



THE Banner of Faith.

VOL. VIII.]

AUGUST 1889.

[No. 8.

'Oliver.'

CHAPTER VI.

'BETTER HAVE LET ME ALONE!'

THE next three weeks made a great change in Oliver's life; but whether for the better or for the worse, on the whole, he hardly knew.

In the first place, one of the firms to which Mr. Wilnot had written about his young friend—Carlton & Marshall, printers and publishers—did at last contrive to stretch a point and to find Oliver a situation, with regular employment and fair average pay.

In the second place, and in consequence of this, the young fellow ventured to take a larger and better room, in the same house in which he had before been lodging, and did at last prevail upon his father to come over and share it with him. Oliver would have changed his neighbourhood altogether if he could have had his own way, but to this Martin Haythorn would not consent.

And, thirdly, Agar Wilson left the little room in which Oliver had seen him first, and brought himself and all his odds and ends of broken furniture to occupy the little attic that Oliver had just left vacant. This last was an unmixed advantage, and, though Agar never hinted as much, Oliver

could not help thinking that it was a feeling of friendship for himself, and a desire to help him, which had prompted the change. And, indeed, he began to see that he needed all the help he was likely to get. He began to see why his father had warned him that he was 'not good to have to do with,' that his son had better go his own way and leave him alone.

Martin Haythorn was one of those men who have no natural tendency to drink—no natural liking for it even—who yet deliberately turn to it to drug conscience and to drown thought. A very little had a great effect upon him, and he knew it; and if he had had a mind at rest he would have avoided drink as carefully as his best friend could have wished.

But plainly his mind was *not* at rest; and, though he had left Joe Hutchins's lodging, it seemed that the sailor had still some hold on him, which he hated and yet could not shake off. And always when he was drunk, and sometimes when he was sober, he was subject to fits of passion, in which he was more like a wild beast than a man; it was not safe then to interfere with him, and yet it hardly seemed possible to leave him alone.

At first when these attacks came on, provoked by anything or nothing as the case might be, Oliver was too much