

31st October 1812 William Napier to his daughter Mary, at Bocking

My dear Mary

A father's opinion in the matter in which you are now engaged, will not be, by you, deemed an intrusion. Personal regard is one of the essentials of the Marriage State; but there are many things that serve to destroy or influence that regard, therefore when we regard persons merely for their persons, without referring to their mental qualifications, local circumstances etc. etc. it often proves that the blaze of personal affection is often damped if not put out. On the other hand, where there seems nothing in the way to prevent the growth of personal affection, but many things, such as good sense, pious disposition, & a competence of worldly comforts, all calculated to promote it, I think the object should not be too hastily cast away. We see the wonderful changes in the female mind, but others can speak more to this than I.

I only assure you that no worldly preferment will bias the mind of your father against your own will, for I hope I shall ever remain

Your affectionate Father,

Wm. Napier

William Napier 1757-1836 was a prosperous baker and corn merchant who had a granary on the Thames near Blackfriars. His youngest daughter, Mary Napier, was 21 years old and had been staying with her older sister, Sarah Reeve, in Bocking, Essex while Sarah had her first baby. There she had been introduced to William Lincolne, a friend of her brother-in-law Joseph Reeve. Joseph, Mary and William went on a jaunt to Ipswich Butter Fair for a couple of days, staying in the White Horse Tavern, later made famous by Dickens in "The Pickwick Papers". William had quickly fallen for her and had proposed, but Mary was a cautious girl and had not given him a firm answer. She told him that he could write to her when she returned to London, which gave William encouragement. She had obviously written to her father in London, asking for his advice, and this was his reply.

Her father's remark about the changeability of women's minds might have been a reference to Sarah Reeve, who had been unhappily in love with an unsuitable man at the beginning of 1810, but had met and married Joseph Reeve by August of the same year.

Mary finally accepted William's proposal couple of months later, but she went on an extended visit to Scotland to see her father's relatives in May of 1813 and did not return until September. They were married at St Bride's Church in Fleet Street on 29th December 1813 and went to live in Witham, Essex, with William's grandfather, Thomas Isaac.

Transcribed by Helen Wolvey, 3 x great granddaughter of William and Mary, in 2017.