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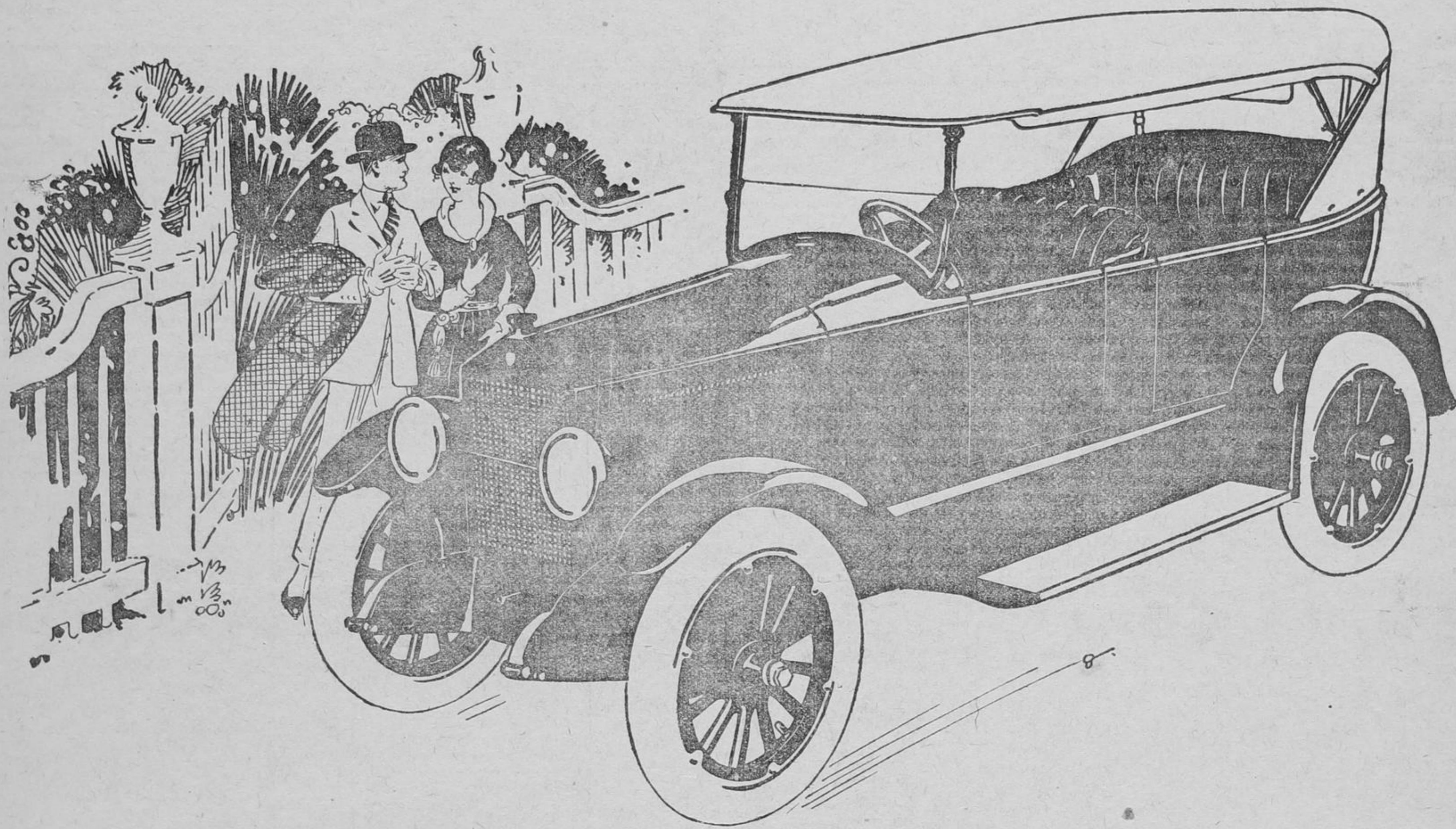
—and it is really *Canadian*.

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## A FRENCH EXPEDITION CROSSES 2,700 MILES OF UNMAPPED DESERT

Brave Death to Explore the Great Sahara; White Men Travel from Algiers to Dakar in 159 Days at Head of Colonial Troops; Feat Unparalleled.

A body of men lost and undoubtedly perished in the great wastes of the western Sahara Desert, camels traveling almost 400 miles without water over blistering sunscorched plains of sand and the unparalleled feat of traversing over 2,700 miles from Algiers, capital of Algeria, on the Mediterranean, to Dakar, Senegal, in 159 days across an unmapped desert—these are some of the details of a French military expedition into the heart of the Great Sahara of northwestern Africa.

While Amundsen was starting north, attended by considerable publicity, and weekly bulletins told of the British Royal Geographical Society's preparations to scale Mount Everest, a small contingent of French military men in Africa were starting secretly on an expedition in which failure meant more terrible death than the peril of the frozen north or the heart straining climb up the world's highest mountain.

Details of the French exploration of the western Sahara—that previously unknown territory lying in the centre of Africa's western hump—have just been given in Paris before the Geographical Society by Captain Augieras, a leading member of the exploration party.

### Unexplored Centre of Desert.

A glance at the ordinary map of Africa shows the region south of the French colonial states of Algeria and Morocco, which is as devoid of life and

civilization as the bare unmarked portion of the map indicates. It is the very unexplored centre of the Great Sahara Desert, marked by little more than oceans of sand and burned by the hottest of tropic suns.

The French Colonial Office required more detailed maps of this part of the Sahara many months ago and opened preparations for an expedition, which, though highly perilous, was not announced to the world until its successful termination. In order to minimize the chances of the expedition's failure it was planned to start two columns of colonial troops, each commanded by French officers, from either end of the route established. A detachment of native troops from Mauritania, the French civil territory touching the Atlantic Coast north of Senegal, was ordered to proceed in a north-easterly direction some 600 miles to El Mzerreb, the watering place of El Hank, a native settlement on the northern edge of the unexplained part of the desert. This expedition was under the command of a Major Lauzanne, a Frenchman, who has spent most of his military life in the colonies.

Another expedition, composed of Algerian troops under the command of Captain Augieras, was ordered to proceed southwestward from Algiers and arrive at El Mzerreb as near as possible on December 25, to make the rendezvous with the Mauritanian column under Major Lauzanne. Three

platoons of native troops and a commissary contingent made up the command of Augieras. This officer left Algiers on October 29 and on December 21 joined the Mauritanian mission at El Mzerreb.

### Perished in Burning Sands.

The two leaders, after a conference, decided to start from El Mzerreb to the northwest, where an important well, named Abd-el-Malek, had been reported as the central meeting place of roaming bands of desert bandits. This well had never before been visited by white men nor military forces, and it was necessary to break the southward course of the expedition to explore the region. Native guides accompanied the advance guards, who reached Abd-el-Malek on December 28. This little island in a sea of sand proved actually to be the rendezvous of bandits, and the advance guard captured a herd of sixty camels, which it was later discovered had been stolen in the Soudan. The bandits fled into the open desert, with the patrols in pursuit. But the bandits rode the fleetest ramiels and escaped. In the enthusiasm and excitement of the chase one patrol, composed of several Mauritanians, went a little too far into the desert and was never seen again.

The joint exploration party remained at the well until December 30, when a split was made, allowing the Angerian column to retrace its journey back to Tabelbala and Algiers. The Mauritanian column, now under command of Captain Augieras, started southward, with an immense stretch of desert between it and safety. To traverse this successfully—day after day over burnsky and an occasional mirage to look at—meant the success of the exploration. The route lay toward the province of Senegal, the capital of which is St. Louis, on the Atlantic coast. The terminus of the exploration, however,

was Dakar, the French cable station, which lies on a small peninsula more than a hundred miles south of St. Louis. From the well of Abd-el-Malek to the nearest reported water, at Aguel, was a distance of nearly five hundred miles, and to Dakar was another six hundred as the crow flies.

### Slimy Pool Saved Lives.

A dozen days of travel across the sands brought the party to Aguel, with waterskins almost empty. The wells here were found to be entirely dry, and the oasis had been deserted even by the hardy desert nomads. The situation was desperate. Calculations told the French officer that he might find wells to the west. The party headed across the Maktier dunes to the west and found wells, but still no water. Eventually, on the seventeenth day of wandering, and now without a drop of water, the mission reached a well which had been reported to them on a small oasis called Auchiche, and there found a quantity of very bad water. With parched throats and swollen lips Captain Augieras and his followers literally fell into the slimy pools and drank their fill. The old wheeze, "How many days can a camel go without water?" was almost answered, according to members of the expedition.

Possibly two or three more days would have finished the animals, which had travelled steadily for seventeen days, covering nearly four hundred miles without a drop of water. The human members of the expedition likewise narrowly escaped with their lives. If, by some miscalculation, the well at Auchiche had been missed or had been found dry upon the mission's arrival, it is regarded as doubtful if either men or animals could have covered a much greater distance in search of problematical water holes. It is highly probable that the filthy

water of Auchiche was the providential find that allowed the entire party to survive.

### First Trip by White Men.

By January 19 the expedition had reached Atar, the small desert town in Mauritania where the French government maintains a wireless station. After a few days' rest here the indomitable Captain Augieras started off with a small detachment of Senegalese riflemen on a further expedition eastward into the little known region between the Mauritanian settlements of Chingueti and Tedjikja. From the sandy plateau of Tagant he descended into the plain of Brakna, where the Moors breed zebus, the ox-like African beast of burden, and sheep and goats. On March 20 the captain had reached Senegal at Boghe, on the Senegal River, where he was able to acquire native canoes and make the journey down stream to Podor. From Podor the regular river steamers carried him to St. Louis, the Senegalese capital, which he reached on April 3, and two days later he was at Dakar.

The perilous trip from Algiers to Dakar was made by Captain Augieras in 159 days, a distance as travelled of a little more than 4,500 kilometres, or about 2,700 miles. This is the first time that a white man has ever attempted to cross the Great Desert or to make the trans-desert trip from Algeria to Senegal. The expedition has not only emphasized the vastness of African desert reaches, but has given the French government valuable topographical data never before known. One immediate result of the expedition may be to shorten the airplane route between France, Spain, Northern Africa and Senegal, whose main port, Dakar, is already the terminus of one French airline company.