

ishment, and discovered a chimney-like aperture above, and reaching up as far as I could discern by the dim light, an iron ladder like a section of fire-escape. My fears were soon overcome, and I felt the fascination of the marvellous. I seized the light, which was attached to a free wire that hung from the ladder, and lifting it over my head looked up along a hundred feet of iron steps. At the same moment the sound of footsteps reached my ear, and I hastily set down the lamp and stood back in the shadow.

A man entered carrying a heavy burden, and grunting and muttering, shuffled towards the chamber where I stood. He threw down his load, a box like the empty ones I had discovered, and trundled it over the rough stone to a place beneath the ladder. As he stooped over it, I saw that he carried a revolver at his belt, and I had only to reach out a hand and slip it from its position. He went out again without perceiving me, and I examined my prize with all the joy of a successful pickpocket. I knew nothing about the working of a revolver, and was only anxious to prevent it from being discharged. Satisfied that it would not go off of its own accord, I waited till my visitor returned. There was nothing else to do. By the time he approached again, I had formed a definite intention to hold him up, and I watched for the best opportunity. The fellow seemed tired, and as he threw down his load it was with an exclamation of relief. I reached the light in an instant, and turning it full in his face with my left hand, covered him with the weapon I held in my right.

"Stand," said I, with all the firmness I could command. He clutched at his belt, and with a vacant stare waited for further orders.

"Now, climb that ladder," I added.

"Oh, ——! so you're a detective, eh?" he said wearily. "Well, Knowing can't blame me."

He clutched the lowest bar of the ladder, and slowly swung himself up. Breaking the shade from the lamp I set it down fairly beneath the perpendicular stairway, and followed my companion eagerly. I was in constant terror lest the gun I was carrying would cause trouble, and I carefully pointed it away from both of us. His bulky form labored up sullenly. Once he stopped; for lack of breath, I afterwards thought. I was determined to land my catch, and thundered at him, "Keep it up!" He resumed the ascent.