



Winfred Ernest Garrison

The East Side of England

*Our young American cyclist pedals with
one leg and still makes it from Edinburgh
to London—440 miles in four and a half days*

It had long ago been decided that London should be the terminus of this bicycle trip, and Friday noon had been fixed upon as the last possible moment for reaching that goal. Leaving Edinburgh with four hundred and forty miles to go and four days and a half in which to do it, this final section of the tour necessarily degenerated into something of a race against time. But if one must hurry, this is the best place in England to do it, for the roads are level and, although it is an interesting ride, there are

comparatively few points of picturesque or historic interest which absolutely demand that the traveler shall linger long in contemplation. Perhaps the most attractive spot on the route is that bit of Scottish borderland which contains, within a few miles, the galaxy of Abbotsford, Melrose and Dryburgh Abbey. The present proprietors of Walter Scott's home, Abbotsford, have devised a most ingenious system for exhibiting to the visitor just those few rooms which they care to exhibit and shooting him out again into the road, admiring but dissatisfied. But at Melrose one may pause and muse and meditate to his heart's content upon the most beautiful ruin in Scotland.

There is something peculiarly satisfying about a good ruin, especially one like Melrose, whose every stone is a monument to the patient labor and artistic skill of those who carved and placed it. In elaborate buildings of more modern date, one cannot but doubt occasionally whether the result, beautiful as it may be, is worth its cost of toil. There are cathedrals, which, by their grandeur and magnificence, suggest that there has been a vast waste of both capital and labor, a terrible misapplication of resources. This is particularly true of new cathedrals. But it is different with a ruin, Here, in the nature of the case, one is forbidden to query whether it is worth its cost. The process of construction is here lost sight of in the distance—even as the well-trained memory diligently forgets painful episodes and treasures those which are pleasing—and there remains only the product, exquisite even in decay.

The line between Scotland and England (the River Tweed at this point) was again crossed without the traditional rain, but a worse thing befell me within a mile after crossing the line—a broken crank. This would have been bad at any time, but it was really serious when the schedule for these few remaining days demanded an average of a hundred miles a day. A telegram to London summoned the extra part to meet me next morning at Morpeth, forty miles from the scene of the accident. The rest of the afternoon was spent in the interesting exercise of learning how to ride against the wind and over an undulating road, with one pedal and the stump of a crank. It is possible, but not pleasant. No one who has not tried it will appreciate the thrill of delight which I experienced on finding the new crank at Morpeth next morning. Perhaps it will also be hard fully to appreciate the bitterness of the disappointment on finding that the new crank was of the wrong pattern, and therefore

useless. It meant another day of riding with one leg. But this day's ride was broken by long stops at Newcastle-on-Tyne and Durham.

Of the many English cathedrals visited on this tour, none produced such an impression as Durham, standing with a Norman castle at its side, on a commanding height, overlooking the river and town. A satisfactory repair of the crippled wheel was effected at Durham, and there seemed to be still a chance of reaching London on time, stopping to see a few more cathedrals on the way besides.

But, alas for the vanity of human wishes! Two hours out of Durham, and making lively time before a friendly breeze, there came a sickening crash. It might have been a broken leg, but as it happened it was nothing worse than the breaking off of a pedal. London seemed very far away, and it was not altogether easy to take a hopeful view of the case. There was no chance of getting a repair, but the days preceding had afforded some experience in the art of riding with one leg, and in that lay the only hope. I have a deep-seated aversion to the idea of finishing a bicycle trip on the train. The outcome of the matter was that the remaining two hundred and sixty miles, including two "century runs," were ridden with only one pedal, and London was reached on schedule time, before noon on Friday.

But there were interesting points to be visited before London was reached. For the lover of cathedrals no part of England can offer attractions equal to those of the strip from Durham to London. The cathedrals of Durham, York, Peterboro, Lincoln and Ely, not to mention St. Pau's and Westminster Abbey in London, will furnish to the student of ecclesiastical architecture abundant food for thought.

In the midst of these splendid monuments of the religious establishment, it is pleasing to find a spot where the mind can dwell upon the heroes of nonconformity and the early champions of religious liberty. It is not many miles from York—the seat of the archbishop of the North—to Scrooby, the English home of our Pilgrim Fathers before their successive migrations to Holland and to New England. The cathedral at York is, in its proportions at least, the most imposing of Anglican temples; at Scrooby the oaken beams of the low building, in which the little band of Independents worshiped, now form the roof of a stable. Scrooby is not much frequented by sightseers, although the present occupant of the manor house, as he showed me through the ancient edifice by candle-light, assured me that they had a great many visitors—that, in fact,

somebody came almost every week in summertime. I spent a night in Scrooby, and employed most of the evening in trying to discover whether any of the villagers were familiar with the names or the deeds of their eminent fellow-townsmen of two centuries and a half ago. Not a man could be found, except at the manor house, who had ever heard of the Pilgrims. I inquired particularly about William Brewster, but none of them could remember that any family of Brewsters had ever lived in the community. If it be not too harsh a thing to say on observation limited to a single night, I would characterize the Nottinghamshire peasants of the locality of Scrooby as an unusually dull and insensible set, little likely to be roused to deeds of heroism. Perhaps the stock has degenerated in these latter days; or, perhaps, as I prefer to believe, the Pilgrims in Scrooby, before they began their pilgrimage, were men of this same sort—heavy and stolid and what a passing stranger (like myself) might have called stupid. If the latter be true, it shows how the touch of divine fire and the possession of a divine truth may make heroes out of peasants and stir dullards to deeds at which the world will wonder.

It was a comfort to be assured by the guidebooks that Cambridge is inferior to Oxford in interest and beauty, for the stop there must be short, too short to admit of more than a hasty outside view of the principal colleges. One twilight and two moonlight hours gave me all the impression of Cambridge which I was permitted to get. Next morning an easy fifty-mile run brought me into London, and completed a ride of three thousand and eighteen miles in sixty-six days.

A few days remain for seeing London, but the bicycle trip is at an end. At the end of the tour I find several beliefs confirmed, most notably the conviction that, in such a country as England, the bicycle is the best means of vacation travel yet devised. The end of the whole matter is that, to those who are contemplating a bicycle trip in England, I would reiterate the advice offered at the outset: "Go."

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