

ROSE LAWN,

KINGSGATE-ON-SEA,

BROADSTAIRS,

KENT.

April 13th, 1951

Dear Geoffrey Cook,

You certainly do know how to write an interesting letter. I was quite intrigued by your communication from Cecil Madden. Oddly enough, a few days later I saw a report that Mr. Madden had left the juvenile section of "vision. I hope he left some of his good ideas behind him!

I am glad you are interested in Bunter and the Blue Mayritius. Our fat friend doesn't exactly get hold of the rare specimen: it is hidden in his watch quite unknown to him, causing him considerable surprises and shocks when certain parties seek to deprive him of the watch! There will be a reproduction of the stamp on the jacket.

I see that you have read Alan Shadwick's article in the Manchester Guardian, and have landed on a happy phrase that was lingering in my own memory. ---those "incredibly leafy" lanes. Really our English lanes are incredibly leafy, and they are not all in the south as Mr. Shadwick seems to imply. Certainly Kent and Devonshire are hard to heat: but one of my happiest recollections, now that the accumulation of years has made me immobile, is of cycling along the lovely lanes of Warwickshire and adjoining counties. I have no doubt that they are as lovely as ever; but if they aren't, at least I have my recollection of what they were like in the days when Plancus was consul.

Time's changes are very curious. I remember, from about fifty years ago, jumping on the bike one morning in London, and sailing merrily along deep sunken lanes in Devonshire the same evening. Now, alas, I do fear that if I remounted the old jigger, it would only be to re-enact the tragedy of Humpty-Dumpty! Never mind--what's the odds, so long as you're happy?

I was very pleased with what you say about reading my books taking you into another world free from the worries and cares of the present day. So long as they produce that effect

I shall be satisfied that my writing is worth while. George Orwell, in his article in Horizon a few years ago, was pleased to describe this as "escapist" -- echoed since by other writers who have no ideas of their own and taken them second-hand from George. But surely there are worries and troubles enough in life without an author adding ~~more~~ to them in his books! I confess that I like cheerful books, and cheerful faces, and a cheery outlook generally; and I hope that I shall always look on the bright side of things if I live to be a hundred --- as I cheerfully hope to do!

With kind regards,
Always yours sincerely,

Frank Richards