

From the Diary of Bishop John Francis Norton – 1925

Inscription....

*Diary kept for my dearest Mother
on the P. & O Steamer "Mongolia"
by John F. Norton
With the Australian National
Pilgrimage to Rome & Lourdes 1925.*

11th April, 1925

We had not much time to see things this morning, for the "Mongolia" was due to leave at 10am. However, we went to the Telegraph Office to send some telegrams and a cable to Agnes. She must have been puzzled to see it sent from there, but I had no time on the morning we left Sydney, and until the boat actually sailed I did not feel safe in sending one. All the time I felt that something would arise that would prevent my leaving, and then when the Bishop got ill, my worst fear seemed likely to be realised. Now that I had made a good start, I felt that as far as is ever humanly certain of anything, our voyage was going to be a reality.

Our ship was not able to start punctually, for the great task of loading 56,000 cases of apples, and 500 bales of wool - all for the London markets - was not finished on time. These are, with potatoes, the staple products of Tasmania. During the Apple season all the big liners call for their cargo of apples, and this year they have had a record crop - about half a million cases. All around the Ocean wharf was the beautiful perfume of ripe fruit.

About an hour, an hour behind our time, the "Mongolia" was ready again for sea. Slowly she breaks away from the pier, swings her prow seaward, let's the pilot down, and it was not long before we were making our headway along the Derwent. We got a very hearty send-off from the people who had gathered on the wharf. There were the paper ribbons again, and one little girl, thinking, I suppose, that I had no one to love me, got someone to throw me up a streamer, and she held her end until the vessel, amid hearty cheers, began to move. Then her mother took it, and we passed slowly through the water; the mother came down the wharf amongst the crowd, and our ribbon held almost till the last.

Sixty four feet at high water and sixty feet at low water is the extraordinary depth at the end of the wharf. There are few harbours in the world that can equal this.

Our passage down the Derwent was very pleasant, but as we reached its mouth and turned again into the Ocean, we began to get a good roll on. However, this is not what makes one seasick, it is the pitching of the vessel from prow to stern. This was the only occasion so far that we had to have table guards during lunch to keep the dishes from slipping of. We never had them again during this voyage.

