

THE CAPTAIN

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THE CYCLING CORNER

By
HAYDON PERRY.

CONCERNING LAMPS.

THERE are few more important adjuncts to the cycle than the lamp. Personally I never ride a mile at any time of day without taking one with me. I know it weighs a trifle, but I was never one of those who carped at odd ounces, and went paring down pennyweights everywhere, as was the fashion when the lightness craze was at its height. I

take my mud-guards with me on many a fine day, although they are readily detachable, for I know they weigh less than the dirty lane of mud all up my back which I should be sure to bring home if surprised by a thunder shower during the course of my jaunt. The reason I carry a lamp is, of course, quite different. I want to be free as a gipsy when I am on the road, and without a lamp I could not be. I have known the times when I have gone out for a morning spin, and have been beguiled into a tour extending over several days. In such a case I telegraph for my travelling kit, which is always kept handy, to be sent on to me; and then time and the town are left behind and

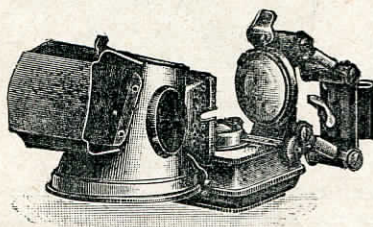
forgotten. I know that there must be very few fellows, and perhaps hardly any who are still in their school-days, who can have the same sweet liberty to wander at their will. But all the same I recommend the practice of

carrying a lamp much more habitually than is common now. It relieves you of all anxiety as to lighting up time, a kind of anxiety that I have known to spoil the last hour of many an otherwise enjoyable outing, and it makes a puncture occurring towards the hours of dusk a matter of trifling moment. People may smile at you for going out before breakfast with a lamp on the

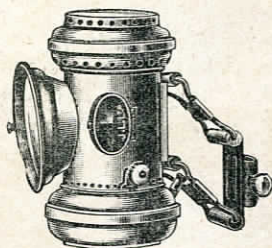
bracket of your machine, when everybody knows that you are bound, whatever happens, to be in your place at that meal. But nobody's foresight is as good as his hindsight, as some western humorist has observed, and it may so fall out that some accident renders your mount unridable, and it may so further happen that the

place at which you leave it is, for some reason or other, one to which you can only go in the evening.

Granted, then, that a lamp is a good companion to have on practically all occasions, it is surprising to find how little the treatment of this useful accessory is understood. There is hardly anything connected with cycling which causes so much annoyance and dissatisfaction as an intractable lamp, and yet its apparent obstinacy is nearly always due to the ignorance or carelessness of its owner. I have known fellows



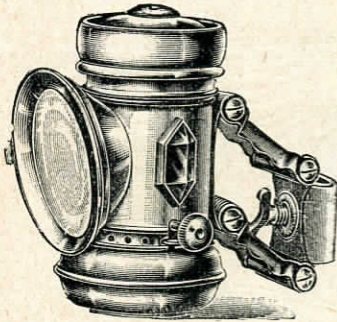
THE "SILVER KING" LAMP.



THE "CLUB" LAMP



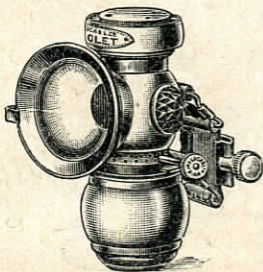
THE "HALYCON" LAMP.



THE "BRONKO" LAMP.

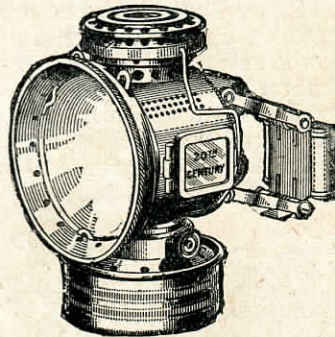
All parts of the lamp, both inside and out, should at frequent periods be cleared of oil and soot. To do this properly a single cloth is insufficient, for after the first cleaning the cloth will be more or less oily, and there will still be traces of oil about the lamp. Now if the smallest trace remain upon such parts as the glass front or the reflector, these areas will rapidly collect a new coating of dust or carbonaceous matter, and your work will have been almost thrown away. The proper way is to have a second cloth, quite dry and clean, in reserve, and to use this for the final touches. For this purpose I know of nothing better than Selvyt. It resembles chamois leather in appearance, but is really velveteen cotton plush cut on one side. It possesses the advantage that it can be washed, and still remain soft and good. It is excellent for cleaning the glass parts. If the reflector is not of glass it should be treated with a suitable metal polish, and when that has been removed the Selvyt will add the final lustre.

Then care must be taken that the proper amount and quality of oil and wick are employed. They must be chosen, not haphazard, but always with regard to each other. This is because oils of the paraffin class will run up the capillary spaces in the wick more easily than thicker and more fatty oils, and the latter, therefore, require a wick somewhat more loosely woven than the former, or they



THE "PETROLET" LAMP.

who have kept their machines as bright and spick as when they were new, and who have yet habitually neglected their lamps. A dirty lamp is sure to go wrong sooner or later, and so the very first rule is—absolute cleanliness.

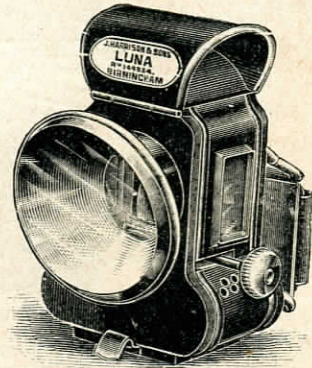


THE "CENTURY" LAMP.

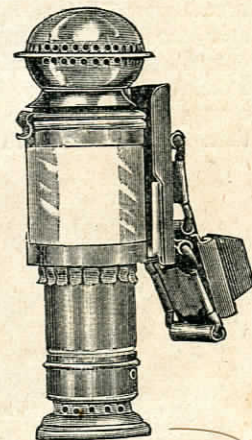
will not flow freely to feed the flame. Having got the proper texture, it is important to see that the wick is just a nice loose fit for the collar. Several lamp makers and oil refiners sell suitable wick, in boxes of twelve 4in. lengths for a few pence, and there is no better

plan than to keep a few of these Before the wick is put into the collar, or brought in contact with the oil in any way, it should be thoroughly dried. This can best be done by toasting it for a moment before the fire. The reason for taking such a precaution is that if any moisture remains in the capillary spaces of the fabric, the oil will decline to pass them, and the upward flow will not be free. I have known many lamps which positively refused to burn solely owing to this safeguard not having been taken. The final step is to dip the head of the wick in the oil before placing the tail in. This at once establishes a continuous connection between the oil tank and the flame. Wick should be frequently trimmed with a pair of sharp scissors, and either cut dead level or, for very wide gauges, slightly bevelled at the corners. If used very frequently, it should often be inspected, to see that it is still long enough.

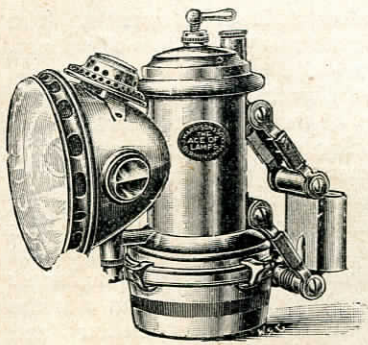
When a wick is too short to reach the bottom of the reservoir, and the latter is nearly empty, you sometimes get the curious phenomenon of a lamp that will burn when you are passing over jolty ground (it being fed by the



HARRISON'S "LUNA" LAMP.



THE "ASP" CANDLE LAMP.



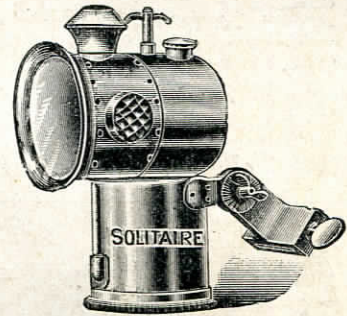
HARRISON'S "ACE OF LAMPS."
(Acetylene.)

is very seldom used, it is advisable to put in an entirely fresh wick from time to time, as the old oil in the capillaries is very apt to clog. This is a very frequent cause of a lamp giving unsatisfactory results, however good it may be, and however good the oil. Even the latter, if it has stood long enough to show signs of thickening, may with advantage be poured away and replaced.

As for the oil, it should be one that will give a flame that is not easily jerked out, one limpid enough to mount the kind of wick employed, and one that provides a good white light. In the old days we used—many of us—to make our own by dissolving a bit of camphor in some colza, but to-day the oil refiners have far surpassed these early experiments. I have used a very large number of oils, and am at present getting excellent results from "Springvale," but there are plenty of good oils to choose from. Of course,

splashing), but which entirely refuses to burn when you are on smooth roads, or when at rest. Of course, only negligence will land a rider in such a predicament. If, on the other hand, a lamp

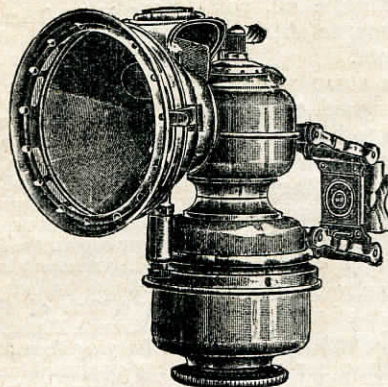
it arose. The firm of Joseph Lucas, Ltd., of Birmingham, deserves special mention in any article dealing with this subject. Long before modern cycling was thought of they were experts in the making of ships' lamps, and when, in the pioneer days, our great trouble was that our lamps always blew out, this firm came quickly to the rescue with one that would weather any gale it was likely to experience. They have ever since



THE "SOLITAIRE" GAS LAMP.

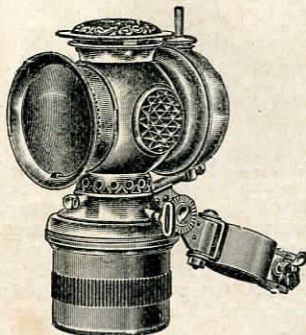
retained the distinction of being able to make as good lamps as it is possible to obtain, and they have developed as well a large general business in cycling accessories of many kinds.

A good lamp must be so constructed that, notwithstanding that it will not blow out, it still provides for plentiful ingress of air, and also plenty of escape for the gases formed by combustion. It should also be strong, fitted firmly together, so as not to develop a rattle in use, and should be so contrived as to be easily and quickly opened

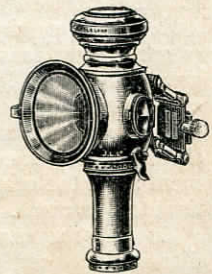


THE "PHENOMENOS" LAMP.

out, alike for cleaning and lighting purposes. Of ordinary oil lamps I may name several at all sorts of prices, each of which fulfils these requirements in its own particular way. There is the "Silver King," a very serviceable lamp, which owes its name to the fact that it was at first made "all bright," but it can now be had enamelled, in which form it better withstands bad weather. There is the round "Club" lamp, and there is the "Microphote," which is so small that it only weighs 9½ ozs. All these are by Lucas. Then another good old firm, Messrs. Brown Bros., make the "Halycon" and the "Bronko," which is a round lamp like the

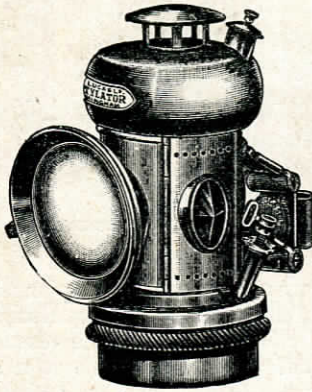


THE "SOLAX" ACETYLENE LAMP.



LUCAS'S CANDLE LAMP

"Club." Still another firm of very high repute, Messrs. Harrison, of Birmingham, offer an excellent thing in the "Luna." Messrs. Gamage,



LUCAS'S "ACETYLATOR."

perhaps the best-known cycle accessory dealers in the world, have, among many kinds of lamps, the "Twentieth Century," specially designed for the burning of paraffin, and Lucas's "Petrollet" is for the same purpose. You see, paraffin is a thing you can buy in any village, and should you adopt it as your favourite oil, you

need never be in doubt as to how to obtain it should you run short while on tour.

Next comes a curious, and in some respects promising group of lamps designed to burn candles. These are very clean to handle, and in most of them you can tell at a glance how much candle you have left, and whether it is desirable to put a fresh one in readiness in your wallet. The "Asp" lamp of Messrs. Brown Bros., and Lucas's candle lamp are good examples of this class. Electricity has been tried, but has been found short of perfection hitherto on several grounds. To begin with, it is very costly as compared with other means of lighting a cyclist's way. Then, too, the apparatus to be carried is heavier than an ordinary lamp, even if only short time charges are provided for. Further, should the tube break and the carbon filament become oxidised the rider is without a light, and cannot repair his misfortune except at the nearest electrician's. But there is one new form of light for which there may possibly be a great future, and that is the acetylene. I speak with all caution, because as at present placed at our disposal, I do not like it. It is not altogether trustworthy; it is tricky and prone to give trouble, and, under some circumstances, it is dangerous. The fact that it gives too much light to be free of the charge of dazzling other users of the road could easily be got over by some dulling of the glass, and I should like to see some maker try the experiment; but the other drawbacks may take some time to overcome.

As was the case with many other valuable discoveries, acetylene was first made by an experimenter who was at the time pursuing his

investigations along quite different paths. The story is one of the many romances of science, but I have no space to tell it here. A mere accident gave the world a new illuminant, and, as I say, it may be that some day acetylene will be the only thing employed for cycle lamps. The gas is generated by the dripping of water upon small-sized lumps of calcium carbide. In conjunction with air the gas ignites with a brilliant white flame, and when by-products threaten to choke the fine passages in the burner all you have to do is to blow it clean with the tyre inflator. Gamage's "Phenomenon" and "Solar"; the "Solitaire" lamp of Messrs. Brown Bros., Lucas's "Acetylator," and the "Ace of Lamps," made by Messrs. Harrison, may be named as among the best gas lamps for cycling purposes extant.

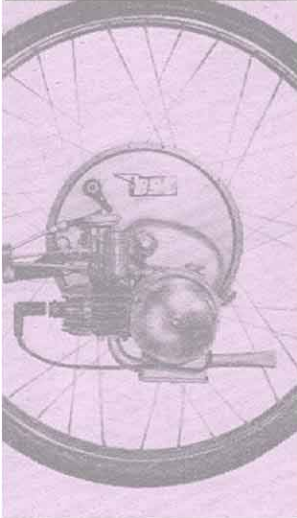
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. H. W. (MAIDENHEAD).—You are right in saying you do see one disadvantage—namely, increased complication. If you have a good gear case, and keep the chain properly lubricated, that disadvantage will be minimised, and will not, under such circumstances, amount to very much. Should be glad if you would kindly add to my information respecting roads in Ceylon. **G. P. (USK).**—You heard from me through another channel at the time when this issue was in the press. Owing to the wide circulation of THE CAPTAIN it is necessary to print several weeks before your copy actually reaches you. **"Rover" (EXETER).**—Your mount is an excellent one. My advice would be to let well alone. Since you have been well suited by a firm of the best reputation, why change? Although I have tried endless machines for the sake of trying them, I have for nearly ten years bought my own machines from the same firm, and they will in all probability build my next. You might, however, change the tyres to either Dunlop, Palmer, Clincher, or Fleuss. **"Elder B." (AYLESBURY).**—Yes, certainly, join the C.T.C. The subscription dates from January 1st, but it is only 5s., with 1s. entrance



fee for the first year. **H. H. H.**—The Veeder cyclo-meter is well suited to the purpose. I cannot read your address, which should have been legibly written. **"Kitchene" (UPPINGHAM).**—See the article on lamps. There are numerous good oils, but you have no need to go further than the ones I named. I am glad you tour on the sensible plan. Open eyes, and a body that is still unwearied when night comes, are the true secret.

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