

GOT BIKE DISEASE

More Virulent at Washington Than Anywhere Else.

Everybody, from the Senate Stenographer Down to the Nobby Messenger Boy, Rides a Wheel - Even Book Agents Push the Pedals.

Special Washington Letter.

Some day somebody will write a book on the "Development of the Bicycle; or Every Man His Own Horse." It is just within the memory of men that a two-wheeled vehicle was introduced and became popular in this country. It was a heavy machine, and both wheels were of the same size. They were made of wood, with iron tires, like the front wheels of a buggy. Everybody wondered that men could sit astride of two wheels and propel them without falling off; and the men who pedaled



EVERY MAN HIS OWN HORSE.

them had to exert a great deal of strength in their exercise. In those days they were bent on speed over pedestrianism, and worked hard to push their wheels. To-day, however, the bicycles are very light, and it is really easier to propel them than it is to walk long distances.

When the velocipede came here from France, the capital city was unprepared for it. Our streets were cobble-stoned. They were either muddy when wet, or full of ruts when dry. Hence the velocipede became popular in all other cities before the people here undertook to use them. But, with the development of our beautiful city, with its hundreds of miles of smooth concrete streets, the modern bicycle has become popular. Men and women use the wheel nowadays, and many a family has discarded the old horse and buggy for the silent steed. The introduction of cable and electric cars, supplemented by the popularity of bicycles, have combined to drive horses out of the market, and they are so cheap to-day that almost any man of moderate means could afford one; but the wheel is generally preferred.

We have many visiting clubs of bicyclers from all parts of the country every year, and our city is properly as well as popularly known as "the wheelmen's paradise." The smooth asphalt pavements in all parts of the city make the best possible roadways for wheels, while the wide streets give plenty of room, and the usually mild weather makes wheeling a pleasant exercise at almost any season of the year. Rain rolls off our streets so rapidly that within half an hour after a shower they are as dry as ever and glittering as glass. The roadways leading into the country are so carefully macadamized and so heavily rolled that there is never any mud to speak of, and the only time when it is impracticable for bicyclists to be out is during the very brief periods when snow is on the ground. It is easy to wheel to the soldiers' home, and there, amidst the trees, there are miles of hard roadway. Over hill and through dale, past monuments, brooks, lakes and over bridges, the young men and women spin from early morn till dewy eve, without let or hindrance.

This is essentially a city of offices, and one may go into any of the executive departments during business hours and see the clerks and basement walls lined with bicycles belonging to the clerks. Ladies as well as gentlemen use them as horses used to be driven from their homes in the morning to the departments, and back to their suppers when the light labor of each day is over. At almost any hour of the day or evening these flying vehicles will sweep past, like swallows skimming the surface of a pond. Ministers, clerks, letter carriers, business men, messenger boys, all use them, and can make the distance from the capitol to the treasury in three or four minutes, saving street cars and horses for behind. The district messenger and telegraph boys cannot go to sleep on their errands now, their bicycles keep them awake. Moreover, the managers know exactly how long a boy ought to be gone on an errand covering a given distance, and the boys must push their pedals in order to keep pace with the inexorable clock.

Some wonderful and daring feats have been performed in this city by expert cyclists. Many of them have been forthrightly, perilous, unnecessary and worthy of condemnation for their hazard; but, having been accomplished, they are noteworthy. For example, the marble steps leading to the east or main entrance of the rotunda of the capitol are eighty in number, and at an angle of forty degrees. H. S. Owens, a cyclist of local note, descended these steps from the bronze doors to the ground on a single wheel. Of course, this might not be regarded as much of an achievement on a safety bicycle with its low wheels, but on a vertical machine it was certainly a very dangerous and difficult performance. Another very hazardous feat was that of riding over the coping of Cabin John's bridge. This was achieved by W. S. Robinson. The coping on the side of the bridge is four feet above the bridge floor, is 300 feet long and 100 feet above the canal. There were two jags or offsets in the coping, which made the achievement more difficult and dangerous. The bridge is the longest single span of arched masonry in the world, and the height above the ravine is such as to make any man or woman dizzy. A single error in manipulating the handles would have resulted in a certain death on the one hand, or a dangerous and crippling tumble on the other. It has never been attempted since; and Mr. Robinson was glad enough to get back

upon safe ground without a mishap. He would not try it again.

There are several clubs of wheelmen here, but the Capital Bicycle club is the oldest of its kind in this country, having been formed in front of the capitol in 1870. Its organization, growth and prosperity are evidences of the great interest in wheeling. Its membership is limited to men, and it has become of late a good deal of a social organization. It has more than one hundred active resident members. These are chiefly young professional men and men of good positions in the various departments. There are also about forty-eight non-resident members, and a number of honorary members. Some men of prominence are attached to this club, and when they have regular outings they are accompanied by lady friends and present a gala spectacle on the streets, avenues and country roads. Quite a number of congressmen take to the wheel when in Washington, and many of them are warm personal friends of the members of the capital club and their lady friends. Jerry Simpson, of Kansas, far-famed as the sockless statesman, is one of the most enthusiastic of cyclists. This club of wheel-peddlers long since created a beautiful building on Fifteenth street and fitted it up very neatly. The total cost was \$20,000. The building is a three-story structure, of modern architecture, and is entirely occupied by the club. The moving-in took place in September, 1886. On the lower floor are the wheel room, the repair shop and the buffet. On the second floor are the parlor, the room for the club meetings and for smoking, and the library and committee rooms. The club possesses an excellent collection of bicycle literature, including complete files of every leading wheelmen's publication. On the third floor are the billiard room and some living rooms for the use of officers and members. Above this is an attic. The parlor is hung with pictures presented by local artists and with engravings. The building is supplied with bathrooms

and closets, and altogether has a very attractive appearance, within and without. It is a popular place, for members have the usual club privilege of bringing their friends as guests, and in serving refreshments, and beneath the hospitable roof, and in the cheerful homelike rooms. The membership is not now composed exclusively of wheelmen, although the large majority of active members are experts at cycling and have their own wheels. They have card parties, dances, musical entertainments and public receptions. Their lady friends assist them upon public occasions with piano recitals, songs, solos, duets, quartets, and in serving refreshments. Altogether the club is a credit, not only to itself, but to the wheelmen of the entire country.



AN OUTING.

Bicycles are also used nowadays by a number of newspaper correspondents. One of the pioneers in journalistic wheeling was William Elmeroy Curtis. He and Perry Heath, now proprietor of a Cincinnati paper, used a tandem cycle, and spent considerable time together in their work. They made a great team, and are both successful business men. J. A. Truesdell, formerly representing a St. Paul daily, and C. P. Austin, founder of the Press News association, were early newspaper wheelers. But to-day fully a score of diligent correspondents of prominent newspapers traverse the city, going from department to department, and ultimately to the capitol, on their fleet flyers.

Insurance agents, and even book agents, use wheels in this city, and many prominent business men have taken to this mode of traveling from their homes to their stores. Apparently the bicycles have come into our civilization to stay, and seem to be becoming as necessary a telegraph wires and telephones.

WANTS THE OFFICE.

Mrs. Stewart Would Be Her Own Successor as Sheriff. Mrs. Helen C. Stewart, of Springfield, Mo., has been appointed by the county court to succeed her husband as sheriff of Greene county. She will serve until the unexpired term is filled out by the election of a sheriff to take the place of her husband, who died in the harness. The indications are that Mrs. Stewart will be nominated by the republican party and elected at the polls. An effort was made to have the county court appoint her brother to the place, who would turn over the fees to Mrs. Stewart. Her brother is William D. Garwood, general baggage agent of the St. Louis & San Francisco railway, and was perfectly willing to go into an arrangement of that kind. But in this age of bloomers and new women Mrs. Stewart promptly put her foot down on any such a policy and declared that she wanted the office. "O, I can run the office with my son," said Mrs. Stewart.



MRS. HELEN C. STEWART, (Springfield, Greene county, Mo. First woman sheriff in the United States.)

frequently resorted to tears of impatience at the capers of the horrid men who could not understand her claims as quickly as she thought they should. There is a big fight on Mrs. Stewart in the ranks of her own party. Timid men swear by their beards that it shocks their modesty to think of a woman sheriff. Others are of the opinion that it is carrying the new woman joke a trifle too far when she comes in and picks up the fattest job in the whole county.

The Missouri law in regard to women holding office is vague. If Mrs. Stewart should be elected to fill out the unexpired term the legality of her position would come to an issue. Mrs. Stewart is a woman of about 45, short and rather heavy. She is good looking and intelligent. She has not been identified with any of the women's rights movements. She is a "womanly woman," but can be firm enough to act as sheriff if duty demands.

Don't gloat over the applause of the multitude until you have seen a dog and a tin can pass a crowd.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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