

November 28th, 1947.

ROSE LAWN,

KINGSGATE-ON-SEA,

KENT.

Dear Mr. Snell,

Many thanks for your cheery letters, and especially for the photograph of Timo and Patsy. It is, as you say, a little dim: but it comes out quite clearly under my reading-glass, and I was very glad to see both Timo and his master. It is a curious thing that there is something perpetually interesting about dogs. No two are ever quite alike. Of course one's own dog is always the very finest critter that ever went on four legs: but all are lovable: and even a vicious dog would, I think, turn out quite a good chap under careful guidance. People who don't understand dogs often mistake playfulness for bad temper. I had a big Airedale once named Caesar: one day he took possession of a barn, and declined to let the owners enter: they came round to my house--at Hawkinge---and asked for him to be fetched away. Actually he wouldn't have hurt a fly. But the wonderfulest dog that ever honoured this unworthy planet with his presence was Micky. Except perhaps Timo!!!

Yes: you are right about Eric Payne's article: your first impression, from the phone talk, did not quite get it. There is a spot of criticism in the article: but why not? I can take it! But as I remarked to Leckenby, Eric is the mildest of critics. No doubt I preferred your article: but that is just human nature.

I read over your letter of the 10th, no fewer than four times: after which I could only conclude that you are, as Alan Breck used to say, a gentleman of much penetration. There were, as you have discerned, a good many difficulties in the matter. The lapse of seven years made a tremendous difference. Naturally I wanted to carry on from where I left off, but that was impracticable, owing not only to the lapse of time, but to the circumstance that the final series in the Magnet was unfinished, and some numbers written before the close-down still remain in manuscript with the publishers, and of course belong to them. Then, there were not only old readers but new readers to be taken into account: and the fact that Billy Bunter is so associated with Greyfriars, that to very many he IS Greyfriars. All

the characters have their own followers; but the evidence of fan 1  
proves that Bunter has the greatest number, by very many. After the  
Picture Post article, I received a whole Himalaya of letters; and  
the burden of their song was "When is Bunter coming back?" Many  
had never read Bunter--but wanted to. Your phrsse "giving them a  
general lay-out of the whole concern" exactly hits it off. All the  
leading characters had to be presented; and the prominence of the  
best-known among them had the effect of pulling the whole thing  
together. After much pondering, it was decided that the first book  
should be a "Bunter" book. Since the publication, I have heard from  
many quarters that the name "Bunter" on the jacket, catching the  
casual eye, has put the public wise to the fact that Frank Richards  
is on the war-path again. All these things, and many more, had to  
be considered: as, judging by your letter, you seem to have discerned  
as well as I did. Even in the second volume, though it really is  
a "Bounder" story, and though I came very near calling it "The  
Mystery of Greyfriars", I have had to give in to our fat friend, and  
it will appear under the title of "Billy Bunter's Banknote".

What/ you tell me about your friend the newsagent is very  
interesting indeed. This was very good of you, my dear boy. Five  
copies in an hour is, as you say, good going. It is very pleasant  
to get spots of information like this. One thing is a fly in the  
ointment---booksellers who ask for further supplies sometimes have  
to wait for them, owing to that eternal question of paper. Reprinting  
is going on as fast as circumstances permit, but all depends on  
the paper supply. I am almost overcome sometimes when I think what  
the sale would be, if we could get a couple of dozen tons of paper  
from somewhere. But one might as well cry for the moon. These be  
tough times for authors and publishers alike. All the same, I am  
feeling very happy about it. To be frank, I was not quite sure how  
Greyfriars would "go" in book form, a year ago. And I confess that  
I am still astonished by the way it is going. It is curious to see  
the exotic stamps on some of my letters of a morning, inquiring about  
the "Bunter book". --yesterday one dropped in from Shanghai! If this  
goes on, Francis, the oldest inhabitant of Kent will begin to fancy  
himself some sort of a minor V.I.P.

With kind regards,  
Yours sincerely,

*Frank Richards*