

Following the unfortunate choice of two day and boarding schools, Dart was sent to another, where her robust health, vigour and vitality enabled her to enjoy a sway in many respects of a Spartan nature, too severe certainly for the less hardy. It was a most unusual school with many methods, original in those days, of true education. For the girls were "drawn out" in many spheres, then usually untouched in school life. At breakfast, the elder girls had to take it in turns to initiate and maintain with the head-mistress a conversation on some self-chosen topic. If the effort was not deemed satisfactory, the luckless girl had to renew the attempt another morning before she had her meal. Dart would have liked to have been the victim every morning more especially as the hated Liberals were then in power and provided a wealth of subjects. Once when her turn came, she launched forth against Home Rule, and so excited the rest of the school (which included an Ulster hot-head and only two nominal Liberals) that breakfast threatened to become a Tory demonstration. But this was promptly quenched, and politics as a breakfast dish were henceforth banned.

Saturday Hops were very popular. On these occasions, brothers of pupils were invited to join in the Lancers, Waltz, Barn Dance, Polka and Schottische in the recreation room. Sometimes when the head-mistress was entertaining friends, one, or perhaps two, of the senior girls were called in to take part in this social function. Dart came in for more than her fair share of these drawing-room gatherings to give recitations, but whereas her preference was for the tragic, she was generally called upon for something humorous and for something fresh every time.

Except in the depths of winter, surprisingly long walks into the country were incumbent upon all the boarders, juniors as well as seniors. Since some of the former were quite young children, there was hardly a walk when one or two, finding it too long, did not collapse. But most of the seniors were more than ready to act as human ambulances. Two would form a four-hand lift, but Dart, if a really small child fell by the way would carry her pick-a-back as making for easier and quicker progress.

Excursions were made in summer down the Thames, to such places as Windsor Castle and Hampton Court, and because of her passion for history and all things historical, Dart was appointed guide to her fellows. So, too, at Oxford, where she and others of her form, up for examinations, spent all the spare time of a delicious week going round the Colleges. Despite a deplorable weakness in one subject, arithmetic, Dart always looked eagerly forward to examinations as very exciting occasions.

Of pleasure of more general acceptance, there were monthly entertainments at the school, and of these Dart was the organiser and often the originator. One very popular "turn" was the Sailor's Hornpipe, when Dart -- at last dressed as a real Jack tar -- and her three companions were encored till they literally dropped -- due largely to bottles of stone ginger drunk in between the successive performances. When plays were staged in the recreation room, Dart,

of course, invariably played a male part, and then, for one vivid hour, felt to the manner born.

With very congenial class mates two of whom, sisters, became life-long friends, Dart spent a very happy time at this school. The French teacher, universally beloved, since she alone on the school staff supplied a gentle, and persuasive influence, made a lasting impression on Dart's life. Although very patriotic "Mademoiselle" displayed none of those volative characteristics of the French, and spoke English fluently and without any foreign accent. Born of a Roman Catholic, after many years spent in England, she had become a most attached and devout Anglican who put the practice of her religious principles before every other consideration. Her intellectual abilities, her strong and beautiful character, her moral courage, her spirit, her complete unselfishness, and her ultimate uncomplaining struggles in France against ill-health, poverty and the religious intolerance of relations whom she had partially supported, afforded Dart her first exemplar of those qualities which of all others seemed to her most admirable.

For the ~~as~~ rest, Dart was intensely interested in most subjects, excepting languages and theory of music, which she cordially abhorred. But Elocution, English history and the English language especially attracted her, and in both the latter subjects she gained distinction when passing with honours in the local examinations.

Towards the end of her school life, Dart experienced a new delight in learning to ride, which, her Mother told her, had been her Father's wish for her, he himself having been a fine horseman.

Holidays, Dart now generally spent in Scotland, staying twice on her way up with the delightful family of her two school friends in Cumberland. Living at first with her grandmother, Dart speedily acquired new and also lasting friends, with some of whom she used to spend island holidays. These invariably yielded a great amount of fun, most of it at Dart's expense. Photography with a half-plate camera now became a hobby, and Dart, despite the weight of the whole kit, invariably shouldered it wherever she went. It also became her only companion on the long tramps in which she rejoiced, tramps too long for any of her friends, none of whom could be called walkers.

At the age of eighteen, Dart at last succeeded in being confirmed. Both in Scotland and in England the Calvinistic services she was forced to attend, repelled her. But taken, at the age of thirteen, to Evensong in a small and humble parish Church in England, she had been arrested alike by the appeal of liturgical worship and by the sermon. The teaching of the latter, based on the Gospel of the day -- the Parable of Dives and Lazarus -- proved a turning point in, and a stay of her life. For it not only disposed of the unscriptural teaching about the state of the departed which, with all else, had repelled Dart from Protestantism, but it satisfied her reason which she could never abrogate.

The existence of an intermediate state, a place of purification between the final state of Heaven and Hell, is indicated in this parable, and strengthened by our Lord's own experiences in

Paradise after His death and before His Ascention into Heaven. To this, two other passages in the New Testament attest, and the Apostles' Creed bears witness in its declaration of Christ's descent into Hell, or rather hades, the place of waiting for the Resurrection. The parable implies that, at death, the soul receives from God its particular judgment, as distinct from the general Judgment at the Last Day, and thereafter finds a place of joy or of misery. Prayer for the progress of the Souls in Paradise towards the perfection of holiness, then logically follows. Through such prayers the Communion of Saints between those still in this world and those beyond the Veil, is attained. Such was the summary of primitive Christian doctrine that Dart heard and received that night, and from which, as well as all the other dogmas of the Catholic creeds she subsequently learnt, she never wavered. The Athanasian creed with all its safeguards against any mutilation of the full Creed of Catholic Christendom, and its solemn warnings against those who, holding that Faith, failed to keep it, made a special appeal to her.

But Dart had to fight for her Faith against Protestant intolerance for a lengthy period with her back to the wall, and for long after her Confirmation which only issued after a struggle of five years. During this time, as subsequently, Dart studied for herself both theology and Church history that she might become a well-instructed and intelligent member of the Anglican Communion.

Long before Dart left school, politics had become an absorbing interest. It was whilst in Scotland that, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, she attended her first political meeting, one in which the Radicals were laying siege to a Tory country stronghold. Dart begged to be allowed to go to this local meeting at a time when no women, let alone small girls, ~~we~~ ever dreamt of attending such meetings in Scotland. Happily Dart's grandmother was quite unconventional and despite the protests of her thoroughly shocked daughters, waved them peremptorily aside saying: "Never heed, if the lassie wants to go, go she shall." But an escort was necessary, and for this, the head gardener, as having Liberal tendencies, was chosen rather than the coachman. He, being a hot Tory, was not to be trusted with equally inflammable material. Dart turned out to be the only one of the feminine sex at the meeting, some members of which would have turned her out at one point. This was when she, carried away by righteous indignation, categorically contradicted the distinguished speaker's remarks on the "rising tide of Liberalism" by instancing three recent by-elections in which Tories had been returned to replace Radicals. On Dart's return home, still aburst with indignation, her embarrassed escort, in answer to the question as to how they had fared, said, with reference to his charge, that he had "had sair wark to haud her down."

In England, she had made her entry into political life by taking round a petition to be signed against Home Rule, when during a General Election, she went to the local Conservative headquarters asking for some work, the kindly head patting her on her shoulder,

told her to come back when she had put up her hair. (This, in those days, was the evidence of being "grown up") But Dart was not too young to join the local Conservative Women's Association in which she worked industriously as occasion served.

Dart's grandmother, a very strong character, had a decade earlier pointed out what she considered a gross injustice. This was the denial of the franchise to educated women, whilst granted it to their half educated, or illiterate, male dependents with no such stake as they in the country. So the arguments of Lady Knightly of Fawsley in favour of women's suffrage at one Conservative meeting merely stressed for Dart an already accepted attitude.

The principles of loyalty, as in Althea were also inborn in Dart at a time when Queen Victoria was generally unpopular. At school Dart invariably hotly countered any disparaging remarks made against the Sovereign or any other members of the Royal family. But only once did she have any opportunity of seeing the Queen. This was when she came to open a Scottish Exhibition in Kelvin Grove Park, Glasgow.

It may be said that Dart matriculated in politics when she was twenty-four, during what was known as the "Khaki" election during the Boer War. Her electioneering on this occasion consisted almost exclusively in canvassing - work which she thoroughly relished as she revelled in arguing on subjects with which she had familiarised herself. Nor was her work always confined to the home constituency, a safe Tory seat, for on some occasions she went to work for friends interested in the contests for some Radical seats.

Dart ever ranked far above any other of the many treats that she so vigorously enjoyed any opportunity of seeing the King or Queen when they were in procession on some State occasion. But the first Royal solemnity of which she was a reverent witness was the funeral procession of Queen Victoria. She never forgot it. Rising on the morning of that sad day first to see her elder brother off, as Sergeant of Electrical Engineer Volunteers to fall in with his regiment lining part of the long route, she then followed him by a later train with friends to see the moving spectacle.

When she was about twenty-four Dart was given a Sunday afternoon class of some thirty young men, mostly rather older than herself. They were employed at an Iron Works in the parish and not only turned up regularly at the very animated classes for instruction on the Creed, but some of them even went voluntarily afterwards with Dart to Evensong. She obtained a further hold on them by securing for them the exclusive use on Saturday nights of one of the parochial club rooms. Here they were not only able to play billiards, bagatelle, and "Shove 'a'penny", but to make their own tea and cocoa.

This class lasted till the Iron Works removed, and then Dart was given choir boys and continued with them for the rest of her time of Sunday teaching. Though usually reckoned "young limbs", choir boys never failed to rejoice Dart's heart, and all her associations with them were of the happiest nature. Most of them would come once a week to Dart's house to learn from her the elements of carpentry, in which, it must be confessed, they shewed more zest than skill.

Dart's first choir boys belonged to a Mission Church in connection with which, every Whit Monday, a large social gathering with an entertainment in an adjoining class room was held. For several successive years Dart was responsible for the invention of such original entertainments as Bunkum and Blarney's shows, "Ventriloquial" figures (with confederates hidden beneath them), a burlesque of a school prize-giving and so forth.

Early in the new century, the Wonders of the West Highlands were opened to Dart in company with the Scots friends who had introduced her to them. Completely captivated by the revelation, Dart thenceforward returned there annually with them for her holiday, and their historical and other associations became and continued to be one of the most absorbing of her interests. From the first she had been very susceptible to the atmosphere of historical buildings, for to her their old stones spoke of the past. The prehistoric remains she came across for the first time in the Highlands quickened and intensified her interest in every class of ancient structure. Indeed this love of "old stones" became a passion with Dart, equivalent to the devotion of others to animals, for which she had no love. Initially and for fifteen years Dart made notes of all she saw in the Highlands, and amplified these by research in the British Museum, Record Office and the Scottish National Library. She took photographs too of every historic scene and antiquity, as well as of rapidly disappearing modes of life and agricultural implements.

It was just when Dart was feeling keenly the sad death of her friend, the heroic "Mademoiselle", that a new and lasting friendship was made. From childhood both she and her elder brother had been sickened by hearing continually of two sisters, who, so they were led to believe, were models for them to copy. Dart and her brother thought they sounded a nasty pair of prigs, and for years managed to dodge them whenever a meeting was arranged by their respective elders. But one day, a bright, merry and lively girl was introduced to Dart who found she was actually one of the wickedly maligned pair. She and her sister had also avoided Dart and her brother on the same grounds, which naturally repelled two girls who were full of spirit and fun. It took but a short time for Dart and H. to discover how much they had in common, and great was their regret they had not met sooner.

In 1906, a General Election raged on "Free" Trade v. Tariff Reform. On this occasion Dart, an ardent Protectionist, was placed in charge of the local Central Conservative Committee Room, and whilst, as invariably, the local Tory candidate, a Tariff Reformer, was triumphantly returned at the head of the poll, the Radicals received an overwhelming majority from the country, largely due to the Dissenting Vote (There was no talk in England of "Free Churches" in those days). As the price of this, there began a ~~prolonged~~ prolonged and bitter fight on behalf of definite Christian teaching in the elementary schools, those of the Church, the R.C.s and the Wesleyans, which alone gave such teaching being the primary, but not the only. objects of the Radical attack.

It was just after this General Election that Dart became

Hon. Rural-Deanery Organising Secretary for the Church Defence and Instruction Committee-- an office which, during the twelve years she held it, afforded her perhaps the most strenuous work of her life. It entailed, amongst other things, a tremendous amount of walking, for the Rural Deanery then comprised 24 parishes, an area that extended into an adjacent county. Here the parish could only be reached on foot, as to begin with Dart had no cycle, and her first duty was to visit the incumbent of every parish. For it was for him to appoint a representative on the Committee, and when Dart took over there was but a solitary parish with a representative, and he was purely nominal. She next helped with arrangements for parochial lantern lectures on the Church as the pioneer of education in England: organised others in large central halls for the Deanery: secured subscriptions and donations for the work: and kept a watchful eye on the local Press in case anything published concerning the Church required a letter of correction.

The introduction of the first "Education" Bill seeking to establish "Birreligion", or "skinned milk" Christianity universally in the elementary schools, found Dart fully prepared for the fight. From this time onwards, she enthusiastically worked sixteen hours daily, attending every parochial Church Defence meeting and addressing some; obtaining members for the Parents' League, and arranging Mass meetings in opposition to this and successive "Education" Bills -- all aimed against the Church. This work entailed the obtaining of well-known public men as speakers: the drawing up and "lay out" of posters: their distribution and bill-sticking and the arranging for the invariably required overflow meetings. On every occasion when these Bills came before the House of Lords, Dart obtained tickets for the debate and followed them closely.

When there came a short respite from fighting the Church's battles, Dart began writing a historical romance, and arranged and produced in the open air a series of tableaux illustrating the Conversion of Britain. She spared no pains to ensure exact correctness of every historical detail from tonsures to properties and herself made all the properties.

HOW THEY MET.

When, in 1909. H. became engaged to be married, Dart realised she could no longer be to her all that she had previously been. Then it was that Dart first met Althea's sister Alice, whose high intellectual attainments attracted her, and Dart was able to persuade her to relieve her of the honorary Secretaryship of the Church Institute. Whilst this sister was re-arranging the Institute's Library Althea and Dart first saw each other, though of this meeting Dart had no memory. But Althea, who must have kept, as usual, in the background, retained a vivid recollection of it, and told Dart that