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ductive after eight years' growth, and comes to its full fruition in from twenty to twenty-five years. A palm grove, with its heavy golden clusters of hanging dates, is one of the most beautiful sights in the world. The only other vegetation of the desert consists of stunted, withered-looking shrubs, which manage to exist with but little moisture.

The chief domestic animal is the "ship of the desert," the familiar camel. Originally introduced from Arabia, the camel has become indispensable to the Arabs of North Africa. Long strings or caravans of these patient creatures, laden with the manufactures of Europe, or the ostrich feathers, ivory, skins, gold-dust, and dates, which form the staple of the desert trade, travel incredible distances over the moving sands, the long, stony steppes, and the rocky ridges of the Sahara. The caravan guide is looked upon almost as a supernatural being, for he holds life and death in his hands. As the caravan sets out, he is treated with homage; when it returns in safety, he is loaded with thanks. He follows the track by noticing landmarks invisible to ordinary eyes; he knows the exact position of every oasis, and the path along the trackless desert seems plain to him. The caravans follow definite trade routes, which converge upon Tripoli, Algeria, or Morocco. The amount of their trade is, after all, only small, and is likely to grow less and less as the trade of Europe penetrates the interior by way of the Senegal and the Niger, and finally by that railway across the Sahara which French engineers have planned.

North of the Sahara, and bordering on the Mediterranean, is Algeria, the most important colony of France, and, next to British South Africa, the most civilized part of the continent. Inland it shades away indefinitely into the sands of the Sahara. To the west is the crumbling empire of Morocco, where French power is making itself felt; to the east, the French protectorate of Tunis. The backbone of these three countries is formed by the Atlas Mountains, a series of broad ridges and rounded elevations running from the Atlantic coast to Cape Bon. The mountains are loftiest in Morocco; and as they proceed