

Why not block the smaller door with the ladder, open the larger, and let us three hold the breach?

"Be it so," said the King, when I had hastily explained my thought. "As the fellow said, it will be 'fall'; but at least it will be fair fighting, and not dying like dogs pent in a kennel."

After that be sure there was no waste of time. In a trice the ladder points were jammed into the lower edge of the gable head-board, and the wings of the rear door flung open. But for all our haste we ran no more than neck and neck with those outside, for the rasp of the wood grating over the uneven floor had its echo in the crash of the gangway as it settled on the corbels. Parley was past, and within and without there was the grimmest promise of men's work.

The great door had, as has been said, a width of about ten feet; three men, therefore, so long as they held their feet, were as good as three hundred. Nay, we had an advantage, for the gangway being some two feet narrower, and having an ugly drop at the edge, gave room to no more than two abreast. The fighting odds were three to two, with a score or more to relieve the two, and the three to face the brawn of them all.

My faith! but when it came to biting the dogs were loth to risk their teeth! The sight of the three naked blades and the faces that looked across their points cooled the ardour, and the rush which was already halfway across the bridge reeled back. To roll stones down two hundred feet of rock upon help-