

Chapter 2

Cautions and Counsels

A Child Bride—[The age of this girl at the time of her marriage is not known.] Poor girl! She married when but a mere child, needing her mother's care. It was an unhappy event. She was a young child. Her health was poor and her husband was severe and arbitrary. This child was too young for a companion. He could not respect her as such. She was but a child. He ruled her like a tyrant. Already they are parted, she hating him most thoroughly and he without love for her.—Ms 4, 1873.

Long Engagements Not Wise—I am sorry that you have entangled yourself in any courtship with Nellie A. In the first place, your anxiety upon this question is premature. Sound judgment and discretion will bid you wait for one or two years. But for you to select one to be in your mind and affections that length of time would not be prudent

for you or just to the one to whom you pay your address.

Premature Affections—I speak what I know in this matter, that the very best course for you and for Nellie is to give this matter up entirely, for no good can come of it. In continuing your attentions to her, you will be unfitting yourself for your office duties and placing obstructions in your way for a thorough education and for the habits of body and mind to become settled. Even to bind your affections prematurely is doing yourself and any young lady injustice....

I have been shown the evil of these early attachments, especially when a young man is away from the home roof and must select his companion without the discriminating eye of his mother. It is not safe for you to trust to your own judgment. Early anxiety upon the subject of courtship and marriage will divert your mind from your work and studies, and will produce in you and the one whom you flatter with your attentions a demoralizing influence. There will be in you both a vain

forwardness in manners, and infatuation will seize you both, and you will be so completely blinded in regard to your influence and example that you will, if you continue in the course you have entered upon, expose yourselves to criticism and demand that censure should be passed upon your course.

This courtship and marriage is the most difficult to manage, because the mind becomes so bewildered and enchanted that duty to God and everything else becomes tame and uninteresting, and calm and mature thought is the last thing to be exercised in this matter of the gravest importance. Dear youth, I speak to you as one who knows. Wait till you have some just knowledge of yourself and of the world, of the bearing and character of young women, before you let the subject of marriage possess your thoughts.

After the Honeymoon—I could cite you many who are now mourning over their extreme folly and madness in their marriage, when mourning will avail them nothing. They find themselves exposed to temptations they never dreamed of; they find

traits of character in the object of their choice above which they cannot elevate them, and therefore they accept the inevitable and come to their level. Nellie A will never elevate you. She has not in her the hidden powers which, developed, would make a woman of judgment and ability to stand by your side, to help you in the battles of life. She lacks force of character. She has not depth of thought and compass of mind that will be a help to you. You see the surface and it is all there is. In a little while, should you marry, the charm would be broken. The novelty of the married life having ceased, you will see things in their real light, and find out you have made a sad mistake.

Need of Mature Judgment—Maturity of judgment will give you much better discernment and power of discrimination to know the truth. Your character needs forming, your judgment needs strength before you entertain the thought of marriage. You are not now prepared to judge of another, and do not be betrayed into committing a grievous indiscretion, if not crime, for which the bitter regrets and tears of afterlife will bring no

relief. The child, the mere undisciplined immature schoolgirl, the Miss, dependent upon the discretion of parents and guardians, has no reason to listen to anything like courtship or marriage. She should decline all special attentions which would have the least likelihood to lead to any such results, and devote herself intently to making herself as perfect a woman as possible, that her life may be useful, and learn a trade that she will have employment and be independent.

Intellectual Basis of True Love—Love is a sentiment so sacred that but few know what it is. It is a term used but not understood. The warm glow of impulse, the fascination of one young person for another, is not love; it does not deserve the name. True love has an intellectual basis, a deep, thorough knowledge of the object loved. But this catching up with objects and bestowing on them the thoughts and affections, is without reason, without judgment, and is excessive, temporary, and sensual.

Remember that impulsive love is perfectly

blind. It will as soon be placed on unworthy objects as worthy. Command such love to stand still and cool. Give place to genuine thought and deep, earnest reflection. Is this object of your affection, in the scale of intelligence and moral excellence, in deportment and cultivated manners, such that you will feel a pride in presenting her to your father's family, to acknowledge her in all society as the object of your choice, one whose society, conversational powers, and manners will interest and satisfy your most grand expectations? Will Nellie fill this bill? I answer decidedly, No, she will not.

Importance of Family Backgrounds—Let time teach you discretion, and what the genuine claims of love are, before it is allowed to step one inch further. Ruin, fearful ruin, is before you in this life and the next, if you pursue the course you have been following. Look to the family history. Two families are to be brought into close and sacred connection. Perfection in all these relations is not, of course, to be expected, but you would make a most cruel move to marry a girl whose ancestry

and relatives would degrade and mortify you, or tempt you to slight and ignore them.

Counsel From Parents and Close Friends—It is safe to make haste slowly in these matters. Give yourself sufficient time for observation on every point, and then do not trust to your own judgment, but let the mother who loves you, and your father, and confidential friends, make critical observation of the one you feel inclined to favor. Trust not to your own judgment, and marry no one whom you feel will not be an honor to your father and mother, [but] one who has intelligence and moral worth. The girl who gives over her affections to a man, and invites his attention by her advances, hanging around where she will be noticed of him unless he shall appear rude, is not the girl you want to associate with. Her conversation is cheap and frequently without depth.

No Marriage Preferable to a Mismatch—Nellie A will not be as much prepared by cultivated manners and useful knowledge to marry at twenty-five as some girls would be at eighteen. But men

generally of your age have a very limited knowledge of character, and no just idea of how foolish a man can make himself by fancying a young girl who is not fit for him in any sense. It will be far better not to marry at all than to be unfortunately married, but seek counsel of God in all these things. Be so calm, so submissive to the will of God, that you will not be in a fever of excitement and unqualified for His service by your attachments.—Letter 59, 1880.

Need of Similar Temperaments—I learned that you thought of marrying a sister named Anna Hale. This aroused me to hasten out the things which I had seen. Your organization is not of that refined order that you can make a woman of her fine, sensitive nature happy. It is not at all in God's order that such temperaments as hers and yours should unite. You possess a large proportion of the animal. You have strong animal passions which have not been controlled as they should have been. The more noble, elevated powers of the mind have been servant to the lower, or baser, passions. You have failed to be sanctified through the truth which

you profess, have failed to be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Anna Hale is not a person who can endure the roughs of life. She is a frail flower and would soon droop and die if exposed to storm and neglect. You have not in your previous marriage understood the wants of a woman. You have not appreciated her delicate organism. You failed, greatly failed, with your first wife. She possessed a powerful constitution which can scarcely be equaled for power of endurance, but she presumed too much. Your anxiety to acquire led you both to overtax yourselves and be swallowed up in the cares of this life, and to neglect present happiness and comfort, looking ahead to a time when you should have more of this world's goods, and then you could afford to look after the comforts of life.

You have made a sad mistake—The life of your wife was sacrificed. She might have lived. She ought to have lived. But you knew so little of woman's organism that you failed to have care, and

neglected the preparation you should have made for her comfort. To a very great degree you possess the temperament of your father.

When you seek a wife, go not among the delicate and refined, where the intellectual predominates. Select you a wife among that class more in accordance with your organization. You cannot make a person of refined spiritual temperament happy.—Letter 21, 1868.

Faithfulness in the Parental Home—It is by faithfulness to duty in the parental home that the young are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let them here practice self-denial and manifest kindness, courtesy, and Christian sympathy. Thus love will be kept warm in the heart, and he who goes out from such a household to stand at the head of a family of his own will know how to promote the happiness of her whom he has chosen as a companion for life. Marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be only its beginning.—Patriarchs and Prophets, 176.

I beg of you, yes, I warn you in the name of my Master, do not enter the marriage relation and take upon yourself the responsibilities and obligation of the marriage vows until you are changed in heart and life. When you can make your own home happy, be a blessing to your father and mother, your brothers and sister, then you can understand the duties involved in the marriage relation.—Ms 2, 1871.