

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.*

3rd May

Thank God the Bishop had a good night, responding well to treatment. The nurse is very pleased. Today Fr Moloney preached a sermon the Mass – some reasons for its existence and what our gratitude for it should be. He described the efforts made by the early Irish settlers in Australia to go to Mass, the long journeys etc. But we can understand their spirit when we think what they must have gone through in the days of the old sailing ships, when they had the courage to face the unknown and for months at the mercy of the sea and the winds. His words make one value more highly the bravery of the young Irish girls who became our first nuns.



We in a 16,000 ton liner, with electric light and currents of air forced through all parts of the ship, iced drinks, plenty of food - in spite of all these things we feel frustrated with the heat, we go to the dining saloon merely from habit - and a month of sea-faring life has made most of us determined never to travel again. Yet we are living in luxury in comparison with them. Three months was the usual length of time taken by the sailing-ships to make the Australian trip. They might strike a calm in the middle of the Indian Ocean. If anything went wrong they had no wireless to make known their plight. Truly they were brave.

Mention of wireless reminds me that since we got out of Australian waters we have got no news except from the German Station at Nauen. Every day we receive a bulletin from there but it is almost about Hindenburg's election, what he said and what he intends to do. It is an extraordinary thing that they have gained the field in this matter. They can use it for their own propoganda and now and then for the sake of appearances they can give us a bit of news of general interest.

During these days of dreadful anxiety the writing of these pages afford the greatest relief. I can't fix my mind to reading, but an hour at the Diary breaks the tedium. I'm afraid the small shaky writing will be a sore trial on Mother's eyes, but I am doing most of it resting the book on the arm of a deck chair. Anyhow I can read it to her.