

ROSE LAWN,

KINGSGATE-ON-SEA,

KENT.

March 9th, 1948.

Dear Frank Snell,

Having read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested your play, I now return the same herewith, with many compliments. I opine that the football-pool prize would have made a more plausible finis: nevertheless, the climax is good and exciting. But O Boy, did ever happy playwright snoop £5,000 for a play? I like what I will call your galloping style, --the whole thing goes with a swing, as everything should but too often doesn't. One gets the impression that you wrote the play at a single sitting without stopping to take breath. Which in my opinion is exactly how a play or anything else should be written: for as I have often remarked, when the author slows down, so does the reader's interest--or the audience's, as the case may be.

I remember using a Barlock once, and it was an experience not to be forgotten. But that was in 1902 or 1903: they have had time to improve since then. ~~I~~ I tried many makes at one time: I think it was in 1903 that I finally settled down with the Remington--since when I have used no other! But when I recall it, I can still hear that old Barlock clumping away like a coke-hammer.

Yes, I was in London for the War, from July 1940. I had settled down here for the duration, planted up two gardens and a field with potatoes and things: and then the Powers that Be sent round a notice politely requesting me to clear off the coast. Hitler being expected to call in any day. This made me curse considerably, for I was getting a little old to be pulled up by the roots. ~~But the place was getting so cluttered up with~~ But the place was getting so cluttered up with barbed wire and tank-traps and other things of a similarly pleasant nature that a doddering old civilian was perhaps better out of the way. I arrived in London in excellent time for the bombing to begin, just as in earlier days I had arrived in Paris just in time for the Ferrer riots, and later on in Austria is good time for the outbreak of the 1914 war. I always had rather a gift for getting into the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't think I shall ever forget that night in September, when the sky over London was red with flame as far as the eye could reach, and buildings going down like houses of cards. There

were curious experiences in those days. One morning I was taking a walk down a street I had not traversed for some years, and I said to myself, said I, "Surely there used to be houses on both sides of this street". And then I discerned that the houses were still there--but in the form of shapeless ridges of rubble! One side of the street still standing, the other side gone into powder! One morning, looking out of my study window, I was a little puzzled by an unusually extensive view----a house had been nipped out of a row, like a tooth at the dentist's. It is quite ~~unusually~~ curious, as a new experience, to feel one's house shake, and the earth rock under one's feet; but it is surprising how soon one accommodates oneself to circumstances. All the while, only one wretched little chunk came through my roof; and I felt rather neglected.

Yes, I read Mr. Rowse's article in the Saturday Book, and rather liked it. I come across reviews by him sometimes in the Sunday papers, which seem to me pretty good. I have not happened on his book "A Cornish Childhood", but from what you tell me, I can guess that it will be interesting. I did not know he was a Labour man--which I suppose means Socialist. If there were a genuine Labour Party, I should certainly belong to it, being an industrious labourer myself: but I have no use for Socialism. "Eliminating the profit motive" on £5,000 a year does not impress me. Not very much, anyway. But I used to have real respect for the early Socialists of other days--they were rather windy, perhaps, but sincere: and certainly they never foresaw that Socialism in practice would mean what it means to-day---meddle and muddle!

Thanks very much for the book, which came promptly to hand, and is now well on its way to Eritrea. Isn't it curious that a missionary at Asmara should be keen to renew his acquaintance with Billy Bunter? I hope that W.G.B. will brighten up a spot of Darkest Africa. No doubt you have received "Horizon", which I sent along on receipt of your letter.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

Frank Richards

P.S. I had a letter the other day from a reader in Clevelly! But it was Clevelly, N.S.W.