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"TURN THE KEY."

In one of the narrow courts lying to the westward of Ludgate Hill, and under the shadow of St. Paul's at sunrise, there lives a man who goes by the somewhat singular cognomen of "Turn the Key." His real name is Matthew Gray; but he only hears it from the lips of his nearest friends and such neighbors as have learned to respect him. I am pleased to say that neither are few nor far between.

By trade he is a wood-engraver. Not one of those delicate-fingered men who so skilfully interpret the artist's work on the wood, and give us those magnificent pieces of modern art which adorn the best works of the day; but a ruder craftsman, employed to engrave advertisement blocks, posters, and the rougher class of this form of labor generally.

He was quick at his work, and having a good connection with some of the larger advertising agents, did remarkably well for several years prior to his marriage and after it. Then the leprosy of drink got hold of him.

He began in his youth, as others do, with his "regular glass" at meals. As time advanced he took one to "moisten his pipe before going to bed." Next he had an occasional glass between, and finally he took so many that food with him became occasional, and drink fearfully and destructively regular.

Matthew had fallen—in spite of the tears, pleadings, and remonstrances of an affectionate wife—in spite of the gift of two children, and in defiance of the palpable evil the fatal habit was working in his mind and body. The unnatural thirst, the miserable craving, was ever upon him; work and home ties were alike neglected for the dirty, brawling public-house.

And yet as he fell he struggled against his fall—feebly, no doubt, but still he struggled. In the morning he would rise with fresh resolves to have no more of it, and go sturdily to the attic where he worked, and sitting down upon his stool, put out his pad and arrange his tools. Then came the fatal whisper, "Have one glass—only one; it will freshen you up and carry you through your work of the morning."

He knew the fallacy of that whisper, but he went; and all the morning the light through the window fell upon an empty room and idle tools. Late in the day he would return, maudlin and despairing, and in a slipshod way do part of the work that ought to have been well done hours before. As usual in such cases, his employers soon

learned to distrust him. Unpunctuality, bad work, and the evidence of his failing drove the best of them away, and the rest offered him—what he was obliged to take—less for his labor.

Bound in the fatal chains, moody and despairing, he lived on with his sorrowful wife and children around him. Mrs. Gray

"There's no good in prayer," replied Matthew, moodily. "I've tried my best; but as soon as I get to the bench I'm called away by a voice that is too strong for me."

"It's too strong for many round us," returned his wife. "What good does it do you?"

"None," he said. "I'm not the man I

Matthew had fallen, but he had not yet acquired the ferocity which drink gives to some men. He had no desire to maltreat the offspring God had given him.

They were pretty children a girl and a boy, respectively four and five years of age. The boy was the elder, and a most intelligent little fellow. His wistful blue eyes unconsciously shot keen arrows of reproach at his unhappy father as he looked at him that day.

"Jane, I can't stand it!" said Matthew Gray, rising hurriedly. "If things go on as they are, I shall kill myself."

"Don't talk so wickedly, Mat," said Jane, laying her hands upon his shoulders. "Your life was given for you to use for the glory of God. It is not your own to take away."

"And of what use is my life to me, or to any one?" he asked.

"It would be of use to many, and a blessing to us," replied his wife, "if you gave up drink."

"Ay! there it is," rejoined Matthew. "I wish I could give it up. And if I could only feel always as I do now it could easily be done; but I know as soon as I try to settle to my bench I shall have a thirst upon me, and out I shall go."

"If I sat with you, Mat," she said, "do you think you could overcome it?"

"I'll try, Jane; but I've doubts of it."

They went up stairs together, and Matthew began his preparations for his day's work. Business had not entirely fallen away from him, and he had enough to do for that day at least. At first he seemed resolute, and drew up his tools and sat down. He took a graving tool in his hand and paused. Jane saw what was coming, and put herself between him and the door.

"It's coming on me," he said, hoarsely; "I must have one glass."

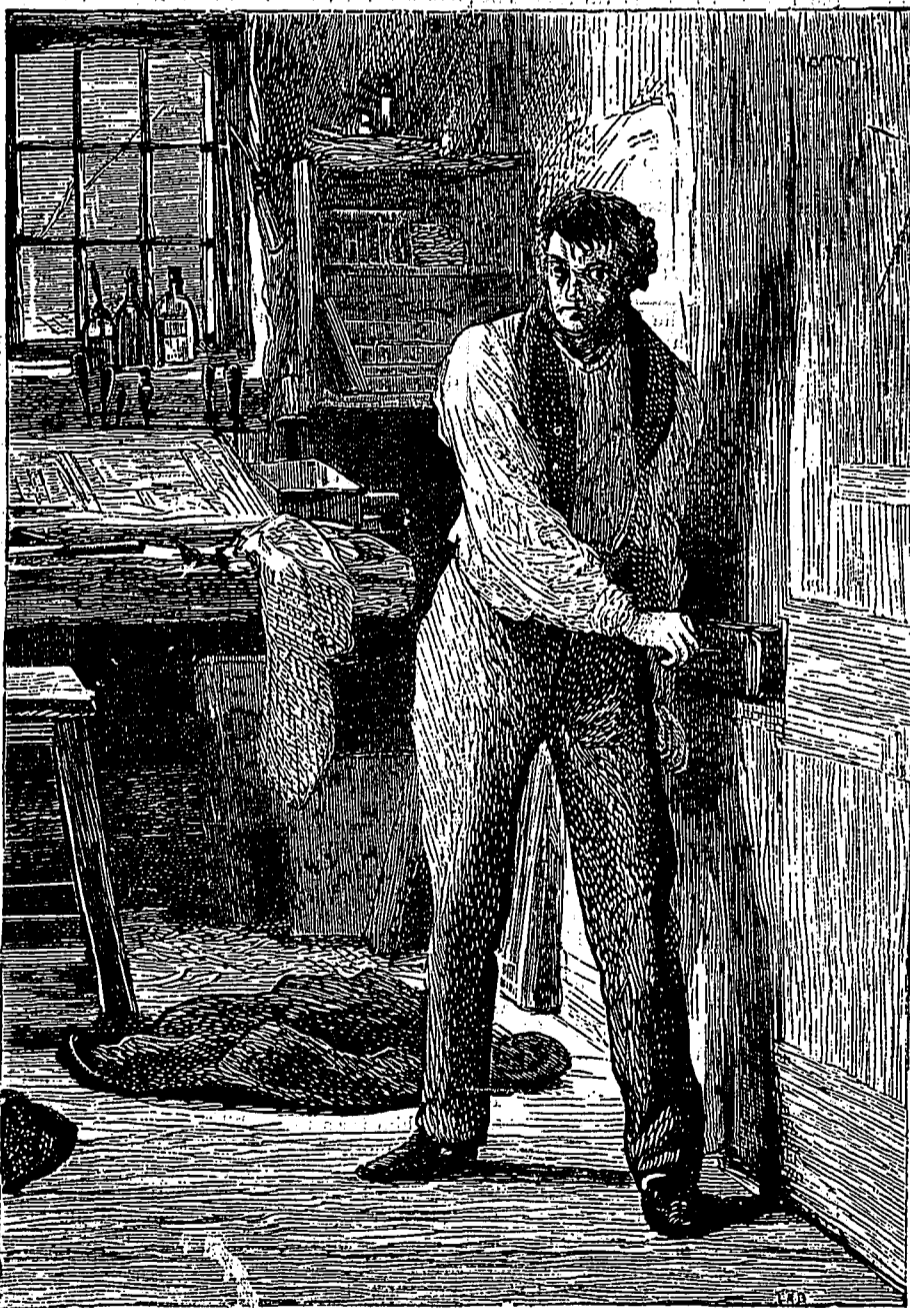
"No, no," she cried; "keep here—for one morning, Mat. It may break the chains, and with God's help they shall never be round you again."

"I can't begin without something," he said, rising. "I'm all to pieces; I have no strength. Let me go; I'll come back surely when I've had one glass."

"No, Mat, it can't be," cried Jane.

"I shall break past you," he said, advancing, "and be gone, unless—" he paused, as if some great thought had been suddenly given him—"unless you turn the key."

In a moment it was done. Jane, inspired with a new hope, closed the door, turned



was a good woman, and regularly attended a place of worship with her little ones. Her husband, however, had never done so; example and affectionate urgings had alike been thrown away upon him.

"Do give the dreadful drink up, Mat," said his wife one morning. "Pray to God to give you strength, and He will not fail you."

was since I took to it; in fact, I sometimes feel I'm no man at all—I'm a brute."

He sat back in his chair with folded arms, gazing gloomily at his two children, who stood in a corner of the room, whispering to each other fearfully, and wondering why their father frowned so at them. He was not frowning at his children, however.

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