

flying wheel. You hear rustles among the dried leaves of a wayside plantation which tell of the wary footsteps of a fox, and look! there on the quiet expanse of turf, six, eight, ten—oh, you can't count the number of hares feeding on the grass shoots with the summer dew for sauce to their repast. Creeping round silently by the old oak at the corner you come upon a dark figure whom you see quite plainly as you shoot by. His features are transfixed in your memory, for they are keen and cruel and hard, and somehow you make up your mind that he is the villain lawyer you are accustomed to in fiction, revolving some deep plot, and ha! you just pop upon a couple and see a girl's face upturned to a young man's and the sweetest kiss "implanted," as they say, on her ruby lips—and you ride on desperately in sheer modesty for you would not discompose such a sweet young pair for the world. But the regular rhythm of your wheels pieces out a story in which the cunning lawyer is the fox, and the lovers are imaged by the shy leverets feeding in the dewy silence.

It was on just such an evening as this that the most thrilling of all my bicycling experiences occurred.

I was bowling at a fair rate along the quietest and flattest of country roads, when, coming round upon a corner just such as I have described, I saw, at my right hand, seated upon his haunches and close up to a stile and on the other side of it, yes, sitting up on his haunches and quietly "washing his face," as we say of a cat, nothing more nor less than a huge tiger! I found out afterwards that he had escaped from a travelling menagerie.

You have heard of a rattlesnake fascinating a chicken by looking at it. That tiger's eye had a similar effect on me. Whatever I did to get out of his way at that moment was purely instinctive and mechanical; it seemed that my whole brain and mind were concentrated in a fixed gaze at him. You cannot, however, keep one eye on a tiger and another on your bicycle. I saw him clear the stile with one little graceful sinuous bound and then I bent all my powers to increasing the distance between us. I took instantaneous photographs of him by half turning my head and radiating my right eye to it utmost extent in the socket. There he was, trotting a queer kind of sideways, soft, watchful, devilish bee-line kind of trot behind me. I thought of my weapons, a knife-pen-blade, good large blade, broken trying to get a cork out; a bicycle spanner and a pair of pocket scissors. Fighting the brute was manifestly impossible. Another extreme radiation of my right eye. I was just about preserving the distance between us. Keep cool, keep cool! I kept saying to myself and at the same time the perspiration kept dropping with a quicker iteration from my brow. I tried to take a general glance at the possibilities of the case as I hurried along. Suppose I rapidly dismounted, got over a stile or a five barred gate and tried to climb a tree? Why the tiger would be on to me like a shot—work of that sort would come natural to him. Suppose the machine broke down, or, worse still, suppose I went over the handles on my head? and a dim picture of the future presented itself to my horrified imagination in which I stood as a central figure trying to keep off a tiger with the broken fragments of my bicycle.

I suppose I insensibly increased my speed, for, looking behind me again, I could see the tiger coming on at a lolling gallop—his eyes gleaming like red lamps in the dust—danger signals indeed.

I gave myself up for lost and began to picture his getting me down and sucking my life-blood.

Just then I saw a narrow lane leading off to the left and on the chance of its leading to some help, or at any rate bringing my state of suspense to a close I turned the corner and proceeded rapidly along it at a breakneck pace. I had gone about half a mile and the tiger was still about fifty yards in my rear when I saw before me what seemed like a deep cutting for a tramway from a mine, opening like a chasm right across the roadway. It was, perhaps, about eight or ten yards wide, and the navvies who had been at work there had made a narrow bridge across it for their wheel-barrows, consisting of a single plank, eleven inches wide, supported in the centre by a wooden erection, strengthened by diagonal spars. From a hut below, where some navvies were presumably acting the part of watchmen, rose up a thick, blue, curling column of smoke. All this I took in at a glance. There before was the narrow plank path. On either side of it there was misty depth.

My mind was made up, and in a moment I determined what to do. I had seen wonderful things done with bicycles at theatres and circuses and the like. Now to try what I could do. I pulled myself together, muttered a mental prayer and rode straight for the plank!

After I was once on it I was as cool as a cucumber, as the saying is. I was actually enjoying the smooth riding and almost wished there was a mile of it so far as that is concerned. But if I were to say that I was not pleased when, after a thrilling swerve or two to right and left, I reached *terra firma* on the other side I should say that which would not be true.

I jumped off my machine and looked back. There stood the tiger lashing his tail grandly. Then he gave one roar and began to come cautiously along upon the plank.

The continued necessity for taking a rapid resolution and acting upon it was becoming oppressive. The plank was in two lengths, the end of one butting up against the other and meeting in the middle of the support before mentioned. I should say that the roar of the tiger brought out of the little hut two Irish navvies, alarm painted on their faces.

A large heap of mortar, a lot of bricks and other building materials lay near to the foot of the skeleton pier in the middle of the abyss. When the tiger got on to the second plank I lifted my end of it so as to let him fall. As good luck would have it he dropped. The cutting was about twenty-five feet deep, and he lay there still enough. But the way in which those two Irishmen ran down the half-finished tramline eclipsed all I ever saw in the way of footraces. A gamekeeper who had evidently been "having a crack" with them in the hut was almost equally frightened but recovered himself sooner, and called them back. They made bold to put a rope round the brute's neck and tied him like a dog to the timbers of the support; and I heard subsequently that the proprietor of the menagerie ultimately recovered his stray specimen of the *carnivora*. B. McCREA.

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The Chickiebirds.

The chickiebirds are in their nest
Overhead,—
Dimpled shapes of rosy rest
Curled a-bed.
Night has sung her spell, and thrown
Her net around
Their heads; their pearly ears have grown
Deaf to all other sound.

O of me how you are part,
Babies mine!
Your hearts are children of my heart,
The inner sign
Of my eyes lurks in your eyes,
And your soul,
That so brims with Paradise,
Stirs what wonders roll
Unsuspected in myself,
Who had thought
Life half dead, till childhood's elf—
Sign of angels men shall be—
Came and taught
My youth eterne within futurity.

ALCHEMIST.

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A Parson's Ponderings Concerning Professor Drummond.

I MET a friend the other day who asked me, with a look and tone of keen distress, if I had read Professor Drummond's last book, "The Ascent of Man." When I said yes, then came the inevitable question as to what I thought of it. I suppose, bye the bye, every minister of the gospel is at times bothered that way: I mean, by persons of all sorts of opinions wanting to know what is *his* opinion of some one of the numberless new books propounding all sorts of opinions. One learns to be diplomatic in his replies, for if he is not he will get into trouble for sure: whatever he says will be coloured by the bias of his interviewer. On the occasion in question, whether I committed myself in my answer, I cannot say; at all events, I managed to elicit the opinions of my friend, and they were to this effect: "I have lost all confidence in Drummond.—He has departed from the faith.—He has declared himself an out-and-out evolutionist!—It is certain that if evolution is true the Old Book must go.—The Bible and evolution cannot be believed together.—If evolution is true there is no place for Christ or