

yer?—five thousand pounds' 'Tis a stiff haul, but I suppose I must lend it to you."

"Johnson! do not play with me. Lend me the money, did you say?"

"Even so. I owe you a good turn or two, lawyer; and if the sons of the free trade are hot in their revenge, they are not cold in the service of a friend. But if you are inclined to earn the money, we can employ you as well on this side of the herring pond as the other. An agency in our line is both respectable and profitable. But there's my mate's signal—the Susan has her long boat out—we must have the tubs on our shoulders and over the hills in half an hour. Not that we go far to night; for I shall lodge my cuzz in the old stone barn belonging to Stillwell."

"What, the exciseman?"

"To be sure; the nearer the church, you know. Meet me to-morrow night at ten o'clock, at the road-post on the Downs. Come alone, and I will let you have the cash."

"Thanks, Johnson, many thanks. How can I ever repay you?"

"Oh, that is easy enough. By the way, you may as well take old Stillwell out for a ride in the morning, and if you can get him up to the George to dinner, and keep him there till eight or nine o'clock, it will be twenty pounds off your debt—Thirty, if you send him home drunk."

"I cannot do it, Johnston; it is the act of a scoundrel."

"Indeed, Master lawyer! Well, if you are so squeamish, I must keep my money, and old Norris will keep the girl. Good night."

"Stay, I will do as you desire," said Etherington, dashing his hand across his brow, and grinding his teeth, so as scarcely to allow the words to escape.

"Your hand to that, Master Lawyer. To-morrow night at ten; away, and if any of our people ask you the time of night, tell them 'tis moonshine, and they will let you pass."

Etherington struck off landward through a defile in the cliff, and as he walked rapidly towards his home a bitter sense of the degradation he had plunged himself into by consenting to become the smuggler's tool, keenly irritated his tortured mind. Etherington was young, enthusiastic—of a frank and generous disposition, but he had a wild and proud heart. In his boyhood he was deprived of a father's protecting care; an early display of talent had snatched him from penury and neglect, and growing to manhood without a friendly hand to guide or counsel, his passions all uncurbed, desires uncheckered, his pride encouraged by a too fond mother—his vanity gratified by the young and thoughtless, he had allowed the unholy fires of this world's love to wither up the seeds of promise, which, had he rightly cultivated the quick and honest impulses of his better nature, would have borne ripe and golden fruit.

He had formed an acquaintance with Ellen Norris at a regatta ball, the annual gala of the place. She was a fine, handsome girl, rather above the usual height, and her intelligent smile and sparkling eyes imparted considerable animation, to features of beautiful regularity. Her father was a retired merchant, and devotedly attached to his daughter, whose happiness formed his only wish. He did not quite approve of the connection she had formed, but as he could bring nothing against Etherington, but the wildness of youth, the father felt that he could not aully the brightness of the sunshine in which his daughter lived by peremptorily breaking off the match. Wedlock might steady the habits of the chosen one. He had, therefore, as Etherington related in the smuggler's nook, imposed severe terms upon the young and needy lawyer, hoping that in endeavouring to fulfil them, a desirable delay would be created—desirable, as it would develop the resources and stability of his son-in-law, or create something like a reasonable excuse for breaking off the match.

CHAPTER SECOND.

"Oh how will sin

Engender sin! throw guilt upon the soul,
And like a rock, dashed on the troubled lake,
'twill form its circles, round succeeding round,
Each wider than the last." *Colman.*

In the morning, William Etherington called upon Mr Norris, and informed the old gentleman that upon looking into his affairs he had found them better than he expected, and should be happy to fulfil the required arrangement. With Ellen his task was somewhat more difficult—his professional tact had prevented him from committing himself when he received the father's ultimatum, but in the interview with his beloved, despair had drawn from him the acknowledgement that he was unable to raise a tenth part of the sum required. But we are easily induced to believe what we wish to be true; and Ellen Norris was perfectly satisfied that a rich and friendly client had advanced her dear William the five thousand pounds, and a few warm speeches induced her to promise that, for the present, she would keep the fact of the loan concealed from her father.

Bidding farewell to the warm-hearted and confiding girl, whose consent he had obtained to an immediate union, Etherington rode over to the cottage of the exciseman, and under pretence of consulting him upon a point in a lawsuit of old standing, proposed a quiet dinner at the Crown, a rustic tavern about four miles off. Here the old man was pled with strong drink, till his incoherent gabble and vacant stare proclaimed his unfitness for the prosecution of his duty. Etherington, accustomed to the powers of wine, could not help noticing that the liquors were more than usually potent, and though not considered a hard or steady drinker, felt considerably excited when he arose from the table. When he called for the bill, the landlord, a hard-featured, wary-haired man, entered the room.

"Tuns," said Etherington, "My old friend, Mr Stillwell, is not in a fit state to keep his saddle; can you put him to bed here, and let his family know that he is safe?"

"We will look him safe enough; and as to the bill, lord love you, we know what the time of night is," said the landlord, putting his finger to his nose. "I was told last night that you were coming over. We never charge nothing to one another when about the general business. Master Johnston will see me righted—so good night, lawyer Etherington, and I am glad to see such a gentleman as you, busy yourself in the free trade."

Surprised and mortified, Etherington dug his spurs into the side of his horse, and galloped furiously down the narrow road. The free trade, then, had its agents everywhere. He was known to them as one of their gang. He had linked himself, like a galley slave, to the same chain with the outcasts of society, the scum, the refuse of the world. Was he in future to breathe but in their atmosphere of deceit, of guilt—to walk in their path, to serve their purposes, and hold his life but in furtherance of their vile behests? His proud heart swelled indignantly at the idea, but he could not break off the link—his Ellen would be the sacrifice if he refused the money from the smuggler, but, once married, he would move heaven and earth to repay it, and become again "the unfettered and the free."

The landlord moved the drunken exciseman into the hay-loft; and as it was not to the interest of the gang to let it be known where the officer was to be found, the aged wife and trembling daughters of the poor old man passed a wretched, sleepless night, racked with fears for his safety—for his life. Stillwell was an honest, active officer, and his family knew that the smugglers had threatened vengeance, and wanted but an opportunity to execute it.

Etherington galloped to the place of rendezvous. It was at the junction of some narrow lanes and country ways, upon the open Downs. The turnpike road

wound up a short, precipitous hill, the brow of which was skirted with a small patch of fir plantation, the only shelter for many miles around. Scarcely a pistol shot from the little wood, the four aims of a huge road post pointed their several ways; this post had formerly been the gallows-tree of a notorious offender who paid on this spot the forfeit of his life for the many highway robberies he had been concerned in. After hanging in chains for some months, the fastenings yielded to the action of the weather, and the iron-bound skeleton lay rotting in the summer's sun. A poor girl who had been betrayed by the ruffian, and abandoned to a life of shame, with her own hands scooped out a shallow hole beneath the gibbet, and the grass flourished and the wild flowers bloomed over this mass of guilt and foul corruption—over the mouldering remains of him she had most cause to hate, but whose memory, despite its infamy, despite her wrongs, she did not cease to cherish with all the energy of woman's love. The direction boards were afterwards affixed to the squared timbers of the post, and it stood conspicuously on the hill's brow, shunned by the peasantry, and sought only by the stranger for intelligence of the locality.

(To be concluded in our next.)

[FOR THE BEE.]

MR. EDITOR,

I observe by an Editorial in the *Times* of the — ult. that reports had been circulated, and found their way into the periodicals of the day, reflecting on my credit as Deputy Registrar, for the County of Picton, relating to the late County Election. I shall therefore take it as a favor if you will copy the following narrative of facts, which I think ought to be received as such, until they are impugned by some person whose name when put in opposition to mine, is more deserving of credit. Sometime in October last, as Mr Hartshorne was returning from the County of Sydney, I in company with James Fraser and John Holmes, Esquires, waited on him and expressed a desire that he should offer himself for the County of Picton, in the event of an Election—a report being then current that the Bills for the division of the old counties of Sydney and Shelburne had arrived by the Packet having obtained the Royal sanction, and that an election was more than probable, to which Mr Hartshorne replied that he was not very anxious to get into the House; but if his friends in Picton thought that he would be no bar in any other person's way, and would be returned without a contest or expense, he would consider himself highly honoured, and would use his best abilities for the interest of the County. Next morning, I called upon Mr Hartshorne at the R. O. Hotel, and delivered him the deed of the property he owns in this town, it being in my possession since it was left in my office for the purpose of being recorded, when he observed that it was not long enough on record, but that he had a large tract of land in the County of Sydney, with a great many settlers upon it, a part of which he believed was in this County, but what quantity he could not say, as the County line was not delineated on the plan, being merely a sketch copy of the original. I examined the plan, and told him that Mr Holmes must know, as he had surveyed about a fourth part of the original Grant, and that he had also been employed in running the County line through it. I also told him that I had a copy of Mr Holmes' survey in my possession, and would transfer the County line from Mr Holmes' plan to his (Mr Hartshorne's) plan, if he would walk up to my house for that purpose—to which he assented. This I did in pencil, and the line so extended, as far as I can recollect, showed some names in this County, but I am not positive. Mr Hartshorne thought there were a number—he parti-