

ROSE LAWN,

KINGSGATE-ON-SEA,

KENT.

July 4th, 1947.

Dear Mr. Gander,

It was a real pleasure to get your letter this morning, with the two copies of the S. P. C., for which many thanks. I am glad indeed to hear that you are mended now, and that the pleurisy is quite cleared up, and that you are feeling fine. At this particular moment I am feeling fine myself. Yes, we've had a heat wave, perhaps to make up for the ghastly cold of the winter, which seemed as if it would last for ever. I guess there will be another heat wave this month--- but what's the odds so long as you're happy? If ever I pick up a Magic Carpet, I shall make one straightwhiz across the Atlantic, just to revel for a few days in the land of plenty! But you must not think that things are too bad over here. Of course there are some tough spots: but one can't expect to carry on War for six years, and recover from the effects in six months. The poor old island has been pretty hard hit: but we are pulling round, slowly but surely. My chief spot of bother is the continued shortage of paper: I come up against it every month, every week, every day, almost every minute. Merritt has had to suspend Sparshott and Headland House for want of paper: and the Manchester publishers have not yet been able to get Ferndale and Oakhurst out: though I am glad to say that a few more "Topham" and "St. Olive's" have now appeared, and "Carcroft" goes on in Pie as per usual. But I have really good news about the Bunter book, and in comparison I don't care much about the others. "Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School" is now definitely scheduled for August---it may be out by the time you get this letter. Many thanks for your good wishes--- which have been realized before they reached me---for the publishers tell me that the demand for the book is very heavy. 10,000 were taken up before June, and the second 10,000 have been printed, with the date of publication still a month ahead. We expect to reach 50,000---but beyond that all depends on paper. A singular thing is that a film producer called on me this week, with a proposition to film the book--- not yet even published!

Quite a lot of things have happened since I wrote to you in February. Among other things, they are republishing one

of my old songs. Did I ever tell you that I used to write songs in earlier days? They have been out of print for years and years: but now one of them is being revived --a duet called "Tell me, What is Love?" It will be curious to see it about again after such a lapse of time. I don't know whether you are interested in such things, but anyhow I shall send you a copy when it materialises, which I expect will be in a month or two.

Do you ever hear of Moore-British Film Productions on your side of the water? They came down here the other day to put me in a picture, and Macdonald, the artist who did the pictures for my book, came over to appear in some of the scenes. It will be longer than the Pathe Pictorial last year, and I think will be a good picture. But I suppose it won't get so far as Manitoba.

I am afraid that the "good old Magnet" is gone for good. Costs of production here go up like the beanstalk in the fairy tale. Even if paper were obtainable--which it isn't!--a periodical like the pre-war Magnet could not be sold under 10d. or perhaps 1/----and I don't think that would be practicable for a weekly publication. Magnet and Gem are closed chapters: still, as I confided to the world in my Christmas broadcast, there will never be any shortage of Bunter, so long as my readers are satisfied with that fat youth in book form.

The second volume will probably be a Bunter book after all, for there have been many requests from the "Trade" for a Bunter series: and it must be supposed that they know what the public want. Tom Merry will certainly appear in book form: but it looks as if he may have to wait to take his turn. It is a curious thing that among "fan" letters, nine in ten ask for Greyfriars to come back, --the demand for Tom Merry is only ten per cent of that for Greyfriars, and for Rookwood only five per cent. Another curious thing is that quite as many adults as young people want Greyfriars, while it is chiefly the younger generation who want Tom Merry. Still, Tom will have his turn in the near future.

Thanks once more for the S.P.C.--little but good! and I hope you will go on feeling fine!

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Frank Richards