



Maria Montessori
Sails to America
a private diary, 1913

The year 1913 was of great importance to Maria Montessori, both in her private and her professional life. She organized an international course in Rome for the first time, whilst just having been reunited with her adolescent son Mario. Also she was preparing for a promotional tour to America.

This is the first time that Maria Montessori's thoughts, feelings and impressions, written down by herself, are being published. The Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company is proud to present the English translation of the diary that Maria Montessori kept during her first voyage to America at the end of the year 1913. In this diary she dwells on the major changes that had taken place in her life in that year and looks forward to what her visit to America may have in store for her and her work.

Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company



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ISBN
978 90 79506 08 8

Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company
Koninginneweg 161, 1075 CN Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Cover design and layout
Van de Manakker, grafische communicatie, Maastricht, The Netherlands
(Cover design based on an idea by Eduard Visser)
Printed and bound by
Wilco Printing & Binding, Amersfoort, The Netherlands

Typeset in Bembo and Zaphino
Printed on sustainably sourced paper

Translated and introduced by
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MONTESSORI-PIERSON PUBLISHING COMPANY
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

affecting Montessori: her mother had died very recently, her long-lost son – usually introduced as her nephew, since Montessori had no custody of the boy – had moved in with her, and two or three times a week her house was filled with students who were eager to hear her speak. Having lived with her secret for many years, Montessori had learnt to keep her emotions in check, so she proceeded with the course as though nothing had happened, taking some time off during Easter to spend with her son whom she still had to get to know. Mario was an intelligent, happy boy and seems to have adapted easily to his new life. In the only picture we have of him of that time, he stands with a proud and happy face next to his mother during the graduation ceremony of the training course in May.

The training course was hugely successful and definitely established Montessori's international reputation for being an innovative and inspirational educator. From all over the world requests came pouring in from people who wanted to study with her, translate her book, buy materials, inviting her to come and lecture. Only 43 years old, her name had already



*Maria Montessori with Mario,
Carlo Marini and an unidentified girl*

proceeds safely; below my feet and on every side there is the endless sea.



At 5 o'clock I sent a radiogram home.
'Received dear messages – blissfully crossing the ocean – thinking of you with love.'



An American lady wanted me to meet her two children: a little girl of 20 months and a boy aged three; later on she wanted me to see them while they were having their bath. The mothers are showing me their *naked* children! This moved me to tears, and made me think of Mario's naked little children.¹⁵

¹⁵ Montessori is looking forward to the grandchildren she may have one day.

Monday 24

Tuesday 25

I can feel the sea! Oh, God ... the sea! Last night I was seized by panic ... the terror of suffering! Like the prelude to a terrible pain – a headache – at the nape of my neck, a general sense of agitation, a sensation of nausea. The ship – this enormous giant – goes up and down, as if sailing over a chest that breathes, and with every breath it rises at least one metre. Every once in a while this terrible chest seems to sigh or sob and the ship heaves even higher.

The ocean is calm ... no foam on the waves ... it is breathing normally. What irony, all this comfort! It seems that the refined dinners, the dining rooms are cruelly mocking us. To walk through these saloons is like proceeding into the greatest suffering – this swaying makes the entire body hurt. Before long, everybody will flee and retire like sick

You can send letters of 60 words and the ship delivers them in Gibraltar, from where they will be sent on by express mail.

I have sent an “ocean letter” home! Tonight there was a ball on deck: I stayed up until 11 o’clock (1.30 at night in Rome), at this hour my child is asleep.

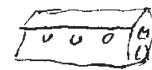
While sailing past us, the *Cleveland* sent a radiotelegraph saying that from New York to here the weather had been splendid. The Captain¹⁹ told us the good news during dinner: it made everybody happy, because it gave us hope that we shall proceed with good weather until the end of our voyage.

¹⁹ The Captain of the *Cincinnati* was a certain C. Schaarschmidt. His name was found in an undated German newspaper clipping among the papers of Maria Montessori.

Wednesday 26

Thursday 27

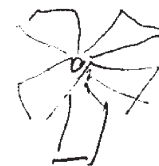
Beautiful day, bright sun. The sea is calm but magnificent with its huge waves. Early in the morning I went quickly outside to see the Azores, many of the islands look like fractured craters. What a beautiful sight! You could see the small houses, white and simple, like primitive toys that children play with. Quite a



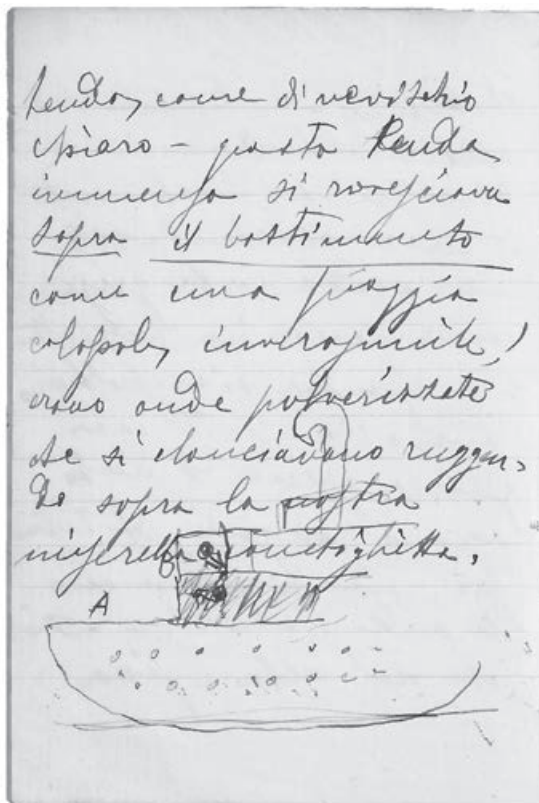
lot of miniature wind-mills, too, real toys. Sail-

ing along the foot of the

Azorean mountains, the ship was calm as it was on the Mediterranean. They say that a smooth voyage like this one is quite exceptional!



Today, the last Thursday of November, is a national holiday in the United States.



Saturday 29

Saturday 29

with the lightweight, coloured storm window and the shutter, while leaving partly open the huge glass window with the thick brass frame, which serves as the heavy, solid, hermetic seal: it keeps out the *raging water*, not the air, as every other window in the world does.

I was lying down, in agony, while the bed moved terrifyingly up and down and sideways, trembling cruelly, when, with much noise, a huge amount of water came roaring through the window, even though it had been doubly secured! By now the waves sweeping through the lower part of the bow were no longer a spray, but real water, reaching the upper deck and penetrating the verandas and the other decks.

Members of the crew came rushing to close everything with huge windowpanes