

steed toiled on as though he had possessed the burning heart of his master;—troops of peasant girls, dressed fantastically, and waving garlands on either side of the road, soon told him that he was near the scene of the sacrifice. They had received a sheep-faced duck from the head of the blushing Sir Lubin,—a sprawling wave of his long arm, thrust, in all the pride of silver and satin, from the window of his coach and six. They had beheld the fevered and bewildered loveliness of the Lady Sibyl, looking, amongst her bridesmaids, intense as a planet amidst its satellites, and they were all in ecstasies, which, if possible, increased his agony. Another lash, another bound, and he turned the corner which brought him full upon the old elm-embowered church, surrounded by the main body of the May-day multitude, and a string of coaches which displayed all the arms in the county. He sprang from his horse, and dashed through them like a meteor. The party was still standing before the altar; and he staggered and restrained his steps to hear how far the ceremony had proceeded. There was a dead silence, and all eyes were fixed upon Sibyl, who trembled, as it seemed, too much to articulate.

"More water," said one in a low voice; "she is going to faint again."

Water was handed to her, and the clergyman repeated—"Wilt thou take this man for thy wedded husband?"

Sibyl said nothing, but gasped audibly; her father looked more troubled, and Sir Lubin opened his mouth wider and wider.

The question was repeated, but still Sibyl spoke not.

It was pronounced a third time,—Sibyl shook more violently, and uttered an hysterical scream.

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed, "it is impossible!—I cannot!—I cannot!"

Her astonished lover sprang forward, and received her fainting form in his arms. A glance at each other's countenance was sufficient to explain all their sufferings,—to dissipate all their resentment. Concealment was now out of the question, and their words broke forth at the same instant.

"Oh, faithless! how could you drive me to this dreadful extremity?"

"Sweet Sibyl, forgive—forgive me! I will atone for it by such penitence, such devotion, as the world never saw."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the bridegroom, "but I do not like this?"

"By my word!" added the Lady Jemima, "but here is a new lover!"

"By mine honour!" responded the Lady Bridget, "but he is an old one!"

"By my word and honour too," continued the lady something else, "I suspected it long ago!"

"And by my gray beard," concluded the old lord, "I wish I had done so too!—Look you, Sir Lubin, Sibyl is my only child, and must be made happy her own way. I really thought she had been pining and dying for you, but since it appears I was mistaken, why e'en let us make the best of it. You can be bridegroom still, though you cannot be bridegroom, and who knows but in our revels to-night, you may find a lady less liable to change her mind?"

Sir Lubin did not understand this mode of proceeding, and would have come to high words but for the peculiar expression of Child Wilful's eye, which kept them babbling in his throat. He could by no means decide upon what to say. He gave two or three pretty considerable hems, but he cleared the road in vain, for nothing was coming; and so, at last, he made up his mind to treat the matter with silent contempt. He bowed to the company with a haughty dive, kicked his long sword, as he turned, between his legs, and strode, or rather rode, out of the church as fast as his dignity would permit. The crowd on the outside, not being aware of what had passed within, and taking it for granted that it was all right that the bridegroom, on such great occasions, should go home alone, wished him joy very heartily and clamorously, and the six horses went off at a long trot, which was quite grand.

Sibyl and her cavalier looked breathlessly for what was to come next.

"The wedding feast must not be lost," said the old lord; "will nobody be married?"

Sibyl was again placed at the altar, and in the room of Sir Lubin, was handed the Cavalier Wilful.

"Wilt thou take this man for thy wedded husband?" demanded the priest.

Sibyl blushed, and still trembled, but her faintings did not return; and if her voice was low when she spoke the words "I will," it was distinct and musical as the clearest note of the nightingale.*

GALLANTRY is a voluntary tribute paid by the stronger to the weaker party.

*We regret to be under the necessity of making an apology for the want of a very fine Engraving with which this story should have been illustrated. The disappointment to us has been very great, particularly as, up to the last moment, and until part of the story had been printed, we were in full expectation of having it in time. The plate will, however, be inserted in one of the succeeding numbers of the volume, and those who have the work bound can have it put in its proper position, by which the present omission will be remedied.