The Heiress of Proctor's Lane.

first became acquainted with my friend Jack | answered: Wilkinson. He was then a little roundage, and I being two years his senior, he | me by putting your name to a note." was put under my special protection. He had been a spoiled child, and until his tenth year the world had been to him a the regulator of his home, and his pleasure get in trouble instead of you." the main object sought by his mother. Quite naturally such a training resulted in evidence of deep feeling which I could not harsh and glaring acts of insubordination distrust. which led to his temporary expulsion from home and his subjection to the discipline of

naturally teel attached to those who cling | way. to us for support, and everything was so new to him, poor fellow! that without me tor's Lane. was miserable. By day and by night he was my appendage. He sat at the same last. desk, casting up his little sums or writing his little exercises, and at night his little house? bed was close to mine, and he used to talk to me about his papa and mamma and the well appointed mansion. big dog Pompey, till he talked himself to sleep. At that very early age he sure I do; and what then? had acquired a taste for extravagance. His money always burned a richest men in the city.' hole in his pockets, and when it was gone many a dime did he borrow of me.

These premature extravagances, petty as they certainly were, of course led to little difficulties; and perhaps the worse result likely to arise from early embarrassments tery and a concealment of trouble which | mured. nothing but candor could really remedy. And thus it was with Jack. Had I not loved him and been a real friend, he would have forfeited my friendship a hundred times, so often did he borrow, and so often did he promise repayment, and so often did he forget to fulfil the promise he made. But no, I wrong him, he did not torget; I always saw that he felt infinitely more annoyed than I did when he stood before me a defaulter, and his flushed cheek and moistened eyes proved that he endured humiliation, and that at heart he was even ! then my honorable friend. Many were the tears he shed at my departure from school. debt he owed me; but when I said, "Jack, be sure you write to me," I suspect that he almost expected me to add, 'and don't forget to enclose the money.'

met; at first our interchange of letters was | pendent." frequent, and the style of our communications most affectionate; but gradually a change came over the spirit of our dream, rather piqued, "but it is her only one, and and for a whole year I heard nothing of | I must humor it; but my business advancehim. At length came a splendidly bound | ment dependscopy of a work which he knew to be my favorite, and in the title page was written my name, and underneath the words: to do for you?" "From his affectionate and grateful friend,

"Yes," thought I, as I read the inscription, "and thou art still my honorable friend." Jack, after so long a period had elapsed, was naturally ashamed to send me the few dollars he owed me, but he could not be happy until he had spent much more money on a gift which was intended to repay me. After leaving Harvard i travelled in Europe for many months, and on my return to the United States I ran across | said I. my triend Jack at a hotel at home, and in every sense of the word, a gay man about

Ours was more like the reunion of boys after a summer's vacation than the meeting of men who had seen something of the we ranged the streets, we laughed almost as much, and were nearly as thoughtless, as in the days when together we ranged the playground of our school.

indeed unchanged, and not alone in spirits and temper, for I soon found that his old habits had grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength. He still retained his sweet tooth, and daily did he indulge it as he used of old. The only difference was that his dainties were somewhat more efine and more expensive; for alas! I soon saw that the old injunction, "Put it down to my bill," had by no means fallen into disuse. I also saw, with regret, to inherit that house in Proctor's Lane from that all other tradespeople were most impartially dealt with by Jack in the same way; and I saw him take possession of the trinkets, coats, hats and boots, without considering it requisite to take his purse

out of his pocket. Now, I knew that Jack would eventually, in all probability, be exceedingly well off, but I greatly doubted his having it then in his power to pay for one-fourth of the | bath! valuable articles I saw him so unceremoniously take possession of. I one day ventured to speak to him on the subject, and from his embarrassed manner, and the deepened color of his cheek, I saw he felt the truth of what I said; but I still found that with the old error, he still retained the old habit of fibbing to conceal it; and evening together with much more reserve through our old haunts looking like the ing been finally arranged, the Molesworths than usual. The next morning I forgot all that had passed, for Jack ran to my bedside to inform me that he was obliged to go to Arizona, and must leave in a day or two. He showed me his letters, and it was me, and at the end of four months (exactly spirits, the morning after my true love's deevident that he must prepare for immediate | two months before it was to become due), | parture, when the door opened and in departure. We breakfasted together, and I had every reason to doubt whether the came Jack. He was so evidently delighted during the repast the waiter was continually note would ever be paid. I was conscious to see me again that I could not help representing him with notes, and it ap- of my own inability to pay it, and I therepeared that several persons had called, fore existed for a week or two in a state of gation I had conferred on him previous to very earnestly wishing to see him. I had mental excitement not to be described. One his departure; and, after frankly acknowlmy suspicions about these visitations, but

arm, and requested me to walk with him; | Proctor's Lane, opposite the identical manand, after passing through several streets | sion inhabited by Jack's intended. in unusual silence, and with an appearance of agitation in his manner, he suddenly ad-

"There is no alternative," said he, "I

"unless you are detained."

"Detained!" said Jack, blushing, "how

do you mean?" few young men could go on as you have me, she seemed to recognize me, and give lately done, and be prepared for a depar- me a familiar nod. ture so sudden; now, my dear boy, you I soon discovered it was my old friend, rary use to you, command me."

He grasped my arm, and his eyes water- | pray, come in, and I'll introduce you."

Newton's boarding-school was where I | of his incumberances; he therefore hastily

"This is like yourself, my dear friend, faced, curly-haired boy, about ten years of and at the moment you may indeed serve "Not of a large amount, I trust?"

"No-yes-larger, I fear, than-" "It it be a large sum, you know that if world of indulgence. His will had been your draft is not honored when it is due, I "Never," said he, with a fervor and an

> "Well, then, what is the sum?" said I. "First let me tell you some circum-

stances which press heavily on my heart,' I soon became very fond of Jack. We he said, "not here-come with me this

And in solemn silence he led me to Proc-"What can all this mean?" said I at

"Hush!" he whispered. "You see that

And he pointed to a very handsome and "See the house?" I replied. "To be

"That house is owned by one of the

"I should think so," I answered.

"He has an only daughter," said Jack. "Has he?" said I.

"His sole heiress," Jack continued. And again I answered. "What then?" "I am ashamed of having concealed this is the habit of fibbing and making a mys- so long from so dear a friend," he mur-

"All what?"

"But the secret was not my own."

"What secret?" "That lovely girl!"

"Upon my word, Jack." I cried, "you put me out of all patience."

"I have won that girl's affections." "The heiress," said I.

"She loves me," whispered Jack. "My dear fellow," I exclaimed, "this is news indeed. You have no occasion for

assistance from a poor fellow like me." "Oh!" said Jack mournfully, "you have not heard all; she loves me-to madness

loves me-poor dear girl! But rich as her He said nothing about the accumulated father is, were he to suppose that I am indebt he owed me; but when I said, "Jack, volved, he would forbid the match." "A very sensible old man."

"That may be; but there is another obstacle-my present position. Clara will During my career at Harvard we never not consent to marry any one who is de-

I could not repress a laugh. "It is a foible, perhaps," said Jack

"Well, well," said I, "I understand all this; but tell me at once what you wish me

"To put your name to a note for two thousand dollars," faltered Jack. "Mercy on me! what a sum!" said I. 'However, it must be done, and when the

note becomes due-"I will honorably pay it."

let us return to our hotel."

look at the house. "At the casket which contains the gem?"

"Yes, and for your sake too, I love to look at it. You see those three windows shaded with sky-blue silk curtains? Oh! such a little room that is, and that room I always mean to be your own exclusively when I am master of the mansion. Such world. We could talk only of the past, of a room! the furniture so exquisite! and trolic, and of fun; and while arm in arm such a view of the park! But come, we'll talk all that over while we are at dinner."

Before that meal was half finished Jack seemed quite to have recovered his spirits; and I could not help suspecting that, as Whatever I may have been, Jack was the prospect of an immediate separation did not seem to depress him, he loved the lady less than he loved her gold.

"I can't imagine," said I, "when you contrived to win your divinity; you and I have been for months almost inseparable,

secret is not my own." "Not entirely, certainly," I replied; "so I will not interrogate you farther. Is she

You are fond of a hot bath?" "Very."

up (I don't exactly know how), and turns into the most delightful white marble

"How very nice!" said I.

mutual expressions of regret. I missed him sadly, and it so happened that after he went, many untoward circumstances occurred, which having first mater- | Proctor's Lane in excellent spirits. The ially lowered my rsources, next effectually the consequence was that we spent our lowered my spirits, and I used to saunter run smooth, and all our preliminaries hav-

ghost of his companion. ed with many circumstances connected with his expenditure which perfectly astounded day after breakfast I sallied forth more do- edging the gratification I had felt at his lorous than usual, and after wandering punctuality, I said, "And now, Jack, that articles are thoughtful and well written. It Immediately after breakfast he took my about for some time, I found myself in you are in business for yourself, nothing is quite a new feature in journalism, but

"Ah!" thought I, "were Jack now in over. possession of that house, all would go well old fellow, but. alas! before he put me in | tor's Lane. possession of that sky-blue apartment, I "Oh!" cried Jack, starting from his "You must, indeed, Jack." I replied, may be a bankrupt and my name dis- chair and pressing my hand; "never-

graced." As I looked towards the balcony of the again." drawing room, I saw a lady watering some "Pardon me," I answered, "but really, geraniums; and turning her head toward

know what my finances are; you know I Mrs. Simmons. Beckoning me to the win- it again." have literally nothing to spare, but if, dow, she exclaimed, "Oh! I'm delighted to knowing this, you think I can be of tempo- see you; we only came to town yesterday for some days we enjoyed ourselves very the style struck the popular fancy. and in -we are on a visit to Mr. Molesworth:

a house in which I (by anticipation) al- and speak to the man, and endeavor to ready possessed a room of my own with persuade him to give Jack time. sky-blue curtains! I walked up stairs, and Mrs. Simmons received me at the drawing- Jack room door, and introduced me to Mr. Molesworth and his only daughter, a lovely and away I went,

fair-haired girl of about eighteen. In this family I spent many happy days; and being, though unknown to her, so well acquainted with the secret of the young lady's heart, I became more intimate with termined to sue Jack at once. I hesitated her than I could have been with any one else without incurring the imputation of serious intentions. My knowledge of the selt responsible for the amount of the bill, heiress's engagement to another person and then returned to congratulate my made me feel perfectly at ease; and we be- triend. When I told him what I had done, came the talk of all our acquaintances, he started up and exclaimed: "You do not without my being the least aware that we were engaged even in a little flirtation.

To my utter astonishment Mrs. Simmons | bill?" came to me one day (it was day before that on which Jack's note was to come due), and with a knowing look asked me why I was out of spirits. I gave an evasive reply, for I did not choose to own the paltry sibility—I never expected it, and all I can pecuniary difficulty which was threatening say is, that you will have to pay it." to overpower me.

ever your present income may be, your out of the question.' prospects are excellent; besides she has enough for both."

mean by 'she?' "

friend. "I am sure she is attached to you, very little of Jack. When we did meet,

'for I can tell you that -

Jack's secret.

worth at the other. lady, earnestly. "You seem agitated! he lamented my having engaged to make What has happened?"

"Are we alone?" said I, after a pause. "It is better that I should be explicit."

Miss Molesworth started, colored, and cast down her eyes. Had I been a favored lover on the point of making my avowal able friend had called that very day, and attachment, she could not have been more | had placed in his hands the sum for which embarrassed.

"Do not be alarmed," said I. "I am "My secret!" cried Miss Molesworth.

"Yes, dear lady," I answered. "I am, as I told you before, the intimate friend of Jack." "Of Jack!" said she.

"Yes," I answered, taking her hand, "I'm Jack's old school-fellow.'

her hand, "who is Jack?" "Do not distress yourself," I whispered. 'Do not think it necessary to conceal any-

thing. He told me all." "All what?" cried Miss Molesworth. "Your mutual attachment-your engage-

ment," I replied. Miss Molesworth started up, coloring crimson. At first she could not articulate, but at last she said, "I know not, sir, to what I am to attribute this conduct. I have been attached to no one-engaged to no "If not, into bankrupter I go; and now one. I know not of whom it is you speak.

I had considered you, sir, in the light of a "One moment," said Jack; "I love to friend, but now, sir, now--" She could say no more, but sank on a chair beside me in a flood of tears. A mist at that moment tell from my eyes. At once I saw the full extent of Jack's unpardonable falsehood, and the distressing certainty flashed on my mind that his note

> would not be paid. Mrs. Simmons entered at that moment, and found us both apparently plunged into the depths of despair. Miss Molesworth was in an instant weeping on her shoulder; and before a quarter of an hour had elapsed. without knowing exactly how it happened, I found myself breathing forth vows of love to the young lady, and exulting in my discovery that her engagement to my friend Jack was a fable.

Miss Molesworth referred me to her father, but I read in her large blue eyes | thethat she did not dislike me. I therefore retired to my bed that night full of love and hope, and dreamed of driving my wife in "Ask no questions," he replied;" "the a chariot, drawn by six dragons, over the mangled body of Jack Wilkinson.

The next morning my first thoughts were of my approaching interview with Mr. Molesworth: but, alas! it was soon followed by my recollection of the note and "To be sure she is; and such a house as the too great probability that before it is! and that room which I mean for you! | night I should be in financial difficulties. My own resources were at that moment inadequate to meet the demand, and could "There is a sky-blue silk sofa in that I ask a rich man to let me marry his room, and when you touch a spring, it flies | daughter, and expect that his first act would be to meet an unpaid note?

At length I made my mind to walk to Jack's creditor and at once ascertain adhered to his resolution .- Ex. the worst. I did so, and on my arrival I In the evening I put my name to the was astonished at being informed by a note, and the next morning we parted with | clerk that "Mr. Wilkinson has provided funds for the payment of the note.

So far I had wronged my honorable friend, and therefore was able to appear in course of my true love did, for a wonder, left town for the country, and I remained When he was gone, I became acquaint- to arrange some matters which would in all probability detain me for a couple of months. was sitting in my own room, rather out of ceiving him kindly. He spoke of the oblican interpose to prevent your marriage.' "My marriage!" said Jack, blushing all

"Yes," I replied, laughing in my sleeve. with us; his heart is in the right place, poor 'Your marriage with the heiress of Proc-

never, I entreat you, mention that subject

"Why so?" said I. "It is all off," he sighed. "Off!" I exclaimed.

cannot speak on the subject-never name I, of course, promised to obey him, and perfect mark. For some reason or other much in the old way. One morning he the course of a few years after its adoption came to me in real distress, and told me as a mark in a reformatory it became one

mind not to be described—the hall-door of | for the amount of his bill; I offered to go "If he will only give me a month," said

"Well," I replied, "I can but try him;"

The tailor was inexorable; but he told me that if I would become responsible for the payment of the debt in a month, he would consent to wait; it not, he was defor a moment, and then, recollecting his prompt payment of the note, I made mymean it; you cannot have made yourself responsible for the amount of that fellow's

"I have, I assure you," said I. "Then," said Jack, "you will have to pay it. I shall not have the money myself-I never asked you to incur the respon-

"My dear boy," said I, "it will not be in "What nonsense!" said Mrs. Simmons. my power-I am peculiarly situated; at "Go boldly and make your offer; your the end of a month I shall be most parconnections are unexceptionable, and what- | ticularly engaged, and paying this will be

Still, Jack protested that he had never asked me to become responsible, and it "And pray," I replied, "what do you ended in his leaving me in a very illhumor. My engagements employed me "Miss Molesworth, to be sure," said my for days together in the city, and I saw my manner was cold and constrained, and "You know nothing about it," said I, it was not until within a day or two of the expiration of the month that I had time to I hesitated, for I had no right to betray | think of the very inopportune and annoying resposibility which I had in-"Well," said Mrs. Simmons at one door, curred. That very day I met Jack, and at the same moment enter Miss Mole- and spoke to him very earnestly and seriously about the payment; but he "What is the matter?" said the young sighed most deeply, told me how much the payment, and pathetically bemoaned the emptiness of his own pockets. The next morning I called on the tailor, earnestly requesting him to renew the term for a month, and was then told that my honor-

I was responsible. I went instantly to call upon him, and he Jack's best friend; and I know your received me with laughter, in which I could not resist joining; but I must confess, I laughed the more from the recollection that my hour of revenge was at hand.

About a fortnight afterwards—the family of my intended having arrived in town for the wedding, which was to take place the next morning-Jack inquired, what it was that seemed to occupy me from morning "And pray, sir," said she, withdrawing till night, and why it was that we so seldom met?

> "My dear Jack," said I, "it has been a secret, but I will now hide no secrets from you; I am going to be married tomorrow. "Married tomorrow!" cried Jack. 'Tell me all about it. Who is she Where does she live? Is she pretty? Is

"There is no time," said I, "to answer your questions at present. I dine with the family at six, and mean to take you with go and dress, and in half an hour I will call for you in a carriage." "Where does your intended live?" said

Jack. as we drove along. "Time will show," I replied "Where are we going now?" said Jack.

as the carriage made a sudden turn. "We are in Proctor's Lane," I replied.

"And the lady lives——?" faltered Jack.
"In Proctor's Lane," said I. Jack sat in a state of evident confusion; and when the carriage stopped at Mr Molesworth's house he said, "I deserve this-I am quite ashamed of myself-come,

come, turn back, and drive home." "By no means," I replied, as I rang the

"Why, you won't go in!" cried Jack, as he breathlessly ran up the steps after me, and vigorously pulled the tail of my coat. "Go in," said I, "to be sure, and you will meet old friends, and show me the room with the sky-blue hangings, and

"You are going too far," whispered Jack. "I see my error-I uttered what was false-torgive me. But these servants, and the inmates of the house, will think us mad."

"Not at all," I replied; "speak the truth in future as I have done to you.' I pressed his hand, and led him up the stairs. I saw that he was depressed and humiliated, and when we got to the draw-

ing room door he murmured, "And do

they know it; I cannot face them." "They know nothing," I replied, "and shall never know from me anything discreditable to my honorable friend Jack." "I will never utter a falsehood again," said Jack; and I firmly believe that he

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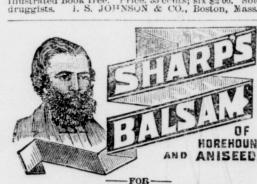
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