

Almighty, it would follow that she would treat her husband properly. The converse also operated—if Susan treated him badly, her heart and soul could not be straight with her Maker.

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Donald and Susan McLean spent six of the fourteen months of their short marriage apart. Susan could not reconcile herself to these separations, nor to the way in which proposed short trips away from Wellington stretched on for week after week. Not long after her mother's death she and Donald moved out of their own cottage and into Dalmuir Hill with Robert Strang. He proved to be of little comfort and less company to Susan in Donald's absences. Wrapped up in his own grief, he had little to talk about and night after night Susan sat with him while he remained silent or dropped off to sleep. Jessie McKenzie, the McLeans' servant, was closer to Susan than her father. In the end Susan took to inviting other young women, doubtless some of the friends Donald frowned on, to stay with her and keep her spirits up.

This was necessary because in February 1852 Susan once again became pregnant. The course of the pregnancy did not run smoothly. In May, when Donald was away at Rangitikei, she suffered acute pains and Jessie sent for her mother, who had already agreed to help at the delivery and through the period immediately after the baby was born.⁵⁶ From late June Susan's health was very up and down and by early August she became convinced that the baby would be born much sooner than expected.⁵⁷ Donald was absent at New Plymouth, winding up his affairs in Taranaki, and Susan's growing conviction that he would not be back in time for the birth of her child made her anxious and morbid. She missed her mother terribly and begged Donald to return to Wellington as soon as possible, using the veiled threat that 'no woman can feel certain of recovering and if anything were to happen while you are away how dreadfully you my darling husband would feel it'.⁵⁸ A few days after writing this she went for a walk on the beach and was taken with pains on the way home; the following night the pains returned and her father sent for Dr Featherston immediately. Featherston announced that the baby would probably be born within a fortnight and ordered Susan to stay at home and rest. Donald finally began to make plans to return to Wellington.⁵⁹

Susan's pains of mid-August were false labour pains. Her husband arrived back in Wellington early in September and was at home when the baby, a boy called Douglas, was born on 7 November. Susan died the same day. Sitting in the house with his