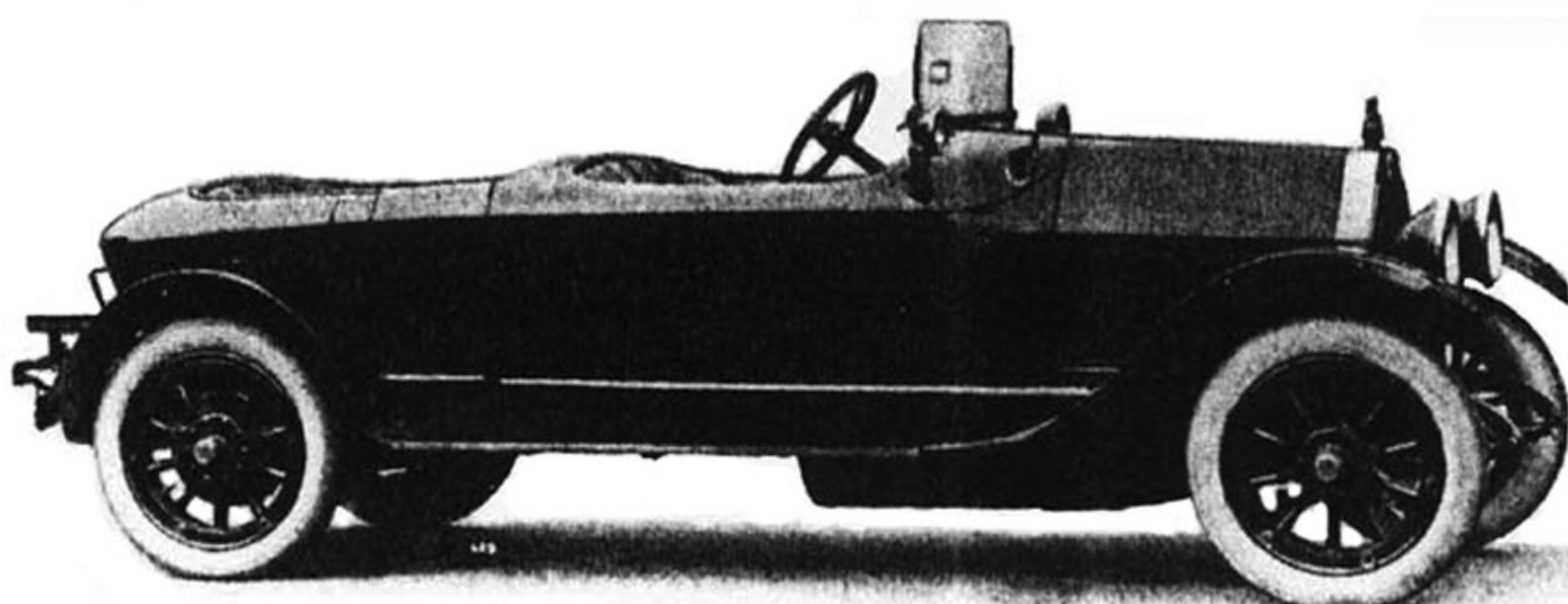




A notable open body by Park-Ward of London upon a 35-hp. Lancia chassis. The top disappears completely into the carriage work and the car has graceful lines

European Motoring

The Sudden Deluge of Small, Cheap Models

By GERALD BISS

ONE thing is absolutely certain—Europe is economizing. It must. Everything in the motor world over here points to an enormous increase in the number of 10-hp. four-cylinder cars and in the even smaller 7-8-hp. two-cylinder machines.

No established firm, so far as I know, has given up any of its high quality, high priced models. However, a vast majority of these expensive cars are commercially in a quiescent state and the entire attention of the industry, both in England and on the Continent, seems concentrated on the smaller types. A great impetus has been given to this movement by the unquestioned success of the 2-cylinder air-cooled Rover, recently introduced. As a result of unparalleled taxation, even the cheaper American makes, with their big engines, are not so popular as they were, owing to their cost of upkeep. The European manufacturer has realized that, for the present at any rate, his industrial future depends upon cars of comparatively small initial cost which can be run day in and day out, with very little strain upon the banking accounts of the owners. For example, the Fiat Company, of Turin, while carefully preserving its six-cylinder line and bringing out a new 12-cylinder chassis against the time of prosperity, is turning out quite the cheapest quality cars in Europe and is making its principal factor its 10-hp. 4-cylinder model.

The new tendency toward the 10-hp. 4-cylinder type was given a tremendous fillip by the extraordinary victory and wonderful team work of the Talbots of this size in the Grand Prix des Voitures over the Sarthe Circuit in September, when they finished, first, second and third within two minutes of each other and within six miles per hour of the time of Murphy's "straight-eight" Duesenberg, which was twice their size and had twice the number of cylinders, in the Grand Prix proper over the same course. In the "straight-eight" there is no sign of any new development other than those mentioned in this department previously, as regards commercial manufacture, and it seems to be generally accepted on all sides that it has taught us very little in this direction and done very little to advance the automobile in a practical way.

Even in France, where there has always been a prejudice against the small car among the haughtier firms, the Delage and the Voisin and others are introducing such machines for their 1922 programmes, as is the Lancia in Italy. In England, practically all the firms which are not one-model, top-grade,

high-power specialists, such as Napier, Lanchester and Rolls-Royce, are adding such a model to their lists. The famous Wolesley firm, which already has a "ten", is putting on the market a 7-hp. 2-cylinder car and the Belsize Company, of Manchester, is making, for the first time, a particularly interesting 8-9-hp. 2-cylinder oil-cooled "Bradshaw" model which is creating a great deal of discussion.

The object of these little cars is not only to please the lesser motorist, but to assist the richer car owner to economize in these extraordinary times. The Austin, the Talbot-Darracq and other well-known companies are putting 10-hp. or 1½-litre models upon the market.

Price cutting, which is still the fashion, has been given added momentum by the big drop in Fiat prices, which brings these cars almost back to pre-war levels. The Rolls-Royce went down from £2,100 to £1,850 and has been followed by the Lanchester with a similar drop of £250, making its chassis £1,950, but the Lanchester people claim that they give a good hundred pounds' worth more equipment than their rivals. The Napier, at the present moment, remains at £2,100, claiming, in its turn, that it is not possible to produce a model of such distinction and virtues more cheaply. The Rover and the Straker-Squire are other prominent firms which have brought their prices down.

Economy has not only shown itself in the reduced cost of cars, but also in the lower prices charged for admission at the Motor Show at Olympia and the White City. Even the show catalogues were cheaper than formerly.

The light car movement in Europe was reflected strikingly at the Automobile Salon in Paris. This showed an enormous development in light cars, sport cars and cyclecars. It proved a decided change in the building policy from the days of 1919 when big cars were in vogue. American cars were more in evidence than ever before and included the Pierce-Arrow, Cadillac, Buick, Hudson, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile and Oakland. They created quite a favorable impression and it is probable that American machines will be seen in increasing numbers on European roads during the next two years, especially those cars which are moderately priced and economical in operation.

Daimler has brought out a new 20-hp. car which should be enormously popular. It has all the Daimler distinctiveness and dignity and its motor is of the Daimler sleeve-valve type, although of four cylinders instead of six.