

Increasing Intimacy.

Some years previously, Althea and Dart, whose devotion to one another steadily increased and strengthened, had agreed ultimately to live together in the Highlands, building their own house there, in native fashion. This agreement had met with the warm approval of Miss Annie and Dart's mother alike, for both were well over eighty, and were relieved to know that such an ideal arrangement had been made by such friends who, otherwise, would have been left each to herself, when they were gone.

For years past, therefore, during their holidays, Althea and Dart had considered the varying attractions of different parts of the Highlands. Discarding their first idea as to locality, they, after great difficulty, secured a site in a country unsurpassed for beauty. It was in its neighbourhood that they had camped. They had begun the fascinating work of planning every conceivable detail of design and material, as soon as the site had been procured and now it was 1924. In the spring of that year Miss Jenny had died, and in October it had been arranged that Dart should speak for the Conservative candidate in the Constituency where she was to have her home. She had reached Glasgow on her way north, when she heard her Aunt was dying. She died only four hours after Dart had reached her bedside, and consequently she had to cancel all her political engagements in the north. This happened just on the eve of the overthrow of the first Socialist Government. Immediately after the ensuing General Election, in which Dart took her usual part, at home, she, as the principal beneficiary of her Aunt's will, returned to Scotland with Althea. Together they made choice of such articles of furniture and of ~~blenish~~ as would suit their prospective home, and before returning to England, went up to the site. In the late autumn of 1925, Althea had to take to bed with a distressing and critical illness. It occurred at a time when not only were both sisters from home, but when Miss Annie herself was prostrate with a severe heart attack. Fortunately her old and faithful cook was an experienced nurse, and Dart, having made arrangements for delegating her work, claimed and was granted the privilege of nursing Althea.

During some six weeks Dart lived with Althea, sleeping on a mattress on the floor of her bedroom to be always at hand when wanted, for, fortunately, she was the lightest of sleepers. During this anxious period, Dart found increasing reason devotedly to love, to cherish and to admire Althea. Nothing could exceed her patience and unselfishness. Nothing could disturb her calm spirit, neither continuous and alarming sickness, nor a temperature which, even when lowered, stubbornly persisted above normal. Throughout the whole time, however ill she felt she never once gave expression to any feeling of illness, much less to bemoanings. She was unfailingly optimistic about her condition, saying invariably, when she was at all able to speak, that she would "be better to-morrow." But she never failed, even when she could hardly speak, to murmur her gratitude for the slightest service. Whenever the doctor visited her - sometimes three times a day - she never had anything to tell him about herself, and always found it very difficult, when not impossible, even to answer his questions as to how she felt. Dart consequently had to answer for her as best she could.

Fortunately Althea was invariably a very good sleeper, and could fall off to sleep very quickly and remain in unbroken sleep for hours.

Early in January of the next year the doctor told the family and Dart that Althea would have to undergo an operation. She had internally a large non-malignant growth which Althea herself could feel, and the absorption of which medical treatment had failed to effect. But both she and Dart alike had always had the utmost horror of such operations, of any talk on the subject; as indeed of any physiological matter. They shuddered at the mere idea of entering either a nursing home or a hospital, having an innate aversion from all the professional paraphernalia of illness.

Dart had for some time been interested in the Guild of St. Raphael, a society of Anglican communicants which exists for the practise of the Sacrament of Holy Unction, but not; as in the modern Roman Church as a preparation for death for its primitive purpose. This originated, of course, in the apostolic injunction: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." (St. James V 14 & 15). A doctor of medicine, who was also a priest of the Scottish (Episcopal) Church and an old friend of Dart's, was at one time Warden of this Guild, and it was from him that Dart first heard of the miracles of healing wrought through this Sacrament, sometimes when all other means had failed. An English friend had also told her of other cures effected through the same means of grace which, however, unlike modern heresies obsessed with health as a religion, is used hand in hand with the skill of medical men. Althea's sisters, too, Dart knew, had great faith in this orthodox primitive use of Holy Unction; and, as it subsequently transpired, it had also, strangely enough, appealed to Althea herself. So when she heard the doctor's verdict, she received it with her usual unruffled calm: said she would never contemplate an operation but expressed the wish to be anointed instead. Though this, too, was Dart's ardent longing for Althea, she not unnaturally, experienced great surprise that her friend should desire this Sacrament in view of her agnostic views. But since

"God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform"

it was not for Dart to demur. So after both had talked over the whole matter, it was agreed that Dart should write fully to her friend Dr. Ireland, the Scottish priest. He replied to her, and at the same time, by return, wrote to Althea's doctor, a Churchman, with the consequence that with the fullest approval of all concerned it was arranged that Althea and Dart should go to Edinburgh, that the former might be prepared for the reception of Holy Unction.

They stayed in rooms there for five weeks, and every day Althea went round to Dr. Ireland's house near by for an hour's preparation. As his nature was as reserved as Althea's, Dart at once found it necessary to act as a sort of interpreter between them. For Althea would return and recount to Dart all that Dr. Ireland had said to her, and invariably it happened that she had wanted to ask questions, but found she could not discuss any religious subject except with Dart. After doing her best to answer the questions Dr. Ireland had raised, Dart would go round to tell him the particular difficulties. This interpretation of one to the other went on daily and afforded relief

on both sides.

There was now a marked change in Althea. She no longer showed that fierce spirit of rebellion against any idea of sin which had previously characterised her. For this change, Dart was profoundly thankful. Further she was not only beginning to pray for herself, for hitherto, she had restricted her prayers to the needs of others, but of her own accord she began going with Dart to church again. All the while, of course, Dart resorted regularly to the daily Eucharist in the Cathedral hard by, to pray for Althea's healing in soul as well as in body, "in faith, nothing wavering." And so, too, prayed her family, whilst certain of Dart's friends continued and amplified their intercessions (for Althea).

This stay in Edinburgh was one of their happiest experiences. Althea kept extremely well all the time, requiring neither medical attention nor medicine, nor was she on any kind of diet. Indeed, she was equal to excursions every day (and sometimes these lasted the whole day), but she was never overtired.

The church to which they went on Sundays for the Choral Eucharist and Evensong was old St. Paul's, in a poor part of the old Town down Carruber's Close, off the High Street. From the first, this historic church, the oldest place of worship in Edinburgh of the old disestablished Church of Scotland, made a strong appeal to Althea. She became sensible of its atmosphere, and she told Dart later that the Scottish Episcopal Church from the first made an appeal to her which the English Church, up to then, had never done. Her Royalist sympathies, too, found satisfaction in attending a Church identified with many Jacobites, and she appreciated the dignity of its devoutly conducted services.

The two friends spent their week-days in company with the shades of many historic characters - with Mary Queen of Scots, King Charles the Martyr, Montrose, "Bonnie Dundee," their greatest Scots hero, and Prince Charlie, in the historic parts of the old Town: and again with the ill-fated Queen at and Linlithgow. They walked through the lovely glen from Hawthornden to Roslin, and marvelled at the famous chapel: they voyaged to packed with ecclesiological interests: and made pilgrimage to Dunfermline, shrine of St. Margaret of Scotland and birthplace of King Charles the Martyr. Of modern things, the zoo provided Althea with the greatest attraction whilst the National, and to a lesser degree, the Scottish Antiquarian Museum fascinated her. Wet days were invariably discounted by a visit to the former, where Althea never tired of feasting on the models of ancient battle ships. Then they engaged a qualified Gaelic instructress to continue lessons ill-begun in England with an entirely unqualified teacher who knew no Gaelic grammar. Althea, with her genius for languages, from the first forged ahead of Dart who, entirely lacking in her friend's gift, was also lacking in application. Another diversion was a series of four broadcasts which Dart gave from Edinburgh on some historic Scottish characters, and for which Althea served helpfully as her visible audience.

At last early in March the day came when Dr. Ireland proposed that Althea should be anointed on St. Patrick's Day, March 17th. On being questioned Althea acknowledged that this was more than ever her desire, but she demurred at her eligibility as she still had not accepted the divinity of Christ; the Divine Healer. Then, since her disposition of mind had undergone such a change, Dart was moved to tell her this incident in the life of her favourite Saint, Bernard the Great of

Clairvaux. One day one of his monks came to him very sorrowfully, saying he could not communicate again as he no longer believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. St. Bernard replied: "My son, approach the Holy Mysteries in my faith, and your own will return to you." Dart said she dared similarly and in all humility to urge Althea to be anointed in her faith. Then Althea herself must believe that, notwithstanding her present unbelief, she would, through Dart's strong faith, and in God's good time, be healed. But she must believe that God could only work in her according to her nature - slowly, and as she co-operated with Him. She must never allow herself to be disheartened even if she had to wait a long time for healing. It was for her to persevere in prayer, in certain faith that it would ultimately be answered. Althea naturally took several days to think over the whole matter, and then she decided that she might receive Holy Unction.

When St. Patrick's Day came, Althea and Dart met at the door of the Cathedral a poor woman who was to be anointed with Althea. Her case had been given up by the doctors as incurable, but she desired to live for the sake of her little boy. Did she die, he would be left to the mercy of relatives who would not have cared what sort of life he led. To his mother, this prospect was an hourly torment, and so Althea and Dart were very glad ultimately to hear that her health had been completely restored.

The purpose of their visit to Edinburgh now being accomplished, Althea and Dart returned to England to resume their usual lives. Althea continued to be extremely well, and two months later they returned north, this time to the West Highlands. Their first Sunday, Dart's favourite festival of the Holy Trinity, was spent where there was a Scottish Episcopal Church. The night before, Althea diffidently asked Dart: "May I come with you to the Altar to-morrow morning?"

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From that day forward Althea steadily advanced and increased in her grasp of the Faith and in religious devotion so that henceforward the two friends were welded together in the most sacred of all bonds. The test of this came when Dart expressed her desire to revert to the practice of Sacramental Confession and Althea was left unaffected by the knowledge. The spiritual change she had undergone shewed itself in her face. Banished was the rather gloomy expression, the somewhat severe cast of countenance which suggested that she was unapproachable. Instead, there was a look of happiness illumined by a ready smile, and there grew upon her a singularly sweet expression which impressed everyone who met her, even once, with an unforgettable charm - the indication of an interior beauty of character.

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The pair had only been for a fortnight in the Highlands when Dart received a telegram saying her mother was dead. She had recovered from her first and last illness before the friends had gone north, so that the news came as a great shock. Immediately after the funeral, Althea and Dart returned to the Hotel they had so hurriedly left, as there were several matters concerning their prospective home they had to settle on the spot. But they had only been back for two days when news came of Mis Annie's sudden death - exactly a fortnight after

that of Dart's mother. Some ten days following the funeral, when Althea and Dart were preparing, for the third time, to return north, Althea had to take to bed with a temperature. The doctor pronounced it to be just a slight attack of influenza which would not hinder her travelling in a week's time. Then he said he would take the opportunity of examining her, and did so in unwonted silence. When he had finished he straightened himself: "I can only say that a miracle has happened since I last saw you. There is not the faintest indication of any growth now, it has completely disappeared."

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During some six weeks spent in the Highlands, the contractor for the house was interviewed for the first time and the house itself was pegged out. The friends had determined that it should offer no affront to the landscape. So they intended that it should be built on native lines adapted to modern needs that they might demonstrate how unnecessary it was to import any alien and ugly material or fashions to procure such requirements. Whilst Althea, who had always loved drawing plans of houses, was left to work out one of one storey, Dart concerned herself more with questions of material and methods of construction and of thatching, a sympathetic architect co-operating with both.

On their necessary return to England, whilst Dart resumed her wonted political activities, Althea occasionally worked on some of her large collection of sketches. On the spot she made no more than what she called "rough notes" for her prospective pictures in water colour. She had a wonderfully retentive and accurate memory of the actual scenes, and even years afterwards, could accurately re-create the originals, with all the finish of miniature work, merely from these outlines, just broadly filled in with colour-wash, and jotted notes giving essential details of lighting, etc. She was a mistress of pure glowing colour, and delicate opal effects in sky, sea and mountain specially appealed to her.

There was also much joint business to be considered: the particular make of light car to be bought: and furniture and furnishings to supplement what they already had. Days in town were spent together at Ideal Home Exhibitions and in furniture shops, where the complementary nature of their abilities again witnessed to the ideal partnership in practical matters as in everything else.

Dart had left her mother's house, of which she had become the only occupant and Althea and she had to return to the Highlands once again to see to the storage of the furniture that had been sent up from both their homes to join that already stored in an obligingly empty house five miles from their own site. On the return journey, they stayed near Glasgow with friends whom they were able to entertain by taking them out on the trial runs of the four cars from which they made their choice, subsequently placing an order for one early in the next year, the friends began taking driving lessons, Dart now living with Althea and her sisters until they should leave finally for their own home.

The driving lessons proved a complete reversal of what might have been expected. Initially Dart was not attracted by the prospect, but Althea, who was as remote from interest in things mechanical as anyone could well be, anticipated the lessons rather pleasurably. In these circumstances, it was perhaps less surprising than it otherwise would have been that Althea proved by far the apter pupil. On the other hand,

Dart's tendency to charge into all the traffic they passed, would have constituted a danger to life and cars alike but for the watchful eye and the ready hand on the wheel of the instructor. Indeed it was a long time before she came to feel really at home when driving.

In April 1927 public and private farewells having been taken, Althea and Dart left permanently, as they supposed, for Scotland. They travelled in adjacent sleeping berths - Althea's one and only indulgence, if in her case such it could be called when it spared her from overstrain. It was one of the many simple enjoyments in which from first to last she found her greatest pleasure. The compactness of the "little room," and its ingenious fittings, appealed to her neat and tidy mind. Immunity from invasion from one end of the journey to the other, too, was a source of great satisfaction. For on day time journeys in non-smoking compartments she and Dart had so often been subjected to the persistent invasions of smoking friends whose fumes they both abhorred. This aversion had resulted in both becoming Founder Members of the National Society of Non-Smokers, which came into being to safeguard the rights of this minority of the community, and not as an anti-smoking society. For neither had any idea of retaliating on smokers by reciprocity in a denial of personal rights. So when the Society embarked on what they considered a health-faddist campaign foreign to its original aims, they both resigned membership in protest.

There was rarely a railway journey, however, when remonstrance with intruding smokers was not necessary. These so raised Dart's fiery temper that, realising this was not the best frame of mind in which to tackle these offenders she generally left it to Althea who was never lacking in moral courage where principles were concerned. Indeed, she was entirely fearless, and it came as a great surprise to those who did not know her to find that so gentle and retiring a personality never hesitated either in attack or defence where she felt either was demanded. Her passages of arms were all the more effective because of the quiet dignity with which they were invariably sustained. They, carefully prepared beforehand, invariably issued in the defeat of her opponent. . . . A man entered the compartment in which Althea and Dart were alone, and after seating himself, asked "Do you ladies object to my smoking?" Althea at once turned the tables with another question: "Is this a smoking carriage?" "Well, no, it isn't, but I thought perhaps you might not mind." "How would you feel if we got into a smoking compartment and asked the smokers if they would mind stopping smoking?" Embarrassed silence. Althea continued coldly. "Non-smokers have very few carriages provided for them. Even if we permitted smoking, others might get in later who might well object to the atmosphere." "I never thought of that." Pursuing her prey relentlessly, Althea continued: "In any case, it is not within the competence of any passenger to sanction a breach of the by-law against smoking." Then, indicating the notice, "You will see there the fine to which it renders you liable"

On other occasions when the friends joined a train somewhere other than at the termini, they frequently found smokers already installed in non-smoking carriages into which they sought entry. Invariably in these cases they brought the guard or the stationmaster suitably to deal with the offenders. Dart, always proud of her association with Althea, was never prouder of it than in her unfailing exercise of moral courage - that rarest of virtues. In the course of their unflagging endeavours to secure justice for non-smokers, Dart this year attended the annual meeting of the shareholders of the L.M.S. Ry. She was the only woman

present, and her complaint, with specific instances, of the little consideration shown to non-smokers was sympathetically received both by the meeting and the Chairman, who promised satisfaction

The friends were met in Glasgow by their own car. But before driving up to their home-to-be, they, staying with friends, had further lessons which, however, in view of eventualities, could scarcely be called "finishing." Dart certainly embarked on this, their first car journey alone, secretly in fear and trembling, as their roads were narrow and winding. But they, driving in turns, went slowly and broke the first half of the journey twice. On the second day, however, they had their first mishap. Althea, missing a hidden turning, drove into and knocked down a wooden post, deflecting, as they discovered that evening, the steering gear. For the rest of the journey Dart drove, and found the greatest difficulty in preventing the car from going into the ditch, only subsequently discovering the reason.