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BETSEY JANE ON WHEELS.

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BETSEY JANE.

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BETSEY JANE ON WHEELS

A TALE OF THE BICYCLE CRAZE.

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"The New Woman."



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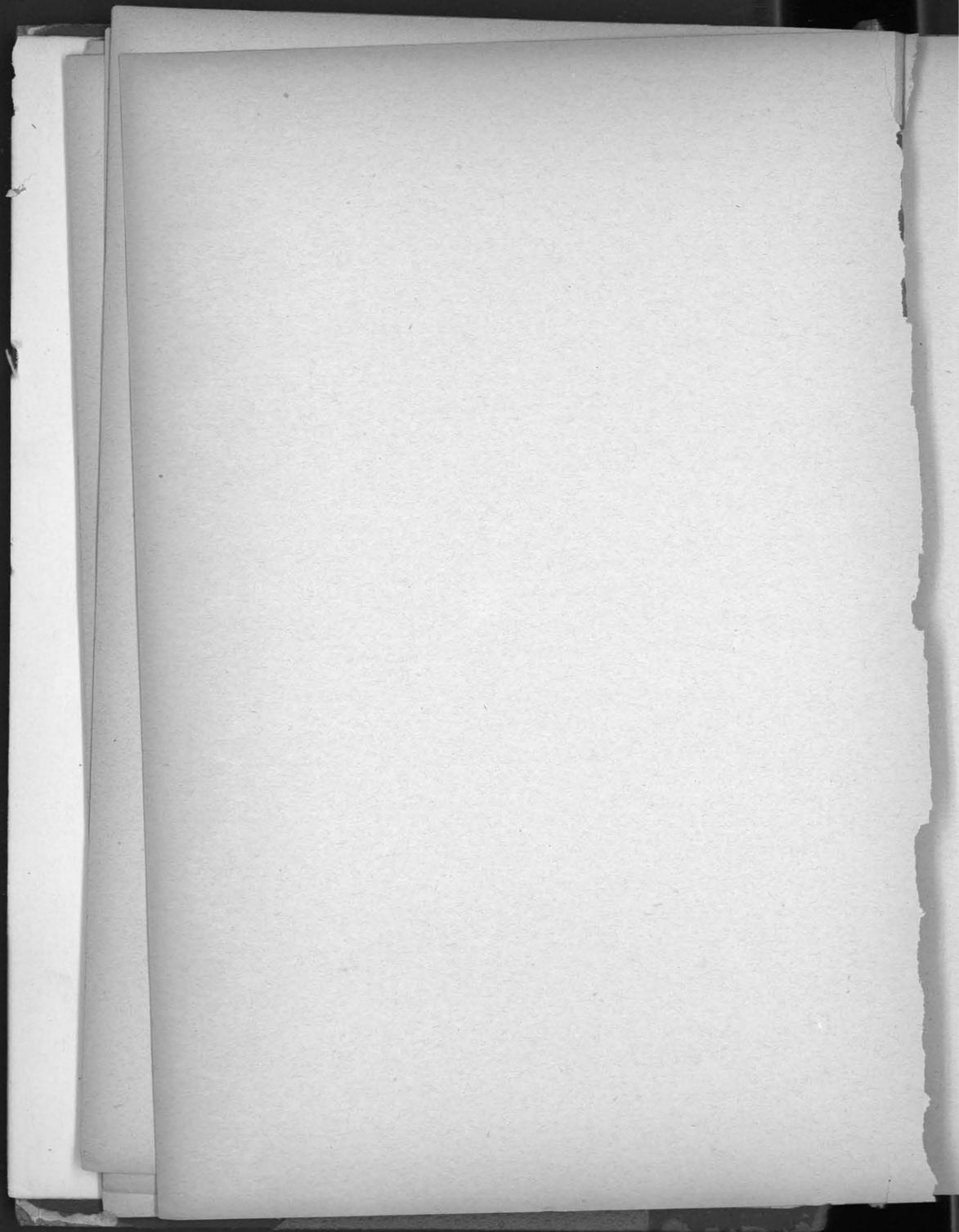
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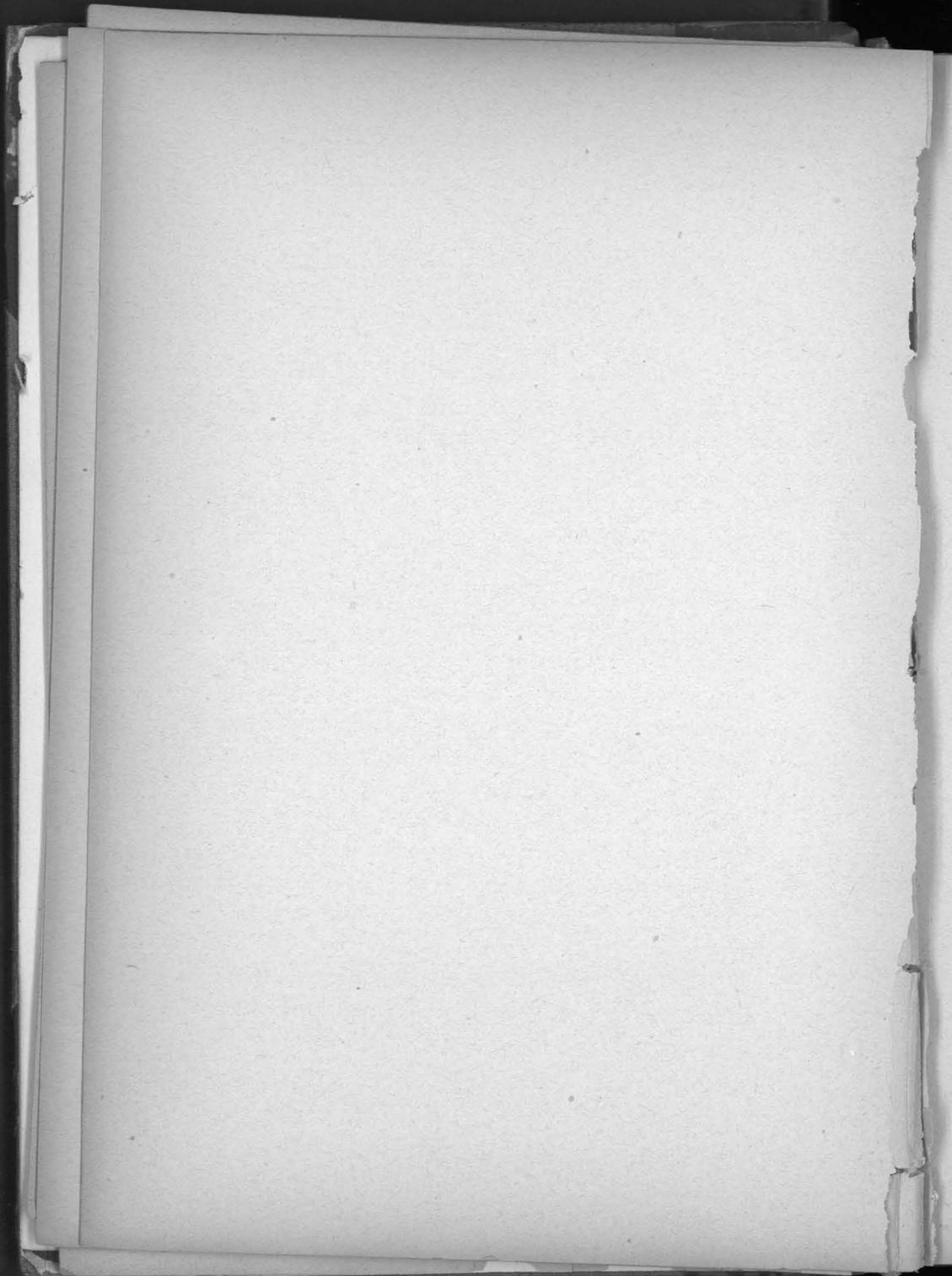
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INTRODUCTION.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is at the earnest solicitation of many friends that I undertake to write a book, and I think that I can do no better than to relate my experiences with bicycles.

My name is Betsey Jane Jones; my maiden name was Hopkins, and I clung to that name, or rather, it clung to me, until I was more than twenty-five years old, and it might have been clinging to me yet if Benjamin Jones had not asked me to become his wife; that was the happiest day of my life, as I was beginning to think that I was destined to be an old maid.

In person I am tall and commanding, that is to say, I command Benjamin without much trouble; my exact height is five feet ten inches, and when I am feeling well I weigh just 240 pounds.

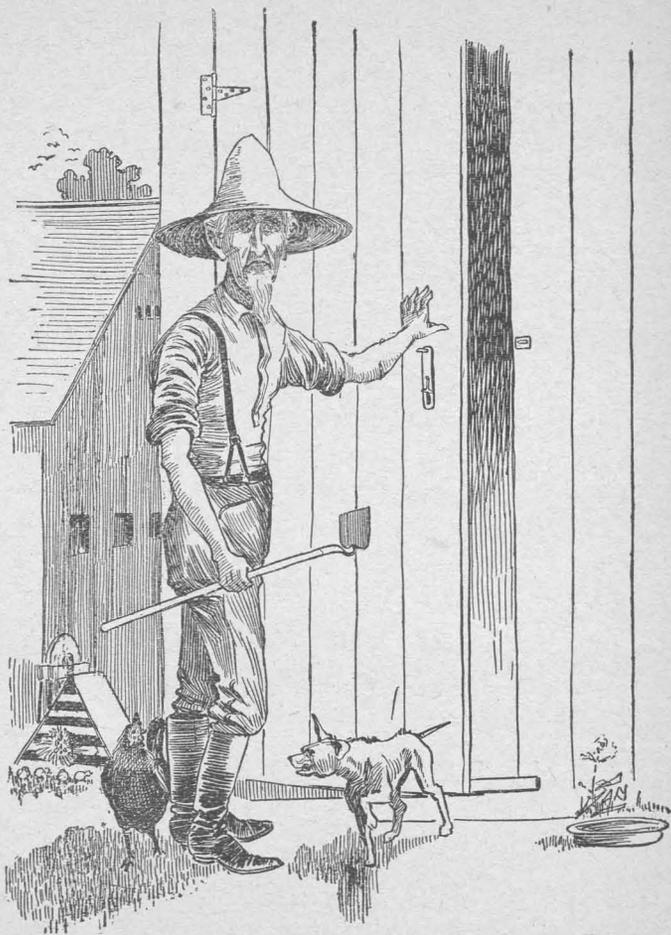
I first saw the light of day in the month of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty, in the state of

Vermont, and am therefore about forty-five years old. I was called good looking when I was a girl, and, unlike some people, I have not outgrown the beauty of youth.

Benjamin Jones, my lord, but not my master, is also a native of the Green Mountain state, and is my senior by something more than ten years. Benjamin's father died when he was quite young, and he, being an only child (and I don't wonder at it, as he was so homely that it was enough to discourage his parents), lived with his widowed mother, who did not want him to get married. She had but little cause to worry, for nobody would have him, until out of pure sympathy for both of us I married him.

The fall before we were married, Benjamin's mother, old Mrs. Jones, died, leaving him the old homestead, which was unincumbered, and all the live stock. It was about this time that he commenced courting me, and I used to make lots of fun of him, but when I thought of that 160-acre farm and the stock, I concluded that it would be better to marry him than to be "Old Maid Hopkins" the balance of my days.

Benjamin was nearly five feet eight inches in height, and when he was fat (I never saw him



BETSEY JANE'S HUSBAND.



in that condition) he weighed almost 130 pounds. As I said before, Benjamin was not pretty; his hair, what little there was of it, was several degrees redder than auburn; his nose was longer than the moral law, or one of Elder Roper's morning sermons; his ears were made on the "quantity and not quality" principle; and his mouth—well! as comparisons are said to be odious, I will say nothing about it, except, that for size, it matched his feet pretty well, and they were a number of sizes too large for the rest of his anatomy. But Benjamin was honest and good-natured, and owned the old Jones homestead, the last of which covered a multitude of deficiencies, and then, too, I might never have another opportunity like it, and I confess that this had much to do with my acceptance of his proposal.

To make a long story short, we were married after a brief and rather uninteresting courtship, for we both thought it the one chance of our lives, and neither wished to give the other an opportunity to back down and out, and when two people of opposite sexes feel that way, their wishes are generally consummated.

After our nuptials we went to live at the old farm, and life flowed along as calmly and

peacefully as could have been expected. From this you are not to imagine that our married life was one long uninterrupted dream of bliss, for it was not. Benjamin's temper was not as sweet as new milk, and my own disposition might have been slightly improved, but hard work, taking care of children, for we had two, and managing Benjamin, who was sometimes decidedly obstreperous, did not have the effect of improving my temper; yet, in the main, we got along quite as well as the majority of married people, had our spats and family jars, just like the rest of creation, and then made up and went along smoothly for a time, only to break out in a new place later on.

Our oldest child, Walter, was eighteen years of age when my story opens, and Alice was sixteen. Walter was called after his grandfather Hopkins, who was known to his friends as "Uncle Walter." Walter resembles both his father's family and my own, for he is thin and lank like his father, and his folks, and tall like my people, being six feet and one inch in height and only weighing one hundred and forty pounds. His disposition is exactly like mine, as he never has much to say, but has a will of his own, and generally does about as he pleases, although he never blows much about it.

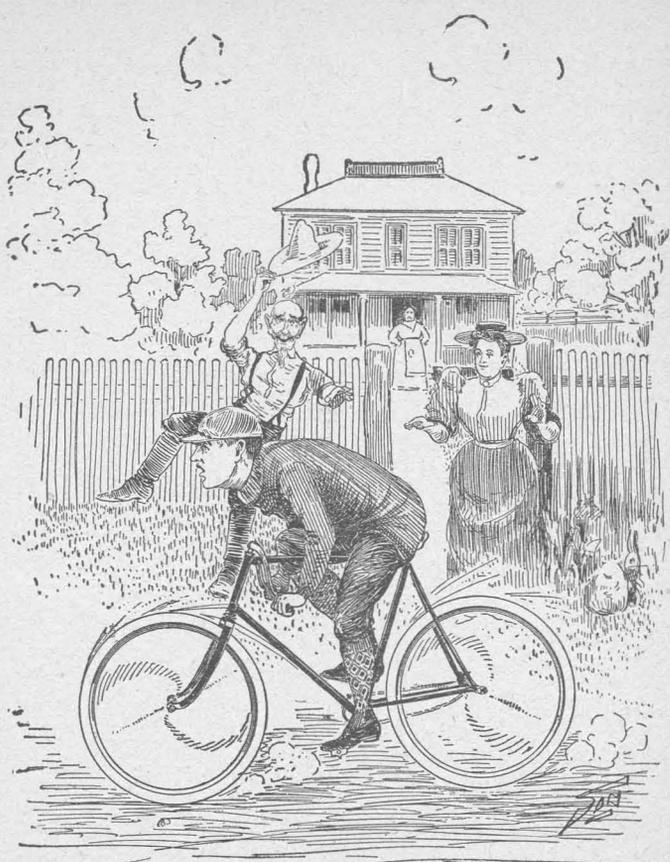
Alice is short like her father, and slightly inclined to be fleshy like myself; she is five feet three inches in height, has nut brown hair, dark blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds; she looks more like me, for which I am truly thankful, than she is like her father, but has his easy-going disposition with hardly enough grit to stand up for her rights.

Shortly after our marriage we took the advice of Mr. Greeley, "and came west to grow up with the country," and finally purchased a farm of 320 acres, just one mile from Griggsville, our county seat. It is one of the largest and best farms in this section, and by industry and economy, principally mine, we have managed to keep out of debt, erect good buildings, stock the farm well and save a little money, which we have out at interest. By hard work and skillful manipulation, I have succeeded in keeping Benjamin out of the snares of the lightning rod men, patent right agents, and other sharks who are constantly preying upon the innocent and unsuspecting farmer. Taken all in all, we have prospered, and have little or no cause to complain. We are both members of the First Baptist church at Griggsville, and Benjamin is one of the deacons. He was once

school director, and has twice been elected pathmaster. I am an active member of the W. C. T. U. society, and it seems to me that we have both enjoyed fame and distinction enough to satisfy ordinary people.

At the time my story opens Walter had just returned from a distant city where he had been attending school, as his father did not think the Griggsville school good enough for his son, but Alice was a pupil there and was learning quite rapidly.

Walter had learned much which was both useful and ornamental, and also some things which were not so useful, and I doubt whether they could have been considered even ornamental. Among other bad habits, which I need not mention, he had learned to ride one of those new fangled machines called a bicycle, and on his return for his summer vacation could talk of nothing else. I grew tired and sick of hearing nothing but wheels, and began to think that my hopeful son had a lot of them in his head, but his father thought that he was all right (he always did make a fool of that boy) and said that this was an age of progress, that he did not want a son of his to be hampered as he had been.



THE FIRST WHEEL IN THE FAMILY. Page 24.

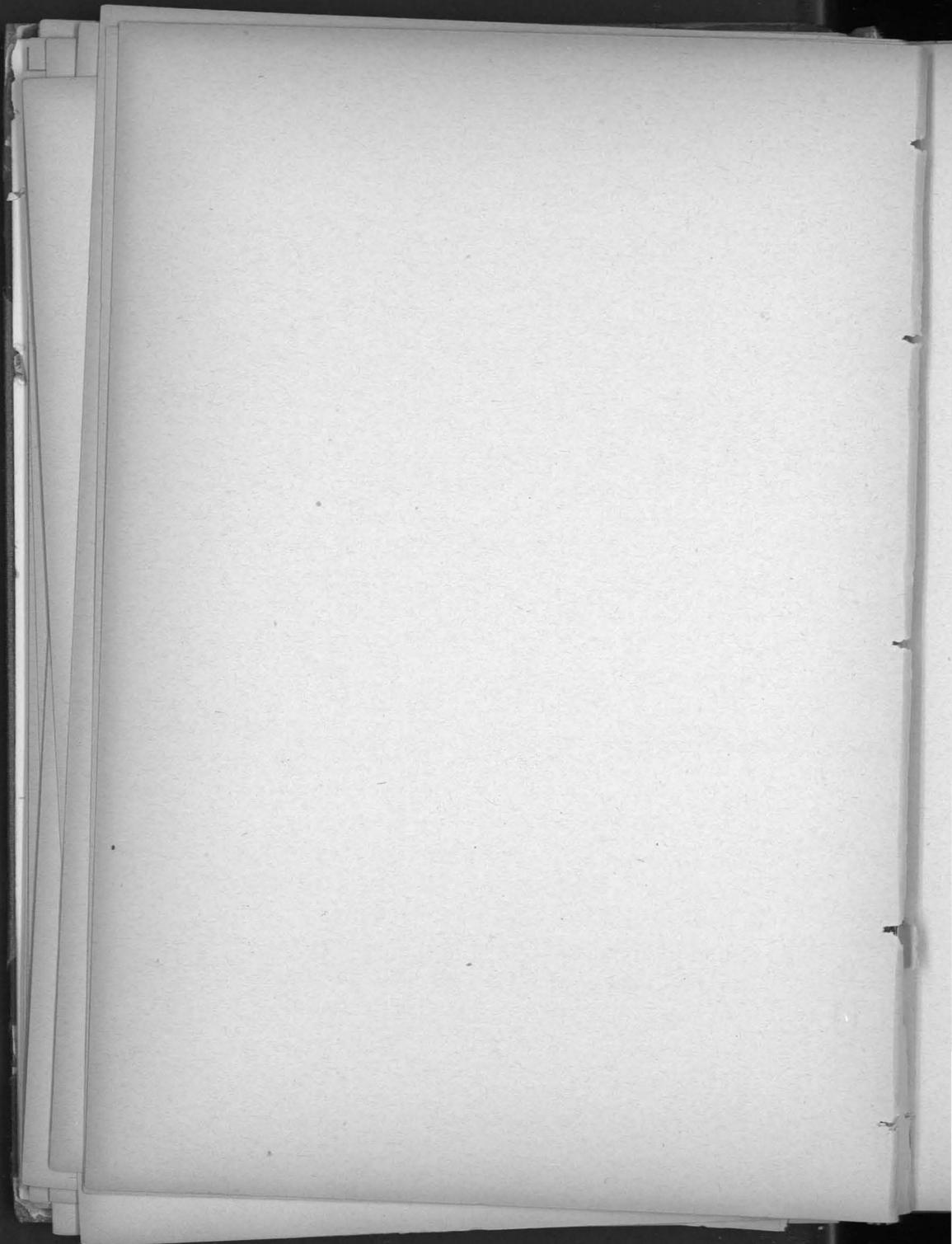


Walter finally persuaded his father to buy a bicycle for him, and then asked my consent. I did not like the idea, and said as much, but that boy always could get around me, for he never gets angry, neither does he ever give up any scheme which he has once fairly set his mind on, and it was soon evident to me that if I wanted any peace in the family that summer I would be compelled to give my consent; and thinking "discretion the better part of valor" I told his father to go ahead and buy him a bicycle; that if he wanted to break his neck, the quicker he accomplished the feat the sooner the shock would be over, as the suspense was almost as bad as the reality. That settled it; the next morning Walter and his father drove to Griggsville, bought a new machine, paid one hundred dollars spot cash for the contraption; it only had two wheels, just half as many as a buggy, and no box or top, but cost quite as much as a new top buggy.

Walter was jubilant and could hardly contain himself, while I was correspondingly depressed, for I felt certain that he would either be killed or crippled for life. But he soon proved to us that he knew how to ride the infernal machine, and could go to town and back while his father was hitching up the team.

I could see that both Alice and Benjamin were interested in the new cycle, but as neither of them said anything, I thought that I would also keep silent. I could see that the end was not yet, but could not foresee what the result would be, although I had my suspicions.

ALICE GETS THE FEVER.



CHAPTER II.

ALICE GETS THE FEVER.

WE were eating breakfast one morning about a week after Walter had purchased his bicycle. I could see that something was up, and knew that there was a storm brewing, but could not tell exactly which direction it would come from, nor whether it would be rain or hail, but rather suspected the latter, as the entire family looked as if they intended to take part in the affair.

Benjamin looked uneasy and wriggled around as if his clothes did not fit him, and as though he would like to give me fits for something or other.

Alice was pale and anxious and looked as though she would like to be somewhere else, but Walter wore his usual look and a new thirty-dollar suit of clothes which his fond but foolish father had purchased for him the day before, although I noticed that he seemed a trifle quieter than was his wont, but the straight cut mouth

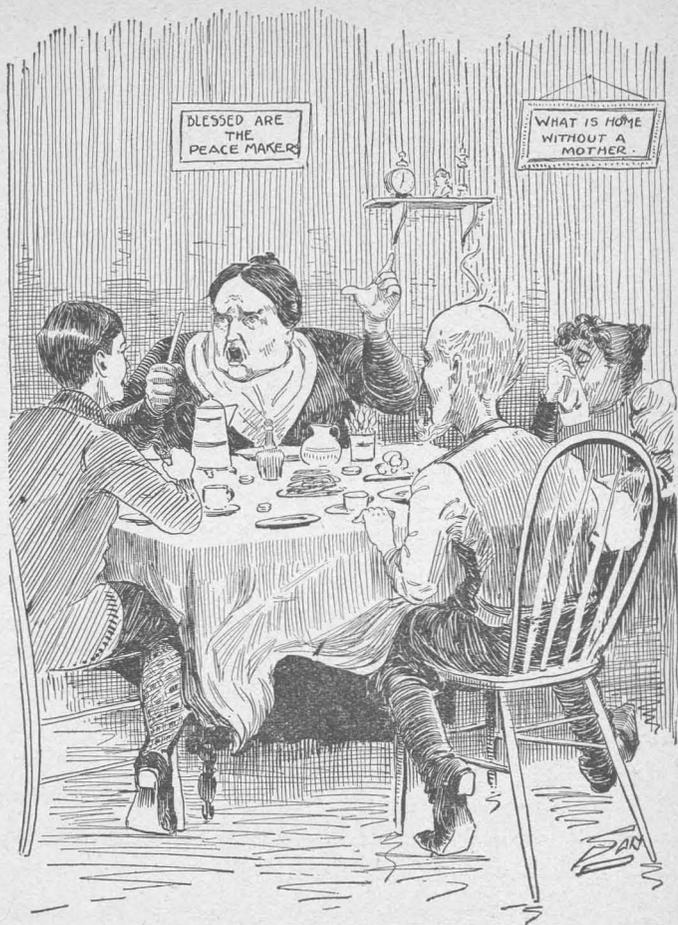
seemed a little straighter than usual, and the prominent chin a trifle more prominent than common.

The silence was becoming oppressive, but I made up my mind that I would say nothing until the enemy showed his colors. I did not have long to wait, for Walter looked up suddenly and said: "Well, mother, when are you going to buy Alice a wheel?"

I was dumbfounded, and looked at my audacious son with undisguised amazement. It was nearly five minutes before I had recovered sufficiently to ejaculate: "What on earth do you mean, Walter Jones?"

"Just what I say," he replied. "Of course you will get her one, and I only wanted to know when?"

I was mad; the impudence of the boy riled me, and I brought my feet down on the floor and my hand down on the table with a force which made the dishes dance a jig, and fairly shouted "Never!" Benjamin looked as though he would like to shoot out of the door or crawl under the table, while Alice began to snivel and cry, but that irrepressible Walter only laughed and said: "Go easy, mother, or you will break all the dishes in the house."



"NO DAUGHTER OF MINE SHALL EVER DISGRACE HERSELF OR ME
BY RIDING A WHEEL." Page 31.



I gazed at that boy in stupefied amazement. Was this the son whom I had raised? the boy who had always minded me without a word? the youth who had never dared to question my slightest wish? He gazed calmly at me, evidently interpreting my thoughts, and said: "There is no use in making a fuss, mother, for this is an age of progress. I am no longer a little boy, and do not intend to be treated as one; and if neither father nor Alice have enough grit to stand up for their rights, I have, and am going to do so, and the quicker you ascertain the truth, the easier it will be for you. Alice shall have a wheel, and the sooner you make up your mind to that fact, the pleasanter it will be for all concerned."

I stared at Walter, and he looked coolly at me and smiled. I could see that the time had come for me to relinquish my power, and it was anything but pleasant after twenty years of uninterrupted rule to be defied, and that, too, by a mere boy; but he was so good-natured about it, and so quiet and determined, that I made up my mind then and there to submit as gracefully as possible, although I own, if he had been a couple of sizes smaller I would have taken him over my motherly knee

and given him just what he most needed. "Well, when are you going to get the machine?" said Walter.

"Walter," I said firmly, "I consented to your buying a bicycle, but no daughter of mine shall ever disgrace herself or me by riding a wheel. I would just as lief see her riding on horseback, man fashion, as to make a show of herself on one of those new fangled contraptions."

Walter stopped his onslaught on the ham and eggs long enough to remark: "There is some truth in what you say, mother, Alice would not make a graceful appearance in an ordinary dress, but she could wear bloomers, just as other girls do."

"Bloomers!" I shrieked, "Never! No daughter of mine shall ever ape those Dr. Mary Walker idiots, who made themselves so ridiculous that they were the talk and scandal of the whole country. An ordinary dress is good enough for an ordinary girl, without putting on anything as extraordinary as bloomers."

Walter then explained that the bloomers to which he referred were not like those worn by Mary Walker, and that they closely resembled Turkish trousers, being made wide and full,

and that at a distance they could hardly be distinguished from ordinary dresses. He also said that they were worn by all the young lady cyclists in the cities, and that the only people who kicked about them were the country people, who had never been more than ten miles from home and whose ideas were proportionately limited.

I did not like the idea of Walter's poking fun at the country people, and replied, "that if his father and mother had not stayed at home and worked like slaves to earn the money, his ideas would be somewhat more limited than they were."

Walter acknowledged the truth of this statement, but added: "You would not have me stay at home and work myself to death just because you and father did, and neither would you want me to be behind the times and know no more than did my ancestors. People do not live now as they did one hundred years ago, and I want to keep up with the times, and so does Alice, and now we wish your consent to her getting a wheel."

I was somewhat mollified by Walter's remarks, but not ready to give in, after taking so decided a stand, as it would compromise my

dignity, and so I asked: "Where is the money to come from?"

But Walter was equal to the emergency, and answered: "If there is no other way I can sell the colt which father gave me last fall, he will bring at least seventy-five dollars; but if horses continue to depreciate as rapidly during the next six months as they have the last six, he will not bring half that sum next winter."

I saw that I was no match for my educated son in an argument, and finally told them that they could go ahead and buy Alice a wheel, and let her break her neck or become crippled for life, as nothing else would satisfy her. "But remember," said I, "when you are called upon to attend her funeral, that I told you just how it would be, and that I wash my hands of the whole affair."

It was finally settled that the colt should not be sold, and that very afternoon Alice and her father drove to Griggsville, Walter following them on his bicycle. They bought a wheel for Alice, paying ninety dollars for it, and reached home in time for supper.

ALICE IN BLOOMERS.





WALTER STEADIED THE MACHINE ON ONE SIDE WHILE HIS FATHER
HELD THE OTHER. Page 39.



CHAPTER III.

ALICE IN BLOOMERS.

IT was so late when Alice reached home with her new wheel that she decided to wait until the next morning before trying to ride it.

Immediately after breakfast Walter brought out the new machine, which he called a "safety," although it was certainly a misnomer, for the concern was anything but safe, as Alice soon learned.

Walter steadied the machine on one side while his father held the other. Alice experienced but little difficulty in mounting the wheel, thanks to her father's and brother's support, they walking along with her for awhile. She rode around for some time and soon thought that she could manage the cycle alone, and said as much, asking them to let go, which they were foolish enough to do. She went along very well for a short distance, was beginning to feel considerable confidence in herself, and allowing her conceit to get the

better of her judgment, looked back over her shoulder with a smile of triumph.

That look was the cause of her downfall, and the old proverb of "pride going before a fall" was again verified, for just then the wheel struck some obstruction and turned sideways. Alice gave a scream and a lurch, and might have saved herself if it had not been for her skirts, which became entangled in the machine; she emitted another scream, louder than the first, the machine made a graceful curve to one side, and Alice came to the ground with the force of a small earthquake; at any rate, I thought that I could feel the house shake. The air was full of Trilby shoes, black stockings and white skirts for a single instant, then all was over, and poor Alice laid there, a silent heap or mound, something like "the deacon's one hoss shay."

Her idiotic father and foolish brother rushed to her assistance, and by their combined efforts managed to raise her to a sitting posture. Alice was not dead, neither were any of her limbs broken, but she had received a terrible shaking up. Her first words were: "That settles it, the next time I ride I'll wear bloomers."

Walter picked up the wheel and said: "The



"THAT SETTLES IT, THE NEXT TIME I RIDE I'LL WEAR BLOOMERS." Page 40.



tire has been punctured, and it will have to be placed on the retired list until we can get some machinist to repair it."

They carried Alice into the house and placed her on the couch by the sitting-room window; she did not seem to be severely injured, but her new spring hat was completely telescoped and utterly worthless, while her clothing was soiled and torn.

Alice managed to repair the damage to her clothes, but the hat was a total wreck.

I asked Walter what he thought of the "safety" by this time.

He said that it was all right and safe enough for anybody who knew how to ride it, and wore the proper toggery; that Alice was right in insisting on bloomers, and that it was not likely she would ever get another such fall.

I told him that I did not think that it was likely that she would get more than one more like that one, as it would probably kill her to take another such a tumble. He did not seem anxious to prolong the conversation and soon left the house.

Alice was apparently all right the next morning, and insisted that she and Walter should drive over to Griggsville that very day to see about her bloomers, and sure enough they did.

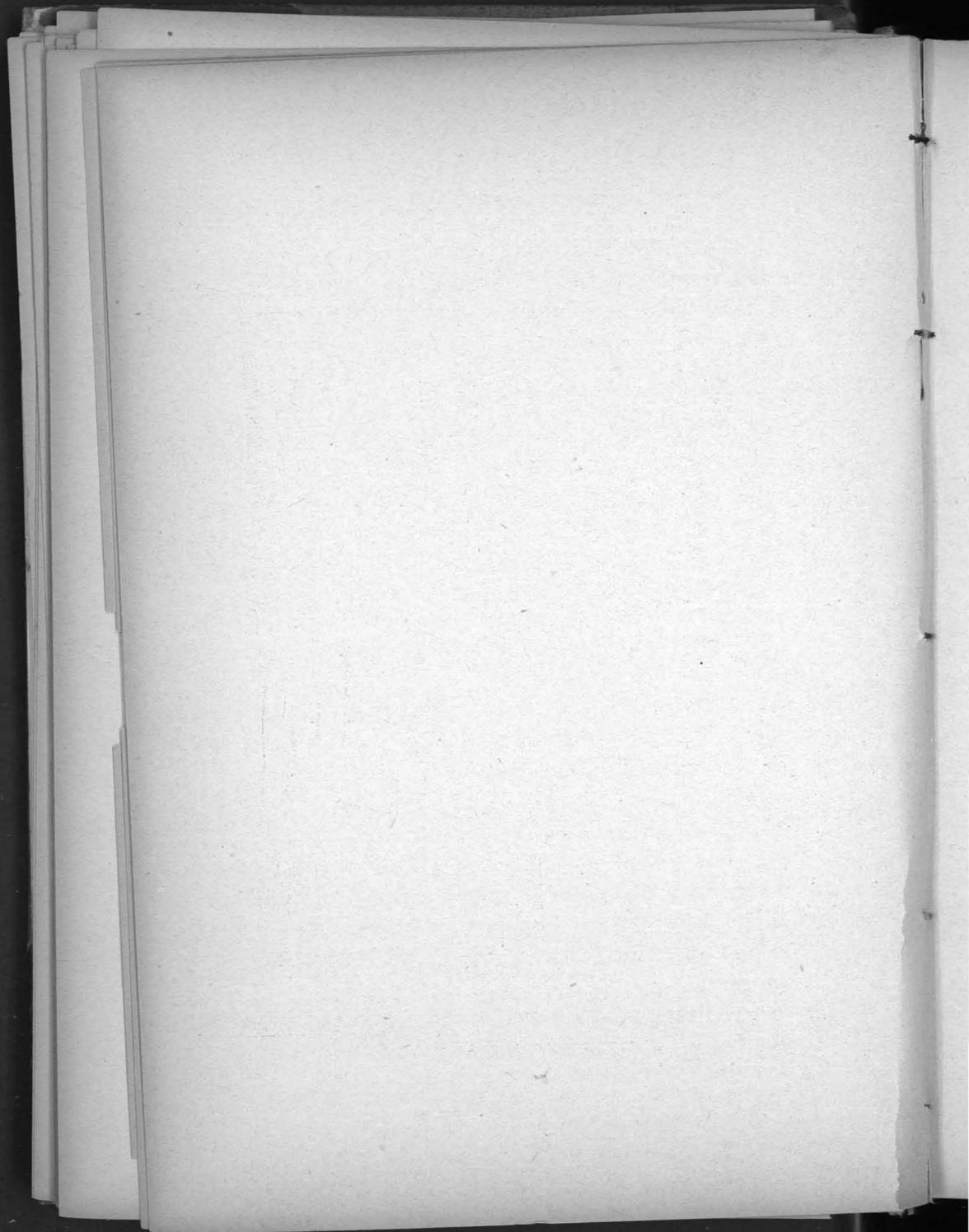
They went to one of the dry goods stores, where Alice purchased a fine piece of dark blue flannel, and then drove down to see Sarah Griggs, who always did her sewing.

Sarah Griggs was a maiden lady of uncertain age, although I could have told within six months of it, as we had been girls together. Sarah's grandfather, old Simon Griggs, was one of the first settlers in the county, having left the Green Mountain state when Sarah and I were children; he purchased the land on which Griggsville now stands. When the old man died, Sarah's father came west, expecting to find a fortune awaiting him, but the old gentleman had embarked in unfortunate speculations and lost all that he possessed, and Sarah's father dying soon after, she had been compelled to work for a living. She had learned dressmaking, and had done all my work for years, as I felt like assisting her all that I could for the sake of old acquaintance.

Sarah was about my height, but I weighed more than twice as much as she did. She was long and thin, and it seemed to me sometimes, when I looked at her, as if she might blow away some day, but she never did, and probably never will.



HER BLOOMERS WERE LARGE AND WIDE, AND WERE GATHERED AT THE KNEES. Page 48.



Alice told Sarah what she wanted, and that lady was horrified. At first she refused to make them, and did not want anything to do with the bloomers. Walter explained matters to Miss Griggs, but she either could not or would not see things in the same light that he did. At last he grew desperate and told her that the sooner she made up her mind and the bloomers, the quicker she would get her money, and that if she did not want to make them he could find somebody who would. The last argument had its weight, and Sarah finally agreed to make the bloomers.

Walter and Alice got back in time for dinner, and after finishing their meal Walter turned out for a ride, but Alice held to her determination not to mount her wheel again until she had on the bloomers, which would not be finished until Saturday evening.

Alice's bloomers were finished according to agreement, but as it was late when she arrived home with them, she did not try them on that night, and the next day being Sunday, I did not get a chance to see them until Monday morning.

I confess that I allowed my curiosity to get the better of my judgment, as I was more than

anxious to see the new bloomers, but of course I did not let Alice know this.

I heard Alice when she went to her room, after breakfast, and knew that she was attiring herself in those detestable bloomers. When she came down stairs I went into the sitting-room to get a good look at her; her bloomers, made of the dark blue flannel, were large and wide, and were gathered at the knees, but being long they drooped and fell nearly to the ankle. She wore a shirt waist and a jaunty little sailor hat, which was quite becoming, and really, she made a much better appearance than I at first thought possible.

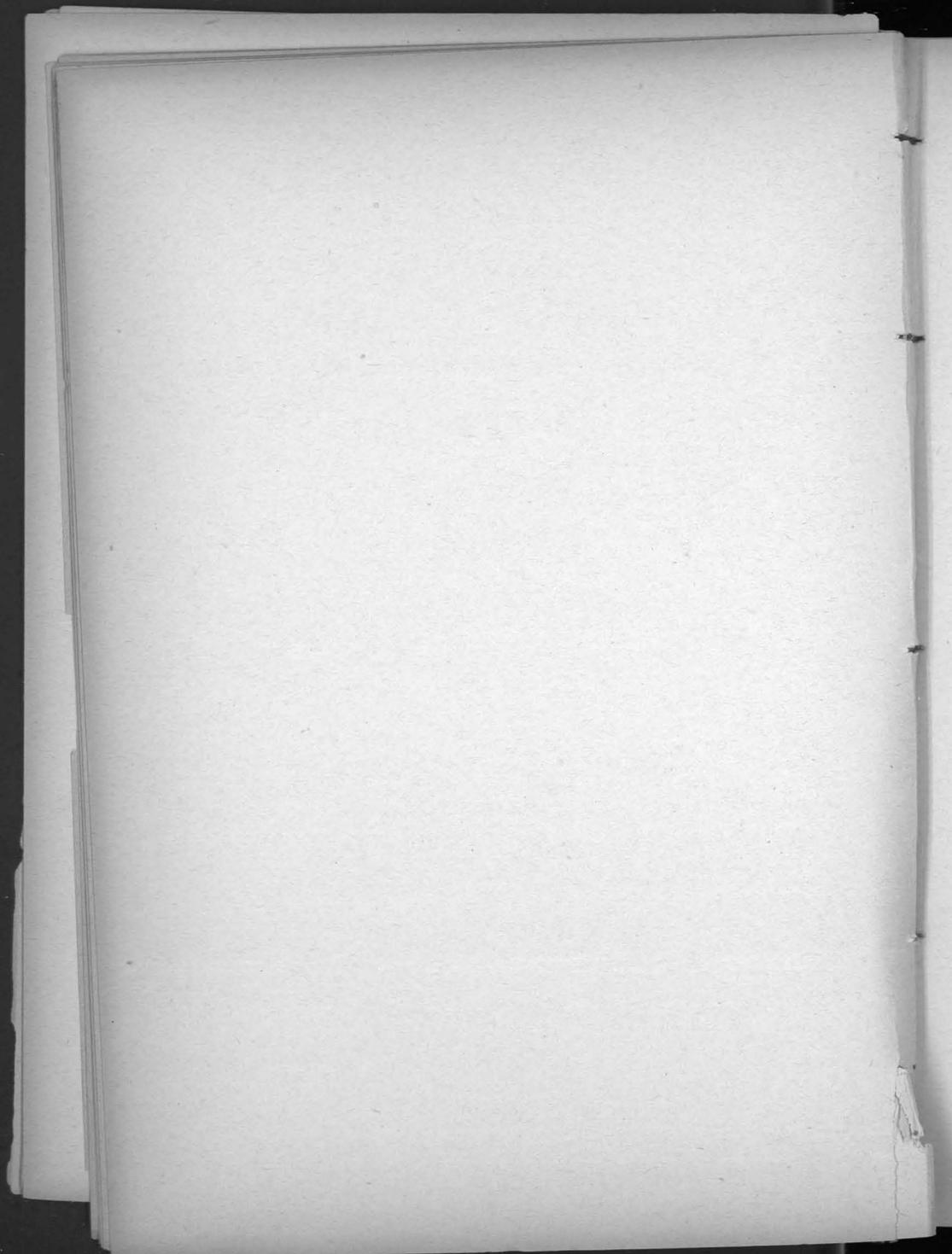
I called her father and Walter from the barn, and they assisted her to mount the wheel; but remembering their former experience they took good care not to let go of their charge, and after about an hour's practice she could get along very well alone. Of course, the cycle would tip over with her occasionally, but as she had learned how to guide and manage it, gained more confidence in herself, and not being hampered with skirts she could throw one foot out sideways, and thus prevent any danger of a heavy fall. Before night Alice could ride around the yard almost as well as



SHE WORE A SHIRT WAIST AND A JAUNTY LITTLE SAILOR HAT.
Page 48.



Walter himself, and I was not one-half as certain now that she would break her neck as I was just after her first attempt.



BENJAMIN GETS THE CRAZE.



CHAPTER IV.

BENJAMIN GETS THE CRAZE.

A FEW days after Alice had learned to ride her wheel, we were seated at the breakfast table; I had noticed queer looks and strange actions on the part of the other members of the household for two or three days, and several times I had surprised Walter and his father indulging in private conversations, which they evidently did not wish me to hear, for they invariably stopped talking, or moved away. I did not know what it all meant, but knew that something was in the air; but that morning, I think it was Friday morning, I could see that affairs had reached the climax, and wondered what the culmination would be. Benjamin wore a strange look, one which I had not seen since we were first married, more than twenty years ago; he looked as if he had made up his mind to enlist in the regular army, and his face had a set expression that I did not like at all. Alice appeared to be uneasy, and fidgeted

around on her chair, looking first at her father and then at me, but Walter seemed as cool as usual, and gave his entire attention to his bread and coffee. I felt certain that there was some conspiracy on foot, and gazed long and earnestly at my lank and lengthy son, for I knew that he could give an explanation if he only wanted to; he evidently did not care to take the time, but seemed bent on getting his coffee out of sight before the rest of us got started.

“Betsey, I am going to buy a wheel!” It was Benjamin’s voice which broke the silence, and I could not have been more surprised if he had exploded a bombshell under the table, and sent us all out through the roof. So great was my excitement that I dropped my knife and fork, and nearly upset the coffee pot. I tried to speak, but my tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of my mouth, and I could only sit, gasp and stare at him. Finally I managed to scream:

“Benjamin Jones, are you foolish or crazy, or both? Am I in my right mind, or are you the lunatic? Is it possible that an old gray-headed man like you can make such a fool of himself? Isn’t it enough to have my son riding around on two wheels and my daughter

cavorting over the country dressed up like a Chinaman without your making such an everlasting idiot of yourself? No! Benjamin Jones, you'll not buy a bicycle as long as my reason retains its throne, although it is very evident that your own is tottering, and I should not be at all surprised if you ended your days in some lunatic asylum."

I stopped, not because I thought that I had said enough, but because I wanted time to take breath and collect my scattered thoughts. I had expected to see Benjamin quail and give in, as he always had done, but he did not—Oh, no! he looked positively savage as he said: "I will buy a wheel, and ride it, too."

I looked at Walter, and then I understood it all, for he was gazing at his paternal ancestor with a smile and nodding approvingly. I knew that Benjamin would never dare to talk to me in that way unless he had received some encouragement, and although that boy was my own son, I would have given ten years of my life if he had been ten years younger, for I fairly ached to thrash him, just as I had done many a time.

I controlled my emotions (principally my temper) as best I could, and said in my most

determined manner: "Benjamin Jones, if you have no respect for yourself, I hope that you will at least have a little for your helpless family; that a man of your age and well known respectability, a man who has been school director and pathmaster, and the head of a family—"

"I'd like to know how long?" muttered Walter.

I paid no attention to the interruption but went right on, "and you, the head of a family, to act like a natural born fool, and bring disgrace on your soft, silly old bald head." I did not stop, but went on: "Now, Benjamin, I want this thing settled right here, and you may as well understand first as last, that you will never buy a bicycle with my consent."

When I touched that bald spot on Benjamin's head I made the mistake of a lifetime; I knew by former experiences that it was his vulnerable point, and that it always riled him up as nothing else could, but I was so mad to think of that old fool's riding a wheel that I forgot myself and came down on him a little too hard.

Benjamin jumped up from the table, threw his chair half way across the room, kicked the



"I AM GOING TO BUY AND RIDE THAT MACHINE IF I HAVE TO TAKE IT AND RUN AWAY." Page 61.



cat under the table, straightened up his diminutive form to its full height, glared down on me, and fairly howled: "I will buy that machine, and ride it, too, and I'd like to see you help yourself; I am a free-born American citizen, although I have never had any freedom since I married you. I have always given you your own way in everything; I never refused you a new dress, a new buggy, new furniture or anything else within the bounds of reason, but I never enjoyed any privileges; I never dared to buy a new pair of suspenders or a new necktie without asking your consent, and I want you to fully understand and comprehend first and last, now, once and forever, that I am going to buy and ride that machine if I have to take it and run away."

This was an awfully long speech for Benjamin; I never knew him to make one half so long before. I knew that a desperate crisis had been reached, Walter was already beyond my control, and Benjamin was tottering on the very verge of successful rebellion or lunacy, I was not certain which, and what could I, a poor lone woman, do, with both of those men, and Alice in sympathy with them, too, although, thanks to my early inculcated lessons

in discipline, she did not dare to say anything and I knew that I had but one card left—a card that has sometimes proved a strong one, but so many years have elapsed since I had used it that I was exceedingly skeptical as to its efficacy, but I would play it as a forlorn hope, and I did. I commenced to cry, something which I had not attempted since the first two years of my marriage; it worked then, but it did not appear to have much effect now, although I could see that Benjamin wavered a little, and if Walter had kept his mouth shut, I might have succeeded even then. He, too, saw his father waver, and, fearful of the result, he said: "Mother will be all right when you get the wheel, just as she was when Alice and I got ours."

The expression on Benjamin's face changed again, and he said: "It won't do any good to cry, Betsey, my mind is made up, and I shall buy a wheel this very day."

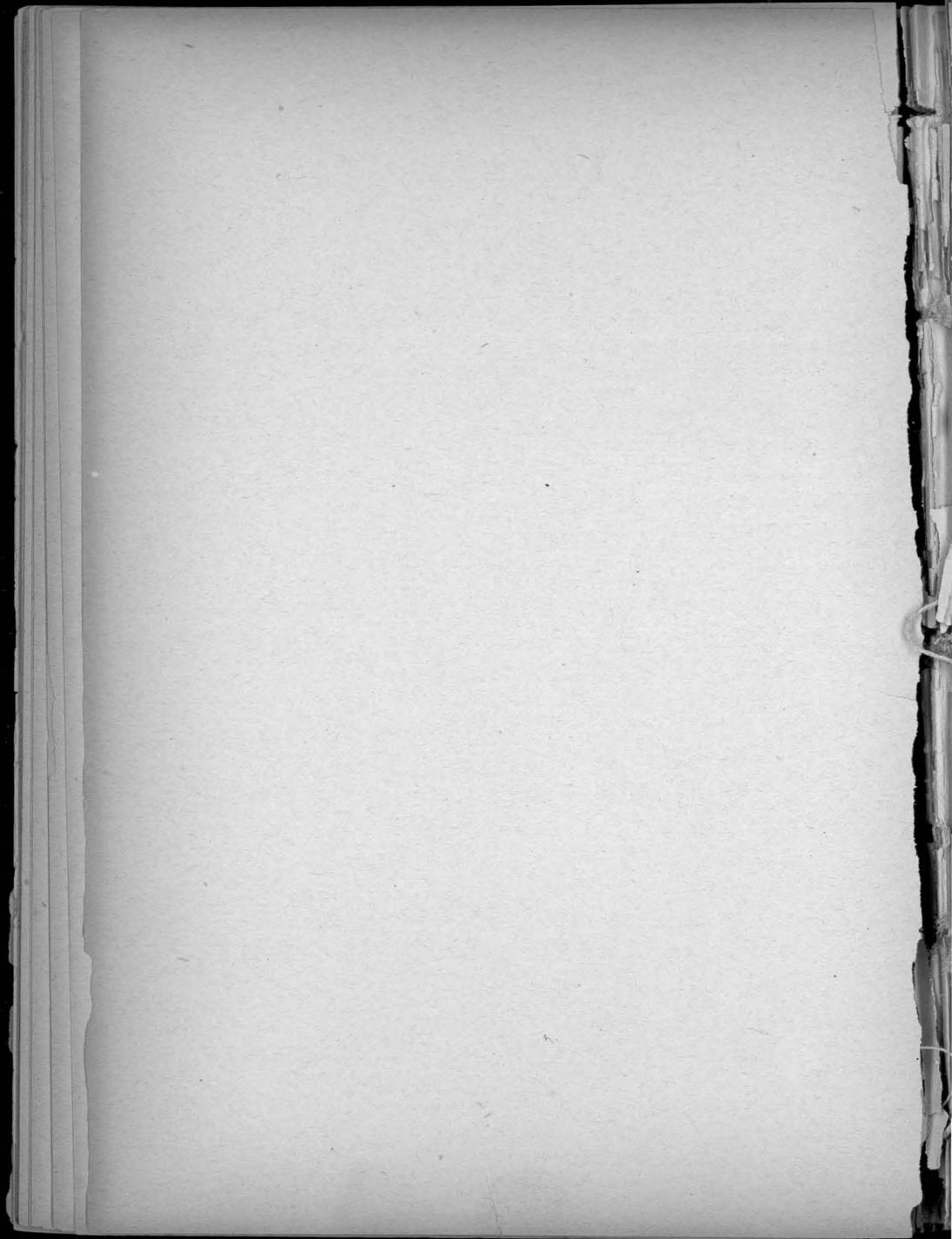
I knew that the battle was lost, and that henceforth I would be obliged to fight my way; that the hard taught lessons of years were all thrown away, and concluded to accept the inevitable with the best grace possible. I knew that Walter, my only son, was at the bottom

of all the mischief, and thas his father never would have dared to oppose me as he had done, if he had not talked with and advised him. I thought that I would have an opportunity to get even with them both some day.

Benjamin was as good as his word and drove to town that very day to purchase a wheel, and I was just wicked enough to wish that he might break a limb and be laid up for the rest of the summer, and thus give me a good chance to pay back some of the things which he had said to me.



BENJAMIN'S EXPERIENCE
WITH A WHEEL.



CHAPTER V.

BENJAMIN'S EXPERIENCE WITH A WHEEL.

BENJAMIN came home in time for supper, and, sure enough, he brought a brand new bicycle with him. I did not ask him any questions and he did not volunteer any information in regard to the wheel. It was too late for him to make any experiments that night, but I knew that he would make his debut early the following morning, and made up my mind to watch him as closely as a cat would a mouse.

My vigilance was rewarded, for about daylight my lord and would-be master slipped quietly out of bed and commenced dressing himself. I was wide awake, but gave no indication of the fact, but just snored right along, as was my custom. Benjamin finished his toilet, and then took a long look at me, evidently wishing to satisfy himself that I was still in the Land of Nod, and then tiptoed softly out of the room.

I waited until I was sure that the coast was clear, and then rose, but I did not take the time

or the trouble to dress, as I was afraid that I might miss the fun, for I had but little doubt that Benjamin would fall all over himself, and anything else which happened to be in the way. I went to the back kitchen window, where I could obtain a good view of the scenes which would soon be enacted.

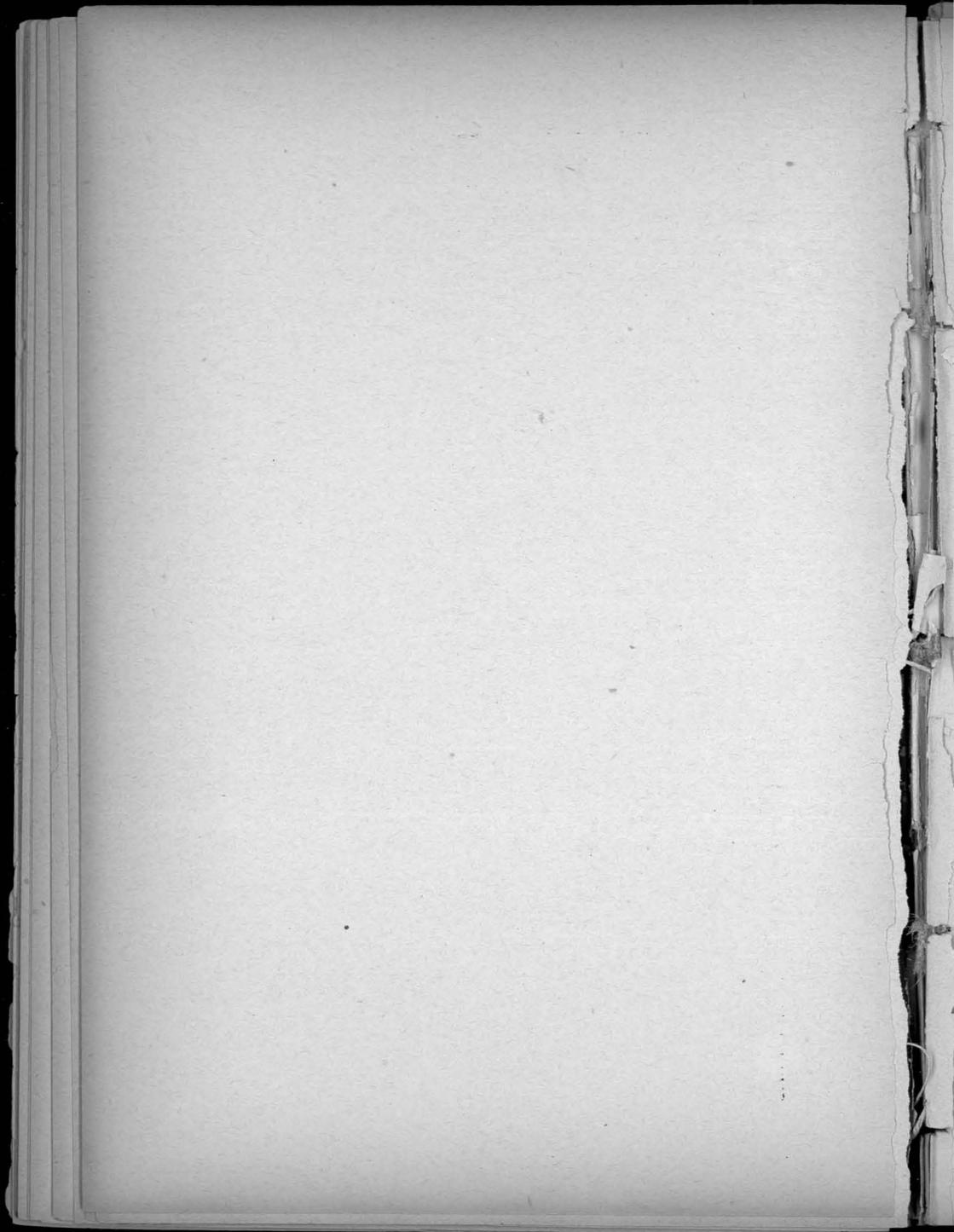
Benjamin was not in sight, but soon made his appearance, trundling the new machine out of the woodshed, where it had been left the night before.

At the rear and left of the house was a long, open space, perhaps 150 feet in length and 50 in width, which led to the barn. Several wagons and buggies were ranged along the sides of this parallelogram, which was still farther ornamented by sundry boxes, barrels and chicken coops, thus leaving a long narrow space, which was flanked on the left by the well and large water tank. I had always known that Benjamin was not very brilliant, but had given him credit for more sense than to attempt to ride a bicycle in such a death-trap of a place as that, but of course I said nothing, only thought what a fine place for a fool to commit suicide.

Benjamin led his wild and untamed steed forth, with all the pride a warrior feels when



HE ROLLED UP HIS SHIRT SLEEVES, AND PREPARED FOR ACTION
Page 71.



he leads out his snorting war horse, and it is my private opinion that he thought it a war horse, and a decidedly wild one, too, before he finished the morning campaign; he wheeled it to the middle of the open space already described, and headed the contraption towards the barn, and then prepared to mount. He removed his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and prepared for action, and it was not long before he had all the action he wanted.

Benjamin picked up the machine which had been lying quietly on its side during all his preparations; placed one foot on the pedal, and tried to swing the other foot over the saddle, just as he would mount a horse, but the machine would not stand still, and neither would it stand up unless he held it; it would glide right out from beneath him, and I was afraid that he would hear me laughing, for it did look so funny to see him with one foot on the pedal, hopping along on the other, just as a man sometimes does when trying to mount a fractious horse. He would get tired of this, and try the other foot awhile, but without success; finally he rolled it back to the original starting point, and prepared to try it again; I could see that he was getting warmed up, as

the perspiration was trickling down his face, which had assumed the color of a beet.

Once more my dear Benjamin attempted to mount, and this time his efforts were crowned with success, as he managed to get his foot over the seat, and on the opposite pedal before the contraption had time to tip over with him; a smile of triumph flitted over his features, but it was of short duration, as the wheel gave a lurch and went over sideways, but Benjamin was equal to the occasion, and struck upon one foot, thus saving himself from a fall.

He tried it again, and was even more successful than he had been before, as he had but little difficulty in mounting, and then started towards the barn as if he had always ridden a bicycle, but this did not last long, for the bicycle made straight for an ash barrel, but just about the time Benjamin and I expected it to strike, it shied at the barrel, making a quick turn to the right, and this time he was not quick enough in throwing out his foot, and so went over, but letting go the machine, he struck on his knees and one hand, in an attitude of prayer; but he did not pray—Oh, no! He said something like this: “Thunder and lightning! Great Jehosophat! That blasted thing turned

me over quicker than a flash, but I am mighty glad that Betsey didn't see me, for I should never hear the last of it."

I came near laughing right out, which would have spoiled all the fun, but by a superhuman effort, I managed to hold in, and watched Benjamin as he picked up the treacherous machine, and rolled it up to the house again; I thought that he had grown disgusted with it and would quit his foolishness, but he had not, for once more he straddled the combination of wheels and chains, and started on a voyage of discovery, which was anything but a failure, as he discovered several objects of interest, if not of affection.

The machine behaved beautifully for a time, and Benjamin was evidently beginning to think the battle won, for the machine was flying towards the barn, when it reached a declivity, as the ground was higher in the middle than at either end, and the fall gave the wheel considerable impetus.

I was afraid that he would run into the barn, but he did not, for he never got that far; the machine got unmanageable, scooted suddenly to one side, and before either of us realized what had happened, it struck a chicken coop

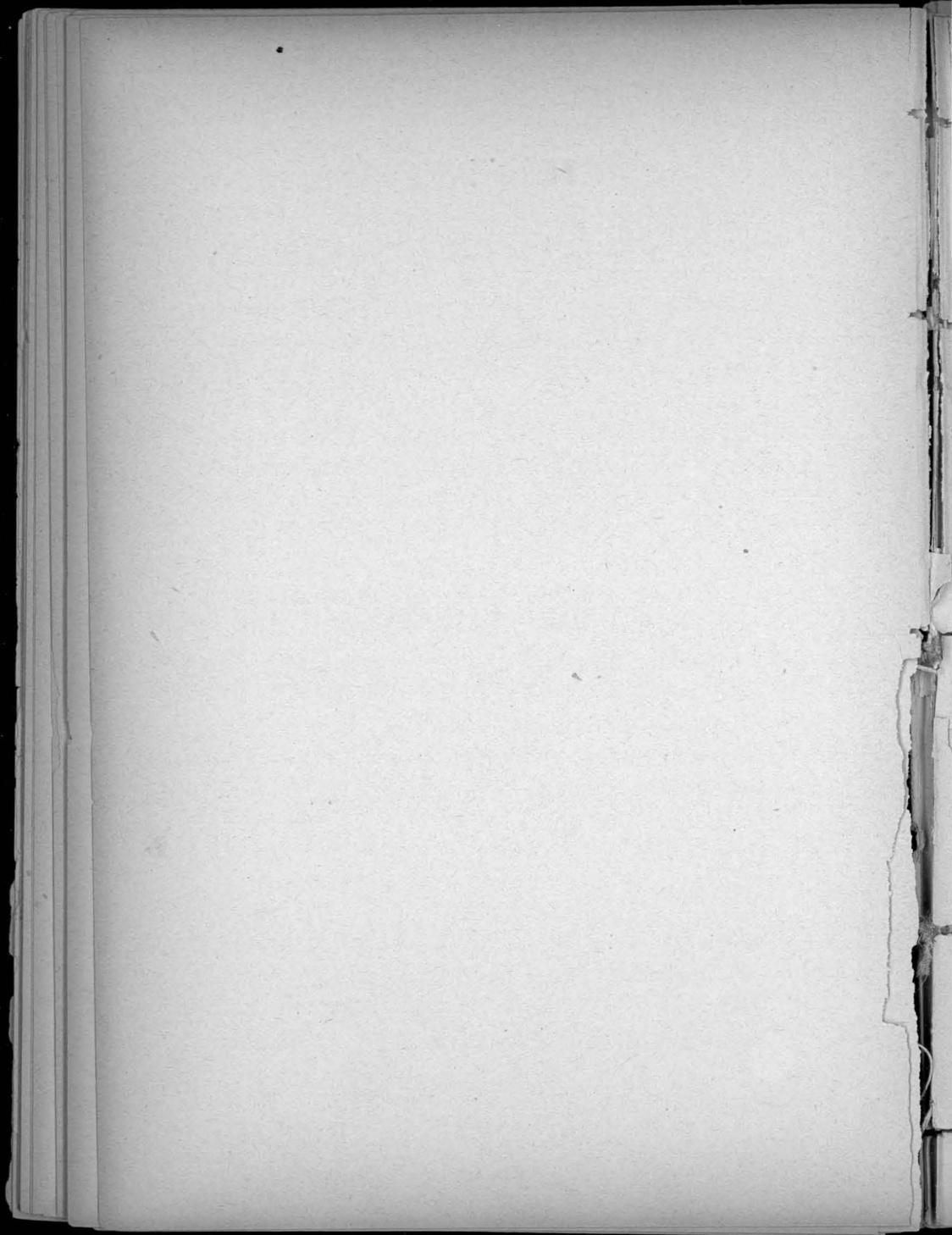
containing a hen and chicks, with the force of a thunderbolt; the coop went over, and so did Benjamin; he went clean over the coop, and landed on a large dry goods box on the front side of his vest; although he landed all right, he did not stay there, but slid right along the entire length of the box; and I could hear the buttons snap as they parted company with the cloth.

It was a regular landslide, for when he reached the farther side of the box, he pitched off head first, striking on the bald-headed end of a neckyoke; his heels described a graceful curve, and went through the slats of another chicken coop.

I could see Benjamin stretched at full length on his back, between the box and coop, and knew by his occasional mutterings that he was not killed. I could hear something about blasted chicken coops and darned fools, and a number of other expressions which would not have sounded well in church, or anywhere else, either. The chickens had set up a fearful cackling and squalling, which had been taken up by all the fowls on the place, including the turkeys, and the din was fearful. Benjamin evidently did not intend to rise until "all was quiet on



THE COOP WENT OVER, AND SO DID BENJAMIN. Page 74.

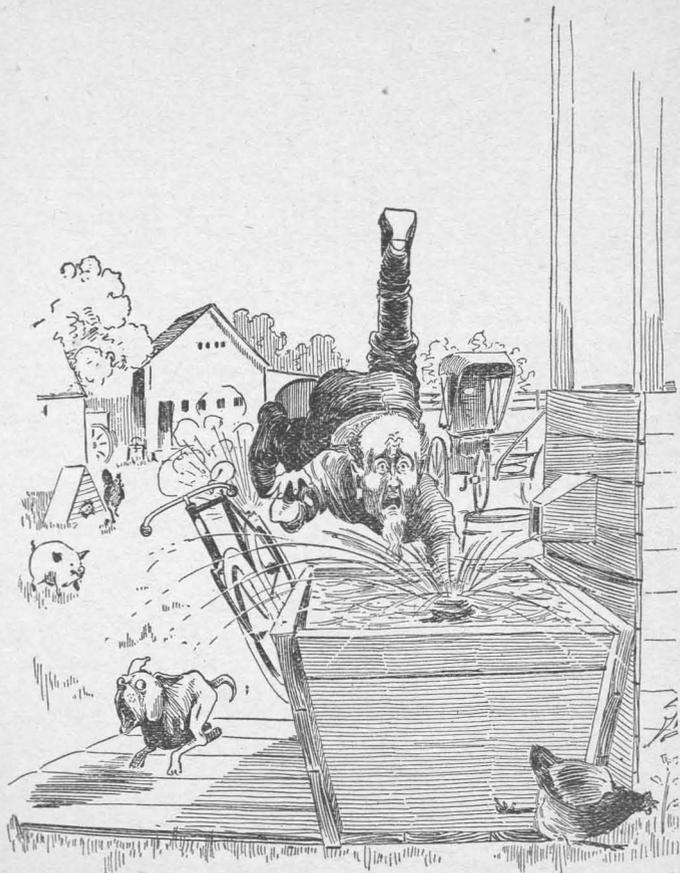


the Potomac," and at last the fowls quieted down, and then Benjamin crawled slowly and carefully from amongst the debris; his nose was bleeding, and swollen to twice its natural size, as were both his lips, and the skin was scraped off his face in half a dozen places, and there was scarcely a button left on his clothes. He walked slowly and painfully towards the water tank, glancing cautiously about as though fearful of discovery, but I kept out of sight, while he went to the tank, where he bathed his face and hands.

I thought that he would surely give it up as a bad job, but he verified the adage: "There's no fool like an old fool," for he went back to his innocent-looking cycle, picked it up tenderly, and again mounted, and rode along without much trouble, as it seemed subdued, and easy to manage, now that it had had the satisfaction of throwing its rider. Benjamin made several trips up and down the open space without falling or meeting with any further accident. The machine would tip over sideways once in a while, but he would save himself by coming down on one foot, and I thought that the fun was all over, and that I would go and dress myself, but about that time, Benjamin,

who had grown conceited, had started from the barn towards the house; he was coming at a terrific pace, when he reached the apex of land near the center, and when he commenced to roll down the declivity towards the house and well, the machine seemed to fairly fly; it kept veering towards the right and the well; when it was within about thirty feet of the watering trough Benjamin realized his position, and tried to turn or stop it, but could do neither; he was scared, and lost his head, and his hat, too.

He came tearing down towards the trough like a race horse, his face pale as death, his eyes wild and dilated with fear, his hair flying, his jaws set, and a look of abject terror on his finely frescoed features. The morning sun was just rising and shed its first warm rays o'er the beautiful June landscape, but not o'er Benjamin's escape, for he didn't escape; the birds were singing in the tree tops, the fowls were making the air ring with their clarion notes, and all nature seemed in her happiest mood—not so with Benjamin, for he appeared to be anything but happy, as he made straight for the end of the trough, and I almost pitied him as I thought of his probable fate. He knew what was going to happen, and knew that he could



HE TOOK A BEAUTIFUL HEADER RIGHT INTO THE WATER TROUGH.
Page 81.



not prevent it, and settled back in the saddle prepared and braced for the terrible shock which he knew was inevitable; the wheel struck the end of the trough like a catapult; I shuddered and closed my eyes for an instant; there was a loud report as the pneumatic tire burst; Benjamin rose swiftly, but very gracefully in the air, something after the fashion of a frog; he went up about six feet and dropped something like ten feet from where he started. As he came down, his heels went up, and he took a beautiful header right into the water trough; I heard the kerchug, when he struck, and saw the water fly, and then all was still, as Benjamin had disappeared.

I rushed to the door and yelled to Walter to get up, that his father was drowning; to hurry up or he would die in the trough.

I ran to the trough just as Benjamin was crawling out; he was a sight to behold; his face was streaked with blood and dirt, his nose and lips were swollen, his clothes were torn and buttonless, and he was dripping with water; one hand hung by his side limp and helpless. Benjamin was never handsome, but never in my life had I seen him look like this. Walter rushed up and said: "What is the matter, father?"

"Nothing much," replied Benjamin. I saw that he was not dead, and concluded that my opportunity had come, so I said: "Well Benjamin, I'll own that you can buy a bicycle, but I know that you can't ride it."

Benjamin was in too subdued a mood to say much, and did not even answer me. Walter led him to the house when we discovered that no bones were broken, but thought it best to send for Dr. Slater. Walter finished dressing, and then mounting his wheel started for the doctor while I assisted Benjamin to get into some dry clothing, and then into bed. Walter soon returned accompanied by the doctor, also mounted on a wheel.

The doctor examined Benjamin's injuries, and said that he would be all right in a day or two; that he had received a few bruises but no broken bones; he then covered Benjamin's face with court plaster until it looked like a patchwork quilt.

The doctor soon took his departure, and in less than an hour Benjamin was fast asleep.

BICYCLES AS FARMING
IMPLEMENTS.



CHAPTER VI.

BICYCLES AS FARMING IMPLEMENTS.

BENJAMIN did not get up until the next day, and I knew by the way in which he moved about, that he was stiff and sore, although he said nothing.

Walter took the bursted tire to Griggsville and had it repaired, but Benjamin did not seem inclined to ride, and did not even take the trouble to replace the tires on his machine. I noticed him at work in the back yard, but did not know what he was doing until the next Monday morning, when I asked him to churn; he said that he would in a few minutes. Half an hour later I saw him carrying our barrel churn out in the yard, and I asked him what he was going to do; he replied that he was going to churn, so I went out to ascertain what he was trying to do. I soon learned that he had rigged up his bicycle as a sort of power, by raising it a foot or two from the ground, and placing it in a frame which held it in an upright and

stationary position, with both wheels free to revolve without touching the ground. As the tires were off, he had no difficulty in running a round belt over the rear wheel, and then backward to a smaller wheel which was attached to a shaft, and another belt on the other end; this belt was running around a small wheel on the churn, and the whole apparatus was now ready for work. I looked at the paraphernalia, and asked Benjamin if he thought he was ever going to get any butter by using that suicidal-looking contrivance?

Benjamin smiled, the first time since his encounter with the water tank, and said that he would have the churning done in less than five minutes if I would only attend to my own affairs.

I had some curiosity to know how the machine would work, but very little faith in its efficiency; but I told Benjamin to go ahead, that I would keep still for a few minutes and watch him make a fool of himself.

He told me to get the cream ready, which I did, and then he climbed on his horse power, or, more properly speaking, his man power, and commenced working like a hay tedder; the wheel went around, the belts moved, and so did



THE WHEEL WENT ROUND, THE BELTS MOVED, AND SO DID THE
SHAFTING AND CHURN. Page 86.



the shafting and churn. As Benjamin appeared to be enjoying himself, and the churn was moving very rapidly, I concluded to leave him alone for a time and returned to the house, telling him to hurry up, and not let the cream spoil, but I did not think that he would finish the churning before night.

I had not been in the house five minutes when I heard Benjamin call, "Betsey! come out here."

I went out expecting to find the churn turned over and the machine a failure, but the churn was right side up, and so was Benjamin, who said that the butter had come, and sure enough it had. I was astonished, but did not tell him so, I only said: "Well! Benjamin, you do better work with the machine where it can't tip over than you did when it could."

He only grinned and replied that he would show me that he could ride as soon as he could get a little time to practice.

I took up the butter and washed and worked it over.

Benjamin was working away at his new machine during this operation and when I again noticed him he was holding the sickle to the mowing machine on the grindstone which had

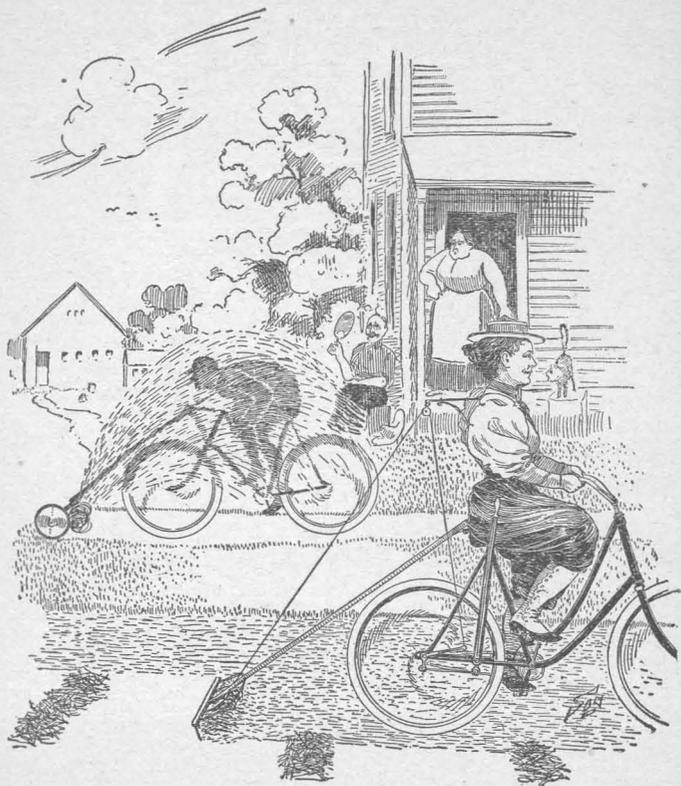
been put in the place of the churn, and Walter was doing the pumping.

Later on my ingenious husband turned the washing machine and pony corn sheller and the clothes wringer by the same device.

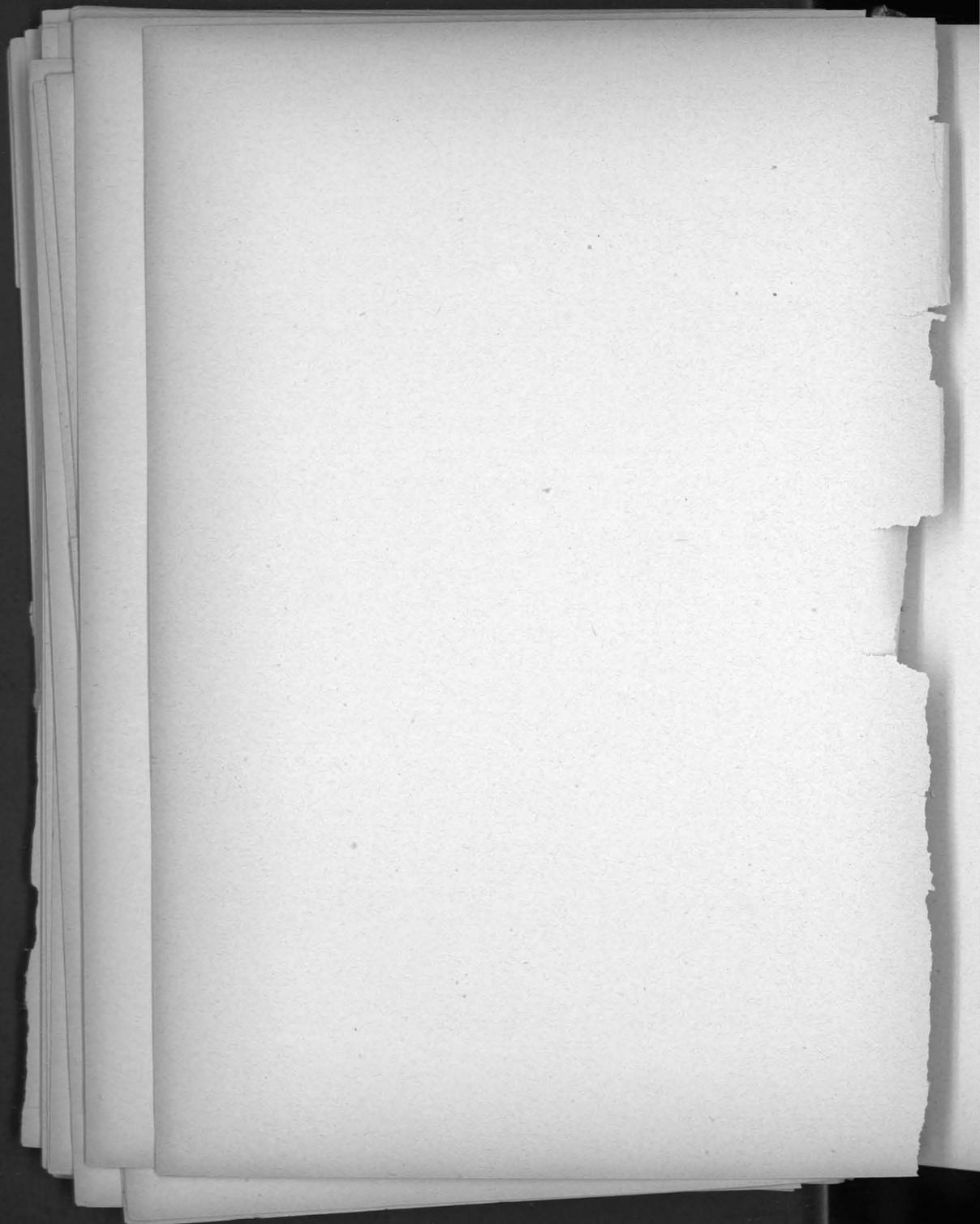
That afternoon I heard a terrible racket in the front yard; it sounded something like a threshing machine, and I went to the door to learn what the commotion meant. To my surprise, I saw Walter riding around the yard pushing the lawn mower in front of him. He had the handles of the mower fastened to the bars of the cycle, and was going so fast, that I could hardly tell who he was for the shower of flying grass. Alice was also riding around the yard, dragging a rake, which Benjamin had made, behind her wheel; she was raking up the grass while Walter did the mowing.

I was astounded, and wondered what would happen next.

About an hour later I went out in the garden to see how the strawberries looked, when I saw Walter riding down through the potato patch, and thought what a fool that boy is; why don't he get out in the road where there is a good track, instead of riding in the soft soil of the garden. But when I took a closer view of his



ALICE WAS ALSO RIDING AROUND THE YARD, DRAGGING A RAKE.
Page 90.



operations, I understood it all; he had a small shovel from one of the corn plows attached to the front of his wheel, and was hilling up the potatoes in good shape, and much faster than he could have done it with a hoe.

I went back to the house with the conviction that the day had been a dream, and would not have been surprised to have seen Alice riding around the dining room setting the table for supper, but fortunately for my chinaware, she was not.

That evening, Benjamin replaced the tires on his bicycle, and Walter undertook to teach his father how to ride, and he did much better than anybody had thought possible, for Walter did not let go of the machine until he got fairly balanced and also showed him how to get on and off, and before bedtime Benjamin could ride nearly as well as Alice could.

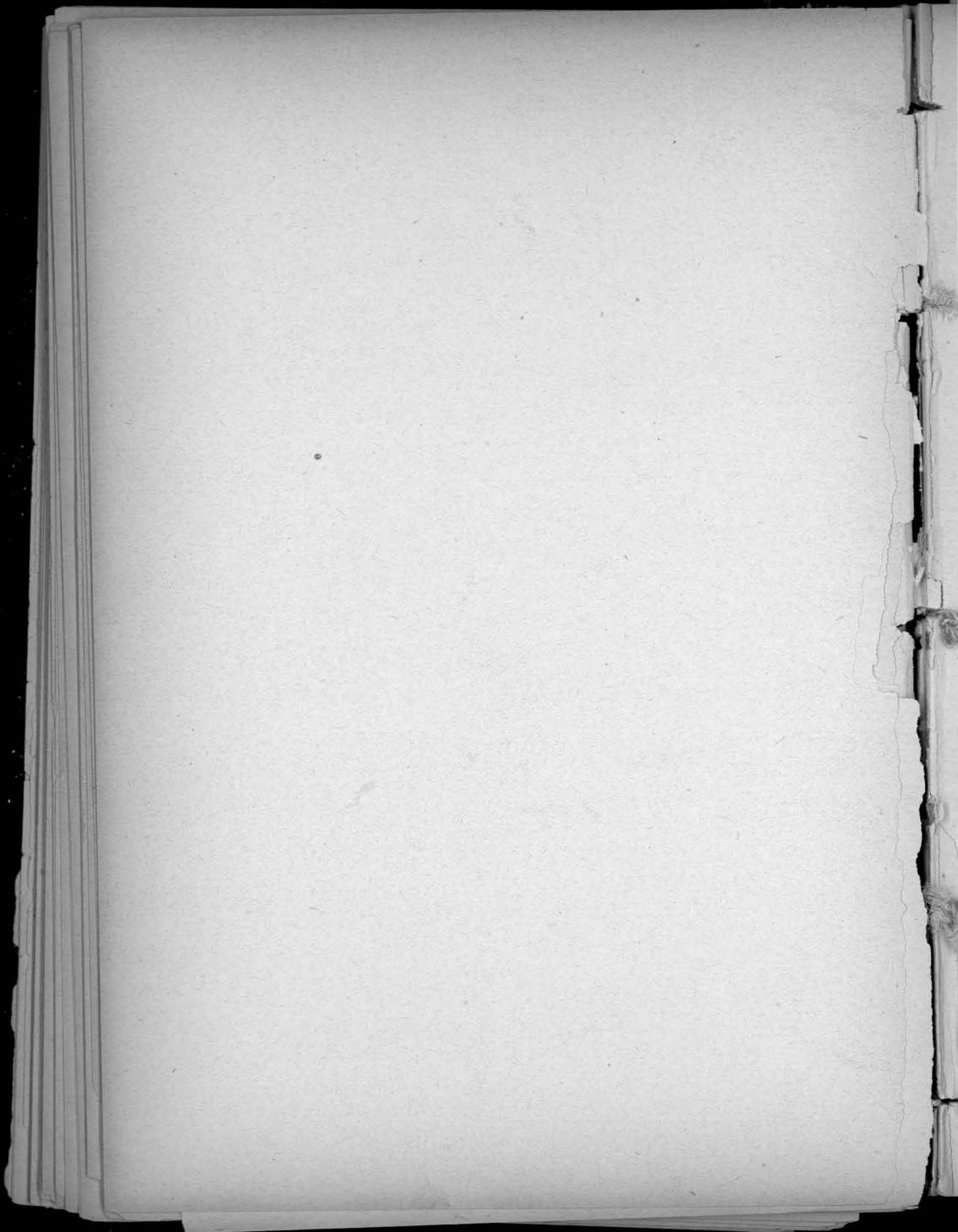
Benjamin did little but ride around the country the rest of the week, and he and Alice made long trips together, while Walter, who rode much faster than either his father or sister, preferred to go alone.

Owing to these facts, I was left alone the most of the time, and I did not like it any too well, either, for life on a farm, at best, is very

lonesome, and then, too, I had nearly all of the work to do, as Alice was good for nothing after she got her wheel, as that was about all that she could think of, and Walter never pretended to hump himself working during the summer vacation. But I did not mind the children's riding so much as Benjamin's, for he was old enough to know better. He did not half attend to the farm work, leaving all to the hired men, who, as a rule, are not very reliable when left to their own pleasure, but fortunately we had one good man who kept the other fellow at work, and, after all, we did not lose much by Benjamin's foolishness.



HE HAD A SMALL SHOVEL FROM ONE END OF THE CORN PLOWS ATTACHED TO THE FRONT OF HIS WHEEL. Page 93.



THE CYCLE IN GRIGGSVILLE.



CHAPTER VII.

THE CYCLE IN GRIGGSVILLE.

WALTER came riding home one afternoon, in great excitement, and said that one of our great city dailies had sent out a couple of cyclists, a lady and a gentleman, who were to make a trip around the globe on their wheels, and they were expected in Griggsville that very afternoon, and would probably arrive about six o'clock. Walter wanted Alice to get ready, and ride back with him, as the Griggsville Cycling Club, of which he was a member, was going to turn out in a body, and go forth to meet the coming cyclists.

Of course Alice was eager to go, and when Benjamin heard the news he was wild to see the celebrated pair, and said that if I would only consent to go with him, that he would drive down. I did not care much about going, and neither did I care to stay at home alone, and so I told them to go ahead, and I would ride down with Benjamin. We did not stop to

get supper, as Walter said we would be too late; so Walter and Alice got on their wheels, and Benjamin and I followed them in the top buggy.

The Griggsville club had gone when we reached town, but the streets were filled with cycles in spite of that, and all the walks along the expected route of the cyclists were covered with people, all anxious to see the great sight. It seemed to me that all Griggsville was out, and a lot of people from the country beside, for I never saw more people at the county fair than were on the streets that night.

The procession did not make its appearance until about seven o'clock, and those people stood there just the same, and as the majority of them had been there since five o'clock, it is not probable that many of them got any supper until after the cyclists arrived.

About half an hour before they came, we were nearly blown away by a small hurricane which came up from the west, the direction in which the cyclists were going, and as we afterward learned, they had all they could do to keep from being blown off their wheels. The streets were filled with dust which blew in such clouds that one could hardly see across them,



THERE WERE ABOUT 150 CYCLISTS IN THE PARADE. Page 103.



but it made no difference to those fools, as none of them showed any inclination to leave. I wanted to get under cover until the storm was over, but my husband would not move, said that he guessed that we could stand it if the rest of them could, and I suppose that was what all of the others thought too.

There was some rain but not enough to do any damage, and the crowd did not appear to mind it in the least. Just about seven o'clock we heard loud cheering from those on the east of town, and knew that the advance guard of wheelmen had arrived. They soon came in sight; were fairly covered with dust, and it was impossible to tell one from another. There were about 150 cyclists in the parade, if such it could be called, and they rode directly to the hotel where they were to stop.

The couple who had created so much excitement ate their suppers, while the crowd contented itself in looking over their wheels and in talking about the great event. A little after eight o'clock, the cyclists prepared to ride to the next town, some fifteen miles away, and everybody who had a wheel prepared to follow them, but I would not let Alice go, although Walter was determined to go, and did go, too,

and even that old fool, Benjamin, wanted to go, and said that he would go if he only had his wheel there.

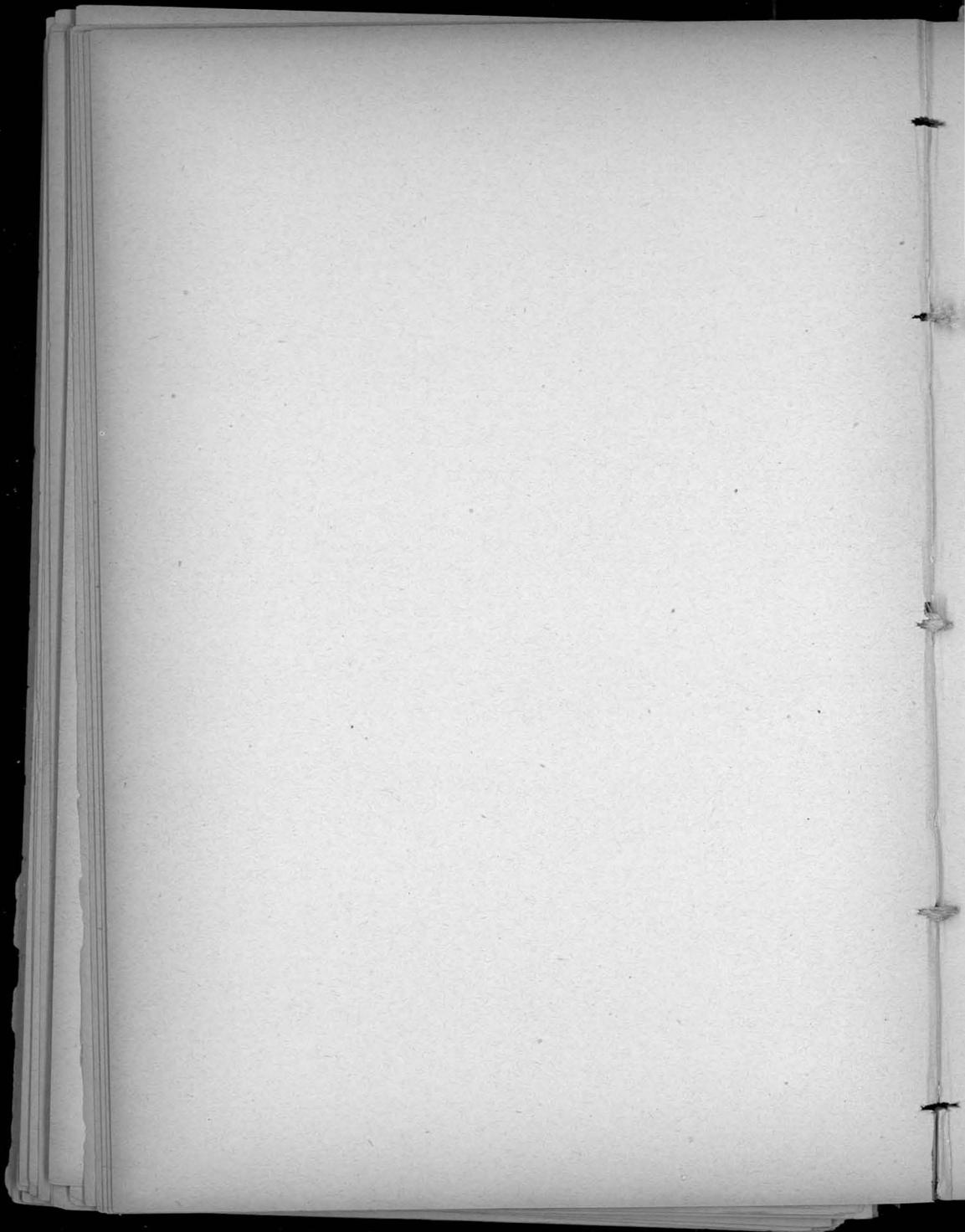
There was at least one man who did not own a wheel, and I guess that he must be the only man in Griggsville who does not own one; that was Mr. Harvey, the editor of the Griggsville Gazette; he says that the reason that he does not have one is because his patrons will not pay up their back subscriptions.

Mr. Harvey wanted to go with the cyclists, and not having a wheel, he went to the livery stable and hired a horse and buggy of a man who owed him for a last year's advertisement, which he had not been able to pay on account of the falling off in trade, due to the cycling craze.

Mr. Harvey induced a friend to accompany him, and they followed or led the procession, I forget which, the entire fifteen miles, and then had the pleasure of riding back again. I do not know what time the editor got back, but I do know that Walter did not put in an appearance until midnight.

We waited until after the cyclists had started on their night ride, and then drove swiftly homeward, where we had supper to get and

the work to do up. I could not help wondering when and where this foolishness would end, for everybody, including old men and women, seemed to be more or less affected by it, and even I was beginning to wish that I had not said so much about it, as it was decidedly unfashionable, and even unpopular, not to have the wheel fever, but then, when I thought of the rest of the family, I concluded that there ought to be at least one sane person on the premises.



ELDER ROPER ON WHEELS.





I WAS HORRIFIED TO SEE ELDER ROPER COME SAILING DOWN THE STREET ON HIS BICYCLE. Page 111.



CHAPTER VIII.

ELDER ROPER ON WHEELS.

SUNDAY morning dawned bright and clear, and the whole family prepared to attend church. Walter was determined to ride his wheel to church, but I would not allow Alice to ride her's, and made her ride with Benjamin and myself, in the buggy.

As we drove into town several cyclists passed us on their way to church, and when we stopped in front of the house of worship, I was horrified to see Elder Roper come sailing down the street on his bicycle with his bible and hymn book under his arm.

The elder is over six feet tall, lank and lean, with a scraggly, auburn tinted beard, and has even less hair on the top of his head than Benjamin had when I married him; he wore spectacles, and was a spectacle himself. I expected to see the elder leave his infernal machine outside when he reached the church door, but he didn't; he shot across the walk and up the

church steps like a fox squirrel, and right down the middle aisle to the front of the pulpit stairs, where he dismounted and left his Sabbath and neck-breaking contraption fairly on the altar.

To say that I was surprised, is expressing it mildly. I was shocked, I was grieved, and for the first time in my life was actually ashamed of our pastor; but he was not the only person who desecrated our house of worship that morning. Before we were fairly seated, another wheel came gliding down the aisle, stopped at one of the front pews and Dr. Salter dismounted, rolled his machine into the pew and set down behind it. The doctor is a big stout man, considerable taller than I am, but not much heavier; and in spite of his size, he is one of the most graceful riders I have yet seen, for he does not lay down and arch his back as most of them do, but sits up straight and easy. Walter says that his stomach is so big that he cannot bend over, but then Walter is jealous, as he thinks that nobody can ride but himself.

After the choir had finished singing, Elder Roper arose, carefully wiped and adjusted his spectacles and looking over the congregation in a determined and fearless manner he said:



"WE HAVE PLENTY OF SCRIPTURAL JUSTIFICATION IN DEFENSE
OF THE BICYCLE." Page 115.



“Owing to the wide difference of opinion amongst members of my church, in regard to the use of the wheel, I shall confine my morning’s remarks to that subject, and shall endeavor to show you that we have plenty of scriptural justification in defense of the bicycle.”

Benjamin and Dr. Salter and several other old fools looked at each other and smiled audibly; I did not smile, but glared at Benjamin. I received several approving nods from some of the sober, true-spirited lady members, who were either too sensible or too old to be carried away with any such work of the devil.

The elder read for his morning lesson, from the first chapter of Ezekiel, 15th to the 21st verses, inclusive:

15. Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

16. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

17. When they went, they went on their four sides; and they turned not when they went.

18. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful: and their rings were full of eyes, round about them four.

19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

20. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures were in the wheels.

21. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

The elder made a powerful prayer, the choir rendered a beautiful anthem, and the collection was then taken, after which the elder rose and announced his text.

He said: "I take for my text, this morning, a portion of the 19th verse of the 10th chapter of Ezekiel," and read: "'When they went out, the wheels were beside them, and everyone stood at the door of the East gate of the Lord's house and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.'

“This occurrence took place nearly six hundred years before the birth of our Savior, and from the reading of the Scriptures, we cannot doubt but that the wheels referred to were bicycles, as it is folly to believe that the people of Ezekiel’s time drove their horses and wagons, or even their chariots, into their houses of worship.

“‘When they went out their wheels were beside them.’

“From this we infer that they did not ride their wheels out of the church, but probably rolled them out, as it may have been inconvenient for them to have ridden them in the building, but it was more than evident that they rode the wheels to their place of worship, and took them into the church, presumably for safe keeping, for if the young men and boys of the prophet’s time were at all like those of our time, it is not likely that they would have been able to have found them when the services were concluded.

“‘And everyone stood at the East gate of the Lord’s house.’

“This passage proves conclusively that the place mentioned must have been a church or house of worship, for no other edifice is

alluded to in the scriptures as the Lord's house, and the door of the East gate was undoubtedly the entrance to the building, and the people of those times were evidently much like those of the present, and liked to congregate at the doors after service to discuss the weather and the crops, and to say 'how do you do' to their many friends.

“‘And the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.’

“From this we infer that the riding of wheels was no offense in the sight of God, and that in spite of what is now considered, by some, to be a sin, was not thought to be such by our Heavenly Father, as His glory shone over them. If it was not wrong and wicked to ride bicycles in the time of Ezekiel, there can be no plausible reason to suppose that it is now.”

The elder then referred to the 24th verse of the 23d chapter of Ezekiel, and read: “‘And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assemblage of people.’”

The elder then went on to say: “From the reading of this passage, we infer, first, that the wheels alluded to were neither wagon nor chariot wheels, but are spoken of as a

separate and distinct method of traveling, and we need not confound these wheels with any other vehicle; but bear in mind that the term 'wheels' was as familiar a one to the people of the past as it is to us.

"Second: That wheels were used in war, and that the military companies of the present were not the first to employ wheels in warfare."

The elder then turned to Ezekiel, 1st chapter, 18th verse, and read: "As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful."

"From this, it is evident that the high wheels were then in use, and that the 'safety' had not then been introduced. The word 'rings' is a synonym for wheels, and is often used as such by the ancients. That these wheels were so high that they were dreadful, none can doubt, who has ever tried to mount or ride a high wheel. These people were afraid of the high wheels, and probably had gone through with many experiences which were calculated to make them fear their high wheels, and they had undoubtedly taken some fearful headers over them, and hence the expression: 'They were so high that they were dreadful.'"

The elder next read from the 3d chapter of Nahum, 2d verse: "The noise of a whip,

and the noise of the rattle of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots."

From this the elder reasoned that a plain distinction was again made between chariots and wheels, and that he could not understand how the most skeptical could doubt that the wheels referred to were bicycle wheels, and that there were probably trials of speed between the horsemen, chariot drivers and cyclists. The rattle of the wheels, he said, was caused by the metallic tires then in use, for it was not likely that the people were familiar with pneumatic tires at so early a period, and that this was another proof of the use of wheels in war by the fearful and victorious armies of God against Nineveh.

The elder then read from the 7th chapter of Daniel, 9th verse, as follows: "His throne was like a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." He argued from this that the people of Daniel's time had improved the wheel since the times of which Ezekiel wrote, and that the fiery appearance of the wheel alluded to was caused by the silver or gold plating in use, and that a wheel plated with gold would, when in rapid motion beneath the glare of an oriental sun,

have the appearance of a wheel of fire, and is spoken of in this graphic manner by Daniel.

In corroboration of this statement, the elder read from Ezekiel, 1st chapter 16th verse: "The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl."

"Some of the wheels of that time," continued the elder, "were undoubtedly made of wood, which cannot easily be plated, and they were probably painted, as the color of the beryl is green, unlike any of the metals then in use, and the works of the wheels referred to the mechanism used to propel the machine."

The elder next spoke of the ancient usage of the wheel, and read from Jeremiah 18, 3: "Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels." This was about the time of which Ezekiel writes, and it is clear that Jeremiah was also familiar with the term wheels, and that the potter, like many mechanics of the present time, had been compelled to add a bicycle repairing shop to his business, and that at the time mentioned, he was engaged either in repairing a broken wheel, or in making a new one. This was about six hundred years B. C. Isaiah speaks of wheels about 760 years B. C., and says in chapter 5,

verse 28: "Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind." Even at this early period it is evident that the cyclists were able to acquire great speed.

The elder continued, "Let us refer again to the 20th verse of the 1st chapter of Ezekiel: 'Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures were in the wheels.'

"It is evident from the words of the prophet that these creatures were animated by some spirit which directed their movements and they really were not free to ride when and where they might please, but were under spiritual guidance.

"It is not strange that they should think that the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels, as many of us have already realized, and felt confident that our own wheels were animated by some spirit, and not always a good spirit either, if one may be allowed to judge from the results which we nearly all experience when learning to ride; and in the time of the

prophet, it is fair to suppose that the people were more ignorant and superstitious than now, and attributed both good and bad to the influences of the spirits. It is probable that when they saw the strange antics which wheels sometimes indulge in, that they should think that they were controlled by the spirits.

“If an evil spirit ever sees fit to enter into a wheel, it renders it very difficult to manage, and the people of Ezekiel’s time must have witnessed many strange and startling sights in connection with their high wheels.”

The elder went on to say, that wheels were mentioned in many other places in the scriptures, and that there could be no doubt that wheels were of very ancient origin, but that like many other inventions, they had been cast aside and forgotten, and left for the people of more modern times to resurrect.

The elder concluded his remarks by a talk on the practicability of wheels in the following words:—

“Horses are an expensive luxury, which few but the wealthy can afford, and the money required with which to purchase a good horse, buggy and harness, and to feed and maintain one, would buy half a dozen cycles.

"A good cyclist can travel much farther and more rapidly than the best of horses; the wheel is never tired, never eats, drinks or sleeps; will not run away, and does not kick or bite, and is within the reach of all people in moderate circumstances.

"Through the medium of the wheel, many people secure a proper amount of exercise, and thus become healthy and more energetic than when they ride about in a carriage, or stay at home and do nothing.

"Many think it wicked to work a horse six days in the week, and then drive it five or six miles to church on Sunday, claiming that the animal is entitled to at least one day of rest, which man in his blind devotion to his religion will not allow it.

"There is nothing wrong or wicked in riding a cycle to church on Sunday, thus fulfilling one of the commandments of our Savior, giving the horse a little rest and securing much-needed exercise ourselves.

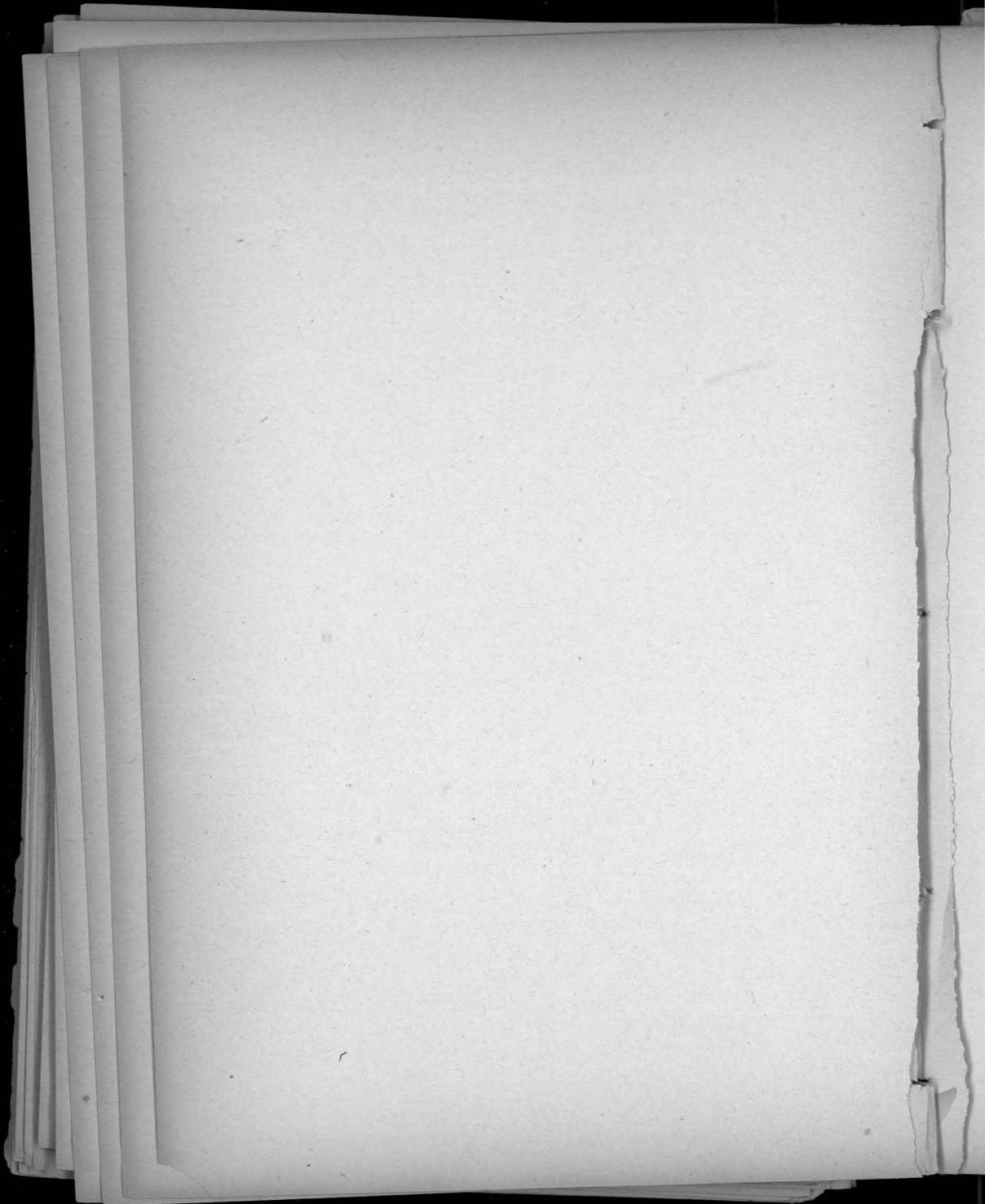
"The people who are so set against the use of the wheel, are generally incapacitated from such active exercise, or are afraid that somebody will get a little enjoyment out of life, or, possibly, they are too stingy to spend the

money necessary to purchase a good wheel; and usually it is either a case of 'sour grapes,' or of 'the dog in the manger.'"

The faces of some of the congregation were a study when the elder closed his remarks, and I own that for one, I did not know what to think, and found my prejudice against wheels was fast melting away.

After prayer and singing, the benediction was pronounced and the services were over. I did not linger to discuss the sermon with anybody, as I had said so much against the use of the wheel.

I pondered long and deeply over the elder's remarks as we drove homeward, and finally arrived at the conclusion that I did not know much either about wheels or the bible.



BETSEY BUYS A WHEEL.



CHAPTER IX.

BETSEY BUYS A WHEEL.

I PONDERED long and deeply over Elder Roper's sermon, and finally came to the conclusion that it was not wrong to ride a bicycle, and from that time I determined to have a wheel.

One morning, a few days after, I told Benjamin that I wanted him to hitch up the horses and buggy, as I wished to drive down to Griggsville to sell some butter and eggs and do some trading.

An hour later I was on my way to town with the produce stored away in the back part of the light double buggy.

When I reached town I disposed of the butter and eggs and bought what groceries I needed, then drove down to Mr. Pierce's jewelry and bicycle store. I told the clerk that I wished to look at some of the cycles. He looked at me in a strange manner, but said nothing. I was afraid that he might think that I

wanted one for myself, but if he thought so he kept it to himself.

I priced several of the machines, and learned that they were intended for men. I then told the clerk that I wanted a machine for a lady. I soon found one which suited me, but he wanted ninety dollars for it. I offered him eighty dollars which he finally accepted.

I did not want anybody to see the wheel, and asked the clerk if he would bring it out the back door, which he promised to do. Then I drove around on the back street and he brought it out and placed it in the buggy, I covered it up with the lap robe and drove toward home, taking pains to select the most retired streets so that I would not meet anyone. On arriving near home, I stopped opposite the orchard, and taking the machine out, I concealed it in the grass under the trees. Before I could get back to the buggy the horses started up and trotted slowly into the yard, Knowing that they could do no damage, I let them go. I met Benjamin as I turned into the gate; he was coming to look for me, or my mangled remains, but found me alive and in the flesh.

He asked me what was the matter, and



I PRICED SEVERAL OF THE MACHINES. Page 130.



I had to quibble a little, for of all people he was the last whom I wished to have know what I had been doing, so I told him that I had stopped to tie up the hitching strap, which had come down, and before I could get hold of the lines the horses started, and as it was so near the house, I knew that they could do no damage, and so let them go. Benjamin remarked that it would have been just the same if I had been ten miles from home, and that women were always careless with horses, but that if I was not such a fool, and would get a bicycle, it would not serve me such a trick. I did not reply, although I ached to do so, but just simply bottled up my wrath until some more convenient day.

I did not get a chance to try my cycle that day, but the next morning Benjamin said that he was going to town, and Walter and Alice went for a long ride across the country, and when nine o'clock arrived it found me all alone. Now, thought I, is the time for me to break in that machine, or break my neck in the attempt.

I went out into the orchard and found the cycle just as I had left it. I trundled it up to the house, and remembering the experience

which Alice had undergone on account of her long skirts, I concluded to doff all superfluous clothing.

Several years before I had made a sort of a bloomer suit, which I wore when cleaning house, but it differed slightly from those worn by lady cyclists, as it was much tighter fitting. I had worn it until Benjamin had made so much fun of me, that I was ashamed to wear it. I proceeded to the privacy of my chamber and there arrayed myself in those bloomers, and I can tell you I was a sight, and would have compared favorably with most of the ballet dancers, as when the suit was made it fitted me pretty tightly, and as I had grown much fleshier since then, it was all that I could do to squeeze myself into the clothes, and when I had them on, they fitted me so snugly that I could scarcely move or breathe, but there was nothing else suitable, so I concluded to wear them.

At the rear of the barn was a long level stretch of pasture land, which was completely hidden from the house and road by the out-buildings and trees and small shrubbery. This pasture land sloped slightly towards a small creek or rivulet nearly a quarter of a mile from the house, but was entirely destitute of



EVERYBODY HAS TO HAVE THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE. Page 137



boxes, barrels, chicken coops and water tanks, for I recalled Benjamin's experience with a feeling of horror, and had no intention of killing myself by running over anything.

I trundled the wheelbarrow, or bicycle, more properly speaking, out into the pasture and prepared for the ordeal which I knew was coming, for everybody has to have their first experience who wants to ride one of the wild untamed steeds, and I was anxious to make my debut, and learn just how hard one of those machines can throw a person, and it was not long before my curiosity on this point was fully satisfied.

I wore a small sailor hat, the same one which Alice had worn, and, taken all in all, was rather a ludicrous sight, or at least that was what I thought as I looked in the mirror before coming out of the house, and I could not help wondering what Benjamin and the Griggsville people, especially Elder Roper, would say if they could but see me fifteen minutes later.

I looked that machine over very carefully, but could see nothing which appeared dangerous. It looked like a very innocent, harmless concern, and not as if it was capable of hurling a person with the force of a thunderbolt, and I

decided to ride without further delay. I took hold of the handle bars and tried to get astride of the rickety contraption, but it was like a nervous horse, for whenever I tried to raise my foot off the ground, it would shy away from me, I would hop along on one foot for a short distance, and then try the other side, but it made no difference which side I tried, it was just the same to that cycle, and finally I grew desperate, jerked the machine around, straightened it up, and made one more effort to get my foot over the saddle, but the bloomers were awfully tight, and strong, too, and that hindered me somewhat. In making a supreme effort, my foot slipped off the pedal, and I fell across the saddle, striking on the front side of my belt, and nearly knocking the breath out of my body; but I did not tip over, although I hardly knew where I was for some time; but I rallied at last and was more determined than ever to mount that machine. I made another effort, and this time I succeeded in getting my foot over the seat, but the great momentum which I had acquired was not so easily to be overcome, and instead of stopping where I wanted to, I went right on; and there being no props or sideboards I went right over the wheel, striking on



INSTEAD OF STOPPING WHERE I WANTED TO, I WENT RIGHT ON
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one foot, and, losing my balance, was compelled to sit down, which I did in as easy and graceful a manner as circumstances would permit. It did not hurt me very much, and I then proceeded to untangle myself, which I had some trouble in doing, as I did not wish to tear my bloomers any worse than they were already torn.

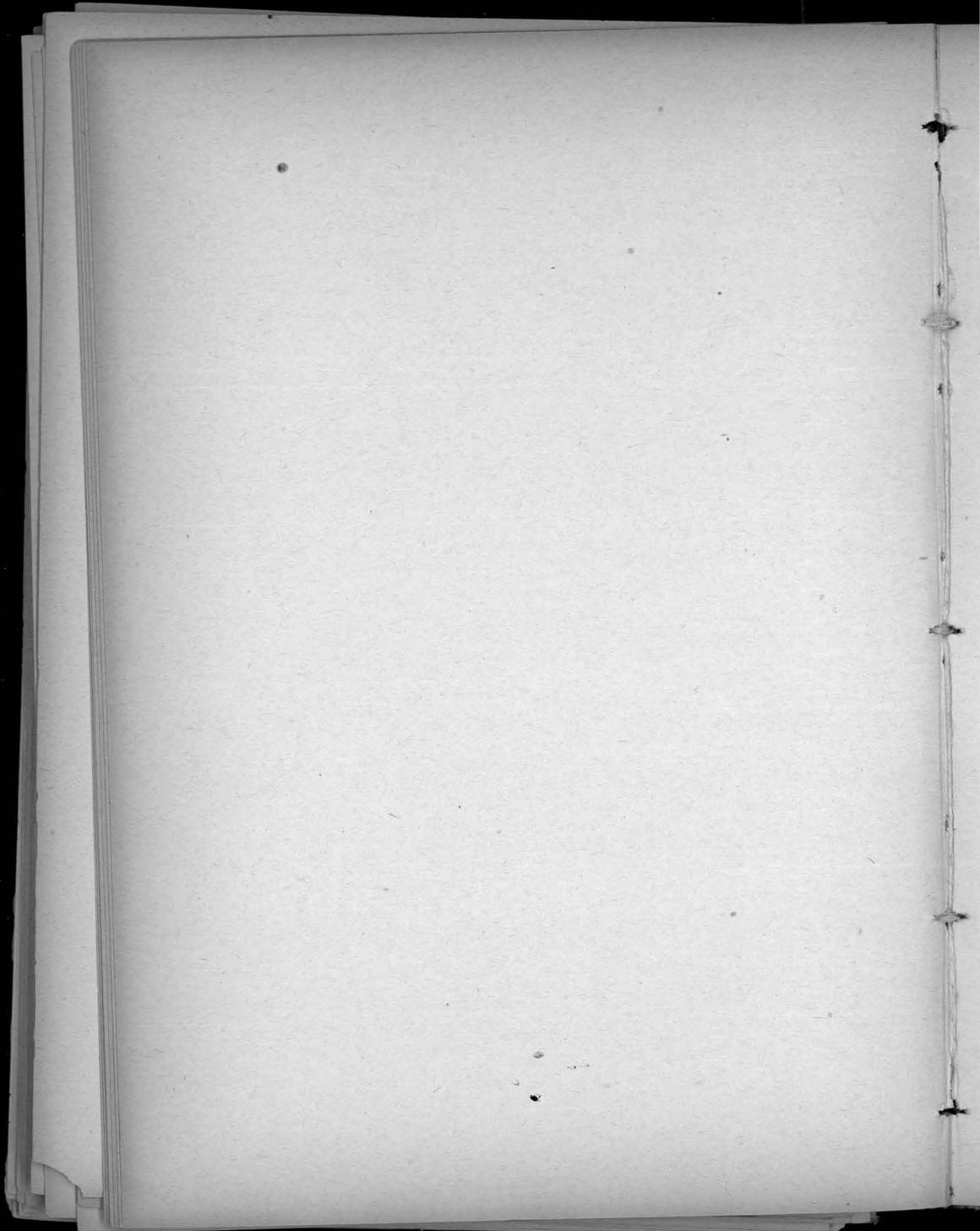
I set my teeth firmly and tried again, and this time success crowned my endeavors, for I managed by some means, to me unknown, to get my foot over the saddle and on the opposite pedal before the concern could tip over with me. The cycle had acquired considerable velocity from the impetus of my weight, and glided along without any perceptible exertion on my part, and this gave me confidence to work my feet as I had seen the others do, and the result surprised me in more ways than one, for at first the machine went along without the least trouble, and then it didn't, although it went for some distance after I dismounted and caused me no little inconvenience.

It happened something like this: I did not have a very good grip on the handles, and when the front wheel struck a small hillock, it turned sharply to one side, gave a dangerous

lurch which nearly upset me and sent my feet flying off the pedals; in my excitement I let go the handles and tried to dismount, and I was more than successful, as I never alighted from any vehicle in less than double the time it took me to alight from that treacherous machine. Just as I let go the handles, the machine gave another lurch, my feet flew up nearly as high as my head, and the cycle shot out from under me like a race horse, and for a single instant I was suspended between heaven and earth, and the next—— I struck terra mater with a thud like a pile driver, and I actually believe that if there had been a blacksmith's anvil under me, it would have been crushed. My bloomers broke right in two, my teeth flew out of my mouth, landing more than two rods away; I felt as if my spinal column had been driven through the top of my hat about six inches, and my entire body shortened by at least one foot, and for a few minutes I felt certain that every one of the 209 bones, which Walter says constitute the framework of the human body, were broken. I would not have been surprised to have found myself in a cellar, for I knew that I came down with enough force to have made a very deep



THE CYCLE SHOT OUT FROM UNDER ME LIKE A RACE HORSE.
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impression in the earth. I was not dead, and after taking an inventory of my remains, I concluded that no bones were broken. The sun was shining brightly, the birds were singing, and the cows stood staring at me in apparent amazement, wondering if a meteor had fallen or a lunatic had escaped from some asylum.

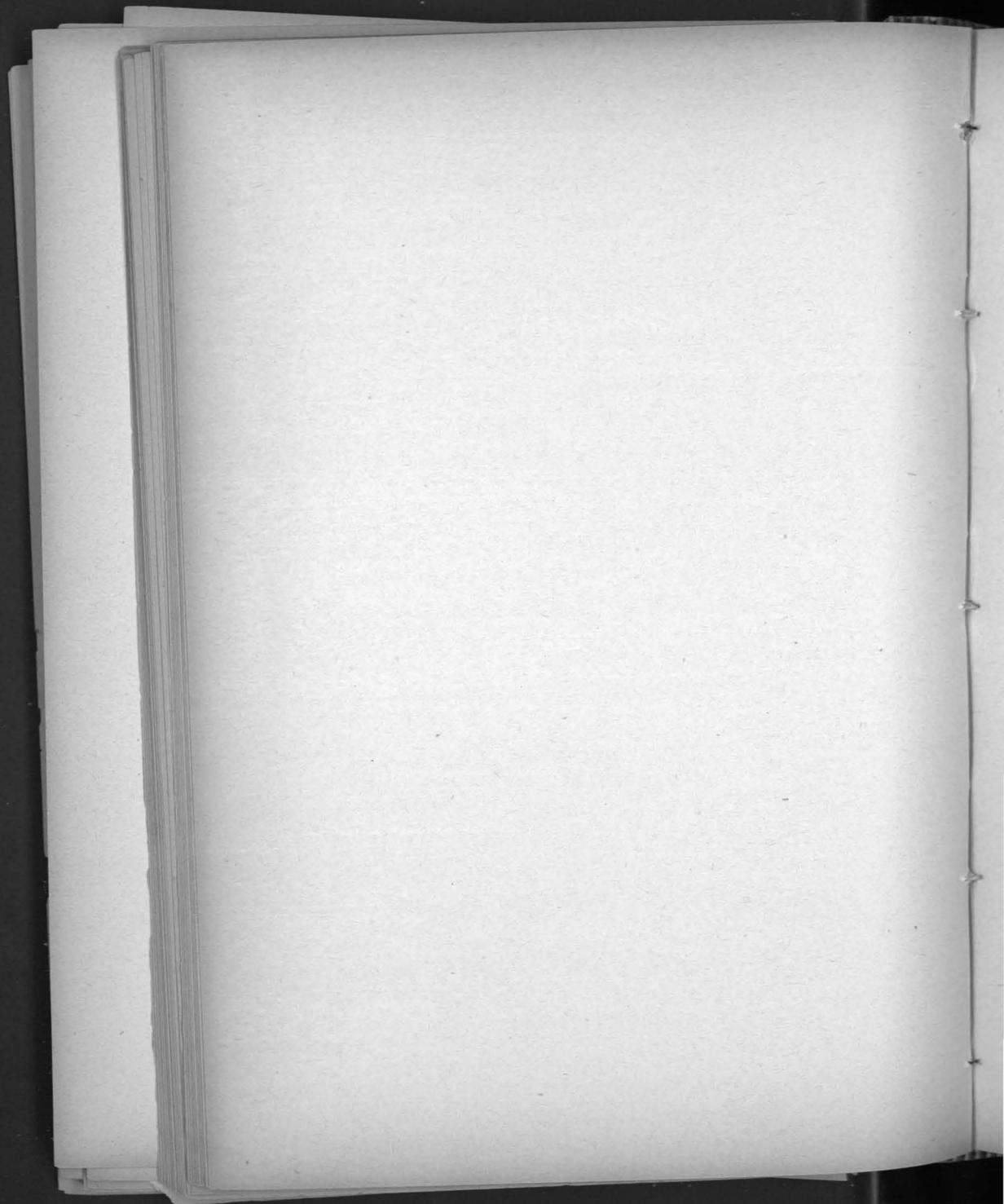
I have since ascertained from actual figures of what a terrible fall I had. Walter says that the striking force of a body is equal to the square of the weight multiplied by the velocity, which is 32 feet per second, and I know that I was in the air for nearly two seconds. I weigh just 240 pounds, and the square of 240 is 57,600 pounds, and this multiplied by 32, the velocity, gives a striking force of 1,843,200 pounds, or about 920 tons; this is the precise force with which I struck the ground, and it is no wonder that my false teeth flew out of my mouth.

I had learned several things from my morning's experience, and profited by them, too; I found that it was easier to mount the cycle when in motion than when standing still, and that when it started to tip over, that I could save myself by alighting on one foot and holding on to the machine. In less than an hour I could ride tolerably well, and could ride nearly a quarter

of a mile without tipping over. I also acquired confidence, and when I dismounted, for I was anxious to get the cycle out of the way before any of the family returned, I could ride almost as well as either Alice or Benjamin. I found a good hiding place for the wheel in the corn crib, where nobody would ever think of looking, and then repaired to the house to change my bloomers for something more suitable. The bloomers were a total wreck, and I never wore them afterwards. I used nearly a bottle of arnica on my numerous bruises, but was as smiling and pleasant as ever when Walter and Alice returned, and they never suspected what I had been doing.

I kept up my practice whenever opportunity offered, and it was not long ere I could ride as well as any of them, with the exception, perhaps, of Walter, and I felt certain that I could ride almost as fast as he could, but kept quiet, for the time had not yet arrived for me to disclose my new accomplishment.

GRIGGSVILLE CELEBRATES.



CHAPTER X.

GRIGGSVILLE CELEBRATES.

THE month of June was rapidly drawing to a close and we were making preparations to attend the grand celebration, which was to be held at Griggsville on July Fourth.

Walter, Alice and Benjamin were busily engaged in practicing, the former for some of the races, and the others for amusement, as neither of them had any idea of entering the races.

The Fourth dawned bright and clear, and Benjamin decided to drive me up in the buggy, but thought it best to bring the horse home and leave it until night, as he could ride back to town on his wheel; while Walter and Alice, who were to take part in the parade, would ride their wheels.

As Benjamin and I drove into Griggsville, I could not help noticing how few buggies and wagons were on the streets, as, with the exception of the farmers' wagons, there was nothing to be seen except bicycles, and an

occasional buggy. People were riding along the streets in crowds, and cycles were to be seen on every side.

Benjamin left me on the sidewalk, and returned with the horse and buggy.

The town was filling up with people, the most of whom were strangers to me, and nearly all of them came on cycles. It was nearly ten o'clock when I saw Walter and Alice ride up to the club house and dismount, and a few minutes later, Benjamin made his appearance, but he found a safe place for his wheel and joined me on the sidewalk.

The parade was to take place at ten o'clock, and at the appointed time the procession formed and took up its line of march. The procession was headed by the Griggsville Silver Cornet Band, all mounted on wheels. They had straps fastened to their arms above the elbows, and running down to the handle bars of their machines, and this device enabled them to guide their wheels without much trouble. Next came the Mayor, President of the Day, the orator, Senator Solomon Tubbs, ministers and other officials, all riding wheels. The double quartette, which was to furnish the music followed the officers on wheels, and immediately



IMMEDIATELY BEHIND THEM RODE THE GRIGGSVILLE GUARDS.
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behind them rode the Griggsville Guards. The members of the G. A. R. organization followed the military company. Next in line, came the fire companies; first the hose company, with their pneumatic-tired cart; their machines were arranged in pairs and were coupled together by cross bars, and could not tip over, while the ropes passed between the riders and were attached to each pair of cycles. The captain and foreman rode individual cycles and wheeled along by the side of the company. The hook and ladder cart was drawn in the same manner as the hose cart, and had pneumatic tires also. The rear of the procession was brought up by the different cycling clubs, of which there were more than half a dozen; the old and young men's, the large and small boys', the old and young ladies' and the large and small girls' clubs.

The procession paraded the principal streets and finally wound up at the park where the exercises of the day were to take place. A stand had been erected for the speakers, and seats arranged for the people. The exercises opened by music from the band, prayer by Elder Roper, singing by the double quartette, reading the Declaration of Independence by

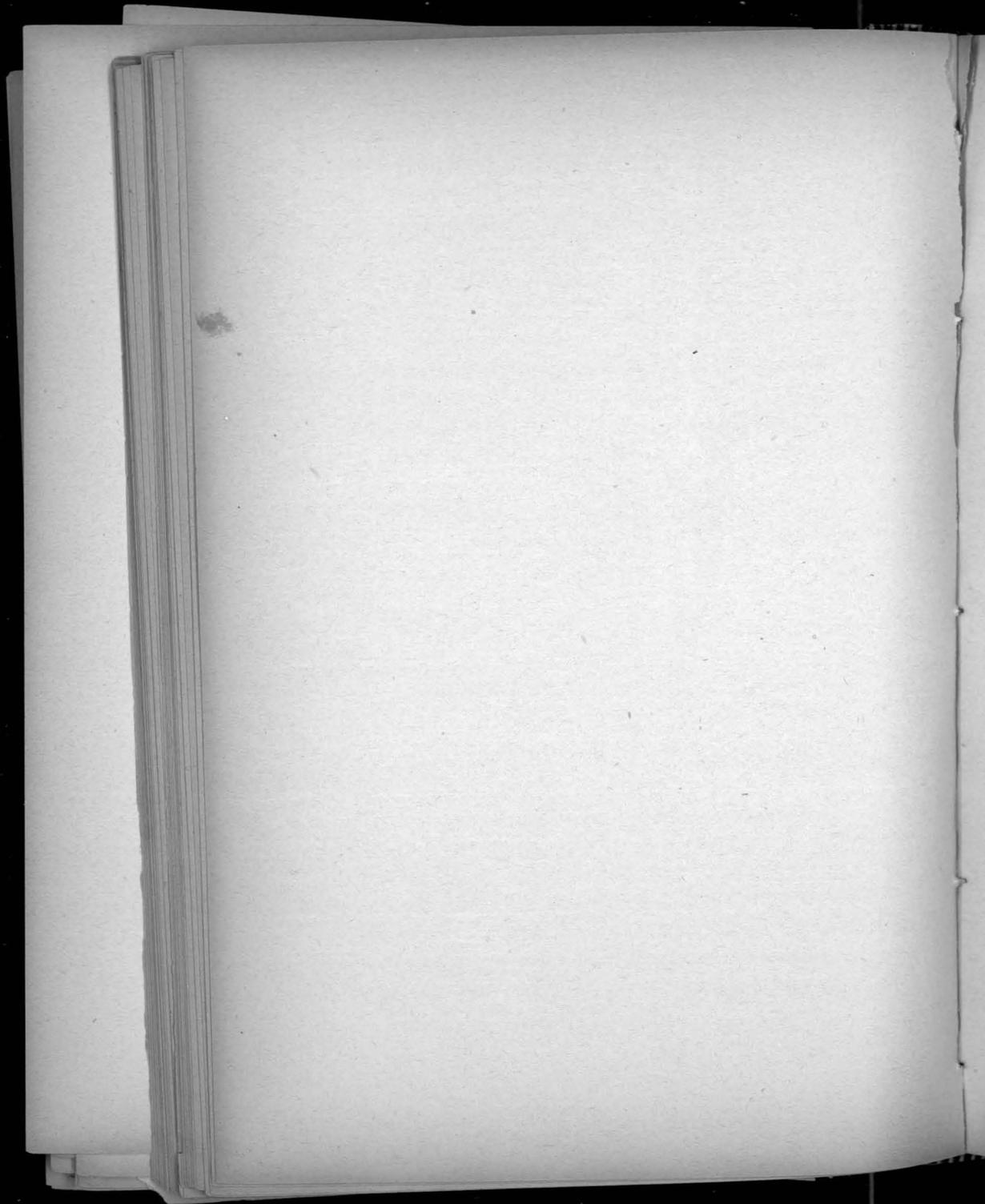
Miss Almira Spriggins, one of the Griggsville teachers, more singing, and the orator of the day, Senator Solomon Tubbs, was introduced. He was tall and thin, and previous to his election had been a lawyer and politician of considerable note.

The speaker was very patriotic and spoke in glowing terms of our origin as a nation, of the many trials and struggles of our forefathers, and how bravely they overcame all obstacles. Of the growth and development of the country, their struggles with England and Mexico, and finally of the terrible rebellion which devastated our land. But in spite of all these adverse circumstances we have risen to the position of the foremost country on the globe. He alluded in an eloquent and touching manner to such men as Washington, Jackson, Lincoln and Grant, and then spoke of the present peace and prosperity of the nation. He told of our many inventions and improvements in machinery, and devoted the remainder of his time to the bicycle craze.

The Senator said: "It is the natural tendency of man to run either to, or on, wheels; the whole planetary system is nothing more nor less than a grand cycle arrangement; the



"IT IS THE NATURAL TENDENCY OF MAN TO RUN EITHER TO, OR ON, WHEELS." Page 154.



different planets being circular, and revolving around each other at safe distances. Nearly all machinery is made on the wheel principle, our railroad trains, electric cars and steamboats are all propelled through the agency of wheels, without which they would be utterly useless. Everything runs to, and in, circles. There are financial and social circles and political rings. Wild animals, when pursued, invariably run in circles, and even man himself, when lost, always travels in a circle. Even our money is in the form of wheels, probably to facilitate its circulation and to increase the speed with which it gets away from us, and that a man had to hustle if he got hold of any of it. Time is measured by cycles, clocks and watches are simply markers of time, and run by wheels. Cyclones travel with a circular motion and with about the same speed as a circular saw."

The senator concluded his remarks by saying that bicycles were made on purely natural and scientific principles, and in adopting them we were but returning to ancient customs, and resurrecting an old pastime. The ancients were undoubtedly using cycles ages ago, although it was hardly probable that they ever brought

them to the stage of perfection which they have now attained.

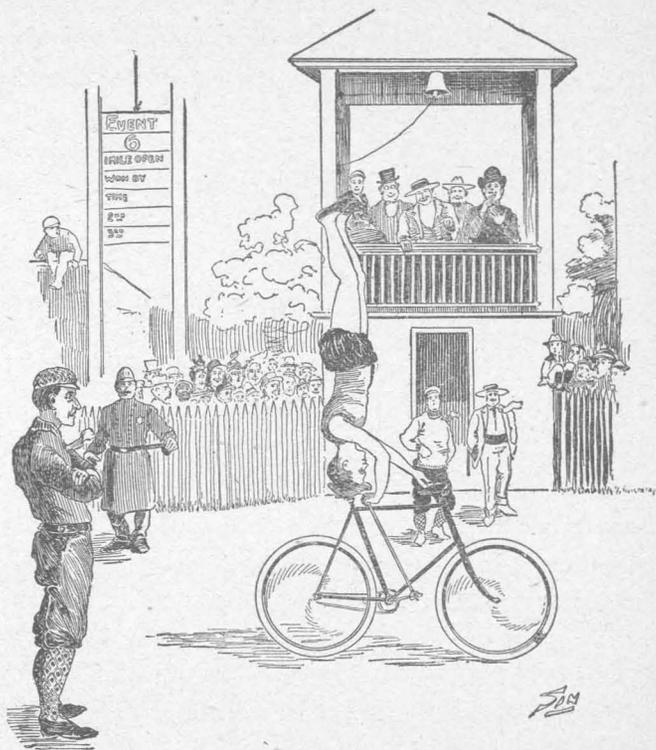
The exercises closed with singing and the benediction, and then all went for their dinners, as it was high noon.

Benjamin and I went to the Methodist church for our dinners, as the ladies of that society were trying to raise money with which to repair the parsonage.

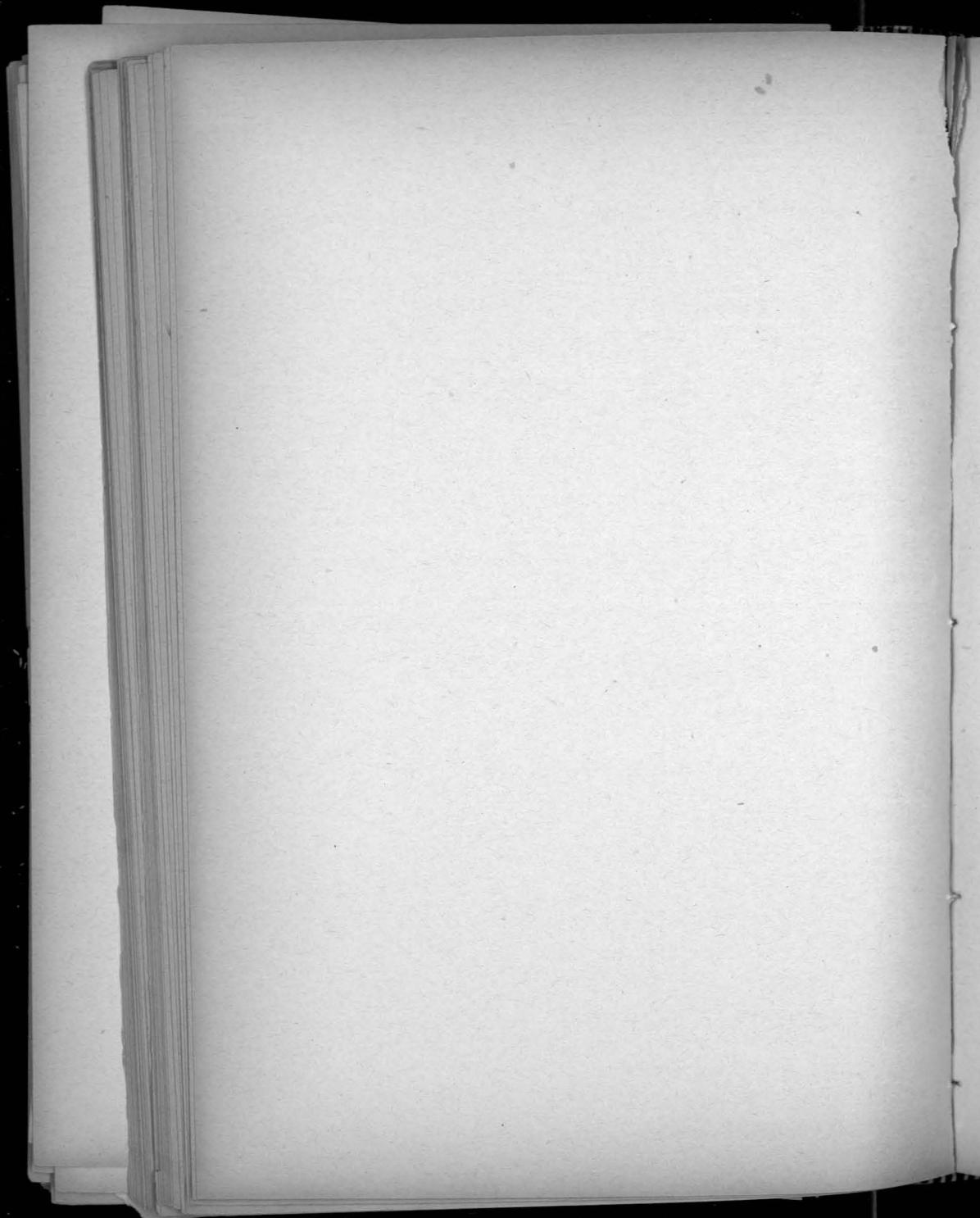
The sports of the day, principally bicycle races, commenced at 1:30 and took place at the cycling park. Walter won a couple of races and Dr. Salter won the old man's race, which greatly excited Benjamin, who thought that he could easily have beaten the doctor had he entered the race.

The prizes for fancy riding were nearly all taken by a stranger, who did some wonderful riding; he stood on his head and worked the pedals with his hands; stood up on the seat; rode in a circle; placed a small boy on his shoulders and on his head; rode backwards and forwards, and performed all kinds of tricks, and finished by riding an ordinary wagon wheel around the track.

Nearly all of the riders who participated in the races tried to tie themselves in a double



HE STOOD ON HIS HEAD AND WORKED THE PEDALS WITH HIS HANDS. Page 158.



bow knot, had their handle bars down nearly as low as the pedals, which caused them to arch their backs and hump themselves like camels or dromedaries, and to thrust their heads and necks forward like snakes, and although they may have gained speed by these maneuvers, they certainly did not add any particular grace to their movements or elegance to their positions. Most of the races were won by people whom I did not know, although Griggsville captured quite a number of them.

The Griggsville Guards gave a mounted drill, which caused considerable amusement and excitement, as the most of them were beginners on the wheel, and the manner in which they made some evolutions and mixed themselves up, was not only funny, but actually dangerous, as they got badly tangled up.

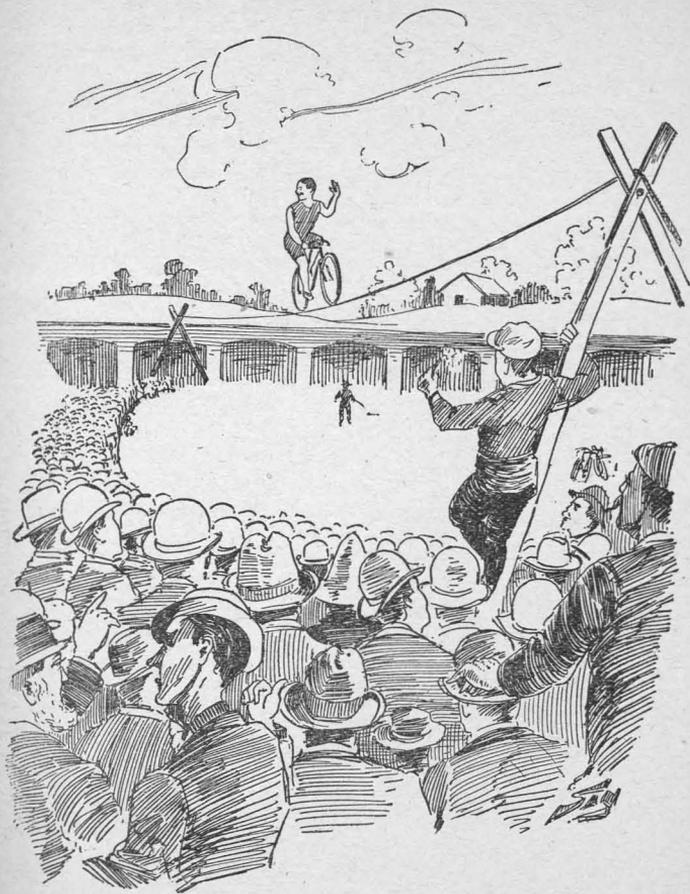
Fortunately nobody was killed, and the sports concluded with a tight rope exhibition, in which a man not only walked the rope, but rode backwards and forwards on a bicycle at a distance of fifty feet from the ground. Walter said that the tires had been removed from the wheels, which, being grooved, just fitted the rope.

After supper, the cycling clubs gave a torch-

light parade. There were over 300 wheelmen in line, with their lamps lighted, and they made a fine appearance as they rode up and down the streets, preceded by the band. They were provided with Roman candles, firecrackers and other fireworks, and at times it looked like a solid column of fire, the air being literally filled with the different colored lights.

The evening closed with a grand display of fireworks in numerous designs, one of which was a large bicycle that ran on a wire; it was a living wheel of fire, and caused no little comment.

Benjamin went home after the horse and buggy, and I waited with Walter and Alice for his return. It was ten o'clock when he arrived and we had started for home completely tired out with the day's excitement. We found Walter and Alice, who had beaten us home, discussing the events of the day, but we were too tired and sleepy to talk, and soon all retired to rest, and thus closed the great celebration at Griggsville.



A MAN RODE BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS ON A BICYCLE. Page 161



MORE EVIDENCE OF THE
CRAZE.



THE EVENING CLOSED WITH A GRAND DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS.
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CHAPTER XI.

MORE EVIDENCE OF THE CRAZE.

HAVING recovered from my first experience with a wheel, and the Griggsville celebration, I concluded to drive to town and get Sarah Griggs to make me a new pair of bloomers.

As I drove leisurely along, more than a dozen cyclists passed me with a rush and a whirl. Driving up on Main street to hitch, as was my custom, I noticed that the hitching racks had all been removed, and inquired of the city marshal, where they expected people to tie their horses when they came to town? He informed me that so few people drove horses that the hitching posts were not needed, and were in the way of the cyclists, but that I could find a place to tie my horse on some of the back streets.

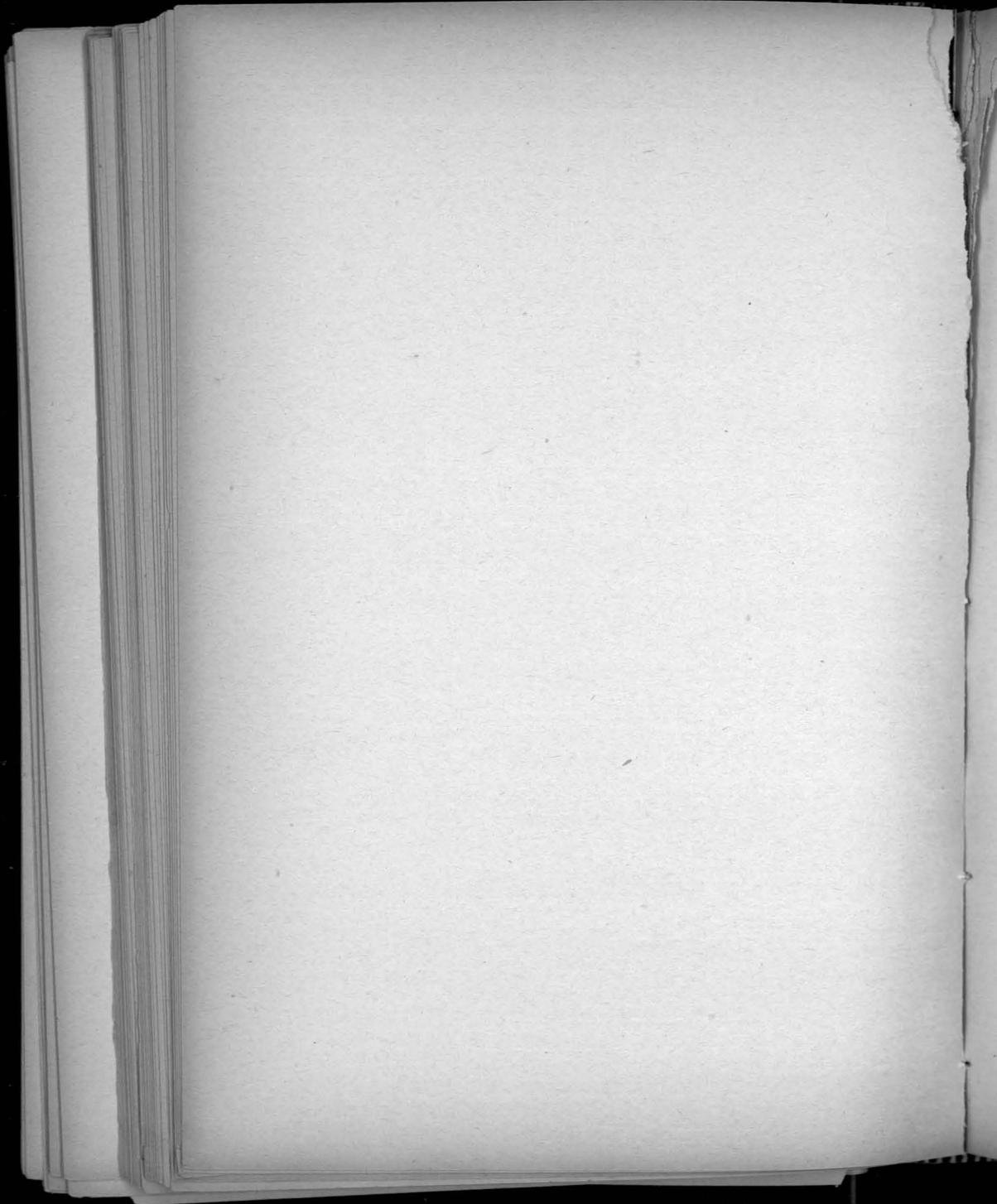
As I drove west on Main street, I saw, at the intersection of Main and Adams streets, a large new building which was not yet finished.

I learned that the lower floor was to be used as a bicycle repository, and the upper one was to be used by the Griggsville Cycling Club. I noticed a large sign in front of the old Farwell Hall, on the opposite side of the street, which read: "Bicycle School, Prof. Robert Samuels, Instructor. Class Instructions, \$1.00 per term of 12 Lessons. Private Lessons, 25 cents each." I afterwards learned that Prof. Samuels was a colored gentleman, who had just opened the school, and already had more pupils than he could well attend to.

At Price's livery stable, I noticed a large sign which read: "Bicycles for rent, by the hour, day or week." The stable was full of bicycles, while all the buggies and carriages were piled up in the rear of the barn, and not a horse in sight. I was told that the proprietor was compelled to get rid of his horses and throw out his buggies to make room for the cycles, which alone were in demand.

As I turned and drove into a side street, I passed several blacksmith shops, all of which had been turned into bicycle repair shops, and they seemed to be doing a rushing business.

Hitching my horse, which looked very lonesome, I started back to Main street on foot. I



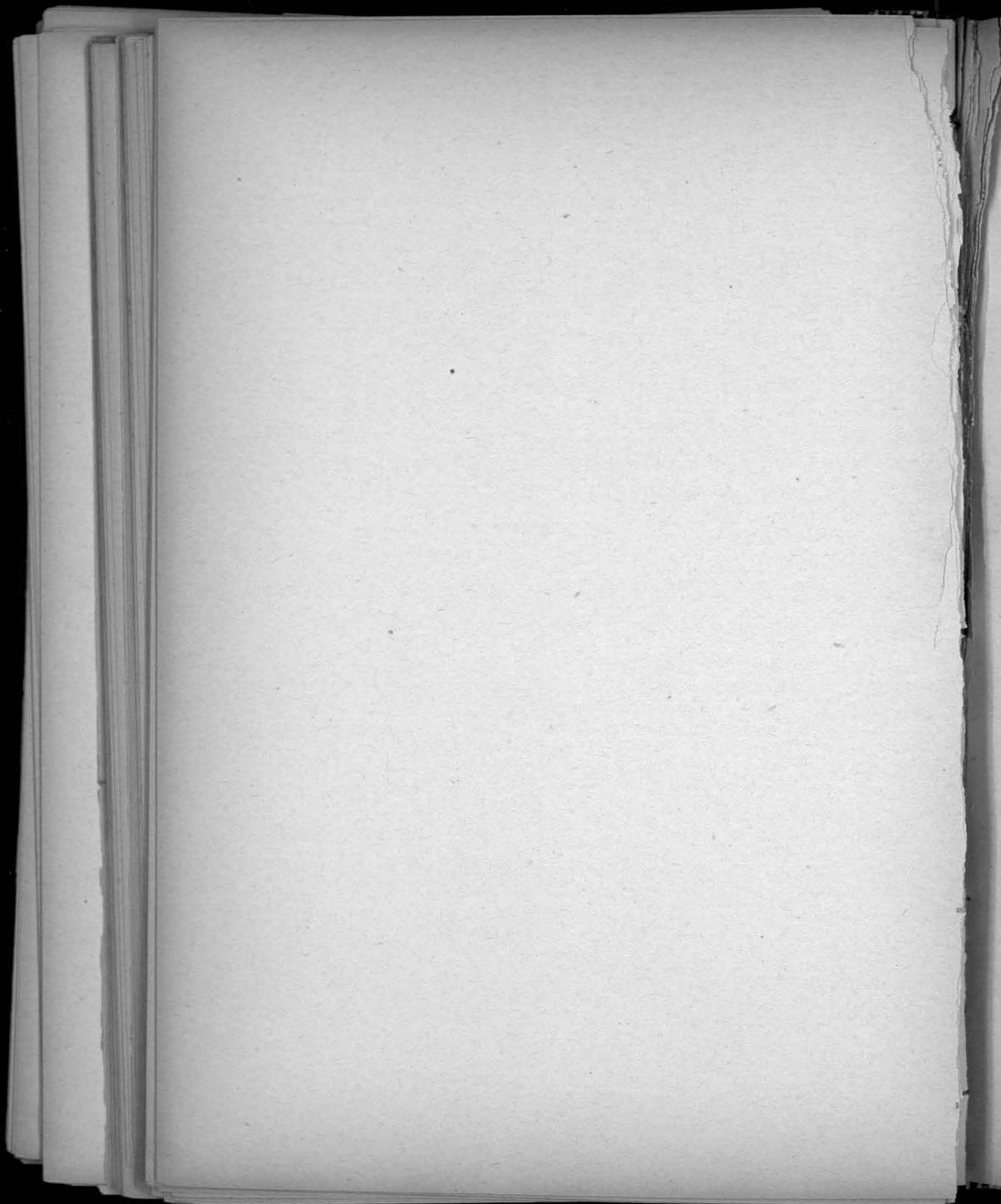
experienced considerable difficulty at the street crossings, for the numerous wheels which went whizzing by kept me busy dodging them. I saw several pedestrians who seemed to have solved the problem of how to keep out of the way of the wheels; they wore what might have been called life preservers. These preservers were made of wicker work, presumably rattan, as they were very light, and were nothing more nor less than a frame work which was supported by a neckyoke across the shoulders, and small wheels at the bottom; the wearer pushed the crate or frame along as he walked, and if a cyclist struck the preserver, the wearer was not injured, and the rider usually got the worst of it.

There was a constant jingling of bicycle gongs, which sounded like the electric car gongs in some of our large cities; the streets were literally filled with cycles, and my curiosity was aroused to learn who all these cranks could be. I stopped and watched the procession awhile, and the first person whom I recognized was Judge Doty; the judge is about sixty years of age, and is a very dignified old gentleman; he wore a high silk hat, spectacles and a Prince Albert coat, buttoned up to the

chin, carried his head high in the air, and had all the pompous ways which characterized him when on the bench. Next came good old Deacon Morris, one of the oldest and staunchest supporters of our church; the deacon is short and stout, and like the Judge, sat up straight and looked neither to the right or the left. Lawyer Harris was just behind the deacon, and was riding like a whirlwind; he is a small, weazened looking little man of about forty-five, very nervous and energetic, and I afterwards learned was president of the Griggsville Cycling Club. My attention was next attracted by several ladies who were laughing and giggling as they rode along; they were teachers in the Griggsville public schools, and were headed by Prof. Wiggins, the superintendent of the school; I don't believe that any of the teachers are under forty-five, and I know that the professor is at least fifty years old. I began to think that I was not such a fool after all, as most of the people I had seen were as old as, or older than, myself. Miss Dobbs, the music teacher, was on her way to give lessons, mounted on a brand new wheel and dressed in a fine suit of bloomers, which was really the prettiest I had yet



THEY WORE WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN CALLED LIFE PRESERVERS
Page 171.



seen. Miss Dobbs had hardly passed when a man came flying down the street; he was humped over and pedaling as if his life depended upon the number of revolutions which he could make in a given time; immediately behind him came another cyclist whom I recognized as the city marshal; he was gaining on the foremost rider, and I turned and asked a bystander why they were racing, and he told me that they were not racing, but that the man who was in the lead had violated a town ordinance by riding on the sidewalk and that the marshal was trying to catch him, and in less than five minutes the marshal returned with his prisoner, the marshal having a chain attached to a pair of handcuffs which adorned the wrists of his prisoner.

I continued on my way up the street, and stopped at Miss Pratt's millinery store, but did not go in, as the store was completely blocked up with bicycles, Miss Pratt having recently added a fine stock of ladies' wheels to her establishment; the windows were filled with bloomers and cycling caps and hats. The hardware, grocery, drug, clothing and jewelry stores all carried lines of bicycles and cycling goods, and even the restaurantkeepers had wheels for sale.

At last I reached Carpenter's dry goods store, and walked, or rather stumbled in, as the space between the counters was completely filled with cycles of all sizes and makes. I found a place where I could get up to the counter and told the clerk that I wished to look at some flannel; he showed me several pieces; I selected a dark blue, which I thought would be suitable for one of my complexion, and remembering my former experience, bought enough to insure plenty of room. I started back to the buggy, and was again compelled to run the blockade. I did so without accident, although I was glad when I found myself safely in the buggy.

I drove at once to the residence of Sarah Griggs, and found that amiable spinster at home. Sarah is about forty years old, but claims to be only twenty-four; her hair is supposed to be curly, and she keeps it well dyed; her teeth are just like mine, she bought them of the same man.

"Good morning, Sarah," said I.

"Good morning, Betsey," said she.

"I want to have a little confidential conversation with you," said I.

"All right, Betsey, go ahead, for you know that you can rely on my silence."

"Now Sarah, I want you to understand that all I am going to say to you must be kept a secret, for I would not have anybody know anything about it for the world."

"I'll never mention it to a living soul," said she.

"You remember, Sarah Ann," said I, calling her by her middle name, which I knew she particularly disliked, "that I never said a word to anybody about the time, something over twenty years ago, when you tried to elope with Tom Higgins, and if you keep what I am about to tell you to yourself, I never will."

Sarah colored up and said something about its not being that long since she made a fool of herself. I had given her a good hint and knew that I could trust her.

"I am going to ride a bicycle, Sarah; in fact, I have already ridden one."

"Betsey Jane Jones, are you mad?" she cried.

"No! I am not mad, but am simply stating a fact," I said coolly, and I want you to make me some bloomers."

"Well, I never!" was all that she could say.

I showed her the goods which I had brought, and she thought that she could get enough out of the piece to make them.

Before leaving, I asked her why she did not get a bicycle, as all the other girls were doing. I could see that the shot struck all right, for she giggled, and said that she thought she would look much better than some people, as she had such a supple and graceful figure.

I thought of our lima bean poles at home, dressed in bloomers, and said that I thought she would make a fine appearance on a wheel.

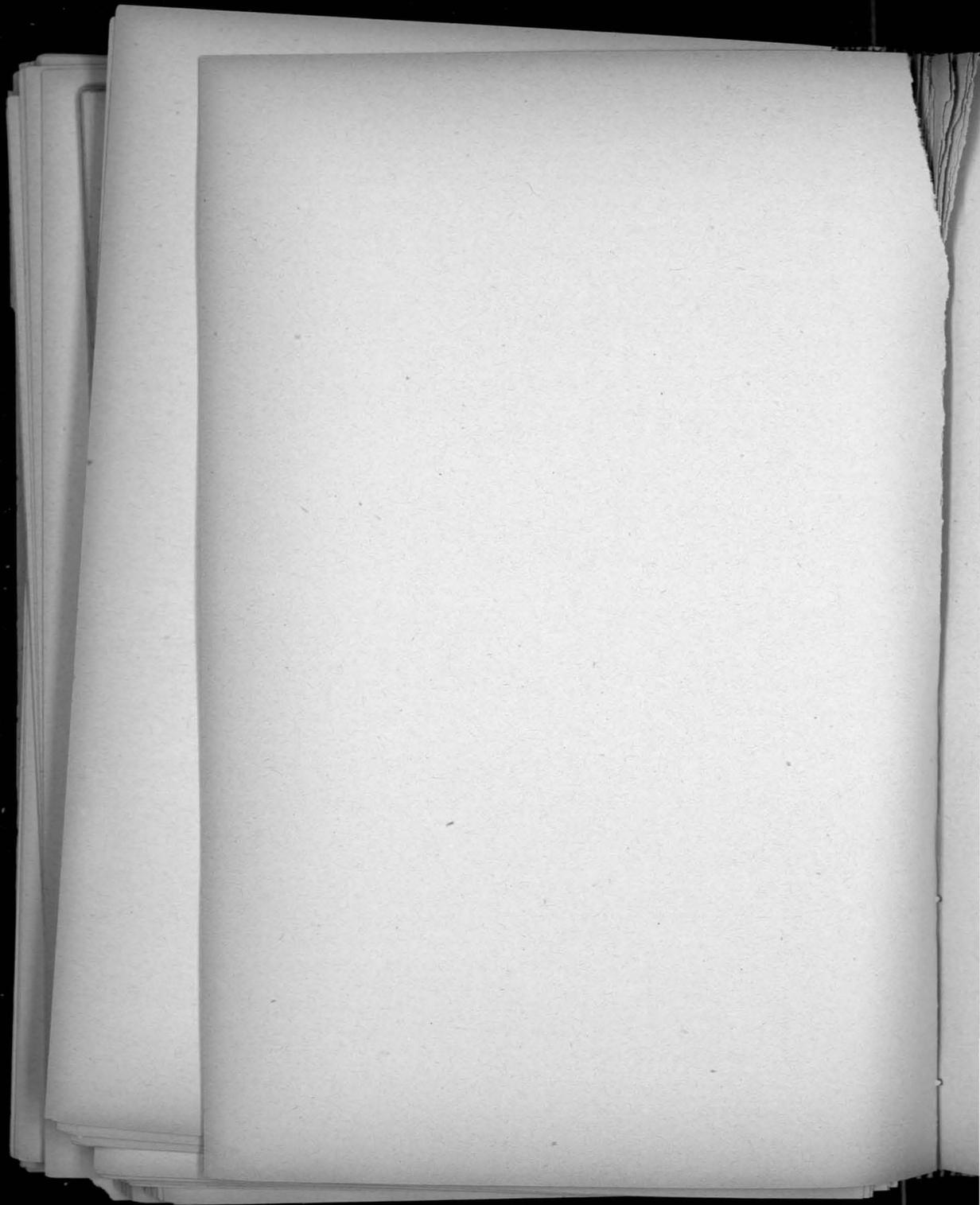
She promised to make the bloomers in time for me to get them the next day.

As I stepped out of the yard to get into the buggy, I experienced a sudden and unpleasant shock, which came very near precipitating me into the gutter.

The widow Spinks, whose husband (poor man) died about a year ago, leaving her a good farm and five children, had come sailing down the street, and did not see me until it was too late. She was riding on the sidewalk, contrary to the town ordinance. As I had my back toward her, I, of course, did not see her, and the rubber tire did not bruise me much, just shook me up a little, but the result to the widow was not pleasant, either. She rolled off the wheel, landing on the back of her head, which could not have been as soft as it looked, or it



SHE WAS RIDING ON THE SIDEWALK, CONTRARY TO THE TOWN
ORDINANCE. Page 178.



would have been crushed. Her wheel ran into the fence, tipped over, and bent the pedals and handle bars.

I was mad, and so was the widow.

"What do you mean by running over me?" I asked in a rather sharp tone.

"What do you mean by getting in my way, you old elephant?" said the widow.

"Don't you call me an elephant," I screamed, "or I'll have you arrested and fined for violating the ordinance."

"I don't care if you do," snapped the widow, "if you wasn't so big and clumsy you could keep out of the way."

"If you would stay at home and take care of your young ones, you wouldn't have so much time to be gadding around the street, looking for another husband," I said contemptuously.

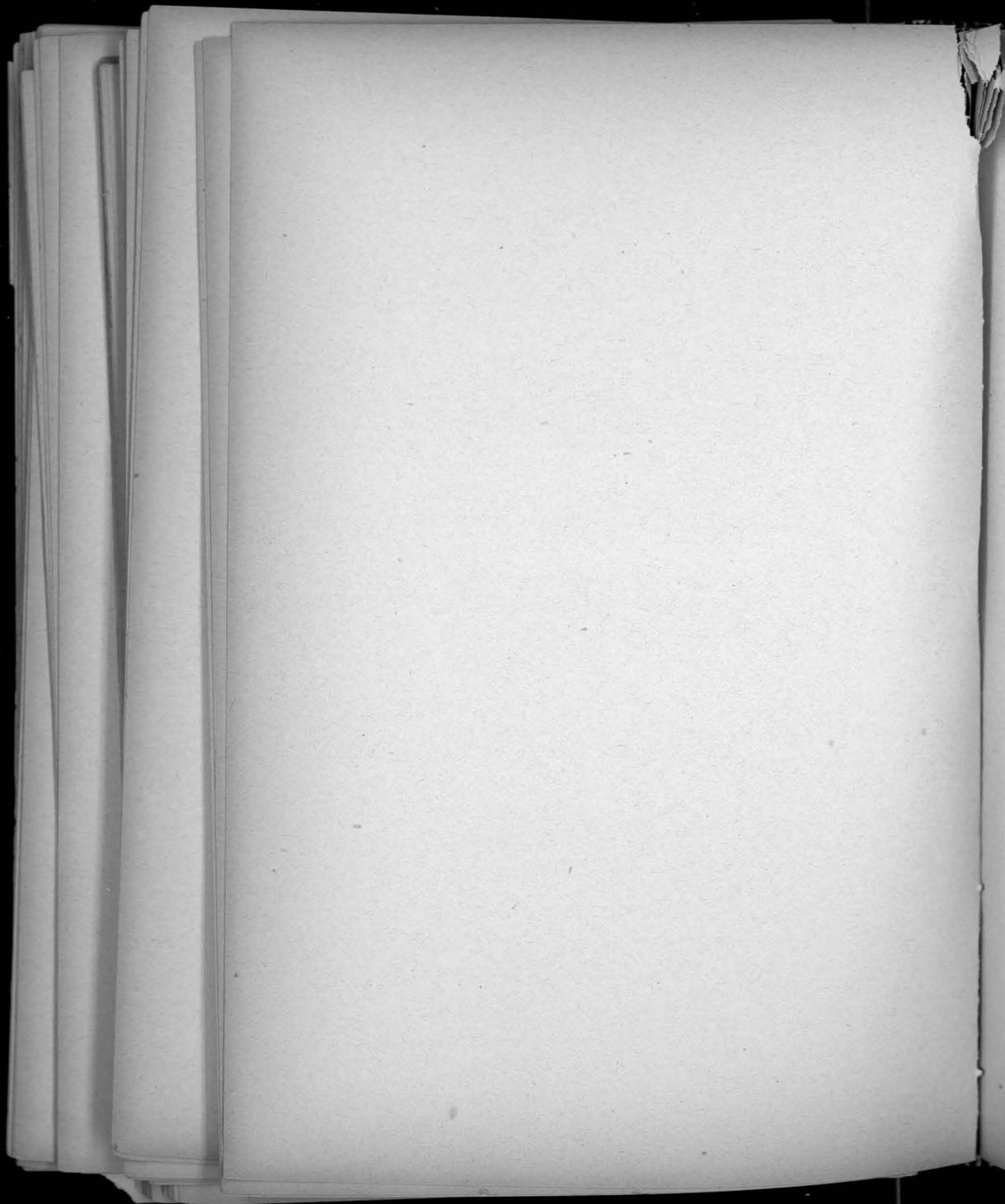
It is hard to tell where and how the trouble might have ended if Elder Roper had not come riding up.

He picked up the widow's wheel, and asked if she was hurt, and what had happened.

"Oh, nothing," said she, "nothing but a slight accident; Mrs. Jones did not mean to upset my wheel, and I am not hurt very much."

I was too disgusted to speak; the elder unhitched my horse, helped me into the buggy and I drove away, leaving him talking to the widow.

THE INFIRMARY.



CHAPTER XII.

THE INFIRMARY.

ONE morning about the middle of July, Benjamin complained of being ill, said his back and lungs pained him terribly. I was afraid that he was going to have a serious time and thought it best "to take time by the forelock," and told him that I was going to drive down town to see Dr. Salter; but like all men he objected, and said that he would be all right in a day or two; but I knew better, and so had Walter hitch up the horse and buggy.

On my way to town, I met and passed the usual number of cyclists, for now we seldom saw a buggy on the road.

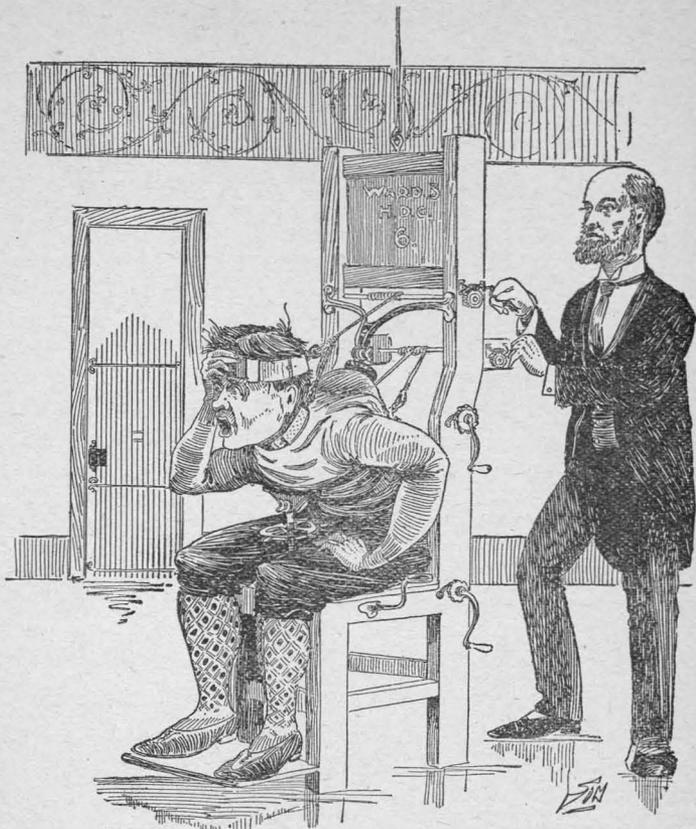
On arriving at the doctor's office I found the worthy sawbones in, and told him the nature of my errand.

He said that Benjamin had injured himself by bending over his bicycle too much, and that it was becoming a very common complaint which would soon fill our cemeteries if the habit was not broken up.

While prescribing for Benjamin, he went on to say: "For a time after the wheel craze had taken possession of the people, I thought I would be compelled to give up my profession, as all who rode wheels were so strong and healthy; and nearly everybody rode, that my patients were becoming few and far between. I had about made up my mind to go into some other business, when I noticed the bad positions of some of the cyclists, and knew that there would soon be a demand for my services. I at once began the erection of a large building on the corner of Main and Second avenue, to be used as an infirmary, and long before it was completed, I had several cases of curvature of the spine on my hands, to say nothing of patching up beginners, and occasionally an old cyclist had run either over or into something."

By this time the doctor had finished putting up the medicine and liniment for Benjamin and after giving me the necessary directions, invited me to accompany him to the new infirmary.

We walked over to the new building, which was a substantial brick edifice, three stories in height, situated in the center of the grounds and pretty well back from the street.



HE STEPPED BEHIND THE MACHINE AND BEGAN TO TURN THE SCREWS. Page 190.



Walking up a broad flight of stone steps into the large hall, we turned to the right and entered the reception room, which was richly furnished and finely decorated. On the opposite side of the hall was the office and private consultation room. The balance of the first floor was taken up by sitting rooms, dining rooms and kitchen. We ascended to the second story, which contained the sleeping rooms of the patients, and up to the third story where the treatment rooms, bath rooms and a large room for surgical operations were located.

The doctor opened the door of a room on the left side of the hall and invited me to enter. A young man was lying on his side on a small cot when the doctor approached and assisted him to rise. I saw that he had an enormous hump on his back which would have prevented his lying in any other position, had he so desired. If the man had been straightened out, he would have been more than six feet tall, but owing to his deformity he did not appear to be five feet, and possibly not more than four and one-half feet in height.

His chest, or what had once represented it, was sunken in or concaved, while his shoulders were bent forward until they almost met in

front and over his chest; his neck was bent forward so far that he could not have seen an object three feet in front of him, and the only way he could prevent tipping over was by the use of a stout cane; his legs were also terribly bent and misshapen, and he did not look as though he could live more than a week.

"This," said the doctor, "is one of the results of a bad position in riding a wheel, but I hope to straighten out all the kinks in his spinal column in less than six months; but it is a very bad case, and will require a great deal of skill and time to make him as good as new; he only came yesterday, and has taken but one treatment."

The doctor then wheeled a queer-looking machine out into the middle of the floor; it resembled a chair, with the exception that there was an upright shaft at the back, to which were attached a number of leather bands; the shaft was in sections, which acted independently of each other, and were moved by means of large screws and small wheels, which could be easily turned. The doctor assisted the patient into the chair, and then busied himself for ten minutes in arranging the bands; loosening this one and tightening that one, and at last

he stepped behind the machine and began to turn the screws and wheels very carefully; it was not long before I could see the patient begin to straighten out a little. His shoulders were drawn backward, his chest forward, and the hump in the middle of his vertebræ began to lessen; the bands around his head straightened out his neck so that he could look me in the face without much trouble. Suddenly the man let out a yell that could have been heard for more than half a mile, and then the doctor stopped turning the screws, and asked the man if he could stand no more pressure, and he howled out that he did not want to die yet, and to let up on that turning business. The doctor next adjusted something which looked like the splints used to set broken limbs, about the man's legs and arms; these were also made in sections, and contained a large number of screws, which the doctor commenced turning with considerable rapidity, and this did not seem to cause the patient as much suffering as the first process had done. The doctor discontinued this work in a few minutes, and completed his operations by fastening several ropes, which were arranged in the form of a pulley, to the man's chair; the pulley was fastened to

the ceiling directly above the chair, and the doctor proceeded to wind his patient up by means of a small windlass in one corner of the room; he raised the man, chair and all, about two feet from the floor, and then fastened a couple of coiled steel springs to the man's feet, and these were fastened to the floor; he then gave the windlass a few more turns, and told the man that he would be back in half an hour to see how he was getting on.

We then left the room and entered another where we found a young man lying on a cot. The doctor said that he had been there for some time and that his spine was nearly straightened out, but that his limbs were not. The doctor rolled another queer looking contrivance into the middle of the room; it looked like a small bench with an easy chair back, and was nicely padded. The patient's legs were bowed so far apart that he could not have stopped a pig in a three foot alley, and his knees were bent forward like those of a horse with the string halt. The doctor placed him on the bench in a sitting posture with his back and head against the rest, to which he strapped him, and then proceeded to adjust a number of bandages and steel springs around the man's legs, and finished

by turning a lot more screws and wheels; this had the effect of straightening his legs in both ways, and must have been decidedly painful, judging from the expression of the man's face; but he made no noise, evidently being accustomed to the treatment but at last he said: "That will do, doctor; I can't stand any more this time." The doctor stopped manipulating the screws and said: "We will soon have you all right, James." As we turned to leave the room, the doctor told the patient that he would return in about an hour.

In the adjoining room we saw a young man who was nearly straight, having but a slight bend in his spine and his limbs were not nearly as crooked as those of the two men whom I had just seen.

"How are you this morning, Albert?" asked the doctor, in his usual cheery tone.

"I am feeling much better, and hope to get out of here next week," replied the young man addressed as Albert.

"I will give you your morning treatment now," said Dr. Salter.

The young man removed his coat and vest and climbed upon a machine which resembled the large turning lathes used in machine shops.

He stretched himself at full length upon the bed of the lathe, and the doctor went to work adjusting the bandages; this, he said, is the finishing room, and when patients leave this room they are considered cured.

The machine was a complicated concern, being a mass of wheels, springs and screws, which straightened every bone and muscle in the body, and in less than five minutes the young man was as straight as an arrow. The doctor adjusted the pillow under his head and telling him that we would be back before noon, we left the room.

"I will show you one of my lady patients now," said the doctor. We entered a room on the opposite side of the hall, where we saw a young woman lying on a couch. She was lying flat on her back for the same reason that the young man in the first room was lying on his side, viz., because she could not lie in any other way.

"This young lady," said the doctor "was injured because she would not wear bloomers, and her skirts got tangled in her machine and gave her a terrible fall which broke and dislocated at least half a dozen ribs, and it also produced a side curvature of the spine; I have

fixed the ribs all right, but the spine is a more difficult problem, and takes more time and labor, but time will remedy this." He raised the young lady to a sitting posture and then I discovered that her back was bent, or rather that her spine was curved sideways, until her head and the upper part of her body was at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees from the lower part of her body; she wore a corset outside her dress which appeared to be made of steel springs. The doctor removed this corset and placed her in another chair contrivance which also had an upright shaft, but, unlike the first, the shaft was at the side instead of the back, and after adjusting the proper bandages, he commenced to turn the screws as he had in the first instance, and the result was that the young lady's spine began to straighten out. The doctor worked very carefully, and at last asked her if she did not think that she had about all the pressure that she could stand, but she replied in the negative, and the doctor continued his work, only stopping to remark that "ladies could stand a great deal more pressure about the waist than the men could;" the young lady did not even smile, but soon intimated that the doctor had better stop, which

he did, telling her that he would return in an hour and release her.

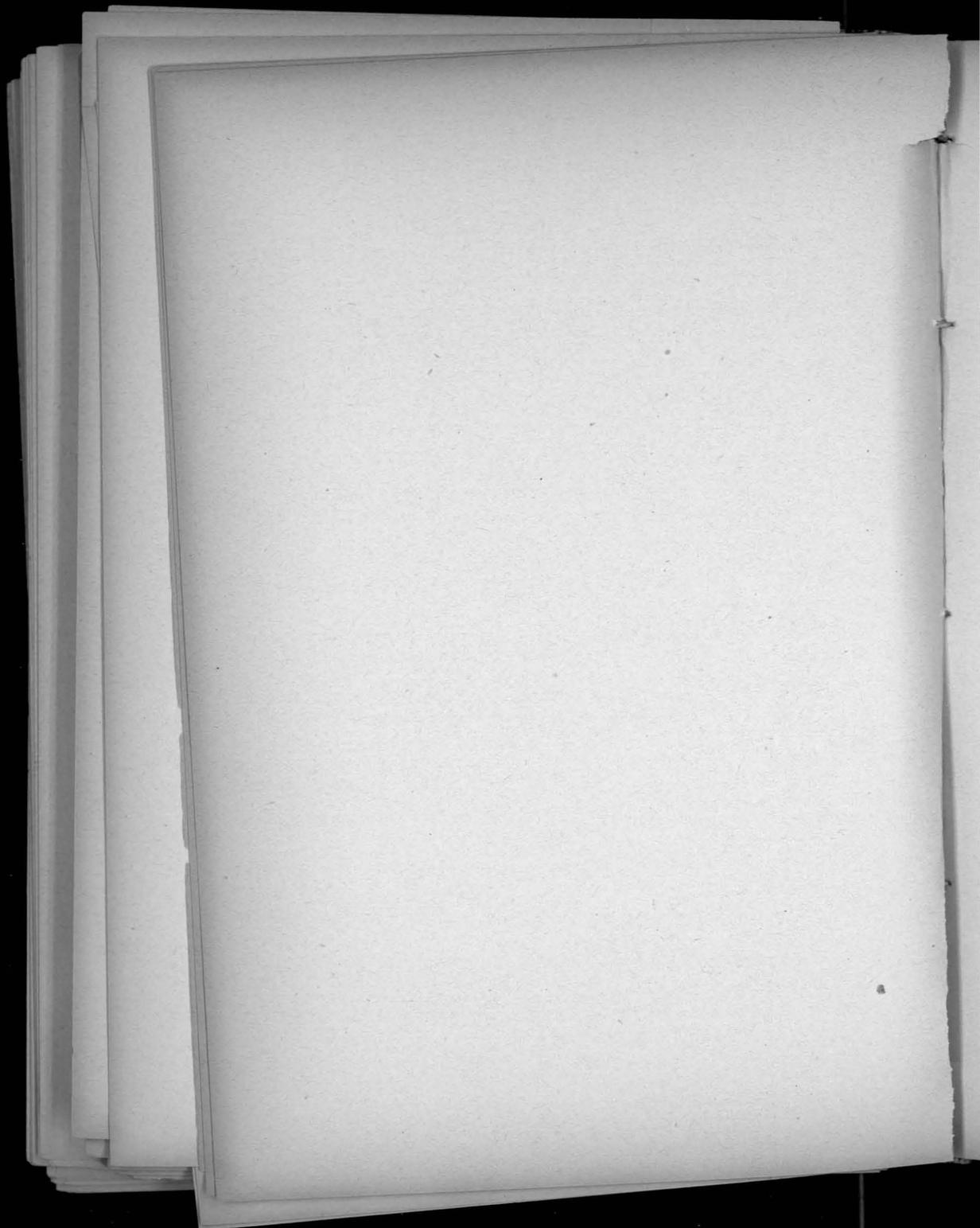
The doctor said that he had several surgical operations to perform that afternoon, and two or three beginners to patch up.

He then took me into the bath rooms where he said that the patients were boiled and steamed every day, as it made the straightening process much easier, for the bathing and steaming rendered the bones and muscles more pliable.

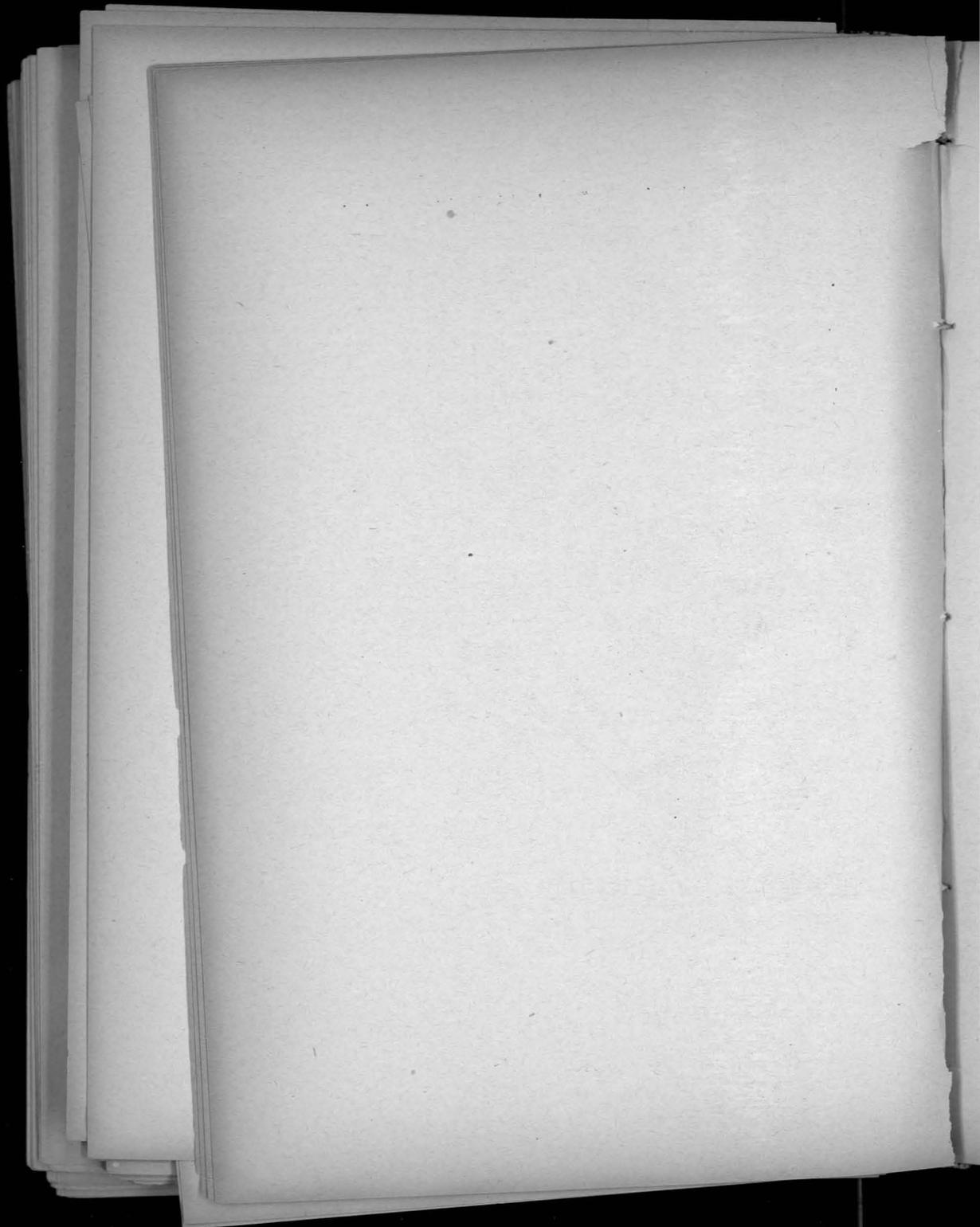
As it was nearly dinner time, I told the doctor that I would be compelled to go, and thanked him for his kindness in showing me about the place. As we descended the stairs, he told me that the building was lighted by electricity and would be heated by steam in the winter. He said that he did not know how long the business would last, but probably until the people got a little more sense and learned to ride in a proper position, and when they did that he would not have much to do, only an occasional beginner to fix up, but that possibly some other craze similar to the roller skating fever, and equally as injurious in its results, might give him plenty of work to do. He also said that the habit of bending and

humping over when riding was a direct violation of natural laws, and these people would, like all others, pay the penalty of such violation, as the cramped position of the spine, ribs, arms, legs, respiratory and circulatory organs, would end disastrously to any man or woman, no matter how strong they might be naturally, and that it was only a question of time with the best of them.

I got my medicine, and bidding the doctor good-bye I got into my buggy and started for home well satisfied with my visit to the infirmary.

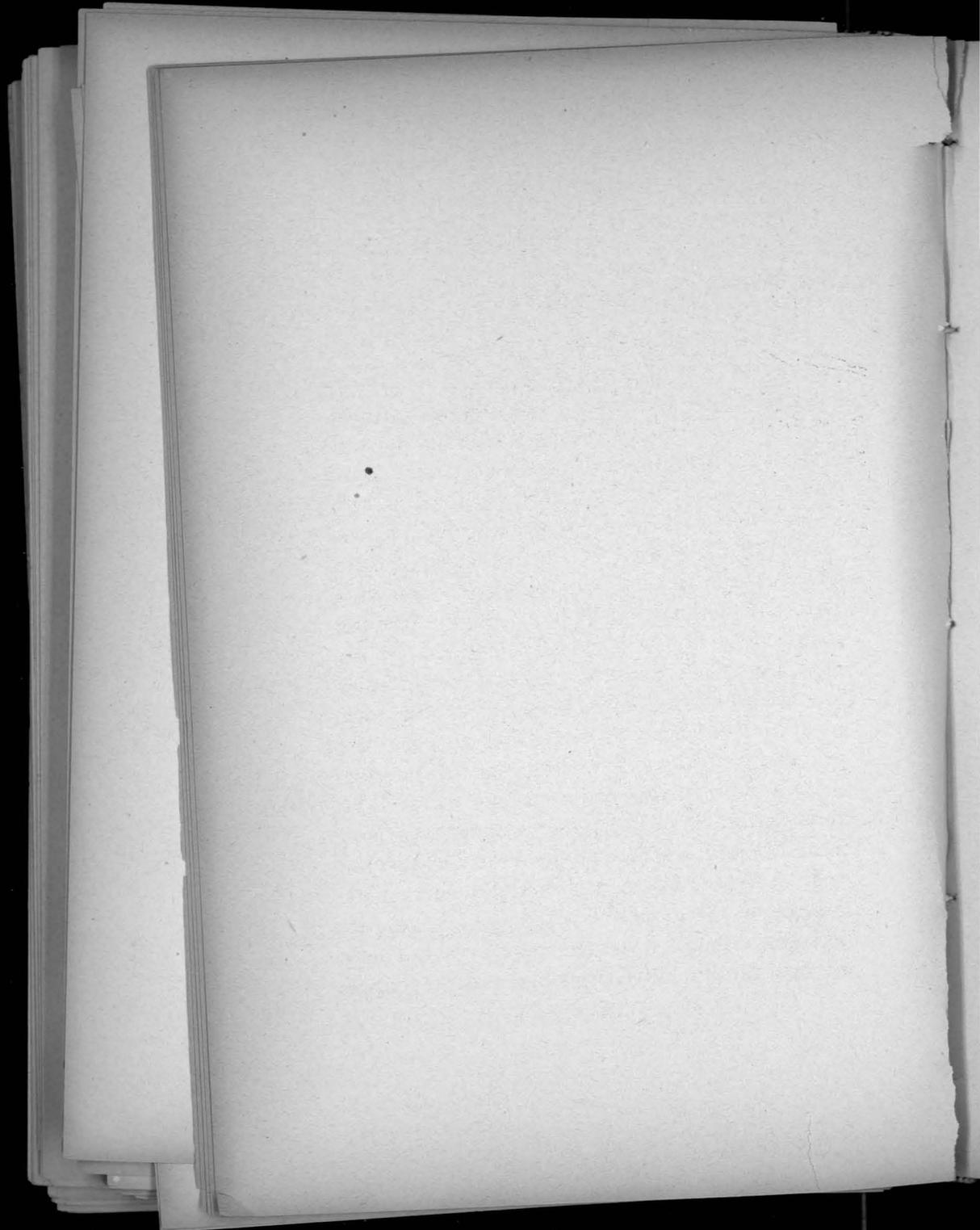


PRACTICING FOR THE FAIR.





BETSEY JANE PRACTICING FOR THE FAIR. Page 203.



CHAPTER XIII.

PRACTICING FOR THE FAIR.

HAVING secured my new bloomers, I now commenced practicing in dead earnest, as I had an object in view, and had made up my mind to do all that I could to achieve success.

Whenever the family was away, which was quite often, I would get out my wheel and repair to the pasture already alluded to, and work hard and faithfully. The old adage: "practice makes perfect," was soon exemplified in my case, for in less than two weeks I could manage the wheel without the slightest difficulty. I did not practice as much for an easy and graceful position, as for speed and endurance.

I will now let the reader into my secret: The annual meeting of the Green County Agricultural Society was to be held at Griggsville early in September, and I wanted to participate in some of the numerous races which were to take place then. I wanted to surprise not only my own family, but Griggsville and the entire

county, for I had said so much against the wheel, that unless I could do something wonderful the people would never let me hear the last of it, if I should presume to ride a wheel now.

I encouraged Alice and Walter in their practice, especially as the latter intended to enter some of the races, and that old fool of a Benjamin did not need any encouragement, as he, too, intended to compete with Dr. Salter and some more of the old men in one of the races. He would ride all day and part of the night, if nobody interfered, and the consequence was that I found plenty of opportunities for practice, which more than pleased me, as my own plans were thus helped along.

My work on the machine soon began to make itself manifest by decreasing my avoirdupois and hardening my flesh, and I even took to dieting to reduce my weight, and in less than one month I actually lost forty pounds, and as my weight decreased my speed and skill increased, and I could now fairly make the cycle hum, and knew that I could ride much faster than either Alice or Benjamin, but could hardly reach the same high rate of speed which Walter had been able to acquire, and I

could not be satisfied until I felt able to eclipse my long-limbed son, who was said to be the fastest rider in the club, and some said in the county; I knew that when I could beat him that I was pretty sure to win the race at the fair, which was open to all comers.

One sunny afternoon about two weeks after I had purchased my new suit, I was practicing, the family all being away, and was riding down the pasture like a small cyclone, when I was startled and surprised by hearing some one call out, "Go down! Get there! I'll bet on you."

I was horrified—shocked and terribly frightened, and came very near upsetting my machine, but finally managed to stop without accident, and on looking about me discovered our hired man, Josiah Evans, just outside the pasture fence; he had broken a plow, and was on his way to the house to get some tools with which to repair it, when he saw me riding over the pasture, and was about as surprised as I was, and gave utterance to his excited emotions in the manner already described.

I rode up to the fence and said: "Josiah Evans, if you ever mention this to a living soul I'll never forgive you." I concluded that the best thing that I could do was to take

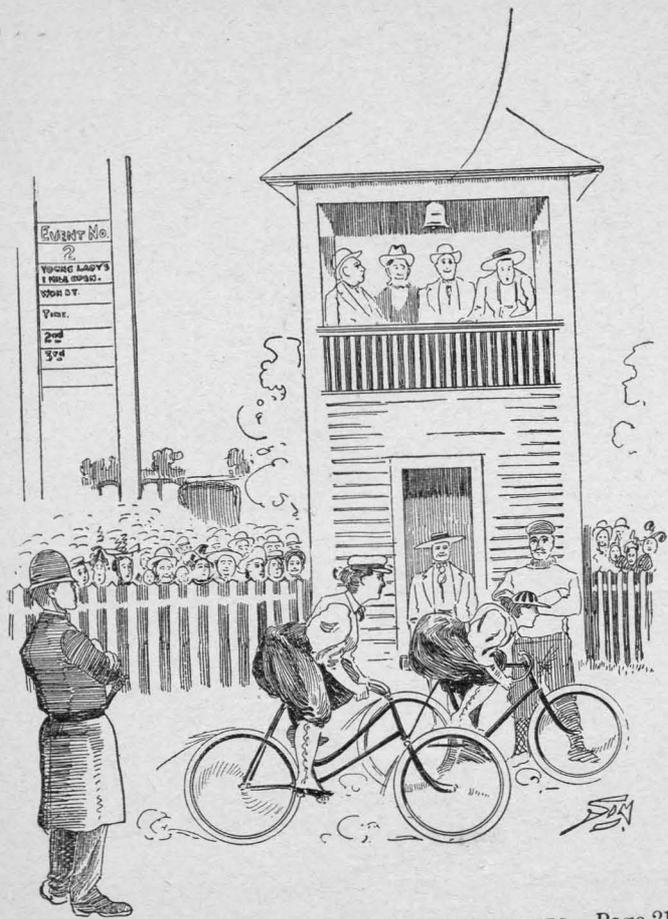
Josiah into my confidence, and then told him all about my plans for taking the conceit out of the rest of the family, and this seemed to amuse him very much, and he not only promised secrecy, but offered to do anything in his power to aid me in my plans, and I was glad that I told him, as he was of almost invaluable assistance to me many times, as I would have been discovered had it not been for his timely warnings, for he would watch for the return of the others when I was practicing, and let me know in time to beat a hasty retreat to the house.

I practiced faithfully whenever opportunity offered, and gained speed very rapidly, and it was not long ere Josiah, who had measured off a track and timed me, declared that I could ride much faster than Benjamin, and said that he knew that I could even beat Walter on a short race, as he had timed him for the same distance, but thought that perhaps Walter could beat me on a long race. I did not stop or become conceited, but worked as hard as ever up to the very week of the fair.

I was greatly surprised one morning to see Sarah Griggs ride into the yard on a new bicycle, and clad in an elegant suit of bloomers; she looked quite girlish, and although her

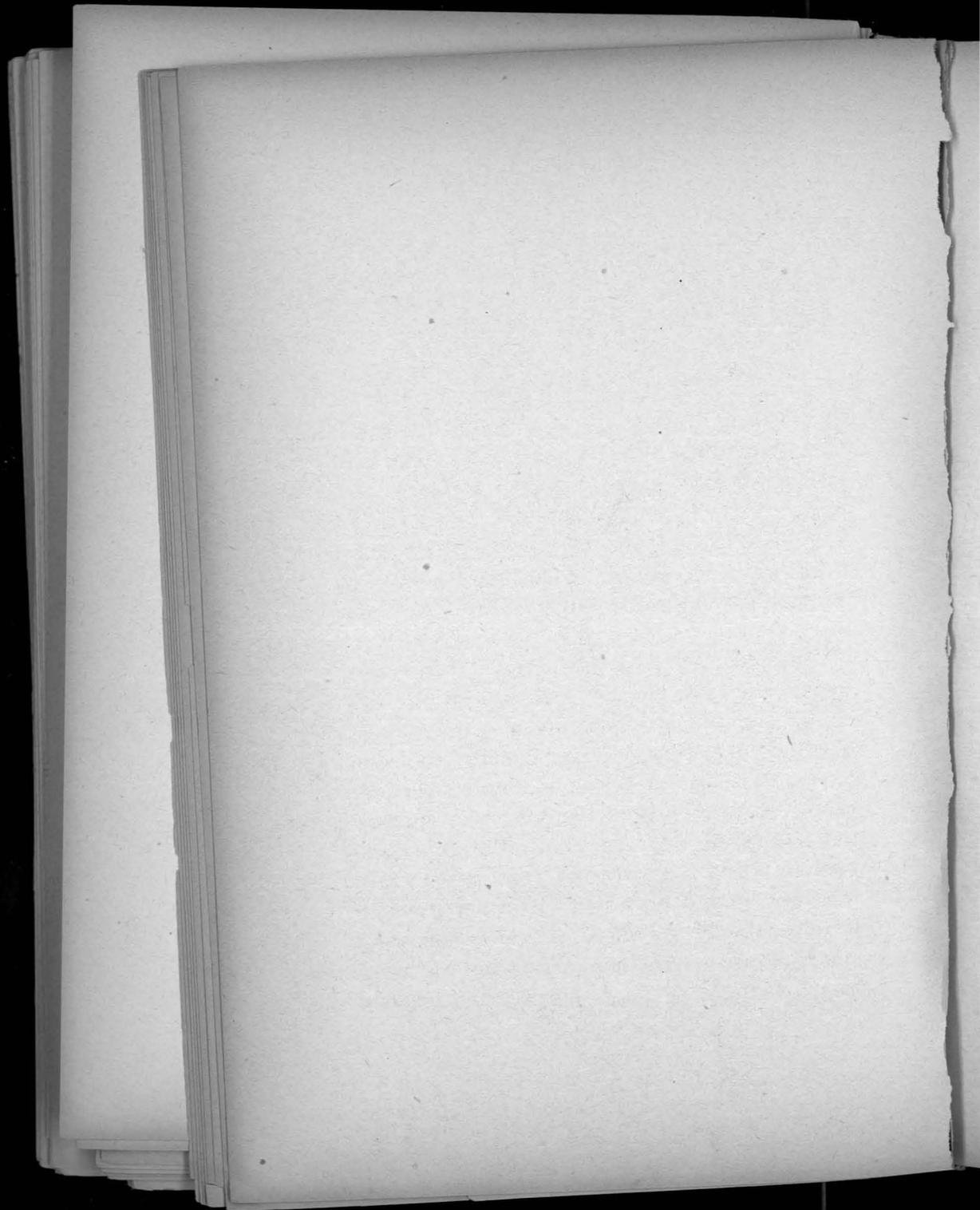
figure was slightly attenuated, she did not look so bad as I had imagined she would; she remained all day, and was very enthusiastic on the wheel question, and said that she must have been a big fool to have said so much about something of which she knew nothing, and thought that everybody should ride a wheel who was able to buy and ride one.

I had grown so much thinner that the family commenced to make remarks about it, but I told them that it was due to the warm weather and hard work, but that I was feeling well and that they need give themselves no uneasiness on my account, as I felt better than when I was fleshier, and they were more than willing to accept my explanation, as long as I did not complain of being sick. Thus the time dragged along until September, and all of the time I had been gaining greater speed on the wheel until I felt confident that none but a professional could beat me, and was even doubtful as to whether many of them could beat in a mile race, for I knew by the time that I was able to make that I was doing remarkable work, and in my dreams I saw myself beating the whole country, and could even see Benjamin's look of wonder when I carried off the first prize.



ALICE TOOK PART IN THE RACE FOR YOUNG LADIES. Page 214.

THE FAIR.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE FAIR.

THE long, dreary and exceedingly hot dog-days slowly drew to a close, and the cooler and more melancholy days of corn and pumpkin pies began to make their appearance, and this was the time set for the Griggsville Fair, as some people called the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Green County Agricultural Society.

There had been a complete revolution in the sports and pastimes of the association, and horse racing had been relegated to the obscurity of the bygone days. This was due to two causes; first the church-going element of society in Griggsville had long been opposed to horse racing, on the grounds of brutality and gambling, and, secondly, but not lastly, there were few if any horses in the country which were capable of making any kind of a showing in a race, as the only horses now in use were heavy draught or farm horses. To remedy

this deficiency the society had introduced a new feature, viz., bicycle races, and thus hoped to prevent cruelty to animals.

There were to be races for the old and young men; the old and young ladies; for boys and girls; for professionals and amateurs. These races were also regulated much the same as the old-fashioned horse races had been, by being divided into green races, three minute races; 2:40, 2:30, 2:20, and last, but not least, the free for all race, in which I intended to participate. Walter had entered several of the races, and Alice would be a contestant in the young ladies' race, while Benjamin was to contest the supremacy of the old man's race with Dr. Salter and others.

There were the usual displays of cattle, sheep, hogs and poultry, but, strange to say, their was no exhibition of horses, and even the poor mule had been crowded out, as this department was now filled by bicycles of all sorts and makes.

Agricultural hall was filled with the old-time farm products, but they did not present their accustomed appearance, as pumpkins, squashes, onions, turnips, beets, carrots and tomatoes were arranged in form of cycles, and

even the corn and wheat had been strung or glued on wires which were fantastically interwoven in the shape of bicycles.

Floral hall was well filled with potted and cut flowers and plants, and many of the cut flowers had been woven into new and strange designs, but the most common and prettiest design was in the form of the everlasting cycle.

There were cycles made of roses, pansies and pinks, and also of many other varieties of flowers.

Thesports also seemed affected with the cycle craze, as some of the shooting galleries had moving targets in the shape of men riding cycles, which moved across the end of the gallery, thus giving the marksman a moving if not a living target.

My attention was attracted by a queer-looking concern, which a few years before might have been called a "Merry-go-round," but now instead of being made up of wooden horses, there were a large number of cycles, running on a smooth plank floor; these cycles were steadied and moved by means of long arms or levers, which ran through the center of the front wheel and were then fastened to a large upright post or pillar, which was made to

revolve through the agency of a small steam engine. When a person wished to ride on the machine, all that he was compelled to do, was to mount the machine, place both feet on the pedals, grasp the handle bars, and away he flew, or rather the cycle did, and as it could not possibly fall down, the rider could not very well fall off and kill himself or anybody else. It was said that this was one of the safest and pleasantest methods of learning to ride a cycle which had yet been invented, as one could learn to use the pedals without falling.

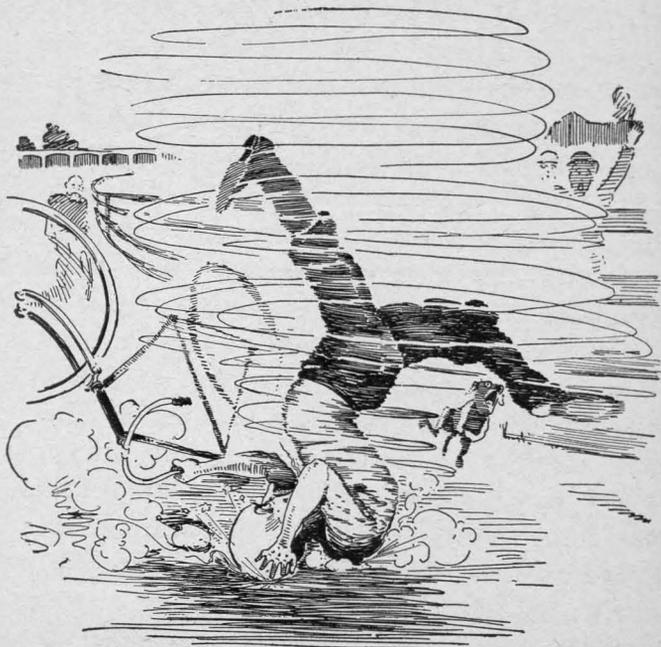
Machinery hall was full of cycles which were being used to propel all kinds of machinery, such as washing machines, clothes wringers, churns, grindstones, hay rakes, lawn mowers and garden plows. The pop corn and taffy candy fiends, the toy balloon and peanut cranks were all mounted on wheels and rode around as coolly as if they had never known any other way of locomotion.

The races did not commence until the second day of the fair, and Alice took part in the race for young ladies, but only succeeded in securing second place. Miss Sarah Griggs tried to enter this race, but the judges would not allow it, as they said that she was too old, which did

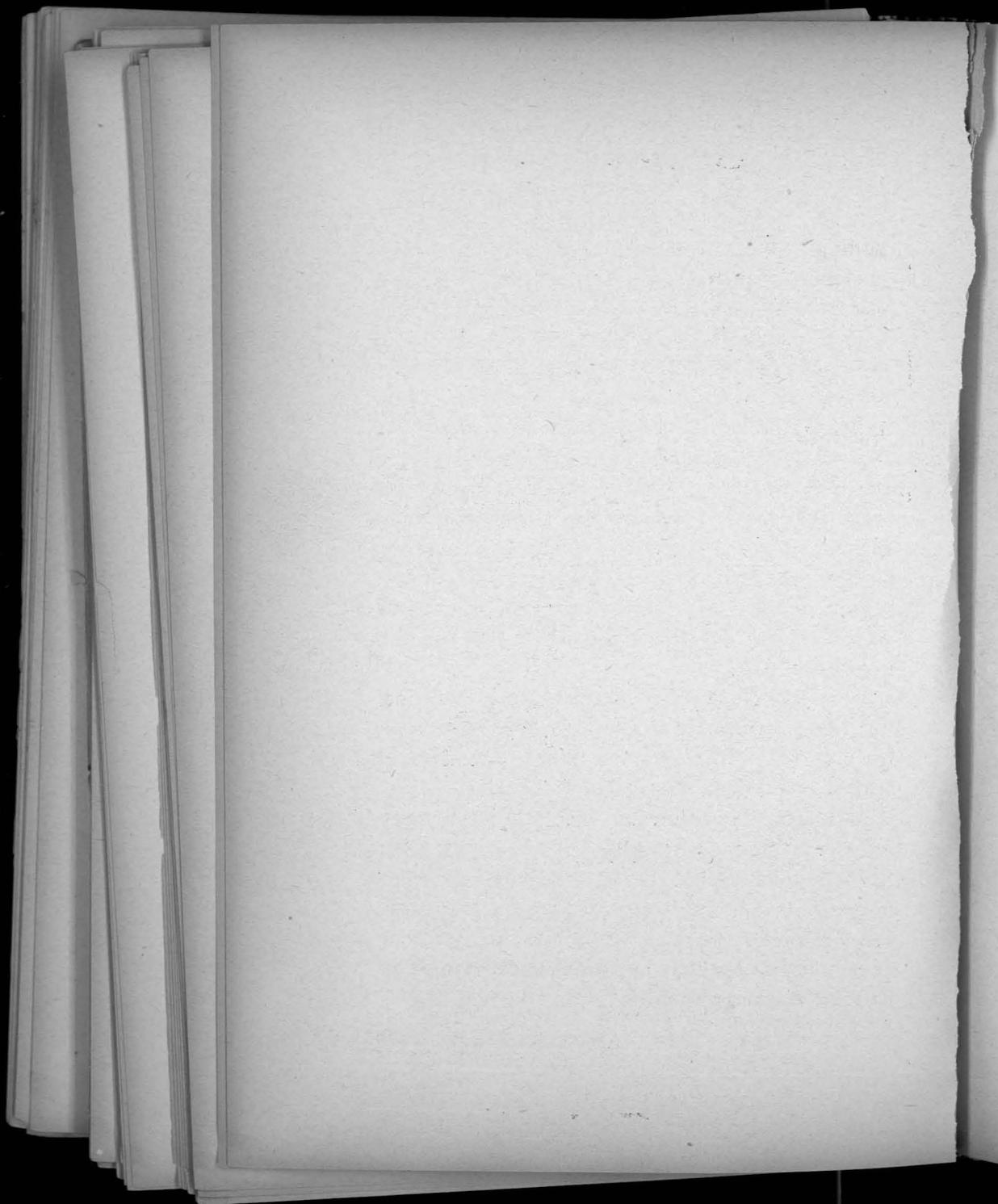
not tend to make poor Sarah feel any too well, but she contented herself with riding in the green race, and so well did she ride that she had little or no trouble in winning.

In the race for old men, Benjamin came to grief, although if it had not been for an unseen accident, he would undoubtedly have taken first honors, but as it was, he did not even finish the race. This race was for one-half a mile, and Benjamin's most dangerous competitor was Dr. Salter. Benjamin got right down to business and made it more than interesting for our family physician, who did his best, but he was too fat to make much of a show against such a light and wiry rider as Benjamin, who soon passed the worthy pill vender, who was puffing like a steamboat. Benjamin kept a good lead until he rounded into the home stretch, when he evidently thought that he would show off a little, and make fun of the poor doctor who was working for dear life away back in the rear. Benjamin tried to turn and look back, just as he had seen some of the younger and more expert riders do, and actually beckoned the doctor to come on. This happened when Benjamin had almost reached the wire, and it was about this time that a small

dog started across the track, and went right in front of Benjamin's wheel; he did not see the dog, neither did the dog see him, but the great crowd saw the dog and set up a yell which not only frightened the poor brute, but so startled Benjamin that he turned to see what was the matter, and he resumed his original position just in time to see the dog right under his wheel. Benjamin realized his danger, but was going at such a terrible pace that he could neither stop nor turn out, and struck the dog with considerable more force than politeness; the dog went down under the terrible pressure thus suddenly brought to bear on his spinal column, and the weight of Benjamin and the wheel crushed a yell out of him that might have been heard a mile away. When Benjamin fully realized what was before him, I saw that same horrified and deathly look spread over his visage that appeared when he struck the water tank and started on his heavenly flight from which he descended so abruptly. All his dreams of greatness and distinction faded into the dim recesses of the past, and with a howl of anguish which fairly rent the ears of those present, Benjamin and his cycle parted company, the cycle rolled directly



WITH A HOWL OF ANGUISH, BENJAMIN AND HIS CYCLE PARTED COMPANY. Page 216.



in front of the doctor who was coming up, puffing like a porpoise, and struck like a cyclone. Benjamin did not stop to see what had become of the machine, and from the length and swiftness of his flight it looked as if he would beat the doctor after all, for he was within ten feet of the wire when his wind appeared to fail, and spreading his arms like the wings of a wounded bird, he came crashing to mother earth. Some of the men rushed forward and picked Benjamin up and carried him off the track; he soon regained consciousness, and his late opponent in the race, Dr. Salter, attended him, and announced that no bones were broken, and that, barring a few bruises, he was all right.

I was a little frightened at Benjamin's mishap, but I had made up my mind to capture the free-for all, and nothing should daunt me; I would win, if the whole family broke their necks; I would show Walter and his father that they were not the only people who could ride. Benjamin was feeling pretty well when we went home, but was terribly blue over the lost race, but we tried to console him by telling him that everybody knew that he would have won, if he had not run over the dog.

The hired man took my wheel down the day before I was to make my debut, and left it at Sarah Griggs'. She had made me a new suit of bloomers, which were a dark blue, and very prettily trimmed; I also had a new shirt waist, and a jockey cap, and knew that I would create a sensation, if I did nothing else. I had kept up my practice as well as I could under rather trying and difficult circumstances, and had but little doubt of my own skill and speed, if I met with no accident.

At last the day arrived which was to make me famous or ridiculous; the sun rose bright and clear, and all nature seemed to be in her happiest mood. I confess that I was nervous and uneasy all day. The great race of the day was to take place about three o'clock p. m., and I had the machine brought down to the grounds and to the ladies' dressing room.

Walter had been defeated in one of the main races, and was feeling decidedly blue and disappointed, while Benjamin had not fully recovered from his disappointment of the previous day. The free-for-all was, what the name implies it should be, open to any and all cyclists who cared to enter; the first prize was a fine one-hundred-dollar wheel, and I wanted

that wheel, as it was a much better one than I then owned.

There were a large number of entries, amongst them were several strangers, and two or three noted professionals, and I knew my chance would be comparatively small. I was the only woman who was to take part in this race. I was all ready when the bell rung for the free-for-all-race. Sarah Briggs was with me, and said:

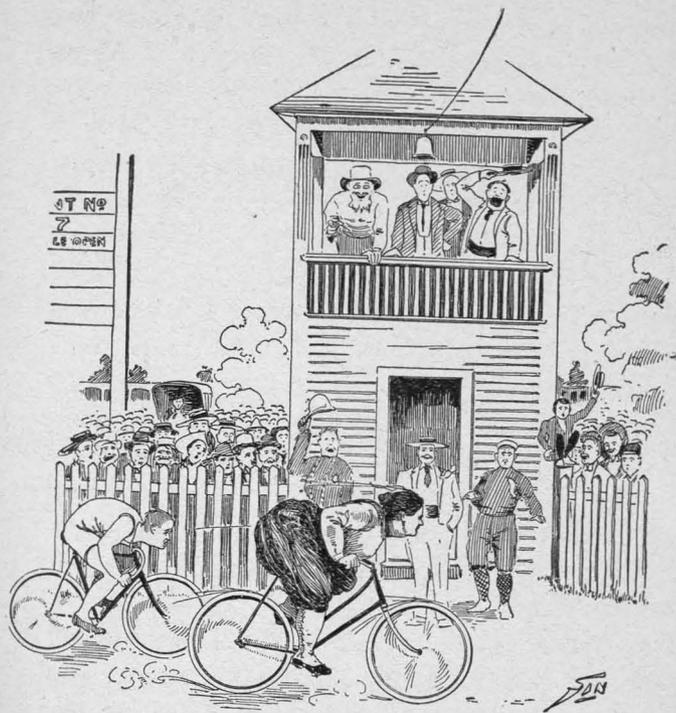
“Now don't get nervous, Betsey, and you will be all right.”

I did not hurry to get out on the track, but at last I made my appearance. When I hove in sight of the grand stand there was a yell that might have been heard at a distance of five miles. I was quite conspicuous, both for my size and my sex, and everybody looked at me, but few recognized me at first, until somebody said: “Why, it's Betsey Jane Jones.” In less than five minutes everybody in that big crowd knew who I was.

We made a good start, and got away all in a bunch. I soon found that I would have to work if I kept in sight, but it was not long before some of them dropped behind. I did not bend over very much, but kept pumping as

hard as I could, and my wheel fairly flew; the track was half a mile in circumference, and as the race was one mile, we had to make two circuits of the track to make the mile. As we made the first circuit of half a mile, there were only three men ahead of me, and at least a dozen in the rear. I was riding very easily, intending to get down to active business on the last half mile, and particularly on the last quarter. When we swept by the judges' stand, the crowd yelled: "Get there, old girl, you can do it; hustle 'em, etc." I didn't pay much attention to their noise, but kept right along on the even tenor of my way. I was gaining slightly on those in front, and as we struck the home stretch, only two were ahead of me, and I put forth all the power of which I was capable, and my wheel seemed to leap into the air, but, thanks to my 200 pounds avoirdupois, it came down again, and the gap between myself and the leader diminished very rapidly, and when we were within one hundred feet of the line, I shot past him like a flash and crossed the goal several lengths ahead.

There was a whirlwind of whooping, howling and yelling, throwing of hats into the air, and all was the wildest confusion; it seemed as



"GET THERE, OLD GIRL, YOU CAN DO IT; HUSTLE 'EM." Page 222



if demonium had broken loose. I turned and rode slowly toward the starting point, and as I did so the judges hung out a card, which read: "Betsey Jane Jones wins this race; time, 2:05."

My friends and relatives rushed into the ring, and lifted me, bicycle and all, to their shoulders and carried me off the ground to the dressing rooms, amidst the wildest cheering. I saw Benjamin's face in the crowd, and he looked as happy as the proverbial "clam." As they set me down at the dressing room, Elder Roper grasped my hand, and said: "My dear Mrs. Jones, allow me to congratulate you on your success." I made my escape into the dressing room, and sat down to catch my breath, which was pretty well exhausted by my recent efforts. When I had changed my bloomers for a more suitable costume, I walked out, and at the door I met the entire family, all looking proud and happy.

It kept me pretty busy shaking hands and receiving congratulations, but at last my crowd of admirers dwindled down to Benjamin and the children, and we prepared to start for home.

As we gathered around the supper table that

evening, we could talk of nothing but the great race, and none of them could understand how or when I had learned to ride, and I deemed it my duty to explain.

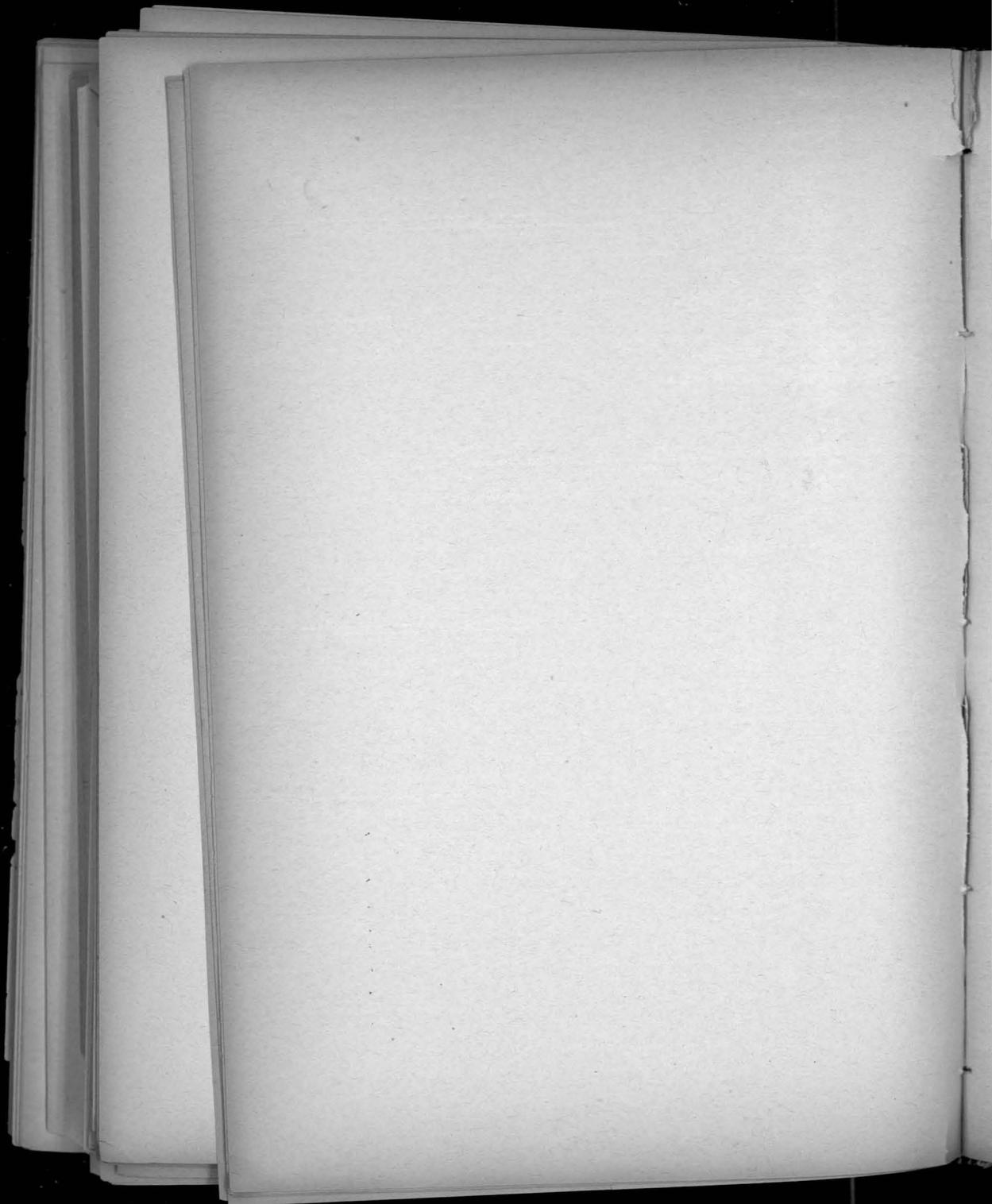
Benjamin said he thought that I might have taken him into my confidence at least, but I told him that had I done so, he would have made all manner of fun of the very idea of my racing, and never tired of reminding me of what I had said against cycling.

Walter said that he had thought he could ride a little bit, but had changed his mind, and did not think that he should ever enter another race, at least not until he could ride as well as his mother, and that he would now be the laughing stock of the town.

Alice was both proud and happy, and not the least jealous, and said that she would always feel proud of the manner in which her mother had taken the starch out of the fancy professional riders.

The fair was voted a success, and the race, too, and all retired to dream of fairs and races.

UNCLE EZRA MAKES US A
VISIT.



CHAPTER XV.

UNCLE EZRA MAKES US A VISIT.

ONE afternoon early in October, Benjamin came home from town with a letter, which proved to be from Uncle Ezra Hopkins, my father's oldest brother.

Uncle Ezra had once owned a farm near Griggsville, but some fifteen years before had sold it and moved down south, finally locating in Florida, where he started an orange grove.

His wife had died a short time before my story opens, and the old man, who had grown tired and lonesome, wrote that he was coming to make us a visit. He would arrive the next Thursday and wanted us to meet him at Griggsville.

Uncle Ezra was one of those old-fashioned people who believed that the ways of his father and grandfather were good enough for him. He had no use for any of the new-fangled ideas, as he called any attempt at progress. He was about seventy-five years of age, tall and slender,

and a regular down east yankee, having been born and raised in the Green mountains of Vermont.

We were all anxious to see him, especially the children, who did not remember him, as they were both very small when he left for the south.

On the day appointed, Benjamin and I drove to the depot to meet the old man. When the train pulled in, I looked for Uncle Ezra, and soon discovered him as he walked down the platform. He had not changed much since he left, with the exception that he had grown considerable older, and Benjamin said he believed that he was wearing the same old clothes that he wore when he went away. I must own that they looked like the same old butternut suit which he used to wear to church, and I am sure that he had the identical old silk hat that I made so much fun of when I was a girl. To be sure, it was not so sleek and shiny as it was then, and now it was pretty badly battered up, too. His pants were as short as in the days of yore, and his white shirt, stand-up collar and old-fashioned black tie looked as natural as they did fifteen years ago.

The old gentleman carried a stout cane in



UNCLE EZRA. Page 230.



one hand, and the proverbial "grip" in the other. He walked rather feebly, I thought, as Benjamin and I hurried to meet him.

I grasped my antiquated uncle by the hand, and said: "Welcome to Griggsville, Uncle Ezra."

"How du yeou du, Niece Betsey," said Uncle Ezra, a smile of pleasure flitting over his wrinkled face.

Benjamin now grasped his hand and said: "I am very glad to see you once more, Uncle Ezra."

"Wal, Benjy, I 'low that yeou ain't growed much sence I went erway," said Uncle Ezra.

"No," said Benjamin, grinning, "but Betsey Jane has."

"Wal, I swan! if she aint bigger'n a meetin' house." And here Uncle Ezra actually smiled.

Benjamin took his check and went for the trunk, while I walked to the light wagon with my uncle. We were soon comfortably seated and journeying homeward. As we drove along, Uncle Ezra plied me with all sorts of questions about people whom he used to know, as to what they were doing, and where they were. I told him to wait until we got home and he could get a chance to rest and sleep, for

he said that he "couldn't sleep on them blamed railroad keers."

It was quite dark when we reached home. I could see Walter smile a little when he got a glimpse of his antiquated relative, but he was too well bred to show any disrespect to an old gentleman, especially one of his own kith and kin.

As Walter came in, I introduced him to uncle by saying: "This is the young man who was a little boy when you went away."

Walter shook his hand and said: "I am more than pleased to meet you, Uncle Ezra."

"I'm powerful glad tu see yeou tu," replied my venerable relative. "When I went daown saouth, yeou wasn't bigger'n a pint of cider, en' coodn't du mutch but squall."

I now introduced Alice, who acknowledged the introduction with her accustomed ease and grace.

"I du reckerlect that ther was a baby about ther house when I went erway, an' I reckon that yer about as putty as yer find 'em," said Uncle Ezra, with all his old-time gallantry.

Alice blushed a little, as Walter winked at her, and drew his nose up to the highest

possible altitude, in imitation of what he called her pug nose, and reached out both arms as though encircling a barrel.

We sat down to supper and Benjamin asked Uncle Ezra to say grace, which he did in his characteristic way.

The old man seemed a little puzzled at the looks of the table, and evidently did not like the silver knives and forks, for he laid down the knife and said: "Betsey, take this here gim-crack away, and give me a knife that will cut."

I took the hint, and brought him an old-fashioned, horn-handled, steel knife.

"Thar; that's sumthin' like it," he said.

He scorned to use the individual butter dishes, and asked me "tu pass ther butter plate," which I accordingly did, and he helped himself to enough to empty an ordinary dish at one swoop.

That Uncle Ezra did not propose to make use of any modern table etiquette was very clear, as he poured his tea into his saucer, reached over the table for anything that he wanted, ate with his knife and rested his elbows on the table.

After supper, Uncle Ezra, who was tired, suggested that he would retire, as he was weary with his long journey.

The old gentleman was the first up the next morning, and went prowling about the place, examining all objects of interest, and in the course of his wanderings discovered some of the bicycles.

When we were at breakfast, he asked "what them durned whirlygig masheens was that he seed out in ther woodshed?"

Benjamin tried to explain, but made a failure of it, as the old gentleman could not understand "how a feller was goin' tu make one uv them blamed consarns stand up, that it would tip over jest as soon as yer let go on it."

Walter then brought all his knowledge of philosophy to bear, but with no better results, and at last gave up in sheer despair, and told Uncle Ezra that he would show him, after breakfast, how to run one of them.

Walter was as good as his word, and the astounded old man could only ejaculate: "It beats thunder! I've lived nigh onto four score years and never seed anything like it; it beats thunder."

Uncle Ezra was not at all pleased with the cycle, and thought that a man might be better employed than in fooling away his time in trying to ride a wheelbarrow with two wheels.

After Uncle Ezra had grown tired of watching Walter's performance on the wheel, he came into the house to have "a regler old-fashioned visit with Betsey Jane."

He commenced asking questions about all his old-time friends and neighbors, and nearly drove me wild with his interrogations and comments.

"Whar's Jim Peters?" he asked. To which I replied that Jim had left the farm some ten years since, and moved into Griggsville where he had been running a grocery store, but now handled bicycles exclusively, as he could make more money at that than he could in the grocery business.

"Wal, I declar!" said uncle, "'pears tu me that Jim must a gone crazy, tu go intu selling them cranky flip flops."

He then asked what had become of Sam Johnson, and I informed him that Sam owned a livery stable in Griggsville, where he did very well for a number of years, until the bicycle craze killed his business. He had been compelled to sell or give away his horses, run his buggies and carriages out of the barn, and had put in a fine line of bicycles for rent. Since then he has been doing a thriving business, and is said to be making money.

"Anuther fool gone mad," muttered Uncle Ezra with a groan.

"How about Squire Thompson? Hez he got ther fever tu?" asked he. I told him that the old squire was living in Griggsville, and although he was not selling cycles, he owned and rode one, and that one of his sons had shut up his law office and was traveling for some manufacturer of bicycles.

Uncle Ezra was growing accustomed to the new craze by this time, and evidently expected to hear that all his old friends were in the bicycle business.

"Whar's ther Widder Bates? I spose that she doant ride a masheen, but I'll bet thet her boys du."

I told him that the Widow Bates did ride a wheel, as did both her sons and her daughter.

"What! ther wimmen ridin on em?" he asked in holy horror.

"Certainly," I said, "why not? they have as good a right to use the wheel as the men."

"Never did bleeve in wimmen's rites, ennyhow," said he in a tone of disgust; "but I spose that it don't make no purtickler diffrunts what I b'lieve or don't b'lieve, fur they'll du jest as they durned please anyhow."

"Whar's Billy Watson, an what's he doin'?" asked the old man.

"He did run a dry goods store, but I guess that he is selling more cycles than dry goods, at present," said I.

"Whar's Dr. Salter? Is he sellin' bicycles, too?" asked Uncle Ezra.

I told him that the doctor did not sell or even repair bicycles, but that he repaired bicycle-riders, and practiced medicine.

"I wonder if the parson don't ride a bicycle, tu," asked Uncle.

I was compelled to own that he did.

"Is thar anybody in Griggsville who don't ride a bysickle?" asked Uncle Ezra, after a short pause.

I had to confess that everybody who had money enough to purchase a wheel, rode one, except those who were too old or too weak to ride.

"I spose yeou ride one tu, Betsey?" he said, looking at me.

I do not know what I should have told the old man, had not Walter, who had just entered the house, saved me the sin of lying, by saying: "No! mother is one of those old fogies who does not believe in any progressive ideas, and

she neither rides a wheel, nor allows anybody else to if she can help it."

"I'm mitey glad to find one person in this here place who hez got sents enuff tu travel as ther good Lord intended they should, on ther feet."

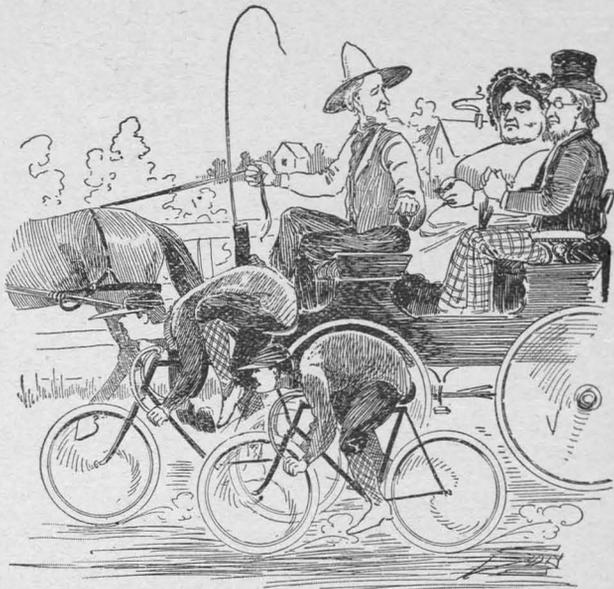
"What has become of Billy Murray, the feller who used to run ther blacksmith shop and shoe hosses?" asked Uncle Ezra.

I said that Bill had been obliged to close his shop, as there were no horses to shoe, but he had turned it into a bicycle shop and was again doing a good business. This seemed to satisfy Uncle Ezra, for he asked no more questions.

That afternoon, Benjamin got out the old buggy and we drove Uncle Ezra to Griggsville to take in the new sights and scenes.

We met several wheelmen on their way to town, and about a dozen more passed us, but we did not see a single buggy until we reached town.

Uncle Ezra noticed the elegant position of some of the riders and commented on them. One young fellow who passed us had the seat of his cycle about two feet higher than the handle bars, and was lying stretched out with his body in a horizontal position, with his head



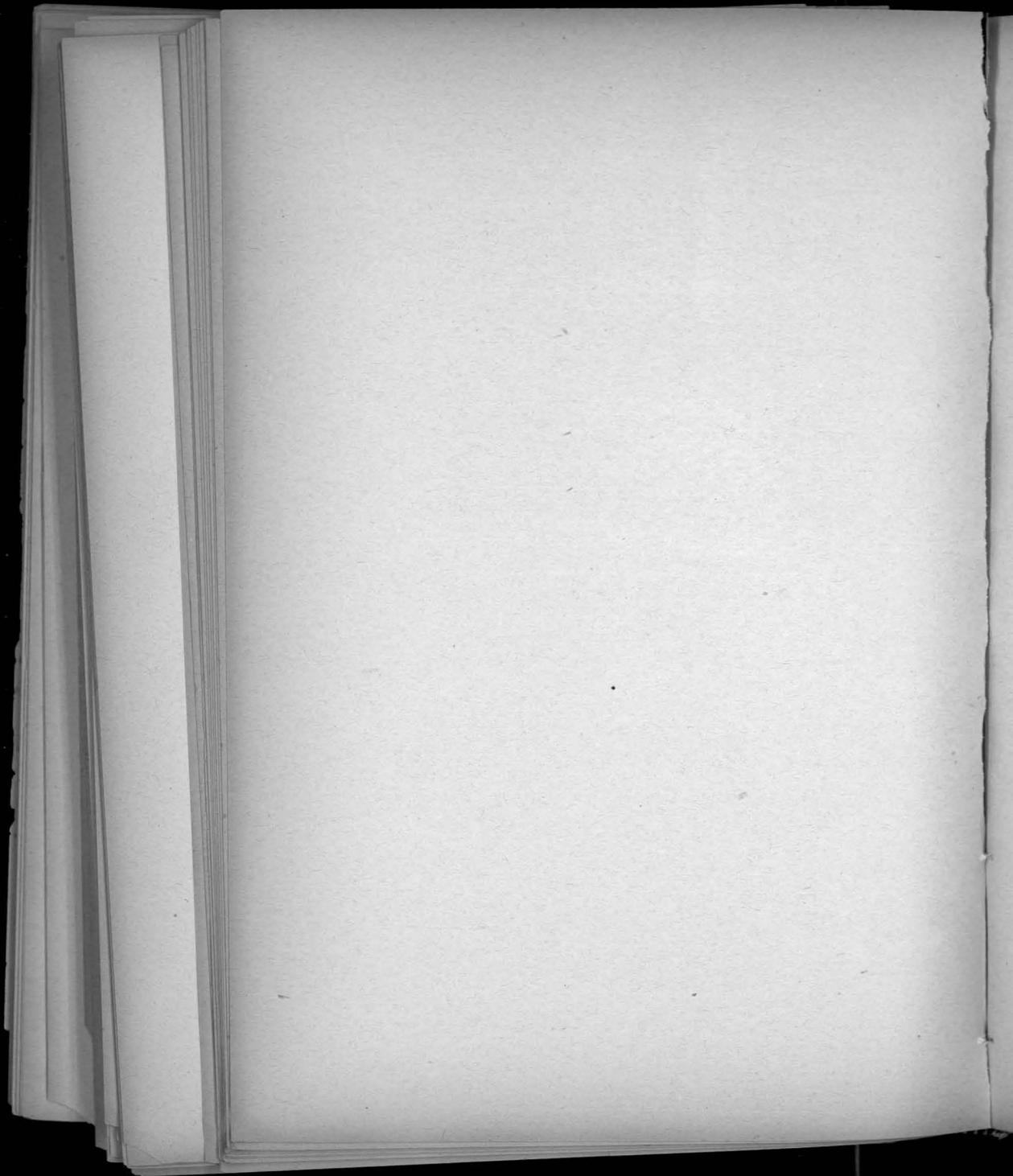
UNCLE EZRA NOTICED THE ELEGANT POSITION OF SOME OF
THE RIDERS. Page 240.



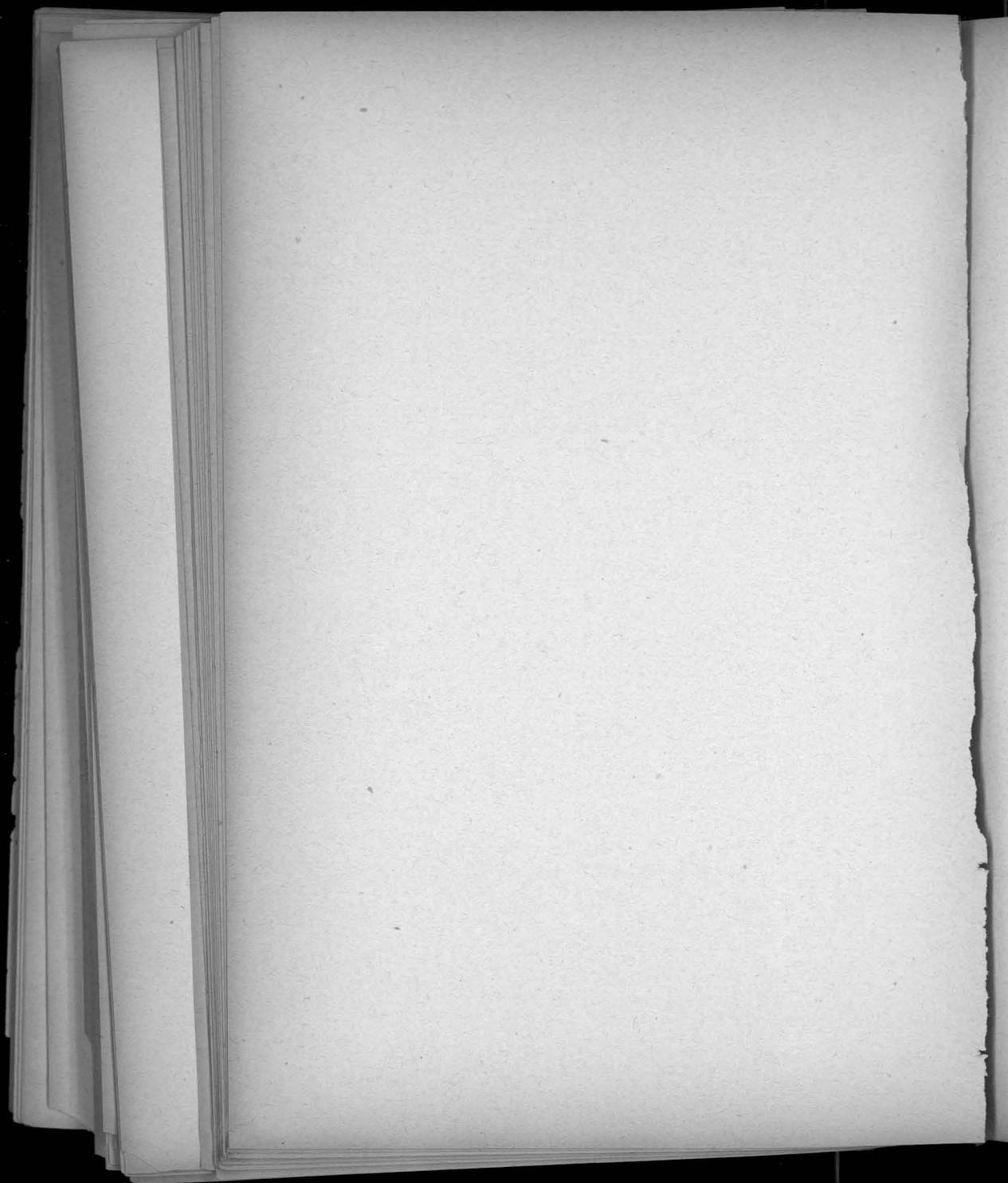
thrown up and backward like a snake, and pumping the machine along at a terrific pace. Uncle thought he looked like a bank cashier who had appropriated the funds of the bank and was making for Canada.

Another rider whom we met had a different position, which was more graceful and difficult than that of the first. Instead of having his body in a horizontal line, without a break or curve, he had what base ball pitchers would term, "the drop curve." His hands were far below the level of the saddle, and a portion of his long, lank body was poised at an angle of about sixty degrees, then it made a long, sweeping curve down toward the handle bars, and in the vicinity of the shoulder blades made another short but abrupt curve, bringing the shoulders, neck and head in a horizontal line.

Uncle Ezra looked at this startling object as it whirled past, and said: "I didn't 'spose thet camuls could ride on wheels, but suspicioned thet jackasses could."



THE BICYCLE PAVILION.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE BICYCLE PAVILION.

ONE evening, late in November, Walter and I drove to town, as the roads were getting too rough for cycling, and after doing our trading, Walter asked me if I did not want to visit the new bicycle pavilion or rink. As I had never been inside the building, I told him that I would go.

The building was about 300 feet square, and had been erected by a stock company. It was under the management of the colored gentleman who had opened the riding and training school early in the summer. The building was heated by steam and lighted by a large number of fine arc lights. In front were the office, anterooms, dressing rooms and rooms where cycles and cycling suits were kept.

We entered the main office, where Walter paid a man twenty cents, the price of admission, and we passed on into the main room. It was a gala scene which met our eyes; around

the sides of the large room seats were arranged, occupying a space some thirty feet in width, while the open space in the center was intended for practice and racing. There was a track some forty feet in width, the floor being constructed of cork. The space inside the track, which was surrounded by a railing, had a plank floor, and was used for practice work and fancy riding. At the farther end of the room was the band stand; at the opposite end stood the judges' stand.

When we went in the band was playing, and the room was well filled with people. Walter found a seat for me among the spectators, where he left me while he went to rent a machine and join the merry cyclists who filled the center of the rink. Walter afterwards informed me that they charged twenty-five cents per hour for the use of the wheels, and ten cents per hour when the riders furnished their own wheels.

I heard a man sitting near me tell a lady that there would be a couple of races a little later on, and that there would be some fancy riding by a stranger.

There were about as many ladies riding as gentlemen, and they all wore bloomers of various designs and colors.

I saw several tandems, as they were called, whirling around the track, and learned that one of the races was to be a tandem race. As I have never seen a tandem race, I was delighted at the opportunity which now presented itself.

As nearly as I could judge, all the riders before me were old and experienced cyclists, and I saw very few falls, although occasionally somebody would get mixed up, and run against someone else.

At precisely nine o'clock, the colored professor stepped out and announced that the track would now be cleared to make room for the races and fancy riding, and Walter soon joined me to view the sports.

The gentleman who gave the exhibition was a fine rider, and performed many new and difficult feats, which called forth loud applause from the spectators. He proved very conclusively that the cycle was not dangerous if one only knew how to ride.

After a fine selection by the band, the professor announced that the races would now take place, and the judges were selected. You can imagine my surprise when the professor asked me to be one of the three judges. At

first I refused, but Walter urged me to accept, saying that it was a high compliment to my skill and judgment, as none but old and experienced riders were ever asked to fill the position. I finally consented, and learned that the other judges were Dr. Salter and Deacon Smith, both of whom were old friends of our family. I walked over to the judges' stand, and climbing the stairs, sat down in the revolving arm chair and prepared for business.

The first race was one-half mile for ladies only. There were seven entries, and among those who were to participate in this race, I noticed Sarah Griggs, who was making quite a reputation as a cyclist, and I had even heard it hinted that she would make a dangerous competitor for me the next season, but that did not worry me, for I did not intend to take part in any more races. The track was an eighth of a mile in circumference, and four circuits of the track were necessary to complete the half mile.

The riders took their positions under the wire, and started at the stroke of the bell. I could see that Sarah could easily win the race, but she did not try to leave the others behind, keeping right along with them until the last

lap, when she came up very rapidly, and was soon even with the leader, whose company she kept about half way around, when she shot ahead, leaving all her competitors far in the rear, winning the race easily.

The next race was one mile, for men only, and there were five starters. There was considerable interest manifested in this race. Two of the riders were Griggsville boys, who, of course, had plenty of sympathizers among the spectators, while the other three came from a neighboring and rival town and were accompanied by a large delegation of backers. But Griggsville was equal to the emergency, as the race was won by Charley Roper, son of Elder Roper, and even second place was taken by John Arnold, a mere boy, and also a resident of our town. The foreigners, as the boys called them, were defeated, and went home feeling very blue, but satisfied that they had been fairly treated.

There were but three entries for the tandem race, which was for a distance of two miles. This race was won by two Griggsville boys, Frank Peck and Charley Roper.

This concluded the evening's entertainment, and Walter and I left the pavilion and started

for home, thoroughly convinced that cold weather could not materially affect the craze, and that the cycle had really come to stay, and would be with us through all seasons of the year.

UNCLE EZRA ON BLOOMERS.





'WHAT IN THE NAME OF MOSES IS THAT, A HOSS JOCKEY OR A CHINYMAN?' HE ASKED. Page 257.



CHAPTER XVII.

UNCLE EZRA ON BLOOMERS.

WE finished our trading, and were about to start for home when a young lady rode up to the sidewalk on a bicycle; she wore a jaunty little jockey cap, a shirt waist and a pair of very pretty bloomers. The lady dismounted from her wheel and entered one of the stores.

From the first instant that he had seen her, Uncle Ezra had stood as if transfixed, and the look of astonishment on his features would have made an artist's fortune, if he could have transferred it to his canvas. The old man's lower jaw fell, his eyes stood out like saucers; he looked stunned and bewildered, but said nothing for about sixty seconds, then he turned and pulled my sleeve. "What in the name of Moses is that, a hoss jockey or a Chinymun?" he asked.

I could not help smiling, and told him that this was one of our young lady teachers.

The old man continued to gaze after the fair

cyclist, and even followed her as far as the door, where he stood staring at her until Benjamin announced that the team was ready. Uncle Ezra turned and with apparent reluctance followed me to the buggy. As soon as we were seated he turned to obtain another look at the young lady.

We were well out of town before uncle ventured to make any remarks, but I could see that he was excited and fairly boiling over with suppressed emotion. There was a storm brewing and I waited as calmly and patiently as possible for what I knew to be inevitable.

I was not disappointed, for suddenly he broke forth with: "Benjy, did yer notice thet female in ther jockey cap, biled shirt and Chinymun pants?"

Benjamin remarked that he had seen a person who answered that description tolerably well, but thought nothing of it, as such sights were common enough in Griggsville.

"Well," said the old man, "I hev allers bin a bleever in wimmen's rights, and hev never sed nothin' agin the female sufferagists, bein' tolerable willin' thet they shoed suffer all they blamed please, an' I doant care nothin' in perticuler abeout their wearin' a feller's hat or

cap oncet in erwhile, an' can even forgive 'em for stealin' a feller's shirt occashunly, but I'll be gosh durned if I can stand it ter heve 'em kick a feller clean outen his pants."

This was a very long speech for Uncle to make, and I knew that his feelings must have been wrought up to fever heat in order to have produced such startling results. I thought it would be well for me to at least make an explanation, and accordingly said: "Uncle Ezra, the jockey cap which you saw, is quite as fit for ladies to wear as gentlemen, and they have been worn more or less for years, and what you are pleased to call a 'boiled shirt' is nothing more than a shirt front fitted into an ordinary dress waist. The pants, as you denominate them, are not entirely new, as they have been worn by Dr. Mary Walker and others, although there have been many modifications since that time. Without bloomers, it would be hardly safe for a lady to attempt to ride a wheel."

"Then why in thunder don't they ride bobsleds or wheelbarrows?" said Uncle.

I told the old gentleman that bobsleds would not be very convenient in the summer time, nor wheelbarrows in the winter, and that as a

means of conveyance they were slightly out of date.

The old man then turned his attention to my husband by saying: "Benjy! how long hez this durned foolishness bin goin' on?"

Benjamin asked what foolishness he referred to.

"I mean how long hev ther wimmen folks bin in ther habit of puttin' on ther men's close and straddle in them blamed masheens?"

Benjamin said that they had been in use for some time, but that as far as he knew that this was the first season that the ladies of Griggsville had made any attempt to ride in public. Our arrival at home now put an end to the conversation, for which I was very thankful, as I was afraid that Benjamin might blurt out something about my riding a wheel, but fortunately he did not say anything on the subject, although I am certain that if the idea had occurred to him, that he would not have hesitated to have told the old man.

When we were eating supper the old gentleman renewed the conversation on bloomers. It happened in this way: Walter asked Alice to ride to town with him after supper, she said that she would as soon as she could don her

bloomers. This was enough to start Uncle Ezra, who dropped his knife and fork, glared across the table at me, and said in his sharp querulous tone: "Betsy Jane! I hope that yeou have got enough sents tu put a stop tu any sich foolishness as this."

Walter saved me the trouble of answering by saying: "What's the matter, Uncle Ez?"

"What's the mateer?" he growled, "matter enuff; what can any sensible woman mean by allowing her only darter to wear them pants and go cāvorting around ther country man-fashion?"

Walter replied that he did not think that there was any harm in that, and that the very best people in the country rode wheels, even the preachers and the deacons, and their wives and children.

Uncle looked at Walter over the top of his spectacles and said: "Young man, when yeou hev reached ther age which I hev, yeou will know a considerable more than yeou do now."

Walter was not to be turned down and out in this summary manner, and replied: "I should hope so, uncle, or my life would have been in vain, as age and experience should enlarge a man's ideas, but there are some people

who do not appear to expand, but are content to drift along in the same old ruts in which their father and grandfather traveled. This is an age of progress and enlightenment, and a man must either go forward or backward, he cannot stand still, as the moment he stops, the balance of the world moves forward and leaves him standing in the rear.'

Uncle Ezra was mad, and glaring defiantly at Walter, he said: "Young man! if you hevent enuff respect to treat old age with the proper considerashum, yeou should at least hev manners enuff to act as if you hed bin well brought up, as it reflects onto your parients."

Walter only laughed good naturedly and said: "I am sorry, Uncle Ezra, if I have offended you, as I did not mean to be impertinent. I know that we cannot expect old people to entirely change either their way of living or their ideas, but I do not think that they should stand in the way of the rise and development of the young people. They should use their influence to advance and promote all that is good, and to think and know that we are advancing step by step from the ignorance and darkness which have enshrouded past generations."

"Wal, I cant see any sents in them thar bloomers, an' don't see that there is very much enlightenment about 'em, except that they give ther people a better chance to study anatomy," was Uncle's next remark.

I told Walter to keep still and not to say any more about it as he could not convince uncle that bloomers were the proper sort of dress for ladies. Walter contented himself by firing one more shot, and replied: "Well, uncle, I suppose that you have opinions of your own, and, as mother says, I cannot hope to materially change your ideas, and neither can you hope to turn the cycle of time backward a couple of centuries, or the cycle bloomers completely out of use; therefore we will drop a subject on which we so greatly differ."

The old gentleman said no more, although I could see that he was anything but satisfied with the result of the conversation.

Immediately after supper, Walter and Alice took their departure, and uncle looked at the latter in a manner which plainly indicated what his opinion of bloomers was, but as he said nothing, Alice remained in blissful ignorance of what was passing in her estimable relative's mind.

We did not retire until after the cyclists, return, and uncle spent the evening in reading the Griggsville paper, making no further allusion to the bloomer question.

UNCLE EZRA DEPARTS.



CHAPTER XVIII.

UNCLE EZRA DEPARTS.

[ROSE bright and early the next morning, leaving the partner of my joys and woes to balmy nature's sweet repose, and if one might be allowed to judge from his sonorous breathing, there was little prospect of his awaking for some time to come.

I looked out of the window, and the morning was so warm and pleasant, that I decided to take a spin on my wheel, which I had not dared to use since Uncle Ezra's advent. I accordingly arrayed myself in my bloomers, thinking that I would return before any of the family were up, and I knew that there was no danger of either Walter or Alice making their appearance before they were called, although I was not so sure about uncle, as he was very erratic in regard to rising, sometimes getting up an hour before any of the family, and occasionally he would rise an hour or two later. I finally concluded to risk it, and went out to the

shed where my wheel was kept, and mounting, was soon spinning down the road, enjoying the morning breeze. I rode about two miles, then turned and rode toward home. I kept sharp watch for Uncle Ezra, but saw nothing of him, and arrived at the conclusion that he had not yet risen, but here was where I made a mistake, for when I rode into the driveway which ran alongside the house, I saw my venerable relative seated calmly on the back porch, apparently wrapped in meditation, which I was destined soon to interrupt.

I did not see the old man until it was too late to retreat, and before I could stop the cycle, he looked up and saw me. I would have given much to have been elsewhere, but made up my mind to face the music, and stand up to the rack, fodder or no fodder. I put on my pleasantest smile, and said: "Good morning, uncle," but the old man neither spoke nor smiled, but looked at me with an expression of thorough disgust on his features; in fact he looked both astonished and angry, but continued to gaze at me until I disappeared in the shed where I left my machine. I walked calmly and deliberately into the house, where I changed my bloomers for a costume which



BEFORE I COULD STOP THE CYCLE HE LOOKED UP AND SAW ME
Page 273.



was more in accordance with Uncle Ezra's ideas of propriety, and then went to the kitchen to prepare the morning meal.

Uncle Ezra came into the kitchen, where he sat down. I expected a storm, and it was not long in coming, for the old man looked up, coughed once or twice to clear his throat, and opened the battle by saying: "Well, Betsey! I never expected I'd live tu see ther day when a niece of mine would disgrace herself by ridin' one of them thar sickles, but as it is allers the onexpected that is happenin', I s'pose that I ortent tu be surprised at ennything, and I erlow that I have been considurbly disappointed in yeou, Betsey, especially when I consider how yeou was raised. What du yeou think yer poor old father and mother wood say, if they cood come back here and see yeou as I did this morning?"

I hardly knew what to say, the only excuse which I could offer was that nearly everybody rode wheels, and that I found my health was greatly improved by riding.

To this, Uncle Ezra responded by saying: "That's no excuse at all, Betsey, ter try tu shift the blame onto someone else, an I shood like ter know how yeou cood tell whether it

wood benefit your health, ontill yeou hed tried it."

I told him that my conscience did not reproach me in the least, especially since I had listened to Elder Roper's sermon on the subject of the wheels.

The old man continued: "Betsey Jane, yeou orter be ashamed of yourself! yeou, ther mother of a family, ridin around ther country in the short pants, why yer looked ridicklus, a great big fat woman like yeou, wearin close like a little boy not moren six yeer old. If yer had enny shame about yeou, yer know better than to scandalize yourself in thet way."

I told him that I was not the only mother of a family who rode, and that I was not half as fat as I was when I commenced to ride a wheel, and also that I was not to blame for being large.

A new idea seemed to strike Uncle Ezra very suddenly, and he said: "That son of yours must a lied to me, fur he said that yeou didn't ride enny bicycle, an yeou was just as bad, fur yer didn't say annything to ther contrary, but jest left me tu spose that he told ther truth, when it was yer bounden duty ter hev reproved him fur lyin. I tell yer, Betsey Jones, yeou

will live tu see ther day when yeou will be sorry fur encouragin that boy in his wickedness, an' I don't beleev that yeou are one whit bettern he is."

Here Uncle Ezra's wrath waxed warm, and he rose to his feet in his excitement, and shook his fist, danced around the kitchen floor, and upsetting the water pail which Benjamin had just brought in. The last named individual looked at the antics of my aged relative in some alarm, evidently not understanding the situation, as he did not see me when I returned, and of course was entirely ignorant as to the cause of the old man's excitement.

I told Benjamin that Uncle Ezra had seen me in my bloomers, riding a wheel, and that he was considerably stirred up over the fact.

Benjamin grinned, and said that he didn't think that uncle had any great reason to make such a demonstration, although I knew by the twinkle in his eye that he rather enjoyed the situation.

But right here he, too, came in for a share of the old man's displeasure, for he turned on him and said: "Benjamin Jones, yeou orter know better'n to stand thar grinnin' like a chessy cat, when your wife is ridin' all around ther country

dressed in them blasted bloomers, an' makin' a holy show of herself. It seems tu me thet any man with a particle of desentsy in his compusishun, wood be worrying himself nigh to death about it."

Benjamin smiled broadly and said: "Well, Uncle Ez, I know that Betsey don't look as graceful as some of the younger girls, but I guess that there isn't any danger of anybody's running off with her."

"No, I shood say not," snarled Uncle Ez. "No man in his right sentses wood want sich a lookin' critter as Betsey is when she is dressed up in them tights."

Benjamin left the house to finish the chores, and as I went into the dining room to set the table, Uncle was compelled to stop for want of an audience.

I did not hear anything more from him until we were seated at the table, when he started again, by remarking: "Well, Walter, it didn't do yeou any good tu lie tu me the other day, for I seen yeur highly respected mother, a member of the Baptist church, too, a ridin' one of them durned sickles, an' dressed up thet toggery which she calls bloomers, an' I can tell

yeou thet she bloomed out like a full-bloomed rose, although she hed tu rise mighty airy in the morning tu do it."

Walter looked surprised, but said that he did not remember of telling any lies.

To this observation, Uncle Ezra replied that people did not like to have anything of that sort recalled to their minds.

I was beginning to get mad, as I thought that it was none of the old man's business anyhow, and said as much, which seemed to rile him considerably, for he said: "See here, Betsey Jones, I don't want you tu tell me thet it is none of my busyness, fur it is, an' if it wasn't, I shood make it my busyness. I can stand the sickle ridin' and the bloomers bettern then I can ther lyin', an' it is mighty evident tu me thet both you an' your hopeless son hev willinly an' malishusly lied tu me."

I was mad indeed, now, and rose from the table telling the old man that I could not stay there to be insulted, even by an old man like himself.

Benjamin tried to smooth matters over, but effected no further result than to make matters worse, and Walter would not condescend to

say anything to anybody, but finished his breakfast in silence. I do not know how they finished the meal, but think that it must have been anything but pleasant to all of them.

After breakfast, Uncle Ezra announced his intention of going home that very morning, saying that he did not propose to stay with a family of liars and bicycle fiends.

Benjamin could not prevail on the old man to stay, and neither Walter nor I cared to say anything to him, while Alice was too timid to say anything to anybody.

Benjamin hitched up the team while Uncle Ezra gathered up his belongings and prepared to say farewell to Griggsville and his obdurate relatives. Benjamin and Walter carried out the old man's trunk, while he followed in the rear. They were soon ready to start, and the whole family accompanied them to the vehicle. As they started off, the old gentleman said: "Good bye, all."

Good bye, was echoed by all of us, and the old man's parting words were: "I can stand bicycles, but bloomers and liars are tu much fur me, an' tu yeou, Walter, I wood say: remember ther fate of Ananias and his wife."



AS THEY STARTED OFF, THE OLD GENTLEMAN SAID: "GOOD BYE
ALL." Page 276.



Uncle Ezra reached Griggsville in time to catch the morning train for the east, Benjamin being the only one who accompanied him. He left Griggsville utterly disgusted with the people, the bicycles and the bloomers.



IN CONCLUSION.



CHAPTER XIX.

IN CONCLUSION.

AS the most interesting part of a book is usually the conclusion I have concluded to finish this work by writing a conclusion, but will leave the reader to form his or her conclusion in regard to its merits.

I have attempted to give some idea of the bicycle craze which is now so prevalent, and although some cases may be slightly overdrawn, I think that I am justified in such over-drawing, as the bicycle craze will undoubtedly reach more alarming proportions another season.

The large manufacturers of buggies, wagons and street cars having noticed a decided falling off in the demand for their goods, and, profiting by this experience, have concluded to meet the popular demand by converting their plants in bicycle factories. They have declared their intention to place wheels on the market at less than one-half the present prices, which will

bring them within the reach of nearly everyone. When a good wheel can be purchased for twenty-five or thirty dollars, few people will be without one, for as a means of conveyance the cycle eclipses all four-footed beasts, as it is cheaper, safer and faster.

That cycling is a healthy and profitable recreation, none can deny, but, like all other good things, there will be plenty of people who will carry it to the extreme, and many others who will condemn the whole business on account of the injurious use which is made of it by a few.

Cycling is one of the few sports in which ladies can indulge with the same freedom and good results as the more fortunate masculine element of society. There has long been a want of something which will afford the ladies both sport and exercise, but so far nothing has been introduced which equals the cycle. Men can play base ball, run foot races, hunt, fish, box, wrestle and jump, but poor woman has so long been debarred from any active amusement, that, physically, she has been deteriorating, and now the cycle comes in as a good Samaritan. It affords an asylum, a refuge, a sort of fire escape, and gives the gentler sex an oppor-

tunity to build up their well nigh lost physical powers.

What if some do abuse the sport and themselves also? It does not follow that cycling is wrong, any more than a great many other institutions which have suffered from the same cause, or that because a few church members do not live up to what they profess, that the church is entirely wrong, yet there are people who will argue on this basis, and tell you that cycling is not right, and that no intelligent or sensible person will ride a wheel. But the world would not be able to move in its accustomed orbit without some cranks, as the millenium would soon arrive and put an end to cycles, cranks and all.

[THE END.]

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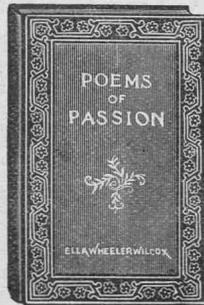
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