

**THE YOUTH OF JEFFERSON, OR,
A CHRONICLE OF COLLEGE
SCRAPES AT WILLIAMSBURG,
IN VIRGINIA, A.D. 1764**

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The youth of Jefferson, or, A chronicle of college scrapes at Williamsburg, in Virginia, A.D. 1764
by John Esten Cooke

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TO THE READER.

THIS little tale is scarcely worth a preface, and it is only necessary to say, that it was written as a relaxation after exhausting toil. If its grotesque incidents beguile an otherwise weary hour with innocent laughter, the writer's ambition will have been fully gratified.

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THE YOUTH OF JEFFERSON.

CHAPTER I.

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
Bolle 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 rechangez;
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.”