

# MACON HERALD.

WILLIAM D. WADDILL.]

"The Constitution and the Laws—the Guardians of our Liberties."

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## THE MACON HERALD, DEVOTED TO NEWS & MISCELLANY.

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### Confessions of a Coward.

How many cowards, whose hearts are all as fake  
As stars of sand, wear yet upon their chins  
The beard of Hercules, and frowning Mars;  
Who inward searched, have livers white as  
milk! SHAKESPEARE.

It is not often that a man will suffer himself to be posted as a coward, even in the circumscribed sphere of an obscure watering-place; and I cannot but anticipate some share of contempt while I go a step beyond that degradation, and acknowledge myself thus, before the whole world of fashion, "a coward—a most scandalous coward." It is, however, with the hope of changing that contempt into something of a more respectful feeling—it is in the sincere expectation of exciting some degree of sympathy, that I have brought myself to make the avowal.

I was born the heir of a most respectable and wealthy family, and entered life under auspices of the most favorable description: but before I had well quitted my nursery, an event occurred which has marred every flattering prospect, which entered like a canker into my very soul, and has tinged every stage of my life with misery and contempt.

I was about four years of age when my paternal grandmother died: she had been excessively fond of me, and would scarcely suffer me to be a moment from her side. I need not describe the feelings which this affection awakened within me. I returned her love with the fervor and artlessness of childhood, and I still cling to her memory with a fondness which, amidst the contumely I have been fated to endure, has survived nearly all the kindly feelings of the heart, and which in its purity and innocence imparts to my solitary moments the most pleasurable sensations I enjoy.—She is before me now in the dignity of seventy winters; her tall figure scarcely more bent than in use; her cheek still flushed with the hue of health, her mild blue eyes beaming kindly on me; and her perfectly white hair turned above a forehead, fair amidst its wrinkles. It was my delight to sit at her feet whilst she was employed in the homely occupation of knitting; and to listen to her stories of our ancestors, or of her own adventures with the rebels in "the 45," when they occupied for a time, her father's house in the north. I remember particularly the description of the horror she felt, a short time afterwards, on entering Carlisle, in recognizing over the city gate the heads of several of these guests. This kind friend and companion of my infancy died suddenly, and her fate was kept secret from me: my inquiries were met with the assurance they contrived to pacify me. One day, however, while the servant was absent, I happened to want a toy which I recollected I had left in my grandmother's room; and proceeded thither, unobserved, to fetch it. On entering the apartment I was surprised by the sight of what appeared to me a handsome chest, and with the curiosity natural to a child, I climbed on the bedstead to examine it. I lifted the covering, and gazed for a moment in mute astonishment at the unexpected appearance and situation of my beloved relative. At first I endeavored to awaken her by calling on her

name: vexed at her continued silence, I impatiently seized her hand; its icy coldness went to my heart, and the heavy manner in which it dropped from my releasing grasp increased my astonishment. At length I lifted the eyelids, and the cold fixed gaze which fell upon me completed my terror, and forced from me a scream which summoned the attendants, who bore me away, and explained to me the work of death.

From this moment the cause which had wrought this dreadful change became the ruling sentiment of my mind. I listened attentively to every narrative of the progress of sickness and death, and the most fatal diseases become objects of terrible anticipation to me. I frequently woke in the middle of the night—the silence and the darkness were associated in my mind with death and the grave, and I shrieked in agony lest I should die before the morning.

My imagination, thus fearfully excited, outstripped my years; and I was sent to a public school, in the hope that the bustle, the emulation, and the amusements of such a scene would produce a favorable effect on my mind; but the shaft had struck too deeply—the impression was never effaced. I never joined in the sports of my companions, for we could play without quarrelling; fighting was the natural consequence of these contests; but I had heard too much of the fatal consequences of an unlucky blow to venture a battle with even the least boy in the school: I was consequently surrounded by a host of tyrants; and happy was the day on which a share of the little luxuries I was enabled to purchase procured for me an exemption from unmerited blows. My time was spent in solitary misery in a retired corner of the play-ground, where I sat continually brooding over the horrors of death; and I now wonder that my senses did not yield to the terrible creations of my fancy.—Sometimes I scarcely slept for weeks, for fear I should fall into a trance, and be buried while alive; at other times I imagined that this catastrophe had already taken place, and that the passing scene was but a dream from which I should awake to die amidst the stifling solitude of my tomb: frequently was I so oppressed with the reality of these fears, that I have poured out my soul in agony to God, and prayed that I might never be conscious of the awfulness of my doom.

In these dreadful fancies and such as these were passed my hours of leisure, and I protest that the recollection of them is terrible to me even now. However, I passed through the several forms of the school with the greatest credit, and was sent to Oxford.

Thither my character followed me, and I became the butt and scapegoat of the whole university: my name was given to the proctor by every jacknape who was detected in any irregularity; if a man had a noisy party in his rooms, and was desirous of escaping the consequences, mine was battered till they obtained entrance, and mine the port that was swallowed till the morning brought a head-ache and an indisposition. At length my name became associated with so many breaches of discipline, that my father was advised to remove me, in order to prevent the adoption of harsher measures; but, so far from being dissatisfied with my conduct, the old gentleman applauded my spirit, and rejoiced to see me changed from the pusillanimous character which I formerly bore. So completely were his views with respect to me altered, that he decided I should enter my uncle's regiment of horse! My father's commands I had never dared to dispute, but this sounded like a sentence of death to me, and appeared totally impossible to be carried into effect. A regiment of horse! Why I had never mounted the little quiet poney which carried me round the park without fears for the safety of my neck, and I had never ventured beyond a walk even upon him. Fortunately, however, as

I then considered it, there was no vacancy in the regiment at the moment; and it was just then ordered to the Peninsula. My reprieve was extremely short; a letter speedily arrived from my uncle, stating that the junior Cornet had been drowned in the passage, and that he had reserved the appointment for me; my commission arrived from the War-office in a few days afterwards, with directions that I should join the regiment immediately. My father hurried my preparations, and I did my best to keep up my spirits; but do what I would, a fit of sickness procured me a month's delay. At length I embarked; but the sensations with which I entered the boat, was dragged up the side of the vessel, and saw the shores lessening to my view, and the waves beating around me, with the fate of my predecessor ever in my recollection, I will not attempt to describe. In those sensations the separation from my friends had no share: in my fears for myself all kindly affections were overwhelmed. Dreadful sea sickness, which I suffered in common with my fellow-passengers, disguised all other feelings, and I landed without having attracted the particular attention of my companions.

My uncle had just left the General when I reached the camp, and congratulated me on my good fortune, in having arrived at a moment when they were on the point of attacking the enemy, an event which would take place on the following morning. He then made a thousand inquiries respecting his friends in England; but imagining from the incoherency of my answers that I was greatly fatigued, he recommended me to seek refreshment in sleep. Sleep, and eternity at hand! I threw myself on the earth, and endeavored to persuade myself that this was one of my dreadful dreams; but the regular tramp of the sentinel, and the canvas canopy above me, too plainly assured me of the terrible reality. At one time I had determined on feigning sickness—but even then danger would be as present as in the battle; other plans I endeavored to arrange for avoiding the fatal field; but seeing no way of escaping, I resolved to fortify myself with laudanum, as the only resource against the discovery of my fears. After a few hours of agonizing suspense, an old servant of my uncle's entered my tent to assist me in accoutring myself. I had read much, and with feelings of strong commiseration, of the conduct of criminals on the morning of execution, during the participation of the sacrament—the interviews with friends, ministers, and sheriffs—pinioning the arms, knocking off the irons, arranging the procession, and other similar modes of increasing the suspense of the awful hour. Feelings similar to those which I had imagined must prevail on such occasions did I experience, while the veteran was fluently expatiating on the probable events of the day; and when he mentioned the certainty of our division having to sustain the brunt of the fight, my trembling would have betrayed me had the possibility of the existence of such a sensation as fear entered the mind of the soldier. He mistook it for the agitation of impatient valor, and begged me not to be too eager, as coolness was every thing on these occasions. Heaven knows I was cool enough—so cool, that my heart seemed frozen within me. At length the laudanum began to take effect; and I have only confused recollection of receiving the encouraging congratulations of my uncle, mounting my high mettled charger, joining my troop, the commencement of the battle, and the astounding effect of the first volley of musketry close by me. I recollect, like a dream, the furious onset with which he charged; and the first occurrence at all clear in my memory, is finding myself left behind my comrades, and alone on the side of a hill facing a dragoon covered with blood, riding at full speed towards me: not

—Mandradora  
Nor all the drowsy syrups in the world,

could sustain me at such a sight as this.—Without a moment's consideration I turned my horse, spurred him into a full gallop, quitted my saddle. On I went towards our lines, fully assured, from the clatter of his accoutrements, of being pursued by the bloody dragoon: we came to the rear, but still he pursued; and it was quite evident to me that he was determined to have my life, though his own should pay for it. At length, in a close dell, whither my horse had carried me at his will, he stumbled and fell, and my enemy coming close after me, fell over us: the two steeds were speedily on their feet, and galloped off, and I was now sure the hour was come. Without daring to look up I implored quarter most lustily, and augured dreadful things from the silence with which my entreaties were received. At last I ventured to look up, and hope revived when I saw the dragoon extended at length beside me. Gradually I gathered courage, or to speak more correctly, I began to be somewhat less fearful, and, taking a full survey of this hardy enemy, I discovered that it was my uncle's old servant, whom I have already mentioned, dead, as he no doubt had been during the whole time of my flight, with a pistol-shot through his breast.

This experiment of a soldier's life was for me; the victory being on our side, I feigned sickness, and was sent to the rear: then I received intelligence of the sudden death of my father, threw up my commission, and returned to England.

The winter after I took possession of my estate, I went to Bath with my mother, who introduced me to Julia Faulkner, a lovely girl with an independent fortune of thirty thousand pounds: she was extremely amiable and well-informed, and I paid her as much attention as my constitutional timidity would allow me. It was evident that a more intimate connection between us was desired by our respective parents, and I little doubt but in the course of time I should have mustered courage to propose for her, and I doubt as little that I should have been accepted. A confoundedly tall Irish Colonel, however, with black whiskers, and most ferocious aspect, appeared on the scene, and became, as well as myself, the constant attendant of Julia. But what chance had I with a fellow of his appearance, profession, and impudence? His loquacity obliged me to sit in their presence as silent as a statue; or if I ventured to make a remark, he was sure to interrupt me before I could utter a sentence.—If I secured her scarf to ensure myself the pleasure of covering her ivory shoulders, he would take it from me with the utmost coolness and praise my attention to the ladies. I had once seated her in my cabriolet for a drive, and was about to follow her, when the Colonel rode up on horseback, and leaping from his saddle, entreated me, if I loved him, to try what I could do to tame his animal, which, he said, was so vicious that no horsemanship but mine would have any effect upon him. Without waiting for a reply he seized the reins, leaped into the carriage, and drove off, begging me, when I had done with the horse, to let my servant take him to the stable; thither indeed he went, as soon as I had recovered from the effects of this astounding piece of assurance.

One evening, as we were leaving Julia's house, the Colonel addressed me in a very quiet, and indeed almost a friendly tone: "Faith now, my dear fellow," said he, "this won't do at all; as only one of us can marry this girl, we must not both of us go on loving her at this rate: so we'll meet to-morrow morning on Lansdown, and decide which it shall be. Just name your friend, and I'll desire my cousin Bob, who always attends me on these occasions, to call and arrange the affair." All the warmth of my affection for Julia thawed at these words: I could live for her, but I could not die for her; so I protested that had I known his pretensions to the lady I should never have made advances, and should thenceforward think no more of her. This, he said, was so prodigiously handsome, that he should be happy to become more particularly acquainted with me; and we parted with an engagement that I should dine with him the next day, having, he said, six elegant sisters whom he was desirous of introducing me to. I went, and was most graciously received by the whole family, particularly by Miss O'Shane, the eldest daughter, a short thick girl, with flaxen hair, (now, like Lord Byron, "I hate a dumpy woman," and flaxen hair is my abomination), white cheeks, and no eyebrows.—Next this lady was seated at dinner; in the evening we went to the rooms, and with this lady it was my fate to dance. The next morning the Colonel called on me, and took me with him to inquire after the ladies: they were about to go on a shopping expedition, and Miss O'Shane was handed over to my protection. In short, by the extremely clever conduct of Mrs.