

greater shame for me that I cannot love him! But he shall never know that—that—"

"That you love another?" said Christina. "Trust me, he knows it already. Think you, one like him could fail to read, aye, at the first glance, a woman's heart—a heart so guileless as yours, sweet maiden?"

Rina sighed deeply, and grew paler as she heard this, but she answered with calmness,

"Then the worst is past. He knows all—yet, he still claims my hand."

"Not so," said the queen, rising. "He has commissioned me to give you back your plighted troth—to absolve you from your promise—to commit his cause to your unbiassed feelings. Obeying only the impulse of friendship, he has already freed your brother from his difficulties—but scorns to ask reward for a deed of generous affection. Is not such a man worthy your love, dearest Rina? Nay, calm yourself, act worthily a high born maiden, and my friend: for lo! they come to learn your decision."

Before the agitated girl could make any reply, the folding doors were thrown open, and Albert di Ziani, pale and thin from recent illness, entered, supported by the Count di Falcone. Rina would have flown to her brother, but Christina detained her, and again reminded her that she was called on to accept or reject her suitor. Without a moment's hesitation, walking up to the Count, the young girl placed her hand frankly in his.

"Your generous friendship," she said, "extended to the unfortunate, shall never make me ungrateful enough to forget it. My hand is freely yours."

The Count took and kissed it respectfully. "Did this inestimable gift," said he, "embrace the heart also, I would not yield it in exchange for an emperor's crown. You have spared my pride, sweet lady, the pain of a refusal; let me now bestow this hand where I feel certain the heart is given. Nay, tremble not, fair one! your brother knows all; his reverence for genius has conquered the prejudices of birth; and for myself, I am only repaying the debt of a life saved by giving up a treasure more precious than life."

The poor bewildered Rina thought herself in a dream. All objects around her were confused, and floated dizzily before her eyes. The next moment Salvini, her own Salvini, knelt at her feet, and she wept on the bosom of her royal friend.

A few days after, the nuptials of the high-born daughter of the house of Ziani and the famed artist, Antonio Salvini were celebrated. Need I say they were happy, or that they prized as the most inestimable blessing of life, the friendship of the Count di Falcone?

Salvator Rosa, in his subsequent residence at Rome, took great delight in witnessing the happiness to which he had contributed by elevating Salvini to his appropriate sphere. And he used to remark, in his satirical way—that the members of the Academy of St. Luke had done wisely in electing an artist skilful in a surgical capacity, since they had so frequently occasion for his services, to re-set the unhappy legs and arms which the academicians were in the daily habit of distorting.

Written for the Lady's Book.

## CHILDHOOD'S LAUGH.

BY MRS. SEBA SMITH.

A LAUGH! a brimming laugh of joy—  
From childhood's lips it peals,  
And every ear on which it falls  
A thrill of rapture feels—  
Stern brows relax, and lips will curl,  
With something like a smile,  
Although the cause of that wild mirth  
Be all unknown the while.

For there is something in the glee,  
The laughing of a child,  
That speaks to e'en the coldest heart,  
It rings so free and wild;  
'Tis like the music of a bird,  
That hath no tone of care,  
But poureth its exceeding joy  
Upon the summer air.

'Tis like the odorous breath exhaled  
From out the dewy flower,  
That telleth of its quiet bliss  
In every sun-light hour—  
Or like the insects' ceaseless hum  
From grove or verdant spot,  
Where they are telling all day long  
Their joy-abounding lot.

It is a free, a guileless laugh,  
That brings a pang to none—  
And welletth from a crystal heart,  
That hath no sorrow known—  
And wheresoe'er that laugh shall fall,  
It will a dream restore  
Of by-gone glee, and careless mirth,  
And childhood's days once more.

Up springing by the dusty way,  
Rise many a joyous group—  
The kite soars high, the ball rebounds,  
And darts the merry hoop—  
The woods re-echo once again,  
To boyhood's noise and glee,  
And tiny mills beside the brook  
Are turning fast and free.

And by-gone pranks, forgotten long,  
Return till each has smiled,  
To think how very smart he was  
And witty, when a child—  
And retrospective sighs are heaved,  
So sadly boys have changed  
Since he along the forest way,  
Or by the sea-shore ranged.

The gay child's laugh is every where,  
And sad indeed were earth,  
If never on the weary ear  
Came childhood's voice of mirth.  
Oh! were that hush'd, a murky gloom  
On every thing would rest,  
And heavy press the weight of care  
Upon each human breast.

Then never check that sinless mirth,  
But freely let it swell,  
For 'mid the pleasant sounds of earth  
This works the holiest spell—  
It tells of hours of innocence,  
When love and trust were given,  
And it may whisper yet again  
The words of peace and heaven.