

Original Version
of a
Diary
kept on a
Five Week Voyage
which began at
Lettercollum, Co. Cork
on
Monday 19 May 1947
and ended at
All Hallows' Convent, Brisbane
on
Wednesday 25 June 1947

Sr Angela Mary R.S.M.

THE FIFTEEN WHO WERE PART OF THE VOYAGE

Sr M. Clementia Banney R.S.M. (In Charge)

Sr M. Rosaleen Hynes

Sr M. Monina Brosnan

Sr M Paulita McEneaney

Sr M Felicity Cavanagh

Sr M Carthage Fennessy

Sr M Madonna O'Donovan

Sr M Emeria O'Sullivan

Sr Angela Mary Doyle

Sr M Eugenia Barrett

Miss Ciss Boyle

Miss Philomena Boyle

Miss Julia Chambers

Miss Clare Markham

Miss Teresa Whelan

THESE HAVE COMPLETED THE VOYAGE BEGUN IN 1947

*Ciss Boyle, later Sister Mary Ambrose,
died 21 May 1980*

*Sister Mary Clementia,
died 13 June 1992*

Foreword

This is a personal Diary recorded at the end of each day, when a group of nine professed Sisters, of whom I was one, and five girls, left Ireland in pursuit of our Vocation in the far distant Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Brisbane.

The year was 1947.

We believed we would never see Ireland, our homes, our families, again. According to the custom and the advice of that era, we did not dwell too often or too long on the sacrifice that this entailed. We were giving our lives to God and we would do it willingly and as cheerfully as the pain of parting allowed, and so the Diary concentrates on the anecdotes, the situations, that helped fill our days and nights, and to a degree, assisted in suppressing the aching loneliness that was never far beneath the surface.

As we sailed further and further from our homeland, we put our faith and trust in God for the future. As each evening we watched the sun set, leaving the ocean dark and menacing, we prayed for the protection of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, that she and her Son would see us safely to Brisbane.

The 8th Century Irish Hymn was relevant to us:

"Be thou my Vision, thou Lord of my heart.

All else be nought to me save that thou art.

Be thou my best thought by day and by night.

Waking or sleeping, thy Presence my Light".

Sr Angela Mary

MONDAY 19 MAY 1947

This morning at about 10.40am, we bade farewell to Lettercollum. Two cars took us to Cork which we reached at 11.50am.. No time remained for taking the promised photograph because the Dublin Bus left at 12md and with it went the fifteen of us. On the way, we said the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary. We are confident Our Lady will watch over us. The sun shone with great splendour making "the fair hills of holy Ireland", more enchanting than ever. The Knockmealdown Mountains and the Galtees were clearly visible against the horizon.

A rest lasting an hour at Thurles, a meal and we were off again. The flocks of sheep and the unfenced fields round Naas reminded Sr Mary Clementia of the sheep-runs of Australia. Soldiers, not many, strolled about the Curragh. Soon after 8pm we saw Dublin. Maureen, my cousin, was waiting on the station for me and Maura Markham for Clare. Sr Mary Paulita and I and the Newmarket party took two taxis to Seville Place while nine went to Belview Hotel, Dunlaoghaire. Clare and Teresa Whelan came with us. Phil and Ciss Boyle stayed at Naas. I wrote to Sr M. Benigna and then, when lights were out, wrote to Nuala and home by the aid of a candle!

1.00am saw all asleep.

TUESDAY 20 MAY 1947

We were up at 7.30am and went to Mass and Holy Communion - our last forever in Ireland. We knew we would never see our families again and I prayed Nuala would follow me safely in a year or two. After breakfast we said our prayers, then finished our letters, ^{Sr.} Mr M Paulita anxiously listening for the Clones Train. The Reporter for the Standard arrived. Sr M Borromeo furnished him with the names and addresses of her party. Fortunately, I knew those of our set so next week's Standard will probably give us a paragraph.

The Reporter wondered if Sr M Clementia wished for a photograph. On hearing that she did, he said the Photographer would go out to Dunlaoghaire to snap the whole party. Maureen arrived, and Sr M Paulita's mother and two sisters, a few minutes later.

We had a pleasant afternoon, then at 4.30pm set out for Dunlaoghaire by boat-train. On arrival, we joined the rest of the party, produced our passports, had them examined, then went down the gangway and into the "Hibernia". The cabins were found to be too stuffy so we came up on deck and remained there, sang "Hail Glorious St Patrick", "Hail Queen of Heaven", and "Ireland, I love you", with full hearts. A calm crossing and just before 12 midnight, saw the lights of Holyhead in the distance, warning us to stand in readiness. Before the boat had dropped anchor, somebody spied Sr Kevin my father's sister French Sister of Charity, but passports had to be examined and a few formalities gone through before I could speak to her.

Luggage was not opened at the Customs. After a short meeting with Sr Kevin, we got on the train for Waterloo. Our carriage was labelled: "Mr Counihan and party". Mr Counihan was our travel-agent. We had some fruit and other food. It was then after 12 midnight. We fell asleep though we were sitting up. Sr M Eugenia, went through the motions of stepdancing! I don't know to what tune she was dancing.

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 1947

At 2.00am, the Ticket Collector called for "Tickets, please". There was a response from Sr M Clementia only - all others were enjoying their forty winks. At about 6.00am, we decided to view the unfamiliar scenery of England, but we were almost at London so the pleasure was denied us. Sr M Eugenia's people were waiting on the platform.

On hearing my name called, I looked around and found it was May Barrett - Sister's niece. Visitors for the other Sisters were there, too. The whole party went round to the French Sisters of Charity at Euston and had a homely breakfast. We wrote home and to Sr M Benigna but did not post the letters. We then left to take the train - the Express - for Waterloo. The unfamiliar escalators gave us a laugh but not before they had given us a fright! On reaching Waterloo, we took the boat-train to Southampton where we had a good view of the docks. We saw the "Queen Elizabeth", and the "Orontes" on which some Sisters came to Ireland about ten years ago. At about a quarter to five, we got on to the "Asturias", which we learned was not leaving until the next day. Dinner was at 6.00pm, and we retired soon after.

THURSDAY 22 MAY 1947

The "Twenty-past-seven" call roused us - at 8am, we had breakfast. The fact that we were scattered all over the dining saloon knocked the edge off our appetites! Soon afterwards, our places at table were assigned and the "fifteen" are divided between two places. A similar arrangement has been made with regard to bunks - two cabins give accommodation to all. We have our cabin-trunks and cases in the cabins, so we are spared the inconvenience of going to the baggage-room when we need things. There are two port holes in each cabin. The boat left at 3pm - the sea was as calm, almost, as the Irish Sea. At about 5pm, all passengers were called to their respective decks for life-belt practice. Sr M Madonna got a life-belt that seemed intended for a child. She examined it and found "Fully Shrunk" printed on it. Sr M Clementia, on seeing this, said: "Mine must be only half-shrunk, so!" An announcement said that all passengers should practise, but, when the Officer-in-Charge saw Sr M Eugenia hesitate about putting it on over her veil, he said: "I suppose you can't manage it with the hat"! We were not asked to practise. One announcement amused us: "A boy, size two feet nothing, dressed in a red jersey and something like a sou'wester has been found. Will his mother please call for him at the Purser's office?"

The cabin-steward just came in to close the port-holes so we must be nearing the Bay of Biscay. Somebody just said there are five Priests on board. Fathers Conron, Owens and McGwynn are Australian Military Chaplains who have been with the troops during the War. Father Brabants is from Cork. The fifth priest is I think, Fr Griffin from Kilkee, probably the Fr Griffin that Sean said was leaving for Australia. All are ready for bed now, so to-day is over.

FRIDAY 23 MAY 1947

Most of us are familiar with sea-sickness since we rolled through the Bay to-day. Sr M Clementia called us at 6.30am - the Masses began at 7.15am. Fr Brabants was the first to begin so we assisted and received at his Mass. We missed the "De Profundis" at the end. As each priest finished Mass, we turned to the priest who was not finished, so we heard the ends of a few Masses. It was hard to look or feel steady while kneeling down; we found the chairs more supporting. Most of us were dizzy before the first Mass was over and, one by one, we made a hasty exit. We shunned the dining-saloon during breakfast and luncheon, but the insistent calls of the "inner man" made me respond to the dinner gong! While Sr M Eugenia and I paced the deck, Fr Griffin and a Patrician Brother came along to us. The latter recognised my Clare accent and introduced me to Fr Griffin. We "explored" Clare and exchanged Clare news! There are in all, four Patrician Brothers on board.

The rolling of the boat continued until we went to bed and after.

SATURDAY 24 MAY 1947

We were out of the Bay before Mass this morning. The Mediterranean promises to be more polite. We spent more of the morning recovering from the effects of yesterday's tossing but we did some study as well. We say Office while walking along a quiet corner of the deck. The few we went past looked on us with curiosity. After dinner, we saw Portugal on our left. At first, it was just faint but

soon the land and buildings were comparatively easy to discern. We were glad to see the land of Fatima where Our Lady appeared. There were several fishing boats out on the ocean – they were tossed hither and thither by the waves, but, I suppose, that is nothing to the Portuguese – they are such good sailors.

Sr M Clementia got a one pound note from a gentleman to buy chocolates for the Sisters. Sister did not know him but he just said: "It does not matter who I am". We know he is a Catholic – at least, he goes to morning Mass. We remembered that today is the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, and we felt she looked down with love on her little band of missionaries.

SUNDAY 25 MAY 1947

Our first Sunday away from Timoleague and Ireland! The Masses made us feel at home, however. Fr Conron heard Confessions before Mass. More passengers than are present at daily Mass turned up.

In addition to the 7.15am Masses in the lounge, there was another celebrated by Fr Brabants in the Cinema Hall at 9.30am. This was to give no excuse to sleepy-heads! Mass was celebrated on the stage, the footlights were on and green curtains hung down at the back and sides. We did not have Benediction.

After breakfast, we got a view of the coast of Spain on our left and the Atlas Mountains on our right. Fr Conron gave us field glasses for our use to the end of the voyage. We had none of our own but other passengers often thoughtfully offered us theirs whenever there was something worth seeing. We passed the Rock of Gibraltar at about 11am. One side is steep, the other sloping. The two sides meet at a point – the result is a rock somewhat conical in shape.

The Sierra Nevada soon came into sight. They are snow-capped. We wrote letters to Australia, Timoleague and home. When we saw people knitting, we were reminded we had left Ireland.

The Protestant service was conducted soon after ours in the Cinema Hall also. They had a much bigger crowd than we had at Mass. They must have good lungs as they were singing for most of the time they were in!

MONDAY 26 MAY 1947

There is a strong wind blowing today. It is difficult to keep the paper steady. At about 10.00am we saw Algeria. The land is mostly hilly and barren but a few squares of tilled land can be seen. Apart from these isolated spots, the land is covered with growth that looks life size except that it is not in bloom. We are only about half a mile away from the coast. We passed Sicily but did not see it – it was too far off. We are not wearing our big beads now as the sea-air makes them rusty.

The sun, looking like a red ball of fire, set very quickly after dinner. Although it was a good bit above the horizon when we began our watch, at the end of five minutes it had entirely disappeared. This, of course, is a new experience for us. We remember the long, peaceful twilight of home.

TUESDAY 27 MAY 1947

Just after Mass today, we got a good view of the coast around Cape Bon. It seems to be thickly populated especially at the foothills near the sea. The hills look white – like limestone. At 1.00pm, we did some ironing. We are allowed half an hour each day for this.

At 2.00pm we passed the Island of Gozo – it is fairly small but we could see a cluster of houses – perhaps a town in one place. The Island is hilly. Next, there

was a still smaller Island and, finally, that of Malta. The houses are flat-roofed. They sleep out sometimes, we are told. Valetta, the Capital of Malta, looks very big. We saw its big spires and domes and a Liner, "Dominican Victory" just sailed out of the harbour. Half the bridge had been lowered (or raised?) to let it out. Most of the town seems to be surrounded by a high wall, but we could see at least four motor vans moving along the streets.

Sr M Borromeo had seen Valetta when she came to Ireland before the War, so she can realise the havoc that has been wrought there within the past seven or eight years. She said the harbour is in ruins now. At a quarter to five each evening, the Captain will speak. This evening he said we would pass close to Cyrenaica, but would not see Tobruk as it is too far inland. He also said that civilians may go ashore at Port Said, but it may not be safe for the military as things are a "bit sticky" in Egypt and the British uniform may not be welcomed. All letters to be posted at Port Said must be given up by 5.30pm tomorrow evening.

The girls changed into their colours today. The Priests, too, have changed into lighter clothes. Sun-glasses are in use. Most passengers are sun-bathing.

WEDNESDAY 28 MAY 1947

This is Ember Day, so we did not have meat for breakfast. There was no fish on the Menu for lunch so we wondered what we would do. To our surprise, we found that our waiter had got fish cooked for the twenty-three of us. I wonder is he a Catholic! We study on C deck – that, being very quiet, – is ideal for study. A sailing boat, with several curly-headed blacks, passed us. Some saw them through the glasses. That was near the town of Derna.

THURSDAY 29 MAY 1947

We are drawing near Port Said. The land is getting more barren every hour. It is night-time now and we are actually anchored in the harbour. Just before the

boat drew quite in, we saw a line of rocks that was just visible above the water. There was a wooden building about half-way down the line. Fr Brabants just said the rocks are a breakwater and the wooden building may be a watch-tower. We saw Egyptian fishing boats with a long pole for their peculiar sail. A huge boat with an iron wheel in the centre caught my attention. It was a dredge. I had often heard about them. They clear away the sand underneath the water and so make the channels where the boats pass along. Motor boats and oar-boats were round our boat in dozens. As the boats drew nearer, we saw that the majority were those that came out with articles to sell.

I will describe one and that will describe them all. There were two men – one to row the boat and the other to do the business. They had attache cases, hand-bags made of kid or of straw, bracelets, turkish delight, all kinds of sweets, while I saw that other boats sold only eatables. They had a few words of English and did their bargaining like this. One held up a hand-bag shouting: "Four pounds". There was no response, so he changed to : "Three pounds" and, then, to "Fifty shillings". Somebody near me signalled to him so he produced a long rope with a weight at one end, folded in half; at the half-mark, he tied the rope to the handbag and to another old bag which was for the money. Then, he threw up the rope with the weight at the end, the man near me caught it and hauled up the bag. The native, wise lad, held on to the other end! The man thought the price too much and prepared to lower the bag again, whereupon the native called out: "What you say? What you say?" Two pounds was agreed upon and the bag was bought. The buyer put the money into the old bag, lowered it and then dropped the rope. Then, the native held up a box of dates shouting: "Lubbully dates! Bee-ootiful dates!" Very few bought food from them – it may not be healthy. There were about six or seven boats immediately beneath me – the shouting from them was frightening. With no money, we couldn't engage in any transactions!

We could see the streets from the deck. Palms are planted at even distances along one side and names of shops are printed in large letters that are green and blue when lighted up. These "neon lights" as they are called are very common in Sydney and Brisbane, we are told, as they are in Dublin. Many of the passengers went ashore though they had only about four hours. All had to be back in the boat by 10pm.

The streets are very badly lighted, some are in complete darkness and look menacing! Egyptian police came on board and some other natives too in order to sell their wares. One squatted down beside Teresa Whelan and Julia Chambers and beamed on them while he showed them some jewellery. The next few minutes saw them a good distance away from him! What was their surprise to find him calling after them: "Pingi! Pingi!" Julia had dropped her pencil and he had seen it, picked it up and now he gave it to her. The cabins and port-holes were closed while they were on board. When we went to bed, they were still busy calling out. When the mail came on board, I got a letter from Sr Kevin. We will stay here for the night.

FRIDAY 30 MAY 1947

Early this morning, the natives roused us from our slumbers with their usual "Do you wanna buy?" We noticed a few swimming in the water. They looked like frogs. A few threw them coins, they rushed at them and if they escaped them, they dived for them under the water. When they caught the coin, they put it into their mouth and then called for more. We left Port Said at about 9am amid the shouts and yells of the natives.

We saw a few men riding through the streets on camels. We passed two troopships laden with soldiers and waved to them. Ships, big and small were lying at anchor all around. Two battleships sailed down the canal just ahead of us. An aeroplane was engaging in some manoeuvres. So we sailed along. On either side, the country was perfectly flat. A splendid road and railway ran close to the water.

Lorries, auto-cycles, old fashioned cars and shining V8's tore along at great speed. They could, because of the flat road – it is like a table, and curves are very gradual. All the vehicles were driven by natives who waved to us as we passed them by. Trees, planted at equal distances from each other, grow on either side of the road but apart from these, there was no vegetation whatever. Soon, we were in the Canal proper as we learned from its narrow width. Hills of sand on both sides completely obstructed the view. The sand was probably dug out when the Canal was being constructed. I saw several camels, some lying, some standing, about twenty yards away from me. I studied one through the glasses. His neck is grey like an ass's neck but the top of his head and his back are brown. One was lying down as a horse would with his long neck and head held high. They have very long legs and their ears must be small because I did not notice them!

Three lakes occur in the course of the Canal. The first was Lake Tismmah. Here, a Pilot got on to steer us through. We moved at a snail's pace. I suppose there are sand-banks and shallows throughout the lake. At one time we were at anchor for two hours. Towards evening, we passed some rowing boats and motor boats at the side of the canal. They were not moving. As we drew near each, four or five natives appeared from their "depths" and started yelling. Did we disturb their slumbers? We passed some wretched hovels built of mud or soft brick. I saw a woman come out of one. She was completely covered in black.

From Port Said to Suez is an eleven hour journey but it took us fifteen or sixteen hours to do it. The heat was intense. Sr M Carthage and I have heavy serge habits. Both of us carry more avoirdupois than any one of the others, so on all counts, we experienced a deal of discomfort. I see the lights of Suez in the distance but I will not remain up until we arrive. It will be midnight before we get there. Sr M Felicity and I have gone to our cabin. A boy of about seven or eight, dressed in a long white nightdress, just came into us his eyes wide open in wonderment! He had gone to the wrong cabin. For the past ten minutes, he and

three or four other youngsters have been having high-jinks in the next cabin – hide and seek, probably, but somebody fell and somebody cried!

In Port Said, pedestrians walk in the middle of the streets so horns are constantly tooting. I saw two cars pass each other. They kept to the right and not to the left.

SATURDAY 31 MAY 1947

We anchored in Suez last night and set off again at 6 this morning. The heat is not too bad but we feel a bit clammy!

We saw Mt Sinai, which is 7,497 feet high and 47 miles from us. We passed the Gulf of Suez which is 12 miles wide and 240 feet deep. The Captain says we will see the wreck of the "Tanker" which was destroyed in 1942. We will reach Aden at "crack of dawn" on Tuesday and will have the whole day to view the camels and other delights of the place! We are now in the Red Sea and a fairly hot wind is blowing. Temperature is now 76°F but, at Port Sudan which is halfway down the Red Sea, it is often 117° in the shade. Sr M Carthage fears she will evaporate and return to Ireland as a drop of rain! We will have a bath each night at 8.30pm. It will be welcome. Times for baths are organised by the crew.

SUNDAY 1 JUNE 1947

We are in the tropics. Judging by the use he gave his handkerchief during Mass, Fr Griffin seems to be feeling the heat as much as the rest of us! Temperature is now 84° though we are told it is 87° in London. It is difficult to do anything – the heat is exhausting. A sheet and blanket will be too much tonight. How will Nuala fare when she comes through here?

MONDAY 2 JUNE 1947

Still in the Red Sea. Clocks are put on half an hour each night – half an hour less sleep! Fr Conlon forgot to put on his watch so his waking hour was a quarter past seven instead of quarter to seven! The other priests had finished their Masses when Father was ready. Miss Boylan, Sr M Clementia's friend who is on board with us, is in Hospital. She is suffering from the heat. Sister is with her now. The heat is oppressive. Even our fingers, right to the tips, are covered with beads of perspiration. Tonight, the last blanket will be discarded. Some people will sleep out on deck, either on mattresses or deck-chairs. The Nuns cannot do that, though!

We passed the Island of Jebelteuiur and the "Twelve Apostles" – twelve rocks or islands. The Captain announced that he will pick up the pilot for Aden at 6pm tomorrow but as he is not renowned for punctuality, those going ashore will have plenty of time for enjoying breakfast before they leave the ship. Sr M Clementia and Sr M Borromeo will stay in the Hospital tonight with Miss Boylan. She is a small, frail person and used to come each evening to have her afternoon tea with us. She has nobody to meet her in Australia but hopes to get a position as a Music teacher when she arrives. She goes to Mass and Holy Communion each morning – excepting of course, this morning. We hope she will get better.

Fr Brabants, seeing a child crying in a pram, promptly took him out of it and, after giving him a few good looks at the Red Sea, followed up the good work by giving him a walking lesson up and down the deck! The mother's face, when she returned, was a picture not to be forgotten. There are only two Nurses and one Doctor on the ship – Hospital staff. One of the Nurses fell prostrate with the heat today and is now a patient. The Doctor has twenty eight cases of measles on his hands. The second Nurse is run off her feet. The radio announcer asked any experienced nurses on board to volunteer for the Hospital. Fr Brabants, elated by his success of the day, wondered if he should go along and present himself! The

unselfishness of the two Sisters who are to stay tonight in the Hospital has impressed those who know of it. Special beds are being made up for them. Miss Boylan is unconscious.

TUESDAY 3 JUNE 1947

We anchored at about 7.30 this morning. The natives are almost black – much darker than those at Port Said. There was a terrific scramble for coins in the water. There are natives on board, some are laying on fresh water. Three of them, fast asleep, were sprawled out on the deck when some of us came along to it. There seems to be no sale of goods here as in Port Said. Passengers are going ashore by means of rowing boats driven by natives. 1/6d is the fare to and from. Sr M Clementia and Sr M Borromeo came down from the Hospital this morning just to see if we had endured the night's heat. They went back again as Fr Owens was saying Mass there. After breakfast, they prepared to rest in the cabin. Then, a message was announced: "Will Fr Owens please come to the ship Hospital". We saw Sr M Clementia and Sr M Borromeo hurry there too, and we concluded poor Miss Boylan was not well. Her temperature that morning had been 106° and Fr Owens had anointed her yesterday evening. When the Sisters returned, they told us she had gone to Heaven. R.I.P.

Some of the Priests went ashore and have made arrangements to have her buried in a cemetery. Her coffin has just come in by launch. Thank God, she is to be buried on land!

At a quarter to four, the coffin was lowered over the Hospital deck on to a launch which then went around to the gangway to pick up Fr Owens and Fr McGwynn. The Pursér, too, went in the same launch. On the opposite coast, it was raised from the launch and placed on a waiting lorry. The priests I think went in a private car. We watched the little procession until it went out of sight. Somebody took a snap while the coffin was being taken into the cemetery. That is

the end of our little friend. She did not expect not to complete the journey to Australia, nor to begin the final one. Please God, it will teach all of us on board to watch and be ready.

Fr Brabants and Fr Griffin had gone ashore this morning before Miss Boylan died. They regretted they had not heard the news – they would have attended the funeral. Today, we learned that three days ago a child was buried at sea.

We left Aden at 7pm. It was then lighted up and the green and red lights reflected on the water made an exquisite picture. Aden, I think, looks more beautiful by day even than by night. There are some splendid flat-roofed buildings. One reminded me of the new Hospital in Ennis only that is much bigger. I mean the building in Aden is bigger.

Perched here and there on crevices in the rock are comfortable looking bungalows. All the buildings seem to be newly painted and look very clean. We remained up on deck until we rounded the last corner and long after it. Fr Brabants came along with a deck chair, a rug and his Breviary. We concluded he would not see the inside of his cabin again that night! When we asked Fr Owens where he intended taking his night's repose, he was extremely mysterious. It must be in some unheard of place! We dread going to the cabin at night – it is stuffy: but, it is far worse having to go to bed.

WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE 1947

We are well out of the Red Sea but it is still dreadfully hot. All our strength seems to have left us. The priests, when they have said Mass, are soaked in perspiration. We sit up for practically the whole of the Masses. At times, there seems to be not a puff of air. (It reminds me of the day Dada and I went to Knock. We had scarcely returned when there was thunder and lightning). Fr Griffin came to lift our hearts and produced a gramophone. Sr M Monina, after bravely listening

to some selections from Chopin and Beethoven, appealingly asked for "Patsy Fagan"! We wanted Father to play something "homely" but he wouldn't! I suppose he thinks we have no time for good music. If he'd only start a few Irish Airs, he'd learn a thing or two! Bananas for sweet transported me in spirit to Kilkee - I always connect them with the Races!

At 4pm we passed Cape Guardafui. That is the last land we will see for some time. We have been land-locked all along. Now, that we are free of land, we may have an obliging little breeze! I hope we do.

Fr Owens revealed his last night's place of repose. It was none other than the stage in the Cinema Hall, where breezes blowing from port to starboard, enabled him to keep his balance and remain like "H.M.S. Immovable" on his mattress! Very wisely, he took up his bed and walked away before the steward appeared in the morning.

The port-holes on F deck, the bottom one, have been closed. We are on E deck so our turn will come next, perhaps.

At about 4.30pm a gentle breeze began to play about us. We gave it such a "warm" welcome that it decided to remain. Now, at 7pm it has got quite strong and is almost a gale, so Monsoons are no longer merely geographical facts but, realities to us. The intense heat is practically gone - Deo Gratias, Alleluia!

However, there is a new thorn in the flesh - the boat is heaving. Will the Indian Ocean be like the Bay of Biscay? We hope not. Pictures of woebegone, seasick faces are still fresh in our memories. After dinner, Sr M Clementia recommended walking out on deck as an antidote to sea-sickness. C Deck was crowded so Sr M Rosaleen, Sr M Felicity and I went up to B Deck. This, though the popular one, seemed almost deserted. We passed Fr Conlon sitting in a quiet

corner, probably praying. Two of the Brothers, like ourselves, were walking about on deck. We noticed that the lights on B Deck were decorated with coloured silks and we suddenly remembered that "dancing on deck" was announced as a recreation for tonight. Just in case the passengers might expect us to remain, we decided to descend once more to C Deck! My two companions decided to take a rest so I found two others – Sr M Eugenia and Ciss Boyle. We walked up and down the deck and met Fr Owens and one of the Australian troops doing their beat as well. Then, we sat down. A Maori Princess who is on board came along to me and gave me remedies against the dread disease. Her main recommendation was to put a sheet of brown paper next to the skin to act as a counter-irritant to nausea! The "cure" doesn't warrant being written into medical books. When I came down to the cabin, I found that Sr M Felicity, Clare and Julia had succumbed. Some of the rest of us feared our turn was not far off but a bath refreshed us. Despite the strong wind that had befriended us on deck, the cabin was still hot. We spent an unpleasant night trying to forget the awful heat and the lurching of the boat and making futile attempts to sleep. We nearly gasped when the cabin-stewards came in and closed the port-holes!

THURSDAY 5 JUNE 1947

The boat was heaving badly this morning when we were dressing. Donning one's shoes and stockings, when one simply could not stand on one foot, was a most annoying experience! I sank into the nearest chair and completed the proceedings! There were nine invalids so the remaining fourteen, semi-invalids by now, hurried out of the cabin, and went out on deck until it was time for Mass. We were hardly into the lounge when Sr M Eugenia and I knew we were really sea-sick. When I saw Fr Brabants counting out the hosts to be consecrated, I told him that nine of the company were in bed and that two others would not stay for Mass. Father looked up to Heaven and decided to offer Mass for the souls of the faithful departed! Sister and I went out on deck and walked and rested by turns. Fr Owens came upon us and said we did not look a bit sick. I wish he knew how we felt! Fr

Conlon did not say Mass this morning so he must be a bad sailor too.

We ventured down to the dining-saloon when the breakfast gong rang, but we left quickly again and went back on deck. The fresh air was like balm. Fr Griffin made us go right around the deck. When we told him the Star-side was too windy, he said: That's where you should be. Come on!" So we had to be obedient. Father told me that Fr Clancy, whenever he went to Kilkee, used to spend a long time at his house. I asked him if he knew Siny Mack's sisters and he said: "Yes, the Cafe Macks!"

Several did not go to lunch but, instead, we had tinned peaches that Fr Conlon took along to us. We spend the evening trying to get better. There were only seven for dinner that night. The head-steward, noticing our small numbers, kindly sent a supply of light biscuits for the invalids. We asked Fr Brabants to sing a song for us and he promptly started a Salvation Army song! He asked for the words of "An Cuilfionn". I am glad I have them. The port-holes are still closed so we'll have another night's heat! This is just a small sacrifice for us. We are not forgetting we must be ready for any hardships, now and in the future.

FRIDAY 6 JUNE 1947

Very early this morning the cabin-steward came along and opened the port-holes. We breathed a sigh of relief. The boat is not heaving much today, so we must be almost out of the Monsoon. The number at Mass was greater.

There are not enough deck-chairs to seat all the passengers. This morning, as I was walking along, a lady called me and offered me her chair. I was grateful for it and said so. The lady answered: "You people are so sweet to me, it is a pleasure to do something for you". Some of the Sisters have given her a chair, perhaps, when she needed it.

A gentleman came along to me and asked me if everybody were better. I told him some were still not well but that the majority were improved. He told me he had been on business to Switzerland, Belgium and Italy, as well as to England and America. He had been to Buckingham Palace and had seen some splendid gold-works. He noticed two wine-bottles with beautiful designs worked on them. He asked how they had come there and was told they were there since the wreck of the Spanish Armada. Later in the day, a Sister told me that the gentleman speaking to me was Mr Lambert.

After dinner, Fr Griffin sang some songs for us.

SATURDAY 7 JUNE 1947

We passed the Equator last night. The boat is still rocking. There was a fancy dress parade for the children today. Some of our children - friends - came along to present themselves when they were dressed. The Maori Princess took over a little lad, Alwyn, and decked him out as a Maori Chief. His dark eyes and hair suited the role he was playing. Afterwards, both came to us, the Princess very pleased with her little friend - he had won second prize. The Parson's daughter, little Ruth Berwick, also won a prize for her evening dress. The Princess grew eloquent on the success of the whole thing and described it to us. Fr Owens, who was with us, engaged her in conversation:

Princess: "Did you like the bride in the parade?"

Fr Owens: "She had a nice veil!"

Princess: "Oh! I mean the whole thing - didn't she carry it off well?"

Fr Owens: "It was the one behind her carried it!"

SUNDAY 8 JUNE 1947

We passed some Coral Islands today. As I was standing on the deck looking out on them, Mr Lambert offered me his glasses, and said we could have use of them, if we wished, for the rest of the journey. We were grateful but, seeing that we had a pair already, we did not accept them.

MONDAY 9 JUNE 1947

The Baby show is the important feature of the day. There are some lovely infants on board but – they make themselves heard! A rumour is afloat that we are running into a 350 mile gale. That might take us to Fremantle! Would it be so obliging?

Two cooks passed along the deck carrying a pot of fruit. The pot fell and some of the fruit came to grief. They both enjoyed the mishap and picked up the pot to go. One of them, with a well-developed sense of humour, put down the pot again and said: "I want another laugh!" Sr Mary Monina enjoyed the little incident.

TUESDAY 10 JUNE 1947

A cool breeze blows today. We are inclined to forget we were ever "stewed" in the Red Sea! We miss the twilight. The sun sinks and, almost immediately, it is dark. The fancy dress parade for the ladies took place this evening. We were just in bed when the prize-winners' names were broadcast. One lady was dressed as Gandhi and another as an Egyptian policeman. The latter must have got his ideas in Port Said. There were prizes for the best-dressed man, best-dressed woman, best-dressed couple or group, most original dress, most comical dress and the cheapest one, so the whole thing must have been an enjoyable affair. We heard it all over the loudspeaker.

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE 1947

It is still cool and somewhat calm and we feel we have become better sailors. At 4.45pm, the Captain announced that on account of weather conditions, he will not anchor overnight in Fremantle as he had at first intended. We shall arrive there early in the morning of the 15th and leave at 4pm, so our proposed visit to the Sisters of Mercy in Perth will be short. The Australian Bight is not likely to be friendly to us. It never is, not even in Summer and this is Winter.

THURSDAY 12 JUNE 1947

We asked Fr Owens to compose a poem about the voyage – but we got no definite answer. Fr Brabants has a cold and went to bed after Mass. He did not improve during the day. The port-holes in his cabin were closed and the place was not a place for improving. In the evening, we were surprised and very, very sorry to see poor Fr Brabants being wheeled along in a chair towards the elevator. He was taken to the Hospital. He is not bad and will be better in a day or two, please God.

We, fifteen, had prepared a concert for tonight so, after dinner, we repaired to our cabin for a rehearsal. The St Joseph Sisters were the audience so we went to their cabin which had to serve as a concert hall. To our surprise, we found them arrayed in their life-belts! We had singing, step-dancing and reciting, while we forgot we were sailing through the Indian Ocean! Afterwards, we went to our own cabin and enjoyed chocolates and biscuits given by the St Joseph Sisters. We did not have baths – they would have "dampened" our spirits too much! At least, that's what we said but the fact was we had missed our scheduled time for ablutions. Sr M Eugenia and I had a conversation with somebody during the night – at least, we were told that next day.

FRIDAY 13 JUNE 1947

Feasts of the Sacred Heart and of St Anthony. The sea must have been very rough last night. This morning when we went up on deck, the chairs were not very inviting – they contained pools of water. Fr Owens composed a poem about a concert the children gave last night. Sr Mary Clementia typed copies of it for him in the Cinema Hall which is vacant except when pictures are being shown.

We petitioned Fr Owens again for a poem about the voyage – one that would in later years, bring back to us memories of the few weeks we spent on the "Asturias". In an hour, we were presented with one. It was not what we had asked

for but a poem entitled "Strange Women" and is supposed to be the average man's reactions on coming into contact with Nuns! I shall send a copy of it to Sr Mary Benigna.

SATURDAY 14 JUNE 1947

Just one more day to go and we will see Australia for the first time. The Captain fears he may not be able to go right into the docks, as a strong gale is blowing and it is not likely that it will grow calmer during the night. If so, we will have to go ashore by boats. We are all ready for tomorrow.

SUNDAY 15 JUNE 1947

Rain! Rain! We remember it is Winter in Australia. However, the wind has gone and that is a big blessing. We had Mass at 7.15am but none at 9.30am. The Pilot came out to the "Asturias" early in the morning and the mail came out in that boat. It was distributed during breakfast so we hurried out to procure it. I had one letter from home. It was addressed to Aden but was sent on. There were letters from Timoleague and, in them, we heard of letters that were sent to Port Said. We did not get them. The girls wrote and the Sisters in Brisbane, too. Fifteen of us crowded into one cabin while Sr M Clementia, reading out the letters, was the centre of attention. Nuala's letter to me was very precious.

The boat drew in and there on the wharf were four Sisters of Mercy from Leaderville, Perth. We waved to each other and then realised it was pouring rain. The letters had so engrossed us that we had not noticed it before. So, sunny Australia greeted us with a homely downpour! Fr Griffin said "Good-bye" to us and gave us Ordination Cards. Fr Brennan from Ennis was waiting on the wharf to see him.

The Medical Inspection was next, a minor inspection indeed! After that, the gangway was lowered and passengers disembarked and visitors were allowed on.

The Sisters came up and said they had cars ready to take us to their Convent. So we left.

It was still raining but we missed none of the sights. We noticed that most of the houses were built of red brick and each had a verandah. We saw only two of the wooden buildings we wanted so much to see. We passed weeping willows, drooping trees and flowers and shrubs we had not seen before. Sr Mr Rosaleen, who had survived the trip so far with little sea-sickness, amazed us by developing land-sickness. We feel very sorry for her.

The Sisters were at the door to welcome us. The "Irish roses" on our cheeks were envied! An orange orchard was a source of interest to everyone and we wondered at all the other fruit that was so plentiful there. Not long after our arrival, a Sister took us along to the Chapel. It was grand to go into one again. The Alter was beautifully decorated with cream and red roses.

Then we had dinner – roast chicken, cold ham, peas, roast potatoes, fruit salad, ice-cream, wine, tea, fruit and chocolates. We wondered how we would ever get through the lot! Two Australian Sisters and two Kerry Sisters were my companions at table and assisted to fill my plate with the good things on the go!

Sr Mary Magdalen, shortly after we had left the refectory, played for us and sang a welcome to Australia. Sr M Eugenia danced, the Aspirants recited, all sang together and lastly we all danced.

Three St John of God nuns were in and two Presentation Sisters from Geraldton. We had lunch – another big affair. Then, the Sisters filled our pockets with apples, oranges and parcels of chocolates. The only disadvantage was lack of space to fit more!

All too soon, the cars came to take us home so we had to bid "Good-bye" to the kind Sisters and hurry back to the "Asturias". We were ten minutes late but the boat did not leave until after the arranged time. We had the pleasure of taking the Perth Sisters on board and showing them our cabins. They went up to the Hospital to see Fr Brabants and give him fruit. Soon we heard the announcement: "Will all persons not travelling on the boat, please leave it at once?" So the Sisters had to go. They remained on the wharf until the boat pulled off, though it was still raining.

Nobody was interested in the menu that night. Who would, after Perth? We retired early and slept soundly.

MONDAY 16 JUNE 1947

We finished reading the big Australian mail today. Sr M Anacleto wrote to each of us. Several Greeks came on board yesterday. We like listening to them talking - not a word do we understand!

The Captain told us that we shall arrive in Melbourne on Friday 20th at 6pm. The boat will remain in dock until Saturday 12 noon. Then, we shall travel at reduced speed arriving in Sydney at 7am on Monday 23rd. We shall get into the Bight tonight, when we round Cape Leeuwin.

TUESDAY 17 JUNE 1947

Although we are in the Bight, it is fairly calm. The boat is rolling but nobody has had a return of sea-sickness. Colds are in the air now. Australia seems to be giving us a rainy welcome. The saloon is decorated with Australian roses since we came on board from Perth.

Fr Conlon has spent much of today up in the Hospital with Fr Brabants. That is characteristic of him. There are two children on board whose mother is not

well-to-do. Fr Conlon has taken the two children ashore at Port Said and Aden and been especially kind to them. Children who are not well off receive his attention.

WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 1947

I awoke last night and realised I was sliding up and down my bunk! The Bight, I realised was living up to its reputation. Dressing in the morning was a tedious affair – we swayed from side to side. When we stood up at Mass for the last Gospel, some rested their hands on chairs for support, but the chairs glided off and the owners with them! We "waltzed" into the dining saloon and out of it. Teresa ran into a waiter who advised her to "Take it easy"! "As if I could!" said Teresa. At lunch, I noticed a lady abuse her beloved for allowing his coffee to spoil her dinner.

THURSDAY 19 JUNE 1947

The ship's clocks were put on one hour at midnight last night. That leaves us ten hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time or "G.M.T.", as the Captain says. The ship was rocking last night again. It was calmer when we got up in the morning but it was raining very much. Australia is certainly giving us a homely welcome. A gale has befriended us all the way from Fremantle and, as a result, we are getting into Melbourne ahead of the schedule time.

Yes, we did arrive in the port early – at 4.30pm. We said "Goodbye" to Fr Conlon who is travelling on to Adelaide to see a division of the troops home to headquarters. He will then go on to Tasmania. We had also to bid farewell to Fr Owens. His mother, sister and uncle came on aboard to meet him. His father was at the foot of the gangway. We, as well as Fr Owens, were sorry to hear that the second priest of the family, Fr Vincent Owens, was very sick. The family travelled to Bendigo that night.

Sisters of St Joseph came on aboard to take their party to their convent for the night and the next night too. We are not leaving until 12noon, the 21st. We will get off tomorrow morning but we are not sure if we will remain out for the night.

Mail arrived – mostly Australian. We had finished reading it in the cabin when Sr M Eugenia announced: "Sr Angela Mary, Sr M St Martin's Aunt is here to see you!"

For a moment, I could not remember who the Aunt was. At first, I thought of Mrs O'Brien but I remembered I was not in Ireland now. It was Mrs O'Mahony and her husband who had come. They remained for a while – Mr O'Mahony getting to know everyone in a few minutes and Mrs O'Mahony asking for all her old friends. They left, after promising to call for us in the morning. The troops got off here – about one hundred and twenty of them. I felt sorry when I saw them tramp along with their kit-bag slung over their shoulders. We are wondering what the lure of the Army is after all, but, of course, these men had no choice.

FRIDAY 20 JUNE 1947

We did not have to be called twice this morning. We were up bright and early to be ready for the longed-for-day in Melbourne. We were pleased to see the sun shining.

Sr M Clementia hoped to meet a friend here – Mrs Gelly. At 9am, Mrs O'Mahony came along and, a few minutes later, two Sisters of Mercy arrived in Mrs Gelly's car. Their guimp is of black, soft material. I was one of the number who went with Mr Downes (Mick) who had hired a taxi for us. Another lot went with Mrs Gelly and another with the Sisters.

A ten minute drive took us to the Convent in South Melbourne. We got a

warm Irish welcome. When we asked for Reverend Mother, we were told she was one of the Sisters who had come to the boat to meet us. Sr M Denise as the second sister.

We were taken to the Chapel – a very beautiful one. We were glad to see a statue of our Foundress – Mother McAuley. Soon, morning tea was served. "Welcome to South Melbourne" painted in water-colours on a scroll, greeted us as we went into the refectory. The Sisters came in from School for lunch and told us they had given a half-day in our honour. I got a special welcome from Sr Mary Angela.

A bus was hired for the day and soon we set off. A visit to Archbishop Mannix was our first stop. His Grace is tall and thin and speaks in a low voice and pleasantly. After about fifteen minutes, we left and met the St Joseph Sisters on the steps.

We visited the Cathedral next, passing on the way a monument. To our shame, be it said, it was Sr Mary Clementia who recognised it as that of Daniel O'Connell. De Valera's cross on the spire of the Cathedral was clearly visible. Mrs Gelly was our guide. All round the back of the High Altar are Altars dedicated to different saints – many of them Irish. At the top of the aisle, was a life-size figure of Christ Crucified.

The Sisters were anxious to get us out to Rosanna – the Novitiate House – so we had to give up our explorations of the Cathedral and get out to the bus. On the way, I met a St Joseph Sister who had been speaking to Sr M Columbkille on the telephone. The latter is looking forward to meeting me.

On the way to Rosanna, we saw the most beautiful scenes – the National Park, a railway track cut out of rock, weeping willows. There were exclamations of

delight when we came upon a hedge of furze. The cattle had a peculiar fawnish colour – "faded looking", somebody said.

Rosanna is built only since 1928. The driveway was a reddish loam colour. Mother General met us at the door and there was a repetition of the Cead Mile Failte.

The Calvary was the first thing that caught our eyes, so most of us went up the long corridor to see it. It is a Christus Limpas. The figure is life-size and very life-like. The "Blood" looks quite wet and fresh. Two wounds on the Sacred Figure made us catch our breath. They were on the knees – the bones were exposed. We had never thought of wounds there before but, of course, they are to be expected. We stayed there for about twenty minutes.

There were figures of Our Lady, Mary Magdalen and St John, close to the cross. Here, too, we visited the Chapel. Two Angels, holding an electric bulb in their hands, interested us. The bust of the Christus Limpas was at the back of the choir. It looked as real as the whole figure. Here, too, was a statue of Mother McAuley and a stained-glass window representing her. The Mistress of Novices, Mother Angela, took us to the Novices and Postulants. There were seventeen of the latter and perhaps the same number of Novices. It was good to see white veils again. We had a short talk with them. All except one are Australian. One Postulant is English.

Then we had tea in a parlour overlooking a green lawn but soon we had to leave. We got into the bus and before we started off, Sr Mary Clementia counted all her chicks! Three were missing so a search was organised and Teresa, Sr M Rosaleen and Sr Mary Paulita came to light.

We saw the Dandenong Range, snow-capped because of Winter. We had a

rather good view of it through the glass.

The scenery on the way back was just as lovely as that on the way out. I was surprised to find that most of the houses were timber. I had not noticed it until Sr Clementia remarked it. They are built of weather-boards that overlap each other.

We called at the Convent of the French Sisters of Charity. In the morning, we had met Fr Mulligan from Offaly, and Fr Cleary from Ballynacally. The latter is related to Sr O'Dea, so when he heard about Sr Kevin, he said I must meet his sister. So I did. She too is Sr Kevin (Cleary), and I met Sr Columba who came out last December. Both know Sr Kevin. Fr Cleary will call to the Six Crosses if he goes home next year.

We returned to St Peter and Paul's and met Fr Power from Kilkenny. Irish songs were requested and we tried "An Cuilfionn" and "Eamonn an Cnuic". Sr Mary Eugenia, Ciss and Phil danced. I think the little bit of Ireland put new life into the aged priest. Mrs Gelly, an Australian, knows a phrase or two of Irish. She learned them from her father and mother.

In the month of June, the Sisters had prayers that are not said at other times of the year. We joined them and in the singing of the hymns: "Oh, What could my Jesus do more?" and "Deep in thy Sacred Heart". We were back in spirit in Lettercollum where we had often sung those hymns and my thoughts are with Nuala and with my mother and her own deep love of the Sacred Heart.

The tea bell rang soon after and all answered it! Afterwards, we had fruit, and had a choice of oranges, bananas, apples and pears. Then, all went to the recreation room where we had dancing and Irish singing. A Kerry priest, Fr Byrne, came in and joined us. The priests seem pleased to see young people fresh from

Ireland. They smell the Shamrock! Beds are made up for the fifteen of us in different parts of the house. Sr M Eugenia and I slept in the Community Room! The five girls were together.

SATURDAY 21 JUNE 1947

At 7am, Sr M Gerardus disturbed our dreams. Mass was at 7.30 – a Votive Mass of Sts Peter and Paul. It was a Missa Cantata, a rehearsal for 29th June. Fr Mulligan was the celebrant. He is a young priest and has been in Australia twelve months only. He has still got his Irish accent. Knowing that we had not our Missals with us, A Sister thoughtfully provided us with a prayer-book each.

A breakfast of sausages and chops made us fit for the day. Sr M Boniface promised to keep the "Welcome to South Melbourne" until Nuala comes in October. I met a Nun of ninety-four years who has had her Diamond Jubilee. She is quite lively and gets a few years younger when she meets young people from Ireland. She is Irish, and is proud of her Irish name – Sr Mary Benignus. An Australian Sister was asked from what part of Ireland she came and gave the answer: "Oh, Sr Mary Benignus comes from the Wicklow Hills in Kerry!" She got a good deal of teasing over it!

At Heidelberg, we met Mother Peter, the author of "Sheltering the Divine Outcast", "In Love with the Divine Outcast" and "Ferventinos". She is writing another and, when it is in print will send it to us.

After breakfast, we were taken for a tour of the Convent. The Sisters run a Girls' Orphanage and we were taken to the Infirmary. It would entice one to get sick! Close beside it was a room – its only occupants were dolls, teddy bears, etc. etc.. We enjoyed them as much as the children! While I was examining a big "Mamma" doll, the other Sisters had gone ahead and soon I came upon them weighing themselves. When I asked to be let on, they teased me and said, "Don't,

Sr Angela Mary, you'll break it!" Regardless of the consequences, I got on and weighed -- nine stone, ten pounds! We continued our exploration on the house and soon we were taken to the Sewing Room. Here were a weaving machine and a knitting machine, and the weaving machine, we were pleased to see, had recently been in progress. The knitting machine was about four feet in height and six feet long.

The girls had not been with us but we knew somebody else was guiding them about. Imagine our surprise when, on visiting the Domestic Science Room, we found Fr Mulligan and the girls with the former as guide. Father was opening stoves, pulling out drawers, examining jam-jars and explaining everything as if he was a first-class cook! He was not a bit put out when he was joined by ten or eleven Nuns!

A picture in one of the rooms drew our attention. Underneath it, was written: "Her first sorrow". The picture itself, was one of a girl of four or five hugging a doll, one of whose legs had broken off!

Sr Mary Angela gave me a picture of my patron and hers, and asked me to write to her for her Silver Jubilee, twelve and a half years hence, I promised!

All too soon, the cars arrived. Mrs O'Mahony's was the first. Just then, we met Jack Fleming from Kilkenny. Sr Mary Eugenia received some advice from him that she passed on. It was:- "When you sing 'God save King' or hear it being sung, stand up like the others or you'll fight with the Sisters"!

When the "Good-byes" were over, we left. Clare and I squeezed into the front of Mrs O'Mahony's car. Sr M Madonna, Clare and Phil fitted into the back. In ten minutes we were again in view of the "Asturias". The rest of the party arrived, we said "Good-bye" to Mrs O'Mahony and Mrs Gelly and got into the

boat. Our bunks were not a bit changed! The St Joseph Sisters came back and, at least twelve from the Convent accompanied them. More mail arrived. I had a letter from Maura. It was addressed to Colombo but, as we did not call there, it had been sent to Melbourne. So far, I have got a letter at all ports of call in Australia.

Phil lost her pen so both of us went to the Purser's Office to see if it were there. Captain Gibbs, the man who lent us the glasses, came to speak to us. He narrated some incidents of the war. One was a murder of a Corporal by five Japanese, who stole on him and stabbed him in the back of the neck. I shuddered but Captain Gibbs, who, by the way, is a Catholic said: "In war, you've got to be hard". His men turned their machine-gun on the Japanese army.

Phil did not find her pen then, but later in the day, it was found and at the Purser's Office.

SUNDAY 22 JUNE 1947

A Patrician Brother gave us a pineapple. Sr M Clementia divided it; the rest of us would not know what to do. It is as big as a moderately sized turnip but is more oval in shape. The skin is rough but of course, they are not eaten "skins and all". They have a reddish-brown colour.

A Sergeant-Major in the Australian Army asked if he may have a snap of himself and the Sisters together. Sr M Clementia said "Yes" so the snap was taken, or, two were taken. He is with the St Joseph Sisters in one and with us in another. When we thanked him for taking the snaps, he said: "It is a privilege to be with you in the snap. It is I should do the thanking". The snaps will be sent to Sr M Clementia if they come out well. Sergeant-Major Jeffreys is living at Cowra, and will get in touch with Mr McMahon when he goes out. He is married to a Catholic but has no religion himself.

Fr John, we hope, will win him over.

Shortly before dinner, Fr Brabants took a snap of us. Sr Mary Carthage was missing. Father fears that the back row may not come out – it was getting dark when it was taken.

The cabin-steward roped our trunks. Instead of getting into Sydney next morning, we got in tonight at 10pm. We dropped anchor outside the wharf and, from our bunks, could view the maze of red, green and blue lights of Sydney. Sr M Clementia regretted we did not get in by daylight. She said we will never again see a sight like the Harbour. We are settling down to our first night in Sydney and our last on the "Asturias". When she returns to Sydney, she will be re-conditioned as a transport ship of two-berth cabins. So she will have a rest for a while.

MONDAY 23 JUNE 1947

Mass was at 6.30am, so the cabin-steward called us at 6am. Fr Brabants said Mass. Afterwards, we had some time to spare before breakfast. We saw the beautiful wood on both sides of Sydney Harbour which has been called "the finest natural harbour in the world". A bridge spans the Harbour. It is known as Sydney Harbour Bridge. While we were at breakfast, we passed underneath the iron monster. Crowds were waiting on the wharf. Three priests were there but none of them was Fr John (McMahon).

Mr Archibald, a friend of St M Clementia, came on board to see our luggage through the Customs. Fr McCarthy, Listowel, came to see Sr M Monina. The St Joseph Sisters came too. Sr Mary Columlikille was one. Some called me her niece! She gave me a lovely gilt-edged office-book. Another lady whose name I did not catch was with her. She is related to the Moloneys near Patty Brownes in Clonderlaw, and to Mrs Meaney, Kilmihill. Fr McCarthy came along and overheard us and said: "Oh! Kilmihill, Kilmihill! There's no place like Kilmihill

now!" Fr Brabants cried when he said "Good-bye" to us. We, too, regretted leaving him.

We bade farewell to the "Asturias" and descended the gangway after meeting Sr M Clementia's Aunt Mary and her Uncle. Mr Archibald saw our luggage through the Customs without its being examined. Three cars met us and took us off to Monte Sant Angelo - a Mercy Convent. We had our eyes and ears open but we could not see much. Sydney Harbour Bridge which spans the harbour made us catch our breath.

After a short drive, we arrived at the Convent and were shown into a room to await Reverend Mother. All the Sisters, except a few, were at School so the place was very quiet. Soon Reverend Mother came along and took us along to see the Chapel. It is very big - the boarders stay in a wing at the side of the altar. There is a Statue of Our Lady and quite close to it is one of our own Saint Patrick.

After dinner, we were taken to see the boarders. They sang and recited for us. When School was over the girls asked us down to their courts to see them play basket-ball. We met Fr O'Brien and Fr Murphy, both Jesuits. The former knows Fr Nash and knew Fr John Sullivan well. He said that Fr J Sullivan had a habit of holding up one finger and saying: "Look here! Don't believe a word of it!"

On hearing that Fr O'Brien was from Dublin, I asked him if he knew Seville Place where Sr M Paulita and I stayed on the night we were in Dublin. His answer was: "I got my vocation there. I used to serve Mass in the Chapel".

The boarders are lovely girls and a credit to Monte. One of them Suzanne Doyle, is a Queenslander. Sr M Clementia was in charge of her when Suzanne was only five years old.

We went to the parlour to say a "few words" to Sr M Clementia's people but we remained a long time. Then, we went off to bed. Some of the Sisters had single cells. Sr M Madonna and I were together.

TUESDAY 24 JUNE 1947

The call was 6.20am, Mass at 7.00am and after breakfast, we went to the parlour to see Fr O'Brien and Fr Ryan (Thurles). Then, all repaired to the Chapel and said prayers. At 10.45, we left for St Joseph's Convent where we had been invited for morning tea. It was grand to see Sr Borromeo and the other Sisters again. The four girls were Postulants. Our girls were envious of them! We had a lovely tea, and then went back to Monte.

When dinner was over, we hired a private bus to have a tour round Sydney. Five of the Monte girls came with us. The scenery was magnificent with trees and flowers on both sides of us. On a river, we saw a boat-house and were told the owners sail about when they like!

The driver pointed out some sheep holdings and said that a small sheep-holding would be from 15 to 20,00 acres. The soil is very red. We saw the foundations of Sorlie's village. Sorlie is an American negro who has bought up an amount of land and has planned to build a circular village so that the shopping centres will be near everyone. Already, some buildings are erected.

We noticed a shrub with yellow blossoms on it. Sr M Clementia said: "Wattle!" So it was the wattle of which we had often seen pictures and even some pressed specimens. The wattle is taken as Australia's national emblem. The driver, noticing our delight, pulled up, got out of the bus, plucked a bunch of the golden blooms and, very graciously presented it to Sr M Clementia. The rest of us benefited, too, getting a sprig each.

The road ran very close to a cliff and had dangerously sharp turns. When I made the comment that "a good heart is needed for this", the driver immediately answered: "No, you need good brakes"!

Our goal was Palm Beach, so called because of the number of palms that grow close to the beach. Here, we alighted and enjoyed for a while the refreshing breeze.

On our return, we had tea; then, we prepared to go to the railway station. Our good friend, Mr Archibald, appeared again and even procured for each of us a box of sandwiches. Sr Mary Clementia's friends came to say "Good-bye", then, we got into the train, the whistle blew and off we went. Somebody created a laugh by asking, just as the train was gathering speed: "Are the trunks and cases in?"

Soon we dispersed, two to each division of the carriage. There were two bunks – one over the other with a ladder reaching up to the second one. We noticed a handle in the wall so, like three year old children, we pulled it. Lo and behold! We had a lovely basin which opened out with a tap over it. There were two slabs of soap, each an inch long, three-quarters of an inch wide and one-quarter of an inch in thickness. They would do quite well on a doll's dressing table! Having come from a family of nine as well as Dan and my parents in the house, I'm more accustomed to using – or having used on me! – a great slab of Lifebuoy soap. The towels are a bit on the small side too.

There is an air of excitement all around, (or is it excitement?) now that we are beginning the last portion of the long journey.

WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE 1947

It is the day of our arrival in Brisbane which will be our home for the rest of our lives. I don't know how the others really feel but I am suddenly experiencing a

sense of real terror at the prospect ahead. The train is trundling along, getting ever closer to Brisbane, and the reality of what I am doing is giving me no sense of comfort or satisfaction. I am haunted by questions: What were the circumstances that resulted in my being here at this moment? How could I have left home for good? What can I do? What have I to offer? Is this what a Vocation to Religious life means – uncertainty, smallness, even unwillingness to go on with it when the going is hard? At this moment, I feel very miserable. I suspect that all the Australian Sisters of our vintage will have knowledge and skills well ahead of mine. Where did I think I could possibly be useful?

A little while ago, I gave up the diary and stood at the train window looking out at the passing countryside. My thoughts were very heavy indeed as I contemplated my plight. How was I going to get back home? I had no money, of course. We sped past very tall trees – so tall in fact that I couldn't see their tops, even when I crouched down. I assumed they were gum trees about which I had heard and read a great deal in Lettercollum. The trunks of some were about two feet in diameter and the branches were high up the trunks. I tried again to see what the tops looked like but to no avail. My vision was obstructed by the immediate limitations of the size of the train windows.

I began to wonder if the situation did not exactly parallel my own position – the future totally hidden and with factors operating within me making that future more uncertain. What to do though? I suddenly looked on the ground and saw there lots of small green growth – indeed a profusion of it. Obviously, whatever it was – ferns, tiny gum trees, tufts of grass – was growing because it was sheltered and had no ambition to be great. I felt that here was promise for the future. Whatever they were, they were making a contribution to the landscape, no one expected anything more from them than they could offer but they were necessary to the scene.

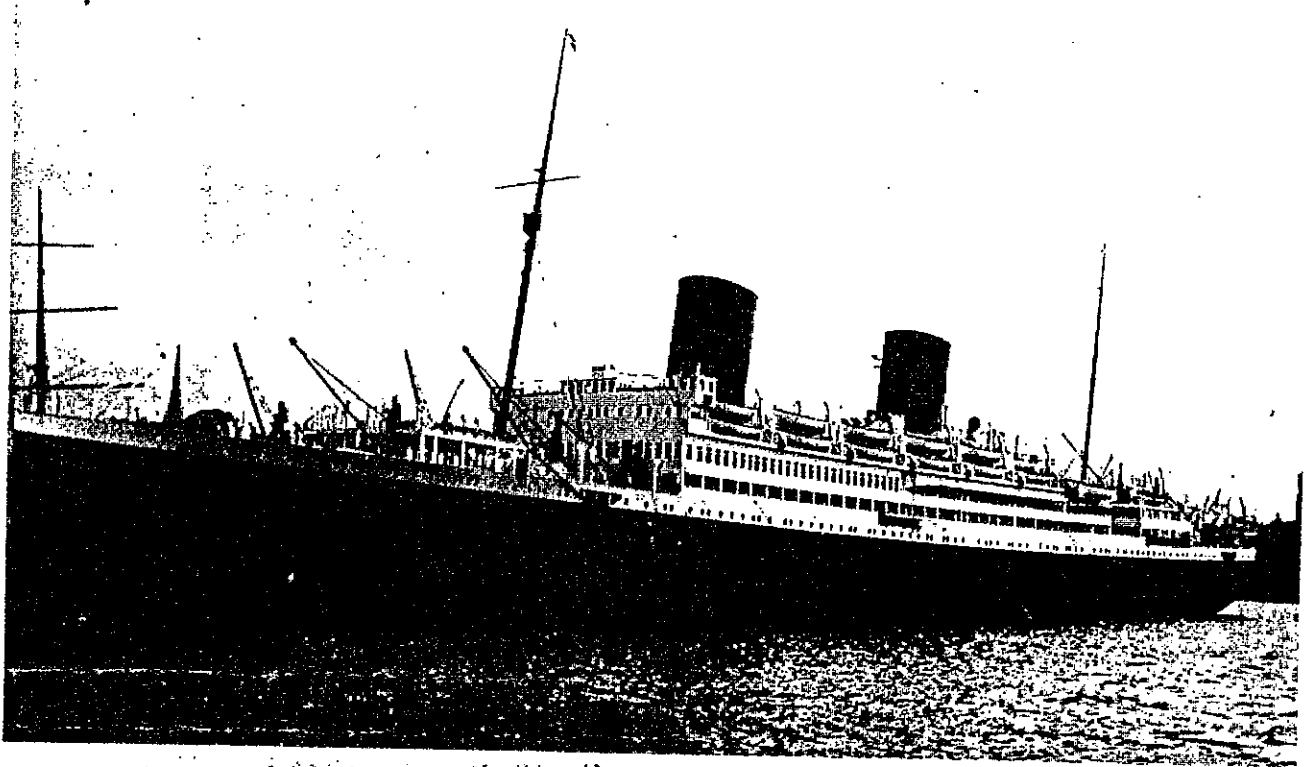
I felt an indescribable peace come over me as I related what I had seen to my own life. I can be content to have little to offer but be willing to give that willingly and constantly.

I returned to my seat and decided to say the Rosary in gratitude to God for the insights I had just received and for the peace of mind that had come back to me. Alas! I made the unwelcome discovery that in my pocket my Rosary beads and a squashed banana had become inextricably one and that that's how I am going to arrive at South Brisbane Railway Station and finally at All Hallows' Convent.

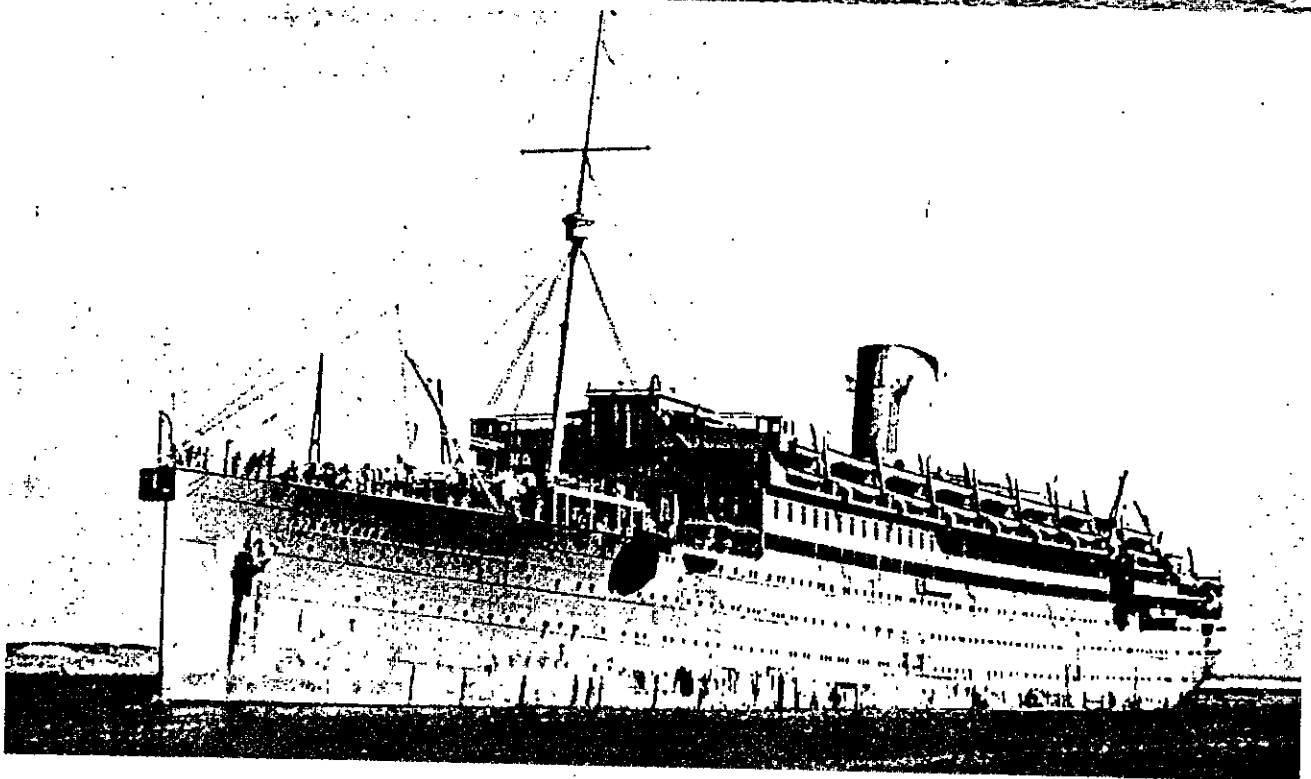
Asturias

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1



2



Asturias

Motorship *Asturias*
Royal Mail Lines, Belfast

Builders: Harland & Wolff,
Belfast

Yard no: 507

22,071 GRT; 199.8 × 23.9 m /
656 × 78.4 ft; Burmeister & Wain
diesel, H & W; Twin screw; 15,000
BHP; 16, max 17 kn; Passengers:
410 1st class, 232 2nd class, 768
3rd class.

1925 Jul 7: Launched.

1926 Jan 12: Completed.

Feb 27: Maiden voyage
Southampton-La Plata.

1934 Converted to turbine
propulsion by Harland & Wolff.
Geared turbines with 20,000 SHP
for 18, max 19 knots. Forepart
lengthened. Length overall

203.0 m/666 ft. Taller funnels.
22,048 GRT. Passengers: 330 1st
class, 220 2nd class, 768 3rd class.
Sep 24: Trials after refit.

1939 Oct: Armed merchant
cruiser. Forward funnel removed.

1943 Jul 25: The *Asturias* was
torpedoed and badly damaged by
the Italian submarine *Cagni* in the
South Atlantic. The
unmanoeuvrable ship was towed to
Freetown by the Dutch tug
Zwarte Zee and laid up there.

1945 Feb: Having been written off
as a total loss, the *Asturias*
was bought by the British
Admiralty and towed to Gibraltar,
and later to Belfast, for repairs.
Fitted out as troop transport at
Belfast.

1947 Entered service as troop
transport after fitting out. 22,445
GRT. Managed for the Ministry of
Transport by Royal Mail Lines.

1949 Jul 26: First voyage in
emigrant service Southampton-

Sydney.

1953 Troop transport again.

1957 Sep 14: Arrived at Faslane to
be broken up.

*1/2 The Asturias in 1935, after the
funnels had been lengthened during
the conversion to turbine propulsion
(1). In 1939 the ship was fitted out as a
troop transport.*

LETTERCOLLUM

By Sister Mary Constanza RSM

*I love you, Lettercolum, at the breaking of a day,
In the freshness of a morning just begun:
When a shining new-born ray breaks o'er Courtnacsherry Bay,
And we smile our thanks to Him who made the sun.*

*When little baby rabbits hop around our glades and bowers,
And rush away when mortals pass them by,
Near our Chapel hover songsters that join their praise to ours,
And a blended prayer ascends to God on high.*

*I love you, Lettercollum, at the closing of a day,
When you warn us that it's time to seek for rest.
When the dying rays of sunshine pause a moment on the bay;
And they fain would linger longer on its breast.*

*When frisky little conies come from out their cosy nest
And watch the daylight hours flee away,
And our weary, faithful songsters give their sweetest notes and best
While we thank our God for one more perfect day.*

*I love you, Lettercolum, in the winter and the spring,
In the summer and the golden Autumn too,
When "Dame Fashion" in her whims, gives your colours fairy wings,
And you don your robes of ever-changing hue.*

*From the crystal pure of winter and the palest spring-time green,
On to myriads of summer shades you fly,
And you spread your autumn carpet for our woodland's fairy queen,
E'er you gather in your leaves to fade and die.*



"Lettercollum" - found among Sr Mary Clementia's belongings after her death.