



THE Banner of Faith.

MAY 1886.

Hope: the Story of a Loving Heart.

CHAPTER V.

HAROLD WESTALL won golden opinions at Abermawr during the sad days that followed Jonas's death, he had been touched by Jonas Halliwell's clinging fondness, and his generous confidence in the goodness of those he loved almost made the young man resolve to deserve that appreciation, ay, though the trusting heart beat no longer in this world.

So he exerted himself and tried to spare Hope as much as he could during the 'death week,' as Old Mari called it. He put himself between the sorrowing girl, and the half-curious, half-pitiful, outer world, and was what is called 'a great comfort' in the house of mourning. He managed the shop, too, and was early and late at work. Very carefully he pioneered poor bewildered, stupefied Hope up the mountain path on the burial day, following in that most mournful of processions led by the dead.

The churchyard was in that state of confusion which alterations and building material create, but Harold had seen that the Halliwell corner was clear of workmen's tools, the green turf only marked by Jonas's newly-dug grave, alongside that of his wife and baby Charity.

Faith could not come to the funeral, a tiny baby, her second, keeping her prisoner

to the house; but her husband was there, and reported young Westall as having 'come out' well at the sad time. Faith had once seen the young man, and with a quick intuition, peculiar to some natures, had felt a certain discomfort creep into her heart as she looked at him. His beautiful grey eyes had fallen before her quiet glance. She made him uncomfortable too.

Yet she could say nothing; he was good to her father, saved Hope much labour unsuited to her, was well spoken of in the village—why should she doubt him?

A few words of caution which she spoke to Hope were received lightly—of course Harold was a stranger, but he pretended to nothing, so they could not be taken in, and he was but a boy, and an orphan! Faith had gone home unsatisfied; but what more could she do?

'I suppose I shall have to clear out now,' Harold mused to himself, the afternoon of the funeral, as, the shop being closed, he took a solitary walk and smoke on the stony beach. 'Well, one can't live all one's life in Abermawr with a couple of women. And yet I shouldn't be so comfortable anywhere else! They can't get rid of me yet, though, and I don't believe Hope wants to get rid of me. Any dog the old man liked she'd wish to keep about her, putting aside the fact that I believe she has a soft corner in her heart for me myself. Well, we shall see. I