



## The Weekly Forums

(BION H. BUTLER)

**T**HE other day as I sat listening to one of the speakers at the Kiwanis club dinner it occurred to me that while we lay much stress on the climate and general out of doors advantages of the Sandhills country there are many other things that go to make this section worth while, and one of them is the contact afforded with a mighty desirable type of men and women. To Pinehurst and Southern Pines come people from everywhere, and representing every industry and every station. These men and women gather informally in all sorts of groups, and acquaintances are formed that are beyond value.

One of the gatherings is at the meeting of the Forum club on Sunday evenings where various subjects are discussed by men competent to talk, and in which the entire assemblage is invited to take part. In the old days Benjamin Franklin and some associates formed what they called the Junto. This was a club for discussion and reading, which lasted for nearly forty years, its long life resulting from the interest it awakened among studious men, and the acquaintance it gave them in a broad, general way. The Forum club at Pinehurst has often called to my mind the Junto, and it impresses me as one means by which a man or woman can pick up a right creditable post graduate course in many of those things that go to make up a substantial education. One thing about the Forum discussions is that they embrace anything anybody wants discussed and they are open to any one who has a question to ask or an opinion to venture. The result of such free consideration of any subject is first of all to bring together many bright men and women, and to provide a way for a general digging into anything that offers, for with a number of intelligent persons working together few angles of any subject will be overlooked. And with a number of intelligent persons much tolerance of individual view is shown, and bias is laid aside so that the real facts are more liable to be brought to the surface than under different conditions.

As I understand the Forum club it is a society formed for the entertainment of those who care to attend its meetings, and it does not burden itself with any profound tasks, or hamper its operations with any inflexible rules. The propositions discussed are usually fixed by the program committee which offers a speaker or two, leaving the speaker to choose his theme, and inviting the whole assemblage to join in any discussion that

follows. By this means the direction of the discussion leads to almost any quarter, and frequently opens up some unlooked for phases of the topic. The informality is one of the features of interest, for that puts the evening into an affair of mild research and highly agreeable companionship.

And that is the point I am getting to. Pinehurst brings together many people of different spheres, and in doing so it widens the individual's horizon amazingly. At such times as I have mixed up with these events I have found men thoroughly versed in special things telling us of those things. So we come to know more about banking and railroads, and China and the Dawes plan, and eclipses, and weather, and almost anything that happens to be offered or to rise up in the general talk fest that invariably results. When a well informed man proceeds to talk about the work he is daily engaged in, and tells of it in the simple way in which it appeals to him it makes the big problems so much clearer to the ordinary fellow, and dispels a lot of the misconception of certain things, and arouses a greater harmony toward everything.

I do not know whether such gatherings as the Forum club are responsible for that broader acquaintance of people with each other in these lines of discussion and interest in pertinent subjects or whether the interest brings about the acquaintance and the enjoyment shown in what is brought up from time to time. But this I know—that so much enlightenment and clarifying of the mental sky comes from attending the meetings that the Forum and kindred meetings add materially to the attractions in the Sandhills during the winter season. When folks get together at a place like Pinehurst the ice is broken for the restraints of business and other affairs that keep men on the jump in the North do not prevail in the Sandhills, and cordiality at once comes to the surface. We ordinary mine-run fellows can mix with the thinkers and doers and the line of talk that follows is so full of character that no man with his eyes and ears open can spend a few weeks at Pinehurst without picking up a far broader idea of a lot of things than he brought with him. And the acquisition is world wide. Religion, philosophy, politics, business, industry, the sciences, anything is likely to break out, and capable thinkers and talkers are handy to dispose of every number on the accidental schedule.

Another thing that has impressed me with the visitors who come to the Sandhills is the intelligent interest so many of them find in the natural conditions here. They delight in the friendly wildness of the remaining forests, and they make friends with the dogwood trees, the hollies, the pines, the peach orchards when the blossom time comes, the companionable spot in the valleys and on the hills, and at the creek crossings. Many of the winter folks have little opportunity away from here to get

