

a due regard to health and the development of physical beauty and activity. It is claimed for this corset that it keeps the muscles of the abdomen in their proper position, reduces the size of the figure, improves the outline, affords a permanent support, without undue pressure, and at the same time secures a graceful appearance and does not lose its original shape, the latter a very essential point in its favour, where the proper fit of a dress is concerned. We can bear out the fact that the "Duchess" corsets are light and strong, and appear to us to be particularly adaptable for those ladies (like Nurses) engaged in work involving much stooping. The price ranges from ten shillings and sixpence per corset upwards, and they are made in various colours. If a corset be a necessity, and there is, we admit, a variety and multitude of opinions upon the subject, the "Duchess" corset appears to us in every way to fulfil the intentions of the makers.

### THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER.\*

An Autobiographical Story.

BY GEORGE MACDONALD, LL.D.,

Author of "David Elginbrod," "Alec Forbes," "Within and Without," "Malcolm," &c.

#### CHAPTER VII.—CONNIE.

IT is high time, though, that I dropped writing about myself for a while. I don't find myself so interesting as it used to be.

The worst of some kinds especially of small illnesses is that they make you think a great deal too much about yourself. Connie's, which was a great and terrible one, never made her do so. She was always forgetting herself in her interest about others. I think I was made more selfish to begin with; and yet I have a hope that a too-much-thinking about yourself may not *always* be pure selfishness. It may be something else wrong in you that makes you uncomfortable, and keeps drawing your eyes towards the aching place. I will hope so till I get rid of the whole business, and then I shall not care much how it came or what it was.

Connie was now a thin, pale, delicate-looking—not handsome, but lovely girl. Her eyes, some people said, were too big for her face, but that seemed to me no more to the discredit of her beauty than it would have been a reproach to say that her soul was too big for her body. She had been early ripened by the hot sun of suffering, and the self-restraint which pain had taught her. Patience had mossed her over and made her warm

and soft and sweet. She never looked for attention, but accepted all that was offered with a smile which seemed to say—"It is more than I need, but you are so good I mustn't spoil it." She was not confined to her sofa now, though she needed to lie down often, but could walk about pretty well, only you must give her time. You could always make her merry by saying she walked like an old woman; and it was the only way we could get rid of the sadness of seeing it. We betook ourselves to her to laugh *her* sadness away from us.

Once, as I lay on a couch on the lawn, she came towards me carrying a bunch of grapes from the greenhouse—a great bunch, each individual grape ready to burst with the sunlight it had bottled up in its swollen purple skin.

"They are too heavy for you, old lady," I cried.

"Yes; I *am* an old lady," she answered. "Think what good use of my time I have made compared with you! I have got ever so far before you: I've nearly forgotten how to walk!"

The tears gathered in my eyes as she left me with the bunch, for how could one help being sad to think of the time when she used to bound like a fawn over the grass, her slender figure borne like a feather on its own slight yet firm muscles, which used to knot so much harder than any of ours? She turned to say something, and, perceiving my emotion, came slowly back.

"Dear Wynnies," she said, "you wouldn't have me back with my old foolishness, would you? Believe me, life is ten times more precious than it was before. I feel, and enjoy, and love so much more! I don't know how often I thank God for what befell me."

I could only smile an answer, unable to speak, not now from pity, but from shame of my own petulant restlessness and impatient helplessness.

I believe she had a special affection for poor Sprite, the pony which threw her—special I mean since the accident—regarding him as in some sense the angel which had driven her out of paradise into a better world. If ever he got loose, and Connie was anywhere about, he was sure to find her: he was an omnivorous animal, and she had always something he would eat when his favourite apples were unattainable. More than once she had been roused from her sleep on the lawn by the lips and the breath of Sprite upon her face; but although one painful sign of her weakness was that she started at the least noise or sudden discovery of a presence, she never started at the most unexpected intrusion of Sprite any more than at the voice of my father or mother. Need I say there was one more whose voice or presence never startled her?

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