His Ministering Angel.

JACK BARNES was drunk, woefully drunk, and his steady legs had hard work to pilot his wretched, whirling head from Reynolds's to the train. Being drunk, it is not surprising that he fell asleep.

"Lakeside," "Brigham," "Stoweville," the brakeman called,—still Barnes slept; at last came "Alford Hills." The familiar "Hills" aroused him, and, sleepily, he arose, and walked the familiar streets to his home. His room seemed strangely in order; the streets had seemed longer than usual, but his "ll' jag" explained that; and in the dark he lay down to a sound sleep, to awaken, alas, only after a long time to proper consciousness.

In the morning strange shapes pursued him, strange faces appeared, and unfamiliar voices sounded around his bed in none too gentle tones. The familiar "Time for breakfast, Jack," was not heard. He lay in a frightful mental torture, unable to move, suffering the mad jibes of unconquerable demons and the attacks of frightful monsters, until, at last, a strange apathy completely overcame him.

The one gentle voice he sometimes heard seemed that of an ever-careful angel, who could sometimes alleviate the burning of his feverish head, and drive away the monsters, and dispel the darkness with her gentle tones and soft touch. As he gradually awoke to consciousness again he thought more and more of the sweet presence which cared for him in his hours of delirium.

At last he heard some one say "Edith, you must come away and rest." "Edith;" who was "Edith?" Surely not his mother or his sister. Nor were they used to minister so tenderly to him,—the black sheep, the "reprobate," as many called him. Alas, he had not deserved it,—such care,—and he knew it. Could he be in a hospital? No; this was a pleasant room in a private house. He had gone home, but this was not home. Too well he knew the reckless disorder of his den,—his well-polished pipes, and armor, and mugs; his ill-used books, battered from despairing flings.

As he gradually regained full consciousness he realized this, and recognized the serious nature of his illness; for a long time he lacked strength even to speak. When he could speak, each evaded his questions in a different way, and the only rest for the confusion of his mind was in recalling vision of the angel of his delirium, who visited him no more,—and, in his dim recollection of her beautiful features and strong, graceful figure, he began to find more pleasure than in all his wild carousals; and, too, as each grace came back to his mind, there came also an ever-increasing shame at what he knew must have been the cause of his sickness.

At last he was well enough to move; and it was well, indeed, as the doctor said, for he had caused trouble enough, and his shame and disgrace became more crushingly evident in the explanations which followed. In his drunken stupor, as the doctor said, he had been carried by his home station, and by the merest chance had found a house situated similarly to his own in the strange town, and there, as a result of his dissipation, he had been stricken with brain fever. No means of identification had been found upon him, and only after three weeks had his identity been discovered, and then he was unable to be moved without total collapse. His friends were a Mr. and Mrs. Armitage, whose daughter had nursed him in the most trying times, from mere pity, said the doctor. He must return home at once, and the Armitage's all desired especially to hear no more of him.

All this and more the doctor told him in scathing words. Jack Barnes died,—that is, the old Jack died,—the doctor's words had killed him. A new, weak, tottering Jack went back to his home, but his mind was strong with hatred of his old foolishness, and