

Walter supplies an answer in the entry of his shipboard diary for 12 August 1857, a week after he left Plymouth: 'Rested very ill last night as usual and had recourse twice to a soporific called *aqua vitae* but with indifferent Success: a Sound Sleep is a luxury I have not enjoyed for, I am afraid to say how long, but certainly not for Six months at least, and this I attribute in a great measure to intense mental anxiety; during that time two very important matters have been engrossing my attention, and are still: the first was getting married, and this, with all right thinking and well meaning people, is a matter not lightly gone into, nor without much thought; luckily for me, I had no distracting doubts as to the qualifications of the young lady I made choice of for a wife, but I had a very great many as to how I would support her properly when I got her and So powerful were they also, that they induced me to leave my own country, where I could not see I had any chance of making a comfortable living, to go to New Zealand, whither my good wife and I are now bound, in the good Ship the *John Macvicar*, to seek there for a larger share of the world's wealth, than we could possibly have found at home The preparation for the marriage therefore, the preparations for going abroad, the establishing connexions at home for the purpose of trade, the canvassing for consignments, and the anxiety of mind connected with all as to whether the step I was taking would prove a Success or a failure, have kept my mind so much on the rack night and day that sleep has all but gone from me, but I trust less anxious times are in Store for me yet.

Walter is not often so revealing and when revising the journal in later life suppressed the passage – an example the biographer, in his zeal for uncovering domestic privacies, has seen no reason to follow. Alexa also wrote of her husband's sleeplessness but not of his soporifics, and both conscientiously recorded the novel phenomena of shipboard life – the sunsets, the storms, the flying fish, the dying children, the boredom, the drunkenness, the scandal. A glimpse of her husband and fellow passengers supplied by Alexa: 'W., though troubled with sleepless nights, has become stout – his appearance Similar to a "Whiskered Pandour" or "a fierce Hussar" If you could have a glimpse just now of the Saloon of the *John Macvicar* you w<sup>d</sup> think us a busy community. It is not teatime yet, many are writing – others Sewing & talking – M<sup>r</sup> Gaby is mounted on the table making himself useful, by cleaning out the water filters. the Sounds of music come from M<sup>rs</sup> Lambert's Cabin – promenaders are above our heads. the report of a gun is heard now & then. The Quarter Deck is like a fair, on a small scale – children Swinging on a real Swing – women washing & baking – a number of men are occupied cutting up a pig, which has just fallen a Sacrifice to our Carniverous tendencies – the old highland wifie sits apart with folded hands looking on – thinking – thinking –'