

last battle, for I think you must have looked just as you do now."

"There is no saying whether his resolution would have been firm enough to persist in his dire demand, had not the Lady Sibyl's attendant at that moment entered with Sir Lubin's compliments, and it was past the hour when she had engaged to ride with him. Child Wilful's heart was armed with a thicker coat of mail than ever, and his lips writhed into a bitter smile.

"Do not let me detain you, Lady Sibyl," he said; "perhaps your gentleman will be good enough to find me the picture amongst your cast-off ornaments."

This was rather too much, to be exposed in her weakest point to the impertinent surprise of her servant.

"Nay—nay," she replied in confusion, "have done for the present; if you ask me for it to-morrow I will return it."

"I shall not be here to-morrow, and it is hardly compatible with Lady Sibyl's pride to retain presents which the donor would resume."

Her answer was a little indignant,—his rejoinder was a little more provoking,—the maid began to laugh in her sleeve,—and Sibyl felt herself humiliated. It is but a short step, in mighty spirits, from humiliation to discord; and Sibyl soon called in the whole force of her dignity, and conjured up a smile of as much asperity as the Child's.

"No!" she exclaimed, "it is not amongst my cast-off ornaments. I mistook it for the similitude of true affection, of generosity and manliness, and have worn it where those qualities deserved to be treasured up."

The picture was produced from its pretty hiding place and carelessly tendered to him.

"You will, perhaps, remember," she continued, "that there was a fellow to this picture, and that the original of it has as little inclination as other people to be made a boast of."

"Undoubtedly, Lady Sibyl,—it was my intention to make you perfectly easy on that point."

The little jewel was removed coldly from his breast, and seemed to reproach him as it parted, for it had the same mournful smile with which Sibyl sat for it when he was preparing for the wars. He gave it to her, and received his own in return. It was yet warm from its sweet depository, and the touch of it thrilled to his soul;—but he was determined for once to act with consistency. As he closed the door he distinguished a faint sob, and a feeling of self-reproach seemed fast coming over him; but then his honour! Was he to endure the possibility of being triumphed over by such an eternal block-head as Sir Lubin of the Golden Dell?

Sibyl made her appearance in the drawing-room, soon after him, in her riding-dress. Her manner was cold and distant, and she heard him feign business at home without condescending to notice it, only there was a fever upon her cheek, which spoke an unwonted tumult of feeling. Her horse was at the door; and Sir Lubin was ready to escort her down. As she took leave of her cousin they were both haughty, and both their hands trembled. In a minute she was seen winding through the old avenue. Sir Lubin, who was observed poking his head from his shoulders with all the grace of a goose in a basket, was evidently saying tender things, and, altogether, looked cruelly like a dangerous rival. The Child drew his breath through his teeth as though they had been set on edge, and moved from the window like a spirit turned out of Paradise.

Sir Lubin did not find his ride very satisfactory. He discovered that it was a fine evening;—made a clever simile about Lady Sibyl's cheek and a poppy,—and another about her cruelty and a bramble; but they had little or no effect. She answered "no" when she ought to have said "yes," looked bewildered when he asked her opinion, and, in fact, as he poetically expressed it, was extracting honey from the flowers of her own imagination.

"Will he indeed have the heart to leave me thus?" said Sibyl to herself. "Unkind—ungrateful—to take my little treasure from me,—the sole companion of my bosom,—the witness of all the tears I have shed for him,—the comforter of all my doubts of his fidelity;—it is gone for ever,—I never can stoop to receive it back,—I never will forgive him,—no, never,—that is, if he be really gone."

And really, when she returned, he *was* gone. Sibyl, however, would not persuade herself that it was not his intention to return; and every night had to take her pride to task for having looked out upon the road all the day. Perhaps he would write; and she stole away as heretofore, alone, to meet the tardy post a mile off. There were letters for my lord,—for Sir Lubin,—for the Lady Femina.

"No—no!—I want not them. For the Lady Sibyl!—what for the Lady Sibyl?"

The letters were turned over and over, and still the same deadening sound fell like a knell upon her heart—"Nothing for the Lady Sibyl!"

She returned unwillingly to her company, and retired, at the first opportunity, to wonder if her cousin was really in earnest—if he had really deserted her, and whether she had ever given him cause so to do. Her pride would seldom suffer her to weep, and the tears seemed swelling at her heart till each throb was a throb of pain. Some-