

# The Pinehurst Outlook

VOL. IV., NO. 5.

PINEHURST, N. C., DEC. 7, 1900.

PRICE THREE CENTS

## AN INTERESTING LETTER

### On North Carolina and Pinehurst, by Mr. John Albee.

Being of New England birth and ancestry I have always had the strongest local attachments. No matter how destitute of natural beauty or historical interest, the places where I have lived possess a strange charm for me and I feel a silent resentment when asked for the grounds of my attachments. Sentimental attachments my friends call them and laugh at me and they accuse me of idealizing everything and indiscriminate optimism. Well, I confess realities are not to my taste; in truth I find none so profoundly real as the things which the imagination can construct out of the commonest and most insignificant material.

This fondness for the loved and limited rather than universal geography followed me to Pinehurst and I had not been here three days before I felt my usual desire to know everything about it and the region round about this neighborhood. I began to localize, so to speak; and though I have come a thousand miles away from home and all I count most dear, yet I suddenly felt old attachments and interests obscured by the new and strange surroundings. I am eager to know and to learn all that this part of our beloved country contains of interest; its nature, trees, flowers, its geology, its civil history, its customs, folk-lore and superstitions, and more than all what its men and women, both black and white think about. I have a secret fancy that this will be as conducive to health as the climate. Half the invalids of my acquaintance are sick because they have nothing else to do. And I have known several cures wrought by no other medicine than an interest in something outside themselves. So I am here in central Carolina to add a chapter to my knowledge of my native land. There are summer schools for everything. I have set up for myself a winter school in Pinehurst and hope to learn a page a day. It is too early to communicate all I expect to learn, and there are probably many persons in Pinehurst who do not need such information as I have in view, having themselves acquired it in former seasons. But it may be worth while to entertain the readers of THE OUTLOOK with some notes made during a winter residence in Western North Carolina.

Western North Carolina is a very distinct portion of the State, not only in its geography, but in the character of its inhabitants. North Carolina has three natural land divisions; first the coast region, three hundred miles in extent and extending inland for a hundred miles; next comes the so-called Piedmont region which is an elevated plateau extending westward to the foothills of

the mountains where it ends abruptly and then lofty peaks of "skyland" began to loom up like a wall against the rest of the State. For two hundred miles from northeast to southwest there are nothing but mountains, mountain valleys and swift rivers. I cannot say any single mountain is remarkably impressive, although it boasts one with the highest summit this side the Rocky Mountains, Mitchell's Peak, 6,688 feet. But seen together from some high point they are impressive. One reason of this is that you are, as soon as you are fairly in Western North Carolina, already at such an elevation that you are disappointed at their height; another reason is the regularity of outline in all the summits. When I had my first good view of them which was from Battery Park, Asheville, I seemed to be looking down upon a vast field of giant haystacks, all rounded, raked down and tucked in to shed the rain. There was as far as I

the five maples; most of the hickories; three out of the five birches. There are one hundred and twelve kinds of trees in that region and the largest chestnut and poplars, called by natives linn. It has the most extensive flora in the country and several flowers and shrubs found nowhere else. One can hardly speak of its minerals without exclamation points. I will only name some of them, but must admit in doing so that they must at present be considered as specimens rather than mines—or indications of undeveloped resources. When I remarked one day to a companion that nearly every one seemed to have specimens of minerals in his vest pocket, he remarked, yes, and that is generally the whole of the mine. There is a great desire to sell land by the farmers not for what can be seen on the surface but the supposed wealth beneath and there is hardly an acre that has not a hole in it made by the owner or some prospector. But I will name the min-

natural and hospitable. There are few villages and almost no inns. In traveling therefore you are obliged to stop for your meals or a night's lodging wherever hunger or rest require it. And this is expected by the inhabitants along the mountain roads. You are welcomed cordially; the best they have is set before you and you will sleep in the best bed. To offer to pay for your accommodation would be considered an affront. All their warmth and their means of cooking, and often of lighting is by the open fire. One or two iron vessels and a coffee pot comprise their cooking utensils. Trout and bacon, sweet potatoes and pone are the solid articles of their diet; but wild small fruits are abundant, as are apples, wanting flavor, grapes and peaches. If you happen to stay at a village hotel as I did for several weeks at a time you would probably lose your appetite. In six weeks I had to give up eating. There was the same bill of fare for breakfast, dinner and supper. The rooster that awoke you in the morning was served for your dinner and it was perfectly plain he had had no breakfast nor any other recent meal. The animal most in evidence is Mr. Pig. He has the freedom of the country and avails himself of it. Fences are no obstacle to him; he climbs them like a goat if there be anything on the other side which takes his fancy. He also is served up in the same manner as the chicken; you will hear his death squeal before you are out of bed and will generally find him on the plates at noon. While in the full vigor of life, Mr. Pig's antics and mischief amused me in my idle hours.

I cannot speak too warmly of the good hearts of these my countrymen who have had few of the educational and social advantages of other sections of the United States. They have read little except the Bible. Books they know nothing of and newspapers are not common enough to keep them in touch with what is going on in the world. I heard that in general the women were virtuous and married young. I heard one good saying about marriage which was new to me:—they say when a woman has married a shiftless, near-do-well man that "she has shaken hands with dry bread." To a woman, young or old, they are snuff dippers. Whether from this or some other cause they are universally of sallow complexion. I saw no pretty women or handsome men; on the other hand the boys and girls were very good looking, bright eyed and plenty of color in their cheeks. Two customs struck me; one that there were no old maids nor bachelors; another that it was the custom for both sexes to join the church as soon as old enough. The people are outwardly religious—not in our sense perhaps—but after their own ideas of what constitutes religion. It is the stamping ground of all sorts of religious fanatics and cranks. They think it is a dull year in which they do not listen to



erals and gems which I either heard of or saw specimens; nickel, chrome iron, chalcedony, talc, kaolin, mica, corundum, marbles, diamonds, rubies, sapphire, emerald, beryl, amethyst and hiddenite, a new gem not yet found anywhere else.

Now having said something of what is upon and under the surface of this part of the State, it is time to speak of the inhabitants. I found them during a winter's sojourn—not in Asheville nor any other place of popular resort, but in the very heart of the mountains, a very peculiar people. In the race for prosperity and improvement they have been left behind, necessarily left behind, as their mountains forbid railroads and consequently manufactures, mining and lumbering can be carried on, but at great disadvantage. It is a hundred years ago with the population. In consequence one finds many old-fashioned virtues as well as customs. I have never met anywhere a people more simple hearted,