

I could not help smiling at this—it was so like Miss Faith to complicate matters. It would have been far more sensible for her to have left the day before Mr. Mostyn and his bride were to return. But no—Miss Faith thought differently. She would stay to the last minute, harassing us all with her feelings and emotional leave-takings, until we should be thankful when the poor thing had really gone.

Hope declared that she had begged her aunt to do this; but Miss Faith had been quite huffy with her, and she had not ventured to say more.

"It is so inconsiderate of Aunt Faith," she continued, "for I know she will upset us all, and I did so want to be nice and bright for father. I wonder why Aunt Faith always makes things so much more difficult? A day more or less at Nutlands cannot surely matter when one has to live there."

"I would not worry over it, dearie; we must just make the best of it." But she knew well that I agreed with her.

"I want to tell you something more, Berrie," she went on after a long pause, during which the shelling went on steadily and the peas leapt merrily from their pods into the yellow pan. "I think I shall soon learn to love

Brenda dearly. She has such a beautiful nature, and then she is so true and honest. She seems so different from other people. She just goes to the heart of things. Oh, Berrie, just think! They cared for each other before father ever saw mother, and she gave him up because she could not leave her invalid father and her young step-brothers and sisters."

"I knew all that before, Hope, my dear;" but Hope was so engrossed with her subject that she scarcely heeded me.

"I think it was the bravest thing a woman could do," she went on, with kindling eyes. "It was 'loving, yet leaving.' It was noble, heroic, and I honour her for it. But, Berrie"—in almost a tone of awe—"how could anyone do such a thing?"

I was a little surprised at the intensity with which Hope said this, for she was only a young thing just out of the schoolroom; but she had a womanly, sympathetic nature, and this love-story from the past had stirred her very deeply. Was it only this, or had the pinion of the angel of love—that mightiest and most tender of all the heavenly visitants—brushed past her lightly as he winged his beneficent way across

this earth? Was this why there was a deeper shadow in my darling's eyes and a softer tone in her fresh, young voice?

It gladdened me to hear her speak so lovingly of Miss Ashton, and she saw the pleasure in my face.

"Berrie," she said softly, "do you think Mr. Campbell is right, and that Brenda will really bring a blessing to dear old Wildcroft? Do you know, she wishes us always to call her Brenda; only Nina will call her mammy. We have settled that already. I think Aunt Faith was rather shocked about it, but she is so old-fashioned. Father was quite pleased. 'I want you to look upon me as an elder sister, and I hope Gordon and Owen will do the same.' Wasn't it dear of Brenda to say that?"

"It was just like her, Hope, my dear." And then, as the peas were all shelled, Hope jumped up.

"I must go and write to Gordon," she said. "I have such a lot to tell him. Aunt Faith is in her room sorting her things. She has begun to pack already." But I was already aware of the fact. Miss Ashton would order her trousseau in half the time it would take Miss Faith to move from here to Nutlands.

(To be continued.)



## AMERICAN V. BRITISH CYCLES.

By N. G. BACON.



UNCLE SAM is a shrewd son of an astute father. The first rear-driven bicycle that "set the fashion to the world" was invented by Mr. J. K. Starley, and John Bull was very successful in introducing the safety bicycle across the pond until expert engineers, gifted with inventive genius, studied the mechanism of the cycle and its parts, and produced such specialised machinery that the cycle industry of to-day is beyond the wildest imaginations of our forefathers. The slow and sure methods of John Bull lack sadly in comparison with the more rapid, scientific progress of Uncle Sam, and the cute elder son in the mechanical world outwits the father.

But before the American cycle can be the universal favourite of the day, many things must happen, for John Bull is in clear possession of the field, and Uncle Sam, although he has stretched his long reach, as it were just touching our shores with his forefinger, discovers that his long strides may be useful in the land of the dollars, but that many difficulties await him ere he can command the commercial enterprises of the United Kingdom.

His first appearance created considerable amusement. With a splash and a dash, he dived in a superficial manner into the intricacies of Britain's method of trading, and generally made fine sport for the onlooker. The cycle experts of this country, however, by gathering around to listen to his vituperations, acquired

knowledge in the art and skill of building bicycles, and departed with many a knowing look and a sagacious thought to reflect upon some plan of action that will eventually lead to a reconstruction of business methods in regard to the cycle industry of England.

To-day, with a jealous eye, and a too severely critical denunciation, the British manufacture, while proclaiming the noble and inspiring principles of Free Trade, pours cold contempt upon America's desire to flood the English market, and place in the hands of our fair damsels a Yankee cycle. Unfortunately for the popularity of the American wheel, Uncle Sam's representatives showed lamentable lack of wisdom in the first instance by exploiting the field with cheap and inferior machines, fitted with tyres unsuited to the English roads, during the recent boom in cycles, when Dame Fashion bowed her head in recognition of the daintiness and desirability of the wheel. Hence, much prejudice and bad feeling has arisen, not only on the part of the trade, but the riding public maintained that it had a just right to complain against being led astray to purchase what was represented to them as being a scientifically constructed bicycle but which, after a little wear and tear, proved to be unfit for the rough and sometimes flinty surfaces of our roads. Not only were the machines unsuited, with respect to tyres, but were not designed to suit the requirements of our English girl-rider. The chains and rear wheels were imperfectly guarded to prevent the catching in of the dress, the mud-guards were insufficient in length and width, and the brake was inadequate for protection against accident during the riding of stiff descents.

The handle-bars, too, were not appropriate to the recognised posture a wheel, but caused the rider to look ungraceful and inelegant, necessitating her to stop unduly. In other words, Uncle Sam, in his vigorous desire to supply the demand for cycles in England, failed at the outset to study the requirements of the rider, and endeavoured to entice the riding public to purchase cycles which were eventually proved to be unsuited for the conditions of the pastime.

It is necessary here to keep distinct the cheap from the good bicycle, for both are manufactured in England as well as in America. The question as to prices, indeed, is a delicate one, and should be carefully studied by our girls a wheel, for innumerable traps await the unwary. The ten-guinea bicycle, which used to be an article only deserving to be scoffed at, is now a profitable purchase, and in every respect suited to the requirements of the rider, provided, of course, it is of a recognised good make. Granted that it is infinitely inferior to the best grade machines, which are the products of the most skilled and expert workmen, the finest materials obtainable, and the most ingenious machinery, and, indeed, bears no comparison with them, still, if a girl has no twenty guineas with which to purchase the finest and most beautifully designed wheel of the nineteenth century, it is a consolation for her to know that a rideable machine can be purchased at half the price.

This question is a problem that is vexing, and will continue to vex, the greatest authorities of the cycle industry of the day. In order to keep clear of the disturbing elements of the warfare that is raging between Uncle

Sam and John Bull on the question of cheap *v.* good, American *v.* British cycles, it is desirable to reflect with dignity that humanity comes before commercialism. Sometimes we become eloquent as we enjoy our jaunts awheel, and sing the song of the poet as we ply our merry way from the teeming cities of our land.

"With the rhythm of the air-shod cycle thrilling

Our ardent souls and joyous spirits filling,  
From the city's fretful flurry,  
From its toil, its moil, and worry,  
And from its incessant hurry,  
From its darkness and its night,  
To the sweetness and the light,  
Borne of Mother Nature, we are ever fleeing,  
As to founts of our existence and our being."

With the aid of the universal wheel, thousands of riders realise the beauty of this song, because, having cycles, they journey forth with light hearts, and still lighter spirits, to take deep breaths of pure air, to enjoy magnificent scenery, and to realise that, beyond the teeming wilderness of smoke and dirt, a land fair and beautiful to gaze upon awaits their arrival. Yet, although thousands go, for the want of a wheel millions are left pent up, and hidden in the obscurity of their poverty. The motor vehicle may be the rich woman's idol, but the cycle is the poor girl's friend.

Humanity before trade, I say. If the Americans, by the invention of elaborate and perfect machinery, can produce a cycle good, yet within the reach of the poorest, they are the benefactors of the human race. With God-giver genius, although they never invented the popular wheel, they have proved themselves to be the universal providers of the favourite mount. A Britisher, with his puny efforts, his slow-going and rudimentary machinery, produces some hundreds of cycles, while the American, swift and sure, cute and ingenious, in less time, with less expenditure of energy, and with more accurate workmanship, places upon the market thousands.

How is it done?

What will it lead to?

We stand confronted with the economics of the trade, the question of supply and demand must be squarely faced, and when all the latest and perfected machinery of the period, the elaborate plant, the enormous capital, and the skilled labour, are taken into consideration, what have we to say? It is not a matter that concerns only the trade, or the Britisher, or the American, but the human race as a whole. All that which is utilised in the production

and the distribution of the cycle belongs to humanity. Trade differences are swept on one side, racial disputes stand condemned, for they are trivial and unworthy of the higher considerations before us. The genius to invent, the skill to produce, and the capacity to distribute, all are God-given blessings to humanity, and must be utilised for the benefit of the human race, and not confined to the inadequate sphere of the well-to-do.

Descending from the ideal to the practical, how does this question concern our girl-lovers of the wheel?

Why, in the coming 1900 season, according to the old adage, "When doctors differ, the patient decides," while the experts of the cycle industry are perplexed concerning prices, machinery, and sale of machines, our girls awheel may be troubled as to whether a British or American wheel suits their requirements best, taking into consideration the cost and appearance of each. That the rider will be able to purchase a really good mount from ten to fifteen guineas, fitted with all accessories, is beyond dispute, but it will require a wiser head than mine to allot each individual cyclist a British or American wheel, and secure her approval. It is absolutely indispensable for the cyclist to study carefully the mechanism of each machine, to satisfy herself as to reliability of tyres, and to see to it that her bicycle, cheap or expensive, British or American, is the handiwork of a good firm, or, if the product of a small maker, is composed of good fittings, manufactured by a well-known firm.

For the moment, the American cycle is condemned unseen, in consequence of the foolish and unbusinesslike methods of the sharp Yankee who, when the cycling boom of England was on, sought to exploit the market and flood our shores with inferior cycles, but it cannot be denied that the American agent, the representative of well-known reliable cycles, has calmly stood to his guns, and waited patiently for the passing of the prejudice against him, ready to sell to the purchaser a mount suited to the English demand. The difficulty will be, of course, to detect the good and cheap from the inferior makes. There are to be had some fifteen guinea cycles which are inferior to those that can be purchased for ten guineas, and it will be necessary to most carefully study before purchase all the points of the proposed new mount for the coming season. For instance, whether a British or American cycle is eventually decided upon, special attention should be given to its tyres, bearings, chain, cranks, pedals, saddle, brake (two, if a free-wheel cycle), gear, rims of wheels, head, forks and hubs, the name of maker, or manu-

facturer of parts, and general quality compared with price.

If the rider studies these points, and carefully compares several good makes of cycles, even the novice cannot go far wrong, and it is always safe to purchase a machine of a recognised good make, whether British or American, cheap or expensive.

There is, though, one serious consideration deserving the concentration of the rider's attention, and that is, the British manufacturers, being on the spot, and knowing the surfaces of the roads, and the conditions of riding, are or ought to be more qualified to produce a cycle suited to English roads, especially as it is known that the Coventry cycle-builders use American machinery to a great extent, whereas Uncle Sam, although he can construct a more magnificent plant for the construction of cycles, naturally fails to understand as well as John Bull the pastime of cycling in this country.

There is also to be considered the question of parts required for the repair of the cycle in case of accident. As the Britisher actually manufactures in England, additional parts can always be obtained within so many hours, even if the local agent, or London depôt, has none in stock; but should the American agent in England run short of parts, it takes at least seven or fourteen days to ship them from the United States.

Then as to gear cases for the chains, the Americans have not apparently yet realised the necessity of covering entirely the chain, securing it protection from the adverse conditions of the roads and weather, or of protecting it sufficiently from the skirt, and attention on this point should be given. British makers generally fit their cycles with gear cases, allowing for some method of continuous oiling by means of an oil bath or greased surface which comes in contact at certain points with the chain, rendering it always well oiled and free from friction. The ordinary American chain-guard, which is generally fitted to cheap machines, rarely gives satisfaction.

It remains now only for me to assure our girls awheel that there are many good cycles to be had, both British and American, at a reasonable price. Allow the machines to stand on their own merits, apart from nationality or racial preference, and time will prove whether the American wheel is in line to compete with the British, or more scientifically constructed. The best must be chosen, the second-rate left, for a cycle that is built upon sound principles speaks for itself, and whether it be British or American, it will be the favourite mount of all intelligent riders.

## PROSPECTUS PUZZLE: OUR COMING OF AGE.

### SOLUTION.

#### OUR COMING OF AGE.

A new century's dawning our birthday to greet,  
And we shall be twenty-one;  
Then no longer an infant, it will be but meet  
That we our court-train should put on;  
For all the girl-world with courtesy sweet  
Will festive adornments don.

And oh! the delight of that birthday so rare,  
For we shall be full of glee,  
With our sisterly readers abroad we will share  
All pleasures of jubilee;  
And a greeting sincere shall resound through  
the air,  
"Long life to the dear 'G. O. P.'"

#### PRIZE WINNERS.

##### *Half-a-Guinea Each.*

Eliza Acworth, Blenheim Mount, Bradford.  
Muriel Hancock, Argyle Street, Birkenhead.  
Ethel L. Thomson Naish, Inglewood, Cecil Road, Weston-super-Mare.

##### *Seven Shillings and Sixpence Each.*

Constance Daphne, Alresford, Hants.  
Minnie FitzPatrick, Holy Cross, Thurles, co. Tipperary.  
Gwyneth A. Mansergh, Broxbourne, Herts.  
Violet C. Todd, Ford, Cornhill-on-Tweed, Northumberland.  
Elizabeth Yarwood, Cale Green, Stockport.

##### *Five Shillings Each.*

J. P. FitzGerald, Whitehall Park, N.  
Jessie Middlemiss, Crescent Parade, Ripon.  
Mary Peacock, 53, Hornsey Rise, N.  
Katherine C. Starie, The Bield, Dumbar-ton.  
Ethel W. Thomson, Budleigh Salterton.  
Mary Jane Wheeler, Bracondale, Norwich.  
W. Fitzjames White, Lowfell, Gateshead.

##### *Very Highly Commended.*

M. A. C. Crabb, Arthur W. Howse.

##### *Highly Commended.*

Annie A. Arnott, M. Barker, E. Baynes, Effie D. Bell, Catherine Collins, Frances Cox,