

THE WHEELING WORLD

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THE WHEELING WORLD.

A Weekly Survey.

DICK TURPIN'S RANDOM RECORDS.

EXPERTS assure me that a taste for camping out is like wealth—it is not readily acquired. I believe them. Still, there is a good deal of fun to be extracted from it, as a contingent of Excelsiorites found last week-end. Sam Clark sent a bell tent and some rugs to Uckfield; then at his invitation Bert Hales, Willmer, and I joined him on Saturday afternoon, and we jogged comfortably through Brighton and Lewes, to Uckfield. Here we found the tent, together with F. A. Tomsett and R. Stevenson of the Horsham C.C., who were to camp with us.

So after tea we set about the ceremony of pitching our tent. As Sam was an old volunteer and Tomsett, before winning County championships, had seen three years' Yeomanry service in South Africa, they were allowed to drag a pole and a vast expanse of canvas about whilst the rest of us carefully watched their labours "so as to know how to do it next time."

At last all the pegs and ropes were in place the straw and rugs made ready, and we set out for a stroll round Uckfield before turning in for the night.

The stroll was somewhat marred by different natives who, with more thought for crops than for cyclists, assured us that the glass was going down, and predicted rain, tempests, and other luxuries with an enthusiastic glee which seemed diabolical to us when we pictured our frail little canvas home.

The recruits among us quaked a little, but Sam assured us that the tent was waterproof; whilst Yeoman Tomsett said that if it rained much a trench round our tent would keep our ground dry. We hoped it wouldn't rain much, and turned in.

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The novice campaigners found sleeping a difficulty. A railway engine about fifty yards away favoured us with instrumental music, the engine having the assistance of an exceedingly heavy chorus of goods waggons. These were being shunted to and fro time after time, to an interminable accompaniment of bangs and crashes, whilst a greasy looking Mephistopheles, who drove the engine, produced some weird effects from the steam whistle.

So on an average two of us sorted out our straw and rugs every quarter of an hour. Then "Good-night" all round, a fruitless effort to beguile the Goddess of Sleep, and more sorting out.

Thus two hours toiled by and brought witching midnight. Also Medhurst, who had motored from Worthing in the dark.

Still the incessant crash and roar of railway waggons in torment kept us awake. We waited patiently for either the engine or the permanent way to get worn out, and, sure enough, about two o'clock in the morning things simmered down.

Then the silence was only broken by a wheezy pumping-engine which was evidently suffering from bronchitis; it was a couple of hundred yards away from us, all alone, and indulging in a mournful soliloquy of grunts and sneezes. We pitied the poor thing, and, after a final sorting out of straw and rugs, dropped off to sleep.

In the early morning the birds were singing cheerily, and one by one we woke up just in time to be greeted by the Mungeam brothers, who were bound for Chatham on a tandem. We wished them luck, peeped out of the tent, found it was raining, turned in and slept again.

Two hours later the tandem crew returned: the rain, which was playing kettle-drum solos on our tent, was too much for them. So we all had a wash and breakfast in a neighbouring institute.

Then Willmer was arraigned before a hastily assembled and rather undignified tribunal to answer a string of charges, ranging from high treason to riding without a light. There was enough evidence to convict him of doing more than his fair share to keep the camp awake over-

Wednesday, July 26th, 1905.

night, so he was mulcted in "coffee all round" after dinner.

Sam and Medhurst visited the Church, Stevenson gave me a derbbing at chess, and with gossip and reading the morning passed away very quickly. Then came dinner, after which we discovered the weather had cleared up.

So the party dispersed, Tomsett and Stevenson going back to Horsham, and four of the Excelsior contingent making for home, leaving Sam and Medhurst still revelling in their temporary lapses into a state of almost primitive barbarism.

But still we all enjoyed our taste of living under canvas; it yielded so much fun that even having to stick three patches on to my breathless tyre during the journey home caused no angry feelings in our breasts.

Sam was in form at Emsworth last Thursday. Riding in a Veterans' mile handicap he finished second to a man who, though eight years younger, had 140 yards start as compared with Sam's 80 yards allowance. He only lost first place by three inches.

Motor bicycles are all right when they are all right. So says Frank Medhurst, who motored to Salisbury and back after dinner one day last week, a journey of about a hundred and sixty miles, without experiencing any trouble with his fiery, untamed steed.

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