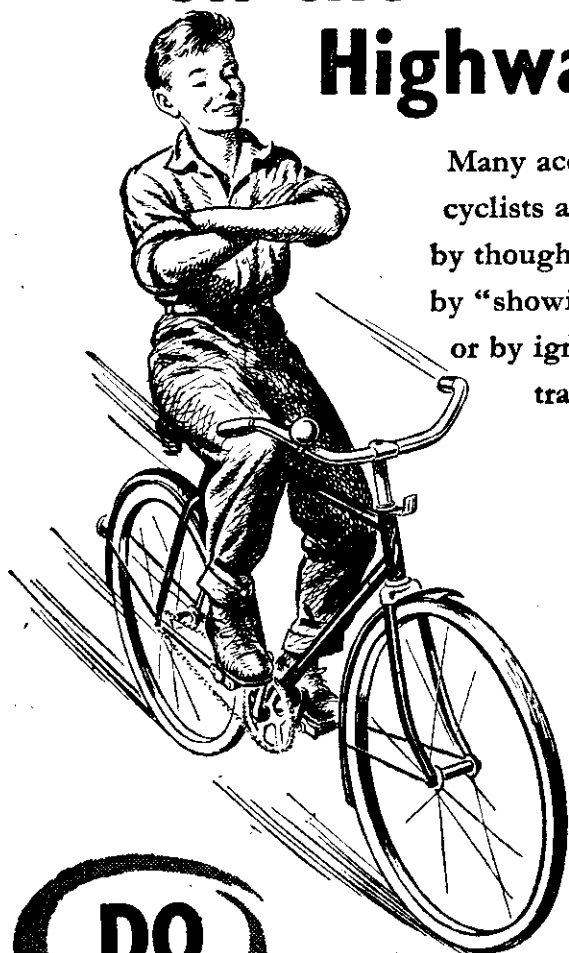


Silly Cycling is for the Circus

DON'T clown on the Highways



Many accidents to
cyclists are caused
by thoughtlessness,
by "showing off",
or by ignoring
traffic rules.

DO

Keep to the left and ride
without wobbling across
the road. ● Give way to traffic
on the right and, if turning to the right yourself,
give way to *all* traffic. ● Keep your speed
down. ● Obey traffic lights and give correct
hand signals. ● Ride carefully and don't
"show off".

ISSUED BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

(Continued from page 5)

HOW TO SPEAK

Sir,—May I quote from the Preface to Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*: "The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it. They cannot spell it because they have nothing to spell it with but an old foreign alphabet of which only the consonants—and not all of them—have any agreed speech value. Consequently no man can teach himself what it should sound like from reading it; and it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him."

If "Argosy," "Homey," and other correspondents will take the above passage to heart, they will find many of their differences and difficulties resolved.

To "Argosy" I would say that the current and accepted pronunciation of a word becomes in time the right one. He suggests that "Kezzik" is the result of slovenliness; maybe he is right, but surely he will not suggest that anyone should say "Kes-wick" merely because it is spelt that way? After all, there must be some standard way of pronouncing every word—otherwise we should all select our own version and immediately become unintelligible to each other; and it cannot be claimed that the standard pronunciation can be based on the spelling. Would "Argosy" pronounce "rough" to rhyme with "though"?

QUIDNUNC (Dunedin).

Sir,—I think we must postulate a single standard of pronunciation. Without this, separate standards are set up and only present-day rapidity of communication prevents the speeches of widely-separated communities from becoming mutually unintelligible. Even a literary standard would not prevent this.

What shall this single standard be? The Americans are greatly in the majority and their speech may prevail. Which American? There is no single American standard. New Zealanders, with a good deal of reason, pride themselves on a speech that varies within comparatively small limits. Is this little country on the perimeter, then, to set up the single standard?

Surely the fount of English is England. There is in England a rapidly spreading dialect, a speaker of which it is difficult or impossible to refer to any particular community or locality. Is not this the standard to aim at, rather than adherence to some parochial variation?

A dialect is not mutilated speech and may be intrinsically as good as, or better than, the standard. A southern dialect says "I be, you be, he be." The standard says "I am, you are, he is." Which is the "mutilated" one? A northern dialect distinguishes between the pronunciation of "for, fore and four." In the standard they are all alike. Which is the better? Either of these might have become the standard; but neither has done so, and each has only a limited currency.

It is the spelling of "ate" that is wrong, not the pronunciation "et," which has continued practically unchanged for a thousand years since the Anglo-Saxon. Nobody ever called it "eight" until the spread of education enabled people to see the word in print. Any good English dictionary will give "et." "Argosy," like most others of his time, was taught wrongly at school and most schools are