

ROSE LAWN,  
KINGSCOTE-ON-SEA,  
KENT.

September 24th, 1947.

Dear Frank Osborn,

I was very pleased to receive your letter. No need for "trepidation", my dear boy. It is always a pleasure to read a letter like yours. It is true of course that I receive a good many, and my replies are sometimes, I fear, a little belated: but yours came luckily this morning, and, having just finished the second Bunter book, I am taking a day or two off to catch up with correspondence: and putting you first on the list. It is extremely interesting to me to hear that you are the proprietor of that venerable "Pluck" containing the first story ever written of St. Jim's. Herbert Lockaby sent me the photograph of it to look at, and it was quite a thrill to see it again after so many years. I had a copy myself up to 1915, when it was used up in preparing it for re-issue in the "Gem" at a time ~~when~~ when circumstances made copy very short. There can be very few now in existence.

You must be quite an old reader if you read the Gem and Magnet from the beginning--a real veteran. And you have a copy of "Football Fortune" in the B.F. Library? This is a very old stager. It was published as a serial in the Boys Realm by Hamilton Edwards, who asked me to write it for him, ever so long ago--it must have been about 1903 or 1904. Long-ago as it is, I remember reeling off the instalments on the No. 7 Remington I used in those days, and sometimes walking into the old Carmelite House with an instalment in my pocket--being a much more active fellow in 1903 than in 1947! In these latter days Frank Richards is rather like a deponent verb---passive in form but active in meaning!

I wish I had a copy of "Tom Merry's Conquest": I should be very glad to supply the missing link, if I had. But alas! nearly all my Gems and Magnets went West in 1940. They made such a mountain of paper that I thought I ought to hand them over to the salvage--and did. Have I not missed them since!

So the first number of the Magnet was brought to you when you were ill in bed! I shall hope that it did not cause a relapse!

Yes, it is rather contrary to the usual opinion to like Martin Clifford better than Frank Richards, but a good many old readers have told me so, all the same. Among the number is the editor of both papers, Maurice Down. Some time ago it was a moot point whether my second volume in the new series should be a "Tom Merry" story or a second "Bunter" book, and I consulted Mr. Down on the subject. He told me that he ~~personally~~ personally always liked Tom Merry the better of the two---nevertheless agreeing that there was a large majority in favour of Greyfriars. I think I myself belong to the latter party: I always think of myself as Frank Richards, and have almost forgotten that it is not my real name. At the same time, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was always one of my favourite characters, and I just loved writing about him. I hope that when the paper werry permits, I may write a "Tom Merry" book similar to the Bunter books: and when that comes to pass, A.A.A. will undoubtedly have a good show in it.

However, I am glad that you tell me that you are looking forward to the Bunter book---Billy the Next Best Thing, as it were! There have been a lot of delays, but the book will positively be out in October, and I believe that early copies are already being despatched. So far it has been possible to print only 20,000 copies, but the third 10,000 is on its way, and I am told that this is to be followed by a fourth and a fifth---so everyone who wants Bunter will be satisfied in the long run. At Greyfriars School nobody wanted Bunter: I am rather glad that the big public don't take the same view of him!

I shall be very interested to see your article in the C.D. which I receive regularly from York. And I thank you, my dear boy, for your good and kind wishes. My health is astonishingly good for an old boy whose eightieth birthday looms on the horizon! It is true that I have a leg which is liable to let me down unexpectedly, in a manner comic to the beholder, if not to the proprietor: but what's the odds so long as you're happy? When I am writing I feel just as I did in 1890, and verily believe that I am not a day older---though I don't think I shall ever try climbing the Alps again!

Thank you once more for a very pleasant letter.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

*Frank Richards*