



Courtesy U. S. Forest Service

A roadside encampment in a National Park

Touring with Tent and Car

By ELON JESSUP

FROM the first of July till mid-September our motor car had alternately hummed and staggered across the varied topography of seven thousand miles in half the States in the Union. An old friend rushed out to the curb in returning greeting.

"Was it worth while?" he presently asked.

"You bet it was!" we chimed in unison.

"What's your main impression of it all?"

"The main impression," I replied, "is the astounding immensity of the United States. It's a great country—really great. I never knew so before. I've become quite mad about it. The beauty, variety, and people."

Mind you, this isn't the impression of a visiting Englishman or Frenchman. It's that of a native American, perhaps of a slightly pessimistic turn of mind at times, who for nearly forty years has lived and traveled in a good many different parts of the United States and more than a half-dozen times crossed it from coast to coast. Traveled a good bit in Europe, too. Yet last summer, I verily believe, was the first time that I had ever received a truly comprehensive and at the same time intimate view of the country at large.

We traveled the entire seven thousand miles by motor car, my wife and I; Con-

Motor camping has become almost a universal American sport.

Another article dealing with the motor camper and his problems and delights will appear in an early issue

nnecticut to Yellowstone Park, over into Idaho, south to Utah, and then zigzagged back to the starting-point. We cooked all our own meals, and not a single night did we spend under a hotel roof. In other words, we were motor campers, automobummers, tin-can tourists, or whatever title you care to apply to the hosts of migratory tent-winged motorists who each summer flit up, down, and across the North American continent in flights of varied length and duration.

To become intimately acquainted with the land you inhabit a large-scale acquaintance such as we acquired during this tour is a most enlightening and eminently resultful experience. Not only from the standpoint of fresh air and sunshine, variety and beauty of the land, but also the privilege of being thrown into close contact with the people who inhabit the land. Camp-fire smoke has the gift of bringing people out of their shells, of giving you a cross-section view and feeling for humanity such as you can get under few other circumstances.

I was quite annoyed some time ago at the unsympathetic attitude of an editorial writer who viewed with alarm, saw something of a problem, in this huge army of khaki-clad motor campers that creeps across forty-eight States headed for the end of the horizon. "Who are these people?" he asked. "Where do they get their money to live and travel? What right have they to scamper around the face of the earth, foot-loose, pleasure bent, like irresponsible hoboes, neglecting the wheels of progress? Why aren't they home at work?"

So ran the general tenor of my colleague's inquiry.

I think I can tell him who those people are. I've sprawled before their campfires a great deal and come to know them pretty well. In the majority of cases they are you and I. They are the American people off on a vacation. As a rule, they are seeing their country for the first time, doing so for a comparatively small amount of money, breathing a great deal of fresh air, acquiring an intelligent interest in their country, and developing in this country for the first time a real out-of-doors tradition.

These people come from every imaginable walk in life, and their worldly goods range in value from little more than the shirts on their backs to a million dollars. They are college professors, mechanics,

doctors, grocerymen, and just about everything else; as a rule, they have their families with them. My critical colleague implies that the crook and grafter are also present. Maybe so, but I have never found any indications of their presence. And I have left my tent and belongings unprotected all day long, offering light-fingered gentry plenty of opportunity to ply their trade if they were around.

Perhaps some motor campers are taking longer vacations than the wheels of progress ordinarily countenance. But if progress insists upon building its cities topheavy it must expect something of a reaction. As a matter of fact, a great many motor campers are elderly people who have more than earned their vacations, saved money, and are in a position to lead this gypsy life for as long a time as suits their fancy.

There exists a popular theory that the United States has long been a great out-of-doors nation, that we have outdoor tradition, a desire to get out into the wild spots of the earth for the pure joy of breathing fresh air and getting close to nature. This theory, I believe, is open to a considerable amount of qualification. A certain number of people have always been interested in that sort of thing, yes; but the majority, the great American public, has never given much thought to the matter.

To-day the balance has changed. We are developing a real out-of-door tradition. To employ a good old platitude, vast numbers of people are actually getting back to nature. And the motor car plays a mighty important rôle in this change.

Possession of a motor car is likely to lead to the desire to go somewhere that you haven't been before, and the car, together with the development of good roads, has supplied the requisite means of getting there. We have found that by pitching a tent each night and cooking our own meals we can travel great distances by car for a comparatively small amount of money; also be surprisingly comfortable and receive greater insight and more real value than in most other methods of travel.

I have heard it said that people who are servants to an environment are not nearly as happy as people who can make the environment serve them. Perhaps that explains why novelists who have lived in the Middle West have sometimes written rather bitter things about their former homes, and also why my wife and I when touring through this section found a great deal of beauty and kindness there. They were servants to environment, and we were not. We were free agents who could stay as long as we liked, come and go as we pleased. And

that, I think, is the keynote to the value of motor camping.

But to come back to this general exodus with tent and car from city streets to prairie and mountain highways, this new out-of-doors tradition that has so fast developed and is finding new converts each year. Can it really be done? Is it possible for a person who has never slept in the open during his or her life suddenly to take to this migratory camping existence without being quite miserable? It is possible. The best proof of this fact consists of its many thousands of followers.

Having spent a good part of my life in learning how to camp with some degree of comfort, and realizing the experience which this process ordinarily demands, I am constantly impressed with the ease with which people having no experience take to motor camping. They make mistakes; sometimes they aren't very comfortable at first and sometimes they make their neighbors uncomfortable; but on the whole they do astonishingly well, and presently have the earmarks of being old-timers at the game.

As a matter of fact, it is possible in motor camping to duplicate to a large extent accepted standards of every-day home comfort. The motor car offers exceptional facilities for carrying suitable equipment, and as a rule one is in fairly constant touch with fresh-food markets. Therefore the motor camper who consumes poor food, sleeps on an uncomfortable bed, or lives in a leaky shelter has only his own lack of foresight to blame.

The average motor camper on leaving home has the good sense to carry most of his home standards of comfort with him. After due process of substitution and elimination, he starts on the road with a roomy, tight tent, comfortable bed, good food, and proper facilities for cooking and serving it. So far his home environment stands him in good stead. In a number of other particulars it may prove lacking. For example, has he visualized such possibilities as mosquitoes, miry roads, hot days on the prairies, cold nights in the mountains, and the absence of water in the desert? And hence the desirability, respectively, of netting, tire chains, an ice-box, plenty of blankets and water-bags. It is extremely wise to visualize beforehand so far as possible the camping environment in which you are about to be thrown and be prepared to meet it.

Efficient system in packing equipment; that's another point, and one which is sometimes slighted. An unduly heavy or bulky load is a good deal of a nuisance. Hence the value of selecting one's equipment with a view to its compactness and packing capability. This is a tolerably simple matter, for most camp-

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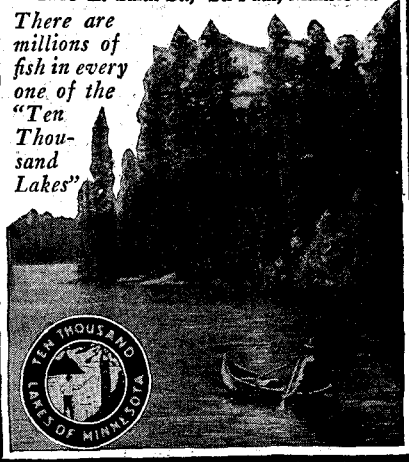
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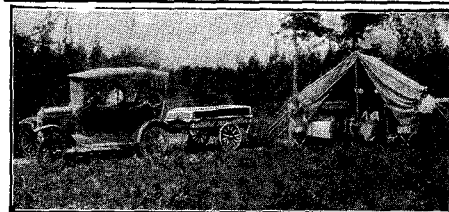


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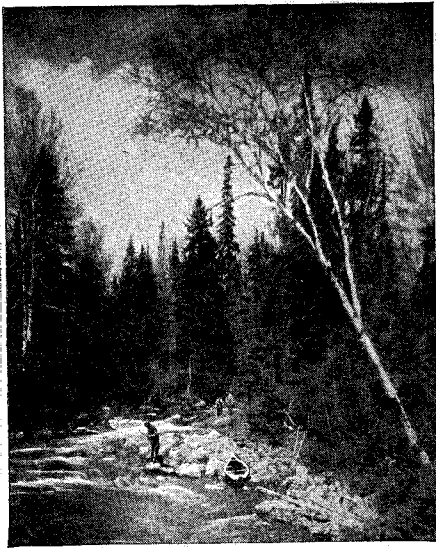


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ing equipment is especially designed from this standpoint. That is, camp cooking utensils, beds, chairs, and similar articles are designed to occupy only a fraction as much room when being transported as they do when in actual use.

And when about to sally forth upon a motor camping expedition it is advisable to work out some definite system of packing. The better the system, the more comfortable you will be. The following fundamentals are suggested: compactness in equipment, protection against rain and dust, security in attachment to the car, equitable distribution of its weight on the car, and due regard for the comfort of passengers.

The night's stand of the average motor camper is the public camping-ground, an institution which is almost universal in Western towns and fast becoming so in the East. These camping-grounds vary greatly in quality. Some are dismal, unattractive, and unsanitary spots, while others are cheerful, clean, and attractive. Criticism in the former case may be aimed both at town authorities and careless campers. The truth of the matter is that motor camping has grown at such a tremendous rate of speed that it has outdistanced in some cases either facilities or intelligence in its handling. I'd say, however, that clean, attractive

camping-grounds predominate. If you don't like the appearance of one camp site, you can travel on to the next.

The careless camper is an inevitable adjunct to this new out-of-doors tradition which is being developed. Without doubt, there are some campers who have astoundingly poor manners, seem quite devoid of consideration for their neighbors and campers who will follow in their trail, and seem utterly ignorant of the first and last rule of out-of-doors etiquette, which is: Leave a camp site as clean as or cleaner than one has found it.

Yet I do not feel half as pessimistic on this score as do some of my camping friends. In the majority of cases the rubbish-littered, grease-soaked camp site is probably the result of thoughtlessness and inadequate understanding of unfamiliar surroundings rather than downright willfulness. Good example is an effective teacher. I have seen a camper on his first two or three days out leave behind littered camp sites, then slowly realize that his neighbors didn't do that sort of thing, and thereafter his own camp site became as spick and span as those of the others. Which was a wholly logical and, I think, usual step in the development of an out-of-doors tradition.

The Book Table

A Sonneteer and Others

A Review by ARTHUR GUITERMAN

AMONG our unnumbered "architects of airy rhyme" and jerry-builders of free verse there is none more genuinely and unaffectedly a poet than David Morton, whose second volume, "Harvest,"¹ again evinces the almost flawless taste and true ear for the melodies of word and phrase that marked his earlier collection, "Ships in Harbor." Mr. Morton seems definitely to have chosen the English or Shakespearean sonnet as his medium, developing it in a manner distinctively his own; and his "Harvest" is a harvest of forty-five poems in this form, all so well wrought that any one is worth quoting. Here is the second in the collection, chosen because of its deeper feeling:

PRESENCE

One had been ill, and in his time of illness,
One who was gone now many, many days,
Was with him in a dim and ghostly stillness,

Was near him in her beautiful, grave ways.

They brought him water—cool, sweet cups of healing,

And that was she—in comfort and disguise;

And so through all their mercies there was stealing

A tenderer mercy, watchful-eyed and wise.

How should they know—who had no way of knowing—

That one behind the darkness and the light,

Bided always their coming and their going,

And kept with them the watches of the night. . . .

That dear cool hands, grown piteous and dim,

Guided their hands, and blessed and tended him.

In all these sonnets there is loveliness of thought and language and perfect clarity of expression, together with those overtones and implications of what is left unsaid that are the very fragrance of poetry.

At this point the Devil's Advocate,

¹ Harvest; A Book of Sonnets. By David Morton. G. P. Putnam's Sons, N. Y. \$1.75.