

November 24th, 1950

ROSE LAWN,  
KINGSGATE-ON-SEA,  
BROADSTAIRS,  
KENT.

Dear Frank Snell,

Very pleased to see your fist again! Which the same, as Truthful James would express it, means your typing.

Not so wholly gratifying to watch the "march of time": I should like it to slow down occasionally: sometimes it seems to me too much of a quick march! You wouldn't be old enough yet to notice it: but in later ~~your own~~ life, the years that seemed unending in youth seem to whiz by like express trains, or rather like supersonic planes.

What a dear, good, pleasant and wholly agreeable chap you are, to say such nice things about "Jack of All Trades". I do confess that I like him myself, and I just want everybody else to like him. If all goes well, there will be a long line of "Jack" books: to tell you a secret, four are already written, and two more in a sketchy state: and to tell you another secret, a good many spots of autobiography are used up in the adventures of "Jack" here and there. And then there is the practical consideration that "Jack" is wholly mine--a poor thing but mine own, as it were: while with the old characters, there are too many fingers in the pie for the author's complete comfort. Every now and then, when I am very optimistic, I see visions of Jack seeing me through when I grow old!!!

Have I ever told you about 'Sammy'? I just wouldn't dare to keep a dog again, for it does break one heart so when they go. But I must have a four-footed pal, and Sammy happened, so here he is. He is the most lovable little critter, and I could tell you ten thousand stories about him, but mercifully refrain. But doesn't he look a little duck in this cutting from the paper?

I am glad to hear that you are still active in the writing line. But you must be prepared, my dear boy, for all sorts of checks and set-backs in these dismal days of paper shortage, printers' strikes, and everything at sixes and sevens, if not at tens and elevens. The delays in getting out my own books



P.S. No, don't return the Sunday Mail, or the enclosed if you like it.

often tempt me to use the language attributed by Uncle Toby to the army in Flanders! The truth is that MSS. rain in on publishers like a new deluge, and new writers have at least a million times the difficulties that old boys like myself had in the happy old nineties, when there was room to move and every man had a chance. Nevertheless, nil desperandum! The urge to write is the first thing and foremost. A subject at your finger-tips is the next, and you tell me that you have that in Soccer. And that certainly is a good subject. By all means, laddie, send that masterpiece along to me, if you value my judgment. I must warn you in advance that having been brought up in the ancient fashion of the nineteenth century, I always tell the truth, and have never been able to learn modern ways in that respect. You have probably read Gil Blas, and remember what happened when he told the Bishop his candid opinion. I shall have to take the risk of your concluding that Frank Richards is an old ass who does not know what he is talking about. Seriously, my dear boy, I will read your typescript with care and attention, and tell you what I honestly think about it. If that is what you wish, send it along without delay. You won't mind if there is a little lapse of time before I return it, as I shall leave it for a leisure hour, an armchair, and a pipe. A job that is worth doing is worth doing well.

Of course you are aware that typescript is essential if you want the Great Panjandrums to look at your work at all. Your typing is quite good, --better than mine, in fact, ---but it is a good idea to leave a good margin, and you wouldn't forget to number the sheets and fasten them together at the corner. Would you believe that when I wrote my first story, in the far-off days of 1890, I omitted to number, and forgot to fasten, --and how the thing got through is a mystery that I have never fathomed in the sixty years since. But it did, and they followed the excellent example of Oliver Twist and asked for more. Those were the days! May you have the same luck!

With kind regards,  
Always yours sincerely,

*Frank Richards*