

THE WHEELING WORLD

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A Weekly Survey.

DICK TURPIN'S RANDOM RECORDS.

The Irrepressible Henson.

A PERSPIRING Government official not a week ago toiled along under the burden of a novel postcard specially built for me by Messrs. Henson and Greenfield. It consisted of a fair-sized piece of board bearing my postal address on one side, and on the other what might have been a Bradshaw or A B C guide in Saxon days. That is presuming the Saxons ever travelled from Fareham to Chichester, Horsham, Redhill, and Croydon.

It proved, however, to be a schedule of a twelve hours' ride by Edgar Henson, who was then arranging to go for yet another medal, to win which he had to ride a hundred and sixty miles in twelve hours.

So on Monday Edgar tackled the job, starting from Chichester at six a.m., hieing himself to Fareham and back in a couple of hours. Another hour or so saw him at Offington Corner; yet another, and he was at Horsham. On he went through Crawley, Redhill, and Purley, and six hours after the start he was on his way south with over a hundred miles to his credit.

Henson turned up smiling at Offington Corner, at which point a hundred and forty-two miles had been polished off in less than nine hours. Instead of going on to Chichester to finish, he put in an extra run to Shoreham Bridge and back, being anxious to compile a creditable total.

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Then he romped to Chichester, and, still having time to spare, rode yet another extra piece on the Barnham, Yapton, and Bognor road before ceasing his efforts. His total mileage is about a hundred and ninety-eight miles, which is, I believe, the finest performance ever done by a Southern rider in a paced twelve hours' jaunt. At its conclusion Henson was remarkably fresh, and a "high tea" at Chichester, in celebration of his success, was done such justice to as to prove the Tarring man was certainly none the worse for a ride the distance of which was about equal to a journey from Sussex to Yorkshire.

Throughout the ride Edgar was splendidly paced by Flint, of Shoreham, who bestrude a motor bike. Albert Standing followed for much of the distance on a spare machine, and Harry Greenfield, Sam Clark, and a few other Club-mates helped the speedy rider in the matter of feeding, following, and checking him.

Thus Edgar winds up a series of rides which prove him to be the best distance rider in Sussex at the present time. Last year he won a gold centre and a gold medal on the Excelsior century and twelve hour rides, and this year he has completed his collection by winning the Excelsior gold for the century, and gold medals for the Chichester Club's hill-climb, fifty and hundred miles rides, and twelve hours' jaunt.

The Guileless Tramp.

I suppose it is no more than natural that there should be a sort of mutual interest in each other felt by the wheelman and the prowling casual who is—or says he is—in search of work. Both casual and wheelman are, in a sense, tramps.

I met a rare specimen near Offington Corner one day last week. A respectable looking man with a well-kept beard and a general air of neatness inquired the distance to Chichester, his accent being that of a foreigner.

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Staggered when I told him he had eighteen miles to tramp, he expressed a wish to consult me as to a difficult position in which he found himself placed, and accordingly I endeavoured to look mildly interested. Britain and British methods puzzled him greatly, he being a native of Buenos Ayres, and having served as a sea captain, I forget how many years.

Appearances were all against the truth of this yarn; but I looked as guileless as I possibly could, and appeared to swallow it whole. Thus encouraged he took a polite interest in my bicycle and in cycling generally, and then, turning to business, he fairly let his imagination go.

At Buenos Ayres one could make a fortune of about any size according to what one fancied in the way of fortunes. Take myself, for instance; and he generously pictured me owning half a Republic or so, after only a few years in South America.

But destiny had called him away from this millionaire manufactory and provided him with a wealth, not in gold but in adventures.

So we stood and strolled by turns whilst my worthy sea-captain manned his vessel, took in cargo, and traded into all the odd corners of the world. Then he struck an unlighted derelict in mid ocean at dead of night, lost his ship, and was afloat in an open boat for days with plenty of other survivors, but a scarcity of food.

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All this time I had looked as innocent and credulous as a very young choir boy; so he forthwith wrecked another ship—this time on a coral reef—and, with a note of grief and sorrow in his voice, he let his wife and children find a watery grave in the wide lone sea.

Just before I could inquire how many times cannibals had endeavoured to digest him and his anecdotes, he got back to civilisation. Then came a long chain of travels in search of the owner for whom he sailed. A rush of business had taken this owner to Paris, Newhaven, Brighton, Worthing, and Chichester in rapid succession. And ever dogging on the trail, my sea captain was at his heels; but always he missed appointments by the merest shaves, shaves which kept rapidly paring away his financial resources.

So, at last, here he was; saved from derelicts, submerged coral reefs, and a large and varied assortment of perils of the vasty deep, only to be stranded at Offington Corner without a penny in hard cash. All he possessed was a bill of exchange, issued on the Continent, but useless owing to some mere formality in drawing up the document.

He produced the bill, together with letters from his two brothers, one a clergyman and the other a Consul in the service of the Argentine Republic.

I felt, under the circumstances, it would be mean to examine the yarn and test its value as a truthful bit of history. I accepted it as a fine specimen of imaginative work on the part of a man who might with training rival the creator of Captain Kettle.

I have met many uncouth loafers, fresh from

the nearest casual ward, who are ready with a clumsy falsehood and a request for "Somethin' to 'elp a pore bloke on the road, govner." One specimen, encountered on the spot where I met my sea captain, assured me he had walked from Portsmouth that morning, and was tramping to Dover for work! Portsmouth to Dover, about a hundred and thirty miles, is a good day's walk!

But the sea Captain was an artist; he worked the climax of his story neatly, and achieved the desired result. I last saw him carefully navigating himself down Salvington Hill; in the offing lay the Half Moon Inn, where doubtless the "desired result" was laid out to advantage.

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