

ROSE LAWN,

KINGSCATE-ON-SEA,

KENT.

February 17th, 1948

Dear Frank Snell,

Please excuse delay in replying to yours of the 9th, January. I have been up to the neck in the third Bunter book, which I finished yesterday: and when Bunter is on the machine, there is no room for anything else. However, "Billy Bunter's Barring-Out" is now done, and will be off to the publisher's in a day or two. I think I told you that the second book is called "Billy Bunter's Banknote", but is a "Smithy" story. In the third, Bunter butts into the title as usual, but Bob Cherry is the chief character. I hope that No. 4 will be a Christmas story, but I suppose that must depend a good deal on the time that it is likely to appear.

I was very glad to see in your letter that the spectacular disaster was so promptly remedied. But surely it was a risky business playing Soccer in glasses. You ought to thank your lucky stars that a ball banging on them damaged only the specs. I played tennis for years in glasses: but I should have drawn the line very severely at Soccer, if I had worn them at that time of life. You must have had a series of marvellous escapes.

Yes, Arthur Marshall's review of the Bunter book on the radio was very pleasant hearing. I am told that Billy Bunter turned up in a quiz in Monday Night at Eight last week, but unluckily I was not Monday night-at-eighting at the time. However, I was much entertained to hear Tommy Handley Buntering in Itma later in the week.

My article in the Saturday Book 1945 was not "on shorthand", but just referred to it. It was an autobiographical article--a brief sketch of the old bean from seven to seventy. Out of print now, of course: but I believe copies can be had at some of the libraries. Did you ever come across my article in "Horizon" in May 1940? It was an answer to one by George Orwell in the previous number. I think I gave George as good as he gave me.

So you are not interested in the fair Bessie? You did not miss anything by missing the Cliff Houss series, as most of them were done by benighted heathens who hardly knew how to spell, let alone to write. However, that is a very sore subject and I won't speak about it. I think the happiest thing at the present time is the fact that these rascals are now quite done with, and will never be butting in again.

Bessie anyway has had to take a back seat, as it was decided after all that the third book should be about Billy. The way people keep on asking for Greyfriars keeps me in a state of perpetual astonishment. I am told that the demand shows no sign of slackening, but reprinting is slowed down by the paper problem, and the books are not easy to get. Actually I have orders myself at two different booksellers, and the answer is "reprinting". Fancy a scribbling fellow being unable to get copies of his own book! However, I suppose this will be set right intime. I had the usual six from the publisher, and an extra six, but these seem to have melted away: but I am hanging on to my first copy, in case the paper shortage should put a sudden stopper on. When you write again, I should be very interested to know whether you see any unsold copies in the booksellers at Bideford.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

*Frank Richards*

P.S. Now I havent referred to your article. But that, of course, is O.K. Much obliged, my dear boy.