



*On Board
The Royal Mail Liner*

Royal Mail Lines

" Highland Monarch " " to June "

Very dear people,

That sounds like the beginning of a sermon in an Edinburgh church. But I have just lost my fifth fountain pen this year, and when I am reduced to using this characterless and impersonal piece of machinery, anything may happen. If, as you know, you put an orangutang on a typewriter on a transatlantic liner, by the time he had crossed the Atlantic seventeen million times he would, by the law of averages, have typed the sonnets of Shakespeare at least once. And if he was on this crossing of the Highland Monarch, he would probably have typed them several times already from sheer boredom.

For there is absolutely nobody but ourselves on board, except a dim young pair from Vina and a long thin girl with shoulders like a coathanger and a voice like a rusty bicycle. In fact the huge boat is so empty that, in our sad and broken up condition, it feels as if the whole expedition was one large stupidity, pointless and macabre, designed for our personal undoing. Marnie, on the other hand, is reminded of the fabulous exercises laid on for the benefit of female anti-aircraft batteries during the War, when hundreds of aeroplanes would be sent up at staggering expense to hover over their heads in the vain hope that the girls would eventually succeed in getting their searchlights onto one of them. (They never did, of course, because they were much too busy brewing tea and talking about their boy-friends). A

and fabulous experience which neither of us will ever forget or recover from. Love

glenn

Dear Alison
Dear Captain



sort of millionaire's dream.

God almighty, the bell is ringing - only half past twelve and our fourth meal today already. We can't be late as we have to sit on either side of the ship's Captain. Yesterday Alison, who has to eat earlier at another table, ran in to us during lunch and was sick all over the Captain's chair. But she mistimed it, as the Captain wasn't there. So there we sit, at the Captain's table in the middle of the vast dining room, and round about at their appointed tables sit his gigantic Petty Officers who look as if they had done nothing, since receiving their commissions, but stuff themselves with cutlets and waddle from time to time to the ship's tailor to let their trousers out. Actually the Captain is a jolly character and so Elizabethan in his outlook that I am always waiting for him to throw his chicken bones over his shoulder at the Chief Steward. He could hardly miss him if he did.

Buenos Aires was grey, vast and dispiriting. Actually I was aware that its window-dressing was entrancing, and the galaxies of huge paper parrots in white wire cages all over the Galeria San Martin would have warmed the heart of anybody who heart was willing to be warmed. But ours were not. It was the dimmallest 42nd birthday I have ever had.

Tomorrow is Sao Paulo and the Biennale. We shall try to do better.

I cannot write any more now. The virtue has gone out of me. Knowing you has been a rich

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