

then Uncle Kit, breaking the stillness, said, "I will tell you a tale." And the tale which he told Philip was still thinking about, as he leant moodily on the window-sill. It was a very short one, and, as Uncle Kit said, was not to be believed for a moment. He said, too, looking at Philip, he only told it to them for the sake of the moral.

It was about a boy named David, who had been shipwrecked, and who had been the only one saved from a crew of thirty hands. It had been a fearful night for this boy David, for the storm had come on in the darkness, and increased so quickly, and with so much fury, that the captain and men soon saw that a miracle alone could save their little craft. The boats were not seaworthy, or the crew were too frightened to use them, and David saw the men, as a great fear came upon them, jump overboard, and thus seek themselves the very death they were dreading. He himself was too frightened at the white foam and the angry growling of the waves to follow them, but he knelt quite still, grasping the mast, while his limbs felt as if they were bound with iron chains, so impossible it seemed for him to rise, or to let go his hold. Hours passed—hours so long and dreary; but at last day broke, and gradually, as it grew lighter, the sea became calmer. David raised himself, looked about, and then shut his eyes with a shudder; for he, the weakest of the crew, was alone,—alone, on that black-looking sea. Alone in a black-looking world he might have thought; for as he looked round, the clouds on every side seemed joined to the sea, and the small storm-stripped wreck he was on appeared the centre of a dismal globe. Then Uncle Kit told them how miserably David passed several days in his prison, the ship, and that one morning he discovered in the S.W. horizon a green line, which he at once recognised as land. Whether the wreck had drifted to it, or it had arisen in the night, David never knew, but it was there on the third morning after the storm. Then David with great joy soon found a plank, and strapping himself to it, managed to paddle to the green line, and found it to be high cliffs, covered with moss and weeds, while great trees grew on the edge, and dipped their branches into the water. The cliffs were so high that David almost gave up the idea of ever getting to the top; however, with the help of the strong weeds and the trees, he did reach it at last, and then he felt very thankful for what he found there. Instead of the wild desert he had expected, there was a beautiful city before him, with houses grander than he had seen even in London.

It seemed to him that he had climbed up the least inhabited part of the island, for he could see a great number of people moving about among the handsome streets more inland; while near him, though there were some of the largest buildings, he could see no one. He noticed, too, that these large buildings, though grandly built, looked very desolate and uncomfortable, and as if no care had been taken with them. He was going to walk on further, when a sight startled him so much that he felt almost inclined to jump back into the sea once more. On the grass outside one of the biggest houses was stretched a man—a giant, perhaps, I ought to say—a giant so long that David thought that there was no end to him. This giant lay quite still, as if asleep, and David wondered if he could get away without being noticed. No, the movement in the grass disturbed him; he raised his head, and in a sleepy voice called out to the sailor-boy. David—for he was really brave—went up to him, and the giant asked him where he came from, and who he was. These questions answered, David grew pluckier, put questions too, and at last, in a hesitating tone, asked, "How long are you?" The giant answered him—I forget the exact length, but it was very long; and he told him, too, many strange things about the island. That the people on it did not die of years, but of deeds, and that to die was looked upon as their one great wish, "for the life on this island," said the giant, "we only count as an apprenticeship, as an entrance to the life afterwards to come." The giant then, with a great effort, changed his position; and then he told David that some men lived a long life before they were twenty, whilst others, like himself, were mere babies, though really hundreds of years old. Then he said that the hardest part was that, as time went on, without deeds, the men grew taller and taller. "You will find those that are active small and lithe, and with glossy black hair, while each day that I lie here I grow longer and longer, and my hair, instead of turning white, as I have heard that it does from old age in some countries, turns redder and redder." And the poor giant sighed deeply, while David asked why he did not get up and work, for perhaps he might then either die or grow shorter. The giant answered that that was another hard part of the life on this island, for the longer a man kept idle the more difficult it was for him to work, and that now it had become almost impossible for him even to rise. The people here, he told David, were beginning to think him a public nuisance, and were discussing what they could do with him, for they knew as well