

J. B. Gough uses the following as a powerful illustration: I remember once riding from Buffalo to Niagara Falls. I said to a gentleman, "What river is that, Sir?"

"That," he said, "is Niagara river."

"Well, it is a beautiful stream," said I; "bright and fair and glossy; how far off are the rapids?"

"Only a mile or two," was the reply.

"Is it possible that only a mile from us we shall find the water in the turbulence which it must show near to the Fall?"

"You will find it so, Sir." And so I found it; and the first sight of Niagara I shall never forget. Now, launch your boat on that Niagara river: it is bright, smooth, beautiful and glossy. There is a ripple at the bow; the silver wave you leave behind adds to the enjoyment. Down the stream you glide, oars, sails and helm in proper trim, and you set out on your pleasure excursion. Suddenly some one cries out from bank "Young men, ahoy!"

"What is it?"

"The rapids are below you."

"Ha! ha! we have heard of the rapids, but we are not such fools as to get there. If we go too fast, then we shall up with the helm and steer to the shore; we will set the mast in the socket, hoist the sail, and speed to the land. Then, on boys, don't be alarmed, there is no danger."

"Young men, ahoy there!"

"What is it?"

"The rapids are below you."

"Ha! ha! we will laugh and quaff; all things delight us. What care we for the future! No man ever saw it. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. We will enjoy life while we may; will catch pleasure as it flies. This is enjoyment; time enough to steer out of danger when we are sailing swiftly with the current."

"Young men, ahoy!"

"What is it?"

"Beware! beware! The rapids are below you."

Now you see the water foaming all around. See how fast you pass that point! Up with the helm, now turn! Pull hard! quick! quick! quick! pull for your lives! pull till the blood starts from the nostrils, and the veins stand like whip-cords upon the brow! Set the mast on the socket! hoist the sail!—ah! ah! it is too late! Shrieking, howling, cursing, blaspheming, over they go!

Thousands go over the rapids every year, through the power of habit, crying all the while, "When I find out that it is injuring me I will give it up!"

Few people form habits of wrong-doing deliberately or wilfully; they glide into them by degrees and almost unconsciously, and before they are aware of danger, the habits are confirmed and require resolute and persistent effort to effect a change. "Resist beginning," was a maxim of the ancients, and should be preserved as a landmark in our day. Those who are prodigal or passionate, or indolent, or visionary, soon make shipwreck of themselves and drift about the sea of life,—the prey of every wind and current, vainly shrieking for help, till at last they drift away into darkness and death.