

SELF-PROTECTION ON A CYCLE.

How you may Best Defend Yourself when Attacked by Modern Highwaymen, Showing how you should Act when Menaced by Foot-pads, when Chased by another Cyclist, and when Attacked under various other Circumstances; showing, also, how the Cycle may be used as a Weapon.

By MARCUS TINDAL.

It is a mistake to suppose that all the romance of the night roads is past and done with—the romance of the merry old days when highwaymen lay in wait for the benighted traveller on every lonely bit of country road, in every wood, on every stretch of waste land. Attacks by foot-pads on cyclists recall at least some of the glamor of the old stand-and-deliver times to the minds of those who read of these highway robberies every now and again in the papers—though the cyclists assaulted may not look upon the matter in quite so romantic a light!

It might appear at first sight that a cyclist would fall an easy prey to a highway robber, especially at night time—that he could be attacked with more certainty of success than could a horseman. In the first place, a cyclist riding at night will usually comply with regulations, and carry a lamp. Thus he will herald his advance from afar off. He is astride a steed, moreover, from which he may be upset far more easily than if he were astride good, solid horseflesh—a stick in the spokes of his wheel, a sudden jerk to the handle-bars, or a wire stretched taut across his road—and he is thrown, inevitably.

On the other hand, consider the cyclist's advantages. He comes silently, and passes swiftly, like a spirit. A moment too soon, a moment too late in attacking, and the foot-pad loses his prey. The cyclist thus has a fair chance of passing the foot-pad before the latter can act, and if he rides without a light he has more than a fair chance of passing unperceived—unless, of course, a cunning trap has



How to use the cycle as a shield.

When menaced by a man in your path, if you ride point blank at him —



—only swerving at the last moment, you will surprise him and pass in safety, but —



—if you attempt simply to ride past on the far side of the road —



— you give him a fair chance to put a stick through the spokes of your wheel.



been laid beforehand. Supposing, too, that it came to a fight, whether by day or by night, the cyclist has a weapon in his cycle with which he may baffle attack in more ways than are at first apparent.

Self-protection awheel is an art full of possibilities. The cyclist who is a skilful rider, who possesses pluck and dash, who has mastered the elementary rules of defence on a bicycle, and who is armed with a knowledge of how to use a machine to the best advantage as a weapon, may rest content that he is able to defend himself perfectly when attacked under the majority of likely conditions.

Perhaps the commonest occasion when a little knowledge of the art of self-defence awheel would prove of greatest use is when a rider is menaced by a rough who blocks the road. A lady, say, is riding alone on a country road, when an approaching tramp suddenly assumes a hostile attitude, standing before her with legs apart and arms outstretched, effectively barring the way. Now this is the secret for removing the tramp, and for riding past in safety. Let the lady put on a spurt, and ride, point blank, at her assailant, then swerve at the last moment.

Certainly this requires nerve, but it is really simple, and marvellously effective. The tramp cannot overcome the instinct of self-protection which makes him jump to one side, when the cyclist, of course, at once swerves in the other direction.

Nearly every cyclist carries a weapon on his machine which, under many circumstances, he may use with great effect: a strong, long, heavy metal pump offers as convenient a weapon as one could desire. Let the rider who is threatened by a foot-pad flourish his pump in his assailant's face, and he will be surprised how quickly and precipitously the assailant jumps back. A formidable blow could be delivered in a man's face with a heavy pump, especially when riding at speed. If the pump is carried in spring clips attached to the top bar of the machine—or in the case of a lady's machine to the handlebars—it is ready to hand in case of emergency, and may be detached in a moment.

It is well to know how to utilise the momentum of a cycle in disabling an opponent to the best effect. To deliver a blow whilst riding—say, at the head of an objectionable small boy who has been indulging in the dangerous practice of throwing a cap at your wheel, and stands in need of punishment—or at the head of an assailant of larger growth—it is necessary to swerve suddenly as you come alongside, so that you throw the balance of your machine over towards your assailant! Leaning well over you deliver a swinging, slightly upward, and *forward*, blow with your hand or your weapon. If the blow be timed well, the shock of the recoil—which, it must be understood, would otherwise be disastrous—will have no other effect than to



throw your machine back into an upright position, and to cause you to regain your balance easily, when you may ride on in triumph.



The water squirt is a useful weapon, while a heavy blow may be dealt with a metal pump.

A forward blow, since it acquires the additional momentum of the bicycle, may be delivered with great force when riding fast; conversely a back-handed blow is ludicrously powerless.

There are occasions when it is safer, if attacked whilst cycling, to meet an assailant dismounted, rather than a wheel. You may then utilise your machine as a weapon—and a very formidable weapon it becomes in the hands of the practised cyclist.

Here is a case in point. You are riding along a country road, when suddenly you are startled by a man who springs in front of you, and attempts to seize hold of your machine. You have no opportunity to adopt the strategy of startling him by riding

fast point blank at him, and then swerving; yet you must act on the instant if you are to protect yourself. Your best plan is this: Spring backwards off your machine, and by pulling at the handle-bars, cause it to rear up on its back wheel.

(We will suppose in this case that you are not of the gentle sex. You may make the backward spring by jumping to the ground with the aid of the back step, or by springing clean to the ground from the saddle.)

You are now face to face with your assailant, with your machine reared up perpendicularly before you. You may retain your hold of the handle-bars with both hands,

or place your right hand on the saddle—in either case you have perfect control over your machine, and may run it backwards or forwards before you, to the right or to the left, as you desire.

That your antagonist will jump back from sheer surprise at the moment when you make your machine rear up, goes without saying. Seizing this opportunity, you take a short sharp run forward, and hurl your machine at your assailant, letting it run on its back wheel, and so directing it as it leaves your hands that the front wheel will come heavily down on top of him. He will necessarily stagger backwards under the weight of the machine, giving you a golden opportunity to make use of your fists.

It may not always be necessary, of course, to resort to these drastic measures. It is quite possible that in the surprise and confusion with which you cover your assailant when



How to use a cycle as a weapon.

you cause your machine to rear, you may be able to make a quick dash past him, mount and ride away. Or you may await his attack, holding your cycle with its front wheel high in the air, and dealing him heavy blows with this wheel, without actually letting the machine leave your hands.

Here is another way in which a bicycle may be utilised both as a shield and as a weapon. You have dismounted, we will suppose, to meet on foot an unexpected attack. You should take care, under these circumstances, to place your machine between your assailant and yourself, holding it by the handle-bar. Then make your cycle describe a half semi-circle around you, with precisely the same movement as you would employ if you were using a scythe in a hay field. In this way you may keep your assailant at a distance until the psychological moment arrives when you

may deliver your grand assault to the best advantage.

This will be when he advances upon you, and throws out one foot, preparatory to delivering a blow at you. The moment he assumes this, the attitude of the boxer when about to attack, make a quick movement of the machine, which will result in catching his outstretched leg, as though in a vice, between the front wheel of the cycle and the sloping bar of the frame. This grip is obtained by twisting the handle-bar, first away from you, and then, after slightly altering the position of the wheel, so as to inclose the antagonist's foot, by twisting it sharply towards you. By now turning the handle-bar with the hand so that a strong pressure is exerted by the back of the front wheel against your assailant's leg, you cause him such pain that he is powerless to harm you. You have now only to lean forward and deal him a blow on the chest with your fist, to disturb his already wavering balance and to stretch him on his back.

The various movements by which this happy termination of the incident is brought about should be done with one swift, strong, comprehensive sweep of the cycle, and a blow which should follow almost simultaneously, so that all will be over in a moment, and there will be nothing to prevent you from mounting and riding gaily on your way.

Another case: suppose you are standing face to face with an assailant who has approached close to you, and is threatening you with his fists. You have hold of your bicycle, one hand on the handle-bar the other on the saddle.

To protect yourself and make an attack to the best advantage, all that you have to do is to give your bicycle a slight push, so that it falls over on to your opponent; then, without a pause, aim as heavy a blow as may be at his chest or chin.

Instinctively, involuntarily, he will lower his hands to catch the bicycle and will step back unguardedly—thus offering you a golden opportunity for attack.

Simple as this little trick is, it is immensely effective when a dismounted cyclist finds himself driven to extremes in dealing with an aggressive assailant who approaches

unwarrantably close to him; and it can hardly fail in result, for no one can make an effective assault with a bicycle falling up against his legs.

Not always, however, is it possible to deal with an assailant with such little risk to oneself as in the above case. In desperate emergencies it is sometimes necessary to act desperately, to take desperate risks. Suppose, for example, that you are riding along a narrow track, or path, when suddenly a man bars your way. To turn and flee is impossible; here, therefore, is your best plan under the circumstances. Ride boldly up to your assailant's side, leap bravely from your machine full upon him, and throw your arms around his neck, leaving your cycle to go where it pleases.

You will come upon him with an irresistible momentum, as though you had dropped from the sky, and if you have not sufficiently damaged him when he strikes the ground, you, at least, are on top. Afterwards, when you have dealt with him as you please, it is quite possible that you will find your wheel lying unharmed on the road-side.

The last three or four methods of defence that I have described are hardly suitable for use by lady cyclists, unless particularly strong-minded and strong-armed! A simple means of defence that may be highly recommended for the use of fair cyclists is the water squirt. This is an ingenious little weapon sold in cycling shops, made in the shape of a pistol, but with an indiarubber handle which holds water, and which, when pressed, will squirt a shower of water for a distance of 20ft. or so. The water squirt is guaranteed to stop an attack from the most vicious dog or man—and certainly the foot-pad who attempted to approach a lady cyclist, and was met with a douche of cold water, would receive a severe shock that would probably cause him to stand back long enough to allow his prey to escape.

Unfortunately, it has happened more than once that lady riders have suffered annoyance from ill-conditioned cyclists, who have followed them along lonely roads, and have ridden close behind them for long distances, not without making remarks. A lady rider thus pursued has a very simple remedy in

her power with which she may easily upset anyone who persists, in cycling parlance, in "hanging on to" her back wheel.

Let the lady rider suddenly back-pedal with all her might, so that she allows the front wheel of her pursuer's bicycle to collide with her own back wheel. The immediate result will be that the pursuer is thrown from his machine, the rider in front escaping with a slight jerk, which will hardly be felt. Any one who has followed a pace-maker on a bicycle track or elsewhere, knows how instantaneous and disastrous is the result of the slightest touch with one's own front wheel against the pace-maker's back wheel,



The tramp is taken unawares.

and how infinitesimal is the effect on the pace-maker.

The cyclist who is pursued by another cyclist may upset the latter in the way described with absolute certainty if the two machines are close together, in a line, and are travelling at a high speed. When chased by another rider who is attempting to draw alongside in order to lay hands upon you, you may cause him a tremendous spill by suddenly swerving and riding across his path, so that your back wheel collides with his front wheel.

Sometimes a cyclist needs self-protection, not from any particular assailant, but from his own folly.

Here is a useful way for a cyclist, who is riding without a brake and who wishes to pull up suddenly, to obtain great power for back-peddalling. Let him take a firm grip with one hand on the saddle behind him, and he will obtain such leverage that he can back-pedal with great strength, and will probably find it an easy matter to control his wheel.

Another excellent method of putting on a brake, on a brakeless machine, is for the rider to insert the toe of his shoe in the space between the top of his wheel and the bottom of the front upright bar, so that the sole of his shoe presses on the tyre like a brake. Or he may use both feet to put on a brake, pressing with the soles of his shoes on either side of the tyre, just in front of the forks.

Suppose that a cyclist has been run away with by his machine down a steep hill, and sees that a collision with a wall at the bottom is inevitable. As he approaches

within a few yards of the wall, he should take both hands from the handles, and hold them out as far forward as possible in front of him. As his front wheel crashes up against the wall, and he is thrown forward, his arms will take the blow, and he will thus protect his head.

Another hint. When riding at night, or in traffic, it has sometimes happened that cyclists have been swept from their machines and badly hurt by running against the tail-boards of wagons or carts, beneath which their front wheels have been sufficiently low to pass. When there is no time to put on the brake, and a collision of this kind is inevitable, the cyclist can do nothing better than to put out one hand before him, as far forward as possible, above the front wheel, and to allow the shock of the collision to be taken by the hand and arm.

Sometimes a cyclist needs protection from the arm of the law, as when he finds himself many miles from home at lighting-up time, and without a lamp. Many and ingenious are the devices which cyclists have been known to adopt on such occasions of pressing need. A Chinese lantern, if obtainable, and a bit of candle will save the

situation; though I cannot recommend the idea of the man who collected all the glow-worms he could find on the roadside, and carried them triumphantly before him in a handkerchief in place of a lamp!

But here is a simple and reliable method for overcoming the difficulty. Let the benighted cyclist obtain a bottle—there should be no great difficulty in this in a civilised country—and a piece of candle. An ordinary



Ride boldly up to your assailant's side, leap bravely from your machine full upon him.



When chased by a purse-snatcher —

white glass bottle with a long neck is best for this purpose. Then let him knock a hole in the bottom of the bottle, light the candle, and push it up the bottle's neck.

An excellent light, even though only of one candle power, is thus given, and the cyclist, holding out his bottle before him, may ride on boldly without fear of falling foul of the law.

himself with an empty purse. Supposing the rider thus armed is menaced by a tramp in his path, who demands money, he has merely to throw the empty purse to the tramp, so that it falls to the side of the road, doing so, of course, with a great show of reluctance.



— suddenly put on the brake, making him run into your back wheel. The certain result is shown below.

So far the means of self-protection from highway assailants that I have described have mostly called for a certain amount of pluck, dash, or strength on the cyclist's part. For the benefit of weak and timid cyclists who sometimes ride in fear of footpads, here is a simple trick wherewith the designs of a purse-snatcher may be confounded.

Let the cyclist afraid of highway robbery arm

The tramp will naturally move to pick up the purse, giving the opportunity for escape.

Fair, but timid cyclists, riding after dark, will find much confidence in two purses, one for their own use, the other for the sole use and benefit of ungentlemanly night road gentlemen,

