

THE ORPHANS;
OR,
THE HEIR OF LONGWORTH.

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

"It never rains but it pours. Upon me life, it's as true as preachin'," says the O'Sullivan, glancing complacently down at his nosegay. "It's a fine young woman that same Mrs. Sheldon is all out. They do be saying, chief, you used to be a sweetheart of hers."

"Stuff! What do you mean by saying that it never rains but it pours? Did any one else present you with a cluster of botanical specimens this morning?"

"Not one. But whose acquaintance do ye think I made this morning, Master Larry, while you were rolling in the arrums of Morpheus? Whose now? It's my opinion if I was to give ye a dozen guesses ye wouldn't guess it."

"Shan't try. Who was it? Confound your mysteries!"

"Well, then, Mademoiselle Reine herself, no less."

"Mademoiselle Reine!"

"Yes, faith, and, oh, by me word, it's the sweet-spoken young creature she is, with a voice like sugar-candy, eyes of her own that go through you like——"

"But where," cries Longworth, too amazed to let his companion hunt up a simile, "where, for heaven's sake, did you meet her and speak to her, O'Sullivan? You say you spoke to her?"

"Ay, spoke to her, and more—walked home with her to her grandmother's door, and got a smile at parting. Oh, by this and that, an angel couldn't beat it! It's a beautiful creature she is, Larry, with two eyes like sloes, and teeth like rale pearls, and a laugh like the music of the spheres. Sure, you all said 'twas the other one was the beauty, and if she goes beyond Ma'amselle Reine, it's a Venus of the first water she must be, sure enough."

O'Sullivan pauses in his eulogy, for his chieftain has come to a standstill in the middle of the street, and is regarding him with menace in his eye.

"Will you, or will not, tell me where you met Mademoiselle Landelle, and how you came to escort her home?" he demands, with ominous calm.

"Oh, I have no objection in life. On fine mornings like this, instead of sweltering in hot bed clothes, like some men I know of, I get up and attend early church over there on the hill yonder; and there, kneeling among the old women's petticoats, I espies the little darling of the world praying away like the angel she is."

"Well? says Longworth. He is surprised rather for a moment, then second thought shows him that nothing is more likely than for a French girl to get up at daydawn, and go to church to say her prayers. "Are you at liberty to address every young lady you may meet in church, whether you know her or not, O'Sullivan?"

"I didn't address her. 'Twas she who addressed me."

"How?"

"I was standing on the steps, lighting my pipe before starting to come home, when I hears a voice at my elbow. 'Will ye have the goodness to tell me, sir, at what hour the services are on Sundays?' says this little voice, sweetly, but a trifle timidly, do ye mind; and there she was, the darling, with her trim little figure as light and graceful as a fairy's, and her smiling face, and beautiful black eyes——"

"Not black, O—brown. 'Exquisite brown, blessed eyes,' as Jean Ingelow says. But proceed, my noble friend—the tale interests me."

"I knew her in a minute," continues the O'Sullivan; "sure if I've heard her and her sister described once, I have a hundred times. 'At seven, and nine, and half-past ten, miss,' I says, taking off my hat and taking out my pipe, 'and half-past three in the afternoon.' 'Thank ye, sir,' says she, smiling and dimpling, and looking like the goddess Flora or the fair Aurora. 'Have you a good choir? Because if Monsieur le Curé will permit it I would like to join.' We were walking along as sociably as life by this time, and may I never if she didn't notice the pipe! 'Never mind me,' says she; 'have your smoke—I don't dislike it in the open air.' May heaven reward her for her thoughtfulness!"

"Well?" says Longworth.

He is striding along with his hands in his coat pockets, trying to realize in