

1855-1857

Out of school Henry found a job with Asbury and Company, importers of china and glass. They paid him \$2 a week for long hours of copying papers, wrapping parcels, and running errands, and he stuck it out for a year or so, performing to satisfaction. Then he moved to a clerkship in a marine adjuster's office. 'Don't you remember our conversations about the pitiful sums of your weekly earnings?' his mother asked years later, when it was his brother Val's turn to be dissatisfied, making \$1.50 a week.

The way out was the water route. Though breaking from the family circle at age fifteen sounds pretty extreme for a proper George, going to sea was really not at all unnatural. It was only one step from his father's office to the offices where Henry had his first jobs, and one step more from clerking in a maritime business to a ship's deck. As a little fellow Henry had loved the sea stories his father told from the lore of Captain George — particularly the patriotic ones of his grandfather's valor during the War of 1812 — and father and son had roamed the Philadelphia waterfront together. 'One of our chief playgrounds,' remembers William Newton, brother of Heber, 'was about the wharves of the city. [Henry] had a friend who was a sea captain and I a cousin, and both of us had our minds set on a sea voyage.' And in his own much later retrospections, Henry George cherished the education he had had, knowing and loving the port. He had seen the first iron steamship ever to put into Philadelphia, he once told an audience, and the fact of

iron afloat had astounded him: in time the boy had thought of the hollowness within, and conceived for himself a notion of the displacement of water by a floating body. He made model brigs for the mantelpiece at home; and for the rest of his days he loved to sail, and to make sketches of sailing vessels.

Opportunity came in 1855, and he must have been watching for it. About the middle of January Henry noticed in the *Herald* that the Indiaman

Hindoo had put into New York after a voyage from the Orient. This was the vessel on which a twenty-four-year-old fellow parishioner of St. Paul's, Samuel Miller, sailed as mate. With the assistance of George Latimer the two met, at St. Paul's Church it seems likely, and talked out Henry's hopes. The boy learned that Miller expected by spring to be put in command of the *Hindoo* and sent to Australia and India; and Henry was promised that if the promotion came off he too could ship. Within a month or so, the friend, now Captain Miller, wrote that they could go ahead. He would gladly help with gathering a sea-going outfit; his one anxiety was that should anything go wrong the George family would never forgive him. 'Any trouble would be my misfortune not my fault.'

At the point of decision making, Henry's diary takes on a flavor of secrecy and conspiracy. Yet it is more likely that the elder Georges fooled the boy, by being undeceived, than that he brought off anything very secret. The fact that his cousin, who within a few weeks was to be ordained a minister, sat in on the conference, makes it pretty clear that family affairs never slipped out of adult supervision. At any rate, when Henry broached the matter, his parents, who had had a recent experience of his being willful around the house, did not object too much; and the arrangements of detail were made rather between Mr. George and Captain Miller than by Henry himself. He was to sail as foremast boy. In the hope that he would not have too good a time and want to go to sea again, the father asked that things not be made too soft. As his mother later reviewed the matter: 'We had perfect knowledge of the Captain and he promised to watch and protect you as a brother which he did.'

On Sunday, 1 April, the day before leaving, St. Paul's Sunday school gave Henry a new Bible, and George Latimer presented a copy of James's *Anxious Inquirer*. (Some Sundays later the young minister pleased the family by praying for Henry during church

service.) On Monday the moment of going was hard, and the boy almost faltered. But his father, two uncles, and half a dozen cousins and friends went with him to the Delaware river ferry; and from there he traveled with Sam Miller, 'four hours brooding' to New York. Some of the farewell letters from Philadelphia were pretty doleful, such as the one from a chum who told his 'Dear Mackerel' that he hoped this parting would not be the last one. Doubtless the railroad journey gave Henry his first and most

emotional opportunity to read a poem signed 'F. C.,' and written out in the prettiest and primmest hand a girl could manage.

*Thou Henry still art young,
And does not see the wonder Thou wilt tread
The buoyant deck, and look upon the flood,
Unconscious of the high sublimity . . .
Blest be thy passage o'er the changing sea
Of life; the clouds be few that intercept
The light of joy. The waves roll gently
Beneath thy bark of hope, and bear thee safe
To meet in peace, thine other father, — God.*

The blurs and creases and turned down corners of the good paper on which this message is inscribed are the first signs of record that Henry was interested in Florence Curry, who was the daughter of a family friend, or in any girl.

The youngster bucked up in New York City. He signed the shipping articles at \$6 a month, three-quarters as much net as he had earned gross at home. He had a few days for sight-seeing. The great city struck him much more happily in 1855 than it was to in 1869, when we shall find him making his next and crucial visit. He liked everything, perhaps excepting the Customs House, which he compared unfavorably with the one where his father worked. His eye was pleased by the regularity of the streets, and the brown-stone houses and the city gardens; and from the Battery the views of land and water entranced him. First experiences of living and working as a seaman were a great deal easier than expected': he mentioned sleeping in the after-house with carpenter and cook, and eating meals prepared by hands as clean as kitchen hands at Parkinson's. With a God bless you all' he ended his good-bys on 10 April as the *Hindoo* was pulled downstream for the long voyage.

The vessel, though twenty-five years old, was good size for then — 586 tons register, 1200 tons burden — and the outward cargo comprised half a million feet of lumber for Australia. The normal crew, Henry had understood beforehand, was nineteen men: fourteen able seamen, the cook, the steward, two mates, and the captain. On this trip the foremast boy, and possibly also the carpenter, was extra. The crew, the members of which Mr.

Miller had some trouble picking up, was a properly mixed lot, men from the West Indies, a Spaniard, and an Englishman among them, and they all looked interesting to the youngest member.

Henry George's fifteen months on the *Hindoo* became the natural occasion of his doing his first sustained writing. There was opportunity to mail letters at only three points: before sailing from New York, at Melbourne, the port of call, and from Calcutta, the destination. But for everyday a sailor may keep a journal, and Henry did a remarkable job. In interesting detail he put down his routine duties, keeping watch and doing odd jobs; and he recorded his introspections also — homesickness at first, Sunday thoughts of St. Paul's, and remembrance of the pies his mother baked. It was all very normal: no emotions to excess, hard work but not too much to do.

Best of all the youngster's mind reached out, noticing things and putting them down with clarity and force and economy of word. For instance, the story in his Sea Journal of the Fourth of July in the South Atlantic: 'Weds. July 4. At 12 o'clock last night the day was ushered in by three discharges from a small swivel, which made a great deal of noise, rousing up all who were asleep. As soon as the smoke cleared away and the dead and wounded were mustered, it was found that it had not been without execution, all the glass on one side of the house being shattered (a loss not easily repaired), a port blown out; and the waddings (made of rope yarn, and very hard) had passed, one through the head of the new water cask, and another through the new foretopsail, which had not been bent a week ... At 12 m. all hands were called to reef. While reefing the foretopsail the parrel of the yard gave way, causing a great deal of trouble and keeping all hands from dinner. It was 2:30 p.m. before our watch got below to their plum duff, which had been allowed in honour of the day. The rest of the day was rainy, with wind constantly varying, keeping us hawling on the

braces. Thus closed the most miserable 4th of July that I have ever yet spent.'

Not often in the journal did he turn from the facts to the feeling of what he saw. But we may look ahead, near to journey's end, to see that at sixteen he could express an emotion and an impression too. On 28 May 1856, he noted: 'I witnessed this afternoon one of the most beautiful storms that I have ever seen. It was about 4 p.m., the sun shining brightly. The

squall or rather shower came up astern: the space over which it extended seemed not above 14 mile in width and its bounds were as clearly marked on the water as those of a sandy beach. Where it was raining the sea seemed as though it were molten silver which contrasted strongly with the deep blues adjoining. The wind curling the tops of the waves made a most beautiful appearance. On the whole was suspended a small but most beautiful rainbow. The shower quickly came on us, but it was light, and as quickly departed.' Evidently writing was fun; certainly there was no other reason than doing a task because he liked to do it, for Henry to keep this journal.

Outward bound the *Hindoo* swung far southeast. Far out of sight of land all the way, the vessel rounded the Cape of Good Hope about the middle of July, and from there ran into cold and gales in the southern Indian Ocean. At last on 24 August, the 137th day at sea, the ship put into Hobson's Bay, the port of Melbourne. Here occurred the most difficult event of the voyage, apparently Henry's very first experience of the conflict of working men with property and authority.

According to his Sea Journal, the sailors planned to leave the *Hindoo* in Australia, and they were in a hurry. He heard them talk about the region around Melbourne as a 'Land of Promise, where gold was to be had by all.' He sympathized with their haste, on the day of putting in, as he heard the men discussing 'What they would do, where they would go, and how they would spend their money when they got it.' But under their articles they were not free until the cargo had been unloaded, and here the crew balked. Fearing that, if they put the lumber ashore, Captain Miller would not pay them, they demanded immediate discharge. Of course this played right into the captain's hands: he regarded the whole crew as a miserable lot, and naturally refused the demand.

Three days of tension passed aboard the *Hindoo*, riding anchor well out in Hobson's Bay. Then as the crew had wanted, the American consul was brought aboard. Seated on the booby-hatch, he heard grievances and commitments. 'Some complained of bad food,' Henry recorded without stating his own judgment, 'others of bad language and threats used to them by the officers, and some of blows and one of sickness caused by falling from aloft.' The consul found in favor of the ship's master; and Captain Miller followed the judgment by saying that once the cargo was unloaded,

‘he would pay them their wages and let them go in peace.’ Yet authority somehow lost power. The sailors demanded the captain’s promise in writing; he refused, and the men refused to work. The struggle ended with the striking sailors’ being convicted and taken to prison ship for a month’s hard labor. The lumber was discharged and ballast taken aboard, doubtless at lower cost to the business venture than paying sailors’ wages from New York.

We gather that, though legal right seems to have been all on the side of the young captain, Henry George tacitly sympathized with the strikers. Perhaps it was simple shock and resentment at first seeing maritime law, or any kind of labor law, in action. Or it may have been more: Henry may have felt some truth in the sailors’ incidental complaints and have judged Sam Miller too truculent in young authority. We may take the word of Henry George, Jr., and Anna George de Mille that his championing sailors’ rights, as an editor nearly twenty years later, connected in his mind with unforgettable scenes in Hobson’s Bay. In 1840, American enlightenment, in the person of Richard Henry Dana, had begun stating the facts and making the fight for seamen, demanding that they be treated essentially like other laborers and citizens. Henry George, in this as much as anyone Dana’s successor, made his background observations in Australia.

Though the *Hindoo* lay over nearly a month, Henry went to Melbourne only once, just long enough to remember at his visit of 1890 the city’s earlier San Francisco-like appearance: ‘its busy streets, its seemingly continuous auctions, its crowds of men with flannel shirts and long high boots, its bay crowded with ships.’ When the time came for economic writing, he always had an eye for what was going on in Australia and New Zealand.

In the *Sea Journal*, a couple of periods of being becalmed, one of them at the crossing of the equator, were the only matters of note

for the remainder of the outward voyage. Then, in one of his most effective passages, he described the approach up the Hooghly River to Calcutta: ‘Mon. Dec. 3 ... About 5 a.m. we were taken in tow by the steamer and proceeded up the river. The night air was misty and chilly and a monkey jacket proved very comfortable. The day soon began to break, revealing a beautiful scene. The river at times very broad and again contracting its stream into a channel hardly large enough for a ship of

average size to turn in, was bordered by small native villages, surrounded by large fruit trees, through which the little bamboo huts peeped ... On the banks the natives began to go to their daily toil, some driving cattle along, others loading boats with grain, while the women seemed busy with their domestic affairs. As we approached the city, the banks on both sides were lined with handsome country residences of the wealthy English ... The river which [at Garden Reach] takes a sudden bend was crowded with ships of all nations, and above nothing could be seen but a forest of masts. On the right hand or Calcutta side, are the East India Company's works, for repairing their steamers, numbers of which, principally iron, were undergoing repairs ... One feature which is peculiar to Calcutta was the number of dead bodies floating down in all stages of decomposition, covered by crows who were actively engaged in picking them to pieces. The first one I saw filled me with horror and disgust, but like the natives, you soon cease to pay any attention to them.'

The *Hindoo* lay nearly all of December and the first half of January in Calcutta harbor, and Henry had freedom to explore a great deal in city and countryside. But the first matter for a boy away from home was a batch of letters, the only ones to reach him on the voyage. His mother had asked friends and relatives to write, and his father had made a packet of the letters: the effort seems to have been planned as group persuasion that Henry should stay at home next time. The letters brought an ocean of affection. From home, humor and teasing as well as words on the sadness of separation, and news of all the relatives; and, from a friend, the not too distressing item that Henry's 'dear Florie' had cried the entire day of his departure, and now was looking 'awful' as she had grown 'several feet.' Thus reminded, the boy wrote the long letters which still tell the story of his visit to India. He shopped for presents to take home, and accumulated in Calcutta a parrot and many hand-

kerchiefs, boxes, fans, and other 'nic nacks.' For himself he selected a pet monkey, a lively and comforting little beast which turned out to be the only member of a considerable menagerie brought aboard the *Hindoo* to survive the passage to New York.

In port the captain and the foremast boy were free to be friends and have their fun together. They suffered a little from change of diet at first, but the weather was beautiful, and during the ten days before Christmas

they visited both Calcutta and Barrackpore, sixteen miles away. They saw a juggler perform, and a dwarf dance; and in a park Henry climbed a giant banyan tree. The captain thought it curious to see white and colored people mix promiscuously on the streets and was tempted to thump a colored gentleman walking with three white girls. Henry recorded no reaction to his commander's attitude. The two found the stores open late on Christmas eve, and the churches crowded on Christmas day. They attended an early service in the cathedral of the Church of England, and then a late service in another Anglican church. They presented themselves with a holiday dinner and really must have had a glorious time. But most of their thoughts that day, the captain insisted, went back to Philadelphia. India was never mystic India to Henry George after this visit; it was an actual, grim, and suffering India. And in course of time, when as social critic he was ready to compare peoples and their problems, having seen the land was to make the literature of India the more fascinating to him, and his argument the more effective.

For the return voyage once again new sailors had to be signed, and Henry noticed that, though they came from more diverse origins than the outgoing crew, almost to a man they had been in the United States and now considered themselves to be Americans. There was room for thought in this: the fourteen 'Americans' included men from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Holland, and Russia. As they were about to sail the boy noticed that the cargo was very 'tight' and the ship 'deep.' He predicted a long voyage, about 120 days, which would bring them into New York about the middle of May. He predicted his own situation also: on arrival home he would have about \$50, 'not much for 13 or 14 months.' But not a bad net gain, either, one may think, considering that his total wages would have come to about \$85 or \$90, and that he had already seen the sights of New York, Melbourne, and Calcutta, on funds advanced.

The worst of the return voyage came at the very start, when adverse winds kept the *Hindoo* three weeks beating down the eighty-six mile stretch of the Hooghly River, a terrible annoyance. The Philadelphians were made happy though on 4 February, the day when at last the pilot could be dropped, because, as they were about to leave the river's mouth, Captain Miller's father brought in his splendid new ship, an American clipper. There was much visiting back and forth, in a small way a St. Paul's reunion, before the *Hindoo* put out to sea.

During the first month the cook sickened and died, and for a few days the captain gave Henry duty in the galley, a job he hated. Otherwise the voyage home lacked much event. The monkey kept him company, and, says Henry, prevented the cockroaches from crawling on his face while he slept. On 13 April the *Hindoo* rounded the Cape of Good Hope again, two weeks later sighted St. Helena, and on 14 June put safely into New York harbor. An April entry in the *Sea Journal*, the last that requires quoting, tells us that the writer was relishing his adventure: ‘One year has passed since the Sunday when I took farewell of my friends — to me an eventful year; one that will have a great influence in determining my position in life; perhaps more so than I can at present see. O that I had it to go over again! Homeward bound! In a few months I hope to be in Philadelphia once more.’

It was a browned and much grown-up young fellow who returned to the Third Street home as summer came on, less than three months short of seventeen. Though he was proud of having gone to sea, in some degree his parents won their point. He showed no sign of wanting to go again; and in the future he thought of seamanship for himself only as the means to earn a passage, or in hard times as a very temporary make-do. Final advice against seamanship as a possible career for Henry George was written by Sam Miller, as he was about to sail again: ‘I hope you will find some agreeable and profitable employment before long, take my advice and never go to sea. You know the troubles of a sailor’s life before the mast, it never gets any better. [The] 2d mate leads proverbially a dog’s life, the mate and Captain’s very little better.’ Henry had now to set a new course for himself, and he knew it; but his bearings were far from clear.

Of course the first question was a job, but finding one was slow. Some unnamed errand took him on an overnight trip to Baltimore

in August. He seems to have been doing some work for the uncle who paid his way, rather than looking for a position; and Henry put down in his diary only that he talked politics and wandered about the waterfront of the city. At last in September, and this time again through his father’s arranging, he got a job sufficient for the time being. This was an apprenticeship in the printing shop of King and Baird, and once more the pay was only \$2 a week. But Mr. George thought of the printing trade as

educational, and one to open doors, and Henry fell into step. They never did a wiser thing together.

As printer's apprentice the boy learned fast. After eight months he could set 4000 ems a day 'on common news work,' an amount which would earn a journeyman printer about \$10 a week, he boasted. He made friends and picked up ideas. 'Henry George was a remarkably bright boy always in discussion with other boys in the office,' Ned Wallazz tells us. 'He got into the habit of appealing to me (I am seven or eight years older) for support as to his dates and facts, historical and political.' This was 1857, the year when Pennsylvania's James Buchanan became President, the year also of Dred Scott, and of the beginning of a depression. Henry George's own recollection of print-shop talk fixes on an economic idea taught him by an old printer of the firm, the proposition — which might have been concocted out of the pages of Adam Smith himself, and which certainly conformed with the ideas of the *laissez faire* school, which prevailed in the United States almost as uniformly as in England — that in old and settled countries workmen are paid low wages, and that in new countries they are paid high. It was an idea to disturb a boy who remembered Australia, and who was beginning to hear and think about the American West coast. Philadelphia was an old city; and Henry had three years ahead at \$2 a week, before at twenty-one he could become a journeyman and earn an independent living of his own.

The dimness and distance of his prospects in the printing office were matched by a certain incompatibility at home. Not that there was a sharp break, nor that the Georges failed to allow leeway for a lad in his later teens. Jo Jeffreys, one of Henry's more spirited contemporaries, gives us an attractive description of how Henry entertained his friends in the attic bedroom, the gaslight dim and books spread around, with hours on hours of talk. When the host

drowsed off, the friends filed out and let him rest. But Henry had not been home long when his father quarreled with him about the hours he kept; and he and his mother argued, not far from election time, about slavery. In this Democratic family the parents condoned slavery as sanctioned by Scripture, and they rejected abolitionism in the way President Buchanan did, as an altogether exaggerated and impractical movement. Henry retorted that his mother's attitude rested 'on policy not principle,' and that the

ownership of human beings gave slave masters too much power. Henry George was thinking of home and church in 1857, we may be sure, when he recalled much later, 'how over and over again I have heard all questions of slavery silenced by the declaration that the negroes were the *property* of their masters, and that to take away a man's slave without payment was as much a crime as to take away his horse without payment.' Very likely Henry's going one Sunday to the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem was a bit of a declaration of moral and spiritual independence.

During his months at home Henry's most particular friends were Ned Wallazz, of King and Baird's, Joseph Jeffreys, who was about to take up the study of law, and two old chums, the brothers Charles and Collins Walton. All shared in the Lawrence Society. Now, as apparently not before the voyage to India, that organization indulged in gay activities, some of them surprising for members and friends of the George family. What with boxing and fencing and general horseplay, 'the exercises tended to promote the muscular rather than the literary character,' says Charlie Walton; and there came times 'when the test of merit, and the standard of membership, was the drinking of the most Red Eye, the singing of the best song, and the smoking of the most segars.' Henry did not refuse. Writing to an absent member he explained that his letter would 'savor the filthy weed,' for he was smoking 'one of the longest kind of pipes filled with Stead's,' and he told about 'a drunk last Saturday night, when Jeffreys laid down in the street to be carried home and put to bed.' The Georges knew that Henry smoked, and probably knew that he drank too. Certainly they knew about Jo Jeffreys, whom Jane George liked. 'Confound it,' Jo told Henry after a call, 'when we are drunk we go just where we ought not to.'

Yet the Lawrence Society's original interest in books and ideas persisted, and the boys did compositions on serious subjects. From 1857 we have two contributions by Henry, the very earliest known essays of his writing. The first deals with Mormonism. With a gay 'Ho Brothers' for salutation, Henry launched into denunciation: polygamy, he said, exposed the Mormons to incredible temptations; and their organizing and colonizing activities created for the leaders of the movement extra temptations, to exploit the common membership. (Was this already recurrent theme, that power corrupts, so soon even a half-serious idea with Henry George?) To his moralizing without benefit of facts Henry added unflattering estimates

of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young; and he ended by arguing that the Latter-day Saints should somehow be brought to submit to government authority. Except for his antislavery feeling, this bit of social judgment is the first instance in the record of Henry George's proposing to change the ways of men.

His other Lawrence Society composition concerns 'The Poetry of Life,' and it takes us closer to the inner man. Poetry, said Henry, belongs to him who sees life round and who nurtures the divine flame. It is denied to those whose views are narrowed 'to the sole end of wealth.' He alone knows the poetry of life who can withdraw from the noise and hustle, and 'who strips the idols of common adoration to their nakedness, [and] views man as he was created, a being a little lower than the angels, but crowned in glory and honour, as a being awful in his powers and sublime in the rightly directed use of them.' Poetry occurs in the universal experiences: in the hopes of youth, 'in the first dawning of love,' in 'the fierce struggles of man with his fellows,' at last in death itself. 'If we would view men and things in their true effects and relations, we must withdraw from the turmoil and let the soul take her stand.'

We could easily say that as first essays the Lawrence Society papers, certainly the 'Mormonism' one, are better forgiven and forgotten. But the *Sea Journal* of 1855 and 1856 places them from the outset in the sequence of Henry George's writing; and they demand notice as they fix the point of turning from the clear flow of descriptive expression, which first came bountifully to him, into more turgid channels of thought and writing. Aboard the *Hindoo* at fifteen and sixteen he had written with little self-consciousness, for himself alone, about external things; but now, and for a while in the

future, self-consciousness and self-assertiveness were the order of the day. It may or may not be significant that Henry's reading pieces of Emerson — exhortations toward self-expression, every line of them — occurred almost certainly between writing the *Sea Journal* and the Lawrence Society essays. As of 1857, the important thing is that, nearly a decade before he began to earn his living by his pen, Henry George had spontaneously phrased his boy's thoughts in both the precise and objective and the hortatory and subjective modes of expression common in his day. It is only normal that at eighteen he was yet making no effort toward that

difficult goal: welding the two together into a powerful tool of expression and persuasion. It would take a quarter-century and the writing of a great book to do just that.

Besides family, job, friends, and ideas, Henry had time for one other interest, Florence Curry and her family. The family as a whole was important to him: the widowed mother, Mrs. Rebecca Curry, who heard his troubles; the older daughters, Martha and Emma, especially Emma who wrote him when Florence did not, and who was an intimate of his sister Caroline; and Florence, apparently a few years his junior, who fascinated him. The Currys were friends of the family and fellow parishioners at St. Paul's, and they had connections. Born a Kelley, Mrs. Curry had as brother no less a person than the Philadelphia judge who, as Republican Congressman, would presently be known as 'Pig Iron' Kelley, the most famous spokesman for the iron interests of the state. More to the concern of Henry, the widow's nephew, George Curry, was now territorial governor of Oregon, and he invited his aunt and cousins to join him. Accordingly, in March 1857, Mrs. Curry packed up her family and left Philadelphia, to take charge of a new home on the Pacific coast.

On seeing the family depart, Henry was quite as desolated as Florence had been in 1855. He let his feelings be hurt because, though he stood by until their boat sailed, he received no farewell wave or glance, a deprivation he may have misunderstood; and he trudged back to the printing office in the doldrums, pondering 'the mutability of human affairs.' But within a month Emma was writing about an expectation which they had discussed at home; and during the summer Florence herself, 'stony-hearted' about letter writing though Henry called her, was mentioning it

too: We will have a home to offer you and warm hearts to welcome you.' The girls wrote most of the letters, but Mrs. Curry approved. Indeed the family could hardly have reached Portland before Henry wrote the mother that he was 'still of the same opinion about going West; you know my reasons ... I only wait for your promised account of Oregon, and advice to determine where and when I shall go.' So it appears that during the winter of 1856-7, perhaps no more than six months after returning from India, again in conference with St. Paul's people, Henry George decided to leave home for more than just a voyage.

His determination to go West, at a time to depend on circumstances and the advice of his friends, became the more important on 10 June. On that day he quarreled with the job-room foreman at King and Baird's and had to quit. Possibly he was given extra courage by the latest word from the Currys: one of their friends, the editor of the *Oregon Statesman*, had said that if Henry would come he would pay him journeyman's wages, \$4 or \$5 a day in the new territory. But no letter from Oregon put travel money in his pocket, and only after stalling a couple of days did he nerve himself to confess to his family that he had got himself out of a job. He returned home low spirited, he confessed to his diary, 'and told Pop that I had left K&B. *****.' To the distant friends he wrote that he had been 'learning little and making little ... and would not quietly submit to the impositions and domineering insolence of the foreman.' It was still too early for him to sense that he was unemployed in a year of economic contraction, and that opportunities western or eastern might close up on him at an abnormal rate, as presently they did.

For a short while he made do in Philadelphia. For six days he was hired to do the work of a journeyman compositor who was out on strike; the work ended when the strike ended, and he was paid \$7.50, his largest wages to date, and the only scab wages of his life. Next, in July, he worked on a weekly sheet, *The Merchant*, and was paid only 'better than nothing.' Meanwhile his father discovered a possibility for him in the printing firm of Stavely and McCalla, at \$2.25 a week, with more promised in the second year. But this was on condition that he stay with the firm until he became twenty-one, and Henry would have none of it. He was tired of being an apprentice. The stop-gap job he took in late summer,

shipping to Boston and return on a coal barge, at least spared him more of that humiliation. He proved to a doubting skipper that he had strength and skill to man the wheel, and so earned the wages of an able seaman.

By fall the hard times had hit and he knew it. In a letter written but not sent to a brother in the Lawrence Society, Henry grieved: 'The times are damned hard, and are practically getting worse every day ... There are thousands of hard-working mechanics now out of employment in this city. And it is to the fact that among them is your humble servant, that you owe this letter. If you will send on without delay the V. you owe me, you will be doing the State a service by lessening the pressure of the hard times upon

one of the hard-fisted mechanics who form her bone and muscle.’ And Henry demanded also to be told of any rich men or corporations his friend happened to know (‘I should much prefer the latter, especially if their rules and regulations are a little lax’) who might want ‘a nice young man of my well known talents and capacities.’ He was ready for a canal boat, he said, if only it would pay.

Yet even at this moment of anxious temporizing, Henry saw better things ahead. If we may trust a much later recollection, he had learned by the time of the Boston trip that a steamer was being fitted out in the Philadelphia Navy Yard for lighthouse service on the Pacific coast — a marvelous chance for a free passage. With his parents fully in counsel, he wrote to Congressman Thomas B. Florence, a Philadelphian who was interested in navy business. He wanted to become an ‘ordinary seaman or first-class boy’ on the *Shubrick*, he petitioned. His father backed him up with a personal appeal; and Mr. Florence promised to help. In addition Henry besought his uncle Thomas Latimer to influence people in the Lighthouse Bureau in Washington, so that he might be permitted to earn his way on the *Shubrick* without the normal commitment to remain on the crew after arrival. In due course he submitted testimonials; and he even stretched the truth to represent himself as ‘a graduate of the Philadelphia High School.’

The pressure moved the wheels. About six weeks after the approach to Representative Florence, Henry George was appointed steward of the bright new craft. The only hitch was that he was obliged to sign for a full year’s service; but even this was sweetened

by a promise of \$40 a month, much the best he had ever earned. He could now make his way to the Currys if he chose; or he would probably have a chance to settle into federal-government service, as his father had. Certainly he would see his married cousin James George, an older contemporary who was fairly well situated now as bookkeeper in a San Francisco clothing firm. In that distant western land, infinite possibilities lay open.

Things moved fast. Henry had to leave suddenly three days before Christmas; his orders came so late that there was no time for proper farewells. A picture was taken, disappointing compared to the daguerreotype of 1855. Though Ned Wallazz learned what was happening

in time to write Henry a letter, Jo Jeffreys missed him, calling on the evening of departure. The lovable scamp, now his best friend, comforted the family by lending a picture he had, better than the new one, for duplication.

The parting was hard for the affectionate pious family. Aunt Mary and sister Caroline put solemn thoughts into their good-by letters, like those of 1855: their hopes that nephew and brother would do nothing dishonorable, and their faith that the day would come soon ‘when our dear Henry will be one of the lambs of Christ.’ Yet we may cheerfully doubt that in the rush such thoughts were said aloud. More likely spoken were the things the parents chose to write: they were completely satisfied with the job on the *Shubrick*, and they were confident that it would lead to good results. Though in a New Year’s letter the mother said how dreadfully she had missed Henry on Christmas day, she admitted that if she could she would not now wish him back: ‘I want you to be something and somebody in the world.’

As for the young man’s own view of how he would succeed in the future, he set himself in entire seriousness a thirty-seven point introspective examination of capacities. He used the scheme of phrenology, the fad and pseudo-science of the day. He judged himself to be ‘large’ or ‘full’ on the points of amativeness, combativeness, destructiveness, self-esteem, firmness, secretiveness, conscientiousness, hope, and individuality. Correct so far, we may judge, according to the record of his early years. He found himself lacking or ‘small’ in concentrativeness, acquisitiveness, mirthfulness, and calculation. Accurate again, he seems, though of all men he would be ‘concentrative’ in future years. He contradicted himself

with his ‘large’ for caution; there is room to question his ‘moderate’ for language; and one would wish that he had not left blank the spaces on veneration, benevolence, and ideality, among others.

His one-word answers he enlarged by free self-characterization. He included the following comments: ‘An ardent, devoted, and constant lover; he will defend the object of his love with boldness, protect his or her rights with spirit. Will feel much stronger attachment than he will express ... Is not very fond of children ... Chooses as his friends the talented, intellectual and literary, and avoids the ignorant ... Is extremely fond of travelling. Has an insatiable desire to roam about and see the world and afterwards to settle

down ... Is patriotic and ready to sacrifice all in defence of his country ... May get angry quickly, but, unless the injury is deep or intended, cannot retain his anger ... Will be more likely to make a general than a critical scholar. May have bold and original ideas upon a variety of subjects yet will not without effort or excitement have a train of connected thoughts upon any ... Is qualified to meet difficulties, overcome obstacles, endure hardships, contend for privileges, resent insults and defend his rights to the last ... Desires money more as a means than an end ... Is inclined to enter largely into business and push his projects with so much energy and zeal as to appear rash and nearly destitute of caution; yet will come out about right in the end, and will seldom fail entirely in his projects, though he may be obliged to retrace his steps.'

In like vein of assurance Henry wrote his parents, aboard the *Shubrick* on 6 January, the eighteenth day from home, and asked them not to share the letter outside the family. After requesting them to write Mrs. Curry that he would see her soon, he declared: 'I know my dear parents that you felt deeply the parting with me — far more so than I did. But let the fact that I am satisfied and that my chances are more than fair comfort you. As for me, for the first time in my life, [I] left home with scarcely a regret and without a tear. I believed that it was my duty both to myself and to you to go, and this belief assuaged the pain of parting.

'I am now about setting out for myself in the world, and though young in years I have every confidence in my ability to go through whatever may be before me. But of that I will say nothing, let the future alone prove ... I remain your Loving child.'