

## S.M.Berchmans Stafford's diary of the Voyage to Ballarat

[Transcript prepared by Sr. Kathleen Fitzgerald from the original diary held in the Loreto Generalate Archives]

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**May 24<sup>th</sup> 1875 7/20 p.m.**

My own dearest Mother,

At last the anchor is raised on route for our unknown and distant home. I wonder if it is half as beautiful as the dear old land we loved so much.

Plymouth Harbour is the only view that attracted our attention since we came to England. I mean, for beauty, it is a beautiful harbour. There was a large sailing vessel anchored here today, it came from Sydney after a passage of 95 days, all provisions were exhausted, two persons died, I suppose of want and were thrown overboard today. The ship was becalmed for several weeks. Mrs. Backhous, (*I cannot make out the name*) the lady who told us all this says she has been to Australia in a sailing vessel and found the voyage much more trying than in a steamer. A great many passengers came on board today, amongst others a grand young fellow who has been in Australia, was thrown from his horse, the horse rolled over his leg in the fall and injured it very much. He came home hoping the English doctors could amputate it but they could not. He suffers intense pain. He has just said Good Bye to two young ladies, his sisters, he stood waving his handkerchief to them as long as they were in sight and cried too, poor fellow, how sad he must feel. Two or three of the nuns cried, they felt so much for him, the first tears shed by any of us since we left Rathfarnham. I know you won't scold us for them.

May 25<sup>th</sup> Tuesday. The ship heaving and lurching(?) dreadfully today, everyone sea-sick, Mother Gonzaga, Sr. Aloysia and Xavaria particularly bad. Sr. Dorothea and I the only ladies on deck today, the former cannot go to cabin or saloon. I am well, thank God, above and below, and can visit the invalids.

We breakfast at 9 a.m. meat hot and cold, potatoes (carrots, parsnips, cabbage, onions mashed together, bread, butter and jam, tea very good. Luncheon meal bread, butter, biscuits, 4 dinner soup, beef, mutton, fowl, vegetables and sweets of various kinds, we leave before the cloth is removed and .....get the dessert of fruit which is served afterward. The stewardess asked us to remain but we prefer a walk on deck while the other passengers are

at dessert. All ours had to rem from dinner, even the chaplain. M.Dorothea and I had it all to ourselves. A man in steerage drank poison in mistake, the doctor was sent to him immediately. He is better.

May 26 Wed. All are much better today except M. Gonzaga and Helen Hughes, the doctor saw both. He ordered dry biscuits, soda water and brandy and to remain on deck as much as possible. We are all sunburnt but the novices faces are of a deeper shade than any damask rose I ever saw and very sore, glycerine and umbrellas would be useful to the next Ballarat missionaries.

We are in the Bay of Biscay today, the sea is very rough but the motion of the ship is pleasanter than yesterday. We saw a number of porpoises today.

May 27<sup>th</sup> Corpus Christi, what a strange Corpus Christi, no Mass, it is much too rough, it is a comfort to know that others are praying for us it is very hard to do so on ship board. I was awakened today by the side of my berth being suddenly clapped down on my face thereby putting my nose and consequently any beauty in great jeopardy and I heard someone nearby saying, "I beg your pardon." The ship rolled suddenly while M. Dorothea was dressing. She was thrown against my berth. We admired our faces while dressing. They get brighter and brighter everyday. The others are more ladylike being in bed all the time we were on deck. All except M. Gonzaga and M. Xavaria are able to come to breakfast in saloon. I forgot to tell you what sort of place the saloon is. It is a long room, longer than the Exhibition room I think, but low and narrow, two tables down the whole length. The table we sit at is separated from the other tables by the mast so we are completely to ourselves. The group cabins are off this. There are skylights over the centre tables but not over the side tables where the servants and children take their meals at a different hour from us.

May 28<sup>th</sup> Mass today in Fr.Carey's cabin. All of us were able to be present. As yet we have not heard of any Catholics being on board except the young man

who came with Fr.Carey. Numbers of "Father Carey's chickens" flying after the ship today. I hope they do not foretell a storm. M. Gonzaga quite well today. Making 11 knots an hour, Captain says so far weather could not be more favourable. We are near Lisbon today, no land to be seen. It is getting very warm.

May 29<sup>th</sup> Saturday. Confession today for the first time certainly accompanied by many inconveniences. I wish Srs. M.J.Francis and Pacifica were here. Fr(?) Hughes cabin arranged

as confessional, green baize hung up for screen, the chaplain inside seated on trunks to our amazement, the captain and one of the officers came around to make a daily visit, however, they passed our cabins as we were in them. The great difficulty was to remember your sins, recite contrition, and at the same time try to keep on your knees and avoid rolling into the confessor's lap. Thank God it is over for another week.

Porto Santo in sight today but so distant it looks like a cloud. Everyone excited to see land. A beautiful calm evening, lecture for Com. Up on deck. Fr.de .....Conferences, closely watched all the time by a .....gentleman who takes a great interest in our goings on also by Physician, who, apparently has nothing else to do. All very well today, M. Gonzaga as bright as possible and able to look at the sea without being "Oh my.."

May 30 Sunday Mass at 7. The Captain has a screen all around our corridor to hide us from 2<sup>nd</sup> class passengers. He is very kind and only wants to know what we wish for that he may get it. About 10 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> class steerage passengers attended Mass today. All the 1<sup>st</sup> class passengers and all the Officers and crew are Protestant but all are kind and polite to us. Sighted a steamer today. It was almost out of sight when we went on deck after dinner, we only caught a glimpse of it. Read some of Mark Twain today for M.Gonzaga and M.Aloysius, both were attacked with "Oh My" and for want of .....I had to stop. Srs.Gertrude, Bruno, Xavaria and Margaret also sick. It is beautiful and calm, I do not know what makes them sick. Sr.Boniface,? Dorothea and I began Office today, the others not able. After meditation we went on deck to get a breath of air. We generally walk in pairs, before setting our Sr.Xavaria requested Sr.Gertrude to walk behind her to hide her as she had no stockings on, fancy prudent S. Xavaria doing such a thing, of course, we were all shocked and she had to put on her stockings after breakfast. It was excessively hot last night, I could not bear more than a sheet over me, with an occasional jump to look out porthole I managed to keep cool. Mother Gonzaga sits on the side of her bed till it cools and then lies down. The others lie quiet patiently waiting to get hotter. The letters that came in the box with the statue were only found today. Were they not welcome? They were like a last chat with dear loved ones in Mother house. Heaven will have a greater joy than if we have not given up all we love.

31 May, A beautiful calm day but very warm when we were on deck. Captain Backhaus asked if we had seen an island which was in view. We had not. He kindly lent us his glass and gave us all the information he could. We were about two miles from it, we could see it distinctly. We passed successively, Palmas, Gomera and Herro of the Canary group, wretched, barren looking places. Herro especially so, it rises abruptly, like an evenly cut wall, black rock, some hundred feet from the sea. We could discern some clumps of trees scattered here and there and the rocks appeared to be covered with lichens. Captain

Backhaus says great quantities of iron are found there. It belongs to Portugal. Mother Gonzaga and Sr. Xavaria are sick today Will they ever be well? Mrs. Backhaus and Mrs. Haffin spoke to us very kindly today and were quite concerned to see M.Gonzaga so ill, one brought her oranges the other Eau de Cologne. The former has been a long time in Ireland and speaks highly of the Irish but is very hard over the bigotry of the Irish Protestants. She has her baby, 15 months old, with her, a darling little child. Mrs. Haffin is a very stout lady, wears a large brown hat with rosettes over her ears, a regular character, we know her as Mrs. Browne of Bridgetown.

1 June, dear Rev.Mother's feast. Mass at 7.00 a.m., we all offered it for her, some of her children wish her more heartily a happy feast and heaven's choicest blessings than her absent and loving children on the "Somersetshire" do. Passed a German Man O' War today and left it behind us. We tried to alarm Sr. Boniface by telling her it was Bismark coming to release his injured subjects but we did not succeed. The sky beautifully clear tonight and the stars very distinct, so distinct that Sr. Dorothea discovered Ursa Minor had two tails and wants to know in which the Pole star is to be found! We will be in the tropics tomorrow and expect intense heat.

2 June In the tropics Lat.20 a very cool morning, awaited the intense heat but did not experience it, on the contrary we were obliged to wrap ourselves in shawls and hoods to avoid cold. The lamp was extinguished in the saloon tonight, by the wind, and a cold wind too. The sun sets every evening about 6.p.m. and before 7 it is quite dark, the lamps are already lighted at sea. It was too cold to go up on deck tonight. We went to Ladies Saloon after tea and had a very pleasant evening there. We had it all to ourselves Sr. Gertrude played harmonium, Sr. Aloysia and Xavaria sang several things, "Jesu dolores victima" Memorare, Bossi's Tantum, etc. The Captain was in his cabin which is opposite Ladies Saloon, he was delighted with the music and voices. The Chaplain was complimented on his fine tenor and asked to sing sometimes, to Sr. Xavaria's intense horror! A storm petrel caught today. It was about the size of a thrust, all black except wings are of a light brown and a large white spot on its back. They say it is unlucky to catch them so it was liberated after a few minutes.

3 June Excessively hot last night, no breeze today. "B flats" are on board. Mrs Backhaus' little baby all bitten. The poop cabins alive with them. Our cabins are on the hot side of the ship, we scarcely ever have a breeze, however, they are free from "B flats" We begin three Hail Marys to Blessed Benedict Joseph Labre tonight to keep them from us. Sr. Bruno and Fr. Carey went to the kitchen tonight to make altar breads, it was not an easy affair Fr. Carey

remained all of the time but was in a great hurry to get out of the heat. It is a very small place Sr. Bruno says. The range is at one side and a press at the other. There is only room to turn in it and the poor cook is there from 4 in the morning till eight at night, what a life he has! The breads were only very middling. I wish we had enough in what you gave us.

Friday 4 June. Mass today in honour of the Sacred Heart. Mass on ship's board is a very much more difficult duty than on land. I don't know whether it is kneeling so long without support of any description, the heaving of the ship, or the close cabin that renders it so difficult but I do know that we are all knocked up for the day after it. Sr. Aloysia complained of neuralgia this morning. At 10 a.m. she lay down for a short time. By 12 noon she was almost unconscious or rather unable to make the slightest effort, excessively weak and in great pain. I puzzled my brains for a remedy and at last thought of quinine. M. Gonzaga gave permission to ask the doctor for some. He, instead of giving it, went in to see her. I was afraid she would be annoyed but she was not able even for that. He gave her two quinine pills, made enquiries if she had been in the sun, said it was weakness made her so bad. Towards evening she got worse. She thought she was getting brain fever and asked leave to go to confession but did not get permission, very bad all night, no sleep

Saw some.....today, they are small, not longer than a herring. They seem to be in shape something like a gondola and are of a pinkish colour, the sails are very thin and flimsy.

Saturday 6 June. Mass today for Sr. Boniface. Everyone sick after it. Sr. Aloysia very little better today. However, she dressed after Mass and got to Ladies Saloon with Sr. Bruno's help. She was unable to go on deck. After breakfast, George, our bedroom steward, took her very gently in his arms and carried her on deck where a mattress and pillow were arranged on one of the seats. She appeared quite unconscious of the sensation she caused. Everyone enquired anxiously for her. All are so kind to us each offering something. Fr. Carey gave us a bottle of Champagne and of sherry. Mrs. Burton two bottles of champagne. The fresh air improved our invalid today if you could fancy we had any air today it is so excessively hot. I had to change forehead band and cap three times today. The others look provokingly cool to me but I suppose I am to suffer from heat what I escaped in sea sickness. 2<sup>nd</sup> class passengers gave a concert to .....we were present, of course, as we could not be on deck without being so. It was a beautiful moonlit night and our dear old friends, the northern stars, looked brighter than ever, a few nights later and even they will be gone.

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Mass at 7.30. We were to have singing at Mass today. We got the trunk with music in it up from the 'hold' but Sr. Aloysia was not able to sing. Two of the Steerage

passengers went to Holy Communion today. We are in the Doldrums today in every sense of the word! It is very, very warm and raining ferociously. We all look unable for any effort. Some of the community spent from 9 o'clock until 12.00 trying to make a half hours meditation fortunately they were interrupted by the luncheon bell and had to be satisfied with their efforts. Protestant Service at 10 o'clock. The harmonium was played by Mrs. Bowe a young widow from Ballarat. She went to Europe with her husband and two little children last June. He got fever at Genoa and died at Rome in December. Her parents live in Ballarat. Her father is ArchDeacon Freman. She told her history to M. Gonzaga today and cried bitterly poor thing.

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> Another ordinary day but fine. No possibility of sleeping last night, the heat was so great. Yet the Captain says it is cooler than it usually is in the tropics. The occupants of the poop cabin complain loudly of "B Flats", the babies are all marked from them. We are free from them up to this. After 12 today we saw a peculiar yellow line on the water near the horizon. It looked like a strand to us, we watched for some minutes. It came nearer every moment. Some of the gentlemen warned us to go quickly down. A storm was coming and we had scarcely time to gather our things, books, work, etc. Then it began to pour rain.

8<sup>th</sup>~Tuesday. Just as warm as yesterday and we will not cross the line until tomorrow morning. We will be exhausted before that time. You could not fancy how hot it is. I would not like anyone who is not strong to feel as we do today. It puts one into a heat even to think of putting on our habit in the morning. It feels like seven stone weight. All any of us can wear is habit, black petticoat and chemise. No ..., no flannels, if we had them on we would be in bed from sheer exhaustion. Some of the sailors who had crossed the line before played a trick on one who is only on his first voyage. They handcuffed him, rubbed his face with a mixture of treacle, mustard and pepper (Sister Boniface ought to try it), and were about to shave him (he has no beard naturally) when he screamed so lustily that the Captain, who was in bed at the time, sent to see what was the matter. The young fellows paid dearly for their joke. They were sent on deck, in penance but did not seem at all repentant. When the Captain got up he sent three of them aloft to spend the evening at the mast head, one on each mast, and the youngest, a boy of 16, formerly styled 'commodore' by crew and passengers, was stationed above at the end of the deck. This boy is a minister's son. He was expelled from six schools and as a last resort was sent to sea. He kept up a conversation, on his fingers, with the fellows on high and when it grew dark he stole aloft. When he was up some time he wanted to know if the Captain was on deck and putting his mouth to the pipe communicating with the Steerman's house he called out, "Is the Skipper down there?" The skipper was there and said "Yes, I am here and will see you tomorrow". He, the commodore, got down pretty quickly and was punished in the morning. Last night the heat was so great that the gases escaping from the coals ignited and some of the coals

were burning. The Captain smelled fire and immediately discovered the cause. He said the crew were busy all night. We knew nothing about it until this morning. We were not to be told at all but some lady found it out and, of course, we all heard of it.

9<sup>th</sup> Wednesday No sleep last night. We all smelled fire though there was no fire to be smelled. Between sea sickness and heat we are a very dilapidated looking community today. M.Gonzaga and S.M.Aloysia the sickest except Margaret who has not been even one day well since we came on board. We have had beautiful moonlight for the last few nights. The Southern Cross has been visible for five or six nights. It is indeed a disappointment. One hears so much in praise of it. The shape is very like a cross but its brightest star is not as brilliant as Deneb (?) 10<sup>th</sup> Thursday Not so hot today. One forehead band sufficed. Saw a quantity of flying fish today. They are very small and perfectly white. Sometimes they look like spray. Nothing of importance occurred today. All the ladies look sick, very few at any of the meals. I think they are meant to sicken by looking at them. I cannot tell you how I felt at breakfast with Red Herring at one side Irish Stew at the other and a mixture of roast potatoes and onions, etc. Opposite and a quantity of meat besides. We had a most alarming and amusing find in our cabin last night. M.Gonzaga found a "B Flat" on her cap. It was caught and killed but it has caused great uneasiness. What shall we do if they get into our cabins!

11<sup>th</sup> Friday. All were sick yesterday. Sr.Boniface broke down for the first time since we left Plymouth. Captain Burton sent a message by the Chaplain to ask us to accept two bottles of champagne. Sr.Aloysia said he should spend a month with us in Ballarat in return for the other bottle he gave us .He says that is impossible but he will watch us and if we look squeamish and do not eat, the champagne will be put in the swing tray over our table and we must drink it. We had a long chat with Miss Ada Germaine last night. Sr.M.Boniface, M.Dorothea and I were standing at the side of the ship. She remained with us. She is very like S.M.Ni...(page caught in binding)

12 Saturday Margaret is in the doctor's care since Thursday. She suffered more than anyone from sea sickness but I think she gives into it very much. She has not got a bit of energy. It is still very warm, the sheet is quite enough at night We were presented with champagne today.

13 Sunday We had Mass today though it is very rough and not quite as warm as it was, Protestant Service at 9 as usual. Mrs. Bowe played harmonium and one of the Messrs.

McHaffie Jun. Provided the air by means of a broom handle fastened to pedal. The Captain officiated. Mrs. Burton insisted on Mother Gonzaga taking the champagne. We found it in swing try over our head when we went to dinner. Mrs McHaffie sent us some during dinner yesterday. I hope the next missionaries will bring some amusing books with them. We have often longed for book. It is impossible to study all day. Some days you cannot do it at all.

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> scarcely any breeze today. We are only creeping along. The sunset this evening was really magnificent, such gorgeous shade of carmine, orange and blue. We had also a lunar rainbow. I wish Sr.Francis could have seen it. The moon was encircled by it. The colours were very beautiful, pale yellow, green, purple etc. It resembled a target. I believe these rainbows are not often seen.

15<sup>th</sup> Tuesday It is almost an impossibility to move today the ship is rolling so much. All are well today, you may judge how well as they were able for confession. There is a strong wind today but an unfavourable one. We saw several whales today. We saw them spouting or rather breathing all the morning in the distance but they did not approach us until 1 o'clock. Some of the gentlemen say they were 30 feet long. They are immense animals. We could only see their backs above the sea. They look to be very well fed creatures. It was very dark this evening at sea and in the morning there is no light until about 7 then we have day light.

16<sup>th</sup> Wednesday Mass today in Fr.Carey's cabin. The ladies are very busy today making wigs, preparing robes for judge and barristers. There is to be a mock trial tomorrow a "breach of promise" case. We were asked to attend but declined.

17<sup>th</sup> Thursday The trial took place today. The poop deck was screened off from the lower deck and seats arranged for the court. Captain Burton was judge. He is a very tall and fine looking man, he is Irish, today he looked a giant. We could not go on deck during the trial so we remained in Ladies Saloon. During lecture the door was thrown open and the Captain ushered in, the Judge in Scarlet robes and wig. With him was the young lady in whose favour the Jury had given a verdict of a farthing in damages. This interesting lady is Mr. Halstead, he looked quite a lady by the aid of two pillows to supply for petticoats, dress improver, hat, veil and flowing train, Mr. Wright next appeared he was dressed as a widow being the aggrieved ladies widowed mother. His nose was deeply rouged as one of the accusations was that mother and daughter were too fond of gin and onions. They were all very well dressed. The wigs were made of untwisted ropes. The trial went on from 1.30 p.m. to 3. P.m. and was a great source of amusement. Mrs Burton said that the only anxiety she had

was that the scarlet petticoat of hers which the Judge had on his shoulders would come down. Captain gave a champagne dinner.

18 Friday A very stupid dull day. The sea rather rough. No one sick. We had to come down to Ladies Saloon at six this evening. It was too dark to remain on deck. Sr. Gertrude played the harmonium and after tea Sr. Aloysia and Xavaria sang some sacred pieces. There were two or three ladies and gentlemen outside the door. One of them, Mr. Habbe, a Danish gentleman wept copiously, he is a most eccentric being. Everyone offends him except the 'lady nuns'. He is a great painter and there is not enough respect paid to him. He had a long controversy (conversation) with M. Gonzaga some days ago. He says it did him good. After the music and singing we had another and far superior entertainment a miscellaneous, simultaneous recitation, viz The Fields of Waterloo, The Song of the Shirts, Old Times and The Old Clock on the Stairs recited by Srs. Aloysia, Xavaria, Dorothea and myself, of course, you may fancy how humorous it was, however it made us laugh plenty and a good laugh is better than harmony any day.

19 Saturday Very calm. A ship quite near us today, we left her far behind. The Captain says the nuns brought him good luck. He never had so prosperous a voyage. I don't know if he means what he says, at all events he is very kind to us. Another sailing vessel in sight today it is coming in our direction but we passed it very quickly, T.G. We are not in a sailing vessel, they are sometimes becalmed for 3 or 4 weeks in the Tropics. The Middys drove a gig through the saloon last night, down stairs and along our passage. It squeaked ....all the time it was about 11 o'clock when it passed our cabins, frightening some. Sr. Aloysia thought it was hens.

20 Sunday The altar very grandly arranged this morning in honour of tomorrow's feast., the Kilkenny bannerette pinned in front as an anti-pendium, Sr. Agatha's gold chain fastened above the ivory crucifix which hung over the altar and festooned at the side. We had singing at Mass. We had been wondering why we never heard the least noise at Mass on Sundays and today discovered that the Captain stands on the stairs at one end and has ordered George, our bedroom steward, to stand at the other end consequently we are never disturbed. Several of the saloon passengers were on the stairs today listening to the music and were delighted. Some of them said they would never forget the impression our early morning service made on them. The Captain never spoke to any of us until today. Fancy my surprise when he stopped Sr. Xavaria and myself, who were walking on deck, and thanked me for the music this morning, see what it is to have a musical face! I asked him if he preferred Sacred Music he said he would not give a Thank You for any other kind and that

we could not give him a greater treat than the music today. It is very cold today. Sunday is a very long lonely day on shipboard.

21 Monday What a St. Aloysius it is! Both his clients are as sea sick as they possibly can be, so is Sr. Xavaria. It seems in mockery to wish a Happy Feast under such circumstances. I hope they do not feel lonely but what a contrast it is to the happy day it is usually in our houses. Well we will have our happy day when we arrive at our dear little convent and now we have Our Lord though not really present. What a happiness one half hour before the Blessed Sacrament will be. It seems ages since our last Holy Communion in the dear, dear Abbey. I think He bid us Good Bye then and is waiting to meet us in Ballarat. The ship is pitching very much today. The sea is a little angry. They say it is only the beginning of rough weather. This is a free day with the crew. They were paid a month's wages before leaving London. And will not be paid again until they return. The month is up today. They were busy all day stuffing a canvas horse. After tea it was led by the sailors, twice around the poop deck. It was then auctioned. The gentlemen bid £2. It was sold for £3 to Captain Burton. This sum was made up amongst the gentlemen. The horse was then raised to the top of one of the masts and thrown into the sea. All this was intended to show that the work of the sailors during the remaining part of the voyage is dead and useless as they do not receive any payment. Whilst the horse was led around the deck the sailors sang an extraordinary song. The only words we could hear were "This old horse is about to be sold" and the chorus "Oh they say so and we hoped so. Perhaps S.M. Attracta could sing it.

22<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday Sea rather rough today. There is a good breeze. It is very difficult to walk as the deck is nearly perpendicular. The captain stopped Sr. Boniface and me this morning to tell us not to go up any more without shawls. He said it is rash of us to do so. We promised to wear them for the future. Sr. Dorothea and I took a grand walk after dinner. We had the deck to ourselves and were not afraid of being seen if we fell. After some time we were joined in our walk by Mrs. Burton. She said she depended on us to prevent her falling. She is as tall as Sr. Bridget. She asked us. She asked us if we had come from Rathfarnham. She knows where it is as she has been often in Dublin. We asked her to pay you a visit the next time she goes to Ireland. She and Captain Burton are very kind to us.

23<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Very rough today, the ship completely to one side. We have frames on table today if not everything would tumble into our aprons. It is quite a feat to get your cup safely to your lips. The saloon passengers gave a concert tonight for the benefit of the sailor's orphan asylum. After the performance the Captain gave supper, sandwiches and sherry. He sent us a dish of the former and a decanter of sherry by the doctor. We were in

the Ladies saloon. The doctor told us to hold the wine glasses and the decanter as they would run off the table if we did not. We took some of the wine, put the decanter on the table and were busy with the sandwiches, suddenly the ship pitched, off went the decanter into a corner and when we rescued it about a glass of wine was all that remained. We told the stewardess about it, and laughed heartily over the mishap. Afterwards we told Captain Backhaus and Mrs. Burton hoping it would be told in the saloon. A sailing vessel in sight today. It left London 12 days before us and we got ahead of it very quickly.

24 Thursday Another very rough day. It is impossible to walk, getting up and down stairs a rather difficult undertaking you find yourself whirled down the whole flight. The altar cloth is finished I will try and get the machine when the sea grows a bit calmer.

25 Friday The ship still on its side. Our cabin windows are nearly under water. It is very cold we have all our flannels on. It is very damp on deck. Sr. Dorothea and I took a walk, we were saying what would you think of us if you saw us struggling hard to keep on our feet. We succeeded in warming ourselves for the day. None of the other sisters ventured to walk

26 Saturday Screw up today, it is delightfully quiet without its clatter. There is a strong breeze. We are getting along splendidly with the sails. A poor sailor died last night. He was working his passage to Australia to try if the climate would improve his health. He has his brother on board. The Captain was with him when he died. He read the prayers for him and will also read the Burial Service. Mrs. Backhaus told us he can do so and can marry also. He once brought a Minister on board to officiate but not one attended the service, since. Since that time he performs all the ceremonies himself and no one is absent. Sr. M. Boniface and Dorothea were on deck today. Both had shawls over their heads. They met the Captain, he saluted them and passed on. After walking once or twice up and down, they stopped to admire the sea. In the meantime the Captain had gone to his cabin and procured a large grey shawl, anything but pretty yet very warm. He came quietly behind them and putting the shawl carefully over both their heads, he said "Allow me to present you this shawl. You look perished. He told some of the ladies afterwards, he got the shawl purposefully for the nuns they are so lightly clad. He could not say that of us in the Tropics! The poor sailor was thrown overboard at 3 o'clock this evening.

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday The screw still up. The Captain wants to spare the coal. He was obliged to throw a quantity of it over board when it ignited. I hope we will have a good breeze for a few days. We have not rounded the Cape yet. The Captain will not turn the ship until it comes to the 45<sup>th</sup> degree of Latitude by that means we will escape a great deal of tossing. We spend our evenings in the Ladies Saloon now. Any day we do not meet Mrs. Burton on

deck she comes to see us in the evening. She sent us more champagne today. I forgot to tell you Fr.Carey gave us eight bottles of champagne, four on M.M.Gonzaga's feast and four since. Champagne is, I believe, the best wine for sea sickness. We had Mass today though it is so rough. It is very cold and too damp to go on deck We remained in Ladies saloon today sitting as close to each other as possible to try and keep ourselves warm.

28 Monday No breeze today. The screw had to be put down. It takes about an hour to put it up or down. We spent our evening at "Proverbs" and "Old Soldier" yesterday. Fr.Carey sent us his dessert of almonds and raisins.

29<sup>th</sup> St. Peter and Paul The Captain gave permission to have Mass on the corridor that the steerage passengers might be able to attend. After dinner we went to M.M.Gonzaga's cabin. Fr. Carey sent us his dessert, figs and prunes, a bottle of champagne also of brandy. The latter were returned by M.M.Gonzaga, but he implored her to accept them. In honour of St.Peter and Paul. He also gave her a large knitted black woollen jacket for herself, in return she gave him a long scolding or exhortation but he carried his point. Mrs.Burton came in this evening, she told us the Captain would be obliged to put down the screw soon as we were not making any way at all. It appears the poor engineer, Mr.Troy, has not been able to take off his clothes for a single night's rest, once since we left Plymouth, the anxiety about the engine is so great, certainly he has a careworn look.

30 Wednesday. A lovely day it would remind you of a bright frosty day at home. Today, for the first time, we saw the Albatross. Captain Backhaus pointed it out to us. It is a very large bird, all white except tips of wings which are brown. It has a long pink beak the legs too, are pink. Myriads of sea birds of several species kept flying near the ship as there was no noise to frighten them. Sr.Dorothea and I were enjoying a walk on deck The side became so crowded that we went to the other side which was more slanted and wet too for the sun was not on it. We went bravely on, however, but in a very short time our pride got a fall for we came to the ground in a most sudden and unexpected manner. The noise we made quite frightened a poor gentleman who was proceeding quietly before us. I think we were up before he had time to turn around. This catastrophe did not prevent us from continuing our walk in the very same place but with a little more caution. The gentlemen gave a concert this evening. It consisted of music, reading, recitation and singing. The Captain does not expect to get to Melbourne before Saturday fortnight. We are doing our best to induce St. Michael to blow us in before then. Every time we come out of the saloon some one or two run up to see how the wind and sails are; we are becoming quite adept in these matters. M.M. Gonzaga has not been once sea sick since the day after her feast and seems to be

getting stronger and more like herself every day. I made a little star basket for Bertine Bowe yesterday and sent it to her with love from the nuns. She came, with her nurse, to thank the "Lady Nuns" had promised her Mamma to kiss each one. When she saw us all together she got quite frightened and we had to be content with kissing hands. She was delighted with the little basket. Passed Prince Edward's Island today. It looked like the top of the Sugar Loaf in the distance. It was covered with snow.

## JULY

1<sup>st</sup> Thursday Very dark, damp day and much wind. The sails are up. No observations could be taken today the sun was so covered with clouds. On fine days the latitude can be taken either in the morning or evening and the longitude at noon. Nothing of any interest happened today we were not able to go up even once on deck, passed the day in working studying, talking, etc.. The weather reminds me of the days before Christmas.

2<sup>nd</sup> Friday Another dark rainy day, no wind. It seems as if we are at a standstill. The screw is down but we are going at half steam in order to save coal. We have been asking St. Michael for favourable winds for some time. Today we intend making a grand attack on him. We are to say his crown together for nine days and if we arrive on the sixteenth to say a Novena in his honour. S.M. Aloysia and I have been working hard at point lace, butterflies, leaves, etc. For bows which we manufactured from some bits of silk we brought with us. We gave some to Mrs. Burton and some to Mrs. Backhaus, four to one and two to the other. They were quite pleased with them.

3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday. It snowed last night. We had a snowball this morning. The wind was fearful last night. At every squall the ship rolled on her side, then suddenly pitched back again. Each roll was accompanied by a crashing of china, glass and delph rolling of barrels and tumbling of boxes that was something dreadful. None of us slept except Sr.Dorothea and M.Gonzaga.. Today is beautifully clear and frosty. They say it is an Australian winter's day. It is not too cold. The ship is heaving very much. The doctor and his chair and a bottle of potion were flung from one end of the saloon to the other during lunch. Mrs. Burton came to thank us for the bows. If we meet in twenty years hence she will show us the lace.

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Last night not too rough. We were able to sleep a little we are going very quickly 13 or 14 knots an hour. Mass this morning was a very nervous thing. The book fell twice. I don't know how the chalice stood without being held. Whilst I was laying the vestments the ship heaved and when I looked round I found nothing on the altar but the chalice, veil, paten, hosts, corporal all were in different directions.. I felt rather uneasy during Mass fearing it would occur again. It has been raining all day, no going on deck so I copied my diary all day. I find it very hard to write as it is very rough. You told me to take pains with my writing but I find it impossible to do so.

5<sup>th</sup> Monday Another very stormy night, certainly St. Michael is working hard. The wind getting very violent, the dead lights are on all the windows so we could not remain in Ladies saloon had to go to our cabins until the lamp was lighted Everything is fastened. Tables, harmonium etc. were all on the move.

6<sup>th</sup> Tuesday No sleep at all last night. The waves dashed incessantly against the port holes and over the deck, then rushing down the lower deck the ship pitched so much I thought nothing remained but to turn right over, as to the smashing of china and glass it was dreadful. I believe there was no danger but it is hard to think so when tossed about in that way. We have. We have no peace all day. The floor is the only place you can get a minutes rest. You only slide up and down when seated there but if you sit anywhere else you are sure to get pitched off. Sometimes two or three of us find ourselves quite unexpectedly clinging fast to each other in a corner, in half a second we are we are dancing something in the Indian fashion to a different part of the apartment. The beds under the portholes are very damp and rather wet. The occupants of them slept on trunks one night with shawls under the mattress to soften them a little. It happened to be the first stormy night. Sr. Xavaria declared she would not sleep there anymore. She expected to be thrown out every minute. Parts of the cabins are sheeted with iron and since the weather got damp water is continuing to trickle down the iron. The Captain has threatened us with a storm.

7<sup>th</sup> Wednesday The storm has been but too well fulfilled, The night was awful, the terror the terror we were in is not easily described and you could not imagine what it is unless you experienced it. The water came dashing down from the decks to our passage where it stood until deep and penetrating into some of the opposite cabins. The meals are very unpleasant. When going to dinner today the first thing we beheld was a pair of ducks dashing across saloon off our table. Every five minutes you expect to get a bath of soup, the contents of your plate on a tumble often but indeed you deem yourself fortunate if you do not get a leg of mutton, as Mr. Hable (?) did, on your knees. We saw about a hundred beautiful

photographs. They belonged to Mrs. Birch. who kindly lent them to us. They were mostly views of Rome, copies of some of the Old Masters and cards of some of the most celebrated characters of the day. They were the best photographs I ever saw.

8<sup>th</sup> Thursday Another terrific night, a sail reefed by the storm. The ship lay over so much that the life boats were filled with water and one of them was removed from its place by the storm. The main deck was full of water. It was so deep that the men who were obliged to cross it were up to the neck in water, one of the officers washed overboard by a wave another officer dashed him back on deck. He was slightly hurt. We did not breakfast until 10 o'clock today. The cooking could not be proceeded with owing to the storm. Some of the sisters who have not been able to sleep for the last six nights, went to bed after dinner. And slept till near supper time.

9<sup>th</sup> Friday Last night was calmer. We had a walk on deck this morning of which we were deprived since Saturday. The screw has been put down. We go by sail and steam. This morning we were making only 4 knots an hour. We had a thousand tons of coal on board when leaving. About 100 had to be thrown overboard at the time of the fire. We use about 30 tons a day.

10<sup>th</sup> Saturday We are going by steam only today. The wind is direct south, consequently the ship is very much on its side. One of the advantages of a steamer over a sailing vessel is that water is much plentier because water is distilled by the same fire which sets the steam going. Water is distributed freely to the First Class passengers. But measured very sparingly to the others. The saloon have many advantages over the other passengers. Indeed it would be impossible for nuns to go any other way but in saloon

11 Sunday Very rough all night, too unsteady for Mass. We are rolling about as if in a cradle but strange to say it is not conducive to sleep.

12<sup>th</sup> Monday The Essex, a sailing vessel, belonging to this Company was in sight was in sight yesterday. It left London in April last. I think we left it behind though we are going by sail too without screw. A land bird was seen today. They say it is a sign that we shall soon see land and what a joy that will be!

13<sup>th</sup> Tuesday It is beautifully quiet today, yet there is a breeze, just enough to get us on without the screw. We had a walk on deck. It is very mild and agreeable. A rat was killed this morning, the first we heard of, I hope it will be the last too.

14<sup>th</sup> Wednesday There was great noise last night occasioned, I think by the screw but Sr. Boniface, and Xavaria declare we were on a rock! I asked M. Boniface how they got off it without injury at which harmless question she indignantly declared that Sr. Dorothea and I were sure to provoke God's anger by our mockeries of every danger! Why, if we believed all the stories of leaks, rocks, sandbanks, etc. which are related as gospel every morning, by our two guardians, as having occurred during the night, we would be quite nervous before this. I once or twice offered to watch for them until 10 o'clock. I could not promise to keep my eyes open any longer. They scornfully rejected my services. I cannot impress on their minds that I go to bed to sleep. They do not seem to think sleep a night duty for they remain awake then and sleep now and then during the day. I must only repeat, dear M.M. Conception, "Let every spirit praise the Lord" and sleep when I go to bed.

15<sup>th</sup> Thursday. The Captain was quite amused when asked if we had been on a rock on Wednesday night. It is not well to be incredulous sometimes! He says he never had a voyage in which all the small things fitted in so well nor travelled with a nicer set of passengers. He is twenty five years at sea. However, it is an exceptionally good voyage. November, generally speaking, is a safer time as you avoid the winter in the southern latitudes.

16<sup>th</sup> Friday Mass today in honour of Our Lady. The night was very calm and now there is scarcely a breath of air, the screw is just down to help us on our way to our unknown home. Where we hope to arrive on Sunday evening by the help of steam and sail. The weather is beautiful now, more like Spring than Winter. The sailors are all very busy, scouring, painting and polishing to make our ship look well when coming into port. This evening we had visits from Mrs. Burton, Mrs. Backhaus. We showed the photographs of the Abbey and they were not only delighted with them but wondered how we could ever have said Goodbye to so beautiful a home.

17 Saturday. We are going by sail and steam. The wind, which is very high, seems annoyed at the screw being down at all and in retaliation is knocking it about terribly and causes it to make a great noise. I spent the morning packing my little goods. The Captain sent us an Invitation to a champagne party he is giving to the saloon passengers this evening at half past nine, we declined, of course. We had our tea in Ladies saloon tonight and enjoyed it.

For better than we do when in the large saloon. The accommodation was not the best but we did full justice to our bread and jam. The albatross came over near us today. They are beautiful birds.

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday. No Mass. It was too rough. I had to settle the altar which before Fr. Carey's mind was at rest as to the possibility of having it. At last the Australian continent is in sight. Before breakfast a long strip of land was visible. It is, I believe Cape Lenvry, the most westerly point of the continent. We will lose sight of it in an hour or two and will not see land again till evening then Cape Otway will be seen. The last three days seem intolerably long but today appears even longer Oh! How welcome land is after two months, nothing to be seen but sky and water. 8 o'clock p.m. we went on deck after tea and what was our delight to see Otway lighthouse shining brilliantly through the dark night. It is a splendid revolving light and though some five miles from us it is very distinct. The moon is not very bright but its rays fall on our ship and we hope it will be seen at Otway and its arrival telegraphed to Melbourne. Some of the sisters propose staying to watch the coming of the Pilot who will take charge of the vessel when she enters the heads or harbour.

19<sup>th</sup> Monday About two o'clock last night we were wakened by a sudden shock occasioned by the stopping of the vessel to take in the Pilot. The Steerage passengers shouted and cheered in a most alarming manner. We slept very little during the remainder of the night. Sr. Xavaria stood at her porthole admiring the lights in the ships we passed and the land opposite to us I could see all these beauties from my top berth by stretching my neck a little. I got up at five, dressed in my best, finished my packing and said my prayers, that I might be able to go on shore early and wait doctor's and co.....(?) arrival. But not one was up except Sr. Boniface who took a peculiar fancy to the Ladies saloon. This morning and would not leave it. So I was obliged to wait as patiently as I could until Sr. Aloysius was dressed and at last my curiosity was satisfied. The harbour is very fine but the scenery is not at all as beautiful as it was at Plymouth. Everything seems very like home. The houses look very small but are pretty buildings with verandas running round them, It was about half past eight when we anchored at Sandridge Pier. All the passengers were on deck looking for friends. We were on the look out for the Bishop but did not see him. The breakfast bell rang at nine and we had to answer it though we would much rather watch his Lordship's arrival. We hurried through our last meal on the "Somersetshire", finished the packing of all of the boxes we had in our cabins, put on clean guimps and went to ladies saloon to wait as patiently as we could. About 11 o'clock we had said Goodbye to all our friends and witnessed their departure. Only two could conveniently look through the window of the saloon so I managed once or twice to cause a small sensation crying out "Purple gaiters" and all the community came running to the window to see them. When the Captain and all the passengers had gone up the town we were on deck to see if we could recognise anyone coming to look for us. I certainly expected

Uncle Joe, even if the Bishop did not come but there was no sign of anyone. At last two priests are seen and after a few minutes of anxious expectation they addressed us, Frs. Cahill and Watson, S.J. The former said he had been commissioned by Dr. O Connor to let him know immediately of the Somersetshire's arrival but we got to Cape Otway so late that it was too late to telegraph to Melbourne, consequently it was not known in Melbourne that we had arrived until this morning. As soon as Fr. Cahill heard it he sent a telegram to the Bishop but he said we could not hope to see him until 3 or 4 o'clock as he could not be in town earlier. He enquired for Fr. Dalton's niece and said he would be down to meet us but he had to appear in the Justice Court about two orphans he had taken care of after the death of their mother who left then in care of the Jesuits. Fr. Cahill then asked what we intended doing. He said it would be best to go with him first to the Archbishop's and then to Abbotsford Convent. We accordingly put on our communion Veils, took our little bags, shawls and set out on our walk to the station. Fr. Cahill leading the way at a moderated distance before us and walking at a pace that evidently meant "don't come up with me". The journey from Sandridge to Melbourne occupies only four or five minutes. Fr. Cahill had gone in another train and had three buggies waiting for us. We drove first to the Archbishop who was out at the time. Fr. O Sullivan, one of his curates and the two Jesuit fathers did the honours and showed us everything that was to be seen. The Cathedral is a magnificent building but is not half finished. They have the most beautiful stained glass window I ever saw at the end of the church. The ground alone, on which the Cathedral stands, cost £20,000. You may imagine what it will cost when completed. The Archbishop's private chapel is very pretty. The altar is of white marble and came quite lately from Rome. The pupils of the Jesuit College hear Mass here every morning. His library is splendid and he has several fine paintings in his gallery. When we had seen all these places Fr. O Sullivan had luncheon ready for us to which we did more than ample justice indeed we individually felt quite ashamed of our appetites but what could we do? It was the first naturally flavoured tea and bread we had tasted for two months, besides it was three o'clock. After lunch we went out on the roof of the house and had a magnificent view of the entire city from it. Whilst we were there Uncle Joe came to look for his niece. The Good Shepherd nuns received us very kindly, showed us all through the convent, community room, novitiate, chapel, all on a very grand scale. When we arrived in Melbourne Fr. Cahill showed us a telegram from Dr. O Connor saying he would be up by the night train. He had taken his ticket for the mid-day one but Deacon Moore showed him into the Ararat instead of the Melbourne train and the Bishop was some forty miles from Ballarat before he discovered the mistake. When he got back to Ballarat he had to wait until the night train. Though the Abbotsford convent is large yet the nuns could not find room for ten visitors. Five was all they could accommodate. Uncle undertook to procure lodgings for three at Miss Jones's a lady who lives near his church at Richmond and Mrs and Mr. O Keefe, father to one of the nuns gave an invitation to two, Margaret and Ellen went to his house Srs. Xavaria, Dorothea and I were named for Richmond. Frs. Cahill and Watson dined with us at the convent and after dinner they came to Richmond with Miss Jones's lodgers. It is a drive of about twenty

minutes. We had tea at the Presbytery and spent a very pleasant evening there, at nine o'clock we went to Mrs. Jones who received us very kindly. We heard four Masses at St. Ignatius the following morning and were at breakfast when Uncle Joe came to tell us that we must hurry. Dr. O Connor sent a message to say we were to go at once to Abbotsford as we were to leave for Ballarat by the 11 o'clock train. Everyone was amused to find the Bishop in such a hurry to get his nuns home. We set off at once to Abbotsford. Uncle Joe accompanied us and the Bishop met us at the door. "Well, well Sisters, here you are at last. We felt that we had got home at last. It was such a comfort to meet him. We were then introduced to Dean Moore. I do not know what the others thought of him. I felt a wee bit afraid of him. The Bishop said Mass at the convent, after Mass any of our party who were in the convent went in to breakfast with him and told him all the news but when we arrived he did not give us time to breathe but hurried us all off in a few minutes. We drove to the Archbishop's to get his blessing and got to the terminus a few minutes before the train started. Four of the Jesuits were there to see us off and we gave the keys of our trunks to Uncle. He kindly undertook to go with Fr. Carey to the Custom House and get them sent on without being opened. I am ashamed to say not one of us could say the exact number of boxes we had. The next travellers should have a list. We were very grand and travelled First Class, the nuns and Helen in one carriage, the Bishop, the Dean, Ellen and Margaret in another. The Bishop got out at every station to know how we were getting on. He seemed not to know what to do with us, he was so glad to see us. At Geelong, which is about half way, we made a longer stay and he sent the Dean to buy oranges for us. We were delighted to get them as we were very hungry. The country, as far as Geelong, was well cultivated. And we saw several good houses scattered here and there. The squatters houses, generally, are very small and made of wood. From Geelong to Ballarat we passed through miles and miles of bush and the country seemed quite uninhabited. We arrived in Ballarat at three. A lot of women rushed to the carriage and insisted on shaking hands with us and declared it was a glorious sight in a foreign land. There were three carriages waiting for us M.M. Gonzaga and the three seniors were in the first under which were a splendid pair of horses, but not greys. We drove first to the Cathedral. The Bishop walked before us up the aisle and settled us in the first two benches. He and the Dean went up to the altar and recited the Te Deum and trimmings, We praise Thee, O God, We adore Thee O god, etc. We admired the altars, sanctuary, the sacristy and orchestra were locked so we could not see them. By the time we had seen the Church a small crowd had gathered outside and we were well stared at while getting into the carriages. We drove down Sturt Street, a magnificent street, splendid houses and up the Melbourne Road to the Presbytery of St. Aloysius [Alipius] which is our house for a time. It is a pretty little wooden house, very like a Swiss Chalet. We have a nice garden and are quite close to the church of St. Aloysius. We go in through the sacristy. The three priests, who lived here are, gone to the Bishop's. Bridget was here to receive us and prepared dinner, champagne, etc. The Bishop and Dean went away before dinner and left us to ourselves. I could not tell you what spirits we are in. We are all as happy as ever could possibly be, in fact we never can convince ourselves that we are 12,000 miles from

home and friends. The Bishop and Dean (who are always together) came again in the evening to see how we liked our house. The Dean has been our dispenser since we came. I need scarcely say he is a good one. He insisted on us taking champagne but after three days M. Gonzaga said to the Bishop it was too much and that we did not require it. He gave us leave to have it only on grand days. We have Mass at 7 o c. And the doors of the church are not opened until we leave. The 8 o c. Mass then begins. We had Confession the Thursday after we arrived but Friday will be the day, I believe. On Sunday we went to the Cathedral for High Mass (Cantate). The Bishop preached on the Gospel of the day (The Publican) after saying a great deal on humility he thought we were able to bear a little praise<sup>1</sup> He said that "these good nuns" were from Rathfarnham which for fifty years was one of the first educational establishments in Ireland, etc. And concluded by saying he hoped they, (the people of Ballarat) would show their appreciation of the good!, holy and enlightened community who had come among them, in a practical manner. After Mass the De Deum was sung and when we went to the sacristy the Bishop shook hands with us congratulated us on being so well established. During Mass we knelt in the sanctuary, where seats had been prepared for us, fortunately our communion veils hid our faces for we would have been seen smiling at our own praises. They have Vespers every Sunday evening in the Cathedral, the choir and children sing the psalms and alternate verses. The Bishop wished us to hear the singing, accordingly he sent two covered vehicles for us. We knelt in the same places as in the morning. The singing was very good and it was delightful to be at Benediction once again. Do you remember my last Benediction in the Abbey, kneeling at your prie dieu? I thought I never would be happy again. If I were writing forever I could not give you an idea of the Bishop's and Dean's kindness to us, they appear to be thinking of us from morning till night. The last Confession day I met the Bishop just after Confession, I suppose my Confession was improved by the rancontre. I walked up the garden with him and when we met M. Gonzaga he said I was looking so strong and had got such a colour. We are all very well and M.Gonzaga says we do her heart good we have such good appetites. You told me to say how our dear little Mother is. I am glad you know she does not say much of herself as you will not expect exact accounts of her. She is, I think, very well. At least she does not say she is sick. She certainly looks very well and is in very good spirits, and fancy, she told us she is really happy. Now won't you let the Enniscorthy community know that? I think Sr. Bertrand expected to hear that her new community had fairly tormented her. I would like her to know that we are a most amiable little set.

I will have room on this half sheet to tell you in which cabins we slept. M.Gonzaga, S r.M.Aloysia, Sr.Boniface slept in cabin marked ...E?..(looks like decorated 6). S.M.Gertrude and Helen in C. S.M.Xavaria, Dorothea and I slept in A., Sr. M.Bruno, Margaret and Ellen in Y, Sister Gertrude slept in our cabinj and Sr.Xavaria in Bruno's and Ellen in Helen's but Margaret was so much in her cabin and so frequently sick that Mother thought it better to change S.Xavaria into our cabin, it being much neater and better aired than the other as the novices were never sick. M. Gertrude went into Helen's to make room for her M. Xavaria

Voyage to Ballarat - M. Berchmans Stafford's Diary, 1875

was never sick after coming to our cabin. We threatened to put her out if she were. I suppose she was afraid. I know there are a hundred and one mistakes of every kind in this diary but I must only trust to your kindness to excuse all. Please do not let too many see it. I am really ashamed of it.

M.Berchmans

6<sup>th</sup> August, 1875

St.Aloysius [Alipius] Presbytery,

Ballarat