

THE CAPTAIN

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FOR BOYS & "OLD BOYS".



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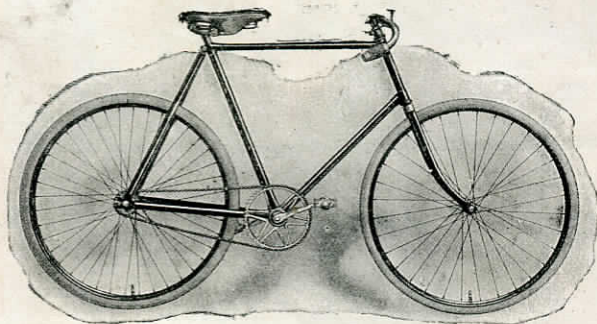
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ON BUYING A MACHINE.

THERE are few matters on which the inexperienced are so likely to go wrong as upon the purchase of a machine. The novice has heard



THE SWIFT.

somewhere that a set of "parts" only costs £3, that So-and-so's tyres can be had for a sovereign, that the "Ride-hard" saddle can be bought for half-a-crown, and there you are! He argues to himself: Why give £20 for something that ought to be procurable at round-about £5? Put in this way there seems to be but one answer. He accordingly makes a purchase of something cheap and attractive looking, and guaranteed by a persuasive vendor to be "equal to a Beeston Humber." The machine is taken home bright and shining, is shown to admiring friends, and is then left to the quiet but searching ordeal of actual work upon the road. This kind of story, often as it is told, has usually the same sad ending. People will not learn by anyone's experience save their own, and so it comes about that the new mount, so affectionately regarded at first, soon becomes a cause of irritation, loss of temper, and waste of money in constant but futile repairs. It is only a fellow with a lot of

money who can afford a cheap machine. That sounds like a paradox, but it is strictly true. It may be said of a bicycle, as of many other things, that the cheapest is the dearest in the end.

And yet it is equally true that there is no absolute need to spend £20 or more upon the purchase of a bicycle. If you can afford it, it is well to do so; but if your funds are more restricted you may still provide yourself with the means of following the freest and most glorious of pastimes. Some of the best firms have adapted themselves to the requirements of those who must have cheap machines or none at all. One of the pioneers in this matter was the company manufacturing the Swift Bicycle. The firm marketed the "Popular Swift" at about ten guineas, and now quite a number of other firms of the highest repute make similar cheap mounts for such of

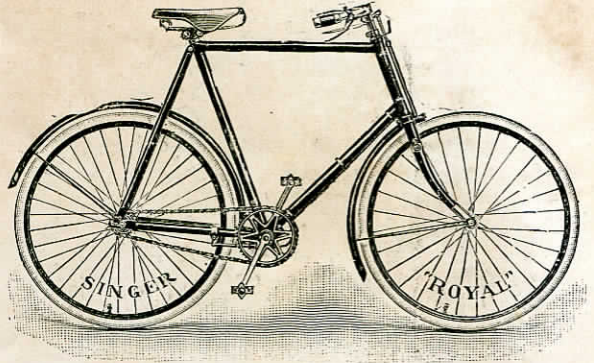


NEW PREMIER POPULAR.

their clients as need them. It is not to be imagined that these machines are equal to the better-class mounts made by the respective

manufacturers, but they are good all the same, and in buying them the purchaser not only gets something that he may rely upon, but he gets something with a name as well. That is a point which I cannot pass by without emphasising it. A great reputation is the most valuable asset that a cycle builder can have, and it is to be presumed that he will spare no pains to guard it from any possible injury. It is true that you "pay for the name," as the saying goes, but as one who has ridden machines at all sorts of prices, and by makers great and small, I hold that a name is worth paying for, and I always buy a name now along with my machine.

The name is of use and of value in more ways than one. First of all it is a guarantee that good materials and good workmanship are both embodied in the machine. If anything



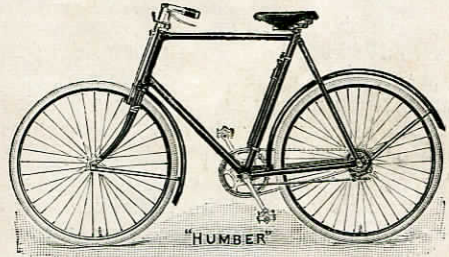
ROYAL SINGER.

has to be parted with to make room for a new one, the second-hand price it will bring will be sure to be much higher if the machine bears a good name. From all this you will gather that if you have £20 or upwards to spend upon a bicycle you will do well to have

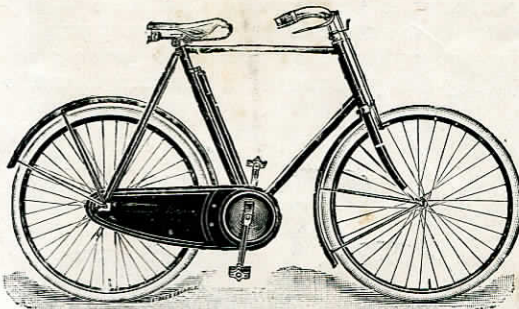


A LADY'S MOUNT.—HUMBER.

goes wrong, which with fair usage ought not to go wrong, your maker of repute will in most cases be only too glad to set it right again at his own cost, and this, of course, for his credit's sake. The smaller his reputation the less



THE HUMBER.



NEW PREMIER ROYAL.

inducement has he to go out of his way to protect it; the greater it is the greater the inducement. Then, again, when the mount

the very best. If, on the other hand, you are not so fortunate, it is better to go to a really good maker and buy something second grade than to buy the best that is offered you by a maker of cheap goods who is little known. Outward appearance is usually a very imperfect guide, for the bad maker often follows the best designs as regards mere form, and he sometimes spends a good deal upon external finish. It is the working parts, which are out of sight, that are of real consequence. If these are good, and properly adjusted, the machine will do its work; if not, there will be disaster.

I lay it down, therefore, as a general principle that the world-renowned maker is the one who will serve you best. There is a favourite argument in use by those who differ from this view which runs somewhat in this way: The small maker has no costly advertising to keep up; and not being hampered



A GIRL'S SWIFT.

by this constant and heavy drain upon his resources he has no need to put a "loading" upon the price of his machines in order to compensate himself. That is true as far as it goes, but of all the machines I have ever known hardly any have been really high class, and yet unadvertised and unknown save to the little circle of customers of the men who made them. All the great firms are extensive advertisers, and this, if you come to consider it, is a real protection to the public, because, having spent so much money merely upon a name, it is not worth any firm's while to take advantage of you by treating you in such a way as to jeopardize what I have already described as its most precious asset. The difference between their wares and those of the firms without a reputation to lose is sometimes as great as that

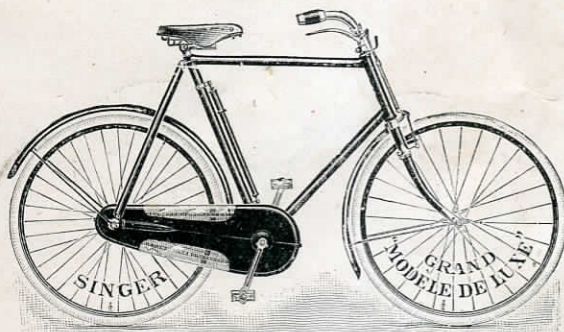


ENLARGEMENT SHOWING THE TUBING EMPLOYED IN MAKING PREMIER FRAMES.

between an Enfield rifle and a popgun. That this should be so is due to the fact that almost every one of the hundreds of parts of which a bicycle is constructed may be bought or made at widely varying costs, the best being worth, in some cases, several hundreds per cent. more than the worst. The builder of high-class machines will see that his materials are of the best; but the maker with no reputation to maintain may be tempted to depart from this course

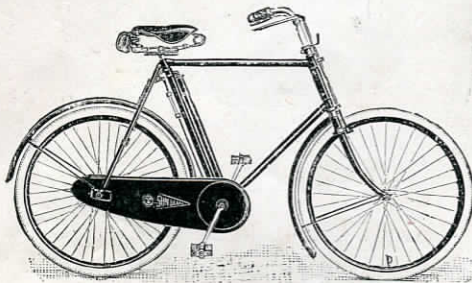
The makers of the "Swift" were, as I have said, a pioneer firm in producing a good mount at a comparatively low price. At first everybody wondered how it was possible to turn out

a really trustworthy bicycle at ten guineas or thereabouts; but the thing was done, and done successfully. I watched the behaviour of one of the first "Popular Swifts," as they were called, and kept a note of its history through three long summers. It was ridden by a friend of mine, a keen sportsman, and an old contributor to our contemporary, the *Field*, and all I can say is that we could both give it a good character at the end of that time. There are plenty of other firms about whom similar praise could truthfully be written. It is the general thing in these days for a great firm to catalogue second-grade as well as first-grade mounts. If, on the one hand, there is less profit on them, the popularity of the price, on the other, tends to greatly widen the circle of customers, and so the makers benefit by



SINGER GRAND "MODELE DE LUXE."

an increased turnover. In naming firms whose wares may be relied on, it must not be supposed that I in any way exhaust the list, nor must it be presumed that there is anything in the order in which I name them; but for the guidance of those who are contemplating the purchase of a summer mount, I



A SUNBEAM WITH THE LITTLE OIL-BATH.

may say that, so far as my experience goes, the words Raleigh, Rover, Rudge-Whitworth, Referee, Premier, Elswick, Excelsior, Triumph, Singer, Centaur, Bradbury, Lea-Francis, and Royal Enfield are all hall-marks. Then there

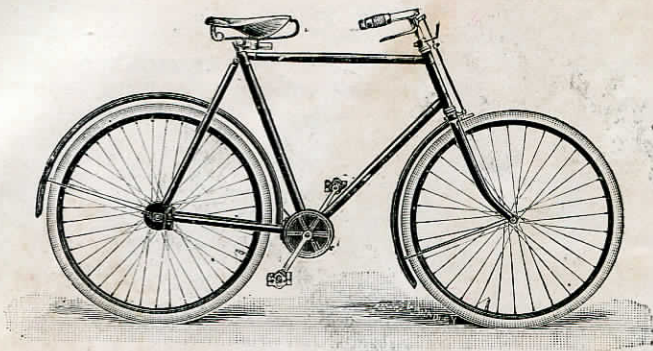
amounted to £6 10s. Nowadays better mounts can be picked up for less money, and, roundly speaking, the joys of cycling may be said to be within the reach of all.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. C. A. (NEWPORT, MON.).—There is no best make. The foregoing article will serve to guide you. Any of the firms named will deal straightforwardly with you, and amongst them you will be readily able to suit yourself as regards price. **"P. K." (EVESHAM).**—You also are practically answered on most points by the above. Cornish roads are certainly very different from those in your own locality, and I shouldn't hesitate to take a new machine over them if I happened to have one. I think it better to buy a new one if you have money enough, but if not, a good strong second-hand one should easily be found at something between £5 and £8. Prices vary very much in different districts according to all sorts of local circumstances. I don't think I should try to

buy through the paper you name. It is best to actually see the machine, and if you know little about bicycles take a friend who is better skilled with you. Unless you are of extremely light weight you should have a full roadster for such an expedition. **"Tourist" (OSWALDTWISTLE).**—Write to the secretary at 47, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W. He will forward you an application form to fill up. If you have any friend who is a member you should get him or her to propose you. If not, I dare say the secretary, when the circumstance is explained to him, will propose you himself. Your name will be printed in the list of candidates in the club's official organ for the ensuing month, and in the ordinary course you will become a member the month following. You must send 6s. with your application, and after that the fee for renewal will be 5s. per annum. You can spend as

is the Humber Company, to whose predecessors we are all indebted for having led the way in perfecting the early bicycle. The "First-grade" Humber and the Coventry Humber will prove serviceable mounts to such as cannot afford to order one of the famous Beestons. The Quadrant Company deserve special mention as having been not only bicycle makers, but as having kept a foremost place as builders of tricycles for a long series of years. Finally, a rough list, however imperfect, should not omit mention of the Sunbeam, a machine which not only embodies the most careful work and the best of materials, but to whose builders we owe the development of the art of gear-case fitting. Of course all my recommendations apply with at least equal force to second-hand as to new machines. If the sum at disposal is less than £10 or £12, it is unwise to buy a new machine at all, unless, of course, it is a juvenile mount. With this proviso, the better plan is to spend the money in buying an old machine that, chipped and battered though it be, bears a great name, and has been a good thing in its day. My first three machines were all of this description, for I was never overburdened with pocket-money. But I toured with the greatest enjoyment, all through a long summer holiday, from one end of England to the other on an old crock in which I had invested my all—which I happen to remember



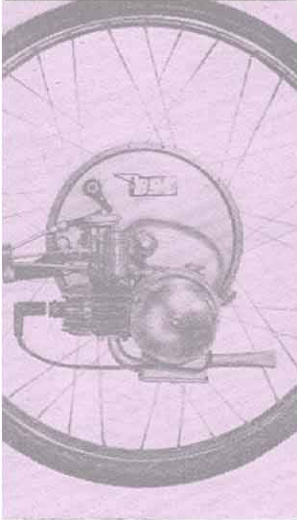
QUADRANT LIGHT ROADSTER.—QUADRANT CYCLE COMPANY.



MODEL D—ENFIELD CYCLE COMPANY.

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