

Notes of a Nomad.

By FRANK J. URRY.



Goyt Valley.

"That miniature paradise which soon will be partly flooded to provide for the needs of Stockport."

Booking Up Engagements.

MY free week-ends are rapidly becoming pawned to race fixtures and meetings of various kinds up and down the country. Sometimes I wish I was a nomad in the correct reading of that term, so that I could drift away, preferably with a few friends of kindred tastes, and forget the daily routine and all the circumstance and convention to which we have become so accustomed. What a joy it would be to turn up when and where you listed, to have no inconvenient reminder postcards delivered with the morning tea, and no urgent telephone calls to upset an evening arrangement made on the spur of an exuberant moment at the end of a Sunday of freedom, forgetful of all the coming week's responsibilities! I am not really grumbling at my lot, but merely desiring that the world should be a better organised "seat of occupancy," as we all do at various times. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it isn't, and, that being so, many of my week-ends, many of those dreams with which I have indulged myself since Christmas, have faded into a diary list looking much less attractive. They will, of course, pan out a good deal better than they appear on paper. These gather-

ings always do, for though they restrict your wandering their compensation lies in the fact that you have the opportunity of exchanging opinions with people of like mind, and comparing experiences which make the memory glow again. Candidly, I dodge everything I can, for the simple reason that I prefer the sky for a roof during my waking hours, rather than legislative dalliance or the long recitals of wheeling excellence in theory. Give me the practice, and I'm a happier mortal.

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A Northern Jubilee.

TO ride a bicycle from Birmingham to Manchester does not sound a very inviting proposition; but when at the end of your journey you have a jubilee dinner to attend and a jubilee welcome awaiting, when the weather is blue and gold with the promise of summer to be, when a sturdy tandem partner who swears that there are many ways to Manchester (and proposes to find a new one) is anxious to steer you, then the suggestion is worth considering—but not for long, so I accepted in the same minute. It happened some weeks ago, when we were living in that blaze of March glory. The jubilee was that of

the Manchester Wheelers—with whom I have had long and friendly relations—and the jovial Mancunians rose to the occasion in the grand manner, giving my companion and myself an evening of rare pleasure—one of those evenings that remain in the memory for ever, and make the world seem a more homely place. “We will go through Derbyshire, start early, and if we have time, do a little delving—just to see that the tandem is in proper order!” Thus my young friend, and all I had to do was obey instructions. On the glorious morning of March 25th we were slipping into Lichfield before nine o’clock, and saw the constables sharpening their pencils in preparation for the quarterly fray on the owner-driver. A golden haze hung in the air as our tyres sung a speed lyric through the flats of the Blythe valley. King’s Bromley and Yoxall slipped out of the haze and were gone; the comeliness of Sudbury did not delay us, and it was still early when we had climbed and fallen to Ashbourne, where our wheels ceased from rolling, and light lunch became the certain cure for an aching void. Forty-eight miles in a trifle over three hours, for which I think the south-easter, the sunshine, and the perfect sense of freedom were responsible.

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Over the Hills
With a Tandem.

MY young steersman had never climbed to Alsop-en-le-Dale. “It’s about six miles,” said he, consulting the map; “half an hour at the outside.” I just lay doggo, knowing that the luxury of a long smoke would be mine when the edge of his energy had been blunted by the banks. And it was so. Years ago I took a club party week-ending to Alsop. They arrived at Ashbourne beaten by a veritable gale. “It’s only six miles further,” I said; “it’s foolish to stay here for tea.” And they came on, but their execration of me has not ceased yet, although the occasion was 25 years ago. We climbed high into the wolds, beauty abode with us, and the tang in the wind made life sparkle. At Newhaven Lodge we lunched and spread our maps, for with sixty miles in hand by 12.30 it seemed high time to carry out the threat of a little delving. What good friends maps are when you have mileage in the check of time, and when the wind is blowing the right way and the sunshine falls like a benediction. What do a few hills matter then? So we left the Buxton road at Parsley Hay for a rough lane leading to the romantically-named village of Earl Sterndale. The road became rougher, the hills broken and boldly cragged, with deep snow in their hollows, and through the gaps the rolling country faded into the golden haze, or lifted still higher ridges ahead of us. And it was all our own; only the curlew and the sheep shared with us that broken, rutted, grass-grown way. Now we were climbing the high grouse moors to Axe Edge, and, rising the summit, came suddenly on the busyness of the Buxton-Leek highway. But our objective was Dane Head, followed by the slight drop to the Buxton-Macclesfield road under the fortress-like buildings of the “Cat and Fiddle,” and then, with a little wriggling, the head of the Goyt Valley, that miniature paradise which soon will be partly flooded to provide for the needs of Stockport.

The Glorious
Goyt.

THE Goyt Canyon opens suddenly out of the limestone hills, and for some eight miles to Taxal provides an exquisite “coast” through sylvan scenery as rare as it is unexpected. For the tiny stream gives one no introduction to its beauty and the lovely little canyon it cut for itself in the remote ages; it just happens as at the opening of a door. You go slowly if you are wise, and absorb its beauty; and in any case slow progress spells comfort, for the road is rough, and presents corners that swirl round the rocks in the affectionate company of the river, and some of the bends hang precipitously over the growing volume of the singing waters. An eight miles drift, and heaven all the way; then Taxal and the ragged industry of dam manufacturer. But I am glad to have seen the Goyt before the flood, because I hope to see it after and so possess a comparison of beauty. Then I can tell some younger wanderer how I rode on this golden day of March through the deep glen, and the waters were not. It was a shock to strike the setts just beyond Whalley Bridge, and leap from crag to crag all the fifteen miles to Manchester. That the journey leaves you with a high regard for the enthusiasm of Manchester cyclists who carry their rough road handicap with the imperturbability of stoics.

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The Homeward
Journey.

WE were a shaken and battered pair by the time we reached the centre of the City of Manchester, but the memory of the Goyt Valley, the sunshine and the balm of the wind brought us to table at the jubilee function of the Wheelers with sparkling eyes and healthy appetites. It was a gallant evening, for “the boy that lives in the heart of every man” had his fling that night. Yet we were up and off betimes next morning, bumping slowly over the road to Chester, leaving most of the traffic at the Knutsford fork, taking a cup of tea at Holmes Chapel, and losing our way in the lanes round about Crewe Hall. Cheshire is a pleasant pastoral country, peppered with some lovely old houses, and if it is not exciting in its outlook for the wanderer, on such a day as this its budding woodland and flashing meres made it very desirable. And there are some charming little stretches, like that long rise to Keele—which methinks is in Staffordshire—where lunch was denied us at the Sneyd Arms, so instead of crossing the low hills and missing Newcastle we perforce had to drop to the pottery valley and seek sustenance. We ambled through Stone and by the edge of the Chase, and sat on Wolesley Bridge, which carries the road over Trent, and watched the speeding traffic until the hearty sunshine burned our faces. This in March, remember! Tea we took in Lichfield, and we arrived home in exactly ten hours, 104 miles of easy going, to find the cabin deserted, but the larder intact. Not in the middle of summer have I covered over a hundred a day for two consecutive days with such easy pleasure, which you will doubtless say is mainly due to my companion, nor will I dare to deny it, for on a short, sharp rise I asked in a still, small

voice, with due avuncular regard for the modern nephew, if he was pushing, and the reply was so devastatingly explosive that I cannot reproduce it.

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The Way of Youth.

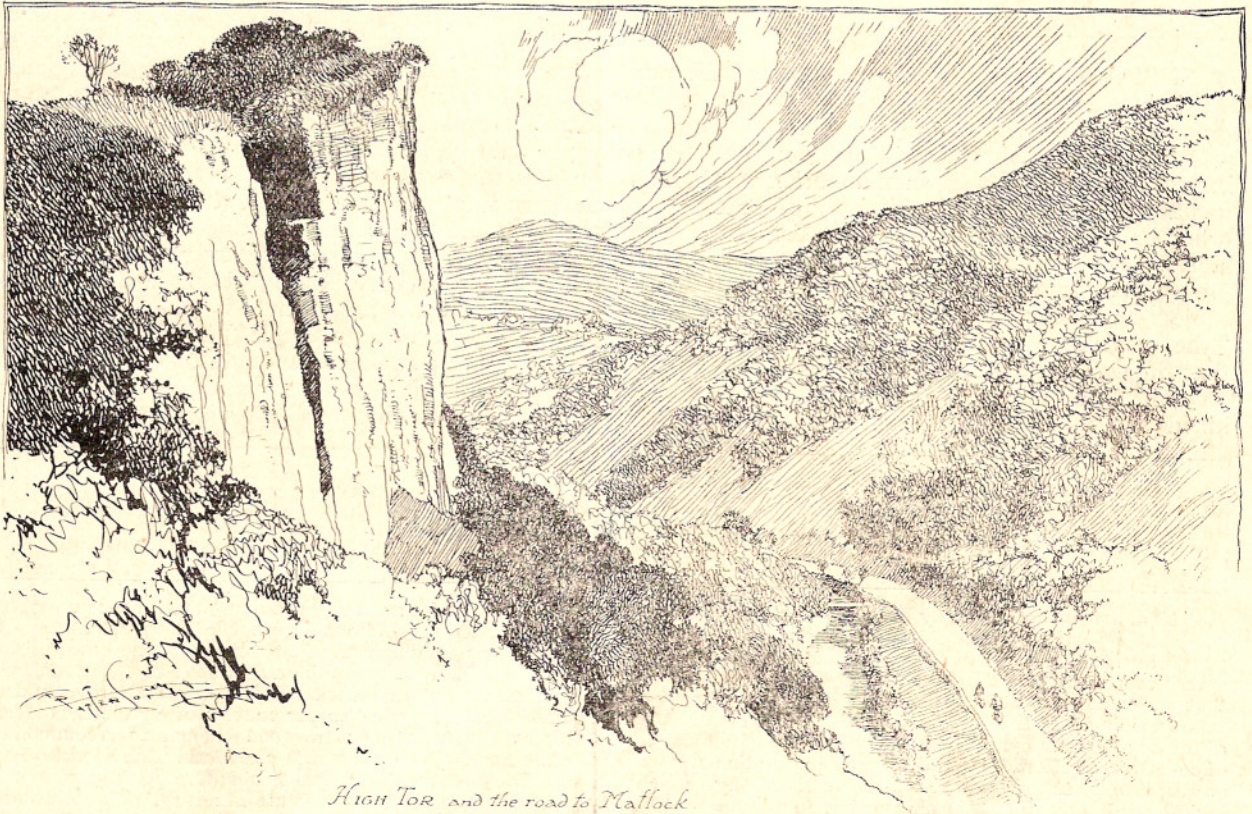
MY hair has gone mouldy and my waist-line has increased in circumference, facts that can be readily proven by that absurd habit of personal photography; but I do not feel old with the passage of the summers, even though the nimbleness of youth has departed. So it came as rather a shock

I can attain in a day of comfortable journeying. It will not, I presume, always be so, and perhaps by then there will be compensations; but just now I am not feeling old, or fat, or worn!

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Good Work and Good Workers.

IT always gives me a sense of satisfaction to read in the *Gazette* the vigorous and logical advocacy of the cyclists' cause as opposed to the narrow and oft-times callous treatment meted out to them or their representatives by coroners and magistrates.



High Tor and the road to Mallock

a week or so ago to overhear a youngster whom I slowly passed on a steep pitch remark: "Come on, boys; fancy that old chap wishing us good night!" Anyhow, I would rather look old than be old, and the way to stave off the latter to very near the end of the story is to keep on riding, carefully using up the remainder of the boy which they say inhabits the heart of every man. It took those youngsters a couple of miles to catch me, and then they slipped past with the cheery greeting of the road flung over their shoulders, and twinkled away into the darkness. Seven miles further I passed them again indulging in mild refreshment, and so had the joy of the last word; and it struck me then that the "old regular" sees as much of the road as the modern youngster—perhaps more—for he goes steadily on, taking a trifle of climbing aid from his gears, stretching his legs up a stiff rise, and finishing the day with a respectable and unhurried mileage without tapping his energies with violent travel. Youth will be served, which is natural enough; but I find that its dots and dashes seldom accumulate a greater radius of country than

I sometimes wonder how many of us realise what a splendid advocate we possess in this journal and its editor, and what excellent work both are doing to restore public opinion to a sound outlook on this question of road tragedies. The Club has always been a protection society guarding the privileges of its members, and the need for that work to-day is greater than ever. Moreover, it is being carried forward with a vigour that wrings an occasional compliment even from prejudiced people. I would include in this short paragraph a word of thanks to the committee and the permanent officials who deal with the accident claims. Their work is largely hidden from the view of the average member, but the value of it is none the less a wonderful tribute to organisation. What a change has invaded the public conscience since the beginning of the century! Cyclists were then the great highway danger—not to themselves, mark you, but to other people. Now, according to the selfish outlook of many taxed road-users, they are a danger to themselves and a nuisance to other people. Thirty-odd years ago the motorist

was generally considered by the then magistrates to be a fiend bound in leather, mainly because his noisy vehicle frightened the brougham horses and made them frantically endeavour to join their owner in the coach. One felt a little sorry for the motoring pioneers, who suffered loss of liberty and money for the most trifling misdemeanours. Now opinions have veered round, and one wonders how long it will be before we discover that compromise which will make road travel a decently responsible undertaking. The Club is undoubtedly bringing that desideratum a little nearer realisation month by month.

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An Old, Old Story.

I SUPPOSE we shall hear little more of the rear-light controversy until October dawns, and it would seem that the last shot of the "season" was fired at a Birmingham meeting of the "Safety First" Council in March, when a motion was brought forward recommending the Ministry of Transport to bring in a measure compelling cyclists to fit rear lamps. The motion was defeated, but that did not prevent the local press comments on this outworn subject favouring the motorists' point of view for "the cyclists' own safety." In view of the fact that the considerable majority of running-down cases occur in broad daylight, and that 6,667 people were killed and 206,450 injured on the roads in 1932,

does the rear-light question matter one little bit? If the Birmingham "Safety First" Council, or any other organisation, really desire to reduce these appalling figures, then they are wasting their time debating the value of reflectors versus rear lights, or even the conduct of cyclists, regrettable as that may be on occasion. With 18 people killed and 564 sent to hospital every day of 1932—for that is the awful daily average—what is the use of dragging the red herring of rear lights for cyclists across the deadly trail? It is futile, and in my opinion is only tolerated because it helps to divert public attention from the sacrifice demanded by the modern Juggernaut. Speed is the trouble, speed in the wrong places. It has been said that speed in the right place is not dangerous. True; but a full year's working of the Road Traffic Act more than suggests that many car drivers are not capable of selecting the right places. Anywhere that speed can be practised is the right place for them; and so the total of accidents increases. Speed, the modern word for impatience and discourtesy, for the rudeness and the danger of cutting-in; speed, whether the roads be dry or greasy, whether the sun shines or the "clouds dissolve in rain," is the real root of the horrible slaughtering. That is the problem the motoring folk want to tackle "for their own sake," for they kill and maim far more of themselves than they do of all the other road users put together. But to talk of rear lights for cyclists is sheer nonsense.

The Art of Tandem Riding.

AN artist is one who by practice attains proficiency at a particular task. Some people have a particular aptitude for performing certain operations. It is agreed among cyclists that it is not so much muscle as skill that spells comfort and speed, and this is essentially true of tandem riding. In the first place, perhaps with the exception of the double sculling boat, tandem riding is the best example of co-ordinated effort. It is not so much a question of muscle as adaptability to each other's efforts, and is largely a psychological study. If the stronger persists in a pace which is beyond the ability of the weaker, then the former tires quickly and both are soon exhausted. It is, therefore, necessary for the stronger to maintain only such a pace as will permit the weaker giving his or her best to the joint propelling force. Lack of recognition of this primary fact merely leads to trouble and recrimination, each thinking that the other is slacking.

There is also the fact that both riders may not be up to "par" on all occasions, and the pace should be set accordingly. Again, different riders tire at different distances, and have differing times of recovery; and in successful tandem riding it is necessary to allow for this also. I have already stated that it is not muscle alone that results in the easiest and best pace. Ankle action (generally unconscious) is an important factor. When something approaching perfect co-ordination is obtained the "running" is as though both riders were dancing joyfully on the pedals—the exact opposite to that sluggishness which is an indication of tired limbs. My impression is that when a rider is tired the legs are not consciously lifted before the propelling stroke, but are pushed upward as the result of the other pedal going down. All swimmers know the dead weight of a leg lifted out of the water, and when the stage mentioned above is reached each leg in turn becomes a dead weight. Concentrating on ankleing implies also the conscious raising of the legs in turn for the power stroke.

I am more concerned in writing these lines with impressing upon fellow clubmen the "sympathetic" nature of tandem riding, rather than the necessity of having every-

thing exact as far as saddle position, etc., is concerned; but, naturally, too much trouble cannot be taken in this respect. By a happy combination of circumstances the best positions for both riders may be found quite early, but constant experiments within reasonable limits will improve matters immensely. Referring to the matter of equipment, several months ago members were good enough to recommend a saddle for the back seat, and considering the vibration and jolts as the result of rough roads, especially abroad, a soft, yielding seat is an absolute necessity. The solution to this problem, so far as we are concerned, was in the fitting of a Terry lady's spring saddle.

With regard to gears, I changed over from 57 single to Sturmey-Archer 47-64-85. I am not concerned so much with the "battle of the gears," but it is quite evident, from observation, that few realise that when the gear is changed down the pace should slow accordingly. Too many attempt, in vain, to keep up a high pedalling speed, which results in both becoming tired, whereas a better pace, with less effort, would have resulted by holding on a little longer to the higher gear. Exponents of variable gears have a great deal to learn as to their most effective use and enough time to try different methods in the search for ultimate efficiency and ease of progress.

To summarise, tandem riding is a co-operative activity which demands perfect rhythm and co-ordinated effort. The pace is set by the weaker, and proficiency in the art demands the recognition of this and the gradual levelling up of the force expended by the two riders. The result of increased skill is a wider radius of action, faster pace, easier riding and an enjoyment of the pastime such as only the keen cyclist knows.

I hope fellow tandem riders will appreciate that these lines have not been written with the idea that the writer knows everything that is to be learned, but rather with the hope that they will result in a keener appreciation of the necessity of studying and cultivating the art of tandem riding.

T. D. SMITH.