

22.12.40.

Dear All,

I have just most reluctantly or not so reluctantly - I am not sure which, - dragged myself away from Agatha Christie's "Three Act Tragedy". While in the danger area, I do not read such things as "Architectural Building Construction (!)", nor do I do any drawing, because these things need slightly more concentration than the aforesaid "Three Act Tragedy". All that of course boils down to the fact that I am taking this opportunity of writing this letter so that it will be ready for me to slip into the letter-box when we arrive.

It is a pity that I could not be home for Christmas, but then I don't suppose there will be much doing this year.

The voyage by the way, has

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been very interesting indeed - especially to me. I don't mind telling you that I enjoy myself far more on this veritable old tramp than I ever did on the last ship. Mind you I enjoyed myself then as well, but it was only like moving from one house to another. I didn't have to change my mode of living. Here it is different. It's an altogether tougher life, full of various excitements from day to day, and suits me down to the ground. Whoever thought that one day I would keep a watch on the bridge of an old tramp in mid winter, going across the North Atlantic? Perhaps I ought to mention that the weather has not been smooth.

I have been trying to imagine how things are going along at home, but I'm afraid I haven't made much of a success of it. I presume you now inhabit the subterranean depths of our own

most honourable cellar which no doubt dad (D) has made to look like a confined-space-dormitory-drawing room. However, no matter ~~no matter~~ how much the space ~~be~~ may be confined, I am going to sleep below ground-level, even if it means shifting Iris from the most comfortable bunk of the lot, which I naturally assume she has bagged!!?

Ah! but you can't ~~me~~ beat my bunk. I sleep so soundly, that when my mate calls me, the conversation sounds something like this:- Mate "Its twenty to twelve" (said ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ a most triumphant tone of voice, as if he received some secret enjoyment out of calling me at such an unearthly hour). ME "O.K." (Eyes immediately fall shut again, and head falls back on pillow). MATE "Are you are awake?" ME (strugglingly) "Yes. O.K. I'm awake"; and then he leaves the room, maybe with a parting "Its twenty to twelve!" However I get my own back when I call him at a quarter to six

so what does it matter? Well I think I'll close down now, but if there is any news when we arrive, I will put it in. I ~~am~~ just ^{going to} drop a line to Mary, and then return to dear old Aggie!"

Dec. 26th 1940. /

Although Agatha Christie could only write a three act tragedy, I think I could write one ~~called~~ ^{entitled} "Tragedy" Infinitum or something! That is not of

course meant to imply that I am fed up (impossible on this ship — double meaning!!), but just that we are still here in —

amongst the fog, anchored in the river, and trying to look cheerful! Admittedly that is difficult enough for me, even at the best of times; but ~~even~~ ^{still} to its a bit leaving a bloke "in the gutter" so to speak.

I am beginning to wonder whether I am a Radio

Officer, a Signaller or a Chartered Accountant, because the old man has given me all the account of wages to do (up to date this time) including correcting the tobacco accounts after the third mate and the steward ^{we} had a go. He tries to humour me by telling me that I am the only neat person aboard the ship, but if the truth were known I think it is because I am green! Still we'll learn by experience.

Christmas dinner consisted of a pair of boiled potatoes, a football team of peas and a couple of slices of Turkey (not the country) which equalled the area I suppose, of a couple of shillings!! The pudding was just duff and white sauce. Oh! I mustn't forget that there ^{was} oranges, Port wine, and Brandy.

I was in a very generous mood, so let the others drink the wine and the brandy, whilst I tucked into the oranges! I The old man as good as told me that I was narrow-minded, so I told him to go and run away (to myself of course).

No doubt I shall soon be home again, but we must be patient — one has to be aboard the "Ethel," but its great fun!

I am reading "Beau Sabreur" ("Beau Geste" etc.), and am revelling in the tales of blood!

Oh! well I'll have to shut up now, for it is eight bells and there are several things that I want to do before it is time for a bit of shut eye.

So au revoir everybody, and all the best,

Your very affectionate son,
and brother,

P.S. Reason for blank page on no. 5. Two leaves turned
Gen.