

a voice which was a little out of breath, and with a feeble effort to extricate her fingers, "and so you have brought your valour back to besiege my citadel again."

"Sweet arrogance! is it not the day three thousand years on which we parted; and did I not promise to be here at sunset?"

"I believe you threatened me that you would. Pray, have you run away from battle to be as good as your word?"

"And pray did you always consider it a threat, or did you tell me that this grotto should be your hermitage till my return?"

"And pray, for the third time, do not be inquisitive; and trouble yourself to let go my hand, and sit down on that seat over the way, and tell me what you have been doing those three years."

"I will, as you desire, take both your hands and the other half of your chair, and tell you, as you surmise, that I have been thinking of you till the thought became exceedingly troublesome: and now oblige me by telling me whether you are as proud as ever, or whether you have ever mustered humility to drop a tear for the mad blood which I have shed in toiling to be worthy such a mighty lady?"

Sibyl laughed, and snatched her hand away from him to draw it across her eyes.

"Dear Sibyl," he continued, in a gentler tone, "and has not that wild heart changed in three long years?—And has not such an age of experience made our boy and girl flirtation a folly to be amended? And do I find you the same—excepting far more lovely—the same perverse being who would not have given her wayward prodigal for the most dismally sensible lord of the creation? Often as I have feared, I have had a little comforter which told me you could not change. See, Sibyl, your miniature, half given, half stolen, at our last parting—it has been my shield in a dozen fights—has healed, with its smile, as many wounds—it has asked if this was a brow whereon to register deceit,—if these were the lips to speak it,—if these were the eyes,—as I live, they are concealed even now!"

She did not raise them from her bosom, but answered, with a smile of feigned mortification, that she thought it very impertinent to make such minute observations. "I too have had my comforter," she said, drawing the fellow miniature from her bosom, and holding it playfully before his eyes;—"it has been my shield against a dozen follies,—it has warned me to benefit by sad experience,—it has asked me if this was the brow whereon to register any thing good,—if these were the lips to speak it,—if these were the eyes,—as I live, they are concealed even now!"

"But have you indeed kept my picture so close to your heart?"

"And do you indeed think that your old rival, Sir Lubin of the Golden Dell, would have given me a farthing for it?"

"Did you ever try him?"

"Oh, Childie Wilful! can you change countenance at such a name even now? No; I did not try him, and (for you are a stranger and must be indulged), I will tell you wherefore. I would not have given it to him for his head; nor for as many of them as would have built a tower to yonder moon; and so now see if you can contrive to be jealous of him;—nay, you shall not touch it. Do you remember how often, when it pleased you to be moody, you threatened to take it from me?"

"No more of that, sweet Sibyl."

"And will you never counterfeit a headache, to hide your displeasure, when I dance with Sir Dance, or gallop with Sir Gosling?"

"No, never, Sibyl."

"And will you never take leave of me for ever, and return five minutes afterwards to see how I bear it?"

"Never, whilst I live."

"Why then I give you leave to ask my father's leave to stay a whole week at the hall, for I have a great deal to say to you—when I can think of it."

"I will ask him for yourself, Sibyl."

"No, no, Sir Childie, you will not do any such thing. When you went from hence, it was with a college character, which was by no means likely to ingratiate you with reasonable people, whatever it may have done with other folks; and you must not talk to my father of the treasured Sibyl till you are better acquainted with him. Talk of ploughs and politics as much as you please;—make it appear that, now the wars are over, there is some chance of your turning your sword into a pruning-hook, and yourself into an accomplished squire;—and then,—and then, alas! for the high-minded Sibyl!"

It was not long afterwards that Childie Wilful, to the great surprise of Sibyl, arrived at the hall, in hot haste, from foreign parts! He had always been a favourite for his liveliness, and was, indeed, almost as much liked as abused. The old lord took him by the hand, with a comical expression of countenance, which seemed to inquire how much mischief he had done; and the old ladies thought him vastly improved by travel, and awfully like a great warrior. The only persons to whom his presence was not likely to be strikingly agreeable, were a few round-shouldered suitors of Sibyl, who, in common with country squires in general, were largely gifted with the blessings