



THE Banner of Faith.

FEBRUARY 1886.

Hope: the Story of a Loving Heart.

CHAPTER II.

THEY were startling words truly. What! give up home, and the old house, the City life, and the City streets! Two, out of the three gathered in that room, said quickly in their hearts Nay to the idea.

They could not give up the old life. And then Jonas uttered a groan. For was not the old life gone from him already, now he had lost his wife? What would the old house be without her presence? And how could he be out all day and leave two young girls alone? He could not shut them up. The old house was not a prison. And then, as to himself—he had lots of strength left and energy, but that night tramp was getting over-much for him. The doctor had warned him in his last attack of bronchitis that it must be given up in the winter, or he might seriously endanger his health.

It was impossible to come to any conclusion that day, or, indeed, for long after. Still Aunt Miriam had sown a seed, and it would spring into life by-and-by.

Jonas went back to London for the present, taking his girls with him. 'I won't bind you to any promise,' said Aunt Miriam, as she stood at her house door to bid them good-bye. 'You are all I have to call kin, and if you don't come back I must just sell the goodwill of the shop and settle the money

on the girls. But I shall make no change till the spring.'

She looked wistfully after the car that carried them to the nearest station.

Hope's heart relented then. 'Good-bye,' she cried, leaning forwards; 'you will see us back, Aunt.'

And they came back. Jonas Halliwell had a bad winter, with cold and rheumatism; and whenever he felt a twinge of any sort he thought of his girls only half provided for, and repented that he had not agreed at once to accept the generous offer of their old relative.

So the plunge was taken, affairs were wound up in London, and Jonas bade good-bye to his employers. One of the firm, to his great surprise, visited him in his little cabin, and, in the dry business-like fashion which had characterised all their dealings with their old servant, counted out to him five crisp ten-pound notes, as a small recognition of his faithful service.

Faith folded a leaf of the dear old tree in her prayer-book, and Hope, strange to say, wandered into the Cathedral that last evening to wonder over the coming new life. A sort of consecration of it, the poor girl meant the visit to be. God would bless it perhaps after that—give her father renewed health and happiness, give her power to do the best for him and Faith. This was Hope's vision for her future life, to tend and care for those