



THE SPIRIT OF THE WHEEL.

A CHRISTMAS FANTASY.

BY SWIZ.

In the sanctum of THE 'CYCLE, resting vertebral cervical, dorsal, lumbar, bones that I call by their dulcet names euphonious, On the sofa I reclined with a cushion under mine head, I had generously dined, and—what all will call erroneous I had sadly overeaten—feasted goose and turkey meat on—and oh! the pudding was a sweet 'un—now, with epigastrium sore, There my weary system resting, longing for a swift digesting, all my inner man suggesting thoughts of Christmas past and o'er; I was wishing that the season would return again—no more.

As I puffed my sweet Havana, thoughts of Lucy and of Anna, o'er my mind in mingled manner, flitted, floated, flopped and flickered, And those thoughts became distorted, heterogeneously assorted—let it never be reported that I had unwisely liquored— But as I lay there reposing, semi-conscious, semi-dozing, with my optics nearly closing, suddenly upon the floor Stood the strangest little being I was ever blest by seeing; how he came there I can never tell you, for I'd locked the door, I had shut and barred and bolted and had double locked the door.

Round his head there shone a halo like the weird light of Saint Malo, which I read of in a tale, oh! many and many a year ago; His eyes gleamed bright like that carbuncle which I "put up" with my good uncle, and his yellow skin was shrunk, all into wrinkles did it go, On a bicycle he rested, and his attitude suggested something slightly Oscar Wildish only just a little more Medieval and aesthetic, but his oculars magnetic such a strange transcendant, glistening, incandescent brightness wore, Such a scintillating, flashing, frost-fire, coal-stove brightness wore.

Thin his limbs and very lanky like a half developed Yankee, for better simile I'll thank ye, and his shoes were pointed sharp,

And the spokes of his bicycle, glittering with the shiniest nickel, he would sweep with claw like fingers, as a harpist harps a harp.

Chanting in a tone most odious, some strange ditty unmelodious, which at first seemed disconnected and no relevancy bore To the words which he was singing, ever on his wheel spokes ringing, and the sound was like the murmur of a distant tarant's roar, as it falls, as Laureate Alfred says it falls down at Lodore.

Nerveless all, I lay and listened, whilst his twinkling eyeballs glistened, wondering if he'd e'er been christened, and if so, what name he bore; And the air grew thick around me, and a deathly stupor bound me, I could neither move nor stir a leg behind nor hand before. "Do I wake or am I dreamin'? Is this thing a devilish demon?" to myself I softly muttered as the moments onward wore; "Is it Nick with all his nickel? truly I am in a pickle," and I felt my life blood trickle cold my glamoured being o'er. Felt my blood like cold ickick freeze my glamoured being o'er.

Then these words he kept repeating, "Yes, you have been overeating, art is long but life is fleeting to the baseborn mortal glutton, Who with mincepic, turkey, gander to his appetite will pander and rejects good wholesome beefsteak and sound muscle making mutton.

I will tell you who I am, sir, and I do not care a darn, sir, whether you believe or whether you incredulous may feel, I assert upon this spot, sir, whether you believe or not, sir, I'm the lurking, hidden genius, I'm the Spirit of the Wheel. See me place upon the treadle my sharp-pointed little pedal, watch me as I touch the saddle, watch me as I ride my wheel."

Round he went with swiftness dashing, lambent flames came leaping, flashing from his bicycle as crashing round and round the room he whirled, Over chair and over table, over manuscript and cable—gram he sped like demon sable from the dark Hadesian world, Went the little imp, so quickly did he drive his bright wheel nickely, till my head swam faint and sickly as I watched the flashing steel, Faster, faster and yet faster, "of the bicycle I'm master, never meet I with disaster, I'm the Spirit of the wheel, Shrieked in glee the little demon, "I'm th' Spirit of the wheel."

Suddenly, with jump astounding, in the air I saw him bounding, turning, twirling, somersaulting, right upon my vest he lit, And with grinning leer he chuckled, "Would you like your vest unbuckled? Am I heavy? How d'ye like it? Here I am and here I sit." How I longed to shout, but could not; for my vocal organs would not answer to my strong endeavors to produce a lusty roar. But I moaned in accents lowly, "Get thee gone, thou thing unholy, take thy form from off my stomach and thy wheel from out my door, Get thee gone, thou grewsome, awesome fiend and come back—nevermore."

But he sat the self same place in, gibbering, hideously grumacing, whilst I in attitude debasing, groaned and moaned in anguish sore, There he sat and drummed his knuckles right upon my waistcoat buckles, just above the epigastric region I spoke of before. Oh! the anguish and the groaning, as I lay there faintly moaning, "Is there, is there no atoning for that awful Christmas meal?" "None at all" the demon clamored, as my vest again he hammered, "You must suffer, I will make you, I the Spirit of the Wheel."

Suddenly the load was lifted, and away the demon drifted, as the door was thrown wide open, and I woke and asked the question, "Where's the wheel bestriding devil, where's that grewsome thing of evil? Can it be a dream brought on by unromantic indigestion?" There with countenances beaming, stood two chums. "Why you've been dreaming, far away we heard you screaming, and we rushed to see what ailed you. So you saw the devil, did you! on his bicycle he rid you! well, 'twas naught but Christmas dinner and o'er stuffing that a-ailed you. Had it been the demon surely, just now you'd be feeling poorly, for you'd be "in quod" in Hades and we never could have hailed you"

Now ye gormandizing sinners who o'er eat at Christmas dinners, ye will surely ne'er be winners of a much prized champion's medal, For dyspepsia's torments awful, caused by gluttony unlawful, will prevent your deftly working of the nickel-plated treadle. Take a warning from my lesson; never make too big a mess on Christmas day, but take it easy and consume a decent meal. Then you never, never, never, no, not even "hardly ever" will see such a loathly being as the Spirit of the Wheel, Such a weird fantastic demon as the Spirit of the Wheel.