

'believe me, always yours affectionately' and he began to use pet names for Susan such as 'puss', a family nickname, and Douglas, her middle name, but he was more likely to send his 'blessing' or tell her to 'be a good girl' than to express his emotions. It was only in September 1850, after he failed to write for almost three weeks, that he assured Susan that the longer he was away the fonder he became and the more frequently he thought of her.¹⁶ Even as the time of their marriage drew closer Donald held back from a written declaration of his love. His letters from Ahuriri between November 1850 and May 1851 followed some rather unpleasant episodes with Mrs Strang and he retreated into cold and aloof language. He frequently signed himself 'yours sincerely', scarcely reassuring to Susan whose low spirits and depression during this time are obvious.

Donald considered himself 'naturally of a reserved disposition on any subject which engages my thoughts and attention' and continued to use the language of affection, friendship and duty even after he was married.¹⁷ Leaving Susan in Wellington while he visited Ahuriri, he wrote, 'I cannot help feeling the extreme affection you evince towards me, and I sincerely trust that I shall ever prove equally dutiful to you however cold I may at times appear.' Although the fortnight they had spent honeymooning was the 'happiest' he had known since leaving Scotland this was not because he had found true love but because he now 'had a bosom friend and should the cold calculating envious world desert me she at least would ever prove a faithful affectionate and true friend. . .'.¹⁸ On the same day he confided to his diary that the past month had embraced

a very important epoch in my lifetime, the most important circumstance being that I have got married and enjoyed 5 weeks of extreme happiness with a wife that promises to be kind faithful and affectionate indeed she is all that I could desire and I wish that heavens blessing may attend us both, other circumstances fall into obscurity as far as my private relations go compared to that of having united myself to a young lady I have long at least ever since I knew her loved and esteemed and I trust will always continue to value as the dearest treasure I have on earth, poor thing she cried bitterly when I parted with her but duty must be attended to and its stern demands complied with to the sacrifice of all other feelings.¹⁹

This private admission of love perhaps unleashed his pen for within a few days he was writing to Susan:

my heart is now securely fixed on an object it loves. . . . strange to say I read over all I see about love marriage etc with greater interest than I did before I became wedded myself for there is a sort of enchantment about the feeling that renders me more cheerful than during our courtship days and happier probably . . . than I have ever been at any period of my life. . . .

He now found he thought constantly of Susan 'at all hours morning