

walk 'the night you say "you were taken"'. Her teasing view on the latter was that 'moonlight walks are very dangerous and I would advise young ladies to beware of them'.³³

Except for the temporary acrimonious relations between Mrs Strang and McLean, the Strangs approved of Donald. This approval was clearly desirable but probably not essential to his pursuing his suit. He did not regard his own actions as under the Strangs' authority, although their blessing on the marriage was important to him and he was a firm believer in the fifth commandment when applied to others. He took pains, both before and after their marriage, to remind Susan of her obligations to her parents. In the early days of their courtship, when Susan was being plagued by questions from those curious to find out about her romance, McLean told her to reject

all approaches of familiarity with your feelings except what is sanctioned by your Father and Mother whose kind parental care is ever alive to the interest and happiness of their dutiful and affectionate child.³⁴

After their marriage he urged Susan not to let it interfere or lessen her respect and esteem for her parents, a respect 'due to their age and experience independent of being your affectionate parents'.³⁵ None of this was without self-consideration. McLean believed that the duty, respect and kindness shown towards parents was of a similar order to that which a wife should show to her husband. He wrote to Susan, 'if you are dutiful and kind to your mother I am sure you will always prove equally so to your husband of whose fond attachment you have the most convincing proofs'.³⁶ The analogy between the parent-child and husband-wife relationship could scarcely be more direct.

Indeed throughout the correspondence it is possible to discern Donald establishing his concerns and wishes as paramount. The eight year age gap between them gave him an advantage he was not averse to using. At the same time if Susan behaved in what he regarded as a childish manner he did not hesitate to remind her of her own mature years, describing her conduct on one occasion as 'ridiculous nonsense ... unbecoming at your age'.³⁷ Other advantages stemmed from Donald's work and his ability to withdraw from Susan. His absences, always longer than planned, caused her first to be anxious and then to become sadly resigned. She was acutely conscious of the unimportance of her daily round of activities compared to Donald's work. She often expressed the fear that her letters would be uninteresting, 'but I have got nothing more to tell which you would wish to hear'. Her time was spent doing 'much the same as when you were here, my occupations