



# THE Banner of Faith.

SEPTEMBER 1886.

## Hope: the Story of a Loving Heart.

### CHAPTER IX.

**N**EW NORTHAM is not a very large place, and boasts of but one hotel, to which Hope made her way the evening of her arrival. In reply to her inquiries she heard that the Land Company gentlemen—three of them—had been there, but had left early that morning for Redrock.

‘Do you know if they intend to make any stay at Redrock?’ asked Hope of the burly landlord.

‘I think I heard them say they were to push on first thing next morning,’ was the discouraging reply.

Must Hope journey on again only to find herself a day behind her truant husband?

In vain she tried to find an early train that might be made use of on the morrow. Every train in the day, but one, was slow, fearfully slow. When she openly bemoaned this fact, the landlord cheerfully told her that she would be glad of any sort of train by-and-by, for at Redrock the line ended. Strange to say, the troubled lady’s brow cleared on hearing this.

At Redrock the first person Hope saw lounging on the platform was the younger partner in the Land Company, a man of about four and thirty, by name Saunders.

She went up to him at once, this was no time for beating about the bush.

‘Mr. Saunders, is my husband here?’ she said.

He started, then laughed rather foolishly. ‘Oh, Mrs. Westall, is that you? How you startled me. I thought you were in Auckland.’

‘Will you tell me where I can find my husband?’ asked Hope, forcing herself to speak quietly.

‘Well, there it is,’ said Mr. Saunders. ‘That’s the question. Where is he, eh?’

He seemed uncomfortable. Hope’s heart beat wildly. Could they—could they already have made away with her husband for the sake of his gold? She felt herself turning pale with apprehension.

Mr. Saunders saw it; he was not altogether a brute.

‘There, Mrs. Westall, don’t faint; it isn’t so bad as that. Here, Wilks,’ he said, calling to his partner, who now, greatly to his relief, appeared in sight, ‘here’s Mrs. Westall asking after her husband.’

‘And she may ask,’ returned the other speculator roughly. He was the most hardened and most unscrupulous of the pair. ‘A shabby trick he’s played us, and I don’t care who knows it. Worming out all the secrets of the company, and then bolting with them. A thing a man should swing