



How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle: Reflections of an Influential 19th Century Woman

Frances E. Willard

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In 1893 Frances Willard was at the height of her power and influence as leader of the women's social reform movement. It was also a time when bicycles were wildly popular. And so, when her doctor recommended she exercise out-of-doors, Willard was determined to learn to ride. It was not easy for a woman in her fifty-third year, hampered by long skirts, but she was eager for the challenge. She hoped her example would help other women seek "a wider world." She saw cycling as a way for women to gain independence, develop confidence, and be seen by men as equals in skill. A best-seller when originally published a century ago, Willard's fascinating account of her adventure continues to enchant and inspire readers today. An introduction by Edith Mayo, curator of political history at the Smithsonian Institution, describes the life and work of Frances Willard and her role as an early leader of the women's movement. The book concludes with an illustrated essay on the history of women and cycling.

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