

somewhat of a favorite with the boys, and there were a good many sleeping in one room, which was an immense comfort; and when I heard I was about to be sent from it to a military college, my heart, which was never very high, sank down to zero, and all the atrocities that martial law had ever inflicted thronged my imagination by day, and sat upon my chest at night. However, there was a good long vacation time before the examination came off, and I determined to enjoy that, at least.

My uncle asked me down to his house in Somersetshire, which, except for its loneliness, I was accustomed to consider one of the most charming in the world; and down I went. Now, it so happened that, not expecting his invitation to be so promptly accepted, himself and his family had been engaged to dine and sleep out, on the very night that I arrived; and, not liking to increase an already considerable party, he left me at home with an apology and a couple of woman servants. That was the facetious manner in which I painted my lonely condition; and, indeed, had it not been for a way I had got into of looking at everything seriously, my life, through fear, would have been almost insupportable. I firmly believe that I tried it, amongst many other experiments, as a means of correcting my weakness; and although it is hard for a small boy to take a comic view, for instance, of burglars at midnight, I really succeeded in doing myself some service by this means. In after years, and amid a common danger, a very tolerable joke would often escape my trembling lips, to procure me, when the peril was over, a great reputation for presence of mind.

Well, my uncle went to his dinner party, and I went to bed—in a room over the low verandah, which anybody could get upon from the ground, with no shutters to the window, and only a kind of button by way of a bolt. However, I locked the door—saying, it was as well they should not enter by two ways at once—and tried to get to sleep before burglar-time. I had a life-preserver by my side, but I did not place much confidence in a weapon which I knew I should not dare to use; and I had matches, but no candle alight, because I believed that would attract ruffians, as it does death's-head moths. The village clock striking twelve awoke me; the iron warning seemed as though it would never cease, and I pressed my fingers into my ears to shut it out. Now, with the exception of dog-howling, there is no midnight sound more distressing to me than clock-striking. Yes, there is—hark! hush! secretly, stealthily, dully, I hear a file at its nefarious work. No, not a file—a diamond, cutting a pain of my window out, for the convenience of unfastening the button. I could not pray, even inwardly, for my whole soul was taken up with the fear that casteth out love. I could not scream nor speak for the chattering of my teeth, but I coughed; not as I had intended it to be, an assuring cough, as much as to say: 'Here I am, my fine fellows, a powerful, athletic person, wide awake, and delighting in combat,' but a strangled, miserable cough, such as a tiny youth might give who thought it was likely to be his last effort in the breathing way. Nevertheless, the diamond ceased cutting, and there were whispers outside at the top of the verandah. I sat up in a bath of perspiration, and stared, like the sphinx, with dilated eyeballs at the window-curtains. A light all of a sudden flashed upon me from a dark lantern, and I knew that the ruffians were about to enter. I stole out of bed with the life-preserver, and approached the casement. All seemed

still, save the beating of my heart, that throbbed like a huge clock within me. I stood ready to strike the first intruder as he came in, as he must have done, head foremost. I stood ready, I repeat, but I don't think I should have done it. After a while—I do do not know how long—I peeped through the curtains, and beheld—moonshine; moonshine almost as bright as sunshine, and no burglars on the verandah with dark lanterns and diamonds at all. There was a dreadful sight in the cheval-glass, however, of a small youth in white raiment, with his knees exceedingly close to one another, and a face like a turnip-top; and I should think I was a stone lighter than when I went to bed. That night's experience is a fair specimen of the charming way in which I generally spent the periods devoted to repose. The light from the dark lantern was caused by that unnatural and protracted stare of mine, and may be seen by anybody else who looks long enough; and the whispering I heard, and the glass-cutting was the blood doing something or other it should not have done about my ears, I suppose; but it is easy enough to be scientific and explanatory by daylight.

When I went to the military college, my disease was in no way bettered; but, thanks to my strenuous exertions, it got no worse, and certainly became more capable of concealment. Boy as I was, I had set myself to work to effect its cure; and from that time to this, I have never let myself be utterly beaten. I needed not the chance expressions regarding 'pluck' and 'funk,' such as every school-boy hears ten times a day, to teach me what the world thinks upon this matter; and, knowing its judgment to be a hard one, I determined from the first it should not be expressed upon me. That it was a cruelly wrong and unjust one, I found out soon enough at the college. I found there every description of cruelty in active operation, and delight in giving pain to be actually the leading characteristic of the corps of gentlemen cadets. I saw authority lending itself to assist the oppressors, and to tie the hands of the oppressed. When a large corporal beat wantonly a small cadet—more helpless than a woman, because, by the military regulations, he was forbidden to defend himself—I discovered the tyrant might still be considered a very courageous fellow, and from these circumstances, I began to be more easy in my mind. For if the general opinion decreed that a physical debility to face danger calmly was worse than a morbid lust for inflicting pain upon helpless persons, it was clear that the general opinion could neither be right nor valuable. I knew that I myself would rather be shot—if it could be done, as Bob Acres wished it to be, 'unawares'—than commit an act of cruelty. I knew that I had the highest moral courage, and could have addressed 5,000 Tories with enthusiasm upon the rights of men, provided only that they kept the peace; and because the whir of a cricket-ball made me tremble, because a fear came over me in peril that I could no more prevent than a landsman can seasickness, was I to be an outcast and a pariah among such men as the corporal? Now, the corporal was half the college, and would be the other half when the other half was old enough. No; I knew that I had a contemptible weakness, not easily cured or concealed, but I no longer humbled myself in the dust, or made myself miserable about what I could not help.

I purposely attended the fencing rooms to accustom myself to the sight of naked steel; I stood as close to the cannon as was permitted by the gunners; and I climbed far

higher up the gymnastic pole than my brain could easily bear. That soldiering was just the profession least adapted for me I was convinced—but my family was not rich enough to justify my throwing up my chance of a commission—so I adapted myself for it as well as I could. Of course, there were many cowards besides myself; and whether they were hang-dog, shambling paltrons, or bragging, lying Bessuses, I saw through them like glass.

All deeds of violence on my part, however justified and called for by the occasion, were the results of prudence and reflection. The sense of shame, and the fear of detection, had to reinforce mere honest indignation before I went into action: though my nature was sensitive enough, anger was no match for fear. Staying at a cadet friend's house in a vacation, this incident happened to me: I was accompanying his two sisters from an afternoon concert in the town, when a couple of young dandies insulted them: they followed so closely that it was impossible but that their impertinent remarks must have been heard. I was indignant beyond measure; but in the ladies' presence, of course, both words and deeds were out of the question; I therefore saw them home before I confronted their tormentors. They were tall, unwhiskered youths, with foolish but not wicked faces, and upon one of them, who wore a moustache, I turned rapidly, as the door closed upon my charges, with my cane in my hand. I saw him draw one leg back irresolutely, which cost him a thrashing at least as much as did his insolence; for I gave him one-two across the shoulders as decisively as Fighting Fitzgerald might have done. I don't know whether he fled first or the other, but I found myself pursuing them both through the streets of Roughfield, at the pace of about fifteen miles an hour. I was, as might perhaps be expected, one of the fastest runners of my day, and it was easy for me to get near enough to the uncared one to trip him into the gutter, and administer a three-four in continuation of the tune I had played so satisfactorily upon his friend. A policeman then came up, and I gave him into custody. If I had hired the creatures to behave as they did, nothing could have gone off more charmingly. When my host, Jack Stanhope, heard the circumstance, he was quite delighted, and grateful to me beyond measure. 'If,' he said, 'the man in custody should want satisfaction for the licking you gave him, he must have it from me, mind.' I said, at first, I should much prefer shooting him myself, but gradually suffered myself to be overruled. However, we thought it better not to press the charge, and the accused thought it better to take himself off quietly. But I was the lion of Roughfield for days—Mr. Stanhope's friend, who had horsewhipped two ruffians for winking at Mr. Stanhope's sisters. I believe, during that period, I might have taken my choice out of a dozen young ladies for my bride; but I was not in want of a wife, but of a reputation.

The usual routine of a military college was at last over, and I found myself a commissioned officer of the —th regiment. My comrades, upon the whole, were a light-hearted, generous set of fellows, and one or two of them right true friends indeed. There was but one entirely black sheep in all the flock—Lieutenant Bullseye. He could sing well, play whist tolerably, and provided all things went smoothly with him, was rather a jovial person, so that, I am sorry to say, he was not unpopular; but he was infamously cruel both to man and horse, sneering and overbearing in manner, and absolutely offensive to all persons who ex-