

THE PROPER AGE TO RIDE.

What is the proper age to ride bicycles? That is certainly a complex question which is often asked. Cycling is the sport of all ages, from the baby who sits on the seat that his fond father attaches to the front of his machine, to the grandfather who takes an airing propelled by his son or a servant. A little girl from three and a-half to four years of age has been seen upon the stage performing feats upon the bicycle and unicycle that would make the cycling kings turn pale, says a French contemporary.

However, it is not claimed that four years is the proper age to begin cycling. Eight years, for healthy children, seems about right, although the exercise should be under the supervision of the parents. A run of a mile or two at a moderate gait is favorable for the development of the subject. At twelve years the child has grown; he is stronger and can make an excursion of fifteen miles for the round trip. A machine of good make should be used. Too often low-priced machines, which do not run easily, are put into the hands of children, and therefore are totally inadequate for moderate exercise. We have known a cyclist who, with his two children, aged twelve and fourteen, made too long journeys, although the children were seemingly less fatigued than the father. At sixteen, the age of all the illusions, the young cyclist should be watched closely. It is the age when the ardor of his temperament makes him feel capable of anything; it is generally the age when all the organs develop rapidly, and severe exercise may be dangerous. Runs at average speed and even rapidly may be made for short distances; but no long-distance races.

A few cases can be cited where cyclists have commenced to race when very young, but they are exceptions. Many, at the beginning, seem to have extraordinary powers, but it only lasts one season, and they feel the effects of premature training all the rest of their lives. At twenty-one the young man can undertake long-distance races, varying from one hour to sixty miles. He need not be restricted to this distance if the training follows a rational progression, as is practiced in some countries. Unfortunately it is without any preparation that they take part in severe tests, and it takes some months to recover from their exhausting effects. From twenty to twenty-five years the cyclist making tours can, without any inconvenience, make journeys at distances varying between sixty and seventy-five miles per day. At twenty-five years the man should be completely formed, but he should know when to stop if he is tired. Cycling, like everything else, should not be carried to excess.

Between thirty and thirty-five seems to be the culminating point for speed, but there are some living exceptions to this; it seems to be the age for the greatest endurance. Allard, in France, and Mills, in England, are notable examples. At forty-five years cycling should be practiced with moderation or the cyclist will subject himself to serious troubles. There are cyclists sixty, seventy-five, and even ninety years old. One day Louis XIV., speaking to his physician on a subject that had nothing to do with cycling, said, "Is it not about time for me to go slowly?" "Yes," replied the doctor, "and I advise you to stop entirely." A cyclist need not be so radical as the doctor, and need not give up cycling entirely at any age until perhaps after sixty. The coming of old age is the return to youth, and the old should observe the principles set down for the young.

Some time since it was announced that William Ham, a young English lad, aged six, rode from Croydon to Brighton, forty-five miles, in 8:09:00. Louis Bontemps, a young Frenchman, aged five years and three months, took only 7:40:00 to run between Compiegne and Paris, a distance of sixty-six miles. Still better, Mile. Rose Fourgeron, of Nice, at the age of twenty-two months, ran three-quarters of a mile every day on a tricycle, and at five and a-half years established a road record of thirty-one miles for infants, in 3:42:06. At twenty years these poor beings, victims of guilty parents, will be broken in health and entirely unfitted for the duties of life.

THE OTHER SIDE.

THE BEARINGS is always ready to give both sides of a story and although it is against the admission of the negro to the L. A. W., yet it is willing to give the colored man a chance to air his views in its columns. The following interesting letter from a colored cyclist of Indianapolis gives a side of the question that has not been touched on before:

EDITOR THE BEARINGS: I am a cyclist; further, I am a negro. I have hesitated a long time, but now think it high time for some one of my color to say a few words in regard to the great (?) question which is causing so much controversy between the different sections of the L. A. W.

It may be because I am illiterate that I have heard or read nothing from the negro, but to my knowledge there has been no argument between any of them and the politicians, who are using them as part of their "stock in trade," to further their interests as great leaders or party bosses. However strong their argument may seem, I for one can only think that it's not the "coon" they want, neither is it their dollar—but their big black vote is the coveted prize.

There is not a member of the League that desires me or any of my colored friends for a club mate, or to be one of my brothers in any fraternity, and every good sound negro who has horse sense enough to ride one of these grand machines knows that as well as I. We are gaining in number every year, and unless this great League looks to its affairs and leaves politics alone to a greater extent, the near future will see a colored man's organization in the field that will bring about a heap more in the way of the good cause than the L. A. W. ever has.

I have ridden a wheel perhaps longer than many of your members and have always found plenty of enjoyment without an L. A. W. pin or a *Bi. World*, and have never had any more desire to become one of its members than I would to have a white man join our little church, instead of the one across the street, which is for whites only. Give us your good will and let us think of our own troubles. If our vote is worth so much, it will be given freely to any good cause, and it can grow much faster if cultivated by our own party.

Negros who wish to mix with white men are not so plentiful as you think. This great United States government has elevated us, given us education and strength to act for ourselves—for which we are very grateful—but we are still a race as different from others as God first made us.

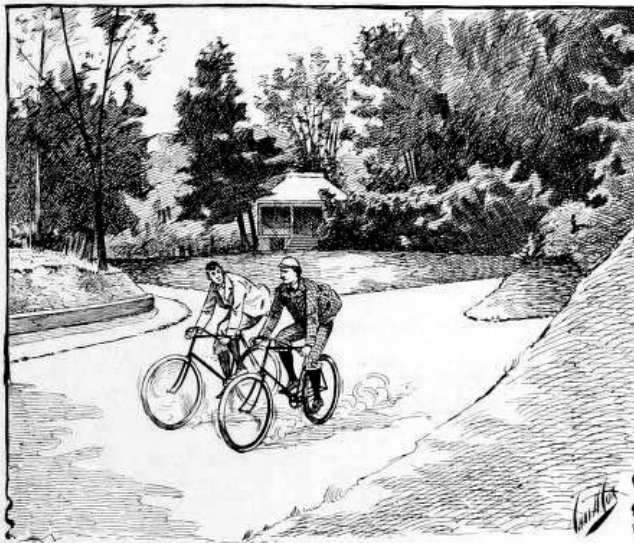
As cyclists we are still young, but as pleasure seekers we are old. Sociability is at least one half of a negro's life and we know that we can not derive a portion of our existence in the social circles of the white race. We want nothing from south, north, east, or west but that which we are entitled to, and that is certainly not membership to any white man's league of wheelmen.

I trust that you will find space in your valuable paper for this letter, that it may be an opening shot in the way of "putting up," instead of "down," the "son of Ham," as he grows interested in cycling. Hoping to hear from the colored cyclists as a body in the near future, I still remain a true lover of what is right for both, yes for all, classes.

Yours truly,
MAJOR TAYLOR (colored cyclist).

INDIANAPOLIS, IND., Jan 30.

They were talking of the possibilities of the riders of the day, unpaced, and all were willing to back their individual opinions for a dinner. These are the figures at which the record will stand, without pacing, according to the prognosticators: "Top" Foell, Buffalo, 2:02; Charles Dorntge, 2:05; Charlie Culver, 1:57; Spooner, 2:00. This dinner will be served at the next cycle show, and will be at the expense of the man the farthest away from the figures then standing.



MR. S. M. ARTY.—"Say, old man, you want to keep your eyes open."
MR. S. TUPID.—"Why? what for?"
MR. S. M. ARTY.—"To see, of course."