

The Jones-Hilliard Bicycle Sensation.

BY TERTIUS CARR.

Illustrations from Photographs by A. J. Johnson.

I WAS standing at the door of the London Pavilion the other day chatting to my friend, Mr. Frank Glenister, when he suddenly turned to me and said: "By-the-bye, have you been to see my show on the cycle-track?" "What's that?" I answered.

"Why, the Jones-Hilliard bicycle sensation, with Charlie Jones, the ex-champion of Australia and New Zealand, in the chair—at least, not exactly in the chair, but on the seat."

I confessed that although inclination would make me a constant spectator of his marvellous collection of varieties, yet time and business had so far kept me away.

"Never mind," said he, "come in to-night, and if your blood doesn't curdle and your



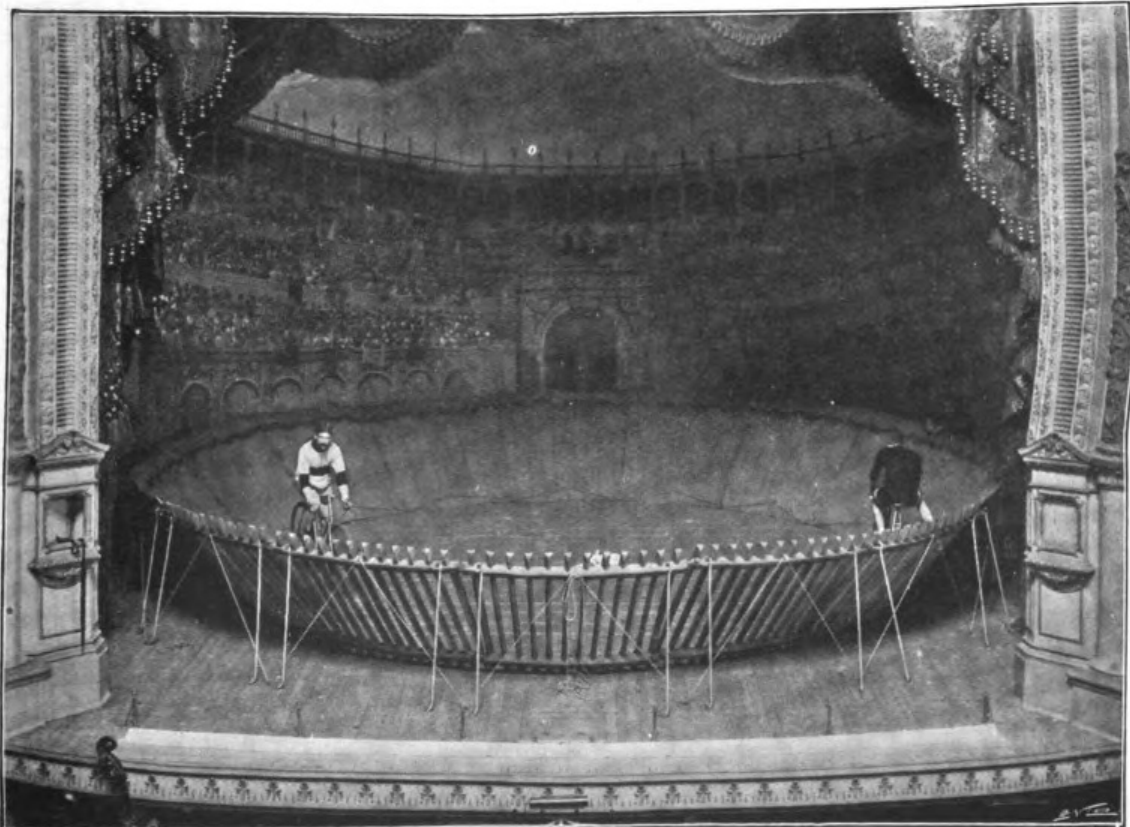
MR. CHARLES JONES, THE SENSATIONAL CYCLIST.
From a Photo. by H. Pawson, Blackpool.

eyeballs hang out like a pair of ripe cherries, don't call me a showman again."

Well, I went, I saw, and I was conquered. I kept my eyesight, and the red corpuscles still flow genially through my system. But what a show! Certainly, as regards the art of cycling, the most striking thing the world has ever seen.

Hearing that Charlie Jones was a New Zealander I had an indistinct notion that I was going to see a native Maori doing the ordinary business on a trick bicycle, and as I sat in the stalls I felt no particular anxiety one way or the other, but when the curtain went up on what

appeared to be a gigantic soup-plate with the edges shaved off and part of the front sliced out like a Wedgwood card-basket, I began to wonder. Then I found that the redoubtable



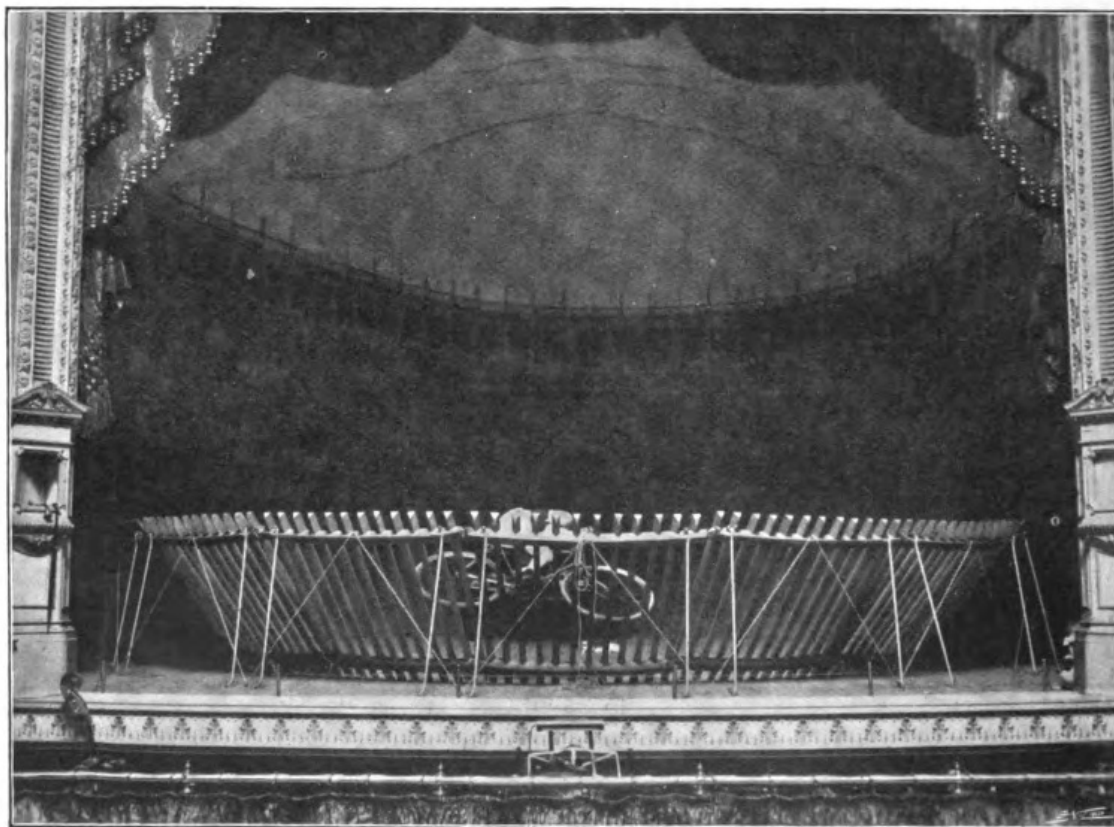
THE TRACK, AS SEEN FROM THE DRESS CIRCLE. Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Charlie Jones was no Maori at all, but a well-set-up, fine-trained specimen of British manhood, clean cut in his limbs and as lissom as a panther. After the show was over, by dint of persuasion I was "taken round" and introduced; hence this story.

To return to our soup-plate. We were told that, in order to show the absolute control he had over his machine, he would ride it at full speed round the track, and that withoat

The ex-champion was to ride round the card-basket, standing on the upper or right-hand side of the machine with his left leg passed through the frame, the frame of the bicycle, *bien entendu!* He did it, and never turned a hair, and the bicycle looked none the worse.

By this time we had begun to settle down, and when we heard that he would ride round that rumbling, grinding, crashing track seated side-saddle, using one foot only and disdain-



THE TRACK, AS SEEN FROM THE STALLS.

using his hands or his handle-bar. Now, considering the fact that this said track, or soup-plate, or card-basket, is only 18ft. in diameter, and that its sides rise at an angle of 60deg. and are only 5ft. in width, we in the stalls smiled gently at one another, because to us it was perfectly evident that the pretty gentleman in the white shirt-front had been telling us a tarradiddle.

But, no; in a brace of shakes there was Charlie Jones scorching round that track with his hands spread out and arms upraised, and the soup-plate was shivering and rattling and groaning, and we were holding on tight to the arms of our seats, wishing that our feet were in stirrups and screwed to the floor. But there was no time to settle down, for out comes our lecturer with another story—we half believed it this time, but only half.

ing his handle-bar, we thoroughly believed our informant and only waited to see Charlie Jones break his neck.

Slowly at first and then with a wild rush he was on the track—whiz—whoosh! round he went, the gallery boys yelling and sedate stalls applauding vigorously. Our hands had got loose from the seat-arms by this time.

Our friend in evening dress, who up to this time had kept us strictly informed on every point of interest, now came to the front and looked round the house with an expression of sadness. "I am empowered to challenge anyone in the world to ride the ex-champion on the Jones-Hilliard track for £50 a-side." There were no takers. I asked him afterwards why he was so sad, and he told me that it arose from a long-continued



RIDING WITHOUT HANDS ON HANDLE-BAR.

disappointment. He was always hoping against hope that somebody would come forward to make Jones stretch himself, but no one had succeeded yet. I felt almost inclined to oblige him, but when I looked over the edge of that awful soup-plate I thought of my loving wife and precious children, and crept wearily away.

"He will dress himself in ordinary street-going costume, he will ride at full speed round the track, he will light a cigarette, and he will—in short, he will undress"; this from our sad-eyed friend. The ex-champion of Australia and New Zealand did all these things, and we once again stamped and split our gloves in the

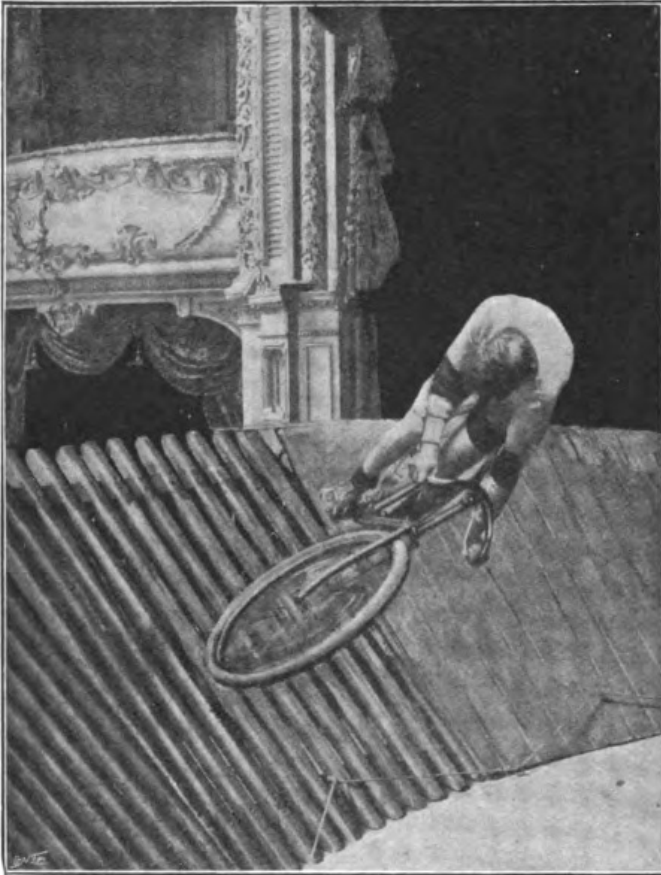
intensity of our excitement.

"Thirty miles an hour and without his handle-bar; no power of guidance over his machine save his wonderful balance. See it before you believe it." Thus our friend. Thirty miles an hour! Whoop, whizz, and away; faster, and faster, and faster still! He no longer looks like a man on a bicycle: he is a blurred line drawn round the track, and the track groans and protests and then, yah! our hearts are in our mouths

and we catch at our breath as if we had swallowed a fly, for, in mid-career, he has made one wild jump from his machine, and is standing smiling and bowing in the middle of the card-basket.



RIDING SIDE-SADDLE



RIDING WITH LEG THROUGH FRAME.

Then they led me trembling to the personal interview I referred to above.

A three-cornered room with red walls, a mat, two chairs, a table, a looking-glass, a square basket, and a collection of mysterious colours and cosmetics on the mantelpiece, with a washstand in the corner. Present: "Charlie" Jones, Mr. Harold Hilliard, and myself. Mr. Harold Hilliard is Charlie Jones's partner and co-inventor. He is a big man with a genial cast of countenance

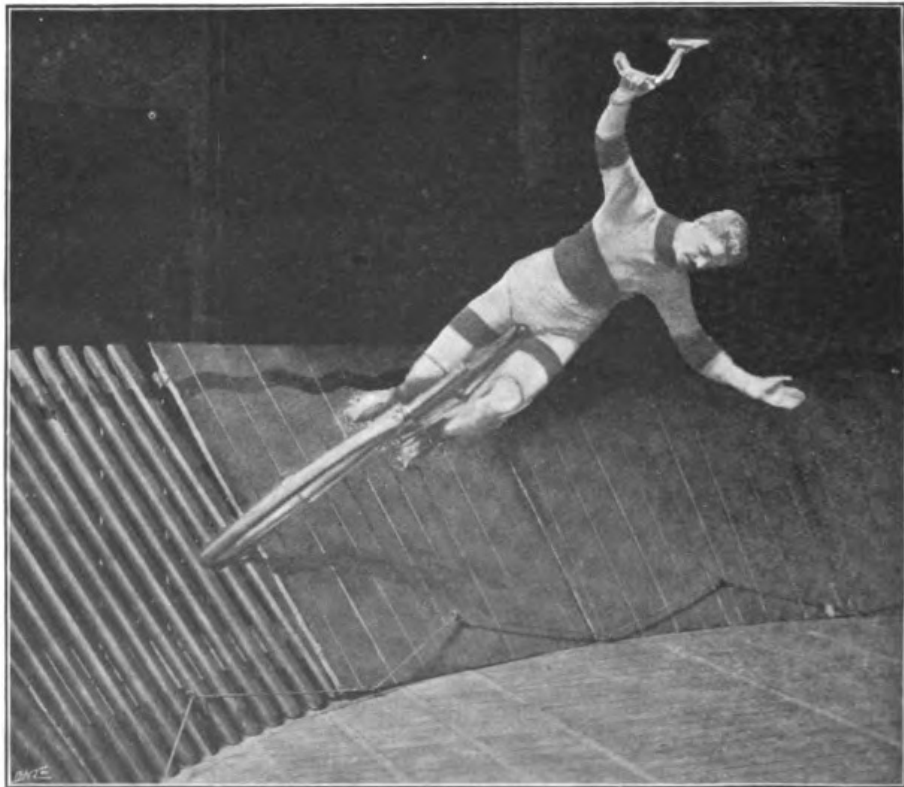
and a pleasant wit; he looks after the business arrangements, whilst Charlie Jones saves as much of his neck and other parts as possible. He was sitting on the basket, and as the two chairs were occupied with a miscellaneous collection of uncouth garments of varied colours he offered me a share of it. The share was small, but then he is a man of large stature and ample beam, but gentle withal. I sat beside him.

At once I plunged *in medias res*. "Tell me, Mr. Jones, are you a born Australian or are you a native of New Zealand?"

"Neither," he replied. "My foot is on my native heath; my name's—'Jones.' I am London born—but ask Hilliard, he'll tell you all about it while I finish dressing."

I turned to Mr. Hilliard, and information came rolling from him.

"When Jones was two years of age his people emigrated, first to Australia, and later to New Zealand, where they disposed their Lares and Penates in Christchurch. He took to cycling when he was twenty years of age, and rode one of those old fire-escape machines known as



REMOVING HANDLE-BAR WHILE RIDING AT FULL SPEED.

ordinaries. Three months later fortune provided him with one of the modern safeties, and at his first attempt he broke the New Zealand record for road-racing. Three months after he carried off five races in succession at Kirwee, and then he was put on the scratch mark. In 1894 he won the Ten-Mile Championship of New Zealand, besides several provincial contests.

"On September 8th of the same year, at Moor Park, Sydney, he carried off the Ten-Mile Championship of Australia. In 1896 he came to England with a view of riding for the World's Amateur Championship, and for some months he trained at Wood Green for that purpose, but on the score that he had rendered himself a professional he was refused his license as an amateur, and so perforce he entered the professional ranks and started lowering records, which he has done successfully."

Mr. Hilliard stopped, but my thirst for information overbore my natural timidity. I turned to the ex-champion and asked: "Have you ever done anything else than lower records and do impossible feats on nerve-breaking tracks?"

He took the towel out his mouth and said: "Ask my partner Hilliard."

Again I turned. "Yes," said Mr. Hilliard, "he is an expert revolver shot, and he plays the cornet; he can make a watch—he hasn't

tried to mend mine, but that's by the way—and he can make or mend a bicycle as well as he can ride and end them; and I believe that on one or two occasions he illustrated the local edition of the New Zealand *War Cry*. No, it did not kill the Salvation Army in the Colony, but I believe it lowered its tone. It became more gentle and modest after that trial."

"There's one thing I should like to tell

you, Mr. Carr," said Mr. Jones. "Thirty-seven years ago, at the Agricultural Hall, my father scorched round the track at the enormous and unheard-of speed of eight miles an hour and created a record. He rode what we call to-day a 'bone-shaker,' with iron tyres and wooden wheels. The handle-bars were about 7in. across, and you kicked forward at the pedals like a shot rabbit. So, you see, the disease is hereditary. My brother, too, has been bitten, and



REMOVING CLOTHES AT FULL SPEED.

although he only rode three races in his life, he won them all. It was somewhere up-country in New Zealand, and a more motley collection of machines and riders I never saw. My brother was riding my light racer, and the others disported themselves on bicycles of every known age, type, and quality. He won the five-mile race by a mile, and then turned back to look for the others. Yes, we are a racy and racing family."