The Greenkeeper
Is a Lady!

By WILLIAM GULSHEN

SHEFFIELD is typical of those small towns along the highways of Illinois, its blocks of one-story shops and stores reminding one of the old street drop curtains of Bijou theater days. And like so many cases of the theater, the real human interest stories occur backstage. Listen to this:

It was past noon and we were hungry. The restaurant looked all right so we stopped in. The conversation inside covered a wide range of subjects but golf seemed to get the biggest break. As we waited for our food we learned of what the home folks considered quite some golf course. We had our clubs in the car and were entirely on the loose, so why not?

Club Is Beauty Spot

We followed the road to its end about a mile out of town and there was the sign "Coal Creek Country Club." We turned in through a few hundred yards of wooded lane, rumbled over a rustic bridge across Coal Creek and here it was; really a beauty spot. As we crossed that bridge I had a feeling I had somehow given everyday things a slip, so serene and peaceful was our setting.

We drove on to the clubhouse, where we were met by a pretty little miss or matron, I didn't know which, who took our green-fee. We called for a caddie but there was only one on hand at the time, a pleasant, efficient kid of about twelve. He carried for me and showed us the way around.

The first hole is 375 yards, straight away over two low rolling hills with a clump of trees and traps out there on the left about 200 yards and a border fence along the right side of the fairway—no place at all for a slice. Fortunately, our drives were down the middle and on top of the second hill and we hit the green in two. And what a green it was. It was fast and true but with plenty of firm bent on a base to stop a decent pitch where it lit. The green was entirely free of blemish and without a scar of brown or dollar patch. It was well trapped.

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behind and along the sides with excellent sand in the traps. The entire setup bore evidence of expert care.

The next hole runs uphill, with a fence along the right, at right angles to number one. This fence along the right seemed reverse to what we usually found. But here we found another green just as good as the first—and so were the remaining ones. Their perfect condition and the course as a whole reflected almost affectionate attention by its keeper.

As we commented on the layout our caddie told us that “Mom said it was laid out by a lefthander with a bad slice.” We spoke our appreciation of the course and the caddie explained it all by what “Mom” said.” We finally found who “Mom” was. She was none other than the little lady who took our green-fee, and she was the caddie’s mother. Her's was quite a story.

A year ago this past winter her husband, Adolph Knudsen, died. He had been club caretaker and greenkeeper for more than a dozen years. The entire member-
die, was the oldest, and little Beth, then just a year old, was the youngest. Pretty little Rosalie was nine. Mrs. Knudsen, then only twenty-nine, married at seventeen, had never done any kind of work other than care for her home and family. This club had been her home for years.

She took inventory of her chances and decided she knew more about her husband's work than anything else, as an extra-domestic occupation. So she asked for the job. The board members were so much at sea they grabbed the idea and signed her.

With the first break of spring, Laura Knudsen got into overalls and started her job. She painted furniture, repaired fences and stiles, cleaned up the winter's dirt, put up screens and awnings, got pumps and water lines in shape. In short, she got ready for the new golf season. She not only surprised the entire membership with her knowledge of her job but she surprised herself as well. Adolph, her husband, had lived his job so intensely that Laura found she had lived it, too. He had kept a diary of his work that was a running account of every green, shrub and bench, but she rarely has to refer to it. She knows her job and certainly does it.

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Greenkeepers Club of New England met at Ponkapoag GC, Canton, Mass., May 5. Dr. John Monteith, Jr., was a featured speaker. Examination and discussion of the experimental green established at Ponkapoag two years ago was another high point of the program.

At a carnival at the club last fall she proved herself the best carpenter in the place and built stands and shelves. She has an assistant, as did her husband, but his experience in work is very limited and she's the boss.

1941 finds Laura at work at her second year of greenkeeping at Coal Creek, but 1941 also finds her answering to another name. She married a Mr. Swainson early this year, but she has determined not to let that interfere unduly with her greenkeeping duties at the club.

Here's Her Schedule

They tell us an early morning call finds her mowing out on the fairways or the house grounds or topdressing a green or mixing compost or running a test on a suspicious green or repairing a fence or washing club towels (that's a new one for a greenkeeper), or serving soft drinks or frying a hamburger or being nice to her own or somebody else's children or assuring some duffer golfer it was not his fault that he had three shots out of bounds. There are quite a few jobs incidental to even a small, well-run country club. So you can see her days are full of duties, to say the least.

Like all good greenkeepers she is religious in her care of her greens. After the golfers clear out Mrs. Swainson takes to watering greens, letting them soak until midnight, or later, in the dry season. This is a strenuous program for a little 128-lb. woman, but it is one that keeps her happy, for she glories in her job well done.

She has a maid to care for her house and small children. Her schedule moves with the greatest precision. Coal Creek CC is being handled by an expert, as everyone will know for years to come.

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