

GAVE UP WHEEL, GOT A TANDEM

Of course, Mr. Stone never for one moment imagined that any of his parishioners would object to his riding a bicycle.

St. John's, Rummford, was a large, straggling parish, and as he made a practice of coming once a fortnight upon every member of the congregation he rightly judged that it would give him a great deal of waiting. Pleasure had nothing to do with his purpose.

As he lunched had it, however, he encountered Miss Meddlebury the first time he rode out. Although no tyro, he was out of practice and he dared not go a handle to lift his hat, so he went by with a nod and a smile.

Miss Meddlebury stopped short. Turning about she glared after the curate's flying cont-tails, until they disappeared in the distance, then marched straight to the vicarage, whither she had been several times before on Mr. Stone's account—visits concerning which he was blissfully ignorant.

It is necessary to explain that Miss Meddlebury was a very important personage in the parish of St. John's. For the sake of his poor the vicar could not ignore her opinions. She had an income of \$15,000 a year, and one-tenth of that sum, not a penny more and not a penny less, she gave to him to bestow as he thought proper.

By reason of her confidence Mr. Armitage shut his eyes to her austerity and narrow-mindedness, but the truth must be told here. Miss Meddlebury was stern and forbidding in appearance and disposition. Every form of enjoyment she considered baneful, if not a deadly sin.

From the first she objected to Mr. Stone. After his opening services, which had greatly pleased the vicar, she complained that he was too young, too tall, and too plain looking.

"All the girls will be getting their caps at him," she said to one of those complaining visits previously mentioned. "They will think a great deal more of the preacher than of the sermon. It was very unwise of you to engage him."

"The good old vicar said he hoped not, and thought no more about it, unless to laugh quietly to himself."

In some unaccountable manner she discovered that Mr. Stone had fallen in love with Nelly Armitage. It was true enough, but at the time the vicar's daughter was by no means sure of the fact herself.

Miss Meddlebury was not aware that the handsome, well-set-up young clergyman possessed a private income large enough to marry upon whenever he thought proper, but she would probably have acted just the same in any case.

"You know I warned you that Mr. Stone would not do," she told that young lady's papa. "Unless you wished to be tangled in a very undesirable love affair you will get rid of him."

The Rev. Mr. Armitage looked rather bewildered, but not at all displeased. "Love affairs," Nelly cried, "I have heard of, but I have never heard of anything to me, nor has Mr. Stone."

"No," said Miss Meddlebury, with her vinegary smile. "I don't suppose it has gone so far as that. I thought it my duty to put you on your guard in time."

"I am very much obliged, I am sure," rejoined the vicar.

And there is no doubt he was very thankful for the information. St. John's was rather a poor living, and he had given too much away to be able to save much. His daughter, being unmarried, the prospects of her union with an independent gentleman of the highest character would not be likely to interfere with his sleep of nights.

"And you will act without delay?" continued Miss Meddlebury.

"When the time comes, I must not be precipitate, you know."

The vicar changed the subject, plunged into parish affairs, and so escaped further awkward questions upon that occasion. But it was only a respite. The meeting with the curate on his bicycle took place two days later. Mr. Armitage chanced to be standing at his study window and saw Miss Meddlebury coming up the garden.

"I have been shocked," she said, "positively shocked. And I am sure you will be when you tell your daughter that you have just met Mr. Stone on a bicycle."

"I don't see any harm in it," rejoined the vicar, who did not look in the least perturbed.

"I am surprised. The clergyman that would ride a bicycle can have no respect for his cloth, no desire to give the good will of his congregation. I will not countenance it. Mr. Stone must give it up or I shall be compelled to take a new vicar in St. Mark's. I should feel uncomfortable. I really could not sit under him."

St. Mark's was the wealthiest parish in Rummford. If she left St. John's she would be sure to take her \$15,000 with her, and this was a contingency to be avoided at almost any cost.

"I trust you have acted upon the hint I gave you concerning Nelly?"

"Well, no," he answered. "I don't see how I can interfere at present."

Miss Meddlebury took herself off with the air of a victor. The vicar watched her down the garden and then went to his daughter's room to unbend his mind.

"Of all the unreasonable mischief-makers I ever met that woman is the worst!" he cried. "She is, indeed, well named Meddlebury."

"Papa!" exclaimed the girl, looking up in surprise.

"Miss Meddlebury has just called," he went on. "She wants me to put my foot down on Stone's bicycle."

"I didn't know that he had one," she rejoined with a blush that did not escape the vicar's notice.

"Neither did I. How can I tell him that he mustn't ride a bicycle here? I don't know how he will take it. He might resign."

"I hope he will not do that," said the girl quickly.

"He is not likely to do so. Mr. Stone is not a man to allow anyone to dictate to him. But she has threatened to leave St. John's. You know what that would mean to the poor next winter. I wish you would speak to Nelly."

The mere suggestion dyed Nelly's cheeks a still more vivid red.

"Oh, no, no," she cried. "I could not. Whatever made you think of that?"

"Miss Meddlebury says he is in love with you," he answered slyly. "If that is so he wouldn't be likely to take offense."

"If he is it has nothing to do with Miss Meddlebury," she answered with asperity. "How did she learn it? Why did she tell you?"

"I cannot answer the first question. Miss Meddlebury has the eyes of a lynx. She told me as an inducement to send Mr. Stone away. She thought I ought to be warned. You know she considers that every curate should be middle-aged and as plain as a pike-staff."

"Papa, let Miss Meddlebury leave St. John's. We should all be happier. And perhaps the poor people wouldn't suffer much for the want of her \$15,000. I could go around and collect for the fun."

"No, my dear, we must bear with her, for the sake of the widows and fatherless. I will send a note to Mr. Stone asking him to call this evening. When he comes on the vicarage, Mr. Stone never had a prior engagement. Stone asking him to call this evening at the vicarage—at least, he never pleaded one. It was rather late when he arrived, however, for he had been sitting with a sick woman and did not receive the vicar's note until 7 o'clock. He came on the vicarage bicycle, which he left in the garden.

The vicar introduced the bicycle almost at once, stating exactly what had passed between himself and Miss Meddlebury.

"I am rather surprised," said the curate, smiling. "But you did quite right to say that I would give it up, sir. I would give up almost anything rather than that a member of the church should be offended. Miss Meddlebury's \$15,000 does not influence me. I should act just the same if she hadn't a penny to bestow in charity."

Nelly gave him a quick glance of admiration. The vicar rose from his chair and grasped him by the hand.

"That's the true christian spirit!" he cried. "I am glad."

"I am sorry that Miss Meddlebury does not like me," Mr. Stone went on, after a pause. "I must give it up, sir. As for the bicycle, as I came over on it, I had better ride it home, but I shall probably get rid of it tomorrow."

The clock was striking 11 when the vicar suddenly pushed the board away, exclaiming:

"Dear me! I had no idea it was so late!"

Mr. Stone rose at once and took his leave. To reach his lodgings it was necessary to pass Miss Meddlebury's fine house, which lay back a considerable distance from the road. As he went he fancied he heard a shout. Applying the brake, he dismounted and listened. He had not been mistaken. Someone at a distance was calling for the curate. The vicar of the carriage drove was wide open. Pushing the machine before him he ran it up to the house, at his best speed.

"What is the matter?" he called out.

"Burglar!" answered a voice at an open window. They have taken my jewels and all my securities. I am ruined!"

He recognized Miss Meddlebury notwithstanding her dishabille. She came down in a dressing gown, greatly distressed.

"I heard a noise in my boudoir," she explained, "and getting out of bed I went to see what was the matter. There were two men. The window was open and they had a ladder. I could not stop them, and they have carried my jewel box and all my securities, which I fetched from the bank this morning to check, as I do twice a year. They drove away in a trap. I saw them go."

"Which way?" cried the curate excitedly.

"To the right," was the reply.

"I'll follow them," my bicycle's outside. Send someone to the police station to give the alarm. The thieves are from Burlington, no doubt."

A minute afterward the curate of St. John's was pedaling along the Bedlington road as fast as he could go. It was his first attempt at "scorching," and he made fair to shine at that dangerous pastime.

Swiftly, noiselessly, the pneumatic hooped on, until the quick beat of the heels ahead became more audible to the cyclist as he rode. Noiser and noiser he drew, until at last he trap was in sight. The moon was shining brightly, and he could see that it contained two men and a boy.

It was a desolate part of the road, with not a house in sight; but the village of Cranworth lay only a mile ahead, and the burglars must pass through it.

Gradually drawing up as the flickering lights came in view, he presently spurred past the trap with out turning his head, and dismounted as near the center of the village as he could judge. At that hour the streets were deserted, and most of the houses in darkness. But Mr. Stone was an old "blue" and he felt himself more than a match for a couple of Bedlington thieves. The boy he did not count.

Mr. Stone had scarcely time to get his wind before the trap was close upon him. Picking up a pebble he shied it through the nearest lighted window, to rouse the inmates, and springing at the burglar's head caught hold of the reins.

Impetuously he assailed his ears, blows were showered upon him with the whip, but he did not let go. The

driver sprang to the ground and rushed at him. Still holding the horse with his left hand, he knocked the fellow down, never ceasing to shout:

"The trap!"

The second man leaped from the trap to assist his companion, but he also received a knockdown blow. It all passed in a few seconds, but the villagers were aroused. Men came running from their cottages without coat or waistcoat, women with shawls thrown over their night-dresses. The boy escaped in the confusion; but both men were secured and handed over to the constable, who arrived in his stockings and trousers, and thus clad, marched them to the lockup.

In the trap Mr. Stone found Miss Meddlebury's jewel case and the box in which she had placed the securities, both unopened. Having given the constable his name and address, and promised to return early in the morning, that officer, a very young man, allowed him to depart with the plunder tied to the handle bar of his bicycle.

A note from Cranworth he met a mounted policeman, followed by two more in a dog cart. Stopping them he informed them of the capture of the burglars and rode on. The limous were a blaze of light when he arrived. Dr. Gray's carriage stood at the door and a fussy police inspector stood on the doorstep.

"You can't go in, sir!" cried the functionary, as the curate approached with the recovered valuables.

"That is immaterial," was the answer. "Perhaps you will give these boxes to Miss Meddlebury and assure her that the thieves are in custody at Cranworth."

"Why—why?" cried the inspector, who had recognized the new curate of St. John's. "You don't mean to say, sir, that you've got the swag?"

"Yes, I do," said Mr. Stone. "all of it, I think. The locks do not appear to have been tampered with. Perhaps you will also be good enough to inform Miss Meddlebury that I overlooked the burglars on my bicycle." He added with a quiet laugh.

Soon after 10 o'clock the next morning Miss Meddlebury called at the vicarage. She had not quite got over the excitement of the previous evening, and a great deal of what she said was so incoherent that the vicar, who knew nothing of the burglary previous to her visit, could not make head or tail of her words, but a very clear recollection of the most important of her rambling remarks.

"I do hope you haven't said anything to Mr. Stone about his bicycle. It would be sinful of me to object to his riding after this. I am convinced that the purpose was good and I am sorry I said a word about it. And if Nelly likes him and they think of marrying she shall not be a portionless bride, I shall make her a wedding present of a substantial character."

Miss Meddlebury was as good as her word—rather better, in fact. When a few months later, Miss Nelly Armitage's engagement to her father's curate was announced, and the wedding day fixed, that young lady received a very substantial gift in the shape of a check for \$900.

Mr. Stone seldom rides his bicycle now. He is much more frequently to be seen on a tandem.—Answers.

AN AFRICAN PIONEER'S FEAT.

Hauled a Boat 1,600 Miles Overland Across Africa.

From the Philadelphia Times.

Sixteen hundred miles across the wilds of Africa, where the foot of civilized man has never hitherto trod, is an experience that presents dangers and difficulties enough of its own to discourage almost any ordinary man. But to haul a steam craft that distance with the aid of two companions of his own race and a handful of ignorant natives without the ordinary resources of modern science is the feat accomplished successfully by John Thorburn, an African pioneer, who has recently arrived in London.

But one of a series of notable accomplishments and experiences through which Thorburn has passed in his thirty years' life in the wilds of Africa.

Thorburn is a Scotchman by birth who emigrated to the Transvaal some thirty years ago. For a number of years he followed the ordinary pursuits of the farmer and tradesman in the African republic. At the end of that time he began a journey across country to settle Lorenzo Marques, but before completing half the distance he was stranded on the borderless ocean of the African wastes. His oxen succumbed to the tsetse fly and left him helpless in sight of a little native village. Hardly had the disaster overcome him when he was met by a distinguished-looking tribesman, who inquired the reason of his difficulty. He soon learned that he was in the presence of Unbulandine, king of Swaziland, and paramount chief to all the Swazis.

The native chieftain was very friendly in his welcome to the stranger and extended to him the hospitality of his home. There the two learned to know each other, and the result was that he constituted the chief advisor to his African majesty. In this capacity he rendered signal service to the natives by the introduction of Scotch methods and civilization in the tribe and was the everlasting gratitude of the chief and his dusky followers.

The king was liberal in his offers to reward the sturdy Scotchman, but he persistently refused to accept anything but a small grant of land from the dusky owner. This he improved and developed by industry and attention and soon built up for himself the nucleus of quite an extensive property.

In pursuance of this he sent to London and had a small steamer built to ply a trade with the natives along the Vaal river. This eventually reached him and soon made a snug sum for its owner. Nature, however, conspired against him, and the Vaal, after successive dry seasons, was completely dried up. Endangered by the dangers of the undertaking, Thorburn at once determined to take the boat across country to the waters of Delagoa bay, a distance of 1,600 miles.

The boat was thirty-seven feet long, but was loaded on a wagon drawn by eighteen oxen. Its engines were disposed of on a similar vehicle and the journey was begun. It led through a perfect wilderness, much of which had never been trodden by man. Roads were cut through thickets and wagons drawn along as readily as possible. Numerous mishaps failed to discourage the indomitable will of the Scotchman, and after encountering forest fires which all but destroyed the little party and being deserted by all his native helpers, he finally reached Delagoa bay with his charge.

The one native custom Thorburn encountered among the Swazis that he could not overcome was the offering of sacrifices in human blood by the tribesmen and the promiscuous murder of a host of natives. Captain Taylor lost his life, and his wife was killed. His ultimate departure from Swaziland was due to this cause.

years. To mark the romantic character of the business, the marriage ceremony was performed in the presence of his two lions, Mustapha and Coder; and twelve months later these two animals acted as godfathers to a young son and heir of the venturesome couple.

"The Marquis of Haddock" is the high-sounding name of a cat possessed by Miss Janotha, the court pianist to the German emperor. Her majesty the queen does not like cats, but when the Marquis and Miss Janotha visit Windsor or Balmoral a roast pheasant or a nice boiled haddock is always prepared for his lordship's dinner, and served to him in state by a solemn and imposing butler. He also recognized visitor at all the royal houses, and among his best friends are her majesty, Emperor William, Francis Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes), and several other leading writers and musical composers. When his mistress played selections from Mozart, Beethoven or Bach he signifies his approval by purring slightly. But modern Slavic music he detests, and if he cannot stop his mistress the Marquis leaves the room in a dignified protest.

Recently a favorite dog belonging to a man living in Strada, Aveila, died, and so great was the grief of his master that he decided to bury the dog according to the rites of the Greek church. Accordingly, he had the dead dog clothed in a splendid dress, and then laid out on an elaborate catafalque and surrounded with flowers, candles and incense burning. He also had a superb coffin constructed, and, finally, after the dog had lain in state for two days, actually ordered a hearse and four. The news got abroad and thousands of people went to see the Christian dog. But the authorities interfered and had the man bury it in a rubbish heap without unnecessary ceremony.

ANIMALS IN CURIOUS ROLES.

Interesting Tales About Some of Our Four-Footed Friends.

From Tit-Bits.

It is doubtful whether a parrot instance can be found of the curious outcome of a dog's sagacity. This was the case with a splendid bloodhound which was the means of bringing about a divorce between his master and mistress.

A prominent society man in Bucharest, a director of a manufactory situated on the outskirts of the city, was such a lover of his dog that he was constituted the chief advisor to his African majesty. In this capacity he rendered signal service to the natives by the introduction of Scotch methods and civilization in the tribe and was the everlasting gratitude of the chief and his dusky followers.

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MARRIAGE BY PROXY.

Peculiar Ceremony Performed in Australia and Africa.

An extraordinary ceremony recently took place in Amsterdam, with a counterpart in Africa. It appears that a young man left Holland some years ago to serve in the telegraph department of the Transvaal. It had been his ambition to make a certain young lady in Amsterdam his wife if he ever attained to prosperity. But when success was achieved he was unable to leave his work for a journey to Holland. In this difficulty a marriage proxy—known in Holland as a glove marriage—was suggested.

The details were all carefully arranged, the difference of time exactly calculated and continuous cable connections between Pretoria and Amsterdam secured. The bridegroom and her friends assembled in the Hotel Kruger. An operator using a wire from the cable notified the lady's family in Holland that all was in readiness, and the reply came that the ceremony would then begin.

In the Amsterdam mansion a friend of the bridegroom made the responses and when the time came to clasp hands, produced a glove belonging to the bridegroom, which he had worn. The proxy, holding one end of the glove and the bride the other, the promises were exchanged and the ceremony completed.

A cablegram from the bride to her husband, six thousand miles away, gave him her wife's greeting, to which he responded. There was a wedding feast in Pretoria and another in Amsterdam and the cable was kept busy with congratulations. Then the bride said farewell to her family and went

on board the steamer to begin her journey to her new home.

The custom of the old glove marriage dates back to Dutch colonial days, when they were more common than in these times of rapid and chief journeys. But there is a counterpart older that resembles it in many of its particulars. Many a tearful farewell to mourning loved ones assembled around a death-bed, is like that bride's good-bye to her family, merely the parting of one who goes to Him who has long been loved, and who is about to enter the mansion prepared before the foundation of the world.

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