THE MAN ON THE WHEEL.

When to light up: Wednesday, June 14, 9.15; Thursday, 9.16; Friday, 9.17; Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 9.18.

A very picturesque Cycling Gymkhana was held last Saturday week in the quaint old-world gardens of the Albany Club at Kingston-on-Thames. It opened with a tortoise-race, run, or rather, "crawled," in

SNAPSHOTTED AT THE ALBANY CLUB GYMKHANA.

three heats, and was eventually won by Miss Valentine and J. W. Marnock. Then came "tilting at the ring." The bending-race, which consisted of riding in and out of a long line of bowling-balls, was won by Miss Valentine. Amongst the events for gentlemen, the "hat-trimming" competition was very amusing, the winning *chapeau* (trimmed in under four minutes by Mr. Timbs) being a hat of the sailor persuasion, turned up at one side with a bunch of coloured ribbons and a cluster of flowers. The gentlemen's obstacle-race was won by Captain Worsley. The competitors mounted their bicycles, opened an unbrella, rode down the lawn to a table, dismounted, closed their umbrella, lit a cigarette, opened and then drank from out of the bottle the soda-water therein contained, and rode back to the starting-point with opened umbrella and lighted cigarette. By the way, I may note that the Albany Club have a pretty lawn at Henley.

Should servants be allowed to cycle? This is a very momentous question in many a household just now. Mistresses and young ladies of the house feel their privileges are infringed when the cook and housemaid also have wheels which, it is quite likely, are as smart as those belonging to the young ladies themselves. When the evening spin is being taken, Miss Muriel rather resents meeting Ada, the under-housemaid, out with the young man who leaves the milk in the morning. The sensation is like going to the theatre and finding the footman in the next stall. Many mistresses have set their faces strongly against servants cycling, and refuse to employ girls if they have a proneness to bike. Others, with a little shrug, simply accept the inevitable. For now it is no uncommon thing for the new maid to turn up at her "place" with a machine among her luggage. The servants argue that it has got nothing to do with the mistress whether they bicycle or walk or go 'bus-rides on their "nights out." So the battle wages. Personally, I think the servants will win. Wasn't there an equally stern fight years ago over whether servants should be permitted to wear flowers in their hats? Now, most maids wear as flamboyant headgear as they like, and few mistresses have the courage to whisper even a word of protest.

I heard the other day of a household where the servants were obliged to sign an agreement that they would neither buy nor hire bicycles. The family went abroad for a few months, and, on returning, they were exceedingly proud of their triumph over "downstairs," whereas their friends were worried by the servants insisting on having bicycles or leaving. But, whenever they crowed particularly loud, these friends would smile knowingly. At last there was an explanation. "It's true your servants didn't buy or hire machines while you were on the Continent," they were told; "but they've been having a good time riding the bicycles that you left behind, so that the machines have been in constant use, instead of being stored away, as you thought." After that, it was thought well to abrogate the agreement, and let the servants buy bicycles of their own.

Cyclists are a thirsty lot. The other Sunday, fifteen hundred bottles of mineral-water were sold at a temperance house at Coulsdon. Of course, mineral-water is better than alcohol. Beer makes one perspire like an overworked drayman, and spirits are absolutely ruinous to breathing comfortably. I advocate strongly that you drink as little as possible when riding. Once give way to the habit of feeling thirsty—and it is little more than a habit—you will want to stop for water or lemonade or gingerbeer every two or three miles. I can speak from experience, for I do believe that once I was the thirstiest man that ever got astride a wheel. But I cured myself until I was able to ride under a blazing Indian sun, and on the blistering, scorching alkali desert of America, with nothing more than the discomfort of getting a hard tongue. I am never thirsty in England. Last week I rode fifty miles on a hot day without any drink, and only once rinsed my mouth Cyclists are infinitely better without drink of any kind. When the thirst comes, resist it, and very soon you will notice the desire will have disappeared.

I go about England a good deal, and a very striking fact it is that good riding in some localities is usual, while in other localities there is almost an epidemic of bad riding. Styles of wheeling, like the measles, must be contagious. Taking towns as a whole, the best cycling I have seen is in Newcastle and Nottingham. London, speaking in a wide general sense, is the worst of the lot. I don't advocate the crouching, humped-back attitude. But the worst riders are those who sit too far back and bolt upright. A great amount of pedal force is wasted by sitting back. Then comfort is lost by the upright position. There is no rounding of the shoulders in leaning forward slightly. It is a distinct advantage to have some of your weight thrown on the arms. The most serviceable easy height to have the handle-bars is just an inch higher than the saddle.

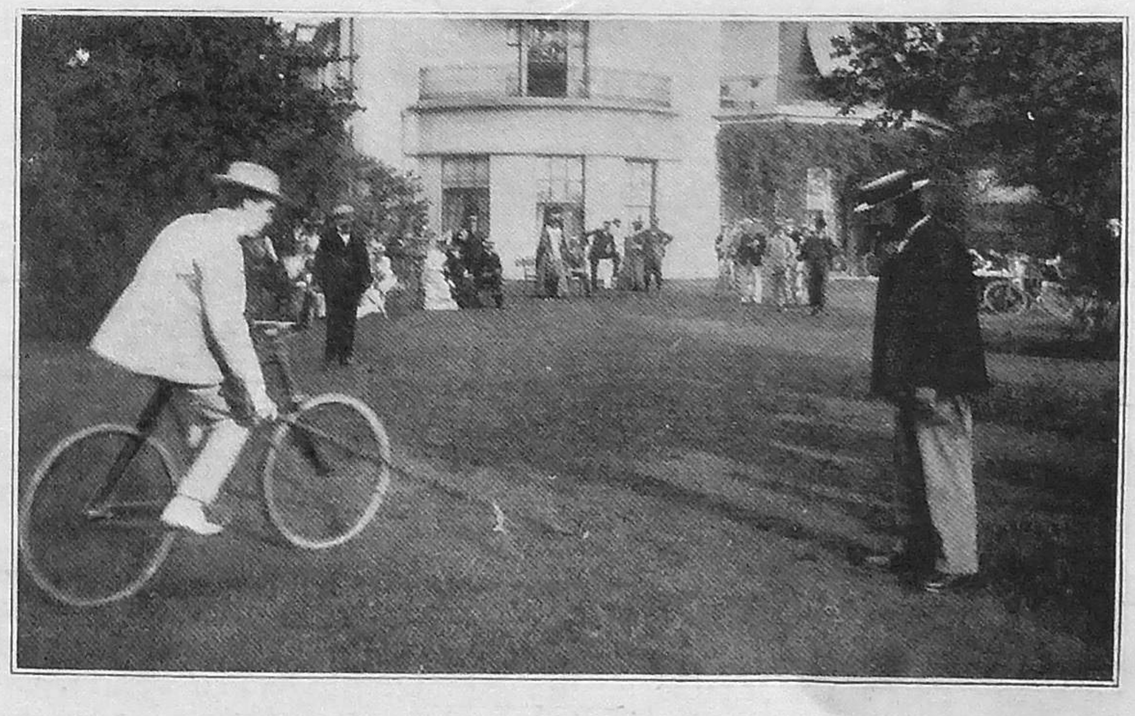
The most interesting cycle-maps are those of the panoramic description, where the country is revealed to you, picture-like, very similar to a yard-long panoramic view of the Upper Thames that I have in my drawer. I am glad to see the *Cycle* is weekly publishing a panoramic road-map of well-known cycling districts, accompanied by useful notes of what is to be seen by the way. These maps are capital, and I hope ultimately they will be published in pocket-book form.

Somebody has worked out a calculation that there are fourteen million bicycles in the world.

A point of much interest to riders is what they should pay extra to cabmen for carrying a bicycle. Cabmen, I know, often try to extract a shilling, especially from ladies. But sixpence is sufficient.

The record of a year's riding is held by a man named George, of Philadelphia. In the 365 days he covered 32,479 miles, or an average of 89½ miles a-day. Edward Hale is about attempting to go one better, by riding 100 miles a-day. Hale is a tall, wiry man, thirty-five years of age, and has had plenty of experience already in long-distance racing. He will travel all over England, accomplishing a century a-day. To prove the genuineness of the ride, he intends to carry a book, and hopes to get signatures every twenty miles or so. Further, he believes that local men will frequently accompany him. The ride is not being undertaken as a purely athletic feat. The main object is to boom a particular bicycle.

A neat little circular dealing with the merits of the "Northfleet" has reached me. I've never been astride a "Northfleet" myself, but I know several riders who are enthusiastic. The machine, while like other bicycles in general outline, has a new method of applying power. The cranks, instead of being attached to a toothed chain-wheel, as in the ordinary bicycle, have a lever-arm, along which the chain or strand is adjustable, and so the gearing may be varied through four or five stages, from the equivalents of 60 inches to 130. The length of the stroke is not affected by the variation of gear. The cranks, 10½ inches long, do not revolve, but move up and down through an arc of the circle. Of course, to be able to instantly lower your gear when in a hilly district, and increase it when in a level, is a great advantage. Besides, when "coasting," it is not necessary to remove the feet from the pedals—the cycle runs free without them; a powerful roller-brake on the rear-wheel



TILTING AT THE RING AT KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.

is applied by pressing both pedals downwards, so that, in "coasting," the pedals not only act as foot-rests, but by them the brake may be instantly applied to the driving-wheel. For ladies especially the "Northfleet" has certainly many attractions. J. F. F.

The North-Eastern Railway Company's Guide to the Hotels and Furnished Lodgings in Farmhouses and Seaside and Country Villages in the districts served by that company costs only twopence. The guide can be obtained post-free from the Superintendent of the line, York, and intending visitors would do well, before making their summer holiday arrangements, to obtain a copy.