

with Sir Robert Peel was spoken of. Eventually, with the help of uncles on both sides of the family, a passage was arranged⁴⁷ and Henry left New Zealand on 7 March 1847 aboard the *Lady Rowena*.⁴⁸ He had been impatiently awaiting the moment for months and on 7 January 1847 had written, 'Everything is ready at a moments notice for my departure.'⁴⁹ 'If it was not for leaving my Father etc. etc. behind me,' he wrote on 7 December 1846, 'I should not have the least regret in leaving this country where I have seen so many persons ruined as I feel confident that I shall succeed in the profession I am now going into and as confident that I should not in any other except the army.'⁵⁰

Henry did join the Navy and succeeded quite well, rising to the rank of Staff Commander, although in the 1860s there were some long periods on reserve. In spite of offers from their grandparents the other young Swainsons remained in New Zealand. William John decided to put his faith in the colony and became a sheep farmer. George Frederick, who had been educated at Saint Johns College, Auckland, was a surveyor. Mary married J. W. Marshall of the 65th Regiment in 1849: she looked forward to their eventual return to England but died young and is buried in Bolton Street cemetery.

Henry's letters to his sister began on Christmas Day 1847, written from their grandparents' home in Harborne Road near Birmingham.⁵¹ The letters continue until just after Mary's death in 1854, so that some are contemporaneous with the 1850-1 diary. There must be other diaries of Henry's in existence, as correspondence at various times in his life indicates. His first seafaring journal, written aboard the merchant vessel *Lady Rowena*, got him into trouble in Valparaiso where the Captain found it, read it and, disliking a reference to himself, took Henry before the British Consul for a reprimand. The 1850-1 diary, which contains plenty of criticism of senior officers, begins with Henry's title, 'Private journal ...'

After months of suspense in England Henry began his naval career by joining H.M.S. *Havannah* in April 1848 and setting sail for New Zealand via Rio de Janeiro and the Cape.⁵² Mary wrote to her grandfather, '... I am sure tho' I am his sister I can safely say that Her Majesty never had a finer Midshipman enter her Service than he, & I am sure he *will* distinguish himself if he ever has an opportunity, & I do think he *will*, at any rate he will rise steadily by his own good conduct and Uncle Joes interest as long as he lives.'⁵³ Nevertheless, with Henry's best interests in mind she had prepared her grandfather for his return: 'Henry has a fine character naturally, but it is much counteracted by a great degree of self will, & selfishness, these you may remember were the besetting sins of his childhood, and they have grown with him.'⁵⁴

Fears that the parting with Henry might be for life were happily unfounded. *Havannah* was attached to the Australian station and Henry