

ROSE LAWN,
KINGSCATE-ON-SEA,
KENT.

December 15 1946

Dear Mr. Snell,

Many thanks for an interesting letter. Your address, "Bideford", brought back recollections from many, many years ago: when as a boy I "did" Devon on a bike, I won't say how many years have passed since then---a good many!----but I remember Bideford as if I had seen it yesterday: and wouldn't I like to give the Ship another look-in: and wouldn't I just like to clamber up that jolly old street in Clovelly! No cars on the roads in those days---the early "safety" bike just in, and the old "bone-shaker" still to be seen careering about! I remember that I left London in the early morning, lunched at Reading, tea'd at Wincanton, and put up for the first night at Bath. Not much like the present day, when I find it rather a wild adventure to walk round to the pillar-box to post a letter! Never mind--what's the odds so long as you're 'appy?

It was too bad your missing my broadcast----I have known what it is like when a set conks out at a particular moment. Perhaps you may like to know that I am

broadcasting on December 23rd. But it is a talk to Australia, and goes out on the short wave, at 8 a.m. I am telling the world that Billy Bunter is coming back, with a few personal remarks on what Christmas means from my point of view.

Yes, it is true that I am rather "up to the neck" at the moment, but I always have time to read a jolly letter like yours and answer the same. I think you are perfectly ~~right~~ right in ranking the Magnet above the Gem. I always liked it better, though I confess to a soft spot for Arthur Augustus D Arcy, who was in reality Maurice Down, the last and best editor of Gem and Magnet. Your view is widely shared: for I get innumerable letters asking for Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton and Co, back again, and only about a tenth as many asking for Tom Merry and Co.

I had quite made up my mind that Greyfriars was dead and gone: but the result of the Picture Post interview changed all that. There were nearly a 1,000 letters, and they still drop in at the rate of three or four a week, the writers generally beginning "I have just seen an old number of Picture Post", or words to that effect. Everybody seems to want Greyfriars again: and I am bound to admit that I like writing Greyfriars better than anything else. But weekly papers cannot be put on the market now: and Greyfriars is coming in volumes of book length, something like the old Holiday Annual, published by Charles Skilton and Co. Ltd. at probably 6/-. Also there will be some 1/- small volumes published by Merretts.

The first 6/- volume was called "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School". I have just finished writing it, and Macdonald is doing the illustrations. It will be in the book-shops in the spring. I am telling the world in my broadcast that the first volume will be followed by "more and more and more, in fact as many as the public will stand!" I hope they will stand quite a lot, for having got back to Greyfriars, I don't want to leave it again.

It was a real pleasure to read your letter, and I am very glad that Mr. Leckenby gave me your address. I had some doubts about beginning again after the War: and letters like yours have an encouraging and bracing effect.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

Frank Richards