



THE
Banner of Faith.

VOL. VIII.]

MAY 1889.

[No. 5.

'Oliver.'

CHAPTER III.

MORE naturally than reasonably, Oliver's spirits went up when once he found himself alone in London, fairly started on his doubtful search.

He had as little idea as ever what to do, or how to set about doing anything. But the old life that had begun to be so irksome was left behind him; the wrong that he had done no longer haunted him now that, in his own way, he had taken the first step towards righting it; and above all, life was so new and wonderful to the country lad, who had never been further than Netherton in his whole life before, that he hardly found time to think at all.

He had meant to inquire of someone at the station at Kentish Town whether the pair of whom he was in search had been seen there on the day they left Netherton. But when he came to talk to his fellow travellers, and still more when he saw for himself the labyrinth of houses amongst which the long train came to its brief stoppage, he quickly realised that no help was to be found that way.

Oliver was countrified and inexperienced, but he was anything but dull, and he was not going to make himself ridiculous by asking unreasonable questions, or to get

into trouble by trusting untrustworthy advisers. He waited about the station till the train by which he had arrived had gone on, and there was an interval of comparative quiet. Then he got into conversation with a very respectable-looking elderly foreman, and consulted him first as to what he had better do with his box until he knew where he was going to stay, and secondly as to what part of London sailors mostly lodged in.

'If I can find that sailor I shall find my father,' he said to himself. But when he had to confess that he knew neither the name of the sailor he wanted to meet, nor whether he belonged to the merchant service or the Royal Navy, his new adviser shook his head.

'It's looking for a needle in a bottle of hay,' he said. 'There's plenty of places where sailors hang about, but you'd better not go to Ratcliffe Highway, neither; go to Poplar, or Blackwall. There's a respectable woman lets lodgings in Blackwall that I could give you the address of. And if you can describe the man so as anyone would know him again, you'd better go about and talk to all the sailors you come across till you meet with one that knows him.'

So it came to pass that Oliver woke the next morning in a bare but tolerably clean