

ing, not inventing; though where such prose and such verse could have been borrowed, and, in especial, such grammar and such spelling, even cleverer men than he might well have despaired of ever finding out. And in order to test my powers, he proposed furnishing me with a theme on which to write. "Let us see," he said, "let us see: the dancing-school ball comes on here next week;—bring me a poem on the dancing-school ball." The subject did not promise a great deal; but, setting myself to work in the evening, I produced half-a-dozen stanzas on the ball, which were received as good, in evidence that I actually could rhyme; and for some weeks after I was rather a favorite with the new master.

I had, however, ere now become a wild insubordinate boy, and the only school in which I could properly be taught was that world-wide school which awaited me, in which Toil and Hardship are the severe but noble teachers. I got into sad scrapes. Quarrelling, on one occasion, with a boy of my own standing, we exchanged blows across the form; and when called up for trial and punishment, the fault was found to attach so equally to both sides, that the same number of *palmies*, well laid on, were awarded to each. I bore mine, however, like a North American Indian, whereas my antagonist began to howl and cry; and I could not resist the temptation of saying to him, in a whisper that unluckily reached the ear of the master, "Ye big blubbering blockhead, take that for a drubbing from me." I had of course to receive a few palmies additional for the speech; but then, "who cared for that?" The master, however, "cared" considerably more for the offence than I did for the punishment. And in a subsequent quarrel with another boy,—a stout and somewhat desperate mulatto,—I got into a worse scrape still, of which he thought still worse. The mulatto, in his battles, which were many, had a trick, when in danger of being over-matched, of drawing his knife; and in our affair—the necessities of the fight seeming to require it—he drew his knife upon me. To his horror and astonishment, however, instead of running off, I immediately drew mine, and, quick as lightning, stabbed him in the thigh.