

Intelligence of its appearance came, at last, from below; and my anxiety was speedily converted into a feverish desire to behold again those dear ones, from whom, for the space of nine months, I had been separated by an immense and tumultuous sea.

A few days before this, a barge, with low masts and broad dingy sails, had been observed, early one morning, lying by the shore; but when, or whence, it had come, was entirely matter of conjecture. It naturally caused no apprehension on the part of the citizens, as it was not an uncommon occurrence to those who had dwelt long in the city. It was noticed, however, by some, that an unusually large number of men appeared, at different times, upon it; and then dispersed idly through the town, with no other ostensible purpose than that of spending their time as agreeably as possible. By others it was observed that they wore a coarse, but uniform, style of dress, and paid a peculiar deference to, seemingly, the youngest of their number. Several times one or two of them had entered my shop, loitered a while before the counters, and then purchasing some trifling article, had gone away without exhibiting anything marked in their conduct.

On the night previous to the day upon which my family were expected to arrive from Quebec, I remained later than usual in my shop, arranging matters so as to be absent on the following day. The clock in the office struck twelve as I placed my books in the safe, and prepared to retire for the night.

Something in the contrast between the slow, measured strokes of the clock, and the stillness which pervaded the building, created in my mind that unaccountable uneasiness which every one at times experiences,—especially when aroused from a deep reverie to the consciousness of being entirely alone. It, however, soon yielded to the reflections with which I was continually engaged; and I turned from my labour with a heart lightened by the anticipation of the morrow's happiness.

As I passed from the office a slight noise attracted my attention, and whilst looking around to discover its source, violent hands were laid upon me, and in an instant I was thrown prostrate upon the floor. My first thought was that of danger to myself; but the conduct of my assailants, who numbered some half-a-dozen, as far as I was able to ascertain—for the light had been extinguished early in the assault—soon dispelled any apprehension of immediate peril. Then the thought of robbery flashed through my mind. This, however, appeared to be quite as far from their object as the former conjecture; for I heard one of them hastily close the office door, making, at the same time, some remark to the effect that there was nothing there which they would need. Then