

THE ORPHANS;  
OR,  
THE HEIR OF LONGWORTH.

CHAPTER XXXII.—(Continued.)

"LOVE LEONCE!" she repeats, dreamily. "Yes; I can recall no time when I did not love Leonce. I was such a little creature when I went to Rouen—mamma was always ailing, and she said I tormented her, and aunt Denise, so gentle and so good to every one, took me home. Leonce was a little fellow then, such a pretty boy; so gay, so loving, so good to me. We grew up together there in the dear old house. We went wandering together through the dear old town, we explored all the beautiful churches, and life was like one long sunny summer day. There never was one so kind as Leonce in those days, or so happy as I. I used to go about singing the whole day long, for the very joy of living. But change came, and Leonce went, and death came, and dear aunt Denise went, and then followed the war, and I thought I had lost my brother for ever. I went to London; so cold, and cheerless, and dark, and bleak it seemed after my Normandy—my dear, dear Normandy that I will never see again. And then Leonce was taken prisoner by those vile Prussians. How we wept that day, Marie and I."

"Marie!" Miss Hariott says, sceptically.

She is touched and interested. The girl has never spoken like this of her old home or friends before; but she is not prepared to accept the tears of the elder Madlle. Landelle.

"Do you think Marie did not know and care for him?" Reine says, quickly, a slight flush passing over her face. "Do you think she has no heart?"

"Well," Miss Hariott responds, "anatomically considered, we all have hearts, and we all have lachrymal glands; but in the light of a damsel in distress I really cannot picture your calm, white, beautiful sister. Pardon me, Reine, but I really cannot."

"Last of all, worst of all, goes on Reine, "papa died—my dear, handsome, noble father—so patient, so tender, so silent, so sad, always working, never complaining, and loving Marie, and me

so well. Then we came here, and of all the sorrowful things of my life I am sorriest for that."

"Dear child—sorriest?"

"Sorry, sorry, sorry to the heart? Oh! if Marie had but listened to me, and stayed in London! We knew people there, we could have got pupils, we could have worked and lived independently; but she was resolved to come—it was our right, she said, and I—I loved her and I listened and yielded. If I only had been firm and refused to come!"

"Reine, this is wicked, this is ungrateful, this is unkind—it is what I never expected to hear from you. At first, I granted you, when all were strangers—"

"And what are they now? What friend have I but you?"

"You have your grandmother, who is good to you after her fashion. You have a safe and secure home——"

"I have a house to live in. But a home!—ah! four walls are not enough for that. Our heart makes our home."

"And," pursues the elder lady, "you have the man you are going to marry——"

But Reine lifts her hand and stops her. The warmth which the firelight and Candace's tea have brought into her face dies slowly out.

"Say no more," she interposes. "Yes, I am unkind and ungrateful. But when I think of the past, and the old home lost for ever, of my beloved France, which I shall never see again, I forget to be grateful. Heaven is good; but life is long—so long—and things happen that are so hard to bear. I try not to think, I try not to go back to the life that is gone; but sometimes I sit, and this dull town and these quiet streets fade away, and I am in the old garden on the hill just above Rouen, and the grapes and apricots shine on the white, sunny wall, and Jeanneton is gathering vegetables in the kitchen garden, and aunt Denise is knitting in the porch, and Leonce comes up, singing as he comes, and then—I wake with a start, and it is Baymouth not Rouen; Massachusetts, not Normandy; Madame Windsor, not aunt Denise, and Leonce—oh! yes Leonce is here, but not the Leonce of those days. Nine!" She rises abruptly.