

laugh. 'But it's no use, my lad. I'll come back to Staneslow and Boskyfield no more. I've said it and I've sworn it.'

There was silence again. What indeed could Oliver find to say, though this was his father and the home was his own? Was there anyone in Staneslow who would really be glad to see the wanderer come home? He looked away; and the hungry gaze that had been watching him grew dull and bitter once more.

'If you won't,' he said at last, 'I won't either. I said I'd not go back there without you. I'll stay here, and be with you, if you'll let me.'

'What for, then?' said Martin Haythorn, and laughed. Then, as Oliver's face flushed with sudden anger and pain, he spoke in a different tone.

'Better not, lad. If you'd been more like your mother, now; or, if I'd had the bringing up of you it might have done better. I came back there mainly to see if you'd grown up like your mother. But you're just what I was at your age—for all they told me of your parsons and your church-going, and all the rest, and they say two of a trade never agree. I shouldn't wonder if we weren't best apart after all.'

Oliver half turned away, looking vaguely out at the dingy smoke-encrusted window, more than half angry, and yet feeling his father's words strike him in quite a different way from that in which they were meant.

They *were* alike, and he felt it as well as knew it—felt something about this dark, rough, passionate man that attracted even while it repelled him.

'After all,' he thought, 'he is my father, my own flesh and blood. He has a right to be put out with me, and I have no right but to take it quietly. I know what it feels like to have turned my back on him, and I'll not do it again.'

'You'll not send me away if I want to stay?' he said at last, aloud. 'It's not fair to judge by what was said that night. I've thought better of it now. If we've a chance to get to know each other, after all these years—'

'If you get to know *me* you may live to be sorry for it,' said the elder man bitterly. 'You'll see why, e'en now, if you do stay. But you may stay till you get tired of it, for all I care. You'll see some doings here that would astonish them at Staneslow; but you'll soon find that you can't carry Staneslow fashions all over the world. What can you do for a living?'

The last question was put in such an abrupt, businesslike tone that Oliver started almost with a feeling of anger. It sounded almost as if he had been asking for help and support from his father.

'I've always worked on the farm of late,' he said. 'But uncle saw that I got a good education, so that I could turn to anything in reason. And Mr. Wilmot told me to write to him as soon as I—knew what part I wanted to settle in, and he'd try and find me something to do. He knows a lot of folks in London.'

'Mr. Wilmot? Ay! one of your parsons,' said Martin Haythorn, looking at his son with doubtful, considering eyes. 'Well, I'll say nought against them, for I've had little enough to do with any of them; but you'll find that if you go by the parson's advice we shall have to travel on different roads. That's only what I expect; but you'll please yourself, I suppose.'

'Is there a place in this house, or near by, where I could get a lodging?'

'Maybe! You can find out for yourself. I know what sort of a place it is, and I'll not lift a finger to bring you here.'

'Very well. I *will* find out for myself,' said Oliver, with a determination that could not keep his heart from sinking a little with a mingling of anger and dismay. He could not understand what could be his father's motive; but it seemed very like being cast off after all.

He walked out of the room without another word, and down the stairs, resolved to ask information of the first decent-looking person he met, and take the risk. But in the doorway stood Agar Wilson, propping his long gaunt frame against the door-post, and talking to two or three grimy, ragged children who were pressing up to his knees.