

# His Bicycle Built for Two

By JOHN WINTER

Getting even with a skinflint on a distinctly novel plan.

FROM here to Warren? Twelve miles. Keep to your left all the way. What sort of a road? Look at them hills!" and Hiram Dean's long arm directed his interrogator's attention to the rugged, jagged declivities of the Penequasset valley.

"Switzerland; good view; mountain-climbing; clear air, lots of it," jerked out the nervous little man who was asking the way. "Business in Boston; important engagement; devil to pay, not there in time."

"Livery stable?" he added. Hiram looked the contempt he felt for one so ignorant.

"No, and you can't get wings here either; I guess you've got to hoof it. Your train leaves Warren in two hours, but of course you can't catch it. They's another train goes to-morrow, at the same time; you can catch that if you hurry."

"Try a farmer with good horses; where's a farmer?"

"Oh, they're scattered along the road; but say, don't you try Silas Crumb, for he won't do nothing for you. He's the meanest cuss in the hill section. Forecloses every mortgage he lays his hands on, turns out tenants and won't be stood off one jiffy, darn him! He's well fixed now, and he'd ought to be, if grabbin' hadn't had it.

"Last year the widdler Peasley's son took sick in the Klondyke, and had to be nursed and doctored there for months. Old Peasley hadn't left Jane a cent and, to get the money for Tom, the widow got Silas Crumb a mortgage on her farm. Tom died, and when the mortgage come due, the widdler could raise only five hundred out of the six. (The Lord only know how she done that, but she was a Diver fore she married Sam Peasley, and the Peasces are all grit).

"But gosh, it warn't no use; Silas driv over in his rig, foreclosed onto her, and turned her out onto the road, said it was hard times for him and told her she had three years' redemption and not to forget the interest. She hired out; but a woman whose heart's broke ain't much help, and she got only her board and keep.

"She died last February, and Silas has the farm."

"Yes, I see; forecloses on widows; large heart, general favourite; ought to be shot," soliloquised Baker. "Well, must be going; find a farmer; make train; good-by," and he hurried down the road.

"Get horse, or find some other way. Something's got to get me to that train. Twelve miles to the left. Do it some way," he said to himself.

The moonday sun was streaming down in its August blaze; even the chipmunks were quiet and nature herself seemed to own up that it was "hot as blazes." This is what Baker told the signboard, as he unbuttoned his vest.

He struck out boldly, however, and half an hour's walking brought him to a big, comfortable-looking farmhouse.

"Red barn and old dog to match," mused Baker as he lifted the knocker. "Haise a horse; get that train."

A heavy step crushed the gravel on the path which led to the barn, and Baker looked up into the face of a gaunt giant of a man, whose hard, crafty, old eyes glared grimly from beneath his shaggy brows; a dog growled from behind him, and was kicked into sullen submission by his master's hoarse-bellied look.

"'Im Silas Crumb," said he suddenly. "What do you want?"

"General favourite," said Baker to himself, and then, as his eyes passed from Silas to another part of the yard, an idea came quickly into the small, round, closely cropped head of Moses Baker.

"How you have bicycle for sale, tan-gum, little out of date, still good. Want two, Mrs. Baker and I."

Silas Crumb unheeded at once, as, looking at the prospective purchaser he saw a chance to dispose of one thing from which he had failed to wrench full value for cost.

He had bought the bicycle several years ago, had never been able to make use of it, and had stored it every winter and exhibited it every summer without having, as yet, succeeded in selling it. Constant overhauls had put him to an expense which had aroused still further hatred of this "white elephant."

It was now at its old place of exhibition, leaning against an apple-tree in the front yard, wearing the sign: "For Sale, Cheap for Cash."

Crumb boiled anew each time he saw it, and realised the generally out-of-date appearance of this derelict, which seemed to mock and defy him. But here was a purchaser!

Silas concealed his joy as well as he could, but human nature will out, and he fairly skipped up the path to the tree under which his enemy was standing. As he "skipped," he fixed his figure at sixty dollars; six years ago this meubus had cost him fifty. This little Mr. Baker had, to Crumb, the look of one whom money might be made almost at will.

Baker's face had assumed a simple, guileless, almost infantile expression; his eyes looked sympathetically into the sharp gray ones of Silas Crumb.

And Silas was deceived. Indeed this simplicity had deceived wiser men than he. Throughout the State in which Baker practised, this look and manner were well known; it was only when making an extra effort that he assumed it.

His brother lawyers knew that look and, when they saw it coming into Baker's face, they kept their eyes and ears open with particular care.

"Heft it," said Crumb, wheeling out the bicycle. "Seems strongly made. It's heavy, of course, but it runs as easy as you please. Why, you and Mrs. Baker kin ride this 'yer bicycle all day, and not know you'd stepped off your vorandy."

"Been used recently? May be rusty inside; better try it if you are willing," said Baker apologetically.

Now Crumb knew what it would mean to push that two-seated ton of old iron on such a day, and he demurred.

"Wait until my boy comes hum; he'll be here in half an hour; come up on the verandy and set in the shade," he started towards the house, but the little man said peevishly, "Want to try it now," and turned up his trousers preparatory to starting.

"Well, if you are bound to do it, come on," and Silas, having oiled the heavy chain, held the relic for his companion to mount to the front seat.

But Baker objected.

"I want Mrs. Baker to sit in front; fond of seeing where she is going. I'll sit behind," and up he climbed.

"I am afraid this is one on you, Silas," reflected Baker, as he settled himself comfortably on the seat. "One on you."

Down the dusty road they went, turning to the left in response to Baker's gentle suggestion that it "looked pretty down there."

For an hour little was said; Silas, bent upon demonstrating the absolute ease with which his machine ran, strained every muscle to maintain the speed and Baker, with his feet long since lifted clear of the pedals, coasted blithely along, praising their rapid progress and fanning himself with his Panama hat.

"Cooler now," he remarked.

On they went, toiling up the hills on foot and recounting at the top; the dust settled thickly up riders and wheel; the sweat poured down the face of Silas Crumb, but sixty dollars was not every day thus easily placed within his

reach, and he bent even harder to his task.

"I'll stick him good for this," he assured himself.

"I told ye it run easy," he said aloud as they rounded a bend and passed out upon a village street. "Twelve miles in an hour and a half ain't bad, is it? We'll get off here and rest a spell."

"Yes," assented Baker, "we'll get off here."

They leaned the wheel against a tree and Crumb mopped his crimson face with his sleeve. A train was just about to pull out of the station close by.

"Hi," shouted Silas, "what are ye—?"

But Baker stepped easily on board; he took a black pipe from his pocket, and produced a tobacco pouch.

"I had to catch this train, you see," he called back pleasantly. "Tried to get a horse, but none to be had, and so I let you bring me down on your agred machine. That's why I asked you to turn to the left, as we rode out of your yard. Sorry to have bothered you, you know, but no other way of getting the train. You didn't understand before, did you? You thought I wanted to buy your old bicycle. No, Silas.

The train was now moving more rapidly, and the last words came faintly but clearly: "Fine country, but hilly for wheeling." He bowed low to Silas, and the train and Moses Baker had passed down the track.

Silas Crumb's journey back to his farm was one he long remembered. It was dark when he trundled his enemy into the yard and let it fall rattling upon the ground.

"And I thought he wanted to BUY it. The darned cuss," he said aloud, and then, turning in sudden wrath toward the bicycle: "And darn you, too!"

## How to Become an Oldest Inhabitant.

SIMPLE RULES WHICH GENERAL BOOTH SAYS BROUGHT HIM SAFELY TO HIS SEVENTY-EIGHTH YEAR.

Precepts for the attaining of old age are as many as the men who have attained it. Some drink whisky and some chew all beverages but water. To some tobacco is an abomination, to others it is the staff of life. Mark Twain declared that he had come safely and happily to the seventieth milestone of his life because he had done everything calculated to shorten and carefully avoided everything recommended to add to one's years.

Now comes General Booth, the seventy-eight-year-old head of the Salvation Army, with seven rules for those who would live long:

Eat as little as possible. The average man eats too much. Instead of nourishing his body, he overtaxes it, compelling his stomach to digest more food than it has capacity for.

Drink plenty of water in preference to adulterated concoctions. Water is wholesome nourishment.

Take exercise. It is just as foolish to develop the mind and not the body as it is to develop the body and not the mind. Perform some manual labour; dig, walk, chop wood, or, if you can talk with your whole body, why, then, talk; but do it with all your might.

Have a system, but do not be a slave of the system. If my hour to rise is 8 a.m., and at that time I haven't had sufficient rest, I take longer time.

Do not fill your life with a lot of silly and sordid pleasures, so that when you come to die you will find you have not really lived.

Abstain from indulgences which over-tax the body and injure not only yourself but the generations that come after you.

Have a purpose in life that predominates above all else, that is beneficial to those about you, and not to your own greedy self alone. If there is one thing for which I am glad it is that I have found a purpose which involves not me alone, but all humanity.

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