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Paradox of Opportunities:
Lucy Stone, Alice Stone Blackwell,
and the Tragedy of Reform

Lori Bogle

Alice Stone Blackwell, a former suffragette and an internationally recognized champion of human rights, occupied a seat of honor at the 1939 dramatic interpretation of the life of her mother, Lucy Stone. Because the eighty-one year-old Blackwell was now blind, she relied on sounds to convey the images portrayed on the stage. Blackwell was pleased. The passage of the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteed the vote for women, and at the same time, the "Lucy Stone" play, along with Blackwell's earlier literary tribute to her mother, *Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Women's Rights*, assured that Stone would continue to hold an honored position in the history of woman's suffrage.¹

After the performance, Blackwell returned to the bleak isolation of her apartment. Aside from the newspapers and books which cluttered the rooms, the only decorations were paintings of her family, a group photograph of the pioneers of the women's rights movement, and a portrait of her Armenian godson. The reputations of her famous Blackwell relatives cast a long shadow over Alice Stone Blackwell, but ultimately, with the woman's suffrage victory, her own separate identity emerged through literature, and through her support for international human rights. While her public career was filled with notable achievements, privately Blackwell failed to develop the positive self-images necessary to fully embrace life. Now in her twilight years, she

1. The "Lucy Stone" play by, Maud Wood Parks, was a WPA federal theater production, based on Blackwell's earlier work. Parts of the original play are located in The Blackwell Family Papers, reel 70, in the Library of Congress. Because of her feud with Susan B. Anthony, Stone refused to cooperate in the compilation of the History of Woman Suffrage, or in other ventures commemorating the movement, and in the process she relegated herself to a secondary position in women's history.

was a nervous recluse, living off the charity of family and friends, and she was only visited regularly by a hired reader.²

As Blackwell retired for the evening, her thoughts may well have drifted back to the closing scene of the play, triggering memories of a promise she had made to her mother ten days before Lucy Stone's death in October of 1893. "Mama said to me, as I sat by the foot of her bed, 'My brave daughter! She will go on with the work just the same....'" Alice replied, "You may be sure she will."³ Alice Stone Blackwell was compelled to adopt the mission in life prescribed by her mother. Lucy Stone was not a brutal oppressor, and there was genuine love within the Stone-Blackwell family, but her obsession with the single goal of woman's suffrage dwarfed the preferences of all those around her, including those of her daughter.

Nineteenth-century reformers present a paradox of opportunities. While demanding fuller public lives for women, their commitment to the cause limited not only their own choices, but also those of their families. Lucy Stone never intended to stifle her daughter's vitality; she most certainly believed that she was opening new horizons through her suffrage work. Yet, Stone's single overpowering commitment to her mission created an unnatural environment for her only child. It remains to be proven whether Alice Stone Blackwell's experience was typical for the daughters of strong-minded women of the time period. Other daughters followed their mothers into reform work, but there is no research that indicates that they followed Alice's pattern. Perhaps an understanding of Blackwell's life will serve as a test case to determine the reform movement's impact on the family life of the reformers.

 2. For a description of Alice's apartment, see "Daughter to be Present Tonight at Play on Career of Lucy Stone," New Bedford Standard Times, May 9, 1939, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 70. After Blackwell donated the family residence to be used as a charity home, and she moved into a small apartment, her business manager stole all her money. Alice compulsively washed her hands about fifty times a day. See "Physical Examination" at the Massachusetts Homeopathic Hospital, n.d., in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 36.

3. In the "Lucy Stone" drama, the death scene climaxed with Lucy's vision of Alice achieving the suffrage victory, while the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" softly played in the background. The actual event was recorded in the journal that Alice kept while her mother was dying a painful death from cancer of the stomach. See Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 4, frame 500.

The eventful lives of Lucy Stone and Alice Stone Blackwell encompassed the two generations that secured the franchise for women. Along with the first female college graduate in Massachusetts, an early abolition lecturer, and the first woman to refuse to take her husband's last name, Stone established the American Woman's Suffrage Association, and founded *The Woman's Journal*, along with her husband, Henry Blackwell. Alice Stone Blackwell was an instrumental auxiliary to Lucy Stone's strong leadership. Blackwell wrote prolifically on the suffrage issue, edited *The Woman's Journal* after her mother and father retired from the paper, was credited with reconciling two rival suffrage organizations into the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, and during the excitement of the suffrage victory, she was nominated as the Association's candidate for president. After women won the right to vote, Blackwell wrote several books and became actively involved in many liberal causes.⁴

Because previous historians have demonstrated the significance of both women to the suffrage movement, it is unnecessary to explore their notable political and professional accomplishments. The focus here is on the complexities of the remarkable nineteenth-century mother-daughter relationship between Lucy Stone and Alice Stone Blackwell.

Born in 1818, Lucy Stone was the eighth of nine children, who were raised on a Massachusetts farm by Congregational parents. She described her father, Francis Stone, as cold and distant: he drank heavily, favored her younger sister Sarah, and ridiculed Lucy's physical appearance. Unable to please her father, Lucy developed an introspective, resolute disposition. For example, in early childhood, after losing her temper and apparently screaming at her sister, Lucy determined to rid her behavior of any further outward displays of anger. While Francis Stone's nature mellowed over the years, and he eventually valued his daughter's many accomplishments, Lucy continued the pattern

4. For biographical treatments of Lucy Stone, see Alice Stone Blackwell, Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights (Boston, 1930); Elinor Rice Hayes, Morning Star: A Biography of Lucy Stone (New York, 1961); Leslie Wheeler, ed., Loving Warriors: Selected Letters of Lucy Stone and Henry B. Blackwell, 1853 to 1893 (New York, 1981). For the life of Alice Stone Blackwell, see Marlene Deahl Merrill, ed., Growing Up in Boston's Gilded Age: The Journal of Alice Stone Blackwell (New Haven, 1990.)

of the exacting self-analysis she had established during her childhood.⁵

Hannah Stone, Lucy's mother, not only was a keeper of the home who was burdened with all the household chores that large families demanded, but she was also hampered in her domesticity by her husband's miserliness. To ease her mother's work-load, Lucy washed clothes for the family of ten before school, and then skipped lunch in order to hurry home and take the clothes off the line. In later years, Lucy admitted: "I loved her [Hannah Stone] more than I did him [Francis Stone], for she was always kind to us"⁶ Throughout her life, Lucy Stone endeavored to right the wrongs committed against her mother. A day before her own seventieth birthday, Lucy wrote:

I trust my mother sees, and knows how glad I am to have been born, and at a time when there was so much that needed help, at which I could "lend a hand." Dear old mother! She had a hard life, and was sorry she had another girl, to share and bear the hard life of a woman. But I am wholly glad I came, and she is too, if she sees. And whether she does or not, it is right.⁷

Earlier studies have characterized Lucy's mother as subservient. However, the fact that she fulfilled the role that the nineteenth century provided for her does not necessarily indicate that she endorsed her subordinate status. Hannah's words and actions revealed evidence of malcontent. At Lucy's birth, Hannah remarked that she regretted having a girl, because life was so hard for women. Years later, Hannah wrote Lucy a letter that contained her insight on marriage. "What do you think about Sarah [Lucy's sister]? I think she is very unwise [to get married]

5. Alice Stone Blackwell, Oct. 8, 1892, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 4, frame 486; Blackwell, Lucy Stone, p. 18.

6. Alice Stone Blackwell, Oct. 8, 1892, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 4, frame 487.

7. Lucy Stone, as quoted in Leslie Wheeler, ed., Loving Warriors: Selected Letters of Lucy Stone and Henry B. Blackwell, 1853 to 1893 (New York, 1981), p. 54.

for I do not think she loves him as she ought. It is a tuff [sic] case to marry one we do love."⁸

Pivotal to the development of Lucy's feminist thought was the collusion necessary between mother and daughter in their everyday-life struggles with the domineering Francis Stone. In order to buy needed household goods, Hannah regularly stole small amounts of change from her husband's purse, and she included Lucy in a scheme to sneak extra cheeses out of the storehouse, to sell in town. Once, as Lucy was about to leave with some cheese, her father appeared unexpectedly. Lucy remembered: "I was as strong as a young buck. I held the cheese, which must have weighed twenty pounds, close to me, under my arm, while I led the horse out with the other arm."⁹

While the impact of Hannah's subtle defiance was not expressly recorded, it can be extrapolated from family actions, and from comments made in later years. When Lucy wanted to attend college, her father may have thought it unwise, but he did not forbid it and he eventually even helped financially. Like most nineteenth-century men, Francis Stone questioned the propriety of a woman speaking to mixed audiences, but he did attend a lecture by his daughter. He was so impressed by her abilities that he later admitted, "You were right, and I was wrong."¹⁰ Lucy's brothers supported her ambitions, despite the ridicule they would undoubtedly receive through her notoriety. One brother wrote her concerning her vocation: "I think with your feelings in relation to women's rights, you are fully justified in the course you have taken...."¹¹ Another brother handed over his church pulpit, for Lucy to give a suffrage message. Such sentiments and actions lent credence to the supposition that the Stone family, under Hannah's influence, came to question what the proper role for women should be.

Lucy Stone's obsession with women's rights resulted from her youthful conflict between the dictates of her religion and her

8. Hannah Stone and Francis Stone to Lucy Stone, June 13, 1847, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 65.

9. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 4, frame 486.

10. Blackwell, Lucy Stone, p. 75.

11. Bowman and Sarah Stone to Lucy Stone, June 13, 1847, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 65.

emerging feminist thought. When Lucy read in the Bible that it was a woman's duty to submit to men, she was not comforted by her mother's explanation that it was the curse of Eve. Lucy determined to learn Hebrew and Greek, for she had no doubt that men had mistranslated the pertinent passages. Never reassured by her Biblical exegesis, Lucy, like many other nineteenth-century reformers, eventually left the Congregational Church and joined the more liberal Unitarian Church.¹²

John and Barbara Maniha, in "A Comparison of Psychohistorical Differences Among Some Female Religious and Secular Leaders," described how new religions were often created from inner conflicts, such as those suffered by Lucy Stone. Stone never established a denomination, but her devotion to women's rights acquired all the trapping of a religion. "The Cause" was all important, and one's personal needs were to be sacrificed for the greater good of womankind. Throughout her life, Stone judged herself and others by their faithfulness to the mission.¹³

Lucy's dedication to woman's suffrage left no room for a personal life. Like many other pioneers of the movement, she refused to compromise her independence by marrying. Her ambivalent feelings over her decision are evident in a letter to Antoinette Brown, Lucy's future sister-in-law, in August of 1849, in which she explained that she was staying single in spite of the fact that she would like to be married.

My heart aches to love somebody that shall be all
its own. I have not yet reached the place where I
need no companionship as you have. Do you think
I am silly? Say so if you do. Don't give yourself

12. Blackwell, *Lucy Stone*, pp. 15-16. For more of Lucy's thoughts on religion, see Carol Lasser and Marlene Deahl Merrill, eds., *Friends and Sisters: Letters Between Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown Blackwell, 1846-1893* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 50-54. Also see an interesting letter on Lucy's positive feelings about her father's Christian conversion: Lucy Stone to Francis Stone, November 29, 1838, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 65.

13. John and Barbara Maniha, "A Comparison of Psychohistorical Differences Among Some Female Religious and Secular Leaders," *Journal of Psychohistory* (Spring, 1978), pp. 523-549. The Manihas explored different factors in a woman's childhood that led to leadership positions in later life. They were especially interested in factors that led women into religious rather than secular roles. Their conclusion was that future secular leaders, as opposed to religious leaders, developed competent self-images, that they were capable and able to make a difference in the world.

any uneasiness on my account, for I shall not be married ever.¹⁴

Unexpectedly, Lucy Stone found romance with reformer Henry Blackwell. Initially Stone resisted Blackwell, who was seven years younger than she, but in time it became increasingly difficult for her to refute his carefully laid arguments on the feasibility of their marriage. To convince Lucy to relent on her vow of celibacy, Henry agreed to devote the rest of his life to women's rights. This made for an unusual marriage, for while Henry was already an abolitionist, who was not unsympathetic to the suffrage issue, until he fell in love with Lucy it is doubtful that this movement would have received so much of his attention.¹⁵

In 1857, thirty-nine year-old Lucy Stone, the nation's leading women's rights spokesperson, put everything on hold to have and raise her only child, Alice. There is no difficulty in understanding her family-oriented goals, for Stone, a conservative among feminists, accepted the ideology of separate spheres, believing that woman's ultimate responsibility was to her family. However, her decision to retire from the movement made her depressed and unsure of herself. Stone wrote fellow suffrage pioneer Susan B. Anthony:

I went to hear E. P. Whipple lecture on Joan d'Arc. It was very inspiring, & for the hour I felt as though all things were possible to me. But when I came home & looked in Alice's sleeping face & thought of the possible evil that might befall her if my guardian eye was turned away, I shrank like a

14. Lasser and Merrill, Friends and Sisters, p. 5.

15. Wheeler, Loving Warriors, pp. 38-70. While Henry Blackwell's involvement in women's rights began after he met the vivacious Lucy Stone, his interest in reform originated within his own abolitionist family. Henry acquired notoriety by preventing the return of an escaped slave to southern territory. This escapade, the \$10,000 reward placed on his head, and his persistent courting finally convinced Stone to marry him. The couple agreed that Lucy would keep her maiden name, and they drew up a marriage protest, declaring that their union did not imply that they felt bound by the civil laws that gave the husband all rights, and the wife little legal existence. See Henry Blackwell, "Marriage Protest Reaffirmed," The Woman's Journal, October 28, 1893.

snail into its shell, & saw that for these years I can only be a mother — no trivial thing either.¹⁶

As Lucy's despondency grew, Henry insisted that for her own sake she had to return to her career. Alice, still young when Lucy resumed active campaigning, was often left with relatives while both her parents travelled to suffrage meetings and undertook extensive lecture tours. Their absences made Alice feel insecure. Recognizing her anxiety, Lucy and Henry tried, whenever they could, to provide a normal home life for their daughter. Alice remembered the rare times when her mother was at home for an extended period of time, and "we had the best meals of our lives . . . both of my parents loved to be at home more than any place else, in spite of the fact that they were both in the forefront of many a bitter battle."¹⁷

Alice's puberty coincided with the founding of the *Woman's Journal*. One of the goals in beginning this women's rights publication was to have more family time, yet the paper came to dominate their lives. Furthermore, Henry became imbued with a sense of failure, as his attempts to establish a national reform reputation of his own never met his expectations.¹⁸

These external pressures added to Alice's own internal turmoil over entering womanhood and striving to establish her own separate identity. The result was a power struggle between

16. Wheeler, *Loving Warriors*, pp. 305-306. Raising Alice appeared to have been the only area of Lucy's life that came before women's rights. Lucy threatened Susan B. Anthony, who opposed her pregnancy, that she just might have ten daughters before returning to the suffrage fight. See Lucy Stone to Susan B. Anthony, July 20, 1857, in *Blackwell Family Papers*, reel 66.

17. Separate from their national importance and busy work schedule, the Blackwells in many ways appeared to be a normal middle-class family. The many aunts, uncles, cousins, and adopted children developed strong kinship ties, yet they often found it difficult to live with each other. The family was somewhat embarrassed by the unwanted attention brought about by Elizabeth Blackwell's medical career, and Elizabeth was concerned over Henry marrying a women's rights speaker. See Margo Horn, "Sisters Worthy of Respect: Family Dynamics and Women's Roles in the Blackwell Family," *Journal of Family History* (Winter, 1983), pp. 367-382.

18. Henry had made enough money to retire from regular employment, and he became convinced that beet sugar, as an alternative to cane sugar, would effectively eliminate the need for slavery. However, he failed at attempts to make the beet sugar process a profitable one.

mother and daughter. In the following journal entry, Lucy seemed to have won the upper hand:

Mama told me a Ledger [a magazine Lucy apparently did not approve of] had come; that she had left it behind, and never meant to let another come into the house. I said I should get it the next day, when I went in; she said it had gone to be cut into wrappers. Papa said that was adding insult to injury, as indeed it was, why need she have told me? She could have kept it back and said nothing. . . . I straightaway went off to bed mad, with tears in my eyes.¹⁹

Sometimes Alice won the battle of wills:

I accused Mama of scratching out something in my diary, and she confessed to having done so. We had a conversation which nearly resulted in my giving up keeping a diary and burning the old ones, but the affair ended satisfactorily.²⁰

In her tribute to her mother, *Lucy Stone*, Alice described the beginnings of her feminist thought:

In my childhood, I heard so much about woman suffrage that I was bored by it and thought I hated it, until one day I came across a magazine article on the other side and found myself bristling up like a hen in defense of her chickens. This happened when I was about twelve years old. After that I never had any doubt as to whether I believed in it.²¹

There is no doubt that Alice advocated woman's suffrage, but it is not clear how thoroughly she internalized her mother's sense of mission.

19. Alice Stone Blackwell, in *Blackwell Family Papers*, reel 1, frame 40.

20. Alice Stone Blackwell, in *Blackwell Family Papers*, reel 1, frame 44.

21. Blackwell, *Lucy Stone*, p. 271.

At sixteen, Alice attended Boston's co-educational Chauncy Hall, a large private school with several hundred boys and about twenty girls. She was a nervous student, never satisfied with anything but the best grades. This drive for academic perfection resulted from her low self-worth in other area of her life. Alice was especially sensitive to her lack of social skills. Nellie Hooper, a classmate, tried to reassure her friend of her worth.

I'm sorry that you have such a poor opinion of yourself in your relations with your schoolmates in general for I am sure the girls like you as much as you like them, and I am sure you are neither awkward, difficult tempered, or angular to any very terrible degree. Now, dear Alice, I liked that clear, bright, "drop" of yours very much. Do you ever intend to gather up your drops and put them into a goblet for the world to drink?²²

One factor that possibly added to Alice's sense of worthlessness was her plain looks. Lucy had been characterized as unattractive by her father and by some opponents of the women's movement, but she had a vivacity that sparked from her eyes. Alice had inherited her father's looks. She was dark, tall, gangly, and she possessed a brooding appearance. As the years went by, age was kind and her appearance softened, but as a young woman her foreboding looks did not attract many suitors. Her mother, who gave up a measure of her own independence to marry, did not encourage Alice's contacts with the opposite sex. Instead Lucy told Alice, "all sorts of queer things about boys — how if you show them any attention they immediately think you want to marry them"²³

Instead of male companionship, Alice developed emotionally close relationships with young women. She became especially attached to her Aunt Elizabeth Blackwell's adopted daughter, Kitty Barry. Alice was four and Kitty thirteen, when they first pretended to become engaged. This family joke lasted well into their adult years. Eventually the two spinster cousins

22. Nellie Hooper to Alice Stone Blackwell, March 2, 1875, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 14, frame 653-654.

23. Alice Stone Blackwell, quoted in Hays, *Morning Star*, p. 247.

lived together, and Alice cared for Kitty until her death. Through years of frequent letters, Alice revealed her innermost thoughts to her "betrothed."

In 1872, Alice fell madly in love with a girl named Sadie. According to Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, in "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relationships between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," it was not an unusual occurrence for nineteenth-century women to fall in love with each other. It is unclear from the available sources whether Alice's infatuation, or "smashing," was the result of any lesbian tendencies.²⁴

Her infatuation grew until one night Alice convinced her parents to allow her to borrow the family servant in order to spy on Sadie, through her living-room window. As the months went by, there were many trips to look at her "beautiful Sadie's" world. Not knowing the purpose of their trips, the servant, Annie McCloud, was perplexed by Alice's behavior. "I astounded Annie by my proceedings on the way home,... I being intoxicated with love, and doing all sorts of idiotic things without rhyme or reason, such as tumbling against trees, telegraph poles and fences, and glaring at the sky" ²⁵

While Alice did become acquainted with Sadie, they never became very close. Alice was fascinated by Sadie's "normal" life — a life she could view through a window, but never experience herself. It was a life that she longed for. Apparently in time Alice forgot her intense emotions, for in 1882 she expressed surprise at the way other girls were "smashing." Alice wrote that the health of college women was damaged by smashes, which she described as:

an extraordinary habit which they have of falling violently in love with each other, and suffering all the pangs of unrequited attachment, desperate jealousy etc.. etc., with as much energy as if one of

24. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," Signs 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29.

25. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 1, frames 31-32. Alice was not alone in her feelings toward her friend. Years earlier, her mother had a similar emotional relationship with Antoinette Brown. Brown wrote Lucy: "Tonight I could nestle closer to your heart than on that night when I went through the dark and the rain . . . all to feel your arm around me — and to know that in all this wide world, I was not alone." See Lasser, Friends and Sisters, p. 5.

them were a man. I could hardly have believed that the things they told were not exaggerations.²⁶

When Alice finally began to notice boys, she began to take greater care with her appearance, and she vowed "to get over my shyness, and make some acquaintances among my schoolmates of the masculine persuasion I am looking forward to the prospect with considerable enjoyment, though how I'm to set about it I don't exactly know."²⁷

Alice did not know how "to set about it." Socially, she did not fit in with her peers. She rejected the normal flirtations of the other girls, yet she longed for their lives — such as the one that Sadie lived. When Alice found out that she was not invited to a schoolmate's party, she despaired.

School in the morning. The ruling excitement at present is Mary Fifield's party, to take place tonight. I am not invited. I wish I was. Of course Mary has a perfect right to choose her own guests, but I was quite well acquainted with her, and I do wish I could sometimes have a little fun like other girls, and live as they do.²⁸

Alice sought relief from her unhappiness through religion. Unfortunately, her search for a relationship with God increased her sense of worthlessness.

Am feeling unhappy; I don't know exactly what the matter is; I think — I want — God. Not the "Spiritual Consciousness" or "Pervading Power," that one *supposes* about; I want . . . one to *love*, to really believe in and trust to utterly. Mama believes in a Guiding Influence, and gets along somehow; but I shouldn't wonder if her blues came somewhat from the want of — something in that direction The God I should like to believe in

26. Alice Stone Blackwell, March 12, 1882, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 6, frame 372.

27. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 6, frame 170.

28. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 1, frame 23.

wouldn't squash individuals for the good of the whole if it wasn't for their good as well. And being a Blackwell, I keep all the worry to myself; there really seems no one to tell — who I could tell.²⁹

Alice adopted a spiritual compromise that would affect her the rest of her life. "I wish I could love him [God]. Maybe if I try my best to do right he will help me about the loving; certainly I don't see that I can help myself."³⁰ Alice's future goal of service to mankind was a direct result of her sense of spiritual worthlessness. She would try to compensate for her inability to love God by adopting a rigid ethical code.

Alice continued to try to establish a measure of independence from her dominant mother. When Lucy altered and secretly published one of Alice's poems in the *Woman's Journal*, Alice, "sat down on the floor and shrieked," as she later reported, "after my usual style. Mama seems rather disgusted that I am not pleased, and showed signs of turning blue; so I decided to *be* pleased, and abated my wrath."³¹ Shortly after the above incident, she published a poem in the magazine, *Young Folks*, and she warned her cousin Kitty not to reveal it to her parents.³²

While Alice wrote prolifically, she never felt comfortable offering her original prose for publication, and risking criticism. Instead, she concentrated on journalistic work, by helping her parents on *The Woman's Journal*. Alice quickly rose from an apprentice to an assistant editor, and after graduation from Boston University she increasingly acted as editor-in-chief as her parents relinquished control of the journal to their daughter. That enabled them to devote themselves fully to the suffrage movement. Her rapid advancement was not due to any driving personal ambition, but rather she met her mother's expectations that she serve the cause through her work on the suffrage journal.

Ultimately, conflicts in the Stone-Blackwell household eased because Alice conformed to her mother's will. Alice's

29. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 1, frame 41.

30. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 1, frame 45.

31. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 1, frame 23.

32. Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 1, frame 48.

editing skills and growing reform work became indispensable, and soon her aging parents unwittingly imprisoned her within their lives. Alice explained to her cousin Kitty that she would remain on *The Woman's Journal*, and not study medicine or the law, because both of those professions would require years of additional study, away from home:

and father and mother like to have me with them. Father comes in [and] says "Where's the Cub?" if he doesn't see me; mother was saying only today that it was funny to see how he followed me round. Then they are both shamefully overworked, and need all the help I can give them, and more. What little bent I have in any direction is chiefly literary
³³

Alice never made an autonomous decision concerning her career. She occupied the only position she believed open to her, within the confines of her reformist family.

With her journalistic career underway, family obligations, and lack of any viable prospective husbands, Alice decided to forego marriage. Her Aunt, Elizabeth Blackwell, though single herself, cautioned having Alice work full-time on the paper, because she might frighten away possible suitors. Alice declared that "there are not any young men and are not going to be any."³⁴

Years after her mother's death, Alice would discover that it was Lucy who had inadvertently given her the opportunity to meet her only serious boyfriend, Hovhannes Khachumian. Lucy asked Mrs. I. Barrows, the director of a Canadian summer camp, to find an outlet for the now thirty-six year-old camper. Barrows brought Alice and Hovhannes together for work on translating Armenian poetry into English. Alice found this Armenian and his nationality's tragic struggle fascinating. Khachumian's growing affections for "my general," as he called Alice, are illustrated by the changing tone of his letters. In April of 1894, he ended "with sincere love, your brother Ohannes [Hovannes];" by September of 1895, he wrote Alice, "you are always near to the thoughts and

 33. Alice Stone Blackwell to Kitty Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 8, frame 321-322.

34. Alice Stone Blackwell, June 3, 1883, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 6, frame 443-444.

heart of Ohannes Ohannes' kisses your hand, your forehead and eyes.³⁵

Khachumian became ill while on business in Germany, and he died before Alice could get to his side. His passing ended Alice's only serious romance, and it came on the heels of Lucy Stone's death. In deep anguish, Alice wrote: "I have started a 'pleasure book' to record the pleasant things that happen to me, and make myself thankful"³⁶

Alice grieved deeply, yet her mother's death appeared to open up new possibilities for independence. Emily Blackwell, Henry's sister, wrote to Elizabeth Blackwell about their niece:

Alice is wonderfully developing her individuality in her independent position. She will always be good and conscientious, but she shows a sort of self-will and positive determination in everyday life which is quite new, and shows what an unconscious subordination her mother's strong will impressed upon her.³⁷

Although Alice immediately began writing her mother's life story, *Lucy Stone* was not published until 1931. In line with her feelings of inferiority, Alice never thought that this book was good enough to publish. Her renderings of foreign poetry, such as *Armenian Poems* (1896), *Songs of Russia* (1908), *Songs of Grief and Gladness* (1908), and *On Some Spanish American Poets* (1927), were more satisfying to her, perhaps because she was not exposing her own work to criticism, but the work of other poets.³⁸

Even though Alice edited the *Woman's Journal*, published several books, and spoke publicly many times, she was still an awkward girl who did not know how to fit in. Feminist Maud Wood Park worked with Alice in the suffrage movement and described Alice as being extremely shy, not just with strangers, but also with those she knew well. Often when Alice expected

35. Hovhannes Khachumian to Alice Stone Blackwell, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 12, frame 215.

36. Elinor Rice Hayes, *Those Extraordinary Blackwells* (New York, 1967), p. 276.

37. Leslie Wheeler, *Loving Warriors*, p. 356.

38. Blackwell Family Papers, reel 24, frame 271.

company, she would lay awake at night, hoping a storm would come to keep her invited guest from arriving.

Before I [Park] came to understand her [Blackwell] timidity about personal relations, I used sometimes to follow her retreating figure up and down the long offices of the association in order to complete a conversation. However, in spite of what seemed then her queer ways, I soon learned to admire the heroism that led her to do whatever seemed necessary [act hospitable] for the cause, no matter how distasteful it might be.³⁹

After Lucy's death, suffrage continued to be the most important goal for Alice and her father, but the two Blackwells also began to expand their reform work into other areas. Henry and Alice, awakened by Hovhannes Khachumian to the tragedy of the 1895 Armenian massacre, became active members of the Friends of Armenia, and they became advocates for political prisoners throughout the world. With Hovhannes's death, and then Henry's, Alice completely centered her life on human rights, establishing a reputation as a friend of suffering people everywhere.⁴⁰

Henry Blackwell died in 1909. Alice had once written that "her father was like an angel in the house, and her mother like the shelter of a great rock under which you felt a sense of safety and strong protection."⁴¹ Henry's gentle nature counterbalanced her mother's strong will, but now with his death, Alice lost her emotional foundation and became so severely depressed that she experienced some type of cardiac attack.

Alice's growing interest in socialism, coupled with her friendship with anti-Bolshevik socialists like Catherine Breshkowsky, gave her purpose to continue for forty-one more years, until her death in 1950. In 1934, Alice received the Ford Hall Forum Award for her work for humanity, and two years later she was awarded the *Jewish Advocate* Rose, for she was "Long an

39. Maud Wood Park, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 24, frame 220.

40. Undated newspaper clipping, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 24, frame 257.

41. Wheeler, Loving Warriors, p. 346.

exponent of extension of full human rights to all people."⁴² Her public career culminated with a 1945 honorary Doctorate of Humanities Degree, bestowed on the aged Blackwell by her alma mater, Boston University. At that time, Alice was living the life of a recluse, blind and alone in her dark and lonely apartment.⁴³

Alice Stone Blackwell never fully escaped from the overpowering presence of her mother's personality. Alice showed signs of spirited individuality as a teenager, but Lucy Stone's obsession with women's rights gradually dominated the sensitive young woman. She never consciously decided to remain single and devote her life to woman's suffrage, as her mother had, but Alice resigned herself to those directions, because she foresaw no other avenues. Perhaps Alice would have been withdrawn regardless of her family upbringing, but certainly this personality trait was intensified by her relationship with her mother. Even if future studies do not determine that children of other reform families followed Alice's pattern, it is clear that her parents' total commitment to suffrage had a detrimental effect on Alice's life. The tragedy of Alice Stone Blackwell was that while living a productive public life, endeavoring to open opportunities for other women and all humankind, her personal life remained empty and void.

42. Undated newspaper clipping, in Blackwell Family Papers, reel 24, frame 257.

43. No one meeting the frail spinster would have considered her a radical threat. Yet, Elizabeth Dilling, in The Red Network, listed her as a subversive, for belonging to organizations such as the American Friends of Russian Freedom, the National Mooney-Billings Committee, the League of Women Voters, and the American Civil Liberties Union. See Elizabeth Dilling, The Red Network: A "Who's Who" and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots (New York, 1977, originally published in 1934), p. 265.