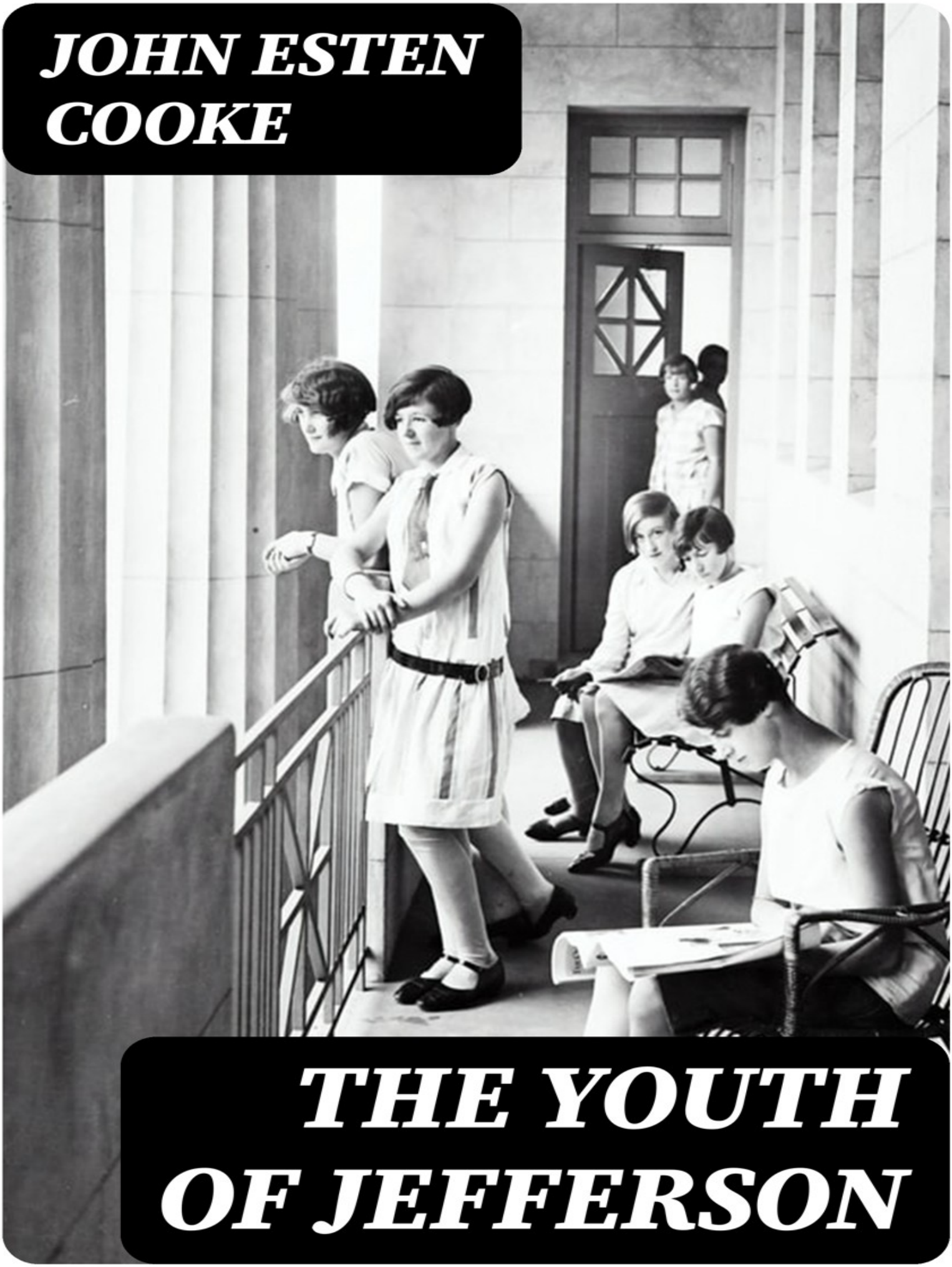
JOHN ESTEN COOKE



THE YOUTH OF JEFFERSON

John Esten Cooke

The Youth of Jefferson

Or, a Chronicle of College Scrapes at Williamsburg, in Virginia, A.D. 1764

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

HOW THREE PERSONS IN THIS HISTORY CAME BY THEIR NAMES.

On a fine May morning in the year 1764,—that is to say, between the peace at Fontainebleau and the stamp act agitation, which great events have fortunately no connection with the present narrative,—a young man mounted on an elegant horse, and covered from head to foot with lace, velvet, and embroidery, stopped before a small house in the town or city of Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia.

Negligently delivering his bridle into the hands of a diminutive negro, the young man entered the open door, ascended a flight of stairs which led to two or three small rooms above, and turning the knob, attempted to enter the room opening upon the street.

The door opened a few inches, and then was suddenly closed by a heavy body thrown against it.

"Back!" cried a careless and jovial voice, "back! base proctor—this is my castle."

"Open! open!" cried the visitor.

"Never!" replied the voice.

The visitor kicked the door, to the great damage of his Spanish shoes.

"Beware!" cried the hidden voice; "I am armed to the teeth, and rather than be captured I will die in defence of

my rights—namely, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness under difficulties."

"Tom! you are mad."

"What! that voice? not the proctor's!"

"No, no," cried the visitor, kicking again; "Jacquelin's."

"Ah, ah!"

And with these ejaculations the inmate of the chamber was heard drawing back a table, then the butt of a gun sounded upon the floor, and the door opened.

The young man who had asserted his inalienable natural rights with so much fervor was scarcely twenty—at least he had not reached his majority. He was richly clad, with the exception of an old faded dressing gown, which fell gracefully like a Roman toga around his legs; and his face was full of intelligence and careless, somewhat cynical humor. The features were hard and pointed, the mouth large, the hair sandy with a tinge of red.

"Ah, my dear forlorn lover!" he cried, grasping his visitor's hand, "I thought you were that rascally proctor, and was really preparing for a hand-to-hand conflict, to the death."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir! could I expect anything else, from the way you turned my knob? You puzzled me."

"So I see," said his visitor; "you had your gun, and were evidently afraid."

"Afraid? Never!"

"Afraid of your shadow!"

"At least I never would have betrayed fear had I seen you!" retorted the occupant of the chamber. "You are so

much in love that a fly need not be afraid of you. Poor Jacquelin! poor melancholy Jacques! a feather would knock you down."

The melancholy Jacques sat down sighing.

"The fact is, my dear fellow," he said, "I am the victim of misfortune: but who complains? I don't, especially to you, you great lubber, shut up here in your den, and with no hope or fear on earth, beyond pardon of your sins of commission at the college, and dread of the proctor's grasp! You are living a dead life, while I—ah! don't speak of it. What were you reading?"

"That deplorable Latin song. Salve your ill-humor with it!"

And he handed his visitor, by this time stretched carelessly upon a lounge, the open volume. He read:

"Orientis partibus
Adventavit asinus,
Pulcher et fortissimus,
Sarcinis aptissimus.

"Hez, sire asne, car chantez
Belle bouche rechignez,
Vous aurez du foin assez,
Et de l'avoine a plantez."

"Good," said the visitor satirically; "that suits you—except it should be '*occidentis* partibus:' our Sir Asinus comes from the west. And by my faith, I think I will in future dub you *Sir Asinus*, in revenge for calling me—me, the most cheerful of light-hearted mortals—the 'melancholy Jacques.'"

"Come, come!" said the gentleman threatened with this sobriquet, "that's too bad, Jacques."

"*Jacques!* You persist in calling me *Jacques*, just as you persist in calling Belinda, *Campana in die—Bell in day*. What a deplorable witticism! I could find a better in a moment. Stay," he added, "I have discovered it already."

"What is it, pray, most sapient Jacques?"

"Listen, most long-eared Sir Asinus."

And the young man read once again;

"Hez, sire asne, car chantez,
BELLE BOUCHE rechignez;
Vous aurez du foin assez,
Et de l'avoine a plantez."

"Well," said his friend, "now that you have mangled that French with your wretched pronunciation, please explain how my lovely Belinda—come, don't sigh and scowl because I say 'my,' for you know it's all settled—tell me where in these lines you find her name."

"In the second," sighed Jacques.

"Oh yes!—bah!"

"There you are sneering. You make a miserable Latin pun, by which you translate Belinda into *Campana in die*—Bell in day—and when I improve your idea, making it really good, you sneer."

"Really, now!—well, I don't say!"

"Belle-bouche! Could any thing be finer? 'Pretty-mouth!' And then the play upon *Bel*, in Belinda, by the word *Belle*. Positively, I will in future call her nothing else. Belle-bouche—pretty-mouth! Ah!"

And the unfortunate lover stretched languidly upon the lounge, studied the ceiling, and sighed piteously.

His friend burst into a roar of laughter. Jacques—for let us adopt the sobriquets all round—turned negligently and said:

"Pray what are you braying at, Sir Asinus?"

"At your sighs."

"Did I sigh?"

"Yes, portentously!"

"I think you are mistaken."

"No!"

"I never sigh."

And the melancholy Jacques uttered a sigh which was enough to shatter all his bulk.

The consequence was that Sir Asinus burst into a second roar of laughter louder than before, and said:

"Come, my dear Jacques, unbosom! You have been to see ——"

"Belle-bouche—Belle-bouche: but I am not in love with her."

"Oh no—of course not," said his friend, laughing ironically.

Jacques sighed.

"She don't like me," he said forlornly.

"She's very fond of me though," said his friend. "Only yesterday—but I am mad to be talking about it."

With which words Sir Asinus turned away his head to hide his mischievous and triumphant smile.

Poor Jacques looked more forlorn than ever; which circumstance seemed to afford his friend extreme delight.

"Why not pay your addresses to Philippa, Jacques my boy?" he said satirically; "there's no chance for you with Belle-bouche, as you call her."

"Philippa? No, no!" sighed Jacques; "she's too brilliant."

"For you?"

"Even for me—me, the prince of wits, and coryphæus of coxcombs: yes, yes!"

And the melancholy Jacques sighed again, and looked around him with the air of a man whose last hope on earth has left him.

His friend chokes down a laugh; and stretching himself in the bright spring sunshine pouring through the window, says with a smile:

"Come, make a clean breast of it, old fellow. You were there to-day?"

"Yes, yes."

"Have a pleasant time?"

"Can't say I did."

"Were there any visitors?"

"A dozen—you understand the description of visitors."

"No; what sort?"

"Fops in embryo, and aspirants after wit-laurels."

"It is well you went—they must have been thrown in the shade. For you, my dear Jacques, are undeniably the most perfect fop, and the greatest wit—in your own opinion—of this pleasant village of Devilsburg."

"No, no," replied his companion with well-affected modesty; "I a fop! I a pretender to wit? No, no, my dear Sir Asinus, you do me injustice: I am the simplest of mortals, and a very child of innocence. But I was speaking of Shadynook and the fairies of that domain. Never have I seen Belinda, or rather Belle-bouche, so lovely, and I here disdainfully repel your ridiculous calumny that she's in love

with you, you great lump of presumption and overweening self-conceit! Philippa too was a pastoral queen—in silk and jewels—and around them they had gathered together a troop of shepherds from the adjoining grammar-school, called William and Mary College, of which I am an aspiring bachelor, and you were an ornament before your religious opinions caught from Fauquier drove you away like a truant school-boy. The shepherds were as usual very ridiculous, and I had no opportunity to whisper so much as a single word into my dear Belle-bouche's ear. Ah! how lovely she looked! By heaven, I'll go to-morrow and request her to designate some form of death for me to die—all for her sake!"

With which words the forlorn Jacques gazed languidly through the window.

At the same moment a bell was heard ringing in the direction of the College; and yawning first luxuriously, the young man rose.

"Lecture, by Jove!" he said.

"And you, unfortunate victim, must attend," said his companion.

"Yes. You remain here?"

"To the end."

"Still resisting?"

"To the death!"

"Very well," said Jacques, putting on his cocked hat, which was ornamented with a magnificent feather. "I half envy you; but duty calls—I must go."

"If you see Ned Carter, or Tom Randolph of Tuckahoe, tell them to come round."

"To comfort you? Poor unfortunate prisoner!"

"No, most sapient Jacques: fortunately I do not need comfort as you do."

"I want comfort?"

"Yes; there you are sighing: that 'heigho!' was dreadful."

"Scoffer!"

"No; I am your rival."

"Very well; I warn you that I intend to push the siege; take care of your interests."

"I'm not afraid."

"I am going to see Belle-bouche again to-morrow.

"Faith, I'll be there, then."

"Good; war is opened then—the glove thrown?"

"War to the death! Good-by, publican!"

"Farewell, sinner!"

And with these words the melancholy Jacques departed.

(Back to Table of Content.)

CHAPTER II.

Table of Contents

JACQUES SHOWS THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING LED CAPTIVE BY A CROOK.

It was a delicious day, such a day as the month of flowers alone can bring into the world, and all nature seemed to be rejoicing. The peach and cherry blossoms shone like snow upon the budding trees, the oriole shot from elm to elm, a ball of fire against a background of blue and emerald, and from every side came the murmuring flow of streamlets,

dancing in the sun and filling the whole landscape with their joyous music.

May reigned supreme—a tender blue-eyed maiden, treading upon a carpet of young grass with flowers in their natural colors; and nowhere were her smiles softer or more bright than there at Shadynook, which looks still on the noble river flowing to the sea, and on the distant town of Williamsburg, from which light clouds of smoke curl upward and are lost in the far-reaching azure.

Shadynook was one of those old hip-roofed houses which the traveller of to-day meets with so frequently, scattered throughout Virginia, crowning every knoll and giving character to every landscape. Before the house stretched a green lawn bounded by a low fence; and in the rear a garden full of flowers and blossoming fruit trees made the surrounding air faint with the odorous breath of Spring.

Over the old house, whose dormer windows were wreathed with the mosses of age, stretched the wide arms of two noble elms; and the whole homestead had about it an air of home comfort, and a quiet, happy repose, which made many a wayfarer from far countries sigh, as he gazed on it, embowered in its verdurous grove.

In the garden is an arbor, over which flowering vines of every description hover and bloom, full of the wine of spring. Around the arbor extend flower plats carefully tended and fragrant with violets, crocuses, and early primroses. Foliage of the light tender tint of May clothes the background, and looking from the arbor you clearly discern the distant barn rising above the trees.

In this arbor sits or rather reclines a young girl—for she has stretched herself upon the trellised seat, with a languid and careless ease, which betrays total abandon—an abandon engendered probably by the warm languid air of May, and those million flowers burdening the air with perfume.

This is Miss Belle-bouche, whom we have heard the melancholy Jacques discourse of with such forlorn eloquence to his friend Tom, or Sir Asinus, as the reader pleases.

Belle-bouche, Pretty-mouth, Belinda, or Rebecca—for this last was the name given her by her sponsors—is a young girl of about seventeen, and of a beauty so fresh and rare that the enthusiasm of Jacques was scarcely strange. The girl has about her the freshness and innocence of childhood, the grace and elegance of the inhabitants of that realm of fairies which we read of in the olden poets—all the warmth, and reality, and beauty of those lovelier fairies of our earth. Around her delicate brow and rosy cheeks fall myriads of golden "drop curls," which veil the deep-blue eyes, half closed and fixed upon the open volume in her hand. Belle-bouche is very richly clad, in a velvet gown, a satin underskirt from which the gown is looped back, wide cuffs and profuse lace at wrists and neck; and on her diminutive feet, which peep from the skirt, are red morocco shoes tied with bows of ribbon, and adorned with heels not more than three inches in height. Her hair is powdered and woven with pearls—she wears a pearl necklace; she looks like a child dressed by its mother for a ball, and spoiled long ago by "petting."

Belle-bouche reads the "Althea" of Lovelace, and smiles approvingly at the gallant poet's assertion, that the birds of the air know no such liberty as he does, fettered by her eyes and hair. It is the fashion for Lovelaces to make such declarations, and with a coquettish little movement she puts back the drop curls, and raises her blue eyes to the sky from which they have stolen their hue.

She remains for some moments is this reverie, and is not aware of the approach of a gallant Lovelace, who, hat in hand, the feather of the said hat trailing on the ground, draws near.

Who is this gallant but our friend of one day's standing, the handsome, the smiling, the forlorn, the melancholy—and, being melancholy, the interesting—Jacques.

He approaches smiling, modest, humble—a consummate strategist; his ambrosial curls and powdered queue tied with its orange ribbon, shining in the sun. He wears a suit of cut velvet with gold buttons; a flowered satin waistcoat reaching to his knees; scarlet silk stockings, and high-heeled worsted shoes. His cuffs would enter a barrel with difficulty, and his chin reposes upon a frill of irreproachable Mechlin lace.

Jacques finds the eyes suddenly turned upon him, and bows low. Then he approaches, falls upon one knee, and presses his lips gallantly to the hand of the little beauty, who smiling carelessly rises in a measure from her recumbent position.

"Do I find the fair Belinda reading?" says the gallant; "what blessed book is made happy by the light of her eyes?"

Which remarkable words, we must beg the reader to remember, were after the fashion of the time and scarcely more than commonplace. The fairer portion of humanity had even then perfected that sovereignty over the males which in our own day is so very observable. So, instead of replying in a tone indicating surprise, the little beauty answers quite simply:

"My favorite—Lovelace."

Jacques heaves a sigh; for the music of the voice has touched his heart—nay, overwhelmed it with a new flood of love.

He dangles his bonnet and plume, and carefully arranges a drop curl. He, the prince of wits, the ornament of ball rooms, the star of the minuet and reel, is suddenly quite dumb, and seems to seek for a subject to discourse upon in surrounding objects.

A happy idea strikes him; a thought occurs to him; he grasps at it with the desperation of a drowning man. He says:

"'Tis a charming day, fairest Belle-bouche—Belinda, I mean. Ah, pardon my awkwardness!"

And the unhappy Corydon betrays by his confusion how much this slip of the tongue has embarrassed him—at least, that he wishes her to think so.

The little beauty smiles faintly, and bending a fatal languishing glance upon her admirer, says:

"You called me—what was it?"

"Ah, pardon me."

"Oh certainly!—but please say what you called me."

"How can I?"

"By telling me," says the beauty philosophically.

"Must I?" says Jacques, reflecting that after all his offence was not so dreadful.

"If you please."

"I said Belle-bouche."

"Ah! that is——?"

"Pretty-mouth," says Lovelace, with the air of a man who is caught feloniously appropriating sheep; but unable to refrain from bending wistful looks upon the topic of his discourse.

Belle-bouche laughs with a delicious good humor, and Jacques takes heart again.

"Is that all?" she says; "but what a pretty name!"

"Do you like it, really?" asks the forlorn lover.

"Indeed I do."

"And may I call you Belle-bouche?"

"If you please."

Jacques feels his heart oppressed with its weight of love. He sighs. This manœuvre is greeted with a little laugh.

"Oh, that was a dreadful heigho!" she says; "you must be in love."

"I am," he says, "desperately."

A slight color comes to her bright cheek, for it is impossible to misunderstand his eloquent glance.

"Are you?" she says; "but that is wrong. Fie on't! Was ever Corydon really in love with his Chloe—or are his affections always confined to the fluttering ribbons, and the crook, wreathed with flowers, which make her a pleasant object only, like a picture?"

Jacques sighs.

"I am not a Corydon," he says, "much less have I a Chloe—at least, who treats me as Chloes should treat their faithful shepherds. My Chloe runs away when I approach, and her crook turns into a shadow which I grasp in vain at. The shepherdess has escaped!"

"It is well she don't beat you," says the lovely girl, smiling.

"Beat me!"

"With her crook."

"Ah! I ask nothing better than to excite some emotion in her tender heart more lively than indifference. Perhaps were she to hate me a little, and consequently beat me, as you have said, she might end by drawing me towards her with her flowery crook."

The young girl laughs.

"Would you follow?"

"Ah, yes—for who knows——?"

He pauses, smiling wistfully.

"Ah, finish—finish! I know 'tis something pretty by the manner in which you smile," she says, laughing.

"Who knows, I would say, but in following her, fairest Belle-bouche—may I call you Belle-bouche?"

"Oh yes, if you please—if you think it suits me."

And she pours the full light of her eyes and smiles upon him, until he looks down, blinded.

"Pity, pity," he murmurs, "pity, dearest Miss Belle-bouche——"

She pretends not to hear, but, turning away with a blush at that word "dearest," says, with an attempt at a laugh:

"You have not told me why you would wish your Chloe to draw you after her with her crook."

"Because we should pass through the groves——"

"Well."

"And I should wrap her in my cloak, to protect her from the boughs and thorns."

"Would you?"

"Ah, yes! And then we should cross the beautiful meadows and the flowery knolls——"

"Very well, sir."

"And I should gather flowers for her, and kneeling to present them, would approach near enough to kiss her hand ——"

"Oh goodness!"

"And finally, fairest Belle-bouche, we should cross the bright streams on the pretty sylvan bridges——"

"Yes, sir."

"And most probably she would grow giddy; and I should take her in my arms, and holding her on my faithful bosom ——"

Jacques opens his arms as though he would really clasp the fair shepherdess, who, half risen, with her golden curls mingled with the flowers, her cheeks the color of her red fluttering ribbons, seeks to escape the declaration which her lover is about to make.

"Oh, no! no!" she says.

He draws back despairingly, and at the same moment hears a merry voice come singing down the blossom-fretted walk, upon which millions of the snowy leaves have fallen.

"One more chance gone!" the melancholy Jacques murmurs; and turning, he bows to the new comer—the fair Philippa.(Back to Table of Content.)

CHAPTER III.

Table of Contents

AN HEIRESS WHO WISHES TO BECOME A MAN.

Philippa is a lady of nineteen or twenty, with the air of a duchess and the walk of an antelope. Her brilliant eyes, as black as night, and as clear as a sunny stream, are full of life, vivacity and mischief; she seems to be laughing at life, and love, and gallantry, and all the complimentary nothings of society, from the height of her superior intellect, and with undazzled eyes. She is clad even more richly than Belle-bouche, for Philippa is an heiress—the mistress of untold farms—or plantations as they then said;—miles of James River "low grounds" and uncounted Africans. Like the Duke of Burgundy's, her sovereignty is acknowledged in three languages—the English, the African or Moorish, and the Indian: for the Indian settlement on the south side calls her mistress, and sends to her for blankets in the winter. In the summer it is not necessary to ask for the produce of her estate, such as they desire—they appropriate it.

Philippa is a cousin of Belle-bouche; and Belle-bouche is the niece of Aunt Wimple, who is mistress of the Shadynook domain. Philippa has guardians, but it cannot be said they direct her movements. They have given up that task in despair, some years since, and only hope that from the

numerous cormorants always hovering around her, she may select one not wholly insatiable—with some craw of mercy.

"There, you are talking about flowers, I lay a wager," she says, returning the bow of Jacques, and laughing.

"I was speaking neither of yourself nor the fair Belinda," replies Jacques, with melancholy gallantry.

"There! please have done with compliments—I detest them."

"You detest every thing insincere, I know, charming Philippa—pardon me, but your beautiful name betrays me constantly. Is it not—like your voice—stolen from poetry or music?"

"Ah, sir, you are insufferable."

"Pardon, pardon—but in this beautiful and fair season, so full of flowers——"

"You think it necessary to employ flowers of speech: that is what you were going to say, but for heaven's sake have done."

Jacques bows.

"I have just discarded the twentieth, Bel," she adds, laughing; "he got on his knees."

And Philippa laughs heartily.

Jacques is used to his companion's manner of talking, and says:

"Who was it, pray, madam—Mowbray?"

A flush passes over Philippa's face, and she looks away, murmuring "No!"

"I won't go over the list of your admirers," continues Jacques, sadly, "they are too numerous; for who can wonder at such a fairy face as yours attracting crowds of lovers?"

"My fairy face? Yes, and my unhappy wealth, sir. I wish I was poor! I can never know when I am loved truly. Oh, to know that!"

And a shadow passes over the face, obliterating the satire, and veiling the brilliant eyes. Then with an effort Philippa drives away her preoccupation, and says:

"I wish Heaven had made me a man!"

"A man?" says Jacques.

"Yes, sir."

"Pray why? Is there any young lady you would like to marry? Ah," he murmurs, "you need not go far if that is the case."

And he glances tenderly at Belle-bouche, who smiles and blushes.

"I wish to be a man, that my movements may not be restricted. There is my guardian, who murmurs at my travelling about from county to county with only Jugurtha to drive me—as if Jugurtha couldn't protect me if there were any highwaymen or robbers."

Jacques laughs.

"But there are disadvantages connected with manhood," he says. "You are ignorant of them, and so think them slight."

"The prominent ones, if you please."

"You would have to make love—the active instead of passive, as at present."

"I would enjoy it."

"How would you commence, pray?"

"Oh, easily—see now. I would say,'My dear Bel! I am at your service! If *you* love *me*, *I'll* love *you*!' And then with a

low bow I would kiss her hand, and her lips too, if she would permit me."

Jacques sighs.

"Do you think that would succeed, however?" he says.

"I don't know, and I don't care—I'd try."

Jacques sighs again, and looks wistfully at Belle-bouche, who smiles.

"I'm afraid such a cavalier address—at the pistol's mouth as it were—at forty paces—like those highwaymen you spoke of but now—would only insure failure."

"You are mistaken."

"I doubt the propriety of such a 'making love.'"

"If I were a man, you would see my success. I'd have any woman for the asking."

"Well, fancy yourself a man."

"And who will be my lady-love?"

"Fancy my sex changed also—make love to me, my charming Madam Philippa."

"Forsooth! But I could win your heart easily."

"How, pray," says Jacques, sighing, "granting first that 'tis in my possession?"

"By two simple things."

"To wit?"

"I would talk to you of flowers and shepherdesses, and crooks and garlands——"

"Oh!"

"And I would adopt, if I had not naturally, that frank, languid, graceful, fatal air which—which—shall I finish?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Which Bel has! What a beautiful blush!"

And Philippa claps her hands.

Jacques tries very hard not to color, thus forfeiting all his pretensions to the character of a self-possessed man of the world and elegant coxcomb; but this is equally forlorn with his attempt not to observe the mischievous glance and satirical lip of the fair Philippa.

He seeks in vain for a word—a jest—a reply.

Fortune favors him. A maid from the house approaches Philippa, and says:

"Mr. Mowbray, ma'am."

A blush, deeper than that upon the face of Jacques, mantles Philippa's cheeks as she replies:

"Say I am coming."

"Before you go," says Jacques with odious triumph, "permit me to say, Madam Philippa, that I begin to see some of the advantages you might enjoy were you a man."

"What are they, pray—more than I have mentioned?" she says coolly.

"You might have more liberty."

"I said as much."

"You might go and see your friends."

"You repeat my words, sir."

"Yes—you might even go and see us at college; listen to my philosophical discussions after lecture; and take part in Mowbray's merry jests—an excellent friend of yours, I think."

Philippa looks at him for a moment, hesitating whether she shall stay and take her revenge. She decides to go in, however; and Jacques and Belle-bouche follow. We are