



THE Banner of Faith.

JUNE 1886.

Hope : the Story of a Loving Heart.

CHAPTER VI.

THE banns of marriage between Harold Westall and Hope Halliwell were duly published in Conway Church—for the building at Abermawr was still unfinished; and, as no one came forward with any 'just cause or impediment,' the wedding day was fixed, and arrangements made for Harold to spend the fortnight before the important day in lodgings in Conway.

'Great nonsense,' Harold thought this last necessity, and when Hope suggested that the rule was a precautionary measure to guard against irregular marriages, the young man pettishly shrugged his shoulders. 'He hated fuss,' he said; 'he wished the English law was like the Scotch. He had heard that up in Scotland you just said anywhere and anyhow that a girl was your wife, and wife she was, and no more to do.'

Hope was grieved. She looked up to see if he really meant what he said. But Harold did not meet her eye, so she laid a hand gently on his, and pleaded—secure that deaf Mari, sewing hard by, could hear nothing—'Dear Harold, do not speak so; do you not care that we should be married in church, that we should ask God to bless our coming life?'

He hung his head somewhat sheepishly.

'You women take things so seriously,' he muttered.

Hope sighed. A little drop of bitterness now and again mingled with her cup. Every now and then a little bit of plaster fell off the idol she had set before herself, and showed that all was not sound material underneath.

For Hope did now idolize Harold, and to her eyes the good-natured, easy, selfish lad appeared surrounded by a halo of imaginary goodness.

She would not see that he lacked principle, that the kind acts he did sprang from a natural amiability of disposition—to be admired and cherished, truly, but not to be accepted in the place of steady obedience to the law concerning God and our neighbour.

Men who are good-natured only when impulse directs are not to be relied upon. A fit of temper, nay, a rainy day, may set them all wrong.

Now Hope waited for something more reassuring from Harold, but it did not come in the fashion she hoped for. He only stretched himself, and slipped his hand from under hers, declaring that Hope needn't look so solemn; he was not really proposing a runaway match. Gretna Green days were over. The sulky, downcast look was gone; he was all smiles and fun; and Hope smiled too, covering a sigh, and remembered that a