

noon and night'. By 1852 he was sending love that he described as 'ever as constant and durable as the sun that shines'.²⁰

If Donald's emotions were liberated by marriage, Susan's were intensified. She wrote that she could 'scarcely yet believe that it is reality that nothing but death can part us, it seems to be too much happiness for me'.²¹ Every day she felt 'more and more the comfort and blessing of being married to one who loves me as you do'; each day seemed 'to bind us more closely together'; she had 'not a single wish or hope that is not connected with my husband'.²² Nor did either of them shrink from expressions of physical love, at least after their marriage. Susan finished one letter 'I send you a thousand kisses'; Donald responded with 'hundreds of fond and affectionate kisses'.²³ Perhaps even more revealingly Susan wrote in August 1852:

I hope I shall dream again as I did the other night that my darling had come home I dreamt that I was sitting with my arms round your neck and kissing you I felt so happy and was quite disappointed when I woke and found it was but a dream.²⁴

There were however considerations other than love in the choice of a marriage partner and these do seem to have played a part in bringing Donald and Susan together. Their common Scottish background was of some significance. In one of his earliest surviving letters to Robert Strang, McLean enclosed a sprig of mountain heather sent to him from Scotland 'for presentation to Susan although in itself it is not worthy of her acceptance it is nevertheless emblematical of the country to which we both belong'. Strang replied that the memento was 'highly prized—it brought back recollections of earlier days pleasure to all of us and is now I believe in [the] charge of Susan who appears to have a peculiar liking for it'. There are other references to Mrs Strang preparing haggis for McLean's visits and Donald exhorted Susan to 'become perfect in playing the "Dalhousie March" and never so many Scotch marches and tunes besides'. In writing to his family about his marriage Donald noted that Susan came from Glasgow and relatives in Scotland exchanged visits.²⁵

Related to a common ethnicity was a shared religious faith. The Strangs belonged to the Free Church of Scotland and attended St Andrew's regularly. McLean also belonged to the Free Church but he tended to be eclectic in his churchgoing, recording in his diary attendance at the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches as well as the 'Scotch kirk'. Perhaps more important than church attendances was the fact that both Donald and Susan were religious, or, by today's standards, religiose. Donald especially was given to