

MOTOR BICYCLING FOR LADIES:

BY MRS. EDWARD KENNARD.

MY DEAR VIOLET,—As you are interested in motor bicycles for ladies, I fulfil my promise of writing and telling you all about mine. It is an Ivel, built by the well-known Dan Albone of Biggleswade. Like all beginners I experienced considerable difficulty in arriving at a decision what to order, but my choice was considerably limited after attending the various shows by finding that at that time there were only three ladies' motor bicycles on the market—the Excelsior, the Ivel, and the Phoenix. I hesitated for a while between the latter two, but eventually decided in favour of the former. I came to the conclusion that it was wiser for me to stick to a standard engine, and not go in for too high a horse power to commence with. So I contented myself with a $1\frac{1}{2}$ Minerva, placed in the usual position. The bicycle, I may tell you, resembles an ordinary safety, only built on stronger lines, but it is so neat throughout that the rider escapes being much stared at—a great point in my estimation. Mr. Albone had carefully thought out a variety of details and has effectually shielded both belt and motor, so that one's dress can neither catch nor get unduly heated. Also, by some very efficient nickel guards placed over the engine and exhaust pipe, one can ride without having one's clothes smothered in grease. This, I can assure you, is a great point for a lady. Dust, of course, is not to be avoided, but it is easily brushed off and does not inflict permanent damage on one's attire.

I stipulated for a spring seat-pillar, and find it the greatest comfort, as it absorbs nearly all vibration and adds enormously to the comfort of the rider. I did not care to depend upon a single accumulator, and had a battery-box fitted capable of holding a couple. Then I ordered a stout luggage-carrier fixed over the rear wheel of the machine, and on this I strap a bag, containing a waterproof cape, and, if I go far afield, a spare can of petrol. I may mention that I have a spray carburetter, and can do about seventy-five miles on three-quarters of a gallon of petrol. Another source of joy is a sight-feed lubricator, containing five charges of oil. I have the satisfaction of seeing, when I pump the oil to the crank-chamber, that it goes to the desired direction. The Clincher tyres are excellent, I could not wish for better, but in order to avoid the bother of puncture I ordered self-sealing air tubes. I rejoiced greatly at this when the other day I picked a sharp pin out of my back tyre. My coil is placed under the saddle, well tucked away, and I further protect it with an india-rubber covering. Every terminal is made secure with wax, and the wires are all well insulated. Now about the levers. I daresay you would think there are a good many when you begin, but it is astonishing how soon the moving of them to and fro becomes automatic. At the same time, I strongly advocate that they should all be placed on the handle-bar within easy reach of the hands. In my machine I have the compression lever on the left and the regulating one on the right, but both are fitted some little distance *beneath* the head. Although the levers are made extra long, when going at high speed it is tiresome having to manipulate them. Mr. Albone has therefore promised me to mount the regulator lever on the handle-bar, close to the right hand, which actuates the front brake, the advance ignition, and exhaust valve lifter.

To the left are assigned the switch, the rear brake, and the bell, and I can assure you that, just at first, one wishes one possessed an extra hand. To start the bicycle, you

mount as on an ordinary safety, but I may tell you that, owing to the difference in weight, this feat requires a little practice. It is not wise to attempt to start up a steep hill, but on the level or down hill the knack is quickly acquired. Once off, the sensation of sailing away, free-wheeling all the time, is most enjoyable, especially on a hot summer's day, when people feel indisposed to take much active exercise. Mr. Albone is an adept in the art of teaching, and inspired me with such confidence that I rode from his residence at Biggleswade, some fifty miles, entirely alone. I am not going to be a humbug, Violet. I do not mind confessing that I felt exceedingly adventurous, and inwardly wondered what on earth I should do were anything untoward to happen. But I consoled myself with the reflection that nothing ever does happen to a brand new machine, with batteries fully charged and all in spick-and-span order.

They came later on. My belief was justified, for I had the most enjoyable ride home. I found that my little motor got up every hill I came across. If the hill were extra steep I pedalled a little to prevent the engine from slowing down too much, and experienced no difficulty in negotiating every ascent I encountered. Of course, one cannot get everything united. If you go in for a high-powered bicycle, it requires much more expert handling, adds extra weight to the machine, uses more petrol, and the vibration is materially increased. Now, I dislike the vibration excessively, and prefer occasionally pedalling a few strokes to being bumped and jolted about. I had enough of that with my De Dion tricycle. I do not think a lady wants a higher horse-power than one and a half, unless she lives in an abnormally hilly country.

I greatly prefer the motor bicycle to the three-wheeler. Certainly something is sacrificed to safety and stability, but the gain in handiness, in weight, and having only a single track is enormous. It is possible to wheel the bicycle about and even to push it up a steep incline, if necessary, by opening the compression and exhaust valve lifter; but I defy any woman to propel, by her sheer unaided strength, a tricycle weighing over 2 cwt. Having tried it, I can speak with authority on this point. In case of a real breakdown, too, it is a great consolation to know that, by taking off the belt one can pedal a few miles to the nearest station and thus not be stranded hopelessly. I quite think that in time a certain number of ladies will be seen riding motor bicycles.

I do not suppose they will ever become universal, because only a limited number of women will take the trouble to learn how to manage their engine and master the numerous points requiring attention. A great many ladies ride bicycles who have not an idea how to mend a puncture, or even to blow up their own tyres. I have seen them arrive at our local cycle agent's and request to have this simple office performed for them. Such fair cyclists as these had better not turn their thoughts towards the machine with a motor. But girls like yourself, my dear Violet, with plenty of "go" and nerve, accustomed to the hunting field and with sufficient intelligence to take an interest in mechanical matters, will very soon overcome the initial difficulties. If I do not bore you with an account of my own experiences I will write you a letter from time to time telling you exactly how I get on. Sooner or later, naturally, some little trouble will arise. I try to prepare for it by rehearsing at home.