

A SHORT ESSAY ON THE BICYCLE.

If anyone expects, under this heading, to find an analytical diagnosis of a bicycle, I fear he will be sadly disappointed, for I disclaim all knowledge of such an intricate and uninteresting subject. My intention is to relate in plain, unvarnished language my own personal experience in bicycling. In sooth, to a person of any perspicuity, the title would plainly evince the extent of the writer's knowledge on the subject. I mean that if it is read "A Short Essay," instead of "A Short Essay on the Bicycle," a totally different impression is effected.

Where is the man under sixty, or the boy out of petticoats, that hasn't had the bicycling fever? If any one, while suffering from this disease, is unable through impecuniosity, or any other uncontrollable circumstance to purchase a machine for himself, he immediately ferrets out the free-holded proprietor of one who is cursed with a good temper and borrows it (not the temper). Yes, borrows it! That's what I did. I'll relate the *minutiae*. It was during the "long," when the weather was terribly hot and I was wont to drag out weary afternoons dozing over a book in the luxury of a hammock. One day, while enjoying a *post prandium* siesta, and had just reached that delicious state between waking and sleeping, I was rudely disturbed by a friend of mine, dressed in his bicycling suit, who was evidently, judging from the way in which he threw himself on the turf beside me, as lazy as I. Naturally the subject of conversation, after the stereotyped remarks on the weather, turned on the "wheel." "Hot work!" remarked my friend, "did you ever try it?" "No," I gloomily responded, "never had the chance—only wish I had. I'm satisfied that I could ride right off." "If you'd really like to take a run," yawned my friend, "you can have my machine, and I'll wait here till you come back." "You don't mean it!" said I, all trace of *ennui* disappearing, as, with alacrity, I rolled from my pendant couch. "Yes, you can keep it all the afternoon," said he. Not waiting to hear more I hastened off. "What a beauty it is," I murmured to myself, as I examined the fine 54-inch "Challenge," which was to be mine *pro tem*. I wheeled it out into the road with the air of a cyclist of twenty years' standing, pointed its bow towards town, thinking to shew any of the fair sex who might be out how well I could ride, and then, putting my left foot on the step, made a preparatory start, hopping along on my right. All went well until I took that foot from the ground, when I found that it needed more courage than I possessed to mount. I stopped for a moment and thought, "Dear me, this will never do, it's quite easy," then started off again. This time I got into the saddle, but my sojourn there was short—all too short. I would have given worlds to stay longer, but efforts were of no avail. The plaguey concern went by the head, and so did I. Before I knew it, the bicycle, myself, a small heap of stones, and a large heap of dust were all struggling (so it seemed to me) for

the top place which the bicycle got, and, not content with its success, endeavored to impress the fact forcibly on me by vigorously planting the small wheel in the middle of my back. I lay there for a few moments thoroughly disgusted, and with the hearty determination of returning the borrowed article to its owner, when I heard some small boys saying, "I say, mister, are you hurt?" "Oh! no," said I, hastily jumping up, "just took a header—struck a stone you know." (I meant that my head struck a stone)—When you're on the road you should always use the cycling slang—"Come, my boy, it will never do to let these brats laugh at you. You'll have to conquer now," I soliloquized. Once more I got under way and leaped for the saddle, and, although in my desperation I almost cleared the handles, I didn't quite, and found myself firmly seated. By some lucky (or unlucky) chance my feet struck the pedals and I started along finely, cutting a figure in the dust something like a snake fence, only a little more so. This I kept up for about twenty-five yards, when suddenly my steed got frightened or something, and we tumbled, it and I. I say "it and I," because it was always on top as heretofore. I now began to wax wrothy as I got up, rubbing a bruised arm and trying to pin together a huge rent in my trousers. "Do or die!" were my words, as I made another dash which brought my ill-fated carcass once again full length in the dust. On this occasion I had completely cleared the handles, and with the trifling exception of the bell-handle making another yawning hiatus in my unmentionables, no part of the machine had come in contact with my body, the saddle, as you may judge, I had over-reached. Quite an admiring audience had now collected, and a couple of fellows coming up asked me if I didn't think it would be a good idea if they started me. I adopted the suggestion. While they held the machine, one on each side, I clambered in and felt for the pedals, determined to shew them that I could *ride* at least, even if I couldn't mount by myself. I went splendidly until they let go, upon which my powers of steering deserted me, and my steed wouldn't go straight. I saw it headed for a ditch of enormous proportions, I shut my eyes and clung to the handles, all exertion proving powerless. At a tremendous pace I hurtled down the side of the ditch, ran up the other, at the summit of which the runaway was checked, but oh, at what a cost! This side of the ditch was lined with sidewalk, raised about a foot and a half from the ground, and against it the large wheel madly struck and then hesitated. But I didn't. With break-neck haste I left that saddle—fairly flew over the handles—didn't pause to think when my head lit on the boards, and only upon my landing between fence and sidewalk did I realize what had happened. Many eager hands lent me assistance to rise, and as many more eagerly offered to give me another start, which I as eagerly declined. I picked up the confounded two-wheeled tormentor, but what a sight met my gaze! Only one pedal remained to it, one