

THE FIRST SEASON.

Every rider of the bicycle, whether man or boy, experiences a few sensations when he takes his first ride upon the road. In the school there was no obstruction of any kind, and the thrust required upon the pedal was almost inappreciable; but on the road, no matter how smooth, a positive and continuous push alone preserves motion and keeps the machine erect. In the school nearly the whole attention and strength can be given to balancing and steering the wheel, but on the road half the strength must be used for propulsion. The result is that the rider often thinks on his first trial that the road is hard and discouraging, or that he has tried it too soon. Perhaps both are true, but two or three days' experience will work a wondrous change. The thrust of the feet will become a natural motion, and strength and facility will increase rapidly.

On beginning road-riding, it is important that the cyclist form good habits, for his later riding will be largely influenced by what he learns now. If he becomes reckless and awkward, he will meet with accidents, and he can only rid himself of bad habits by months of watchfulness. If he becomes careful and graceful, he will get the largest amount of pleasure and benefit from his steed. Recklessly used, the wheel may become dangerous; used with care and reason, it is always safe.

SIZE. In the school the learner was first placed on a comparatively small wheel. As he improved he was given a larger one, and he doubtless soon became ambitious to use as large an one as possible, thinking to gain in speed and appearance from the increased size. Both these ideas were wrong. For road-riding, comfort, safety and speed, favor a size below your limit, and appearance depends upon graceful carriage of the body and limbs and perfect control of the wheel. Ease, comfort, safety, speed and appearance come with that mastery of the bicycle's movement which is only attained when the pedals are always within full control. If the thrust is longer than your leg, and you lose your grip, though it be ever so little in each revolution, you have, for that instant, lost some degree of control, and also added an element of danger. To secure the greatest advantages possible, select a size below your limit. Generally, dealers' catalogues giving tables of sizes are reliable. For the average machine, a leg measuring thirty-three inches fits a 30-inch, and every inch of leg corresponds to two inches in the size of the wheel. These sizes give good control and are best for general use. A size larger can be used by an old rider, or by a beginner on a machine with a low spring; but there is nothing to be gained by so doing, and there are disadvantages in the shape of (a) lessened stability, (b) harder work in hill climbing, and (c) greater resistance offered to the wind—all considerable items.

POSITION.—Having your wheel selected, look well to the position of the seat. The nearer you place it to a perpendicular drawn through the centre of gravity, the easier is the machine propelled; but less resistance is offered to obstacles, and the danger of a header increased. A beginner should place his seat as far back from the neck as he can, and still feel his pedals firmly dur-

ing their whole revolution. After a few months he can move the seat forward. This should be done by degrees, and only half an inch at a time, as every half inch makes an appreciable difference in the saddle. When in the saddle, sit up straight and well back. No matter how fast you are riding, keep erect. It is foolish and useless to lean far forward over the handles. It is awkward, and the small gain in speed obtained can never compensate for the largely-increased danger. When leaning far forward, a trifling inequality in the road will cause a header, and leaders taken in this way are always dangerous.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS. To become a good rider of the wheel, it is not necessary to learn fancy tricks, but there are a few accomplishments which are important. When first trying the road, it is supposed that you can mount and dismount with some little ease. Be satisfied with that until you can sit easily in the saddle without grasping the handles like a vice. In a few weeks this point will be reached. It will come quickly if you will try to hold the handles as lightly as you can, and frequently change the position of your hands on them. The best method, as a whole, is the overhold; but it is restless to often grasp the ends of the handles, or occasionally to take the underhold. As soon as you can steer with a light grasp, let go with one hand, and guide the wheel with the other. This will, at first, put quite a strain upon the guiding arm, because you are doing all the guiding with your arm, and none with your feet—but you cannot help that yet. Try this with each hand, until you can run a little distance easily, and in a fairly straight line. When you reach this point, remove both hands from the handles for an instant. If you have learned to hold the pedals firmly with your feet, you will find that you can guide the wheel a little by them. If you have not done so, you must do it now. Keep your knees well in towards the forks (always see that you do not ride in bow-legged style), and press evenly on the pedals. When the wheel swerves, a little pressure on a pedal will right it. Practice a little at a time, but often, and you will soon be able to ride with hands off, and use your hands for anything required. When you can do this, it will be possible to grasp the handles lightly, even on rough roads, because you will steer largely by the pedals. By this time, perhaps, a couple of months will have elapsed. When you reach the saddle, you will no longer feel that you are on a strange steed, but will be more or less at home. Practice is the chief thing needful. Every day will bring improvement, until you feel like part of your wheel.

At a very early date try back-pedaling. Run moderately fast and slow up by reversing the action of your feet and pressing back gently. Try this very often, until, in fact, you can control your machine perfectly by it. It is a very important accomplishment.

When you are able to ride lightly in a tolerably straight line, you can essay an easy coast. Take a smooth and gentle hill. Throw one foot lightly over the handle and pedal carefully with the other. The machine will be less steady than usual, but if you have allowed these directions you will get down safely. The next

day coast with the other leg up. Try it half a dozen times, or until you can do it comfortably, with each leg, before you try both legs. The first time you have both up you may feel shaky, but if you keep cool you will come to no harm, and it will be easier and steadier every time. At the end of the coast, take your legs down carefully, at the same time steadying the machine. Keep them both well away from the pedals till you have good control of the handles. Then look down quickly and catch one pedal, the other foot will follow naturally. I have seen riders put down their feet quickly without steadying their machines, and before they could catch the pedals or reassert their control, run wildly into the gutter and a bad fall. Coasting is so fascinating that it is apt to lead to recklessness; but if you never coast where you cannot safely pedal, and never try a strange hill when you cannot see the bottom, you reduce the danger to a minimum. The brake must be used very cautiously at all times, and only when it is imperative; but it is necessary to practise with it so that it may be used at need.

These few points comprise nearly all that it can be called necessary to learn. When they have been mastered, many little things will readily occur to the rider. But it should be remembered that it is nearly impossible to make any accomplishment perfect, and that a good rider will always exert himself to improve. Six months of riding ought to give a good facility, and an easy and complete control of the wheel. Nothing is gained by carelessness or recklessness. Never take an unnecessary risk. Keep the machine well in hand. Sit well up, keep cool, by all means have your eyes and wits about you, and then, if any risk is necessary, the danger will be decreased. Be courteous on the road. Don't assume the sole right of way to be yours. Never frighten or annoy any man or beast. If you heed this, you will get courtesy in return.

The great secret for a learner is to "make haste slowly." In bicycling, everything depends upon the rider. It is, therefore, in the highest degree important that he fully understand his steed and learn to control it thoroughly, and that he be always cool and self-controlled. To acquire these requisites, take time, patience, and intelligent practice, and nothing will replace them.

CARE OF WHEEL.—Common-sense generally dictates how a wheel should be cared for, and more or less complete directions are so accessible in many little manuals, that a few simple directions are the most practical. Always wipe off well on returning from a ride. Oil a little at a time and often. Watch screws, nuts and spokes, and keep them tight. See that the tire is firm, and repaired if much cut. Carry oil, a cloth, twine, and wrenches in your saddle-bag. Familiarize yourself with all parts of the machine, but do not unnecessarily take it apart. See that any luggage you may carry is firm. If anything gets out of gear, and you cannot fix it, consult some one who is posted, or take it to a competent mechanic.

When well learned, bicycling is the pleasantest, most harmonious and beneficial of all exercises, and the most exhilarating of sports.—*The Bicycling World.*