

anxious thought, Walter was careful to explain, had they decided on this course. 'It was', he wrote, 'a hard trial to both my Wife and myself to leave our two youngest children behind us, but we believed it was much better for the dear children themselves to leave them behind than to Subject them to the hard fare and the rough usage of a long Sea voyage, the more So as our Contemplated absence from them was to be Short, and we were leaving them in the care of a most Kind & tender hearted friend . . .' Apart from this there are few intimacies in the new journal, not much about natural phenomena, and no references at all to reading. But Walter does mention the ship's newspaper to which both he and Alexa contributed; he praises the captain who dispensed free drinks on festive occasions; he sometimes complains of sleeplessness; and more frequently he writes of the three boys, their health, their high spirits, their engaging pranks. The revelation during this voyage is of Walter as the fondest of parents. A more perfunctory journalizer now than he had been in 1857, he ends in mid-ocean soon after the passengers celebrated crossing the Line with potations of champagne supplied by the generous captain.

That the Turnbulls reached London and travelled to Scotland can be inferred from an incident recorded not by Walter but by some anonymous journalist, with the heading, *Sad Fatality*. This paragraph from the *Wellington Independent* for 4 November was the reward of Mr Bagnall's inspired and persistent searching:

'By the arrival of the English mail yesterday, the friends of Mr Walter Turnbull, of this city, received the intelligence of his having sustained an extremely distressing family bereavement. It appears that, by a sad accident, two of his children have been drowned – both fine young boys, aged eight and nine years. The accident happened in the river Tweed, in the vicinity of Peebles, and during the visit of Mr Turnbull to the city of Edinburgh. Accompanied by a servant girl, they had gone to the river to bathe. When the girl thought they had been sufficiently long in the water, she called to them to come out. Robert, the youngest of the three, did so at once; the other two replied that they would be out immediately. While engaged dressing the youngest, she turned to look to the river where the boys were, and missed them. She at once gave an alarm, and it was found that the poor boys had gone over a bank or a ledge on the bottom of the stream into a pool ten feet deep – the Tweed being in that neighbourhood a succession of shallow streams and deep pools. The bodies were got out, and everything was done to restore animation, but without avail. . . . Yesterday, on the news being received, the vessels in harbour showed their colors half mast in recognition of the general regret it had caused.'

In their extremity the Turnbulls were supported by their unquestioning faith – or so Walter's one extant reference to the tragedy seems to