

How not to enjoy cycling



Some things to avoid if you would make the most of your excursions awheel

By PERCY LONGHURST

How do you treat your bicycle? Do you keep it clean from dust and grit, and oil it frequently—have a look at the chain now and again to make sure it isn't clogged with filth—glance occasionally at the state of the tyres? If you don't, you are failing to get the best out of your machine.

"A merciful man is merciful to his beast" is a good old saying; and you should be merciful to your beast—even though it is made of metal instead of flesh and blood.

Some fellows regard bikes simply as a means of saving 'bus and railway fares. Others seem to look upon them as a means for the performing of weird and fantastic gymnastic tricks; and it really doesn't do a bike any good to slide off the saddle and ride astride the top bar of the frame, all one's weight on the pedals. Still, others consider their metal steed as the medium by which they can obtain fine, healthy exercise, recreation, and pleasure combined. Into which of these groups do you come?

Properly used, a bike will give an endless amount of real pleasure and profit, to the great benefit of health and pocket. But to obtain this benefit it is necessary not only to take proper care of

the bike, but to learn to ride properly.

Learning to ride isn't very difficult. Learning to ride badly is a whole lot easier. The worst of it is that the rider doesn't know that his bad riding is not good for him. He sees others riding badly, and he copies them. Why, I can't tell you.

Tearing along the road on a machine fitted with dropped handle-bars (which were meant only for racing bikes, on which everything

in the way of comfort has to be sacrificed to speed), nose almost touching the steering post, mouth open (so that all the dust going about can be breathed into the lungs), body arched almost as much as an angry cat's, legs driving furiously—that is bad riding, for it gives mighty little pleasure and is no benefit to the health.

The ordinary cyclist's intention when he goes out for a "pleasure" ride is not to make the outing a race against time, or it ought not to be. A race of any kind is some sort of pleasure,



Frank Lacey

A couple of hours' foot-slogging through the rain, just because you've left your tool-bag at home, isn't very enjoyable.

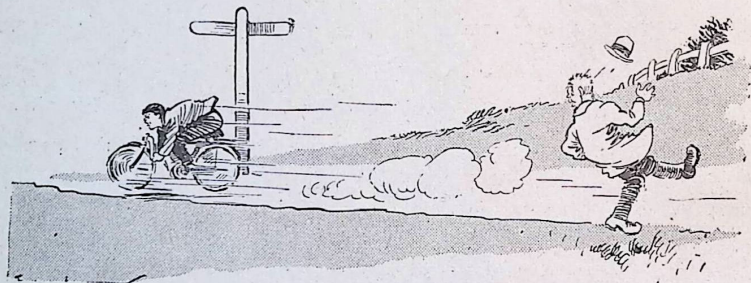
but there's also an awful lot of hard work in it; and when you take out your bike for a pleasure run, you don't start with the intention of having a spell of hard work.

You've seen a squadron of cavalry dash by, every trooper upright in his saddle, body swaying easily from the hips, and I'm quite sure they make a fine sight. But I'm equally sure you would not think they looked so well if every man was bent forward, lying on, almost riding on, the neck of his charger (as some jockeys ride), face buried in the animal's mane. Well, there's just as much difference between a proper and an improper seat on a bike saddle.

For the spine to be bent like a bow, and kept thus, is not good for it. And how can it be possible for deep, health-giving breaths of the fresh country air to be inhaled if the chest is cramped and contracted? And I'm

Companionship on a cycle run adds to its enjoyment, but a lot depends on the companion; and I've come to the conclusion that an elder brother is not always the ideal pal. You may be half a dozen years younger—a fact he is apt to forget—but, naturally, you're not going to show the white feather when he sets the pace, with the result that you are liable to be taken further and faster than is altogether good for you. Fatigue is a cause of many a cycling accident. Overtired, muscles wearied, the rider gets careless; his brain isn't so alert, his judgment weakens; he becomes more willing to "chance a risk," not from over-confidence, but from the sheer indifference that comes with too great tiredness. When in that condition, one will go on, but the pleasure has vanished.

Much of the pleasure of a cycle run depends upon one's ability to deal with emergencies,



Where is the pleasure in scorching along, getting your mouth and eyes, nostrils and throat caked with dust?

very certain there is no pleasure in getting the lips and mouth caked with dust, dust in the eyes, dust in the nostrils, and a dry throat, that all the mineral water you can afford won't moisten. Is there any pleasure in that?

With your eyes glued to the road, how many pleasure-giving sights are you going to see? Dust or mud or tar paving you can see any day in the week; but you'll see little else unless you're willing to cycle in the easy, upright position that gives the maximum of useful physical exercise combined with enjoyment.

for accidents and misfortunes will happen even to the most careful. To come to grief, and to find out that one is in for a couple of hours' foot slogging, perhaps with a head wind, a heavy road, and rain coming down, and all because one has happened to leave a spanner at home, is anything but cheerful. Mem: don't start out with an empty tool-bag.

One more tip. When out for a long pleasure run, never mind how hot and thirsty a day it is, don't be continually getting off to drink ginger beer or lemonade, or eat chocolate. You'll only get thirstier.