



THE
Banner of Faith.

VOL. VIII.]

JUNE 1889.

[No. 6.]

'Oliver.'

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER AND SON.

FOR a moment they stood silent, face to face, the memory of that last meeting at Boskyfield present to both their minds. Ay, and older memories than that—of days almost beyond Oliver's recollection, but clear enough to his father's, who could trace in the young man's face but little look of the bright baby-boy whom he had loved better than any other living thing.

Hardly knowing what he did, Oliver held out his hands at last with one word, 'Father!'

There was another pause. It seemed as if the elder man were about to speak, and checked himself.

'Well,' he said at last, 'I'll not deny you; though, say I am your father, lad—what then?'

Oliver hesitated, feeling something in the tone that checked and chilled him. And neither of them noticed that Agar Wilson went quietly out, shutting the door behind him, and leaving father and son alone together.

'I've come a long way to look for you,' said Oliver, simply. 'I've been looking for you ever since that night.'

'Ay!' answered his father. 'And that

night I'd come a long way to look for you. And you know what I found!'

'We were—taken—by surprise,' said Oliver slowly, feeling, as it were, for words that should be truthful and yet give no offence. 'If we'd known what you meant to do—'

'Let be!' broke in the other impatiently. 'It makes nought, now, whatever I meant. If I *had* stayed, like enough no good would have come of it; and I heard enough that night to send me away again if I'd meant to stay.'

'I came to see if you wouldn't come back. It's *your* place still—your own home. Nobody's got a right to say a word against your coming. No one shall, if I can stop them.'

Many a time Oliver had said those words to himself in a passion of indignant protest. He spoke them now in a dogged, half-sullen tone, chilled by something in his father's look and manner, yet none the less resolved. The older man made a step forward, catching him by the shoulders and looking almost fiercely into his eyes.

'You'd better let ill alone,' was all he said, but all the while his looks were questioning the lad's face, keen and passionate, but thrilled as if with a new hope.

'I do believe you meant it,' he said, after a moment, dropping his hands with a little