



TO A BEGINNER.

To ride upon a bicycle,
Or even on a tricycle,
Keep cool as any icicle,
And don't get in a fluster,
For if you lose your steadiness,
And part with your calm headiness,
The wheel's in constant readiness
To let you go a 'buster.'

Equalize your ponderosity,
Subdue your corporosity,
And check your adiposity
By constant exercise,
And you'll find that your velocity
Will increase, for Westbrook, (was it he?)
Explained this with verbosity,
Now see him as he flies.

As he works his either pedicle,
(This word sounds somewhat medical),
The antipodes of head I call
By this infrequent term.
How straight he speeds, and arrowy
He glides on sidewalk narrow, he
Flies straighter than a sparrow, he
Shows neither twist nor squirm.

He controls with rare ability
His wheel, and his agility
Is the acme of virility,
As swiftly on he speeds,
And it seems as tho' 'twere part of him,
And herein is the art of him,
And none can get the start of him,
For he knows just what he needs.

How to ride with much dexterity,
Increasing your celerity,
These words of well-known verity
Will form a good rule here;
Don't give up if you fail at first
The *Globe* topped off the *Mail* at first,
And strong men are all frail at first,
Be sure and persevere.

SWIZ.

A STRANGE STORY.

One day, about a week ago, I was sitting in THE BICYCLE office having a quiet smoke and

going over my day's mail, when the door opened and a queer old man came in hurriedly and sat down beside my desk. He was a very

old man with snow-white hair and beard, a wrinkled face and a seared forehead, from underneath which, gleamed a piercing pair of dark brown eyes, capped with shaggy eyebrows that gave his face an extremely fierce expression. He was dressed in a ragged suit of some dark tweed, and wore a soft felt hat carelessly on the back of his head. In one hand he carried a knotty walking stick; in the other a little round bundle tied up in a colored cotton handkerchief. "My friend," he said to me in a shaky voice, "are you the editor of THE BICYCLE?" I answered "Yes." "Ah! then I have something to tell you; something that will interest you. Can you spare me a few minutes?" "Really sir," I answered, "I am very busy just now, but if it is a matter of importance I can give you, say a quarter of an hour. Will that suffice?" "Yes; listen and I will tell you my story." I leaned back in my chair and the old man went on speaking in a quiet though quivering voice:

"I'm not much to look at now sir, but ten years ago there was no finer-looking man in all America than I. I look old and broken-down now, but care and sorrow have turned my locks white and have left their marks on my face. You see me now ragged and miserable, yet ten years back I was wealthy and as happy as could be. My wife and little child were God's gifts to make me the happiest of men, but they are both dead now and all the sunshine has been taken out of my life. And all my trouble has been brought about by a bicycle!"

"By a bicycle!" I echoed in astonishment.

"Yes, by a bicycle. It happened in this way: My father died when I was about twenty years of age, and left me, his only son, a beautiful estate on the banks of the Hudson River and a half interest in a large retail dry-goods establishment in New York. When I reached my thirtieth year I married the daughter of my partner. A year afterwards a child was born; a little girl who looked like her mother, and who was fairly worshiped by us both. No other children blessed our union. Eight years went by, I was then thirty-nine years old, strong, vigorous and in the prime of my life. One day a foreigner called at my house; he was the agent for a manufacturing firm, and had all sorts of new machines and mechanical inventions for sale. One of his wares was a beautiful bicycle. From the first moment I saw it, it seemed to fascinate me. The wonderfully-made parts shining like

silver in the sunlight seemed to me to be endowed with more than ordinary beauty. All the glittering spokes, the curved back-bone, the ebony handles, all had a peculiar interest for me. I was charmed, delighted! I paid the price he asked for it on the spot and the bicycle was mine. How I loved that machine! Every day I would spend an hour or more rubbing the different parts till they shone again; every day I would mount its pig-skin saddle and ride at will through the country. I neglected my business for it. I neglected my home and my wife. My partner, my friends expostulated with me. It was useless. I would not leave my machine for all the world. A year went by and my partner would stand it no longer. He came to me one day and we had a serious quarrel, the outcome of which was, that he bought out my interest in the business, and the partnership was dissolved. I was only too glad of this; it gave me more time to devote to my pet. All the day now I spent with it, and I found out what nobody else knew—that my bicycle was alive! Yes, alive! Whenever I rode through the country I could hear the whirring wheel singing softly to me, its sounds all unintelligible to everybody else but to me as plain as script. What strange queer things it told me as I whirled it along through the quiet country lanes, past murmuring streams and by green fields where the meek-looking cows chewed their cuds all the day, and frisked playfully with their calves. And further down where the road passed through a great, green forest where the birds sang sweetly in the leafy trees, and the squirrels chased each other up and down the great tree-trunks and over the branches chirping as they went, as if life was all one long holiday, it would sing a soft low croon that chimed in with nature's orchestra. Oh! it was beautiful there. But all this time my wife was worrying and fretting because I neglected her. One day I came home from my ride and she met me in the hall and with tears in her eyes asked me what had come over me. I answered her roughly. She persisted, talking in a wailing tone and bursting out crying afresh. I told her not to interfere with me. She came up and put her arms around my neck and laid her tear-stained face against mine. The woman maddened me. In an agony of rage I struck her. Yes, God help me, I struck her. She fell on her knees and looked up pitifully at me with the blood streaming over her beautiful face and mingling with her tears. She clasped me around the legs and looked at me as if her heart was broken. I shook her roughly off and rushed from the house. I mounted my bicycle and rode off. And what a strange song the wheel sang to-day. "Kill her!" it seemed to say, "kill her, kill her!" All along the road over hill and dale, the two