

New Zealand there is such a gap in time that without seeing the work of the intervening years other than the exquisite scientific illustrations it is idle to speculate about their contrasts.

The importance to us of the New Zealand drawings is that they exist, that William Swainson never lost his interest in what he saw around him in spite of the hardships, dangers and disappointments he encountered when he chose at fiftyone to emigrate to the colonies. We are indebted to him for numerous glimpses through an Englishman's eyes of the first encroachments on the wilderness.

Henry Gabriel Swainson, whose 1850-1 diary was bought with the drawings, was born on 6 December 1830, the fourth child of William Swainson. He was ten years old when he came to New Zealand and although he probably went to school during the two years the family spent at Thorndon his subsequent education must have been got at home for his 'Hawkshead Journals' kept in 1844<sup>43</sup> for his grandparents are a daily record of work on the property in company with his brother George. Although an erratic speller, he was a fluent and spontaneous writer, as his later letters show, and early cut childish pieties to a minimum to write succinctly and with enjoyment of the happenings of the district.

The young Swainsons all wrote home to their fond and anxious relatives, and many of their letters have been preserved.<sup>44</sup> Although the writers no doubt felt they were withholding the worst of their experiences, they have left many artless descriptions of life in the settlement which must have confirmed to excess their grandparents' fears for their welfare and survival. Henry Gabriel's letters of 1845-46 casually alternate stories of backwoods horrors with Swiss Family Robinson confidence and cheer. On 12 July 1846 he described an ambush, several skirmishes (in which he participated) and a murder, interspersed with social gossip, then said, 'We have a guard of Soldiers stationed at our house so you need not be alarmed for us amid all these horrible scenes so I hope you will put your mind quit at rest with respect to us ...'<sup>45</sup> He was then in the Hutt Militia, for which service he later received the New Zealand Medal.<sup>46</sup>

In spite of his exuberance Henry was fretting to leave New Zealand. On 20 October 1845 he wrote to Mr and Mrs Parkes saying that ever since he had left England in the *Jane* he had had 'a strong attachment to [the sea] and now it has burst out in all its vigour ...' The next year, in which he joined the Militia while waiting for his future to be settled, was full of discussion of ways and means. He was afraid as his sixteenth birthday approached that he would be soon too old to make a satisfactory career in the Navy and, funds being short, was willing to work his passage home to save time. Once in England if the Navy failed him he was prepared to accept a place in a Liverpool merchant's fleet trading with China. For the Navy, influence was necessary and his uncle's friendship