

THE LAST DUCHESNE.

BY MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

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CHAPTER I.

SHE rose from her seat upon the floor, dropping her lap-full of yellow papers.

"Grandpapa," she said, "who is it?"

He advanced toward her, poor old Harold Duchesne, almost wringing his long white hands in his nervous tremor and annoyance.

"I cannot see him, Griselda. It is impossible. I am not equal to the interview. You will have to—" and he held out the card to her, with a piteous helplessness of gesture.

Griselda took it, and read aloud the name written upon it.

"Donald Ferris."

It made her feel helpless herself, helpless against fate, and after the helplessness came a kind of anger, an unreasonable anger against Donald Ferris, who had done her no harm; indeed, on the contrary, was on the point of doing something, which, viewed in a practical light, was for her ultimate benefit.

"Well," she said, after a second's pause, "I suppose I must go."

"Yes," faltered Harold Duchesne, in his weakest petulant voice. "It seems as if there were nothing else left for us to do, Griselda."

"And I must accept his terms?"

"Yes."

And so she went, and in a few minutes, Donald Ferris, who stood waiting at the window of the great, bare drawing-room, was aroused from his reverie, by the appearance of a slight and delicate figure, which advanced towards him, with a suggestion of girlish *hauteur*, which almost touched him by its mere incongruity.

It was the figure of a girl of eighteen, who had evidently but lately recovered from an illness, which had left her only a fragile young shadow of healthful girlhood. Her fine little face was as white as her dress; her eyes looked large and hollow, even while their beauty was beyond measure; her hair, which had been cropped closely, was just beginning to curl itself over her head, and down to the nape of her slender neck. She paused before him with the card in her hand.

"Mr. Donald Ferris?" she said.

Something in her poor, little air of stateliness,

which was sweet after all, filled Donald Ferris with pity, as I have said. He began, also, to feel somewhat ashamed of his strength and physical proportions. He, himself, was a powerful, cleanly built young man, and this frail girl's presence suggested to him that he was an unpleasantly muscular animal.

He bowed in acquiescence.

"Mr. Duchesne—" he began, his voice modulating itself almost tenderly in deference to some incomprehensible emotion.

"Mr. Duchesne is not equal to the interview," she answered. "He has not been strong for several years, and I often attend to his business arrangements for him. I am his granddaughter, Griselda Duchesne."

Ferris bowed again, and there arose within him a secret thought that Mr. Duchesne must be a very broken man indeed, if he was not more fit for business interviews and conversations than his young relative. He drew forward a chair, and placed it near the table, and then it was Griselda's turn to bow, which she did with the prettiest possible touch of pride of manner, as a young queen might have done, who had the mind to thank a subject. She could never forget, poor little soul, that she was a Duchesne; and that there had been a time when to be a Duchesne had been to be a very lofty personage indeed. Even in all the desperate forlornness of fallen fortune, she never forgot this.

And yet her hands trembled so, that she was obliged to clasp them together upon the table before her, as she began again.

"We have determined to accept the company's terms," she said.

Two weeks ago, Ferris had fancied that he should feel exultantly relieved, when he heard these words. His well-balanced and business-like mind had found old Harold Duchesne's high-handed, querulous, ever-protesting vacillation a trial, to say the least of it. He had borne with his feeble lamentations and weak stubbornness but impatiently, and had looked forward to the closing of the negotiations with annoyed eagerness. And now, with Griselda Duchesne speaking these words to him, while her frail, little

hands tightened themselves upon the table, to conquer their own tremor, he did not feel exultant, or relieved at all. He felt, inconsistently enough, and without the least foundation for the feeling, like a villain.

There was no diffuseness here.

"If you have anything additional to say before the agreement is drawn up," she said, "I think I can understand, and explain to my grandfather; and then he will be ready for you, when you come again." Ferris drew a step nearer to her, and the indescribable emotion made his voice even lower and more deprecating than before.

"There is nothing to be added—nothing—only that—I trust the changes we shall be obliged to make, will not interfere with your comfort as much as you imagine."

The small, close-curved head held itself very high indeed.

"They will not interfere with us; they will have nothing to do with us. The part of Duchesne that we sell, will cease to be Duchesne at all."

"Yes," she added, after a pause, "we did not think the time would ever come when we should part with our heritage. But when we give up our land, we shall give it up entirely. We shall not interfere with *you*."

After that, there seemed nothing left for her visitor to say. He could only return to the more matter-of-fact part of the transaction, and confine himself to it during the remainder of the interview, and go away at the close of his call half sad, half amused, and wholly interested.

"Poor child," he said to himself, "poor child!"

Griselda did not return to her grandfather at once, when he had taken his departure. She was not quite equal to Mr. Duchesne at first. She wandered to one of the big windows, and sat down upon the floor, folding her arms upon the sill, and looking out as she had a habit of doing. She felt weak and tired, and her heart sank within her.

"Oh!" she cried, bitterly, "to think of selling Duchesne, and for such a purpose! To think of the horrid swarms of coarse men who will come and dig and delve, and make everything look dreadful and unfamiliar! To think of coal, and dust, and grime, and noise, within sight and sound of our very walls!"

It was purely a Duchesne view of the state of affairs, this. There were people, even in the immediate neighborhood, who would have felt that the discovery of coal upon their possessions, and an excellent offer of purchase, were rather causes for self gratification, than otherwise; there were people who were disposed to envy "General" Duchesne his chance to free himself from debt

and humiliation of spirit, and provide for his future. The price offered to him was a good one, and in his present pecuniary condition, the whole estate lay waste and unproductive. "The old General" was not a practical man. He had never been a practical man in his best days, when he had been at his stateliest and strongest, when he had counted his human chattels by the score, and had held a sort of high court and open house at the rambling old mansion. And now his wealth had taken to itself wings; he held high court no longer; the lavish, hospitable, easy-going men and women, who had held court with him, had been driven from their homes, or had left them in despair, or had died more than half broken of heart; other people had taken their places, and among these he was of small importance; they only knew him as a poverty-stricken, ultra-dignified old fellow, full of refined oddities and exploded notions of dead and gone state and ceremony. They laughed at, or tolerated him, and sometimes lost all patience at his want of management.

"He ought to be a rich man, and he is a poor one," these people said. "And he lets his burdens fall upon that poor, ignorant child's shoulders. It is she who faces his creditors, and struggles with his helplessness, and he has not even left her the consolation of making friends, he has taught her so much of his own foolish old-fashioned pride. What is one to do with a girl who wears a skimp, washed-out muslin, as if it was a robe of state, and who receives ones offers of friendship, with a grand little quaint courtesy, and a silence which chills one to the bone. We would take her up and make her life more cheerful, if she would let us; but she won't let us. She is too conscious of the Duchesne blood in her veins."

CHAPTER II.

WHICH was all quite true, Griselda. They would have been kind enough to her, and have done her good by rousing her to a more healthful condition. But she would not let them. She belonged to old Harold Duchesne's century and not to her own. Her father and mother had died in her infancy, and since then she had reigned, in the family mansion, in the old, prosperous times, like a young queen. She had had subjects both black and white, the slaves upon the plantation, and the poor white folks in the woods; she had carried the keys and doled out the charity, which, it must be admitted, had been extravagant enough, after true Southern fashion. No one had ever ventured to dispute her word, or to disagree with her opinion; nobody at least but

mammy Miranda, whose foster child she had been, and who was coaxing and caressing or loftily impertinent as she chose. Omnipotent as she was in other cases, "Miss Grisell" was mammy Miranda's gracefully abject slave. She bore with her scoldings and not too elegant freedom of speech; she submitted to being disobeyed and sulked at, and admired; she existed from childhood to womanhood, under the pressure of mammy Miranda's broad, black thumb; and so she existed to this day, when the final ruin occurred, mammy at her post, possibly feeling in secret some dogged triumph in her own honor. She might have bettered herself, she had no hesitation in announcing to Griselda; but she had made up her mind to sacrifice the prospect.

"'Cos when I ses a thing, I ses it," she informed her, with a stolidness which was a by no means unnatural result of the circumstances. "An' I promised Miss Bell when she died as I'd take keer o' you, an' I'm goin' to do it."

And Griselda had shed a few tears, and said, gently, "Thank you, mammy."

For "Miss Bell" was her own pretty, young mother, who had died at her birth, in her eighteenth year.

So, amid decay and downfall, mammy Miranda became a more supreme power than ever. In fact she was the practical element of the household. She battled stoutly with a kitchen-garden and a poultry yard, which almost supplied the family table; and for the rest, she did her duty with almost fierce energy. "Miss Grisell" was at once her consolation and her trial.

"A lady from head to foot," she used to mourn loudly, "'an' then to see her brought clear down to nothin'; a wearin' fady, poor things, an' them No'thun women in their silks. Who ever made any 'count of No'thun women, I'd like to know—school teachers, an' nothin' else in the old times. I hain't no earthly use for 'em! Shucks! who's they?"

And this being the state of affairs, Griselda sat upon the floor by the window, and rebelled against the Fortune she felt had been so cruel to her. It was something, indeed, to her sentimental young mind. It seemed worse than all the rest to be forced to part with their heritage. The money weighed but lightly against the pain of such a calamity; in fact, she almost lost sight of the money altogether. The well-intentioned capitalists, who had made the offer of purchase, were cold-blooded, scheming tyrants, who were wresting their rights from them. Tyrants, whom she bitterly despised.

"Trade! trade!" she said; "always trade and money. A Southern gentleman would scorn—"

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But there she stopped, being suddenly checked by an unexpected recognition of the true state of affairs, which rose within her breast in spite of her queer little romantic notions and antipathies.

"It cannot be helped," she cried, breaking down altogether; "it cannot be helped."

The end of her sentence was lost in tears. The illness, she had lately passed through, had left her weaker than she knew.

It cost her an effort to control herself, when once her tears began to flow; but she had not much time before she could control herself sufficiently to return to the other room, and her every-day task of reading aloud to Mr. Duchesne. Her sweet, young voice soothed him, and in his calmly polite selfishness, he felt no hesitation in using it, hour after hour. Sometimes she read until the letters danced before her eyes, and her head ached; but the old gentleman never failed to be slightly astonished when she paused, and to say, with dignified annoyance:

"Pray, go on, Griselda."

But to-day he was not in the humor to be read to. He sat rubbing his long white hands, and bemoaning himself pathetically.

"What did the young man say, Griselda?" he asked. "I hope his manner was respectful. I trust he conducted himself deferentially, as—as became him."

"Yes, sir," taking up her book with a sigh, "deferentially enough."

He waved his hand impatiently.

"Put the book down, Griselda, put it down. I—I don't care to listen to-day, I am too much disturbed."

"Yes, grandpapa," meekly, and it was laid aside.

He straightened his delicate old figure and frowned slightly, evidently bracing himself up to the occasion.

"I wish to warn you, Griselda," he proceeded.

"I wish to caution you—to desire you to remember your position with regard to these people when they come among us. You are of so yielding a disposition, that I fear that it is possible you might forget that—in short, that nothing can make such persons our equals. No Duchesne has ever stooped to associate with his social inferiors, and this trading, bartering class cannot stand upon a footing with well-born men and women. Hold them at arms length, Griselda, I beg of you, and do not forget that you are a Duchesne. Be courteous to them, but nothing more."

It was not the best of schools for a sensitive, highly strung and rather romantic girl. No day passed without the poor child's being reminded

of the lost grandeur and importance of her position, until at last there was no need to remind her, since she had become morbidly alive to many things she had far better have forgotten, and so had grown reserved, even to bearing an outward appearance of coldness unnatural to her youth.

Donald Ferris was a man of deep and lasting impressions, and he thought of Griselda often, after that interview. He was an active, ambitious, clear-brained individual, perhaps a trifle too ambitious, and always full of interest in any labor he undertook. At present he was energetically full of the mining company's plans, and their prospects for the future; but often, at his busiest moments, he found himself indulging in almost unconscious thought of Griselda Duchesne.

She represented to him an interesting phase of Southern life, of which hitherto he knew nothing. She was the youth and pride and beauty of a by-gone day; for half a score of years she had been standing still, a sleeping princess, to whom the fast-living, outside world was all unknown. He formed, too, a correct enough idea of what order of existence she had known. His imagination was vivid enough to help him. She had borne her poverty with silent patience; she had read Harold Duchesne's old books, listened to his old stories, and respected his antiquated homilies; she had learned to believe in him profoundly, and to serve him with increased gentleness every day. The very dress he had seen her wear had told him something of her story. He was himself, not only a Harvard graduate, but had naturally a fine and delicate imagination; and he understood Griselda from the first.

"She is a little lady," he said. "And some day, if chance is good to me, I hope we shall know each other better."

He only saw her for a few moments, however, the next time he went to the house. Harold Duchesne received him, and she only appeared when she was summoned to affix her signature, in pretty, quaint, angular characters, to a certain document. She scarcely looked at him, and having done what was required of her, made her grave little bow again, and was gone. But he was not discouraged, and before taking his departure, laid himself, with an infinite artfulness, at General Duchesne's feet, having first prepared the way by his reserved and graceful deference.

"I am sorry to hear that Miss Duchesne's habit was to lead a comparatively secluded life," he remarked, as he made his adieu. "My mother and sisters, who will join me as soon as my house is built, would have derived much pleasure from an acquaintance with her."

The General bowed in lofty acknowledgment

of the implied compliment. He could not be otherwise than condescending to a person, who deferred, with so much of good taste, to his pre-eminence. But he answered, vaguely.

"Since our misfortunes," waving a fine, thin hand, "it has been impossible for us to perform our old social duties. I have found it necessary to live in retirement, and Griselda has chosen to share it with me."

"Miss Duchesne's feeling is one easily understood," answered Ferris, and allowed the subject to drop at once.

"This young man," the General said to Griselda, at supper that night, "this Mr. Donald Ferris, who, it appears, is to manage the operations here, informs me that it is his intention to build himself a house, and bring his family to reside with him." Griselda's pallor lost itself in sudden color.

"Will he build it upon *our* land?" she asked.

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders, querulously.

"It is our land no longer," was his peevish comment. "The time will come when the Duchesne estate will have become a myth."

Naturally, Griselda was not inclined to view this new house with favor, when it began to rise from its foundation with promising form. It proved to be a pretty and graceful enough building, but it was built upon "our land," even within sight of the old house, and consequently it was something of an eyesore. The girl often glanced at it, from her window, with an emotion almost akin to resentment.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER the importation of the mine workers, her life became more secluded than ever. She seldom left the grounds around the house. The large, thickly shaded yard, which was less a garden than a kind of small grass-park, gave her plenty of room, for her languid strolls in the cool of the day; and this was all she cared for. The outside world had little charm for her. There were the books in the antiquated library, and when she was not engaged in her attendance upon her grandfather, she could always spend her leisure among them, reading nothing more modern than Fielding or Richardson, and ignorant that there was anything more interesting.

But one day, she met with a little adventure. Going down to her favorite haunt under the trees, which shaded and cooled the spring, which was one of the household's most valuable possessions, she found a book lying upon the grass.

Having picked it up, nothing was more natural than to turn to the fly leaf, and upon it she found written, "Donald Ferris."

She read the name very calmly, and without the least tinge of interest. She was no more interested in Donald Ferris than in the dozens of other people, who were fond of strolling to "Duchesne Spring" for a refreshing drink, on the hot summer evenings. The water was the coolest and clearest in the neighborhood, and despite the fact that it lay within the boundary fence, was frequently visited by the scattered population. It was not at all out of the ordinary run of common events that a stranger should have been there.

But if she was not interested in Donald Ferris, Griselda was interested in his book, sufficiently to sit down and look over it; and it was not long before the looking over became something else. She began to read it.

It was a modern volume, a love story, and not at all a ponderous affair either; quite a simple description of a couple of emotional people, who loved and lost and found each other again, after some strong pangs and heart aches; but it was well told, and fresh, and life-like; the characters were moved by natural emotions, and stirred to natural follies, and consequently after Clarissa—Miss Clarissa Harlowe, and her rather slow retirement from this vale of tears, her slight tendency to be mildly reproachful towards her decidedly unpleasant relatives, etc.—it was a revelation.

Griselda quite forgot herself in her perusal of it. Her color came and went, and soft tears rose in her eyes. She was all the more readily moved, you see, because this was her first experience of the kind. If she had read modern novels all her life, she would possibly only have said of this one that it was "very nice." As it was, however, she read on until she was roused by the sound of footsteps upon the path close to her—the footsteps of a man, who walked quickly and well, and with admirable firmness and spring. Looking up, she saw Mr. Donald Ferris.

A more modern and experienced young lady might have felt a shade of embarrassment, just a touch. Not so Griselda Duchesne. She closed her book and stood upright, returning his deferential uncovering with her prim, sweet little bow.

"I found your book, and have been reading it," she said. "I saw your name and supposed you had dropped or left it."

She held it out to him. But he did not make any move to take it. He simply waved his hand lightly.

"I hope you will finish it," he said. "I am glad you found it. Do you think it good?"

"I am not a judge of such things, only I never read anything like it before, and it has interested

me very much. I have only read such things as 'Pamela,' and 'Clarissa Harlowe,' and 'Sir Charles Grandison.' This is quite new to me, and I like it best, I think."

"Finish it then, pray," he returned. "The fact is that it is better than most books of its class. It is neither sentimental nor sensational, which is really saying much in these degenerate days. Keep it, I beg."

"Thank you," she began, "but—"

Courteous as he was, his own air stiffened, at sight of her hesitancy.

"I have read it to the last word myself," he said. "It is of no value at all. I did not return for it, but to try the water again, if you will allow me." And he produced a small silver cup from his pocket, and bent over the spring, thus somewhat summarily ending the discussion.

Griselda stood and looked at him gravely.

"I hope you will come as often as you choose," she said. "We consider the spring almost public property."

Then she became conscious of the fact that he had a smile, which was sweet and yet manly; for he smiled, as he said:

"Thank you."

He did not encroach upon her graciousness by lingering. He only remained long enough to say one thing.

"My mother and sisters, who arrived last week, find themselves rather desolate. The life here is quite new to them, and it is natural that they should feel the change. If you had leisure to kindly give them an hour or so, occasionally, they would feel it as a generous kindness."

He saw that she shrank within herself in an instant.

"I do not visit at all," she said. "It is impossible for me, at present, though it is very kind in you to put it in that way. You are very good," the touch of stateliness getting the better of her again.

Each went their separate ways then; and that same night, Harold Duchesne, finding a strange volume on a table, called upon Griselda for an explanation as usual.

"It does not belong to us, surely?" he said. "We have nothing so new."

Griselda, who stood at the window, gazing out at the moonlit sky, did not even turn her head, as she answered him.

"It belonged to Mr. Donald Ferris, grandpapa, and he gave it to me."

The old gentleman almost dropped it, in his momentary feeling of wondering horror.

"Ferris?" he exclaimed. "Mr. Ferris! Griselda—impossible!"

And even Griselda's simply given explanation did not seem to render the matter clear to him.

"It was a little presuming in him to venture such a thing," he said, testily. "We know nothing of him."

The pale little face showed, all at once, a curiously decided expression.

"No," said Griselda, "he was not presuming; not in the least," but added no more.

It was ordained, however, so it seemed, that she should go further, and the next little episode which occurred, threw her into the very camp of the enemy.

One Sunday morning, a few weeks afterwards, as the Ferris family were on their way to the country church, they passed, as their light carriage rolled over the rough road, a girl and an elderly negro woman, at the sight of whom Donald uttered an impatient ejaculation, which attracted his mother's attention.

"Is it some one you know?" she asked.

"It is Miss Duchesne and her servant," he answered. "And she is attempting what is beyond her strength. A mile and a-half under a sun like this would be too much for any delicate woman, and she has only lately recovered from an illness."

Mrs. Ferris leaned backward, and lowering her parasol, looked out from behind it with a kindly, keen, maternal eye. The colorless, purely outlined, grave young face she saw, was of a very different style from the fresh bloom of her own two fair, healthful girls, but it appealed at once to some gentle, generous sense within her; it touched her just as it had touched her son.

"She ought to be at home," she said, even a little anxiously. "It is too much for her. She has no mother, I am sure. Duchesne, did you say?"

Mildred Ferris, who had been looking out from under her parasol also, suddenly became aroused to quite an excited interest.

"Donald," she exclaimed, "is it possible it is that queer, proud Griselda Duchesne we have heard so much of? I must look at her again. She is the strangest little creature, mother, living all alone in a big empty house, with an old black

nurse, and a last century general—who isn't a general at all—for a grandfather. They were terribly important and rich before the war; and they would no more condescend to mingle with us, than they would condescend to pick pockets."

Mrs. Ferris glanced at her son, whose eyes were fixed, with a kind of restive sympathy, upon the slight white figure they had left behind.

"Is it Griselda Duchesne, Donald?" she ventured.

"Yes," he answered. "It is Griselda Duchesne."

They had been at the church for some time when she came in, looking like a little ghost for pallor and immateriality. She, herself had now discovered that she had attempted too much. The weakness she thought she had overcome had returned to her, the heat and fatigue combined had thoroughly worn her out. She began to wish she had retained mammy Miranda, who had gone on to her "own meetin'."

Donald Ferris knitted his brows again, when he saw her, and his mother moved restlessly.

"She will be ill again," she was saying inwardly. "It is plain that she has broken down."

It was plain, indeed, and became plainer as the services began. Two people, at least, saw that her hands shook, and that she found it impossible to stand until the first hymn was finished. At its close, Donald Ferris bent forward, and spoke to his mother in a rapid undertone.

"She is going to faint. What shall we do?"

He knew she would understand his feelings, she always understood him, there was never any need for elaborate explanations between them. Her eyes met his, and then she rose and went forward, with a quick, soft, sweeping movement, and had just reached the seat Griselda Duchesne occupied, when the poor child rose up, white and faltering, a singular sense of terror upon her.

"My child," whispered the elder woman, softly. "My child," as if she had been her daughter indeed.

And then she caught the swaying figure as it sank forward.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A T R E S T .

BY FANNY DRISCOLL.

If life is done for her, why weep?
Smile, rather, at the breathless mouth,
And eyes that know such happy sleep,
And days that have no rain or drouth.

Touch the still hands with soft caress,
And smile to think them aye at rest,
With moveless feet and pulseless heart—
Ah, God! I would I were so blest.

THE LAST DUCHESNE.

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CHAPTER IV.

THEY carried Griselda out, as soon as was possible, and laid her upon the cushioned seat of the carriage, as it stood in the shade. Ferris himself brought water, and gave it to her, while his mother held the girl's head upon her arm. But the swoon was an obstinate and prolonged one, so prolonged that there was only one thing to be done, to drive her to the nearest house, which was their own. Ferris took the reins himself in his impatience, and when they reached home carried her to a large, cool room, filled up with Indian matting, and light bamboo furniture.

"She is a mere feather weight," he said, indignantly, as he laid her down upon the flowered cushions of the wide sofa. He was indignant because she had not been cared for more tenderly.

"Mother," he said, "look at her. It is barbarous that she should have been left to herself, and allowed to go out on such a day."

The mother looked at her tenderly enough. She saw her now, as it were, in detail: the long, upcurled lashes, the small, fine hands, the delicate oval of face, the short, close curls her late illness had left.

"I should like to hear all about her, as soon as you have time to tell me," she said, holding the little hand in her own. "Her face looks as if she had not lived as other girls do."

It was some time before Griselda returned to consciousness, and when she did, she saw Mrs. Ferris first.

"It was you who came to me," she said. "I should have fallen, if you had not. You were very kind to me, madam."

Being so far relieved from her uneasiness, Mrs. Ferris found herself smiling, though, perhaps, more inwardly than outwardly. Under the same circumstances Mildred would probably have burst into tears, and have been a little hysterical, and a little gratefully effusive. Elinor also would, doubtless, have done the same things. But Griselda Duchesne, who was two or three years younger than either, had awakened to perfect self-possession, and a certain degree of staid readiness of speech and dignity.

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In a minute or so more, she was trying to rise to her feet, and even managed to do so, though with manifest tremor and uncertainty. Seeing it, Ferris advanced to interfere at once.

"We must beg of you to be still," he said.

"You must not attempt to stand yet."

"I—I cannot stand," she faltered, and sank backward, her dark eyes appealing to them both.

Mrs. Ferris stood over her, and petted her in a strong, capable sort of way. Mother and son were much alike in their strength of character, as well as in personal appearance. The firm, well-shaped, white hand, which was laid on Griselda's shoulder, was wonderfully suggestive of Ferris' own.

"You must let us take care of you, my child," said the kind, steady voice.

Ferris left the room, and presently returned, hat in hand.

"If there is anything you wish said to General Duchesne—any message you would like me to deliver—"

Griselda uttered a little cry.

"Oh! do not go, if you please. I am not so ill as that. I must go home myself."

But the other two exchanged glances.

"You cannot go to-day," said Mrs. Ferris.

"You are not so strong as you think. As I said, just now, you must let us care for you."

The girl had never been in such hands before. She looked from one to the other, and somehow vaguely felt that she was disposed of. Even if she had been stronger it would have been unlike her to protest, so she remained silent.

Left alone with her, Mrs. Ferris began to understand the comments Mildred had made. It was not easy to manage the child, young as she was. Evidently she preferred silence to conversation, so the matron was discreet enough to leave her to herself.

"Only it was like sitting watching a little ghost," she said afterwards, whimsically. "She does not belong to your world, girls, nor to mine. She has lived a century before us."

Her grandfather came in a great flutter of annoyance, rubbing his hands nervously.

"I am really very sorry, Griselda," he said, after his private interview with Mrs. Ferris. "This is very unpleasant indeed. I am afraid you will inconvenience these people, and necessarily this places us under great obligations to them. I really hope you will make an effort to recover as soon as possible."

Something not entirely unlike terror shone in Griselda's eyes, as she regarded him.

"Am I to stay?" she said. "I thought—I meant to have gone home with you."

"You will be obliged to remain for a day or two," testily. "This Mrs. Ferris, who is a very decided person, informs me that your condition is more critical than we imagined. It is very unfortunate."

She was even more silent than before, when he had taken his departure, so silent, indeed, that Mildred and Elinor found her a trifle mysterious, and sat apart conversing in under tones, while she lay upon the sofa with closed eyes, around which faint dark shadows showed themselves.

"One cannot do anything with her," said Elinor. "It is just as people told us."

But towards night Ferris did something with her. He sat down at the piano and played for an hour without speaking, and when he got up, he found her eyes opened and fixed upon him, while her hands clasped themselves tensely upon her breast.

He made no remark, however, but seated himself near her and began to talk to her, and the music having affected her in such a way as rendered her mood more receptive, she found, now and then, answers for him, and from first to last a sensitive attention.

She did not regain her strength immediately, as she fancied she would. For a few days she was astonishingly weak, and so was obliged to remain where she was. In that time, however, she was secretly surprised to find herself becoming resigned, as it were. Carefully as she was tended, she was never intruded upon, and found no necessity for shrinking within herself, as she was too often disposed to do. When they began to comprehend the situation, Mildred and Elinor veered suddenly from a rather indifferent indifference to a decided interest and predilection. Indeed their mother found some entertainment and spice, in observing how they at last plunged into voluble girl-talk, with perfect good faith and innocence.

"It will do her no harm, to be talked to about dresses and adorers, and it will do them no harm to find themselves checked by her sublime ignorance," she said.

She was right, as usual. Griselda listened, somewhat uncomprehendingly, but with perfect graciousness; now and then her youth asserted itself in a momentary interest.

The grandeur of the outside world scarcely fascinated her, but its novelty aroused her somewhat, and set her to thinking of possibilities.

"Donald," said Mildred, catching her brother by the arm, and regarding him with solemn eyes, "she has absolutely never been to the opera, or to a theatre, or even to a concert. She was only a child when the war broke out, and ever since she has lived just like a nun. Donald," ecstatically, "I would give absolute worlds, if she would invite us to go and see her, but she won't, I know she won't. She is so queer and reticent."

They could not quite overcome the queerness and reticence, but there was some suggestion of change manifest in her, when she went away. She was quiet and grave yet, but something less quiet and grave than she had been at first, and though the girls' farewell kisses surprised her into a faint flush, she received them with a very sweet submissiveness.

"There is no knowing, however, whether to ask her to come again or not," said Mildred. "Of course one can hardly do anything else, and yet she has not said a word, to intimate that she would like to know us better."

But the mother—excellent and wise woman—seized upon the horns of the dilemma bravely.

"My dear," she said, with the firm, light hands on the slight shoulders, "because you are so much alone, and have no mother, I must keep a little hold upon you. I shall come to see you, now and then, and give you orders about taking care of yourself."

Then Ferris drove her home, but when he bade her good-bye, he said nothing of any hope of seeing her again.

"Do not forget that my mother begged you not to overrate your strength," he said. "She understands these matters so well, and she is convinced you have no power to spare at present."

Then he pointed to a package he had brought in, and laid upon the table.

"There are a few books there I think you will like," he said. "Mildred and my mother gathered them together."

He went away, after this, and Griselda was left with General Duchesne, who, having been neglected so long, was out of humor.

"Well," he said, "I am glad that is over. Such an intimacy scarcely becomes us."

He was rather taken back at receiving an answer, not unlike the one he had received a few

weeks before, when Griselda had stood at the window and looked out at the moonlit night.

"Grandpapa," she said, "we have made one mistake, at least. They are ladies and gentlemen."

CHAPTER V.

FERRIS went home and talked to his mother. He told her the whole story of the Duchesnes, as far as he knew it, and he ended with a vexed and anxious air.

"And now I am afraid that there is even worse to come. The money they have received might, if it were sensibly used, be the means of restoring to them a great deal they have lost; but yesterday—think of the madness of such a thing—I heard a rumor, that some rascal had persuaded Duchesne into speculating with it. He has bought plantations, down in Mississippi, and left them to be managed by these men, it is said. If that is true, he is ruined."

"Are you sure of that?" asked his mother.

Ferris shrugged his shoulders, as he walked to and fro across the room.

"It is one of those miserable, new plantations, which, of course, is in the hands of the wrong men—a lot of scoundrels, who are bent more upon making money out of others, than cotton off their land, and who are too sharp for an unsophisticated, old aristocrat, whose day is past."

"Can nothing be done?"

"Nothing—unless I find it is not too late to warn him; and even that will amount to nothing I am afraid. He would be more likely to regard me as an impudent and officious 'yankee,' than not."

"But you will run the risk?"

"Yes, certainly."

"For Griselda's sake?" With gentle suggestiveness, her anxious, maternal eyes scanning his face.

"I would do it for his own, and—" in a low, decided tone—"I would do it doubly for Griselda's sake."

It was a little curious how they both called her "Griselda," and spoke of her as if they had known her for years. There was no sense of unfamiliarity between them when they came to Griselda. For a very few moments, Ferris came and threw himself at full length upon the couch at his mother's side. He folded his hands beneath his head, and so lying, spoke again in the same decided and low voice.

"You understand my feelings?" he said.

"Yes," with the most sympathetic possible inflection. "Quite."

"I felt sure you would, particularly after you

had seen her. She attracted me from the first day. I was touched and interested, and since then I have found myself drifting almost insensibly into a curious sentiment. The end of it all is this: I must teach her to return my feelings, if I can, and I shall not give up soon."

For the first time in her life, mammy Miranda was inclined to tolerate the new element, when Mrs. Ferris drove up to the old house, to pay her visit to Griselda. A woman who wore a simple dress, who had white hands and a gracious presence, who did not show a shade of astonishment at the general bareness, and who also had the good taste to appreciate choice breeds of Brahmahs and Cochin Chinas, was not so bad upon the whole.

"You mought ask her to stay fo' dinner," she hinted to Griselda, with grim condescension. "It wouldn't do no harm, 'n it'd look kinder the right thing. Them No'thun people don't live high; no hot biscuit, nor waffles, nor nothin'—cold bread and sech all the time, Tempy Thomas was a'tellin' me. It's Tempy Thomas cooks for 'em. Bless you! they isn't used to the livin' we is, Miss Grisell."

After this, there came, in course of time, Mildred and Elinor, and now and then, though rarely, Ferris himself. Griselda found herself taken possession of and was privately surprised when her first reluctance melted away. The girls adored her, because they found her somewhat difficult to understand, and she, in her turn, slowly developed a reticent, sensitive affection for them. Upon the whole, they were rather inclined to treat her as if she had been a child, admiring and caressing her, and making wondrous efforts to amuse her, and excite her interest.

Coming in upon them unexpectedly, one day, Ferris found them standing about her in great delight, over the effect of a fanciful costume they had attired her in. It was one Mildred had worn at a masque ball; a stiff, gray silk, thickly strewn with single crimson carnations; this, with lace sleeves, frills and kerchief, carnation satin petticoat and little mob cap, and the effect of the whole costume upon the delicate figure and fine, small face, was such a one as any artist might have delighted in. The way in which she turned, too, as Ferris entered, her slender hands hanging lightly folded before her, was indescribably sweet, and innocently grave and calm, without any touch of embarrassment or trepidation.

"Ah! Donald, look at her," cried Mildred.

"As if she had worn it always, you know," said Elinor, "and it was not a fancy dress at all. So few people look as if they belong to their fancy dresses. One always secretly imagines they must have stolen them."

And then both walked around her in a circle, their ecstasy growing as they looked.

"There is a dress something like it in an old chest at home," said Griselda, in her quiet, young voice. "It is all faded and moth eaten. It belonged to a lady, Abigail Hyde, who married a Duchesne, in the old colonial days."

Ferris stood apart, and watched her with tender, eager eyes. He could only watch her all the evening. Because the two girls were so eager, she consented to wear the dress until she went home, and it was pleasant enough to set and watch her move gently here and there.

"It is Lady Abigail Hyde," said Mildred, "and we have gone back to good old colony times. God save the King."

Ferris drove her home that night, and having assisted her to alight, and accompanied her to the house, contrary to his usual custom followed her in.

"I have something of importance I wish to say to the general," he said.

She opened the parlor door, and then drew back.

"He is alone," she answered, simply, and went away.

She went into an adjoining room, and leaned out of the open window. It was a clear, moonlight night, and she was in a happier and calmer mood than she had experienced for many a weary day. The new friendship had been good for her, in more ways than one. The effects produced by it had been thoroughly healthful ones. She had been cared for affectionately, and treated as a girl should be, with constant regard for her youth. She was beginning to forget her poor childish pride and *hauteur*, and feel something of pleasure in her contact with the world outside the desolate old home.

"They are kind to me," she said to herself, in a soft undertone. "They were kind even when I tried to repel them, and hold myself aloof. I am ashamed to remember how cold and proud I was."

She was just saying this, when her attention was attracted by the sound of her grandfather's voice, issuing from the window of the next room. He was speaking loftily and angrily, and his words fell upon her ear distinctly.

"I have asked no advice, sir, and I will accept none. I am an old man, but I trust I have spirit enough left to conduct my affairs, without assistance. The Duchesne's, sir," in his grandest manner, "are not in the habit of submitting their intentions to the comment of every uninterested stranger."

Ferris' answer was too low to be heard, but Vol. LXXIV.—8.

its tone was evidently a calm one, and its very calmness seemed to rouse the old general to greater ire, and more offended dignity.

"Sir, I have given you my reply. I require no further advice. I—really I must beg of you to withdraw."

Griselda rose, clasping her hands tightly together, in her distress.

"Something has gone wrong," she said. "Something has made him angry."

There were a few more sentences, whose purport she could not distinguish, and then she heard Ferris' footsteps in the hall. She stepped quickly to the door and confronted him, her face pale, her eyes full of anxiety.

He was pale also, but his pallor was from suppressed feeling.

"Griselda!" he said, suddenly.

"I heard," she said. "Come in, if you please."

He obeyed her in silence, but once inside, with her troubled, upturned face before him, he lost some little of his self-control.

"I wonder if I ought to say good-bye to you," he broke forth.

"I cannot ask you not to do so, after what I have heard," she said, tremulously, "but he is very old, and he has known so much pain and trouble."

Somehow or other, he gained possession of both her hands, and held them.

"It ought to be good-bye," he said, with some impetuous bitterness, "but my self-respect is actually not as strong as—as my love, Griselda."

The words seemed to leap from his lips, and utter themselves in spite of him. Discretion told him the next instant, that he had spoken too soon and too suddenly. It was as if he had awakened her abruptly from a calm dream. Her hands fell away from his grasp, as she started backward, and a deep flush stained her white skin, dying out the next moment, and leaving her paler than before. But she did not speak at all.

Having made his false step, however, he must go on.

"The last blunder is worse than the first," he said. "I see that, but I cannot unsay my words. They must stand as they are. I have been guilty of the presumption, and a man's love is a fixed fact, Griselda, if the man is worthy of a moment's thought. The beginning and the end is, that I love you!"

"I am sorry," she said.

That was all. She was Griselda Duchesne again, involuntarily, ruled by certain rapid memories and fancies, some would say prejudices, she had better have forgotten. He had really done

her a kind of wrong, in rousing within her this sudden, momentary repulsion.

"I am not," he answered. "And yet it is hardly fortunate for me, at present. Do you think you can forgive me?"

She drew herself erect, and replied to him, with the faint suggestion of *hauteur* he knew so well.

"There is no need that you should ask that."

"No," he said, in generous repentance. "There was no need. But you see mine is the 'lost cause,' Griselda, and I am only a very masculine man."

He extended his hand, and she gave him hers, coldly and passively. He held it a moment, while he gave her a long, appealing look.

"General Duchesne will tell you how I have offended him," he said. "But when he tells you, remember that I had a reason for my officiousness. Good-night—or, perhaps, good-bye."

CHAPTER VI.

Griselda went back to her window again. She sat down, and her face looked very white in the moonlight. For a few moments she felt as cold and grave as she had ever done in her life. Until a certain stage of feeling was passed, she was only proudly indifferent. But at last she became conscious of a sort of emotional stirring within. The coldness melted away, and all at once her mood changed.

She was restless and unhappy, and before very long heavy tears rose in her eyes, and filled them, and fell. There was so much of emotion at work in her usually cold young frame, that she was almost frightened. She moved uneasily and left her chair.

"I said I was sorry, and I thought I did not mean it," she said, "but it was true. I am sorry. Everything so altered, and—and I am wretched."

As a refuge against herself, she went to her grandfather; but his humor was a more singular one than her own. He was pacing the big barren room, excitedly, and on seeing her he pointed to the table.

"You will find a check there, which you will use, Griselda," he said. "It is time that we began to—to assert ourselves somewhat, and show these people that we are not the beggars we seem, and that—that our future is more secure than they fancy."

Beyond this, however, he explained nothing. Griselda carried the check away, and wondered what she should do with it. She had never owned so much money in her life, and did not care for the things most girls care for.

"I suppose I must buy dresses," she said. "That must be what he means, and once I might

have been a little glad; but who is there to see me now, or care whether I look well or not. Mildred and Elinor—" And there she stopped, because her tears forced her to faltering.

But to her surprise there was no falling off of the usual friendly intercourse. The two girls and their mother retained their hold upon her as affectionately as ever. The fact was that they knew nothing of the little episode which had disturbed her so. And Ferris managed to control events so ably, that there were no embarrassing *tête-à-têtes* or *rencontres*, and as their intimacy had never been a close one, this was the less difficult.

Mildred and Elinor found it charming beyond measure to assist Griselda to make the best use of her new opportunities. They grew important over plans and purchases, and were hardly controllable when she came to them, one day, and with a rather troubled air, told them that a carriage had been bought, and the old house was to be refurnished.

"Everything is to be altered," she said, sadly. Elinor fairly stared at her.

"But it will be delightful," she cried. "Is it possible you are not glad, Griselda?"

Griselda only looked pensive, resting her chin upon her hand.

"I don't know. I have been poor so long. And it will hardly seem like Duchesne, and—and," faltering the words forth, "I think I am afraid."

"Why?" amazedly.

"I did not know there was enough money to do so much all at once. I knew the land had been sold well, but I thought—"

"Ah!" said Mildred, "that is only because you don't understand. Gentlemen always know about money and business, and we don't," with large ease of mind. "Do let us talk about the new furniture."

After this, instead of walking to church, Griselda was driven there, in a resplendent coach, her grandfather seated at her side, filled with all the dignity of the dead-and-gone Duchesnes. The skimp, washed-out muslins were laid aside, and rich fabrics and late fashions took their place.

But Ferris, at least, and his mother also, saw that the sweet, fine face was no brighter than it had been in darker-seeming days; indeed, that it often wore a shadow of secret trouble and anxiousness. Even the girls, sometimes, awakened to a recognition of this fact, and were bewildered by it.

"She is not a bit happier-looking than she used to be," they said. "And she does not seem to care for things, as most people would."

"But then," added Elinor, "Griselda is different from most people." And with this reflection they consoled themselves.

Among the *grandeurs* of the new furniture, Griselda lived the old, lonely life. She had more to do and more to think of, perhaps, in her position as mistress to additional servants, who all quarreled with mammy Miranda, and who were regarded by her, contemptuously, as know-nothings and interlopers; but in the abstract the life was the same. She read to her grandfather, and listened to his harangues on the fallen state of society, and she did not find their tone more cheerful, since his change of fortune.

"There is no society," he would say, "no society, Griselda. I have nothing in common with mere trades people," which implied a certain degree of reproach, sonorously administered.

Of the state of their private affairs, Griselda knew nothing. She saw that her grandfather had letters which he made a point of answering himself, and she observed that after their appearance, he was always more fretful and dignified than usual, and inclined also to a kind of secretive mood.

Entering the library, however, one morning, she found him in conversation with a stranger, an aquiline-featured, fair-faced man, who was talking rapidly and persuasively, and whose last words reached her ear.

"In investments of this kind, one must expect to meet with occasional drawbacks, and in such cases economy is poor policy. Just at present, it seems scarcely a paying thing; but in course of time—" And there he paused, seeing Griselda, and rose to bow.

Duchesne waved his hand, impatiently.

"Go away, Griselda," he said. "I am engaged. Go away."

From this time forward he changed rapidly. He was irritable and nervous, and spent the greater part of his time in writing letters, or pacing his room restlessly. Sometimes, when he read, in her presence, the letters he received, Griselda saw actual dismay in his face.

"I—I am very much annoyed," he would exclaim, in petulant explanation, when he saw her looking at him. "Why do you watch me, Griselda? It is a business matter you do not understand."

There came a time, at last, when he was hardly himself at all. He asked the same questions over and over again, and once she came upon him with an open letter in his hand, and tears rolling weakly down his withered face.

"Griselda," he faltered, staring at her, in a piteous, appealing fashion. "We—we must

make an effort. We must not give way. Poverty is a terrible thing, Griselda."

She knew what was coming from that moment. But she did not anticipate as heavy a blow as fell upon her at last.

He had written one of the long, weary letters, toiling over it through the whole of one morning, and for several days he awaited its answer, with an impatient eagerness painful to behold. He could not rest, and as the hours for the arrival of the mails approached, would wander from room to room, and from window to door, and being disappointed again and again, would work himself into a fever of misery.

"There is something wrong with the mails," he would protest. "There is no method among these people. I shall consider it my duty to enter a complaint."

But the answer came at length, a great, empty-looking envelope, containing only half a sheet of paper, upon which a few lines were roughly scrawled; but when he read them, Griselda knew that the end had come.

A gray pallor spread itself over his face, and a palsied tremor seized upon him. His eyes left the paper, and turned upon her, as if in a vague hope that the sight of her would clear his bewildered and excited brain.

"Griselda," he faltered, but before she could reach him, all likeness to his former self had fallen away from him; his form seemed to shrink, his look to become vacant, and he had burst into sobs, and incoherent, indistinct attempts at speech.

"Ruin, Griselda—scoundrels—ruin—for—forever." And so, until the incoherence trailed off into silence, and he sank helplessly forward, over the arm of his chair, his blank, ashen face resting upon the table.

Those few wild, stammering words were his last. Fate spared him the pang of awakening again to a consciousness of the blow his senile pride and folly had brought upon him. He never spoke again, but lay helplessly, uttering low, wearied moans, until he died—a week after Griselda had thrown herself upon her knees, to support him as he fell.

And then the girl stood in the desolate old place, the last of her race, and alone. The will they found among the papers left her heiress to houses and lands, of whose existence she knew nothing, and which, in the hands of sharpers and speculators, had lapsed into worse than nothingness, before she even heard of them, for their loss involved debt and entanglement.

"The servants must go away, I suppose, and the new things must be sold," she said to Ferris

and his mother, who had stood by her in her need. "But Duchesne is left, and," smiling pathetically, "mammy Miranda will stay and take care of me."

To Ferris there was a sharp sting in the fact that she refused his mother's invitation, and persisted in her determination of living as she had done, in the old times.

"It is nothing new to me to live alone, and be poor," she said. "It is only putting on an old, familiar dress again. As long as I have Duchesne, it does not matter; and Mildred and Elinor can come and see me often."

It was not more than a week after this—after they had left her to her solitary life—when sitting at her work, one morning, Mrs. Ferris was startled by Griselda's entrance into the room, without the slightest warning.

The girl flung open the door, and walked in, white and breathless; then stopped short in the middle of the room, her hands dropping at her sides.

"I have come—to ask you to take me," she said, between her excited, fluttering breaths. "I have no home—I have no one but you. There are people at Duchesne, who say it does not belong to me but to them. It is gone, too—even poor, old Duchesne—even Duchesne!"

Ferris, who was in the room, took up his hat and left the house, without a word. He had been haunted by the fear of this crisis from the first. He went to Duchesne, and found that there had been foundation enough for his fears. The old house had gone with the rest.

There was nothing to be done. He could only come back and explain the business minutiae, and leave his mother and the girls to do the rest. Just then it appeared to him, that his part was to keep himself as much out of sight as possible.

"We have always wanted you," Elinor and Mildred said, hanging over her, and crying in spite of a secret feeling of relief. "And mammy Miranda is always good-natured to us."

But Griselda lay listless and pale, upon the sofa, where Mrs. Ferris had put her.

"I did not think Duchesne would go, too,"

she said, "—not Duchesne. It was like a living friend, and now it is gone."

She had been drifting slowly towards a new phase of existence, since the very hour in which she had drawn away from Ferris, and fancied herself chilled against him; but she had never known how far she had advanced, until now that her desolateness was so complete.

When he entered the room that night, for the first time after he had left them, she looked up at him, as a lost child might have done. She did not quite understand herself even then, but it was clear to her, that here, at least, she was safe. She had lost all the rest, but not this one thing—and, somehow, all old Harold Duchesne's lessons were forgotten. On his part, Ferris had not given up. He had meant, from the first, to try once again, and when she looked up at him, from her sofa, he felt that the time had come.

So he went to his mother, and spoke to the point, as he had a habit of doing.

"I want a few minutes alone with her," he said. "I have something to say."

Of course, having done this, his opportunity soon presented itself, and then he went at once to the sofa, and spoke to the point there.

Only a few words at first, but when they were finished, Griselda stood up before him, with tremulous lips.

"I am like a beggar," she faltered, "and it seems as if it was to punish me, that—that I know now—when it is so late. I am nothing—I have nothing—even Duchesne—"

He took her slight hands, and looked down at her with a tenderness beyond measure.

"Do not let us think of Duchesne," he said. "Do not let us remember one thing in the past, which has caused either of us unhappiness. Only give me the right to make your future happier, and that will be enough. That is all I ask. Say only that I may love you with some hope?"

"I might have said it before," she answered, softly, "if I had known—if I had understood myself. I know now, that there was hope, when I told you that there was none."

And simple as the words were, they were enough, and the end.

L I N E S .

BY MRS. D. PIDSLEY.

The present ours; the future rests with God,
Yet man, vain mortal, dreams, and talks, and plans,
And airy castles builds, as if it lay
Within his grasp. Life's path, with flowers, bright hope

Adorns, and points to coming years serene;
Touched by her magic wand, the future glows
With beauty rare, and man forgets that God,
Who gives to-day, the morrow may withhold.