

him . . .'. Mrs Wilson was the arbiter of good taste and proper form and Donald was mortified to discover that Susan had neglected to write to his 'old mother' first, as etiquette apparently demanded. It was surely the example of Mrs Wilson that led Donald to write to Susan that he trusted

that no imprudent acts or conduct of yours will cause [ours] to be an unhappy life . . . nothing delights me more than to see a good and an amiable wife who anticipates her husbands wishes, and calmly undergoes every trial to make him happy.⁵²

Renewed friendship with Mrs Wilson also led Donald to find fault with Susan's friends. He told her in no uncertain terms that he had often felt her inclinations lead her 'to associate more intimately with persons of a doubtful position in society than with those of a more genuine and respectable description, and the sooner you change your sentiments on this subject the better'.⁵³ Susan had to learn that she was married to a man of substance whose position she had to maintain.

Susan however was high-spirited, did not take kindly to being told what to do and reacted strongly to unjust criticism. There is a hint of this in a semi-jocular remark Donald passed to her mother after their marriage. Referring to Susan he wrote, 'she is such a frolicsome wayward lassie that she even already begins to assert greater independence than expected at least for the next six months to come, but I shall just let her have her fling and give her time to sober down by degrees'.⁵⁴ There are frequent references to Susan's 'rebelliousness', her 'disobedience' and Donald's 'indulgence' in both her own and his letters. One such incident clearly gave Donald an awful shock and prompted this self-pitying outburst from him in May 1852:

I often think my pussy would never have displayed some fretful little changes of temper had she placed more confidence in God and I sincerely trust that my own pet will never even in a trifling manner give her devoted husband any cause however slight to be displeased with her, only imagine how painful it is to be absent from you, and how often I must suffer cold, wet, and various other hardships and self denial for my pussys sake remember that you are everything to me and that I cannot help feeling any appearance of ungratitude on your part not my pet that I accuse you of such but that I think it just as well as the thought has struck me to warn you that I expect to be loved with equal devotion and self denial as I experience on your account, and never to leave me as you did on that foolish night the remembrance of which and some of the circumstances connected with it still rush through my heart in a painful manner.⁵⁵

In linking Susan's disobedience or waywardness towards him with her lack of confidence in God, Donald was setting up an order of authority for their marriage. If Susan's heart was right with the