

## LOOK FOR THE SILVER LINING. By Bob Currie.

The sickly sunlight filtered fitfully through the fog, which covered industrial England, yet somewhere in the middle of the Midlands, a deep depression centred over a small factory in a back street. All was not well with the affairs of the North Brummagem Gun Company, manufacturers of N.B.G. motorcycles, as the plunging red line of the sales chart on the wall showed very plainly.

Despairingly John Goodheart, the managing director, turned to the pile of letters on his desk, Complaints, all of them—even from those who didn't own N.B.G.'S.'S, but had been convicted of " driving away without the owner's permission "; and one piteous tale from a miscreant who had willingly given himself up to the police for this crime only to find that the rightful owner of the machine had resolutely refused to identify it as his property.

Goodheart thought wistfully of the days when N.B.G.'s, fitted with a brush attachment to the front wheel, swept all before them, and heaved a great sigh. Slowly he drew out the right-hand top drawer of his desk and reached inside— but it was no use. He had eaten the last of his peppermint humbugs. Resignedly he rose to his feet and wandered out into the works ....

Now by this time it will be obvious to the keen-eyed reader that something was seriously amiss, and the aforesaid keen-eyed reader will, of course, be perfectly right. Lurking behind the scenes was the sinister figure of Sir Jasper Base-bridge, owner of the rival Moonshine firm, and it was he who had brought N.B.G. to such a sorry state.

" How?" you may ask, and here is the answer. In league with Sir Jasper was Nathan Notsogood, works manager of the N.B.G. firm, and it doesn't need any elaboration on my part to thicken this particular part of the plot any further. Sabotage, no less! The object was only too obvious—to bring the shares of the old firm to rock bottom, so that Sir J. could snaffle them up at bargain prices and so gain control. A normal procedure, as any captain of industry can confirm!

So far so bad, but there was an even stronger reason for Sir Jasper's interest, in the shape or form (and what a shape or form!) of sweet Sally Goodheart, the Boss's daughter. Already his tentative approaches to this tender blossom had been repulsed—but bring her father to his knees, and " Aha!"

Since it is plain that we must have a hero somewhere, this is the point at which Fearless Frank comes into the picture. Only a lowly employee in the N.B.G. factory, penniless naturally, but with a heart of pure gold and burning with

revolutionary ideas for a far, far better N.B.G. motorcycle. As might be expected, he had fallen in love with the Boss's daughter, and she with him. Fill in the next paragraph or two yourself—you'll find the plot in any issue of any of the weekly Woman's Journals—suffice to say that he didn't stand an earthly, as things stood.

But Frank was not such a dimwit as he appeared, and pretty soon he began to understand what was going on in the factory. In a dark corner of the works, he began to assemble his own idea of a motorcycle, with parts snaffled from the scrap heap, sneaking into the deserted factory at dead of night to do the necessary machining work. At last, the bike was finished, and right from the start Frank knew that it would be an absolute winner. Now for the T.T. (By the way, I forgot to mention that there was also an official N.B.G. team entered for the race, but since the riders were all in the pay of Sir J. and the machines were all personally assembled by Nathan Notsogood, the dastardly works manager, well . . . .)

Right then! The secret N.B.G. was all ready for the Island—but it costs a lot of money to ride in the T.T., and Frank, as we noted earlier, was penniless. Sadly, he poured out his story to his sweetheart, sweet Sally, but she, brave girl, had expected this and already had taken steps to overcome the difficulty. Rifling the family safe, she had discovered the family jewels, and these had been deposited in a nearby pawnshop in exchange for the necessary cash. Nothing could now go wrong, so let us move hurriedly across to the Isle of Man.

According to pre-arranged plan, the official N.B.G. machines fell apart at the seams on the first morning of practice—but Fearless Frank, on the secret job, went round steadily enough. In due course came the day of the big race, and very soon after the start came an announcement over the round-the-course loudspeakers. "Fearless Frank," said the announcer, "has retired at Quarter Bridge, having blown up his engine."

That surprised you, didn't it! There is not much left to tell; with Frank's retirement came the end of the N.B.G. hopes, and Sir Jasper bought up the firm. John Goodheart (the managing director, remember?) went out and drowned himself at this ruin of all he had worked for, while his daughter Sally, went to clink for pinching the jewellery. Frank, of course, got the sack for misuse of the firm's property, and that's about the lot.

**Well heck! Don't want a happy ending every time do you?**

*I was surprised when I came across this, somehow I don't connect Bob with a fantasy motorcycling tale.*