

January 4th, 1948.

ROSE LAWN,
KINGSCATE-ON-SEA,
KENT.

Dear Frank Snell,

The more the merrier! I have read your article for the C.D., with real interest and pleasure. A curious thing is that it is exactly such an article as I might have written myself. Perhaps that is why I like it!!

You mention the old "Realm". Probably you were reading that paper at the time that some of my earlier works were appearing in its columns. I also read the "Hill" very many years ago: and in very early days delighted in Talbot Baines Reed, and--like yourself--- only his school stories: his "Three-Guinea Watch" made me feel almost ill! I used to like the writings of George Manville Fenn, too, whom you do not mention. His son, now an old johnny of about my own age, is a friend of mine, and used to be at the A.P.

It really was a little fatheaded to give the "Pilgrim's Progress" to a boy. But later in life, it would be a precious gift, for truly it is a great book and a great work. My copy is one of my treasured possessions. But when I read it at eleven, I found it very heavy going. On the other hand, I read the "Swiss Family Robinson" hundreds of times between the ages of eight and twelve. But when I looked at it in more mature years---about the time of the Boer War---I was sadly disappointed in it. And I've never looked at it since.

I like your remark about a "dual personality in age, ~~whichever~~ whereby we retain our present-day values yet revel in the memories of the youthful happier days". You will find this still more marked when you reach my time of life--about double your own. I find it quite easy to dismiss the present, and in imagination to become once more the little chap who used to perch himself in the branches of the apple-tree with a book. It is very curious how one can switch on any period in the past, almost as if one were turning on a film, and it becomes instantly real. Sometimes a word, a picture, or as you say even a smell, will do the trick---especially the smell of burning wood always touches old chords in my memory. The sight of a single Greek type brings back with a rush the time when I was very, very young, and taught myself the Greek alphabet, being such an innocent little ass that I supposed

this wouldn't enable me to read Greek! The stupendous innocence or ignorance--of childhood has a curious mixture of pathos and bathos.

There is only one spot in your article that I don't like--the mention of the Courtenay story. That story was written by Pentelow against my will, he taking unfair advantage of his position as temporary editor at the time. It is therefore a very sore recollection with me. But nevermind.

One thing, my dear boy, you must keep in mind--number your pages! Otherwise the printer will get into a heluva mess when the clip is removed and the pages mixed.

I was very glad to receive the copy of "In Memoriam". The man was evidently a lover of dogs, and a man of deep and right feeling. I like the line "Some day, somewhere, we two shall meet again". This thought has often, often been in my own mind: perhaps a longing as much as a thought. Yet why not? That we meet again, in another world, the dear ones we have lost in this life, is my firmest faith and conviction: and it always seems to me that without such a belief life would not be tolerable. Why then should we not meet again friends of---I will not say a lower, but a different race? When one thinks of the faith, the affection, the intelligence, of a dog like my dear old Micky, it seems that it must be possible. How one would like to say, like the writer of those lines:

I know that I shall hear your cheery bark

Guiding my lonely soul across the dark."

But we cannot "know": it is only a hope.

I see that you have short-hand among your acquirements. This was always too tough for me. Perhaps you have read my article in the 1945 Saturday Book in which I described my efforts to acquire it. It was all in vain--it just wouldn't work. On the other hand, I found it quite easy recently to learn Braille sufficiently to write a letter for finger-reading. It is odd how one can do one thing but not another---a man may be quite clever at some things and an ass at others. But we common mortals cannot expect, like Lord Bacon, to "take all knowledge to be our province".

By the way, a third Bunter book is now coming on the carpet. The idea at present is to make it a "Bessie Bunter", but nothing is settled so far. Are you by chance interested in the fair Bessie?

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

Frank Richards