

true, O man of many prayers, you are in that awful road, and near its end too. Will you not then solemnly inquire, *'Where does my road lead to?'* The most high God who is to judge you, the Saviour whom you reject, the Holy Ghost whose grace you resist, the men and women who have preceded you on the road, all reply, "IT LEADETH TO DESTRUCTION!" Dare you tread it any longer?

SHAKING OUT THE REEF.

On the wide ocean, between us and India, the winds blow for weeks in one direction. Then the ship moves on day and night, safely, rapidly, and pleasantly. A sea captain has been heard to say that he has sailed his ship six weeks without altering a sail. These are called the "Trade Winds."

"I will tell you a fact about drinking," said a noble old sea captain. "And I tell you, boys, that when people say, 'It don't hurt anybody to drink, if they don't drink too much,' they don't know what they are talking about. There is no such thing as drinking spirits, without drinking too much. When I used to sail to India, and got into the trade winds, I used to put all the sail on my ship which she would possibly bear. But I noticed a curious fact. Every morning about eleven o'clock, I used to go down into my cabin and take a good horn of brandy. Before going down, I would cast my eye over the ship, see that every sail was full, and every rope taut. She was under all the sail she could safely carry. On coming up out of the cabin, having taken my brandy, it always seemed as if the ship was sailing too slow, and the winds had fallen. Then I would cry, 'Up there, lads, and shake out that reef.'" For about thirty minutes my poor ship would stagger under the new press of sail. By that time, when my brandy began to subside, I found she was under too heavy a pressure, the winds seemed to blow harder, and again I would shout, "Up there, lads, and clew up that reef." So I found it day after day, and was utterly unable to account for the lull in the wind just about that hour. But one day I was unwell, and omitted my brandy, and overheard my cook, black Cæsar, say, "Captain drink no brandy to-day—guess no shake out reef!" Then I understood all! From that time I dropt my brandy, and there was no change in the sails of my ship. I drank moderately, and yet it was too much; and it would not have been strange if I had lost my ship in consequence. I tell you, boys, there is no such thing as drinking, without drinking too much."

It's even so. We don't know but a little about it. Many a shipmaster has felt cold or hot, tired or sleepy, vexed and troubled, and has gone to the bottle, gained courage to be rash, "shaken out the reef," till his ship was dashed on the rocks, or swamped in the seas.

Many a physician has been worn down by labours and anxieties, his nerves weak, and his mind wavering, and has gone to the bottle; and thus he, "shakes out the reef," is rash in dealing his powerful medicines, and he loses his patients, loses self-reliance, and the confidence of the community, and he loses practice and character, and is ruined.

Many a merchant drinks a little, feels more confidence, makes bargains when thus stimulated,—"shakes out his reef," and is ruined.

Many a mechanic takes a contract which he examined after drinking a little, forgot the number of hard blows it would cost to complete it; and thus he "shakes out the reef," and is ruined.

Many a young man falls into jovial company, feels that it would not be manly to refuse to drink with them; and he drinks, "shakes out the reef," and acquires a taste that is his destruction.

And many a bright boy, the hope of his father and the pride of his mother, early learns to drink a little; and thus he "shakes out the reef," disappoints the hopes of his friends, lives a poor creature, dies a drunkard, and reads over the gate of heaven, "No drunkard shall inherit eternal life."—*Rev. John Todd, D.D.*