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CHRISTMAS IN RAINBOW CANYON

By ADDISON HOWARD GIBSON.

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AFTER sketching for two months in various parts of the Rockies, where he had been trying to forget that he was the most miserable fellow in the west, Claude Extrum, "artist unarrived," as he styled himself, turned his face toward his lonely mountain cabin among the pines in Rainbow canyon.

Purposely he had shunned Denver, declining the invitation of two artist friends to a big Christmas reception. He did not want to run the possibility of meeting Aldyce. It would be painful to both, since her father had denounced him as a "good for nothing, fortune hunting dabbler."

Art must first be mastered, the cold critics won, then if Aldyce had not forgotten, his great dream would become sweet reality. But what if she should forget him? There was a capriciousness in the sex that was quite beyond his understanding.

It was noon when he reached the large cabin among the pines. The first room he visited was the studio, gay with warm colored Indian blankets and the walls covered with sketches by his own brush and a few copies of the masters. On his easel was an unfinished picture, just as he had left it when he went away in the latter part of October. He drew aside the cloth, brushed off the dust and looked long into the laughing brown eyes of a lovely girl. Underneath was pencled the name "Aldyce."

With a deep drawn breath he replaced the cover and went into the kitchen. In the large zinc lined provision box he found that Joe Clark, the prospector who had looked after the cabin during Claude's absence, had obeyed his instructions by leaving a sack of flour, some beans, sugar, part of a ham and dried venison.

"Now I'll have a supper after my own appetite," he declared, making a fire in the little stove.

Presently a pot of beans, with a piece of ham to give flavor, was bubbling away, filling the room with its savory steam. Then Claude swept the floors, wiped the accumulated dust off the simple furniture and proceeded to make a lonely house look comfortable.

"I must decorate to be in spirit with the season," he said, after scanning walls and unadorned mantel shelf.

By the time the young man returned with his arms full of decorations a cold wind was racing down the pass, driving a steadily increasing fall of snow and sleet before it.

"Gee! Old Boreas is sending me some Christmas weather with all the frills," he soliloquized, making a run for the shelter of the cabin.

Claude had scarcely put the last of the mountain holly on the walls and built a cheerful big fire in the fireplace in the studio when the door burst open, letting in a dash of snow, in the midst of which stood a slender youth in a furry overcoat and cap, with huge goggles over his eyes.

"Well, can't you come in and shut the door?" demanded the artist impatiently as he stared at the apparition before him.

"I must look like I'm posing as old Santa, don't I?" laughed the boy. Then, with a start of recognition, "Claude Extrum, as I live and whistle!" Suiting the action to the word, he gave vent to a prolonged whistle.

The artist grew red and white by turns as he recognized the boy. It was the sixteen-year-old brother of Aldyce!

"Hal Bannlers!" he cried. "Where did you drop from?"

"From the snow clouds," answered the youth, hugging the surprised artist. "This is some luck, all right, finding shelter, and just think of its being your mountain retreat. Aldyce is out there in the car. The machine broke down just below your cabin."

"Aldyce in the car out in this storm!" cried Claude, buttoning up his coat and rushing to the door.

"Yes. We were on our way to Frazier's, up Bear canyon," Hal shouted his explanation as he clung to his companion's arm through the snowy gale. "The Fraziers are giving an old fashioned Christmas eve party at their ranch house. You know Aldyce and Dell Frazier were great pals at school, so Aldyce was bound to go to the party. I was sure I knew the road there, but this snow came on so suddenly I was a little confused where the roads fork. Aldyce insisted this was the right way, so we came up the wrong canyon."

The artist paid scant heed to young Bannler's explanation. As they sturdily breasted the keen, snow burdened wind toward the crippled car he was thinking what a strange prank fate had played on him. He had wanted to bury himself in his mountain cabin, sixty-five miles away from Aldyce, and here she was, snowbound at his door.

"HELP! HELP!" SHE CRIED IN MOCK TERROR.

The wrecked automobile in the snow tempest looked like a red rock half buried in raging whitecaps near a stormy shore. In the back seat sat a girl veiled and clad in rich furs.

"Aldyce!" exclaimed Claude, opening the door wide enough to admit his head.

"We are uninvited guests," laughed the girl, giving him one of her small gloved hands. The girl was the more rational of the two, the young artist being too confused to offer the customary courtesies of host.

"Come, Claude, why don't you ask us in? I'm getting cold," she reminded him. "Perhaps you want me to freeze stiff and stark out here so you can have a real model for a famous painting entitled 'Frozen in a Motorcar!'" she laughed lightly.

Without a word in reply she felt herself lifted in the man's strong arms. The next second he was hurrying her away to the cabin.

"Help, help!" she called in mock terror. "Hal, bring the suit cases. The mountain brigand is carrying off your sister."

Claude Extrum deposited his guest in a great easy chair in front of the blazing pine log on the fireplace. Then he helped her remove her wraps. Presently she sat back quite at her ease, her handsomely shod feet on an improvised footstool, while her face glowed in the dancing firelight.

"What are you cooking, Claude, that smells so tarnation good?" demanded Hal, sniffing robustly as he found a place for the suit cases in an unoccupied corner of the studio.

"Not a Christmas turkey, you young gastronomer," answered Claude, his somberness leaving him under the merry moods of his two unexpected guests. "It's beans—pure, unadulterated beans," he added, with a tragic air.

"This is a regular bean soup evening," observed Aldyce. "I'm sure I shall enjoy it."

"I want the largest bowl in your china collection," ordered Hal, assisting the artist to sift flour for the biscuits. "Nature has endowed me with a big sized attachment for bean soup."

"The pot is full," said Claude, lifting the lid to give the boy a peep, "but if you advise an extension we may bring the wash boiler into service."

It was a merry meal to which they sat down as the early dusk of Christmas eve began to creep into the rustic studio. Hal declared the bean soup was nectar, and Aldyce herself pinned up her sleeves and made delicious coffee. But the reaction came to Claude at the close of the feast. He suddenly pushed back his chair from the table and sat moodily staring into the crumbling embers on the hearth.

Aldyce regarded the young man's clouded countenance for a short time in silence, a mysterious twinkle in her dark eyes. Then she arose and walked over to the window.

"Hal," she called to her brother, who showed symptoms of dozing in his chair, "the snow has almost stopped. I want you to go out and see if the car is still properly covered."

With a yawn the young fellow obeyed, whistling merrily as he trudged down the canyon.

Quickly Aldyce opened her suit case, took out a long envelope and laid it before the artist.

"A Christmas gift for you," she said simply, the mysterious smile now lurking at the corners of her mouth. "Open it, Claude."

He obeyed and a crisp check for $3,000 dropped into his hand. Then he read the accompanying note:

Dear Old Pal—The inclosed check is for your painting, "Rainbow Canyon in Summer," sold to the famous art collector, Mr. Stevens of New York. He wants the same scene in winter at your own price. He says to be prepared for some orders from his friends. Merry Christmas!

LAWRENCE.

"Aldyce, how did you learn I was here?" he asked, moving toward her.

"Lawrence told me. I was in the studio when Mr. Stevens bought your picture on exhibition there. He was so happy for you he let out your secret that you were coming here to hide yourself for the holidays," she replied.

"Then I planned"—

She hesitated, blushed, looking at him with laughing eyes.

"Dell Frazier's party," he finished boldly.

"How dare you insinuate that I fabricated that as an excuse to bring you the good news of your fortune?" she taunted him, assuming a tone of injury.

He sprang toward her. With a little cry of feigned fright she eluded him, but stopped under the hanging lamp where a dangling spray of mistletoe touched her hair. Then he kissed her.

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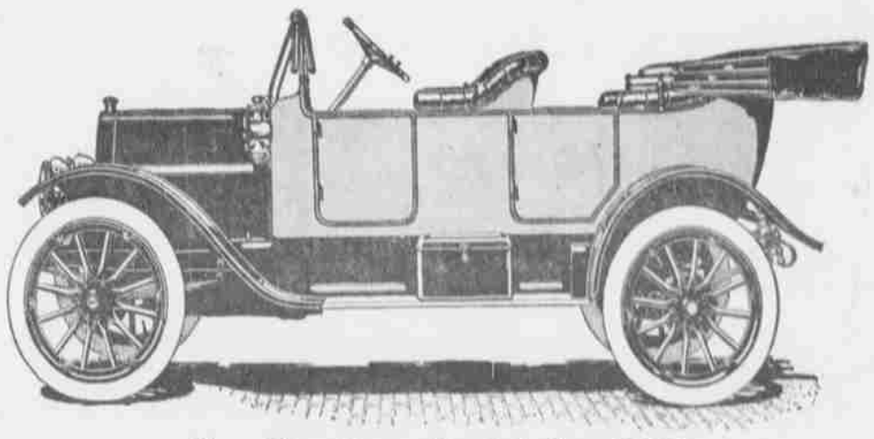

Specifications Studebaker "25"

Motor, 4-cylinder, long stroke, 3 1-2-inch bore, 5-inch stroke, cast en bloc, 25 horsepower. Ignition dual system, Splitdorf low tension magneto, with four auxiliary dry cells. Carburater, our own design. Self-starter, acetylene starter of design adopted after long experiments. Clutch, leather faced cone type. Tires 30x3 1-2, quick demountable rims. Wheelbase 102 inches.

Prices, fully equipped, F. O. B. Salem, Studebaker "25."

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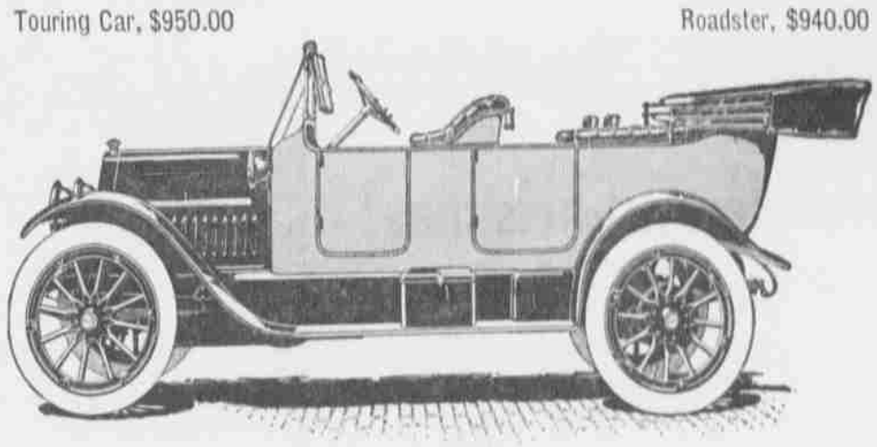
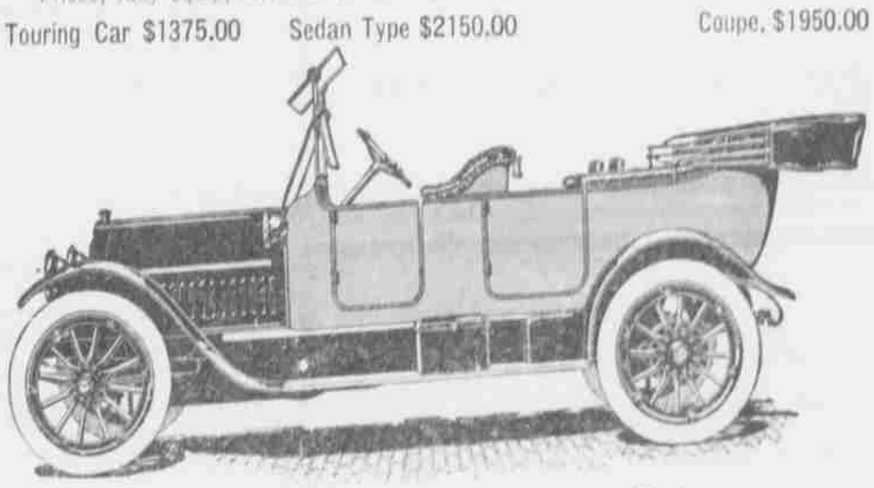


Specifications Studebaker "35"

Motor, 4-cylinders, cast en-bloc, 35 horsepower, 4 1-8-inch bore, 5-inch stroke. Self-starter, Wagner electric, capable of turning engine 80 revolutions per minute for 31 minutes. Clutch leather faced cone. Rear axle full floating. Wheelbase, 116 inches. Tires, 34x4 Goodrich, with quick demountable rims. Body six-passenger, with luxurious upholstering. Electric light and electric horn.

Prices, fully equipped, F. O. B. Salem, Studebaker "35."

Touring Car $1375.00 Sedan Type $2150.00 Coupe, $1950.00



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