

principally consist in sewing and attending to some of the household duties'.³⁸ Donald, on the other hand, enjoyed his work. The outdoor life, the long discussions with the Maori tribes from whom he was buying land and the sense of participating in significant events, gave him immense gratification. He might refer to 'stern duty' keeping him from Susan but he was much happier when out of Wellington and engaged on 'real' work. A major difference between them during their engagement was that Donald had a life independent of Susan whereas Susan could no longer envision life without Donald. She was simply waiting to become a married woman. Suspended between the states of girlhood and womanhood she was both dependent and vulnerable.

As their courtship progressed through letters Donald and Susan had the opportunity to spell out their expectations of each other and of the future. Susan's hopes were for happiness and a long life together. Donald however had more precise ideas about the direction their relationship should take. He urged Susan to tell him all about her 'amusements books employments thoughts wonderings and little changes or disappointments', adding that 'these should be all candid communications in as much as they are now of more concern to me than at any previous time'. She was to unfold her feelings 'without formality or restraint' and he doubtless felt that he was doing the same.³⁹ More than this, however, Donald tried to encourage habits in Susan which would ensure their future happiness and harmony. History and religion were widely regarded as suitable avocations for young women in the nineteenth century and Donald urged Susan to read the popular multi-volume histories of the time—Charles Rollin's *Ancient History of the Egyptians*, Archibald Alison's *History of Europe* and William Robertson's *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V*. Sometimes he teased her about this reading, doubting whether history would 'always be of sufficient interest to keep you amused', but more often he spelled out the virtue of such a pastime:

My great anxiety is that you should lay in a good store of religious and historical knowledge as it will be of infinite advantage and great pleasure to both of us through life. I regard external accomplishments as altogether subordinate to the careful improvement of the mind which should be nourished with as much system and regularity as we provide wholesome food for our bodily sustenance. What is more delightful than to read and converse over what we read by a nice clear winter fireside when we are relieved from the cares of the day enjoying that agreeable evening relaxation that most persons feel when the duties of the day have been ended.⁴⁰

He was most anxious that Susan pursue her historical and religious interests 'not in a trifling putting off way but in sincere reality