

AN AUTOIST'S WINTER TRIP OVER THE ROCKIES



CROSSING A RIVER. ON ROW. BOATS LACED TOGETHER.

Lessons from the Experience of Percy Megargel Which Should Be of Benefit to Contestants in the New York-to-Paris Auto Race.

IN view of the great interest manifested in the coming polar automobile race from New York to Paris under the auspices of Le Matin of Paris, with the co-operation of THE NEW YORK TIMES, the adventures of Percy Megargel and his machinist, David Fassett, in crossing the American Continent in midwinter in an automobile may not be uninteresting.

If Megargel starts in the race it is quite certain that he will not drive a high-power car, with the possibility of the outfit finding a resting place at the bottom of some river on which the ice has proved treacherous. Megargel is seriously considering entering the race with a car of medium power, with good clearance, driven by a man of resourcefulness. His car, while not hampered with unnecessary articles, would still carry an equipment that when tabulated seems large.

It is only necessary to hear his modest description of the experiences he met with on his tours to know that no novice will have a "look in," nor would the average man who has achieved fame in the racing game on beaches, for instance, be a likely contestant. In order to show how a contestant must depend more on his brawn and endurance than upon a high-power motor in his car, a brief description of the car and equipment which Megargel has in mind may be of interest.

The Car and Equipment.

In his trip from San Francisco in the winter of 1905-6 he took a regular stock car of 16 horse power and equipped the front axle with an extra strong truss rod. The tonneau was kept in place rather than built a special box in which to carry his supplies. The front seat was fastened on with hinges so that it could be tilted up in order to afford sleeping quarters for himself and machinist. Every nut on the car was tightened up as tight as possible without stripping the nuts. The projecting ends of the bolts were then drilled and cotter pins were inserted, eliminating the chance of a nut working loose.

A special windlass was constructed in the frame on which was wound 200 feet of three-eighths-inch wire cable, one crank operating the windlass and resembling the starting crank of the machine, but of heavier construction. The two bolts were removed from the forward ends of the springs and a steel rod inserted that graduated across the front of the car and acted as a buffer or "cow catcher," as the veteran tourist put it.

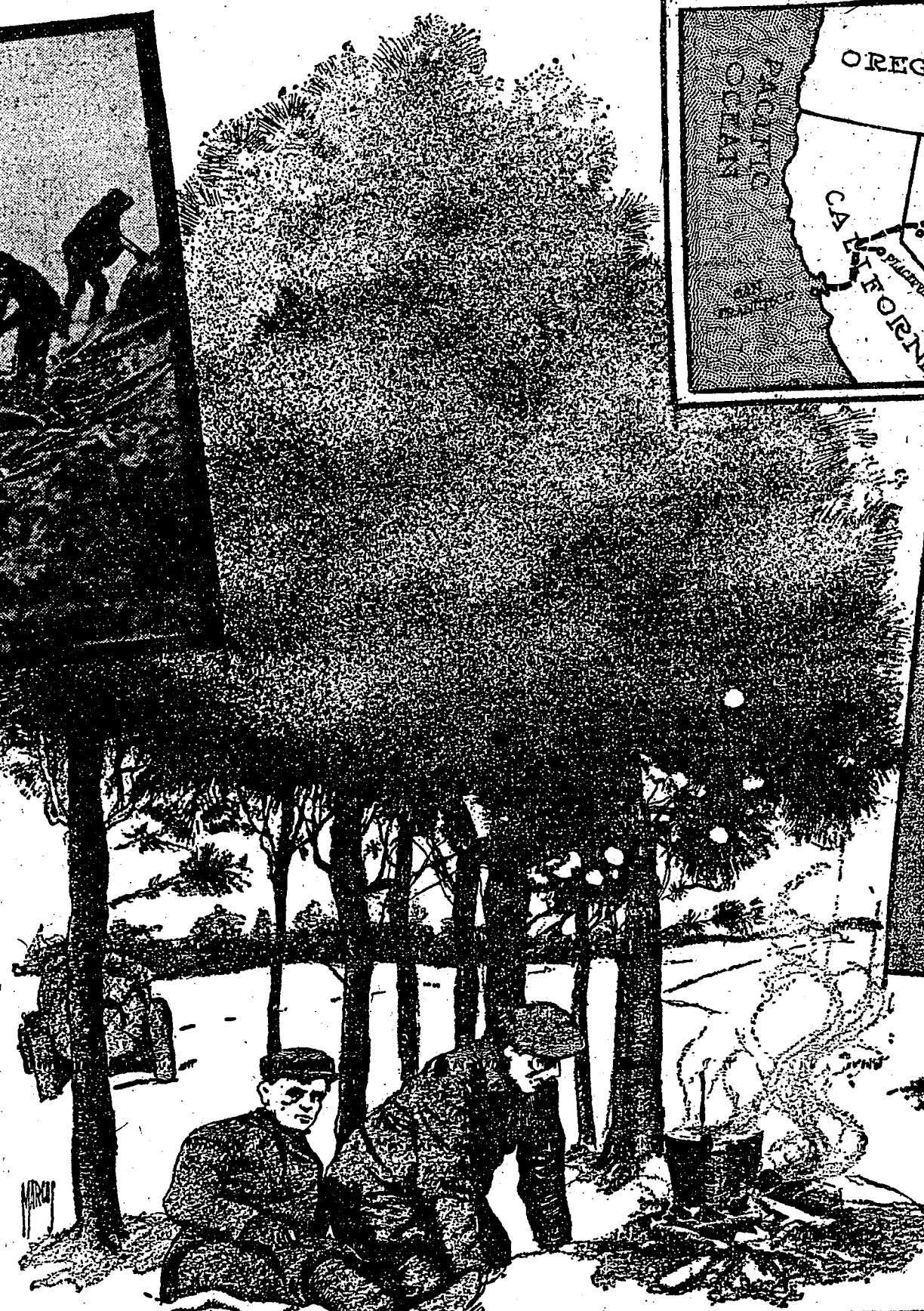
Hartford trauxaux were fixed to each spring to prevent its breaking when the car was severely jolted. The pair of springs were constructed and fixed to the axle with sharpened ends. These were allowed to drag in ascending all steep grades to prevent the car from backing down should the mechanism fail to work, and four inches from the end of the springs plates were fixed to prevent them from sinking too deep into the soft earth.

A pair of Dietz oil lamps and a six-inch Dietz searchlight connected to a double generator were installed. Rubber lamp covers covered the lighting outfit. On the right-hand side of the car, a pair of candles to hold in place two five-gallon cans of gasoline. A tarpaulin stretched across the tonneau and buttoned at the sides was to protect the contents from dust and rain.

A Varner autometer, to tell the distance traveled and the rate of speed, and a graduated meter to register the pressure of the gas were placed on the dashboard. The foot throttle was equipped with a ratchet to enable the driver to lock it in place and run at any desired speed without keeping his foot on the pedal.

Sand tires of his own invention were carried to be used in crossing desert stretches. Heavy woolen army blankets and two twenty-foot strips of heavy canvas were placed aboard, the canvas to be used in improvising a tent and to be stretched under the wheels when crossing an unusually boggy stretch of country. There was a mess kit with a week's provisions, consisting mostly of canned meats, crackers, and vegetables. The rest of the outfit was made up in part as follows: Two heavy Colt revolvers, a Winchester rifle, a coil of strong wire, such as is employed in baling hay; an axe, spade, and shovel, an extra set of dry cells and an extra set of copper wiring, a set of Veed tie chains, a Gabriel horn, box spark plugs, rubber coats, hats, and hip boots.

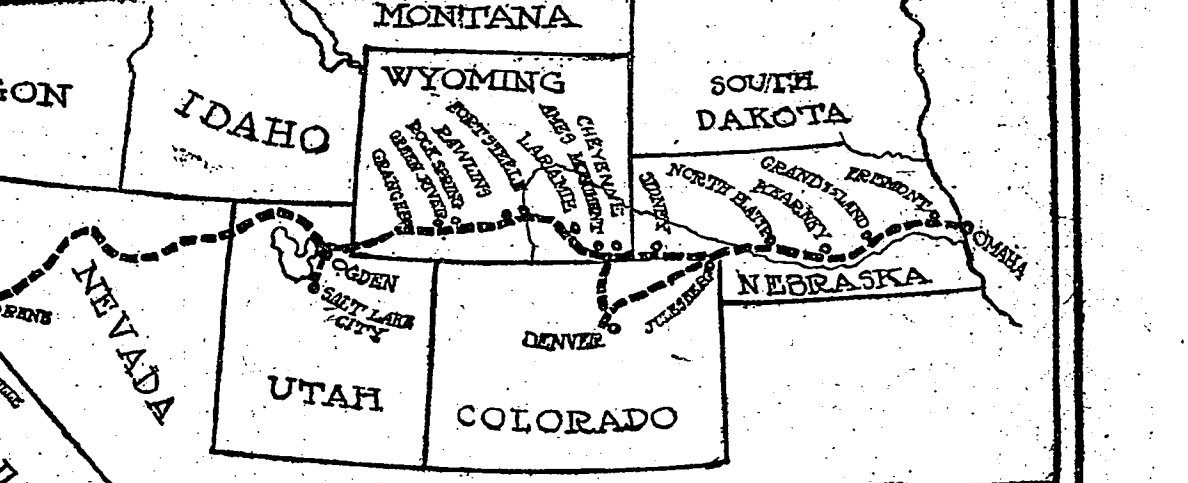
Among the changes which he would make, some of which have been anticipated by the manufacturer, would be to



THINKING OF HOME—CHRISTMAS 1905

Colorado had to be crossed. Two rowboats were lashed together, two side wheels resting in each boat. Mojave Indians acted as boatmen. Fassett nearly lost his life at this point through trying to stop the twin boats in the swift current. Less difficulty was met with on the Arizona desert, but when the San Francisco Mountains were reached the real trouble commenced. The mercury rapidly descended in the tube as the horizon showed high altitudes and the barometer indicated a conveyance in some places from eight to ten feet in depth. The trail, which had not been traveled in months, was obliterated. Occasionally a guide could be secured, but money was no consideration to the average cowboy snugly housed in his log shack to get out and face a raging blizzard in the heart of a line of smoke in the distance once or twice a day. The party bore forty or more miles to the north or south, as the

topography of the country changed. Under these conditions it is not to be wondered at that they became lost in the mountains between Williams and Flagstaff. A fierce blizzard had not been sighted for days. The gasoline supply became practically exhausted, and the men realized that they were in for it. The mercury went down until it disappeared



ROUTE OF MEGARGEL'S WINTER TRIP ACROSS THE CONTINENT.



MEGARGEL'S CAR AS A SLEEPER IN CALIFORNIA

When they were reaching the timber line after leaving Williams, where there were only a few dwarfed pines, the snow blew so fiercely that they could not see more than a yard or two ahead. They decided to halt, and formed a camp beside a fir tree, the snow being banked on all sides to protect the travelers. An attempt was made to light a fire, but it had rained a few days before, and all firewood was covered with a thick coating of sleet.

After an hour of fruitless work, during which the tourists had to keep constantly in motion to prevent freezing, the attempt was given up in despair. When abandoned it suddenly occurred to one of the men to use the gasoline blow torch to warm themselves. The sight of the yard of blue flame cheered the wayfarers, and they saw the problem of lighting a fire was solved, for the blue flame, which would melt sleet, had no trouble in cutting through the coating of ice.

A Last Resource Soup.

A search was made through the tonneau for provisions, and such articles as had been overlooked were dumped into a pot of snow over the fire which had been kindled with the aid of the blow torch. They called the concoction soup. It was made of sardines, a potato, two onions, some greasy cracker crumbs, some butter, a little bacon, and pepper and salt. For four days they lived on the "soup," with generous additions of snow and pepper—always more pepper.

Then a rescuing party that had been searching for some lumbermen hove in sight in a sleigh, the corpses of two unfortunate occupants occupying the bottom of the box. Megargel and Fassett were taken to the nearest station of the Santa Fe, Bellevue, about fourteen miles west of Flagstaff. Two weeks were consumed in getting the car to Flagstaff from where it had been abandoned. From Flagstaff they went east through Winslow, Amarillo, and Navajo Springs.

Deep snow was encountered most of the way, and the nights were extremely cold. The nights were passed huddled up in the blankets or in the little shanties of the Mexican section men, made of railroad ties, on the Santa Fe. They slept on these occasions with one eye on the greasers. Regarding the travel on the New Mexican or some of the others of Siberia, Megargel's experience on the Rio Puerco may prove enlightening. Soon after leaving Winslow there was no wagon road over the section, and the party decided to take to the Rio Puerco. The car was lowered down the steep bank with its windlass, and soon they were bowling along on the snow-covered ice at the fastest clip they had been able to make since leaving California.

About forty miles had been traveled in this manner when, without warning, the rear wheels, which sustained several hundred pounds more than those in front, broke through. The occupants of the car were thrown headlong over the dashboard when the car stopped with a jolt. Investigation showed that the wheels were not in water, but quicksand, of the most dangerous kind, and were being steadily drawn down.

Everything movable in the car was removed and an iron bar was driven in the ice fifty feet ahead, to which the cable of the windlass was attached. Despite the efforts of the two men they could not budge the car, and the cable was from the railroad and tied to a tree to be used in blocking it up. Two days later, with the assistance of the crews of two sections of the Santa Fe, the car was released. A heavier car would probably have been lost if they had not gone through into deeper water, where the car was swallowed up by the quicksand at the same point some years earlier.

No Trouble with the Gasoline.

No trouble was ever experienced with gasoline freezing. The lubricating oil, however, froze or became congealed, and it was necessary to put the flame of the blow torch on the lubricator and tubes each morning before starting the engine. It was necessary on innumerable occasions to crank for twenty minutes at a time, with frequent single explosions, before the cylinders warmed enough to allow regular explosions.

In the tonneau were frozen at all times, and often when a can was thrown into a pall of boiling water and the contents warmed enough to explode the can there was a frozen core when the contents were served. Leather caps and shoes had to be changed each morning.

Sweated with long turtle necks were worn at night and were drawn over the face to prevent freezing. Woolen stockings were worn under heavy arctic, but the men frequently ran beside the car to keep their blood circulating freely. A hand was kept on this part of the journey, the car from erupting at a bare spot. On one occasion on another trip the car got away while some shoveling was being done, but brought up in a snow bank without injury. Snow crust was encountered sufficiently strong to carry the car.

Megargel is of the impression that it is impossible to cross the Sierra Nevada between November and June, but he figures that the run from New York to Ogden will be comparatively easy sailing in February, unless a few days of rain should put the Platte over its banks in Nebraska and wash away some bridges, as it does about each Spring.

There is no doubt in his mind that the run can be made from Ogden to Los Angeles. From Los Angeles to San Francisco is about 600 miles of well-traveled, excellent road, and on this part of the journey he estimated should not take more than thirty-six hours.

Megargel has paid as high as \$1.75 a gallon for gasoline, and from his experience he has learned that it took four times as much gasoline to drive a car in cold weather through snow as when spilling along smooth roads in the Summer time. On one occasion he had the gasoline carted fourteen miles to the car on a wagon drawn by two cow ponies. The outfit came to grief in a small cañon.

On the subject of the Siberian end of the race Megargel is very reticent. He has pulled his car through boggy ground that could not be more difficult to portage or of Siberia during the milder part of the year. He has forded streams, built bridges, and done almost inconceivable things with his car, and is not crossing his bridges until he comes to them.

In the trip from San Francisco to New York the start was made on Nov. 21, and New York was reached on June 9.

Churchgoing Among the Guests of New York Hotels

Investigators Surprised to Find that Transients Are Very Diligent in Church Attendance—A Large Variety of Motives Discovered.

WHAT do the 100,000 or more transient hotel guests who add to New York's shifting population do with themselves on Sunday? Investigators from the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, which is operating a series of special evangelized Sunday night services for the hotel population and other strangers in the city, have found to their surprise that a large number of them go to church. A number of the hotel managers interviewed declare that the transients are better church-goers, as an average, than guests who stay all year around, or people who live in private homes or apartments. At a number of hotels it was declared that on Sunday mornings it took the entire time of one or more clerks to answer inquiries about where to go to church.

Why They Go to Church.

The reasons for churchgoing, however, are as varied as the types of guests. The largest part go because they are churchgoers at home and wish to keep up the practice. Some of these want simply the nearest church of their denomination. But others look upon city churches as features of the sights of the city and pick out the one they wish to attend for much the same reason that they would pick out a theatrical show. Some want to see the church which cost the most money or the one with the highest salaried preacher. Still others want the best music or the best preacher or the best stained glass. Another class wants to see the minister, who is known as Dr. Boardman throughout the country because of his attack on the city that feature of New York. And a very large class wants to go to the church where Mr. Millionbucks is to be seen in the congregation or the one where Mr. Merger or Mr. Copper or Mr. Steel King makes his weekly peace with Heaven. Their idea is to be able to say, when they return home, that they have seen this great religious spectacle and tell at great length just how the entire Moneybags family behaves at public worship and what they think of the service. As a result the hotel clerk, who supplements the information on the church directories in the reading room, has to be a regular bureau of information, not about the religious features of the churches, but about their financial and other show features. These people go to the churches just as they go to the museums, as part of seeing New York, and are as disappointed if the

personal exhibit is not on show as they would be to find some collection of pictures closed for cleaning.

In the more fashionable hostilities, the churchgoing indication takes the form of an order for a taximeter cab to take the Sunday guests to definite churches. These people generally have made up their minds as to whom they wish to see or hear—generally the church or preacher or choir made most famous by newspaper articles printed in out-of-town newspapers. The investigations made by the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church Committee covered all ranges of hotels, from the Mills to the latest of the great luxurious palaces of the rich, from the hotels which seldom open their registers and have no transient guests save in their restaurants, to those who haven't had any thing like a permanent guest since they were opened years ago. But everywhere there was the report that hotel guests were consistent churchgoers, and there were as many explanations as hotels as to why this is so.

At the Mills Hotel, the clerk said that most of their guests were familiar with the city, and did not make inquiries at the desk. Some of the guests, however, said that not a few of their fellow-residents went to church, but principally on rainy Sundays. For the most part they were laboring men or clerks, and on fair

Sundays wanted to walk around and see what was going on. On rainy Sundays, however, they wanted other recreation indoors, and after they were tired of the hotel reading rooms and had finished the Sunday papers, they generally went to church. Commonly, they did not care what church it was—they chose the nearest one which had a hotel reputation of being decent to strangers and of furnishing good music and a fair sermon. The thinking set of people, and were rather hard critics of sermons unless they were full of ideas.

Generally Know What They Want.

At the Astor the management said that they were kept busy Sunday morning ordering cabs for churchgoers, of which there were always a considerable number among their guests. As a rule, they said, these guests knew what they wanted to see, and asked only to be told how to find it. A number of these people would ask to be directed to some church where years ago some very famous preacher had occupied the pulpit. They had heard of him from their fathers or mothers, who had attended his church, and they wanted to see it as place of historic interest. Beecher's church figures particularly in this category, and one

man, not so long ago, wanted to know where Beecher was preaching. There are sometimes rare requests for the church where Talmage preached, or some other minister no local to New York.

Foreigners ask commonly for a church where their own language is used, and inasmuch as New York has congregations which employ everything from French to Greek, this demand is readily satisfied. Others, particularly musical people, want to go to the church where some famous singer of to-day made, years ago, her modest vocal debut. For the most part, however, it is apparent that the hotel churchgoers, or at least a large part of them, want to take back home from their interesting story. They want to tell to their home circle something like this: "On Sunday I went to such and such a church and saw or heard this celebrity, who did so and so."

In another hotel, one of lower rate, used largely by transients from the smaller towns, the Fifth Avenue Church people found that these simple folk were somewhat afraid to attend the big New York churches because they had heard many stories which, true or false, had made them timid about what happened to this or that church brother who got into Mr. Midas's pew at some church and received unmistakable demonstration that he was

not welcome to the owner, who seemed to know nothing about the brotherhood feeling of his church. These strangers always asked many questions about the welcome accorded to strangers, wanted to know if the congregation dressed very stylishly, and probably would end by going to some modest mission church near the hotel where they could worship in peace, as this was their chief object. They had not missed church, save for sickness, in twenty-five years, and did not wish to spoil the record in the city. This class of people the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, both at its regular Sunday morning and afternoon services and at its special meetings for hotel dwellers Sunday night, is making special efforts to reach. A duties of the Hospitality Committee of church members is constantly on duty at all services, and is particularly alert in seeing that strangers are made to feel at home without the sense of receiving patronage.

Over on the East Side.

Nearer the East River, at a place which only by a stretch of the imagination could be called a hotel, the investigators were surprised at what the proprietor, the clerk, the porter, and the bell-boy told them when he said that the people who lived in his hotel were regular church attendants, but were pretty particular and hard to suit. They worked hard all the week and received small wages, so that when Sundays came they were looking for an inexpensive and pleasant form of recreation. The missions filled this want, thought the one man who discharged the duties of the Hospitality Committee above, because they knew the wants of the people with whom they were dealing better than did the large churches. Occasionally his boarders would attend services at the latter, and the opinions expressed on their return were often caustic.

"I don't know whether this house is an exception or not," said the manager of a hotel that is now given over to permanent patronage by reason of its being downtown, far from the hustle and bustle. "It may be the case of 'blues of the pod-flopping together,' but every one here, employees and all, goes to church." A clerk in an exclusive hotel in upper Fifth Avenue said: "We supply more cabs on Sunday mornings to people who want to go to church than for any other purpose."