five or six months and spends two nights with us—never more, never less. He eats his meals, attends to his commissions for woodcarving, takes Alice out once in the afternoon or evening, gives my wife the money for her board, and that's all. For five years it's been the same. I've noticed she's nervous just before his visits and sort of sad after them. My wife says the girl has her worst dreams then."

"I have it!" Coquenil exclaimed presently. "Tell me about this man Francois."

"Francois?" answered the sacristan in surprise. "Why, he helps me with the night work here. He takes two meals with us a day."

"Ah! Do you think he would like to make a hundred francs by doing nothing? And you would like to make 500?"

"Five hundred francs?" cried Bonneton.

"Don't be afraid," laughed the other. "When do you expect the wood-carver?"

"He'll be here next Wednesday."

"Next Wednesday," reflected Coquenil. "He always comes when he says he will?"

"Always. He's as regular as clock-work."

"And he spends two nights with you?"

"Yes."

"That will be Wednesday night and Thursday night of next week?"

"Yes."

"Good! Now I'll show you how you're going to make this money. I want Francois to have a little vacation. He looks tired. I want him to go into the country on Tuesday and stay until Friday."

"And his work? Who will do his work?"

Coquenil tipped his breast.

"I will take Francois' place. I'll be the best assistant you ever had, and I shall enjoy Mother Bonneton's cooking. None of them will know me. You won't know me yourself."

"Ah, I see," nodded the old man wisely. "You will have a disguise."

"I shall come on Tuesday. When do you want me?"

"At 6 o'clock," answered the sacristan doubtfully. "But what shall I say if any one asks me about it?"

"Say Francois was sick and you got your old friend Matthieu to replace him for a few days. I'm Matthieu!"

"You wouldn't get me into trouble, M. Paul?" he appealed weakly.

"Papa Bonneton," answered Coquenil earnestly, "have I ever shown you anything but friendship? When old Max died and you asked me to lead you Caesar I did it, didn't I? And you know what Caesar is to me. I love that dog."

M. Paul held out his hand frankly, and the sacristan took it with emotion.

"That settles it," he murmured. "I never doubted you."

"Then it's understood. Tuesday, at 6, your friend Matthieu will be here to replace Francois." The detective rose to go. He moved toward the door. "Oh, I forgot about the dog. Tignol will come for him Tuesday morning with a line from me. I shall want Caesar in the afternoon, but I'll bring him back at 6."

"All right," nodded the sacristan.

"He'll be ready. An auvoir until Tuesday."

"Things are marching along," smiled Coquenil some minutes later to Papa Tignol as they rolled along toward the Eastern railway station. "You know what you have to do. And I know what I have to do. We meet Tuesday at noon near the Auteuil station beneath the first arch of the viaduct."

Coquenil had certainly chosen the busiest end of Paris for his meeting with Papa Tignol.

Their rendezvous was at noon, but two hours earlier Tignol took the train at the St. Lazare station. And with him came Caesar—such a changed, unrecognizable Caesar! Poor dog! His beautiful, glossy coat of brown and white had been clipped to ridiculous shortness, and he crouched at the old

man's feet in evident humiliation.

"It was a shame, old fellow," said Tignol consolingly, "but we had to obey orders, eh? Never mind, it will grow out again."

Leaving the train at Auteuil, they walked down the Rue de la Fontaine to a tavern near the Rue Mozart, where the old man left Caesar in charge of the proprietor, a friend of his. It was now a quarter to 11, and Tignol spent the next hour riding back and forth on the circular railway between Auteuil and various other stations. He did this because Coquenil had charged him to be sure he was not followed. Finally, after an amusing adventure, he met Coquenil, who had disguised himself so cleverly as to deceive even Papa Tignol himself. Going to a room in the Rue Pousset, Coquenil changed his disguise very materially, while Tignol gave him the latest news from his mother, who sent word that she was praying for his safety. Tignol later went out and procured the dog Caesar. The men then walked in the Bois toward Passy, and Coquenil recounted important discoveries he had made in Brussels regarding Groener, the woodcarver.

"I saw the place where he boards, this Adolf Groener. In fact, I stopped there, and I talked to the woman who runs it, a sharp eyed young widow with a smooth tongue, and I saw the place where he works. It's a woodcarving shop, all right, and I talked to the men there. Papa Tignol," he added impressively, "they all tell a simple story. His name is Adolf Groener. He does live in Brussels, and the widow who runs the boarding house knows all about this girl."

"Then something happened," went on the famous detective. "You see, I was waiting in the parlor of this boarding house for the widow to bring me my bill, and I happened to glance at a photograph she had shown me when I first came, a picture of Alice and herself, taken five years ago, when Alice was twelve years old. There was no doubt about the girl, and it was a good likeness of the widow. I now noticed that it had no photographer's name on it, which is unusual, and it seemed to me there was something queer about the girl's hand. I went to the window and was studying

be at Bonneton's house tomorrow."

"What?"

"Her name is Mary, and he is her stepfather."

"How do you know that?"

Coquenil smiled. "I found an inscription on the back of that Brussels photograph—I mean the genuine one. It was hidden under a hinged support, and Groener must have overlooked it. That was his second great mistake. It read, 'To my dear husband, Raoul, from his devoted wife, Margaret, and her little Mary.' You notice it says her little Mary. That one word throws a flood of light on this case. The child was not his little Mary."

"I see, I see," reflected the old man. "And Alice? Does she know that—that she isn't Alice?"

"No."

"See here," suddenly said Coquenil; "we've talked too much. You must hurry back to Alice. Better take an auto. And, remember, Papa Tignol,"

"He was added in final warning, "there is nothing so important as to guard this girl."

A few moments later, with Caesar bounding happily at his side, M. Paul entered the quieter paths of the great park. With the dog at his heels M. Paul turned his steps toward a beautiful cool glade. Here he came into plain view of a company of ladies and gentlemen who, having witnessed the review, had chosen this delightful spot for luncheon. They were evidently rich and fashionable people, for they had come as a coaching party on a very smart walk, with four beautiful horses, and some in a dashing red and black automobile that was now drawn up beside the larger vehicle. Coquenil's interest was heightened when he overheard a passing couple say that these were the guests of no less a person than the Duke of Montreuil, whose lavish entertainments were the talk of Paris.

So they went on together, master and dog, and were passing around on the far side of the coaching party when suddenly Caesar began to nose the ground excitedly. Then, running to his master, he stood with eager eyes, as if urging some pursuit. The detective observed the dog in surprise. Was this some foolish whim to find squirrel or a rabbit? It wasn't like Caesar.

Come, coming; "don't be a baby."

Cesar growled in vigorous protest

and, darting away, began circling the ground before him, back and forth, in widening curves, as Coquenil had taught him.

"Does he know?"

The girl's hands closed convulsively. She stammered these singular words: "He knows everything."

"Is he planning something?"

For a moment Alice hesitated, biting her red lips. Then, with a quick impulse, she lifted her dark eyes to Coquenil. "I must tell you. I have no one else to tell, and I am so distressed, so—so afraid." She caught his hands impulsively in hers, and he felt that they were icy cold.

"He's planning to take me away from Paris. I overheard him just now telling Mother Bonneton to pack my trunk. If he takes me away I may never come back."

"See here—you trust me?" asked the detective.

"Oh, yes."

"You'll do exactly what I tell you?"

"I will," she declared.

"Now, listen." And, speaking slowly and distinctly, the detective gave Alice precise instructions; then he went over them again, point by point.

"Are you sure you understand?" he asked finally.

"Yes, I understand, and I will do what you tell me, but—" She shook her head anxiously. "You don't know, you can't understand, what a—" she stopped as if searching for a word—"what a wicked man he is."

"I understand—a little," answered Coquenil gravely.

It was about 2 o'clock, and under a dazzling sun the trees and buildings of the square were outlined on the asphalt in sharp black shadows. Coquenil took out his watch and proceeded to wind it slowly, at which a beggar dragged himself lazily out of his cool corner and limped across the street.

"A little charity, kind gentleman," he whined as he came nearer.

And a moment later Coquenil and the beggar, who was Papa Tignol, were talking earnestly near the doorkeeper's lodge.

Meantime Alice, with new life in her heart, was putting on her best dress and hat, as Groener had bidden her, and presently she joined her cousin in the salon, where he sat smoking a cheap cigar and finishing his talk with Mother Bonneton.

"What time is it?" she asked Groener.

He looked at his watch. "Twenty minutes to 3."