

THE WHEELING WORLD

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THE WHEELING WORLD.
A Weekly Survey.
DICK TURPIN'S RANDOM RECORDS.
A Night Ride.
"I am that merry wanderer of the night."
Midsummer Night's Dream.

THUS far, and no farther, may I be permitted to quote Puck. To be a merry wanderer of the night has its charms; but to follow the example of a fairy who openly boasts of jesting to his King, and of beguiling fat and bean-fed horses; whilst he is proud, too, of worrying venerable old ladies when he is disguised as a roasted crab or a three-footed stool of the disappearing persuasion, might result in my expulsion from the ranks of the Excelsiorites.

So I contented myself with being a merry wanderer of the night, last week, when I decided upon a spin up to London and back.

It was a grand, still, moonlight evening, and half-past nine saw me pottering along the familiar Horsham road in company with my pipe and faithful steed. Horsham was settling down for the night, and even the moon retired before Crawley was reached.

Then it became real night riding. Save for a couple of fast motor cars which flashed past in a glare of acetylene lamps and two or three cyclists and pedestrians, I had the road all to myself.

Horley was sound asleep; over Reigate Common there was a hushed silence, and in fancy I heard the trees whisper to each other as I passed.

Redhill was restless, but things were calm again further on, and I pedalled through Merstham and on to Croydon, which was utterly deserted save for police, though the streets were ablaze with electric arc lamps.

Croydon past, and the fringe of London is

Croydon past, and the fringe of London is reached. Norbury and Streatham were sleeping; a cab or two and odd wanderers were about at Brixton, and from there on to London Bridge I saw little groups round the various street coffee stalls. And ever the policeman trying doors, searching doorways, corners, and passages with his bull's eye.

Lifeless London!

But it is a strange London. The tall shops are there and the lighted streets. But it is all so quiet. London lifeless: no cabs, 'buses, motors, carts, or people; it is worth a fifty miles ride at night to see.

At two o'clock in the morning I was almost the only person on London Bridge. On my last previous visit I was rushing to catch a train, and threading through a solid mass of hurrying humanity, half of whom were rushing to catch trains here, cabs there, or 'buses somewhere else.

Now I leaned lazily on the parapet and admired the pictorial effect of the lights along the Thames side which were reflected in the smooth dark water. And when later a large flock of sheep were driven over the Bridge the contrast was complete. The biggest flock of sheep I have ever seen; and on London Bridge!

However, I had not cycled up to the big city

However, I had not cycled up to the big city to dream, but to meet a brother wheelman. Having discovered him we set out, and were soon leaving silent London and heading south again.

Now the stars looked sickly, the sky paled in the east, and the air felt raw. To our left was the ghost of the Crystal Palace showing faintly in the dim light.

As we rode through Merstham the sun got up and glowed a deep red through the morning mists which rolled down the hills into the valleys. Then he rose in the heavens and lost the deep red glow, whilst the mists vanished, and by the time we reached Crawley a warm day had set in.

So breakfast received attention, after which we were not long in making our way through Horsham and home, with enjoyable recollections of the ride.

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