

was back in Port Nicholson on 26 November 1848<sup>55</sup> with all the news that Mary longed for of the large circle of beloved relatives and friends in England. He was not able to be at Mary's wedding in May 1849 but on the wharf at Hobart Town he saw her wedding dress taken aboard the *Emma* for Port Nicholson.<sup>56</sup>

During the period of the diary Henry visited New Zealand twice, made two cruises in the Pacific and turned 21. He was a man of the world, decorously adult in Port Nicholson society; critical of the entertainment at parties in Sydney and Hobart and of the looks, dress and deportment of the ladies; and an outspoken observer in the Islands as well as a keen participant. He spent more than a year in the schooner *Bramble* chafing to get back to the *Havannah*, which he rejoined for the return trip to England; and he met up with the *Calliope*, his 'old ship' as he called her in memory of his Hutt Militia days when *Calliope* and *Driver* were at Porirua and the Swainsons were friendly with Captain Polkinghorne, Midshipman McKillop and the Honourable Lieutenant Yelverton, R. A.

Inside the diary is a note in the handwriting of Edwin Swainson's daughter Dorothy, 'Aunt Lilla (Mrs Henry G. Swainson) gave this book to my sister Mary saying "Here is your Uncle's diary you may like to read" — we all felt certain she had never read it herself —' Dorothy Swainson may have underestimated her aunt, who emerges from later Swainson correspondence as a favourite relative and seemingly not predisposed to be shocked. It must be one of Henry's vintage diaries, however, and appears to have been read to pieces. Every night on shore in Sydney was a ball or a party, every day in Hobart a picnic. 'Monday the 10th [February 1851] Got the "*Bramble*" under way & took a Pic-Nic party over to the other side of the river — It was given jointly by Captain Erskine and Miss King. No one was asked but spoons [girls to spoon with] so directly we landed they all paired off. I thought it rather a bawdy house turn out ...' Henry's objections were on grounds of style. In Fiji he accepted local manners: 'We then dined smoked and bathed. We performed the latter operation before about twenty women who at last became so excited that they caught hold of each other in all kind of indecent postures. When we came out I tried what could be done but there were too many together and I could not get any privately.'<sup>57</sup>

The diary is full of gossip — about people in society, about quarrels and scandals in the navy, and about the missionaries and chieftains in New Caledonia, the Loyalty Islands, Fiji and Samoa. Terrible stories of hearsay are recounted and cruel and sad instances of his own experience: '... we have to take 8 natives back who were brought to Sydney from Aneitium [?] being the same that were in that disturbance at the Beche de Mer fishing in New Caledonia. We left Sydney with 9 all looking very ill. One poor thin skeleton died on Tuesday such an object I never saw.