

speaking; and this man, who had never known him, who said not a word of surprise or of blame, was less embarrassing as a listener than his own kin and friends would have been.

The story was told at last, and Oliver was silent, half ashamed of his openness, and for a moment the stranger said nothing.

'It's a strange story,' he said, at last; 'but I think you're in the right of it *now*, anyway. You must look for him till you find him, if he can be found. "Those whom God has joined together let not man put asunder," and that means fathers and sons, I reckon, as well as—. There's just a chance that I might be able to help you, and if I can I will. Tell me again what yon sailor was like.'

Oliver described to the best of his power, but his new acquaintance shook his head somewhat impatiently.

'That's nought to go by,' he said. 'Wasn't there aught about him different to other folks? No trick of moving or speaking? Nothing in his face or his figure?'

'I don't know; I can't remember,' said Oliver. 'I never saw him but that once, and then I was looking—not at him—'

'Well, think about him all night, and come to me to-morrow evening, and see if you can tell me any more. My name's Agar Wilson, and I live *here*.'

He produced a tumbled scrap of paper from his pocket and gave it to Oliver, and turned away with a brief 'Good-night.'

And Oliver, after looking after him for a moment or two, went home and went to bed, wondering, and yet somehow feeling more hopeful than he had felt since his first few days in London.

He thought less of the sailor than of his new friend all that night and all the next day. Nevertheless, when he set off to find the address that Agar Wilson had given him, he had recollected one or two points about his father's companion that might help to identify him, though nothing of much importance.

It was a strange little room into which he found his way at last—clean, but crowded

till there was hardly space to turn, and mostly with things that were broken and worthless now, whatever they might once have been.

Oliver's new friend was sitting in the middle of these wrecks, apparently mending a broken baby's-chair, and he looked up kindly as the young man entered.

'Oh! it's you, is it? Sit you down; there's a chair there that will bear you,' he said, brusquely, but not unkindly. And Oliver sat down, and with the deliberation of his countrymen took a good look at the man before beginning upon his business.

Agar Wilson looked even more gaunt and thin by candlelight than he had done in the half-darkness on the bridge. His hair and lank 'goat's-beard' were tinged with grey, and his grey eyes had a strangely solemn and weary expression, as if they had seen *all*, and more than all, they wished to see in this world.

But they were honest, not unfriendly eyes, and presently Oliver found that they were drawing his confidence from him, as the man's very presence had done before.

Oliver said his say, and the other listened almost in silence. 'The chap will be in the merchant service by what you say,' he pronounced at last. 'I *might* make him out by what you've told me now. I'll try, anyhow, among the seafaring men I know. I was a sailor myself once, so I've kept acquainted with a good many of them.'

'Were *you* a sailor?' asked Oliver, surprised, and hardly knowing that he spoke aloud in his surprise.

'Ay! why not? You're thinking maybe that I'm not like the most of them. No more I am, for they mostly carry a light heart and a careless mind; ay! and a godless one, God forgive us all! Not so often as you think, though, maybe; for we see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep, just as them of old did, and we don't *all* of us forget to lay them to heart.'

'I don't know much about sailors,' answered the young man, frankly. 'I'd never seen any before I came to this town, except that one.'