

THE AUTOBILIST'S CAMPING GROUNDS IN THE MALAGA VILLAGE



A THICKLY wooded forest crossed by narrow passages conspicuously labeled as North and South Second street, East and West Main street, etc., a great barn-like meeting house, a huge deserted millinery, and three hundred quaint little houses, is the scene at the Malaga Campmeeting grounds in early summer.

Not even the most remote of the Jersey wilds present a more profound loneliness for fifty weeks of the year; nor a city a more bustling activity for the remaining two.

New Jersey seems fairly alive with camping enthusiasm during August. And for the rest of the year these rambling grounds, being within the limits of a large city or on the outskirts of a country village, are watched over by the owners of the little cottages, and kept trim and cozy. The Malaga camp, on the other hand, being somewhat remote from a railway station, and far from a village, is simply a picture of utter desolation for fifty weeks of the year. Although it is directly on the pike leading from Putnam Grove to Vineand, the grove in which the houses stand is so thickly wooded that one is apt to drive by without noticing the clustered cottages and meeting houses within the low branching forest.

Automobilists in search of water to continue their journey in their steam-driven vehicles, stopped at the lonely camp the other day. A convenient pump was noticed just within the outskirts of a woods and the automobile was run in that direction, only to discover that the pump was attached to the shed of a long low building more like a great frame restaurant than a farmhouse, and such it proved to be, with a great deserted village just beyond it.

All the smooth and narrow narrow little streets were carefully boarded off by long stout saplings securely tied in place, making the great deserted village free from intruders, so far as driving is concerned. The stillness became so profound that the travelers began to speculate as to the possibility of ghosts or tramps inhabiting some of the cottages, when a quaint figure that first appeared to belong to one or both of these classes—emerged from one of the

houses behind a clump of trees, and advanced towards the automobile, studying it curiously, and giving quite a shock to the travelers. The bent figure, the weak peering eyes, the deep wrinkles, and the crooked mouth, with a general aspect of oddities, were not prepossessing, but it was soon discovered that these were partly due to age, and in reality "the old man of the camp" is a very interesting character. The presiding figure of the Malaga woods is in reality a well known man of the neighborhood, and one that possesses an interesting history. His name is John Bissett, and although he has traveled extensively in his youth, for thirty years he has been in this part of the country, and for fifteen or twenty years he has watched over the Malaga camp meeting grounds during their period of desertion. With his aged wife, he has charge of what is known as the "Company House" or the "Association House," which differs but little from the majority of the little two-story brick cottages with which the wood is filled. With the exception of one other family, that of John Edwards, at the other end of the deserted village, John Bissett and his wife are entirely alone at the camp grounds during much of the time.

According to Mr. Bissett, there are over three hundred houses within the limits of this forest village, but these do not begin to accommodate the campers during the two weeks of activity. There is an average daily attendance of more than three thousand people during the height of the religious enthusiasm and on Sundays the campers of ten number more than ten thousand. To accommodate this multitude of people within the limits of the camp grounds, tents are frequently erected by enterprising speculators to rent to chance visitors; but the majority of the visiting campers carry with them their own tents, and a supply of force to carry them over their camping period. Others simply camp within the great farm grove in which they arrive at the campmeeting, and lead a gray life for two weeks of religious excitement.

Down on South Second street, which, by the way is crossed near the business portion by East Main street, there is a barber shop, a drug store, an ice cream saloon and a restaurant. At least so

they were designated by Mr. Bissett. "Does it pay these shop keepers to bring down their goods, and all the necessities for carrying on business, just for two short weeks?" we asked our guide.

"Oh yes," it pays well, he answered. "Why some of the campers save up money for the whole of the year just to spend it in having a good time during the last two weeks of August. The keepers of the restaurant make a big thing of it. Then the drug store pays well too, as there is a good sale for paregoric, Jamaica ginger and all kinds of pain killers and dyspepsia cures, for the camp meeting enthusiasts come here to eat as well as to pray, and them that eat too much is bound to need a pain-killer sooner or later."

And Mr. Bissett shook his head wisely and sadly over this inevitable law of the human system, as the automobilists drove merrily off, feeling that they had added quite a "find" to their touring experiences, in discovering the deserted village of the Malaga camp in the depths of a Jersey forest.