

A Race for Life.

Dinner is over. The ladies have withdrawn, and around the fragments of a costly dessert sit four gentlemen. Colonel Harvie and his guests, Captain Morton and William Staines, are sipping their wine and talking politics (Master Tom Harvie, the Colonel's young nephew being home from Eton for the Christmas holidays.) The Colonel and his friends being staunch Tories and with very stultic opinions on most political questions, any suggestions or theory advanced by one is carried unanimously by the other two; and therefore, their remarks being neither very interesting nor exciting, Mr. Tom's chatter is listened to, much to that youth's surprize and pleasure.

"O Uncle," he says; "what is that extraordinary arrangement you have in the hall, facing the front door?"

"What, the bicycle?"

"Yes, I suppose its a bicycle, but it's the nas jest old one I ever saw; and why should it stand on that splendid tiger skin?"

"Ah, thereby hangs a tale," says Captain Morton, sententiously.

"To the tiger, or the bicycle?" laughed Tom.

"If you begin making bad jokes at your time of life, Tom, I don't know what will become of you. By-the-by, Staines, have you heard of Harvie's Indian adventure?"

Staines, who has only lately become acquainted with his host, says "No."

"I've written it in the shape of a story, Morton, since I saw you last," says the Colonel, "and if you like we will read it over our cigars, being a literary man, Staines, you must listen critically."

"A story, hurrah!" shouts Tom.

The manuscript is produced, and Colonel Harvie, settling himself comfortably, adjusts his double eye-glasses, clears his throat, and begins:

"Has a bicycle ever saved a man's life? A curious question, and one to which, I imagine, few persons would answer in the affirmative. I am one of those few, however, and as the life in question had a particular interest for me, being my own, all the details of the terrible event are firmly fixed in my memory.

I was always fond of bicycling, and from the time when I was a small boy and labored for hours at a bone-shaker, to the day when I became the proud possessor of one of the first bicycles ever manufactured, I reveled in the enchanting pastime, spending hours which should have been otherwise occupied, on the back of my iron horse, thus putting my physical powers a long way ahead of my mental. In fact I hated the sight of a book, and was never happy unless touring around the country on my bicycle.

My father was a doctor, in a little Kentish village, and having a large family, he was thankful indeed when, at the age of nineteen, a commission was obtained for me by a wealthy friend in a regiment about to sail for India. And one fine morning I

found myself with the King's Own at Plymouth, starting in H.M.S. Gauges for our mighty Eastern Empire. A grand new bicycle was my father's parting present to me, and great was my delight at finding that Fred Bent, another young "sub," in my regiment was also a bicyclist.

Well, we reached our destination at last, and steamed up the mighty Hoogly to Calcutta. Words fail me to describe the sensation which our bicycles caused. They were, I believe, the first ever seen in India; and as my friend, Fred Bent, and I rode together into the town, some days after our arrival, one would have thought it was the triumphal entry of some eastern potentate. But by degrees the natives became quite accustomed to our iron steeds, as we always used them to transact any business which we had to do. But for a change, and to make things interesting, we agreed to have a trial of speed, and as our pet pastime would soon have to be abandoned for an indefinite period, one evening, after mess, we drew up and signed articles, in the regular professional style, to ride a ten-mile race for five pounds a side. We were now stationed at the foot of the hills. There was a grand native road within a short distance of our camp running away for ten miles as flat as a billiard table, and it terminated in a very thick jungle. On this road I started to train. After a week of such training as would make a modern athlete's hair stand on end, I considered myself fit for the contest, and the adventure I am going to relate, occurred on the evening before the eventful day, when I started out for my final spin. In about an hour's easy riding I had reached my usual halting-place, ten miles from camp. This place I passed and rode two miles farther on, which brought me to the jungle.

Now for home. Dismounting, I oiled my machine, tightened up every screw, and then sat down on a boulder to rest and enjoy the prospect. A beautiful scene it was, too! Above me rose the grand mountains with their snowy tops; here a little waterfall, like a thread of gold and silver, running down the mountain-side, and twining in and out amongst the masses of trees and rocks. A port or "tank," as they are called, surrounded by dense foliage, festooned by parasitical climbing plants, glowing with flowers of every imaginable hue. On the "tank" floated water fowl of every kind, and variety of color. But now the shadows were deepening, and the cold snow began to look gray and ghostly.

A flying fox went hustling past me, and I hastily prepared to mount; for there is scarcely any twilight in India, and I knew it would soon be dark.

As I rose my eyes encountered something which made me start, and nearly drop my bicycle. There, not forty yards off, was a tiger. I knew the animal well enough; but how different he looked from the lean, half-starved little beast I had seen at home. He had just come to the open space from a dense jungle break and sat there washing his face and purring in a contented sort of way, like

a huge cat. Was I frightened? Not an atom. I had my bicycle and a start of forty yards; and if I could not beat him it was a pity.

He had not seen me yet, and I stood for another minute admiring the handsome creature, and then quietly mounted. The tiger was directly on my right, while the road stretched straight away in front of me. The noise I made aroused him; he looked up, and then, after deliberately stretching himself, came leaping with long, graceful bounds over the rank grass and rocks which separated him from the road.

He did not seem a bit angry; but evidently wished to get a nearer view of such an extraordinary object. Forty yards, however, I thought was quite near enough for safety. The tiger was in the road behind me now; so I pulled myself together and began to quicken my pace. Would he stop, disgusted, after the first hundred yards and give up the chase, or would he stick to it? I quite hoped he would follow me, and already pictured in my mind the graphic description I would write home of my race with a tiger. Little did I think what a terrible race it would be. I looked behind. By Jove! he was "sticking to it." I could not judge the distance; but, at any rate, I was no farther from him than when we started. Now for a spurt! I rode the next half-mile as hard as I could; but on again looking round I found I had not gained a yard. The tiger was on my track, moving with a long, swinging trot, and going quite as fast as I was.

For the first time I began to feel anxious, and thought uneasily of the ten long miles that separated me from safety. However, it was no good thinking now; it was my muscle and iron steed against the brute. I could only do my best, and trust in Providence.

Now there was no doubt about the tiger's intentions; his blood was up and on he came, occasionally giving vent to a roar, which made the ground tremble. Another mile had been traversed, and the tiger was slowly but surely closing up.

I dashed my pouch to the ground, hoping it would stop him for a few seconds; but he kept steadily on, and I felt it was then grim earnest. I calculated we must be about seven miles from camp now, and before I could ride another four, my pursuer, I knew, must reach me. O, the agony of those minutes, which seemed to me like long hours!

Another mile passed and then another. I could hear him behind me now. Quicker and quicker, louder and louder.

I turned in my saddle for a moment and saw there were not twenty yards separating us. How enormous the brute looked, and how terrible! His huge tongue hung out, and the only sound he made was a continual hoarse growl of rage, while his eyes seemed to literally flash fire.

It was like some awful nightmare, and with a shudder I bent down over the handles and flew on.

As I now sit quietly in my chair writing, I find it hard to analyze the crowd of mem-

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