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wind instruments all froze up. I told the boys not to blow damp, but I guess they couldn't help it."

"Never mind," I soothed. It's probably all for the best."

He looked at me suspiciously, but apparently saw no guile in my eye because he went on cheerfully:

"It will be all right when we get inside and thaw out the horns. Then we'll play it again for you."

We had a lovely time that afternoon. The old soldiers were as eager to play as children. In the summertime they had lots of visitors, but in the winter it was rather dull. The Home is on Three Bears Lake, eight miles from the town of Fair Oaks at the other end where the railroad station is. As a consequence few people take the trip in winter except for some special reason.

Comrade Abel Dreyenfurth had lost a leg at Antietam. That did not interfere with a lively desire to learn the fox-trot, and Maryella spent an hour teaching it to him.

The bass-drummer Pilk Henwether, discovered in me a kindred soul.

"I like you, Mr. Bilbeck," he confided at the top of his voice. "I can sort of tell what you are talking about because you make faces when you speak."

The undertaker's bus arrived just before dinner. We all ate together in a large mess-hall. The dwellers at the Home cook their own meals and do all their own housework.

"That's the chief objection I got to the Home," said Pilk Henwether, hardly raising his voice above a shout. "There ought to be some female veterans. I'm durned if I like washing dishes."

The dinner was good, all except the dessert, which was a fallen angel-food cake with ice-cream.

"Henry Klingman made it," Pilk confided, "and I think it's punk, if you want my honest opinion. But I wouldn't let him hear me say that because it would only hurt his feelings."

As Comrade Klingman was in the room and Pilk Henwether spoke in his ordinary tone of voice, there seemed little doubt of his feelings receiving a jolt.

"It ain't so bad, though," Pilk went on, "when you come to think that Henry has only got one arm. He says the other one was shot off at Chancellorsville, but it's my private opinion he lost it running a buzz-saw after the war was over. Anyhow, he draws an extra allowance as a one-armed man."

(Continued Next Week)

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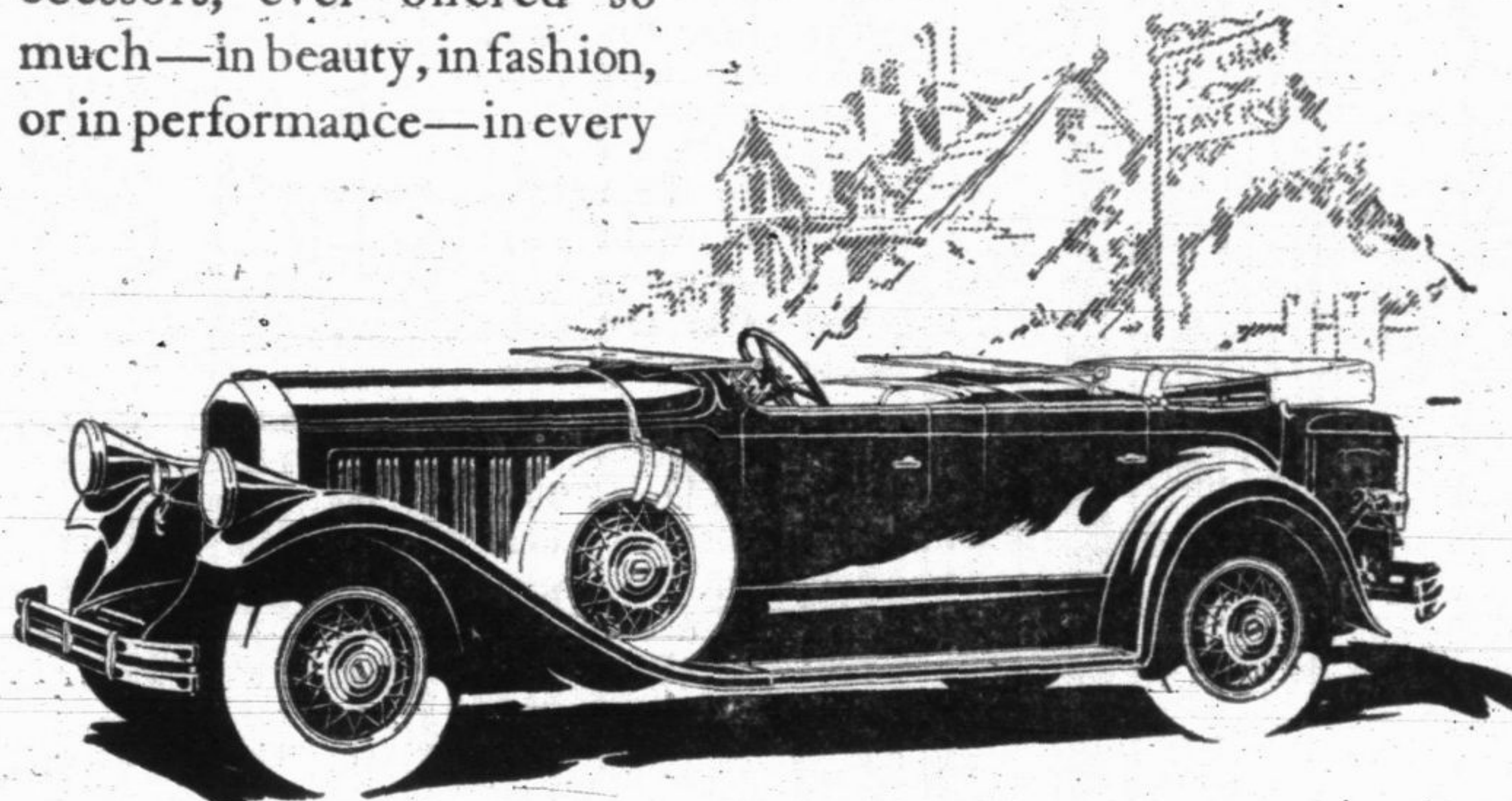
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