as from
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25 May 1974

Dear Mr Scott,

Your letter in this week's Radio Times has given me much pleasure and I write to tell you that I heard many years ago that Miss Dorothy Sayers, (Mrs Atherton Fleming,) first got the idea of writing a story about bell-ringing on picking up a second-hand book on Change Ringing (in the Tottenham Court Road for threepence.) A previous note in the Radio Times says that she studied campanology because she was writing a story about bells, but the fact is the other way round; she wrote a story about bells because she was so fascinated by the subject of campanology that she had to make her next book

centre round it. I wonder if you agree with me (i) that it is the best actual novel that she wrote, and (ii) that the detection of the crime in it is secondary in merit to the descriptive passages and picture of country life? This is based on the country round Blunhisham (near Ely;) of which her father was vicar. I cannot be sure who gave me the details of the Threepenny book but either she did herself or another friend of hers did. We were at Somerville together from 1912 to 1915, (where she got a First in French,) and she often stayed with us in our old home, (St Anne's, Surrey Road, Bournemouth,) and I with her at Blunhisham; she partly wrote her first book "Whose Body?" at our house and I was staying with her on the night when she heard that

a publisher had accepted it. I vividly remember, (she was then living in London and working in great James Street), how we went out that Evening to a friend's house for coffee, and as she entered the room, (with this glorious news of first acceptance singing in her mind,) she flung her arms out and exclaimed, "Yes X! I am rich!!! I am famous!!!" How happily true that proved.

She was essentially a scholar, and certainly read in the British Museum many books on Campanology (which at one time I also went over, recognising bits which had prompted brilliant strokes in "The Nine Tailors".) I have still many letters, some unpublished verses and some typescript of one of her plays which she sent me with notes on it. Her sudden and unexpected death was a great loss.

These small details may not have very much interest for you, but I should like you to know that once, when she had received an invitation from some notable Campanologists' Society which she had had to refuse, she told me that of all the invitations she had ever received this was the one that she most regretted being unable to accept.

May I ask you one favour? A lady unknown to me is engaged in writing a life of Miss Sayers and writes round to her friends asking for reminiscences and details. Miss Sayers herself told Miss Muriel St-Clare Byrne, O.B.E. (her amanuensis (Mrs) Dorothy H. Rowe. temporary at Somerville, collaborator in "Busman's Honeymoon" and literary executor) that she definitely disapproved of the writing of a biography until fifty years after the subject's death. If you are approached would you very kindly treat this letter as entirely confidential? With all regards, Yours sincerely,