

she looked like an Indian squaw, and then she s-s-snipped off her eyelashes till there wasn't a hair left. She was sent to bed as w-well as me."

"They have grown again since then," said Norah, shutting one eye, and screwing up her face in a vain effort to prove the truth of her words. "I had been to see Lettice have her hair cut that day, and I was longing to try what it felt like. I knew it was naughty, but I couldn't stop, it was too fascinating. Oh, Lettice, do you remember when you sucked your thumb?"

Lettice threw up her hands with a little shriek of laughter. "Oh, how funny it was. I used to suck my thumb, Rex, until I was quite a big girl, six years old, I think, and one day mother spoke to me seriously, and said I really must give it up. If I didn't I was to be punished; if I did I was to get a prize—I forget what it was now. I said, 'Well, may I suck my thumb as long as ever I like to-day, for the very last time?' Mother said I might, so I sat on the stairs outside the nursery door and sucked my thumb all day long—hours, hours, and hours, and after that I was never seen to suck it again. I had had enough!"

"It must be awfully nice to belong to a large family," said Rex wistfully. "You can have such fun together. Edna and I were very quiet at home, but I had splendid times at school, and sometimes I used to bring some of the

fellows down to stay with me in the holidays. One night I remember—hallo, here's the Mouse! I thought you were having a nice little sleep on the schoolroom sofa, Mouse. Come here and sit by me."

Geraldine advanced to the fireplace in her usual deliberate fashion. She was quite calm and unruffled, and found time to smile at each member of the party before she spoke.

"So I was asleep, only they's a fire burning on the carpet of the schoolroom, and it waked me up."

"Wh—at?"

"They's a fire burning in the miggles of the carpet—a blue fire, just like a plum pudding."

There was a simultaneous shriek of dismay, as work, scissors, chestnuts, were thrown wildly on the floor, and the Bertrand family rushed upstairs in a stampede of excitement. The schoolroom door stood open, the rug was thrown back from the couch on which the Mouse had been lying, and in the centre of the well-worn carpet, little blue flames were dancing up and down, exactly as they do on a Christmas pudding, which has been previously baptised with spirit. Bob cast a guilty look at his brother, who stuck his hands in his pockets and looked at the conflagration with smiling patronage.

"Phosphorus pentoxide P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>," he remarked coolly. "What a lark!"

"It wouldn't have been a lark if the Mouse had been stifled by the nasty, horrid fumes," said Lettice angrily. "Get some water at once, and help us put it out, before the whole house is on fire."

"Water, indeed, don't do anything so foolish. You mustn't touch it with water. Here, it's only a square, pull the thing up and throw it through the window into the garden, that's the best thing we can do," said Raymond, dropping on his knees and setting himself to pull and tear with all his strength. Bob and the girls did their best to assist him, for the Bertrands were accustomed to help themselves, and in a very few minutes the carpet was lifted, folded hurriedly in two, and sent flying through the window to the garden beneath. After which the tired and begrimed labourers sank down on chairs, and panted for breath.

"This is what comes of chemical experiments," said Hilary, severely. "I shall ask father to forbid you to play with such dangerous things in the house. I wonder what on earth you will do next."

"Have some tea. This sort of work is tiring. I'm going downstairs to ring the bell and hurry Mary up," said Raymond, coolly. "It was absolutely impossible to get that dreadful boy to realise his own enormities!"

(To be continued.)

## BICYCLING TO HEALTH AND FORTUNE.

By LAWRENCE LISTON, M.D.

PART I.  
THE MACHINE.



ERTAINLY one of the most remarkable and important additions to our lives during the past ten years has been the pneumatic bicycle. In town and in country alike go where we will, the

ever-present bicycle is to be seen in the roads, in the streets, at railway stations and even on board steamers. The large majority of present-day girls ride, and the object of these articles is to point out,

if possible, the way of getting the greatest benefit from the exercise, and of avoiding its pitfalls and dangers.

The bicycle was a closed book to any but hardy men until the introduction of the pneumatic tyre, which immediately rendered propulsion easy and stopped nearly all the old injurious and uncomfortable vibration; fortunately also at about the same time many

County Councils adopted the use of the steam-roller on country roads, and nowadays it can only exceptionally be the case that a girl of ordinary physical endowments cannot ride a bicycle. That this exercise has exerted a favourable influence on the health of those who indulge in it, with discretion, there can be no shadow of doubt; the increased appetite, the ability to sleep soundly, the banishing of dyspepsia, the reddening of poor pale cheeks, the feeling of well-being and increased physical strength tell loudly the tale of restored and perfected health. It must be always remembered, however, that these much desired ends are only to be attained by care and discretion in riding, and that results the very reverse may be suffered through ill-directed over-exertion. So great are these benefits which the bicycle brings that the toy of fashion has become a necessary element in the life of most girls in the country, and a never-failing source of recreation to those who live in towns. Let us see then how we can best make use of this wonderful health-giving mechanism, and think over the points that have to be considered in its use.

First of all the machine; this thing which is going to be your *alter ego* must be chosen with care. Don't be in a hurry to buy any bicycle which the seller may first bring to your notice, but wait and think over the pros and cons quietly. You cannot go far wrong if you buy one of the high-grade standard manufactures of English renown, and if cost be a grave consideration, you will often do better to buy a second-hand last year's machine of well-known make, rather than a new one of unknown or inferior manufacture. Be sure that the machine is of the right

height for you; it is positively harmful to ride a machine, the pedals of which you can only just reach with effort, and it is absurd and may be dangerous to have the saddle pillar and handle-bars raised to a great height on a machine which is too small for you. In a machine which is of the right size, you should be able, with the saddle at its lowest, to ride comfortably, and there should never be any occasion for dangerous elevation of the handles on which the hands should rest comfortably, the elbows being only slightly bent. The weight of the machine should not exceed thirty pounds with all "extras" for ordinary girl riders up to nine stone; a heavy machine means greater fatigue in riding, though often a very light machine conveys vibration from inequalities of the road with greater intensity. No standard English maker is likely to supply a "lady's safety" built so lightly as to be dangerous. It is of first importance that a suitable saddle should be fixed to the machine, one which gives rise to no sort of injurious pressure or sense of discomfort at the end of a long ride. Considerable ingenuity has been expended to meet this want, and it is an open question whether it has been thoroughly satisfied even yet. It is a pity that the word "saddle" was ever applied to this particular part of the bicycle, "seat" would be much better, and those forms of apparatus which are "seats" rather than "saddles" are as a rule to be preferred. As regards the position of the saddle, the point or most forward part of the saddle should be in the same vertical line with the hindmost pedal when the pedals are horizontal; the height should be such that the under

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