

He roared out in fright and pain, and, though more alarmed than hurt, never after drew knife upon a combatant. But the value of the lesson which I gave was, like most other very valuable things, inadequately appreciated ; and it merely procured for me the character of being a dangerous boy. I had certainly reached a dangerous stage ; but it was mainly myself that was in jeopardy. There is a transition time in which the strength and independence of the latent man begin to mingle with the wilfulness and indiscretion of the mere boy, which is more perilous than any other, and in which many more downward careers of recklessness and folly begin, that end in wreck and ruin, than in all the other years of life which intervene between childhood and old age. The growing lad should be wisely and tenderly dealt with at this critical stage. The severity that would fain compel the implicit submission yielded at an earlier period, would probably succeed, if his character was a strong one, in ensuring but his ruin. It is at this transition stage that boys run off to sea from their parents and masters, or, when tall enough, enlist in the army for soldiers. The strictly orthodox parent, if more severe than wise, succeeds occasionally in driving, during this crisis, his son into Popery, or infidelity ; and the sternly moral one, in landing *his* in utter profligacy. But, leniently and judiciously dealt with, the dangerous period passes ; in a few years at most,—in some instances in even a few months,—the sobriety incidental to a further development of character ensues, and the wild boy settles down into a rational young man.

It so chanced, however, that in what proved the closing scene in my term of school attendance, I was rather unfortunate than guilty. The class to which I now belonged read an English lesson every afternoon, and had its rounds of spelling ; and in these last I acquitted myself but ill ; partly from the circumstance that I spelt only indifferently, but still more from the further circumstance, that, retaining strongly fixed in my memory the broad Scotch pronunciation acquired at the dames' school I had to carry on in my mind the double process of at once spelling the required word, and of trans