

'I daresay not. Well, I've done this now, and if you care to come out with me we'll go and find out two or three men I know, and between us we can, maybe, make them understand what sort of fellow it is you want.'

He stood up, and flung his tools into something that hung close up to the ceiling, and that Oliver afterwards found out to be a hammock. Then he reached down his hat from the same place, and they went out together.

To several lodging-houses, haunted by sailors, they went, and Oliver noticed that his new friend was treated by most of those rough, jovial men with a kind of quizzical respect, as if they laughed at and could not understand him, but half-reverenced him nevertheless.

None of them could give any clue at present, but many promised to keep their eyes open and see if they could learn anything; and again Oliver went to bed a little more hopeful than he had been of late.

'Tell me where you live,' Agar Wilson had said, 'and if I hear anything I'll let you know.'

Oliver had done so; but for four days he heard nothing, nor had he been able to find out anything for himself, and his hopes were sinking again.

The fifth day, however, in the evening, when he had been home to his lodging to snatch a meal and see if any message had been left for him, a small boy appeared on the doorstep as he was leaving the house again, and asked him his name.

'Oliver Haythorn,' he answered, with a thrill of new hope.

'Agar Wilson says you are to come,' said the boy, and walked off, while Oliver followed without more words.

His guide led him straight to Wilson's lodgings and vanished; and Agar came to the door, with his hat on, before Oliver had had time to knock.

'I've found your sailor, I fancy,' he said, without waiting for any greeting. 'Come along with me now, and we may catch him at his lodging.'

He did not seem to expect any thanks, and Oliver forgot to give him any. His heart had given a great jump at the first word that told of success, and then sank again. Suppose the sailor should not after all be able to tell him where his father was? Suppose he should find his father, this very night perhaps, and find him reconciled now to old ways and bad companions, not caring any more to repent and amend, not willing now to come back to Staneslow? It would be hard to have come so far, and sought so long, for no reward but *that*!

He was so lost in his own thoughts that he hardly noticed at first that they were getting into a part of the town quite strange to him—a foul, crowded neighbourhood, damp with the mist from the river, and grimy with smoke from what looked like tall factory chimneys.

But his companion turned presently into an open doorway, climbed a flight of steep, almost pitch-dark stairs—Oliver following with some difficulty—knocked at one of the doors on the narrow landing, and opened it.

A man rose from beside the smouldering fire in the narrow little grate, and even while his back was towards them Oliver saw that he was too tall to be the sailor.

Then, the next instant, he turned, and Oliver recognised the eyes that had looked him through in the kitchen at Boskyfield—the eyes that had haunted him ever since, and had brought him here to meet them at last.

(To be continued.)

