

his elbows on the sill, and his eyes looking far away over the tree-tops. Instead of going to bed this night happily and full of fun, as he usually did, the poor boy was heavy and sad, for he felt, for the first time in his life, lonely. Perhaps, when I tell you the cause of this feeling of loneliness, you will think that he was very foolish, and that he ought not to have given way to it. You will be quite right in so thinking; but then we all are foolish and give way sometimes, and so you must not be too hard upon our friend Philip.

Philip was one brother amongst many sisters—they therefore thought him the noblest and bravest brother that had ever been; and Philip really was a brave and noble boy, for though he may not have had all the good virtues that his sisters gave to him, he certainly had some which his sisters knew nothing about. For the last three months the family had been anxiously expecting the coming home of a sailor uncle. The children had not seen him since they were very small, the youngest having been even a baby; and so perhaps you can imagine how much they were all thinking about the tales that they expected Uncle Kit would tell them. They were looking forward to them with too great a pleasure, for it would have been impossible unless he had had as many voyages as Sindbad the Sailor, or seen and done as many marvellous things as Sindbad the Sailor saw and did, for him at all to have satisfied their dreams of his adventures. Thus, when he did come home, the children drew away from him, and spoke in a disappointed tone, for, instead of the talkative, brigand-looking uncle they had expected, they saw a tall, thin man, with a square serious face, and eyes so deep in his head, that they were not quite sure, at first, if he had eyes at all; and even when Little Bessie did find them, by their twinkling, it struck her that they were a great deal too small for them ever to have seen much. They were disappointed, too, at his dress not being at all strange, for he had not even gilt buttons, but might, as Philip said, “by the look of his hands and coat, have done nothing but walk down Regent Street all his life.” However, after a time, the children got used to their disappointment, and then gradually got used to their uncle. He began to tell them tales, too, about people and places he had seen; not such wonderful tales as they had longed for, but still very amusing ones. But he seemed to like best to have one little girl on his knee, and the others standing round him, and then to hear about their work and their music, and about what they did all the day-time. He did

not take so much notice of Philip, and Philip heard him say that he feared “the boy would be quite spoilt by being brought up with so many girls.” This rather hurt Philip’s feelings, for he had always thought himself a very manly boy; and though he did speak gently to his sisters, and kindly mend their dolls and their workboxes, he knew himself that he would much rather have a game of cricket with other boys than be a dolls’ doctor or girls’ carpenter. His uncle, too, had once or twice called him lazy, and had said that before he was Philip’s age he had been half round the world, and that he never had more than three hours’ sleep at a time. It struck Philip as rather hard that he should be reproached because he had not run away from school (as his uncle had done), but had kept steadily at his lessons instead; while as for sleeping so much, why, he never wanted to go to bed when he was told, and only went because he did not like to worry his mother to let him stay up later. When he was in bed, to be sure, he might wake up every three hours; but, if he did, he did not see what good it would do: so Philip, and I think justly, fancied his uncle was not quite fair with him.

This evening, as it had been very hot all day, and the cooler air now was so refreshing, the children had been allowed to stay up later, and they were gathered round their mamma and uncle, telling their good and bad deeds of the day before they went to bed. Ruth confessed to have been very cross over her music particularly, when she had to play the scale of G with six flats. Fanny remembered having cried, though she could not exactly recollect why; and then Uncle Kit turned to Philip, “And what, sir, have you done to-day?”

“I don’t remember to have done anything in particular,” answered Philip, his uncle’s abrupt question putting all his deeds, both good and bad, out of his head.

“I would much rather hear,” said Uncle Kit, “that you had been in mischief than that you had done nothing in particular.”

“Yesterday I broke mamma’s best glass dish, and spilt all the custard,” returned Philip.

“Glorious achievement!” said Uncle Kit dily, while mamma could not help smiling, and the little girls laughed loudly. Philip looked fierce; and then his sisters, who really loved him very much, were sorry that he should be so vexed, and tried to be grave again, whilst Ruth, his pet sister, pushed up to him and squeezed her little hand through his shut fingers.

There was a silence for a few minutes;