

dismayed to be angry or wish to interfere. Dimly he recollected that scenes like this had been the terror of his babyhood; but Martin Haythorn's temper had grown with his years, as such things will, and it was bad enough now to frighten anyone.

It did not alarm Oliver, however, after the first. It began to rouse in him *something akin to itself*; and the consciousness that it was so distressed him more than all.

There were plenty of fathers and sons in that part of the world who lived together and yet were nothing to one another; who quarrelled and even came to blows now and then; who hated each other, and yet went on living together, because such hatred seemed to them neither shocking nor strange.

But Oliver had been very differently brought up. He was one of those to whom much has been given and of whom much will be required, and in a certain way he knew it. It was terrible to him to feel the blind rage rising up in his heart again—passion that he had hardly felt since he was a child, and had thought he should never again have to battle with. Sometimes, under the sting of his father's bitter words and violent unreasoning injustice, he felt that he, too, did not care *what* he said or did. But afterwards, realising how nearly he had lost all control over himself, he would wonder with a shudder how this would end, and whether it might not have been, after all, an evil day for both of them when his father and he had met.

It was during one of these moods of bitter despondency that he knocked one night at the door of Agar Wilson's attic, and, entering, found his friend at work as usual. Oliver had long since discovered Agar's trade, but what it brought him in was not so easy to find out, and perhaps he hardly knew himself. He seemed to have some small property of his own, enough to live upon in a very frugal fashion, and he took no pay excepting from those who could afford to give it.

For the rest, he was a kind of 'furniture doctor,' through whom many a poor, bare attic was made far less desolate than it

would otherwise have been. His long, thin fingers had a wonderful faculty for dealing with rickety chairs and broken stools, and setting disordered sewing-machines or mangles to rights.

'Sit you down, lad,' he said, as Oliver entered. 'Sit you down, and catch hold of that leg while I tie it. How are things going with you?'

'Badly,' said Oliver, as he cleared himself a place to sit down in, and steadied the leg of a little table while Agar strapped up a bad compound fracture. 'It wouldn't take much to make me think I was doing more harm than good here.'

'If that's how you feel, I wonder you don't go away.'

'I can't. I made a vow, and I'll keep it. I said I'd never go back without him. And I promised, when he agreed to come and live with me, that I'd never leave him.'

He spoke in the old headstrong way that had made the Rector's daughter call him 'untamed' in the old days at Staneslow. But his face was very sad, and his friend looked at him keenly and anxiously.

'Do you care about him,' he asked presently; 'or is it only that you'll keep your word to yourself?'

'I don't know. Sometimes I think that I hate him. But then—other times—'

Oliver did not finish the sentence, but dropped his chin into his hand and sat looking straight before him gloomily enough. And Agar too was silent, and seemed to be pondering.

'It's the tie of blood; you can't break it,' he said at last with a sigh. 'I've often thought of that. If I was to meet either of *mine*, I wonder—?'

It was his turn now to leave his speech unfinished, and Oliver, looking up with sudden curiosity, found no encouragement in his face to ask any questions.

'You can't break it, and you oughtn't to try,' went on Agar Wilson, after a moment. 'There's some that can take the safest and easiest road for themselves, and their own souls, and seemingly be none the worse for it; but you're not one of them. You are meant to take life hard, and to have a sore