

The Merry Cyclist

STURMEY
ARCHER
EST. 1902

Long, light evenings are opening up before us. Spring fever, this year, has run riot in cycling, the quickest, cheapest, most reliable form of short-distance transport.

Here are a few hints to beginners on how to master the quarrelsome instincts of their bicycles.

Your will find it easier to mount and dismount if you regard your bicycle as living. Treat it as an inanimate machine and it will surprise you by moving when you are not ready to move and throw you to the ground.

Approach it from the left. Grip the handlebars, place your right foot through on to the right pedal which should be up, and press it forward and round while you raise yourself on the seat, still going smoothly forward for the left foot to make contact with its own pedal. Providing you keep moving, you will stay on.

To dismount intentionally, select a spot ahead and then apply a gentle pre-meditated pressure to the brakes. If pressure is sudden, you will find yourself flying through the air into a holly bush, stone wall or barbed wire fence, any of which would be discouraging.

Any beginner likes to have someone hold fast to his seat and run alongside the bicycle. It is reassuring. In the same way a would-be swimmer likes to have the master's hand under his chin. But in cycling, no real progress can be made until the fear of coming to ground has been lost.

To maintain equilibrium, keep pedalling, whatever the palpitations, and alight smartly – when this is the purpose – by keeping the left pedal low, bringing the right foot through, balancing thus while the bicycle is braked down to a wobble, setting the left foot, then the right, sharply to the ground. Now the bicycle will have come to a standstill.

How to turn is the next point, one that is so easy that it will often have occurred involuntarily. Choose a wide place and then veer to the right deliberately, circling round and round. Now try to the left. Next take a right and left turn alternatively in figures of eight. After this you will be ready for the road.

Switchback hills present a problem to the initiate, and will cause her to perspire more freely hurtling down them than ever she will trudging up. Discretion is the better part of valour, and the novice will be well advised to dismount at the top and walk down, rather than be flung around sickening curves and bends into some obstacle she cannot avoid!



The next difficulty will be to overcome the attraction exercised by oncoming traffic. Observe an approaching lorry and you will invariably find your bicycle heading straight into it.

To avoid this, glue your eyes, not on the lorry but on the clear fairway beside it; head your bicycle into this and keep on heading it with concentrated grimness until the danger has passed.

One last warning: do not grow uppish and over-confident because you happen to steer clear of accidents. Keep behind traffic in towns, don't corkscrew in and out. Remember that the clumsy bore, the pedestrian, and even that tyrant in the car, is probably a fellow cyclist.

Suit your machine to your personality.

If you are a heavyweight, a B.S.A. will carry you through and over anything. Lightweights look best on a Raleigh. Royal Enfield equips those who come midways and is good for hills. Standard cycles are useful and inexpensive.

The gadgets you need are few, but there are three which are indispensable. The Sturmey-Archer speed gear helps you up a slope. By altering the gear ratio you pedal faster and cover less ground. On the level you increase the ratio and travel faster yet pedal slower.

A tail-lamp lit by a dynamo worked off the revolutions of your front wheel will safeguard you with a back light. This is essential.

Punctures happen no matter what care you take to avoid them, but unless you are going to be a terribly serious cyclist you needn't let them worry you. Wheel the machine to the nearest repair shop.

On the other hand you should learn how to mend a puncture for yourself in case of need. It is quite simple if you have the right tools.

Most essential of all is a tyre lever for removing the outer tyre from the rim. Once this is done you can apply a patch to the inner tube in a very short time.

Be sure to carry your puncture outfit wherever you go. It is reassuring even if you don't have to use it.