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“TO POUR FORTH FROM
MY OWN EXPERIENCE”:¹
TWO VERSIONS OF
ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

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THE present feminist movement has brought about a renewed interest in and reappraisal of major women figures in history. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) is best known as the founder of the women's rights movement of nineteenth century America, since she and Lucretia Mott organized the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. Stanton is also typically associated in people's minds with Susan B. Anthony, due to their lifelong friendship and commitment to the cause of woman suffrage. An examination of Stanton's correspondence and writings by recent scholars reveals a multi-faceted person, actively involved in many issues that continue to interest scholars and confront women today—religion, politics, divorce, child-rearing, and heredity. An indication of this renewed interest in Stanton is the publication last year of Ellen DuBois' *Elizabeth Cady Stanton/Susan B. Anthony; Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*. DuBois comments that “although we know Stanton and Anthony better

¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton (ECS hereafter) to Susan B. Anthony, July 4, 1858. All letters cited are from the Theodore Stanton Collection, Douglass Library, Rutgers University unless otherwise noted, and refer to typed copies.

than we know most women in American history, we do not understand them as well as we should."²

In 1980 Lois Banner³ wrote the first major biography of Stanton to appear since Alma Lutz's *Created Equal*⁴ in 1940; in her work she used a variety of primary sources including those located in the Mabel Smith Douglass Library at Douglass College, Rutgers University. Before Banner's publication it was not widely known that a collection of Elizabeth Cady Stanton papers were housed at the library as part of the Theodore Stanton Collection; In fact, until five years ago these materials were either not known about or not considered valuable enough to warrant special attention. An inventory of the entire Theodore Stanton Collection compiled by Oral Coad in the 1950's briefly mentions the "Elizabeth Cady Stanton Correspondence":

This portion consists of a book of typed copies of letters, with footnotes identifying people mentioned, etc. Obviously prepared for publication. Much of this material was included in *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, vol. II, 1922.⁵

Actually, a significant number of the Douglass letters never appeared in the 1922 volume, and, furthermore, many of those that did were substantially altered.

Although Elizabeth Cady Stanton lived in Tenafly, New Jersey from 1868 to 1887, and although she writes fondly of the "blue hills of New Jersey,"⁶ it is only by coincidence that a collection of her papers now exists in this state.⁷ Theodore Stanton (1851-1925), the son of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, lived most of his life in France, and his work as a journalist and as an agent for U.S. publishers there brought him into contact with many leading authors of his day. His personal library contained over 5,000 books, some journals and manuscripts; it was enticing to libraries,

² Ellen DuBois, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton/Susan B. Anthony; Correspondence, Writings, Speeches* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. xiii.

³ Lois Banner, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: A Radical for Woman's Rights* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980).

⁴ Alma Lutz, *Created Equal* (New York: John Day Company, 1940).

⁵ Oral S. Coad, compiler, "Report on the Contents of the Theodore Stanton Collection, New Jersey College for Women," c. 1950. Unpublished typed report, 33pp.

⁶ ECS to Susan B. Anthony, February 1, 1877.

⁷ Other major collections of Elizabeth Cady Stanton materials are located at the Library of Congress and Vassar College.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

*Mabel Smith Douglass Library
Rutgers University*

although he rarely mentioned that materials written by or relating to his mother were contained within it.

Theodore Stanton initially offered his library to his alma mater, Cornell University, and after some consideration Cornell rejected his donation, probably because he wished to accompany it as its curator.⁸ Stanton's friend, Dr. Lane Cooper—a Rutgers alumnus and professor at Cornell—mentioned Rutgers College as a possible location for his collection. After some correspondence with George Osborn, Rutgers Librarian, it was agreed that Rutgers would accept Stanton's collection, make him curator, and pay for his lodging while he stayed in New Brunswick.⁹ But relations between Stanton and Rutgers never went smoothly; consequently, only eight months after his arrival in New Brunswick, Osborn terminated their agreement.

The newly-established New Jersey College for Women (now, of course, Douglass College) had from its inception interested Theodore Stanton, so in 1922 he offered his collection, "to be known as the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Memorial Collection,"¹⁰ to this institution. His offer was again initially accepted and then rejected as his demands (lodging, transportation costs of his books, some in Paris) became known. Meanwhile the collection continued to occupy valuable space in the overcrowded Rutgers library.

On March 1, 1925, Theodore Stanton died suddenly in the Rutgers infirmary, and his sister, Harriot Stanton Blatch, made arrangements for the collection to go to the New Jersey College for Women. At this time, she also examined her brother's collection, and, according to her letters to Osborn, removed, among other things, her mother's diaries. Since it is now thought¹¹ that Harriot Stanton Blatch may have destroyed many of her mother's letters and diaries, it is unfortunate that Rutgers librarians in their anxiousness to dispose of the collection, did not have a better knowledge of its contents. It is amazing that apparently none

⁸ For Cornell's dealings with Theodore Stanton, see Gould P. Colman, "Women's Rights and Centralization of Libraries: A Note Concerning Collection Development," *Journal of Library History* 14 (1): 73-6, Winter 1979.

⁹ George Osborn Correspondence, Rutgers University Archives, Alexander Library.

¹⁰ Board of Managers, New Jersey College for Women. Minutes of November 9, 1924.

¹¹ This view is espoused by Elisabeth Griffith, a doctoral candidate at American University, and is supported in a letter from Theodore Stanton to George Osborn, May 3, [1924?]: "Mrs. Blatch will come on later when I take up our mother's papers. Many of these lack a certain historical value and we wish to consult together about some of them,—what should be preserved and what not."

of the colleges involved—Cornell, Rutgers, the New Jersey College for Women—were aware that the real value of the collection would not be found in Theodore Stanton's collection of books, but in his mother's materials.

The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Collection at the Douglass Library contains typed carbon-copies of 550 letters, of which about two-thirds were written by Stanton and the remaining received by her. Since the hand-writings of both Harriot and Theodore are evident on some copies, it seems probable (as Oral Coad suggested) that these copies were to serve as a prototype for the published text of their mother's letters. Within this collection are also five manuscripts, five original handwritten letters from Stanton, and twelve received by her (including four from the noted abolitionist, Wendell Phillips). In addition, this collection has several books from her library that sometimes contain notes. There are many pamphlets relating to woman suffrage (probably assembled by her son) that include several of her published speeches. A few photographs and one painting of Stanton supplement this collection.

Perhaps the most unique part of the collection is the five manuscripts which, as far as can be determined, have never been published. Two of these—"Home Life"¹² and "Marriage and Divorce"—are Stanton's handwritten copies of two of her most popular speeches¹³ that she delivered while employed by the Lyceum Bureau from 1869 to 1881 for eight months of each year. The women's rights advocate who in "Marriage and Divorce"¹⁴ writes that "In all history sacred and profane woman has never been recognized as an equal party to the [marriage] contract" is a familiar one. But the Douglass "Home Life" manuscript reveals that her interests in women's rights go beyond political issues:

Bear in mind that diseases are not of supernatural origin, that they are not sent as curses on mankind, but that they result from our disobedience of sanitary law. One of the laws, which few regard, is effective drainage. This point cannot be too strongly emphasized, as most fevers can be traced to bad sewerage.

¹² The "Home Life" manuscript is entirely different from that published recently under the same title in DuBois, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton/Susan B. Anthony*, pp. 131-38.

¹³ Lutz, p. 196.

¹⁴ "Marriage and Divorce" was probably Stanton's first draft of what became her article, "The Need for Liberal Divorce Laws," *North American Review* 139:234-45, which was written in reply to Judge Noah Davis' anti-divorce article, "Marriage and Divorce," *North American Review* 139:30-41, 1884.

The third manuscript, which is untitled, concerns Stanton's view of the controversial and highly publicized Burch divorce case of 1860.¹⁵ She defends Mary Burch, who was depicted by the press as a self-confessed adulterer with a tyrannical husband:

Do you expect women who live on excitement and flattery to be happy in the solitude of the home, with only one silent man to look at? . . . So long as woman is allowed but one outlet for the whole force and intensity of her being do not wonder that ever and anon the fashionable world is startled with the announcement of some Platonic friendship springing up between the wife of some marble statue, some indifferent husband, and a very agreeable attentive admirer of the fair sex in general.

Throughout her life Stanton was an avid reader and her papers are filled with references from popular fiction, classical mythology, philosophy, and social and political theories. One manuscript in the collection—"Heredity"—is a summary of Theodule Ribot's work, *Heredity*¹⁶ and Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius*.¹⁷ Both of these texts were in Theodore Stanton's personal library and, according to his notes, were read by him in mid-1886 at Jacquenassay, France. The following spring Elizabeth Cady Stanton spent six months there visiting her son and his family, and probably read Ribot and Galton.

In the last manuscript, "Positivists in London," (dated 1888) Stanton discusses her thoughts on the life of Auguste Comte and her encounters with some of the proponents of Positivism in London. This manuscript illustrates the problem that exists with much of the published material produced by her children, Harriot and Theodore. Parts of this manuscript are contained word-for-word as a diary entry in their two-volume set, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton; As Revealed in Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, which was published in 1922. Omitting slight grammatical changes, some of the diary passage is identical to the original manuscript. However, the last part of the Stanton and Blatch version—a drastic condensation of the original—reads:

¹⁵ I am grateful to Alice Albano, Douglass student, who provided me with the background material on the Burch case and worked extensively on the transcription of all the Stanton manuscripts.

¹⁶ Theodule Ribot, *Heredity: A Psychological Study of Its Phenomena, Laws, Causes, and Consequences* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884).

¹⁷ Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences*, rev. ed. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1884).

But in spite of poverty and an inharmonious wife on the one hand, and with the ridicule and violent opposition of philosophers, metaphysicians and theologians on the other, Comte made a noble fight, and though often wounded was never vanquished. His deep attachment for Clotilde de Vaux may have called forth mockery from frivolous contemporaries, but posterity will read in it a serious lesson, and will perceive that this modern Beatrice played a considerable part in the evolution of Positive Philosophy.¹⁸

The same section of the Douglass manuscript says:

But in spite of poverty, and an inharmonious wife on one hand, with the ridicule and the bitter opposition of philosophers, metaphysicians and theologians, on the other, he made a noble fight and though often wounded was never vanquished. Comte was initiated [sic] into married life at the early age of twenty seven, and found the relation so intolerable that in due time he worked his way out of it. These domestic troubles, with the elaboration of his great conceptions of all the sciences, and their systematic co-ordination amid the varied vexations of his critics, proved too much for Comtes' nervous organization and he suddenly became insane. However the cerebral attack passed off in a few months and he was again at work.

Later in life this great soul found a harbor of rest in the love and friendship of Madame Clotilde de Vaux. Speaking of this relation, George Henry Lewes one of his most appreciative biographers, says, "marriage being impossible to them owing to unfortunate ties on both sides, a passionate friendship was their only consolation."

The manuscript continues to describe this relationship and the effect of Clotilde de Vaux's death on Comte, and then concludes:

. . . His published eulogies and invocations may call forth mockery from frivolous contemporaries—intense convictions and disinterested passions easily lending themselves to ridicule—but posterity will read in them a grave lesson, and will see that this mod-

¹⁸ Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, editors, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in Her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), vol. 2, p. 245. All later references to this work will be noted as "Stanton and Blatch."

ern Beatrice played a considerable part in the evolution of the Religion of Humanity.

It is not unusual for researchers to find that posthumous editions of a person's letters and diaries often tell more about their editors than their authors. In the previous example, perhaps reasons of economy rather than personal bias dictated a shortened version. Nonetheless, as a comparison of the Douglass-owned materials with the published ones demonstrates, this is not always the case.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton lived a long life, during which she publicly expressed very controversial views. As a young woman, she disturbed her husband (and caused his defection from the 1848 convention) by introducing a woman suffrage resolution; fifty years later, she certainly had lost none of her zealotry for controversial issues when she published the first volume of the *Woman's Bible*.¹⁹ This text, which analyzed Biblical passages for their degradation of women and espoused the idea of a God composed of masculine and feminine elements, resulted in a storm of protest and even her censure by the younger, more conservative members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. It is clear that her editor-children—themselves, of her seven children, the most committed to the woman's rights cause²⁰—felt even twenty years after her death that some of her views were better left unsaid.

Throughout her lifetime, Stanton's active involvement, in first the abolition of slavery, and then the women's rights movement—as both a participant and as a theoretician—perhaps accounts for the lack of organization she had regarding her own papers. Her friend, Theodore Tilton, wrote in 1868 that “Mrs. Stanton is a fine writer, but a poor executant; Miss Anthony is a thorough manager, but a poor writer.”²¹ And although Stanton knew the necessity of documenting her activities by writing with Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage the first three volumes of *The History of Woman Suffrage*,²² she never compiled her own speeches and correspondence.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (New York: European Publishing Company, 1884). The Douglass copy is Stanton's personal copy and has notes.

²⁰ Theodore Stanton edited *The Woman Question in Europe* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1884). Harriot Stanton Blatch was extremely active in the woman suffrage movement in both England and the United States.

²¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years Or More* (New York: European Publishing Company, 1898), pp. 184-85.

²² Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *The*

She did write an autobiography, *Eighty Years Or More*,²³ in which, among other things, she discusses at great length her friendship with Anthony and denounces conventional religion. Both of these discussions are missing from the edited version of this text which became the first volume of the Stanton and Blatch publication and, until 1971,²⁴ the autobiography of Stanton most available to researchers.

In any case, it does seem that Elizabeth Griffith (who just completed her dissertation on Stanton) is correct when she writes that after Stanton's death, her children—particularly Harriot—were “trying to re-establish and refurbish Elizabeth Cady Stanton's reputation.”²⁵ When Stanton and Blatch organized their mother's correspondence and diaries for their second volume of *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, they chose to publish some letters and omit others. (The edited correspondence of Stanton ends at 1880, although the Douglass collection contains a voluminous amount of post-1880 letters.) Many references and letters to Susan B. Anthony are lacking, as are Stanton's “pronunciamientos” on religion. Stanton and Blatch often exceeded their editorial function as grammarians and never indicated what they omitted or added.

The existing Stanton correspondence is very important, given this situation. Even Stanton and Blatch acknowledge in a short typed manuscript called “Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An Epistolary Autobiography”²⁶ that

Almost every lecture and speech and article by Mrs. Stanton had its origin in a personal letter so that her correspondence to an exceptional extent, is a history of her life reflecting as it does not only her private experiences, but her attitudes on public affairs.

But if the Stanton and Blatch volume does not present a comprehensive view of Stanton, where are the best sources of information to be found?

Elizabeth Griffith, who traversed the country for research materials, has concluded that many of the original primary sources elicited by Stanton and Blatch for their publication were destroyed by them along

History of Woman Suffrage, vol. 1-3 (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881 and 1882; Rochester, New York: Susan B. Anthony, 1886).

²³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years or More* (New York: European Publishing Company, 1898).

²⁴ Schoken Books reprint.

²⁵ Elizabeth Griffith to Amy Dykeman, March 13, 1982.

²⁶ Harriot Stanton Blatch and Theodore Stanton, “Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An Epistolary Autobiography,” typed manuscript, 26p.

with their mother's diaries. "Those that remain are scattered."²⁷ It cannot be said that the collection of typed copies assembled by Theodore Stanton are identical to the original;²⁸ nevertheless, in Griffith's view "Douglass has the largest and most accurate collection of letters."²⁹

Is it of interest to scholars that in Stanton's correspondence she discussed the character of the Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth; that she played the guitar as a young woman; or that she was disgusted by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' novel, *The Story of Avis*?³⁰ Perhaps. These items are all omitted in the Stanton and Blatch volume but present in the Douglass letters. The real tragedy, though, is the erroneous transcription or omission of passages in the letters that deal with Stanton's views on major issues of her day. Patterns emerge when the Douglass copies are compared to the published version: Stanton's views on marriage and divorce, her remuneration for her speeches and articles, her domestic duties, men, black male suffrage, and her health are often deleted. As in the edited autobiography, many of Stanton's references to personal acquaintances, especially Susan B. Anthony, are suppressed.

For instance, at a time in her life when she has become pregnant with her seventh and last child, she writes to Anthony:

Dear Susan,

Oh how I long for a few hours of blessed leisure each day. How rebellious it makes me feel when I see Henry going about where and how he pleases. He can walk at will through the whole wide world or shut himself up alone, if he pleases, within four walls. As I contrast his freedom with my bondage and feel that, because of the false position of woman, I have been compelled to hold all my noblest aspirations in abeyance in order to be a wife, a mother, a nurse, a cook, a household drudge, I am fired anew and long to pour forth from my own experience the whole story of woman's wrongs. I have been alone today as the whole family except Hattie and myself have been out to celebrate our national

²⁷ Elizabeth Griffith, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Self Sovereign: A Biography Based on Social Learning Theory" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, American University, 1981), p. 7.

²⁸ Occasionally, there are omissions, especially of living person's names, in the typed copies.

²⁹ Elizabeth Griffith to Amy Dykeman, March 13, 1982.

³⁰ These items are mentioned, respectively, in the following letters: ECS to Gerrit Smith, undated original letter, c. 1852; ECS to Elizabeth Smith Miller (in "An Epistolary Autobiography") June 4, 1839; ECS to Theodore Stanton, August 12, 1880.

birthday. What has woman to do with patriotism? Must not someone watch baby, house and garden! And who so fitting to perform all these duties, which no one else wished to do, as she who brought sin into the world and all our woe!

I went to Junius and read my address on suffrage, which was pronounced very fine. I feel that two or three such meetings would put me on my feet. But oh, Susan, my hopes of leisure were soon blasted. The cook's brother was taken sick with fever a few days after you left, and she was obliged to go home. So I have done my work aided by a little girl ever since. But I went to Junius in spite of it all. I drew up, presented, and supported a resolution making it a sin for a woman to be a wife to a habitual drunkard, which, after much discussion and some opposition, was passed.

I see that Mr. Higginson belongs to the Jeremy Bentham school, that law makes right. I am a disciple of the new philosophy that man's wants make his rights. I consider my right to property, to suffrage, etc., as natural and inalienable as my right to life and liberty. Man is above all law. The province of law is simply to protect me in what is mine.³¹

The Stanton and Blatch letter³² (below) does not present Stanton's frustrations with her family duties (the entire first paragraph of the Douglass copy) or include her reference to divorce (in the last sentence of the second paragraph):

Dear Susan,—I went to Junius and read my address on suffrage, which was pronounced very fine. I feel that two or three such meetings would put me on my feet. But, oh, Susan, my hopes of leisure were soon blasted. The cook's brother was taken sick with fever a few days after you left, and she was obliged to go home. So I have done my work aided by a little girl since. But I went to Junius in spite of it all. I see that Mr. Higginson belongs to the Jeremy Bentham school, that law makes right. I am a disciple of the new philosophy that man's wants make his rights. I consider my right to property, to suffrage, etc., as natural and inalienable as my right to life and to liberty. Man is above all law. The province of law is simply to protect me in what is mine.

³¹ ECS to Susan B. Anthony, July 4, 1858.

³² Stanton and Blatch, vol. 2, pp. 72-73.

In another letter, Stanton again writes fervently to Anthony on woman's marital status and her own home obligations, major portions of which are lacking from the letter that appears in Stanton and Blatch, dated August 20, 1857.³³ What is particularly interesting is the omission of Stanton's statements comparing black slavery and the position of women. The Douglass letter follows, with the sections marked that were omitted in the published version.

Dear Susan,

How much I wish I could respond to your letter in the tone I know you desire. But I dare not promise to undertake any work beyond the imperative duties each day brings forth. In the first place, the weather is enervating. If we ever have another shower, I may recover in a measure my vitality; but at present I am thoroughly dried up. In the next place, my baby is cutting her eye-teeth, is restless at night and troublesome by day. Then again, my boys have a four weeks' vacation and so they are on my hands. Furthermore my friends will all visit me in August and I have no Amelia³⁴ to share a single care. From the roast beef and jellies down to the dish cloth and soap grease, my eye must penetrate everywhere and my influence be omnipresent. Under such circumstances how could I sit down to think and write? But in two or three years I shall be able to have some hours of each day to myself. My two older boys will then be in college or business and my three younger children will be in school.

omitted

I was glad to hear of Lucy Stone. I think a vast deal of her and Antoinette Brown. I regret so much that you and Lucy should have had even a slight interruption to your friendship. I was much interested in the extract from her letter; although I agree with her that man too suffers in a false marriage relation, yet what can his suffering be compared with what every woman experiences whether happy or unhappy?

I do not know that the laws and religion of our country even now are behind the public sentiment which makes woman the mere tool of man. He has made the laws and proclaimed the religion; so we have his exact idea of the niche he thinks God intended

³³ Stanton and Blatch, vol. 2, pp. 70-71.

³⁴ Amelia Willard was for thirty years the Stanton's housekeeper, and according to Stanton, "a treasure, a friend and comforter, a second mother to my children."

woman to fill. A man in marrying gives up no right; but a woman, every right, even the most sacred of all,—the right to her own person. [How many men, think you, would marry if woman claimed and enforced the right to say when she would become a mother? When we talk of women's rights, is not the right to her person, to her happiness, to her life, the first on the list? If you go to the southern plantation and speak to the slave of his right to property, to the elective franchise, to a thorough education, his response will be a vacant stare. He believes himself the degraded being which a southern religion and public sentiment have made him. The great idea of his right to himself, of his personal dignity, must first take possession of his soul, and then will he demand equality in everything.] There will be no response among women to our demands, until we have first aroused in them a sense of personal dignity and independence; and so long as our present false marriage relation continues, which in most cases is nothing more nor less than legalized prostitution, woman can have no self-respect and of course man will have none for her, for the world estimates us according to the value we put on ourselves. [I repeat, the center and circumference of woman's rights is just what the slave's are.] Personal freedom is the first right to be proclaimed, and that does not and cannot now belong to the relation of wife, to the mistress of the isolated home, to the financial dependent.

An apparently unpublished letter³⁵ within the Douglass collection written by Stanton thirty years later (at age seventy-eight) shows that her interest is still undiminished on questions of marriage, religion, and even her own physical size. As in many of her letters, the constant interplay between outrage and wit is evident.

Dear Julius:³⁶

We have been a week with my sister Margaret, but out here on this splendid farm of 20,000 acres all under perfect cultivation. Mr. McMartin³⁷ applies his knowledge of the sciences to practical farming; he has the finest crops and cattle in the state.

³⁵ ECS to Elizabeth Smith Miller, September 11, 18[88].

³⁶ Stanton and Elizabeth Smith Miller (the daughter of Stanton's cousin, Gerrit Smith) were life-long friends and correspondents. They adopted the nicknames "Johnson" and "Julius," in their youths, after the Christy Minstrels whom they saw in performance.

³⁷ Stanton's brother-in-law.

omitted

omitted

I have just read an article in the *Westminister Review*³⁸ on marriage, by Mona Caird, with whom I spent a few days last winter in London. Do get the Review for August and read it over carefully twice and then tell me how it strikes you. Thank the Lord one woman has dared openly and plainly to say what all women feel. Who can conceive the depth of degradation for the human soul to be viewed simply as an instrument of lust in the hands of another? St. Paul's view of marriage in the New Testament is simply that it is carnal necessity, with every spiritual element wholly eliminated.

I have been receptioned and photographed. I have one melancholy fact to state which I do with sorrow and humiliation. I was weighed yesterday and brought the scales down at 240, just the speed of a trotting [sic] horse, and yet I cannot trot 100 feet without puffing. As soon as I reach Omaha I intend to commence dieting. Yet I am well; danced the Virginia reel at New Marlborough with [my son] Bob. But alas! I am 240! Pray for your lumbering,

Johnson

Elizabeth Cady Stanton has traditionally been portrayed as a confident and persuasive lecturer who encouraged Anthony in her early and awkward attempts at speech-making. It seems that this was an image worth preserving, since her insecurity regarding this activity is deleted in a Stanton and Blatch letter. Stanton writes in 1859, five years after she addressed the joint judiciary committee of the New York State Legislature and after numerous speeches at woman's rights conventions:

. . . I gave every leisure thought and moment to my lecture before going to Boston, I was so desirous to do well. I always dread speaking in public, and was, on this occasion, only too happy when I was through. Whipple,³⁹ who is a severe critic, told me I appeared as self-possessed as if I lived on the platform all my days.⁴⁰

Many of the unpublished letters in the Douglass collection sound surprisingly modern, both in language and content. The issue of censor-

³⁸ Mona Caird, "Marriage," *Westminister Review* 130: 186-201, August 1888.

³⁹ Edwin Percy Whipple (1819-1886), noted essayist and lecturer of this time.

⁴⁰ ECS to Nancy Smith, July 20, 1863.

ship for libraries has always been a lively one and in a letter to Theodore, Stanton writes:⁴¹

Dear Theodore:

My books are selling pretty well. Whenever there is a lull in the sale of the Woman's Bible, some convention denounces it or some library throws it out, then there is immediately a fresh demand for it. So the bigots promote the sale every time, doing the very thing we desire them to do even from a financial point of view. They buy the book and then advertise it free of all expense to us. The western papers have given columns to the discussion of removing it from the libraries. It is a tempest in a tea-pot. A rich woman gave both my books to several libraries and she is in a rage over all this. She is represented in the pictorial papers as Dame Partington beating back the Atlantic ocean.

With love and kisses.

Mother

On a postcard to her daughter, Harriot, who is attending Vassar College, Stanton writes:

When you write me, give my name in full. I consider abbreviations of a person's name vulgar. If the English nobility can have all titles everytime they are mentioned, I think republican citizens might have their names, and not be designated, like bales of goods, by the signs of Cadmus. I am not a spool of silk, nor a barrel of flour, though I am a number-one woman.⁴²

As the preceding letters indicate, the collection of letters to her children (approximately 150 at Douglass) are invaluable for showing both the public and private woman. They are rarely included in Stanton and Blatch, and, as in most of her correspondence, Stanton, in these letters, is analytical, witty, and articulate. She is also still aware of her role as an activist and polemicist for the women's movement. Nevertheless, these letters (like those to Anthony, her cousin Elizabeth Smith Miller, and other close friends) depict a woman who gives advice, displays affection, and takes her role as a mother seriously. While Theodore is at Cornell she writes:

⁴¹ ECS to Theodore Stanton, September 4, 1898.

⁴² ECS to Harriot Stanton Blatch, October 11, 1877.

I write in haste merely to say: take care of your health. Remember that your health is your capital. I would rather have you graduate without an honor than crowned with laurels and a broken-down dyspeptic. As you are reading the classics, mark how many of the old philosophers dwell on the importance of keeping the sensuous nature ever under control of the spiritual. The ordinary young girls are not worth your thought or attention. Better exercise with dumb-bells than visit them. Spend your vacation in sleep and exercise. Do something every day to strengthen mind and body. In your friendships with boys, let them be able to say in looking back that they were wiser and better for having known you. Finally, be kind to everybody, especially to the poor and ignorant.⁴³

In a letter to Harriot she says:⁴⁴

. . . I have made up my mind to one thing fully, that I shall stick to you henceforth like a burr. I must have something in human shape to love. Do you not think that out of seven children, I should have one sure, ever present prop?

Lovingly,
Mother

The letters discussed here constitute only about one percent of the Douglass collection; even so, this small sampling reveals Stanton to be more complex and more radical than she appears in the Stanton and Blatch versions. Almost every letter espouses an interesting view or touches on an issue of social, political, or literary importance.

The Douglass letters are problematic. They illuminate the life of one of the most important figures in American history; but, they provoke several questions. One cannot help but wonder about the fate of much of Stanton's original correspondence. Why did Theodore retain the typed copies? Why were the letters tampered with and, to a large extent, left unpublished?

These questions must inevitably lead to more questions about Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Now, with the rediscovery of her letters, and with the increased interest in women's issues, a new, fuller understanding of the woman question in the nineteenth century and of Stanton herself will emerge.

⁴³ ECS to Theodore Stanton, 1873.

⁴⁴ ECS to Harriot Stanton Blatch, March 12, 1878.