

ing, white and shaking with terror, entered his room. To undo his fastenings was the work of a few minutes, but Nicholas found himself too much exhausted to sit up in his bed. Mrs. Fleming had locked her door on the first consciousness that the house had been entered, and though it was carefully tried, no violence had been offered to it. She had heard the words, "That's the old woman's room I reckon, and we must remember our mothers;" and this was followed by a low laugh, and retreating footsteps.

Mrs. Fleming brought Nicholas a cordial, and, after an hour, he tottered to his feet, and dressed himself. Then they found Pont who had slept through it all in his distant room, and all descended to the scene of the robbery. The burglars had entered by a window opening like a door from the piazza, and the damp night wind was passing through it into the house. They closed the window and then began to examine into the extent of the spoliation. They first visited the safe. It was open, and the key, which Nicholas had placed in his pocket on returning with his bonds the previous afternoon, was in the lock. As he anticipated, not only the plate but the bonds were gone, and these covered a far greater value than everything else that they could have borne away. After ascertaining the loss of these, Nicholas had no curiosity with regard to the remainder of the booty. Daylight would better reveal the minor particulars, and for this it was agreed to wait. They would not go to bed again, and Pont was consigned to a lounge and ordered to wait with them.

Nicholas went to the window and peered out into the night, which was rapidly approaching a new day. Exactly in the place where the schooner had come to anchor ten days before, he saw a light. While he watched it, it slowly moved out across the stream and disappeared. The river pirates had done their dark work, won their plunder and flown, leaving no clew behind them but the memory of the villain whom Nicholas had once thrust from the house, and who had returned in the character of his captor and keeper. Pont was soon asleep, and Nicholas and Mrs. Fleming, sitting close beside each other and engaging in low conversation, watched until the brightest and sweetest of summer mornings dawned upon them, and then they slowly and regretfully counted up their losses.

CHAPTER IX.

GREAT was the excitement in Ottercliff when it was noised abroad that the Minturn mansion had been broken into and plundered of its treasures. All who could leave their work swarmed to the house, entered it, looked it all through and all over, hung about it, and wearied