

Moore County Hunting

BY BION H. BUTLER

BEFORE me as I write are maps of Moore, Hoke, Richmond and Harnett counties, accurate surveys made by the Federal Government and State men for the Agricultural Department that the soils may be recognized and classified. These maps are dependable. They tie in with each other and they tell the story of the four counties and their relations to each other topographically and in many other ways. One striking deduction is that the ridge on which Pinehurst is built marks a definite contact with the rest of the country to either side of that ridge, for here is the high ground of the territory, and sloping off on either side is the drainage basin of the Cape Fear and of the Drowning creek tributary of the Pee Dee. Down these drainage basins extends the swamp and the river bottom, and settlement along the stream beds has been scant. Deep forests are extensive. These forests are the natural home of deer, bear, turkeys, quail and other wild life which has been hunted by men as long as men have inhabited the continent.

But in recent years the ingenuity of men and their invention of killing machines have had an influence on the wild creatures, and hunting had come to be chiefly hunting with mighty little finding until the United States government came into the neighborhood and established its big artillery range and barred hunters from that vast tract of 122,000 acres between the Little River branch of Cape Fear river and the Drowning creek branch of the Little Pee Dee. The day the government took possession of the land, the wild creatures found there a sanctuary, for Uncle Sam told the folks that guns were not allowed on military possessions. To go on a government military reservation with a gun unless you are under military orders looks like war, no matter how peaceful your intentions may be. Anyway, the government wants to develop a forestry scheme on the reservation and does not approve of many strangers over there without permission and limited privileges for brief period.

So Fort Bragg is becoming one of the greatest breeding grounds for wild animals in the South, and one of the safest sanctuaries. About the time Fort Bragg came into the game, Pinehurst joined with some of its neighbors and established a game sanctuary, and there is another vast acreage of refuge in which birds and animals may breed and multiply. Then came Eldridge Johnson on Drowning creek, and the Johnsons, father and son at Mossgiel farm farther down the creek, and there further harbors of refuge were created. Then the more intelligent game laws of the state extended their sheltering care. Now that big territory between the Little river and the Drowning creek bottoms has begun to multiply

its wild life until game creatures are already right abundant. In the next few years this increase appears likely to make of the country between the two streams one of the most interesting game retreats in the country, for gradually the lands involved are passing into the hands of men who will carry out the same general principles of game preservation, and the increase of all creatures that are protected will be on a pronounced scale. The tendency is to divert more and more acreage to the creation of rural estates, and from Bensalem township in Moore county to the Fort Bragg line, which is the lower boundary of Moore, and from the west side of Drowning creek to the east side of Little river, new owners are coming into possession of tracts of greater or less size at a rate that is prophetic.

Under the protection of the various influences quail are more numerous now than for a long time. But the protection for the birds is also more rigid now than ever.

If all this does not point to one of the greatest shooting belts in the country in this area around Pinehurst then I am a left-handed prophet. But with the government making an absolute reservation at Fort Bragg and private owners following on their big reservations it looks as if the experience of Pennsylvania is to be repeated. Years ago in my boyhood days deer were so plentiful in the pine country up there that I have stood in my mother's door and seen them in the edge of the forest just beyond. Then, hunters killed them down until a deer was hard to find. Now they have multiplied until there is no greater abundance of wild deer any place in the United States than in Northwestern Pennsylvania. In a recent copy of the paper from DuBois, an account appears of a deer coming into the city of 15,000 people, traveling up the main streets, jumping through the windows of two or three stores, passing the newspaper office, scaring automobiles off to the curb, for it is a crime against the law to kill a deer out of season or to kill a buck at any time, and this one happened to be a buck. The creature went on through the city a couple of miles, turned and came back, and finally went out in another direction and into the forest again, after having done several hundred dollars' worth of damage to things along the streets, including one car on which it had jumped with all four feet.

Even now deer are coming into the field outside of their reservations in this neighborhood, and it is easy to guess that deer hunting will be common enough on lands big enough to hold and protect them. Pinehurst will win fame in the near future as a great game center, and one under proper control.