

With a sob Amy turned her head away. "I cannot comply with your conditions," she said in a low voice.

"Then, here is your money," and flinging down a few shillings, Mr. Slither turned angrily to his books.

Amy gathered up the coins with trembling fingers. Pride prompted her to leave them. They were well-earned and meant life and strength to her mother.

She walked drearily into the street with a sensation of numb depression. Where was she to turn? She could not venture home with despair written upon her face. She hurried along the crowded streets. Some instinct, it must have been the hand of God (He leads us often when we do not recognise His guidance), led Amy towards an old, old church in the heart of the city. Still obeying the impulse within her, she entered the silent building, and knelt in an empty pew. She could not pray, but somehow the horrible weight of despair seemed to lift from her

soul, and she knelt there weeping in the dim, soft gloom.

A hand was placed upon her shoulder, and a sweet voice said, "My dear, can I help you?"

Amy's tears flowed faster. She did not raise her head. She had recognised the voice of the sister of the man she loved, and for a few moments she could not look into her face. When at last she raised her tearful eyes, there was mutual recognition.

"Why, Amy, I did not know you!"

"It is the loss of my hair, Agatha," whispered Amy brokenly.

"Are you in trouble, dear?"

There in the silence Amy unburdened her heart to her friend. The story was no desecration to the holy building. The angels must have listened with joyful ears, while over Amy's head shorn of its girlish glory, they waved the victor's crown.

"There is still your vacant post in our

show-room," said Agatha Wallace as the two friends walked through the streets.

"I cannot return, thank you," answered Amy in low tones.

"It is true then?" and Agatha looked into Amy's blushing face with searching eyes.

Amy was silent.

"Is that why you left us, dear?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" cried Amy, turning to a shop window to hide the tears that gathered afresh in her eyes.

"I am so glad," said Agatha. "I understand your conduct now. But Amy, Werrick and Vowles have a vacancy in their mantle show-room. Come home with me and bathe your face, and then together we will apply for it."

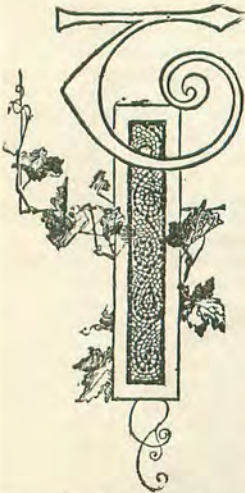
"You are too kind. But I cannot go to your house."

"John has gone away by train this morning. You need not fear him. Poor John!"

(To be concluded.)

CYCLING: AS A PASTIME AND FOR HEALTH.

By "MEDICUS."



THIS is the age of speed. The world is rushing on so quickly that it is impossible for any one individual to keep himself acquainted with the thousand and more useful inventions that go whirling and flying past one every day of the year. And no sooner does one inventor place something before the public, than a score of others rush forward to improve it.

There is something, mind you, in that doctrine of the survival of the fittest; the weakest must go to the wall and go rolling down into the lee scuppers, so to speak, along with the lazy ones and the phlegmatic, while we quick, nervous individuals win easy in the race of life. What is true of individuals is true also of nations. This anyone can see for himself. And the weakness of either consists for the most part of ignorance and the inability to learn things speedily, or make a smart dive for essentials, leaving everything that is not necessary to go floating astern.

The cleverest girls, in their reading, skim over essays, be they even on the most difficult subjects, just as a swallow goes skimming over a garden of flowers. But skim as speedily as she chooses the clever girl gets hold of the salient points, and the swallow catches the flies.

It is the age of speed, and it is the age of paragraphs also. An author nowadays must say what he has got to say in a few words and be done with it, or, in all probability, the world will be done with him.

Now I don't mean to say that I am a past-master in the art of paragraphism. I have already written two or three books on cycling, and I can assure you I would rather begin another to-day than write one paper on a subject with so many spokes to it as this. I do so, however, with all the more pleasure in that I expect

before very long all of us shall be flying, and there is no doubt about it. Everything is leading up to it, and when the *genus homo* becomes the *homo volitans*, then good-bye to the cycle. It will still be used by the timid, the gouty and lazy, but you and I will rotate no longer along rough or rutty roads. We shall soar, and as we skim gracefully over hills and dells, mountain, moor, and woodland, we shall look down with disdain on the creatures who crawl.

Well now, for quite a long time—for a couple of years at least—a battle has been going on between the British matron who can't cycle, and says she won't, and the British lassie who says she can, and does. The fat, fair, and forty matron has turned up her hands and eyes from earth away, and said all kinds of nasty things, usually in horrid French, against cycling for girls. The girls, notwithstanding, have simply mounted their cycles and gone gliding away, the fresh breeze blowing in her face, the sunshine, the wild flowers, and beautiful scenery all around them soon make them forget all about Mrs. Grundy the portly, or Miss Grundy, the lean and stagnant, who is fifty if a day.

Cycling is really a glorious institution when ruled by reason. Personally speaking, I myself learned on the tall bicycle, with one gaunt wheel in front and a wee one bringing up the rear. On the whole it wasn't a bad kind of instrument. Perched high up on the saddle the rider could look over the hedges anyhow, and see a deal more than we can see from the little safety. Then what splendid spills one used to have from the "ordinary," as it came to be called, insolently enough, by the new but growing school of safety fellows. The spills, however, were not a whit more frequent from the ordinary than they are now from the wee one, and not half so dangerous. If while tooling along on the star-gazing machine a rider felt like going over the handles, felt that the little wheel was making an insane attempt to leap up and bat him on the back of the head, well, he had to leave rather hurriedly, it is true, but having a long distance to fall, there was time to stretch himself comfortably out, to select his position, as it were. On the other hand, in coming off the safety, *volens* not *volens*, if going at a great speed you get there all the same, but you're on the ground before you have time to think of making a will, and with perhaps a broken bone that will require

X-rays to set. Good luck to the little safety all the same. It came as a boon and a blessing, not to men so much as to girls, for, bless their hearts, they could never have got yonder, you know, without the aid of a fire-escape.

So my first advice to any young lady who means to join the glorious army of cyclists, is to get a safety of the very *best* type.

Don't be in too great a hurry. Don't buy a cheap machine. It is true that a twenty-two guinea safety looks expensive. You can't seem to see the money about it, nevertheless it is there in the material, the finish, the art, the ball-bearings, etc.

Don't buy one on the hire system. Rather begin a fund, and put away spare cash. Relations who love you will help you. And even if you have to wait a year or more, you're not too old, and you will have the advantage of the newest improvements.

Let me whisper, please; the days of the pneumatic tire seem to be numbered. Pneumatism is not going out, but it will be applied to quite a different part of the machine. Fact! A birdie told me!

Again, learning to ride on your friend's cycle may be all very well, but hiring cycles by the hour or day is stupid work, and horribly expensive. Better save, I say. And indeed there is a look about a hiring machine and usually about the hiring girl, that a regular roadster can distinguish at a peep.

About learning to ride. At first you must neither be too timid nor too rash. It will be time enough to think about learning the art a few weeks before you are able to buy your machine.

But by all means, if you can afford it, take half a dozen lessons at a proper school. You will thus gain confidence and learn to balance far more quickly, and avoid awkwardness and unpleasant or ungainly mannerisms. In fact you will learn to ride with the easy grace of a lady. It pains me to see girls learning in the open, held up by others perhaps, and every now and then tumbling all over the Queen's highway. Pray don't make a laughing-stock of yourselves, girls, for the British corner boys and yokels are more disagreeable than even Mrs. Grundy.

The Age at which to Learn.—You can hardly learn cycling too early if—mind, there is a deal in that "if"—other exercise, such as walking, swimming, rowing, and gymnastics,

are engaged in at the same time. If a very young girl becomes a constant rider, giving up all other exercise, she will neither develop well in body nor in mind.

That cycling does do injury to the mind any medical man can tell you, if, I mean, it is carried out to an extent that excludes all other fads or fancies. In other words cycling for health, for pleasure, or pastime, is greatly to be recommended, but when it becomes a mania, I pity the maniac and her friends.

And mind you this, girls, though I don't want to frighten but merely to warn you, the disease called cyclomania is more easily and more frequently developed in women than in men, because the former are more fond of remarkable costumes than the latter. Love of dress, love of show, and cycling, have injured many a brain. Cyclomania is on the increase, and it is most insidious—slow but all too sure. I am certain that no sensible girl will mind my writing so plainly; I would not be doing my duty if I left unsaid a single word I ought to say.

About Buying a Cycle.—I do not deny that you may at odd times get a good, cheap, second-hand machine, but, as a rule, you will be disappointed with the purchase. Anyhow, do not buy one without first getting it on approval and getting it examined by an expert.

But the best plan is to order a good cycle from a good maker, even if you have to pay a little higher for it. You will thus secure a machine that is up-to-date and a mount that will do you credit. Large firms that turn out safeties for the best people in this country and the continent are not likely to give you bad advice or put you off with an inferior article. To do so would indeed be a poor way of advertising their particular make.

Strength and Lightness.—I am not going to recommend you a very light machine, I assure you. You will not get lightness and strength combined to any great extent. Get a good, honest, handsome roadster, unless you mean merely to disport yourself on the cinder path or in the parks.

Besides the machine you buy may only seem a trifle too heavy, you will soon get over that, because the longer you ride the greater will be your motor power and the better your art of pedal propulsion.

The Bicycle Heart.—This is caused by over-riding and by spurring, as in going up hills, or trying to keep up with other riders, you yourself being out of form.

There are several kinds of bicycle-heart. I shall only mention two, and they are not the worst. The hypertrophied heart is caused by riding too much and too hard. It is more common in strong girls than in weak. To put it plainly, the heart is merely a muscle, and may get thin in the walls or over-thick. In the latter case it is hypertrophied, and if it continues so, the most dangerous and even fatal symptoms may ensue. Besides, one who gets a heart like this in youth, retains it, and cannot be a long liver. She or he will be carried off, if not by inflammation of some

internal organ, by rupture of blood-vessels, or dropsy itself.

The dilated heart is the other cycling trouble, and it is quite as dangerous as hypertrophy. In this case the heart is weak to begin with, and the labour of spurring or riding to keep up with stronger people puts more strain on this muscular organ than it can bear; it therefore gets thin and stretched, and the valves may even suffer injury. In the latter case there could be no cure except death; but let me tell you this: a stretched heart means a lifetime of wretchedness, nervousness, sleeplessness, and distressing fulness in the head if not actual headache. People with stretched hearts cannot keep up the animal heat well, and are altogether unfitted for life's burden, which they have to lay down sooner than usual.

Dress for Lady Cyclists.—This is a subject on which men are supposed to know very little. Is it so? Does not one sex dress to please the other? Especially the one sex? You cannot deny it, girls, but the new woman or new girl who, instead of dressing like a lady, fits herself out like a mountebank,* is sure to attract attention, but can never gain the respect of anyone worth thinking about.

On clothing, however, apart from fashion or costume, I may be permitted to write a sentence, and give an opinion. It should be of the softest, lightest wool, underneath the dress. The stockings should be thicker than that used for indoor wear or the promenade, and the shoes should be moderately thick in the soles, and elastic. But never have india-rubber soles, they are most unhealthy. A dark skirt and nicely fitting knitted jersey is very becoming and wholesome.

The head-dress should be light and comfortable, and not easily blown off.

The corset, if worn tightly, ruins everything, and causes perspiration of a weakening kind on that portion of the body which is least able to bear it. Liver and heart therefore suffer, and even distressing dyspepsia may be the result of the tight-lacing folly.

Accessories.—When going on a short tour, take all that is necessary, but leave everything behind you can possibly dispense with. Many girls take things just for show! Lassies of this mental calibre may sometimes be heard wildly ringing their bells when there is no necessity for doing so. Silly little things! I hear them ringing sometimes behind my caravan "Wanderer." Just imagine a two-ton land-yacht twenty feet long drawing hastily to one side to let a tom-tit upon wheels have half the road. I should laugh!

Training for Cycling.—I hope I shall not disappoint anyone if I state the fact, that some girls should not ride at all, being constitutionally unsuited for such exercise. If a girl is not over-robust, she ought to take a medical opinion before buying a byke.

But before going in for bicycling or even tricycling, I advise that a kind of preliminary

* No doubt this word is a corruption of the old "Mount-ye-back."

course of training should be taken. The best exercise is that of walking, because it gives vigour to both limb and lung, and moreover strengthens every muscle of the body.

Just determine to live by rule for five or six weeks before starting a cycle. Live on plain fare—meat, bread, milk, eggs, cheese, weak tea and coffee, but avoid strong tea and coffee, and also too much sugar or pudding. Fruit is excellent if in season. I cannot speak too highly of tomatoes. If living in England, don't eat French; if in Scotland, use only Scotch tomatoes, which, like Scotch grapes, are the finest in the world. But tomatoes should be eaten in the country where they grow, they deteriorate *en voyage*. Fat meat, such as pork and oily fishes, should be avoided, and too much butter. You see it is muscle you want to have, not useless fat.

Will Cycling Cure Obesity?—If a regulated diet is taken it will help, otherwise it only makes matters worse.

Now mind you this, exercise and healthful sleep *plus* the bath and regulation diet are all that you need to put you into cycling form. Good refreshing sleep will follow as a natural consequence and you will feel fresher and happier every morning of your life.

But the morning tub, cold if possible, is a *sine qua non* with a warm bath every week, and a Turkish bath every fortnight.

I really feel as if I had not said half enough in this paper, and yet I have no doubt many of my readers will gain by the advice I give.

Just one word more in answer to the oft-repeated question: What ailments are likely to be cured or alleviated by cycling? Well, the following are a few. Indigestion; debility without actual disease; anæmia or poverty of blood; skin eruptions; chronic headaches; liver troubles; nervousness; neuralgia; sleeplessness, etc.

I cannot better conclude this paper than by giving a much-quoted extract from one of my own books.* Before doing so I should mention that I have no pecuniary interest at all in this handy volume. "Ten years ago," I say, "being then in my thirty-fifth year, I accepted half-pay and ceased to serve in the Royal Navy, being a martyr to rheumatism which I had acquired on the coast of Africa and in India. I took to literature as a profession. There was no healing power in that; but I shortly took to cycling. My rheumatism used to come on periodically and last for six weeks at a time, during which I could hardly stand on the floor, nor rest in bed without feet and legs elevated. Since I adopted cycling as an exercise, and thus found a pleasant means of keeping the skin in perfect order, I have never had a twinge of rheumatism. . . . Cycling has banished my pains, and made me physically and mentally double the individual I was on that mournful morning, when I left Haslar Hospital leaning on a stick."

* *Health upon Wheels.* Messrs. Iliffe and Co., London and Coventry.

