

key, and put it into her pocket. "Now, Mat," she said, "I'll not let you have it. If you want it, you must take it by force."

He sat down again trembling. The temptation to do so was upon him. For an instant the horrible idea trembled in the balance. His wife understood all. "O merciful Father!" she murmured, "spare him, for our blessed Redeemer's sake." The prayer was breathed and the answer came. Matthew Gray turned, and resting his elbows upon the bench, buried his face in his hands. Great drops of perspiration fell from his brow.

Jane said nothing to him then. Nor when he suddenly began his labors did she speak. A good half-hour had elapsed before a word passed between them.

"Jane," he said suddenly, "I nearly did it."

He did not specify what "it" was, there was no need to do so. Jane, in reply, quietly said, "It was a merciful God who spared you from such a deed."

No reproach, no suggestion as to what her own sufferings would have been, no threat as to what she would have done had he so far forgotten his manhood. He drew his hand across his eyes and came over and kissed her.

"Jane," he said, "the thirst is leaving me. You shall come up every morning and turn the key."

"So I will, Mat," she replied, "until you can turn it yourself."

"I fear that it will be many a day before I do that," he answered sadly.

"If you will listen to me," Jane replied, "you shall do it to-morrow."

He looked at her incredulously; but she met his look with a hopeful smile. "Mat," she said, "it was prayer that saved you from striking me just now. Indeed, it was that, and nothing else. If you doubt me, kneel down now, and see what strength will come of it."

"But I can't pray," he said; "I haven't done such a thing since I was a boy. I don't know a prayer. I've near forgot even that which I learnt at my mother's knee."

"Kneel," she said—"be earnest; give yourself up to thoughts of your Saviour and your God, and power to pray will come."

He still hesitated, for it is not easy for most men to yield at once to their better instincts or to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Years of indifference to the truths of religion are employed by the enemy of man in building strong outworks around him. But they vanish into thin air if the man himself but yields. Happily, Matthew Gray cast down the breastworks of pride and indifference, and yielded.

Husband and wife were in that room for two hours together. God heard their prayers. The little children were called up to play in the "shop," as Matthew called his attic. They came wondering, and the boy on entering put a question which was unconsciously another arrow.

"Isn't father going out to day?"

"Oh no," replied his mother; "father is going to work, and you must play quietly in the corner."

"I am so glad," said the boy; "ain't you, Jenny?"

Jenny lisped her gladness, and they both promised not to disturb their father at work, and Jane went down to her household duties. When she was gone the children experienced yet another surprise. Their father called them over and fondled them. He had never been unkind, but since he had taken to drink, he had not been very demonstrative of affection. The boy, looking up, saw tears in his father's eyes.

"Father," he said, "why are you crying?"

"Don't be afraid, darling," was the reply; "I am crying because I am so happy."

It was new to the boy to learn that there were tears of joy, and he looked somewhat doubtfully; but he was soon convinced of the truth of what his father said by seeing smiles upon a face which for a long time had only worn looks of sorrow and gloomy frowns.

"Oh! I'm so glad," he said, and clapped his little hands.

A great victory had been won; but the strife was not yet over. The cravings for drink are not easily stifled. Matthew Gray felt the direful sinking which follows the use and sudden abandonment of alcohol, and thought he was dying.

"Jane," he said to his wife, when she brought his dinner upstairs, "I'm dreadfully low. I think I ought to leave it off gradually."

"No, no," she said—"no more drink. Eat your dinner; it will do you more good."

"Turn the key," he said, with a resolution hitherto foreign to him. Jane did so, and he sat down to his meal.

At first he felt as if he could not touch it; but his wife pressed him to eat a little against his will. He did so. Appetite came, and he ate a good meal.

He went out for a walk that evening with his wife and children; and whenever they approached a public-house his face told of the struggle within; but Jane whispered in his ear, "Turn the key," and they went on. He returned home without having fallen into the clutches of his old enemy.

The next morning Jane, ever watchful, was awake and up early, and having put the house to rights, so as to be ready to aid him in what she knew would be another great struggle, aroused Matthew, who awoke and wondered at first why his tongue was not so parched as usual, and why his head was not like a block of wood or stone.

The reason for the change was soon made clear. Husband and wife knelt down and prayed together, at first aloud and then in silence. Next came breakfast, plain but wholesome, and of this Matthew was able to partake with a zest he had not known for two or three years.

"It is a new life," he said, as he arose.

"Now go up to work," said Jane, "and turn the key yourself. You know where to ask for strength to do so. Our Lord and Saviour will not fail you."

He went, and in a few minutes she softly followed, and listened outside the closed door. He was pacing to and fro, and she knew the key was not yet turned. The second struggle was going on. There was a pause, and a soft sound as of one sinking on his knees. The anxious, loving wife, sank down too, and with clasped hands asked in her heart for aid.

A movement within arrested her out-pouring; a hasty footstep approached the door, and the key was turned.

The dim, narrow staircase was full of light as she stole softly down. The fight was now over and the victory won. An answer to the prayer of herself and husband had been vouchsafed.

Matthew Gray kept the door locked until his wife came up with his mid-day meal. He was rather pale and quiet, but he was very happy.

"Jane," he said, "God has given me strength. I have turned the key, and I will never touch a drop of the poison again."

"May our merciful Father support you in your resolution," said Jane, to which Matthew responded "Amen."

He was supported, and is supported still. The key was turned upon his bane, and alcohol has never been admitted since. Sober and wiser and happier, Matthew Gray lives in his new home—the same house, but a new home—with a different wife and children, but differing only in their happiness, which came with the resolve of the husband and father.

Matthew turned the key and was not ashamed of it. He spoke of it among his neighbors—not in any boastful spirit, but as a humble acknowledgment of the mercy vouchsafed to him, and points to the change in his abode as a proof of the blessing of that turning.

They may call him "Turn the key," and laughed at him, and he will on his own behalf laugh back again; but he looks sad, too, for their sake. And yet he has cause for rejoicing on the behalf of a few who have wisely followed his example, and "turned the key" upon the fatal habit of drinking.

The public house still thrives. The landlord scarcely missed Matthew Gray and those who have followed his example and teaching. How long are we to wait for the great day when the people generally will "turn the key" upon the curse of our country? Let us all earnestly pray and work, that by God's blessing it may come quickly.—*Friendly Visitor.*

He that trusteth in  
his own heart is a fool.

PROV. 28: 26.

ROSA LEIGHTON.

BY MRS. M. F. MARTIN.

(National Temperance Society, New York.)

CHAPTER V.

Rosa's cheerful spirit and her unwavering trust in her Heavenly Father, which caused her always to feel that all things would work together for good if she would but trust Him, would not let her grieve very long over her loss. "Never mind, mamma," said she, as she felt a tear drop on her forehead, "I have Birdie left, and I don't believe he will care; indeed he doesn't use his cage much, and now he can fly around the room all the time if he wants to. But I promised Jennie that I would come to her right early this morning, so I guess I will take my work and sit beside her; and then I won't think about Birdie's cage."

Rosa had not been idle during the years she had lived in Birch's Court. Attracted at first by curiosity, the children of the neighborhood had soon learned to love the gentle little blind girl who passed in and out of the house so quietly, and the rudest of them would stop their boisterous play when she came near, lest in some way they might injure her.

One summer evening, a few weeks after they had moved there, she sat down by herself at the front door to try to breathe a little fresh air, for so close were the houses to each other that it seemed almost impossible for the cool air to reach any of the inmates.

All day the sunshine had been pouring in there, and although the sun had set several hours before, the heat still lingered, and women and children gathered at the doors to catch, if possible, a breath of cool air.

I do not think that any one would have guessed that it was Sunday—the boys were playing marbles before the doors, women were gossiping with their neighbors, some idle, others with their knitting in their hands, and from one house came the constant whir of a sewing-machine, that could not rest one day in seven; for its owner worked for a fashionable dress-maker, who on Saturday evening had given some of her work-girls dresses that must be finished by Monday morning, that they might be worn at a grand wedding that was to take place that day. The men as usual were absent, for their evenings were spent at one or another of the numerous taverns that abounded in that neighborhood.

In the midst of this confusion Rosa sat silent upon the doorstep, thinking of other Sunday evenings, and then her thoughts wandered to her Uncle George, who had made those evenings so pleasant, and as she thought of him, a tear involuntarily started to her eye, and she longed to lean upon his breast, and tell him all her troubles.

Then at once she remembered their conversation on the last evening they were together, and her promise that when she was lonely, and needed him very much, she would remember that he had left her to teach the heathen about that dear Saviour whom she loved so dearly. She thought of his telling her that perhaps God wanted her to be a missionary at home, and lead her father and mother to Jesus. Had she done anything for them? Her mother, she felt sure, had lately learned to love the Saviour. This change had first manifested itself in an increasing interest in their evening readings, and only last evening, before they knelt to pray, she had whispered, "Rosa, darling, pray for me, that God may forgive all my sins for Jesus' sake." Yes, yes, Rosa's heart was full of thankfulness now; she would have had something beside her troubles to tell Uncle George, could she but see him for a little while; she knew that her dear mother had accepted Jesus, and she thought with prayerful joy how all that day she had been singing snatches of some old familiar hymns, and once she had put her arms around her and joyfully whispered:

"Rosa, darling, I know now what is meant by the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing from all sin."

A great joy was in store for Rosa too, for her mother had told her that, if possible, they would commence to go to church again—a place to which they had seldom gone since the days of their prosperity. This made Rosa's thoughts turn again to the days that were past; then her father and mother had taken her to the most fashionable church in the city; now when her mother and she went to the mission church in the neighborhood, where would her father be?

Her dear, dear father! would he ever be what she hoped, and prayed he might be? Yes! she knew he would; she felt as confident that at some time God's Holy Spirit would lead him to Jesus, as she was when she told her uncle that she knew Jesus would cure his headaches.

Then the noise and confusion in the court attracted her attention, and the thought arose in her heart that many here seemed as ignorant of the Saviour, as the heathen to whom her uncle was telling the "old, old story," and as she leaned her head upon her hand and breathed a prayer for the father whom she loved so dearly, she also prayed that God would let her do some work for Him here, and teach some of those around her about Jesus.

As if in immediate answer to her prayer, her meditations were disturbed by a shrill, piping voice that seemed to come from the window above her: "I'm so tired and hot, won't somebody come and talk to me? I think it's real mean that you can all be out of doors, and I have to lie here;" and then came a wailing cry, as of some child weakened by disease, and almost in the depths of despair.

No one seemed to heed the little sufferer, so, after waiting a little while, and finding that the crying and moaning still continued, Rosa arose and groped her way through the entry, and up the stairs, pausing at their head, until, guided by the crying, she was enabled to find her way to the door of the room where the sick child lay.

Pausing there, she knocked lightly, and then, when the child, surprised at the appearance of a stranger, stopped crying, she said, "Where are you? I can't see you, but I heard you calling for some one, and as no one answered, I thought you wouldn't mind if I came to you. I am Rosa, and I live down-stairs."

Having thus introduced herself she paused, until, receiving a sobbing invitation to enter, she felt her way into the room, and, still guided by the broken sobs of the little sufferer, reached the bed, and feeling a chair near it, sat down.

"Now," said Rosa, "tell me who you are and what is the matter."

"I am Jennie, and I'm sick; everybody has left me, and I think they are real hateful," and the crying threatened to begin afresh.

"Why, Jennie, are you very sick? can't you go down-stairs at all?"

"No, I just have to lie here all the time."

"How long have you been sick?"

"Oh, ever so many years. When I was little, just learning to walk alone, I was playing in the street, and a horse ran away and knocked me down, and the carriage went right over me. A police officer picked me up, and carried me to the hospital; but after I had been there a good while the doctors told mother that I would never be any better; so she brought me home, and I have been sick ever since."

"I can't get out of bed unless somebody lifts me, and I get so tired, and my back aches so—oh, dear! oh, dear!"

Rosa felt herself powerless to soothe such grief; she had always imagined that a child who had her eyesight, must have so many things to interest her that she could never grow tired, but here was a little girl, who, although able to see, was obliged to lie there in constant suffering, and her own burden seemed to grow lighter by the contrast.

Laying her hand gently on the sick child's head, she said, "Jennie, where are your father and mother?"

"Oh, mother is talking to some of the women in the court, and father goes off to the tavern every night."

"Does he, Jennie? oh, I am so sorry."

"Well, but he isn't cross to me. He often beats and kicks Jim and Joe, but when he is real drunk he is kind to me."

"Isn't that nice, Jennie, and does he kiss and hug you?" asked Rosa, remembering the caresses of her father, before he had ceased to love her.

"Yes, sometimes, not when he has been drinking though, but in the morning, before he goes to his work, he always takes me in his arms, and carries me up and down the room to rest my back."

"Then I feel better for a little while; but now I am so tired—oh, dear! oh, dear!"

Rosa feared that the crying would commence again, and said soothingly: "Can't I do something for you?"

(To be Continued.)