

BLUE RIBAND IS SAME WITH BRITAIN'S
QUEENS

At Southampton, it's loading day for Britain's Queen of the seas - the giant Cunarder Queen Mary. This is a special occasion. For the next 40 days, the "Mary" has the Atlantic on her own. Her sister ship, the even-bigger "Elizabeth" will be in dry dock for annual overhaul. Though departure and arrival has become routine to this headline-stealing luxury liner, sailing day still has the atmosphere of a premiere - the excitement and splendour of a first night.

As the last of 2,000 passengers join what will be their home for the next five days, a Pathe cameraman goes aboard with them. For this voyage will take "the liner of the half-century" well past the century mark of post-war crossings. A marvel of craftsmanship - a triumph of British shipbuilding, the two Cunarders are today among our biggest dollar earners. And the facts about the ship are truly astonishing. A catering crew - more than 800 strong - sees to it that austerity fare becomes just a bad memory. In well-equipped electric kitchens, more than 100 cooks conjure up over 10,000 meals a day. Meals to rival those of the swankiest luxury hotel. It's little wonder that all accommodation is booked up months ahead.

As the Q.M. prepares to put out to sea, news comes of the arrival of the Q.E. - home from New York. It's the first time the two ships have met in the same port for more than a year, and, though they are a mile apart, there is time for sisterly greetings.

"Dinner is served" as the Mary slips out into Cowes Road. The first of the journey's 50,000 meals is under way. The first of 200,000 pieces of china goes into action. The first of 10,000 chickens goes the way of all chickens.

From the Queen Elizabeth - now off to dry dock - comes a final "Happy Journey" - and then the Queen Mary is away - down Channel into the Atlantic. As she leaves, news comes of an ambitious plan to build a third Atlantic Queen. While Britain can build and own ships like these, the nation's maritime position is secure.