MOTOR NOTES FOR MEDICAL MEN.

By H. MASSAC BUIST.

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF WITHDRAWING
THE McKENNA DUTIES.

THE average medical man will regard the Chancellor of the Exchequer's policy concerning the withdrawal of the McKenna duties, not from the point of view of politics, which is the Government's, but from that of a man who has to purchase his first car for undertaking professional duties, or who recognizes with regret that the best of cars wears out in time. Therefore he wishes to know what will be the effect of the Government's policy on the cost of motor cars in the future, and whether, if his circumstances dictate that he should buy a car within the next few months, he were best advised to wait or to complete the transaction now.

Taking first the case of the doctor who must in any event acquire a car within the next six months, we find that the motor traders of the country have been exercising their minds on the same problem and have already made plans to meet him. To take an example from France, Citroën has arranged that, in the event of there being any reduction in the cost of cars between now and September consequent on the removal of the duties, anybody who buys a car at prices obtaining to-day will be refunded any sum which represents cost greater than the list price of the vehicle at the later date. English manufacturers are also announcing much the same terms; while yet others are doing a more remarkable thing still, particularly in face of the increasing costs of labour and materials in this country. Thus in the middle size class of cars we find that the Wolseley Company—which, it was noted when reviewing the Olympia Motor Show in these columns last autumn, has greatly improved its 15-h.p. 4-cylinder overhead model that has now four speeds forward, entirely different axle scheme, and so forth—has nevertheless just reduced the cost of that type, alone among its series, both for open and for closed bodies; the reduction is considerable, for the touring type has been brought down from £745 to £575, and the four-seat coupé from £975 to £800. From America certain manufacturers are announcing that any differences in price between now and the time of the removal of the McKenna duties will be refunded.

ALL THE WAYS OF IT.

In connexion with some of these announcements, however, it is advisable to look very closely into the details. On analysis some—not those indicated above—are not what a first impression from reading them would convey. For instance, some would suggest that on the withdrawal of the McKenna duties the purchaser will receive back one-third of the current cost of the given car. Of course, this is bound to be impracticable: for one thing, the authorized dealer has a commission on the sale of the vehicle, which lawful profit is not subject to calculation in arriving at the sum payable for import duty; nor is the cost, by no means negligible, of shipping a car to this country. Therefore a very different sum from one-third of the total retail list price to-day would be represented in the way of future reduction in the case of a vehicle imported from a foreign country. An American firm announces reductions forthwith, and that no further reductions will be made, which may mean that new models will be introduced after August. Some importers of foreign cars are not carrying stocks of vehicles. One American importer writes me: "Frankly we are looking forward to rather interesting developments after August 1st." As soon as the Chancellor's proposals were made known the greatest Italian concessionaires cabled immediately to Turin stopping all consignments of cars to this country. Against this certain dealers in cars brought in from the United States speculated on the anticipation that the Chancellor's proposals would result in the McKenna duties coming off this month. Consequently they intended to flood the country immediately by having machines in mid-ocean at Budget time. But the moment they discovered their mistake they made plans for getting back the duties. This can be achieved if the given car is sent

out of the country within three months. This loophole means that, for a charge of about 30s. a car, a newly imported vehicle can be sent on a short voyage from the British shores to Ireland, or any convenient port on the Continent, the duty paid reclaimed, and the car brought back here immediately on the lapsing of the duties. These are merely instances to illustrate the various effects of any Government measure on trading enterprise of various sorts; also of the ceaseless activities of individual speculators to take advantage of any Government move.

"HANG ON—BUT DO NOT PASS IT ON."

Between now and the lapsing of the McKenna duties we may be quite prepared to see a series of announcements concerning reductions in costs of cars for quite other reasons than those that have enabled the Wolseley Company to bring down its charges in respect of a particular model as a result of the entire reorganization of its management of production. For one thing, the first effect of uncertainty concerning the McKenna duties was to make trade exceedingly bad, and, taking makes on the average as distinct from individual examples which embrace certain exceptions, of course, it has been by no means too good during this year in imported American cars. How many people in this country are aware of the fact that, of the more expensive types of American cars, the export managers are selling more in Berlin alone to-day than they are in London? Germany is actually buying more French, Italian, and American cars of the more expensive sorts than this country. Yet she has a big motor manufacturing industry of her own. Unquestionably, the prospect of the McKenna duties coming off is upsetting to motor trading in this country; one result is that those who can "hang on to their cars" for a few more months are deciding to do so until the situation shall become defined more clearly. All this makes the weak firms weaker. Certainly, as far as medical men are concerned, that seems the best policy—but trading should not be embarrassed by passing this on—provided the vehicle at present in service is mechanically sound. The reason is that the withdrawal of a degree of protection from the motor industry of this country has to be considered in conjunction with certain other points, not the least of which is the increasing cost of wages in the engineering trade, a difficulty which is continually recurring and is likely to assume a very ominous aspect indeed during the next few months.

THE DEAREST INDIFFERENT, THE CHEAPEST EMBARRASSED.

One of the results is that, as regards all save those cars which are built and sold irrespective of cost, manufacturers are having to reduce their outputs. That qualification is necessary even at this time when individuals, as well as nations, are hard up, for it is a fact that the most expensive cars built in this country are about the only ones which will be immune from the ill effects of the inevitable complications we have to fear no less than the actual loss of that limited degree of protection the McKenna duties afford. It is the cheapest car market that will experience the worst time in consequence of their lapsing. The explanation is simple, though easily overlooked. That limited public which can afford the best and has sufficient discrimination to recognize it is not deterred because a car costs £1,000 more. In New York, for instance, the rich men's wives like to leave their neighbours' wives guessing to within £1,000 what they paid for what is called an imported car, one of the troubles of the American-built luxury car trade being that as each such carriage passes down the street anybody can tell to within a dollar what the owner paid for it; that does not suit the typical post-war wealthy American.

NATIONAL, FINANCIAL, AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS.

By contrast, however, nine cars out of ten sold in the world are bought primarily because their cost is within the purse range of the public desiring the particular combination of qualities possessed by the given vehicle by comparison with its rivals. Every country where cars are built except this has a tariff to protect the industry because each foreign country believes that its motor industry must be dependent primarily on what is called the home-built

bread-and-butter car. The largest section of the industry in any country attempts to provide precisely that class of car; therefore in the country of origin that form of enterprise is protected against foreign competition. That is the way American, French, German, and Italian industries, among others, have been built up. In no country in the world is a higher percentage of wages paid per car built than here. Consequently the bread-and-butter car in this country will present a very thorny problem to the public in the coming season, which, owing to the advanced date of the Motor Show, will begin as soon as possible after the August holiday season, and, in consequence, after the lapse of the McKenna duties. Motor manufacturing is primarily a matter of finance. No matter who figures as a car builder, the controlling spirit is the banker. The bankers have been in awkward places once or twice in regard to their commitments on behalf of the motor industry as well since the war as in the period of the first memorable slump of 1907. They are going to make no blind plunges in the way of financing in the dark. Consequently, instead of the expanding programmes, such as Mr. Morris's, which would result in producing more than 1,000 cars a week, we are much more likely to see them reduced 40 per cent. or even more. The overhead—or, as they are styled, dead—charges for producing any make of car are a fixed quantity representing a cost divisible over the actual number of machines built. Obviously, the cost of those dead charges per car is increased in proportion to reduction in output. That is one factor which will send up prices. Another is cost in the ancillary industries. Few realize that more men and more money are engaged in the industries that supply the motor car builder than are engaged in motor car building factories. The less the demand made by those factories on the ancillary industries the greater the cost of producing raw materials or components for the motor car builder; therefore the higher cost of those details. Hence it is to be anticipated that the British-built bread-and-butter car will be forced up in price as a result of the McKenna duties lapsing, for fewer cars will be produced.

FACTORS FOR AND AGAINST LOWER PRICES.

It would be optimistic to imagine that there will be a slump in the cost of imported motor cars to the consumer in this country solely on account of the abandonment of the McKenna duties. So far as vehicles for which there is a demand are concerned, nobody importing them to this country is going to sell them at a lower price than he need; on the contrary, he is going to put as much profit into his pocket, and his agents' pockets, as he can. So much for the effect of the withdrawal of the McKenna duties as a beneficial act to the motor car buyer. The Chancellor of the Exchequer having announced that he does not think it is the purpose of any Government of his cast of politics to protect, or encourage, any particular industry, many manufacturers who have not attempted to sell cars in this country—the lesser ones, who are not doing well in their own country, where motor trade has been none too encouraging this year, so that there is something in the nature of local over-production—will probably attempt to enter the British market. Well established foreign firms may be expected to flood our markets with those of their models for which there is least demand at home, and to put on these any price convenient to them. In some cases—but these will be relatively few—the trans-Atlantic or Continental builder will reduce his price, but in the majority of cases he will be selling at a good profit to himself, albeit the price will be so low, with 33½ per cent. duty off, that it will appear a slump figure to buyers in this country. But in the case of the American cars, for which there is most demand in any given price class, we are not to expect anything in the nature of 33½ per cent. reduction on present list prices. We may, however, see anything up to 20 per cent. reduction this autumn, particularly as America's motor manufacturing programme for 1924-25, which commences with the issue of new models at the end of August, will itself result in her home costs of cars being reduced appreciably. Of course, this is a factor quite extraneous to the McKenna duties. Meantime the plain fact is that

most importers of cars into this country are even more upset by this measure in its effect on trading this summer than are the British builders of cars themselves.

PORTENTS OF COMING CHANGES.

Our home builders will have time to consider their programmes and commitments for 1924-25, but, unfortunately, they are caught by these Government proposals in the mid-season of production and commitments in respect of given types. Therefore we may witness an over-production of certain 1923-24 British types, leading to trading trouble which will have to be dealt with during next selling year. In certain cases that may delay indefinitely the introduction of 1924-25 car types. Certainly the biggest scale manufacturers will reduce their commitments greatly, with the result that their prices will tend to rise, especially in face of the present labour situation. This will give the manufacturers of small cars on the Continent a good opportunity. Further, there is work afoot in the American industry which will result in a year or two in that industry embarking on the small car. In one of his speeches in the House of Commons the Chancellor of the Exchequer suggested that America had done so already and had withdrawn from our market defeated by British small car enterprise. This is a pure figment of the imagination, inasmuch as America has never entered into the small car industry for the sufficient reason there must be good roads for a small car market, and the United States is only now beginning to build roads on the scale with which we are familiar. Further, it is only now that General Motors, the biggest corporation of its kind in the world, is beginning to get results from its experimental enterprise. We are going to have much higher compression engines from America, as may be judged from the General Motors Research Corporation's chemical work, which has resulted in six of the large petrol vending companies of the States, including the Rockefeller group, supplying, under licence, anywhere from the Rockies eastward to New York, tetra-ethyl petrol mixture at an extra cost of 2 cents a gallon. The characteristics are that, without injury of any sort to the engine, the compression can be put up to that employed on our Grand Prix racing car engines, or on our aircraft engines, without the power plant "pinking." Although no American manufacturer has yet made such a car, yet these big petrol distributors in that country have actually standardized such a fuel which can be got on demand by drawing up at any wayside supply station; it follows that there can be no doubt as to the direction which American car building enterprise is going to take, not necessarily next year, but in any case in the not distant future. We are going to have much higher compression engines from United States factories, therefore power plant which will come out far more favourably under British taxation horse-power rating. It will also be of better quality, therefore the competition as well with the Continental as with the home industry will be of unprecedented keenness. But while nothing would be so easy as for me to indulge at great length in a variety of speculations as to what will be the motor car manufacturing and selling situation in 1924-25, the fact is the governing factors tend to vary every moment, and new factors are being introduced every month, many of them arising out of circumstances quite extraneous to the motor industry. Therefore on the present occasion I do not propose to take up more space in dealing with the future, having outlined some of the main factors already to be reckoned with.

THE PROBLEM OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

In the meantime it is well to observe that, in any case, the American smaller car (which may not mature for the 1925 season) will not be built primarily for service on British roads but for such routes as are available, or will soon become available, in the U.S.A. Therefore the fact will remain that the home maker here will have the advantage over the Continental and the trans-Atlantic car maker in building British cars pre-eminently suitable for the roads of this country, and the user will continue to have, if he chooses, the advantages, by no means negligible, of having a

car built in this country by the firm whose name it bears. That qualified phrase is used advisedly because, as the law of motor trading has stood, it is a fact that a car, a negligible percentage of which is built in this country, is allowed to figure as a British-built machine. In fact, the question arises whether we shall not have to obtain a more precise definition of what constitutes a British-built car in face of the ample use the American industry has made of its Canadian factories for escaping one-third of the McKenna duties when importing to this country, thereby establishing a very large business here in selling cars which are built overseas and do not provide work in this country. Of course, the better way would be for the manufacturers in this country to advertise their cars by the name of the city in which their factories are established. There is, however, a technical trading difficulty in adopting that apparently simple course. If you announce the Smith car as having been built in Coventry, and the Jones car as having been built in Birmingham, and those machines achieve a vogue, the manufacturers would have no protection should an unscrupulous speculator start advertising the Jones car of London, or the Smith car of London, which the majority of buyers would imagine to be a branch of the same enterprise though the spurious vehicle might be built almost entirely of imported parts. This question of where a car is built will become of increasing importance to the user after the McKenna duties have lapsed. For one thing, since many of our manufacturers do not intend to go out of business, and as it will be impossible to produce at the necessary low cost in this country, not a few of them may have some of the most important parts, and some of them nearly all the parts, of their cars made abroad. The parts will come chiefly from the continent of Europe; not many from America. Of course, it was quite an ordinary thing before the war for the valves and crankshafts of British cars to be built in France or in Belgium, some also in Germany. But very few of our leading manufacturers failed to make all their parts before the war broke out, and most of the parts of British cars have been made in this country since the war. Nevertheless, as time goes on the medical man who desires to have a car of any given country of origin will require to investigate the matter more closely than has been necessary hitherto to make sure, if he wants a British car, that it is wholly built in this country.

In the meantime the situation amounts to this: there can be little question that the lapse of the McKenna duties will put out of business a large proportion of British motor manufacturers, and will result in the surplus production of these cars being put on the market at any price which will result in them being bought. In turn that will be a cause of embarrassment to the manufacturers of cars for which there is a demand; the cost of production will be rising in any case owing to the labour situation here, and it will be necessary to produce on smaller scales to operate on soundly cautious financial lines.

For the rest, the British industry continues to show fresh enterprise. An instance is afforded by the introduction to-day of a £9 tax car with overhead valve, water-cooled, four-cylinder, nominal 9 h.p., actual 20 h.p., engined, 11 cwt., three-speed Rover car with two or four seats. It is marketed complete with all-weather equipment and all manner of accessories for £180 only. This model is supplementary to the well known 8-h.p. air-cooled two-cylinder type, which will continue to be built.

At the headmasters' conference last December it was decided to draw up a syllabus of instruction in hygiene, with a view to the introduction into schools of teaching about health. This syllabus has now been published under the title of *The Practice of Health*. It provides simple and useful information about the romance of public health and the main features of the organization of the public health service, the principles concerned in the maintenance of healthy surroundings, and the application of biological and physiological considerations to personal health. With its aid personal and communal hygiene can be introduced to the boy and girl as a quest which will excite interest and stimulate the formation of good habits. A list of recommended books is appended, so that more detailed information can be obtained when required. The syllabus may be obtained from Messrs. Warren and Son, Ltd., Winchester, for 1s., post free.

THE INDIAN MEDICAL SERVICE.

PROPOSED ABOLITION.

THE report of the Royal Commission on the Superior Civil Services in India was published on May 27th. The Commission consisted of the Rt. Hon. Viscount Lee of Fareham (chairman), Sir Reginald Craddock, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Sir Cyril Jackson, K.B.E., Khan Bahadur Sir Muhammad Habibullah, C.I.E., Rai Bahadur Hari Kishan Kaul, C.S.I., C.I.E., Mr. D. Petrie, C.I.E., C.V.O., C.B.E., I.P.S., Mr. Bhupendranath Basu, Professor R. Coupland, and Mr. N. M. Samarth (in place of Sir Chiminlal Setalvad, who resigned before the Commission met).

The Commission was instructed to inquire into—

The organization and general conditions of service, financial and otherwise, of those Services;

The possibility of transferring immediately or gradually any of their present duties and functions to services constituted on a provincial basis;

The recruitment of Europeans and Indians respectively, for which provision should be made under the Constitution established by the said Act, and the best methods of ensuring and maintaining such recruitment.

The Commission recommends what practically amounts to the abolition of the Indian Medical Service. If we understand its recommendations correctly, it would be absorbed into the Royal Army Medical Corps (India), and a new Civil Medical Service would be constituted in each province, partly on the basis of a competitive examination, both in England and India, and partly by seconding from the R.A.M.C. (India), to which all officers and other ranks R.A.M.C. while serving in India would be attached.

The Commission met in Delhi on November 4th, 1923, and issued a series of questions, to which 1,300 replies were received from individuals and associations in India. In addition about 100 replies were received from Great Britain to a provisional set of questions issued by the Chairman in England. The Commission visited Allahabad, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Patna, and Lahore, and examined 411 selected witnesses, official and non-official. On its return to Delhi it heard the evidence of a number of officials and heads of departments in the Central Services, including the Director-General of the Indian Medical Service.

Broadly, the Commission recommends that the all-India Services employed in reserved fields of administration should continue to be appointed and controlled by the Secretary of State for India in Council.

Medical Attendance.

The Commission considers that the almost universally expressed anxiety of British members of the Services in India to have access to British medical advice for themselves and their families is intelligible, and that its provision is vital to contentment. Owing to the geographical conditions of India and in view of the increasing Indianization of the Services, including the medical, the adequate provision of British medical qualified attendants for the British members of the Services presents peculiar difficulties; the Commission recommends as follows:

"(a) The districts of a province should be grouped, and a British medical officer (civil or military) should always be posted to one station in each group. This station should be within easy reach of each district in the group. The details of this grouping should be arranged by the Local Governments concerned, in consultation with the Government of India, and should be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.

"(b) In stations where there is no British medical officer, travelling allowances for the officer or his family should be granted to and from the nearest station where there is such medical officer. Payment should be made on a certificate by the medical officer, countersigned, if desirable, by the head of the medical service in the province. Alternatively, if more convenient or if the patient is not fit to travel, the expenses of the medical officer's visit (exclusive of his normal fee for attendance) should be defrayed by Government.

"(c) In the event of a case being of such a serious or special nature that the doctor first consulted does not feel able or willing to treat it, he may give a certificate authorizing the patient to travel to the nearest station where adequate treatment can be given. This certificate should qualify the patient for the grant of travelling allowance as in (b) above.

"(d) In stations where only military medical officers are available their services should be at the disposal of civil officers and their families, upon payment of normal fees.

"(e) Officers should be entitled to free medical attendance as at present. If treated in hospital, they should not be liable for payment of medical, surgical, and nursing charges, but charges for board or special accommodation should be defrayed by the officers.