District Experimental Stations

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ONE of the greatest steps toward the advancement of turf culture is the movement toward the establishment of district experimental stations.

The importance of this movement can best be appreciated by those who not only have practical knowledge of the "science" of greenkeeping but vision as to its future as well. It is an astonishing fact that, although, golf has been played for nearly three hundred years, it has only been in the past decade that any attention whatever has been paid to the scientific aspect of greenkeeping.

The increasing popularity of golf as a pastime, needless to say, is directly related to the progress of greenkeeping. When courses were few and poorly kept, it was only to be expected that interest in the game was not very vigorous. It was a pastime for the few; now it is a sport for the many. Why? Simply because numerous well-kept courses now issue mute challenges to all who enjoy fresh air and sunshine to come and try their skill.

The growth in popularity of golf, also, is having its effect upon the progress of greenkeeping. Courses, which would have been accepted as satisfactory a few years ago, are now regarded as mediocre. Unkept courses are looked upon with contempt. Players now have many choices of links and naturally select those which are the most attractive.

Hit or miss methods of greenkeeping are rapidly becoming obsolete. The greenkeeper, whose methods are founded solely on precedent without some sound basis, will soon become as extinct as the Dodo. The greenkeeper, who does things the way he does because he has always done them that way and who refuses to keep abreast of the times, will soon be out of the picture.

IN THE present struggle for supremacy in the field of greenkeeping the importance of accurate knowledge is constantly becoming more evident. The greenkeeper needs a fundamental knowledge of the problems of his profession. The more profound this knowledge the more certain his success.

Until recently the greenkeeper was almost completely at the mercy of Mother Nature, who as you know, is rather whimsical. When he considered it the proper time of year, he sowed grass seed. This was usually of some variety to which he was partial. If the soil seemed poor, he fertilized it to the best of his ability with fertilizers, many of which were unsuited to the requirements of the soil. When the grass showed proper growth, he was delighted and took proper pride in his profession. When the growth failed to equal his expectations, he blamed the lack of results upon Mother Nature —instead of placing it where it belonged, on

himself. When the season was long and dry, he prayed for rain then cussed without restraint at the necessity of pushing heavy cumbersome mowers in the heat of the sun. Truly his days were full of toil and his nights were full of anxiety.

Vision of greenkeeping as a science instead of merely a means of earning a living by manual labor was first seen by a few pioneers. Everlasting credit must be paid to Dr. C. V. Piper and Prof. R. A. Oakley who brought their scientific knowledge of botany and agrostology into this field and opened a new era. The wisdom of these two men will reflect down through the ages of greenkeeping. Disregarding unfounded precedents which prevailed, they attacked the problems of greenkeeping from the standpoint of science. While they did not solve all of these problems, they laid a sufficient foundation so that it has been much easier for others to follow in their footsteps.

Owe Debt to Pioneers

THE debt which the greenkeeping profession owes to these pioneers can never be repaid. The memory of the late Dr. C. V. Piper deserves the tribute of a fitting monument at the national capital. Tribute to Prof. R. A. Oakley can best be paid through the development of greenkeeping during his lifetime.

Foresight was one of the outstanding characteristics of these pioneers. Realizing that the mystery of turf culture was largely due to ignorance, they advocated the scientific study of greenkeeping through the most practical method known to scientists—experimentation.

The Arlington Gardens at Washington were established as a result of their persistency and foresight. While chairman of the Green committee of the United States Golf Association, Dr. C. V. Piper was an indefatigable worker and the fruit of his labor is now worthy of appreciation. To Prof. R. A. Oakley also belongs equal credit.

Although this experimental station has been in existence only seven years, its accomplishments have been noteworthy. Already it has made important findings in the methods of propagating vegetative bents, control of grubs and elimination of brown patch. Attention to these three problems alone would have justified its existence. However, it has been quietly devoting its attention to many additional problems many of almost equal importance.

While the accomplishments of the national experimental station must not be minimized, it is now realized that each local district has its peculiar problems due to varying conditions of climate, soil and geography. The solution of a problem in turf culture under conditions at Arlington Gardens does not necessarily mean that this problem has been solved for Maine or Texas. In many cases the findings merely lay the basis for further local experimentation.

District Stations Given Impetus

THE movement toward the establishment of district experimental stations has been given impetus by the expanding vision of greenkeeping. With the growth in popularity of golf and the enormous sums involved in the

maintenance of courses throughout the country, it is only natural that the more progressive greenkeepers should awaken to their responsibilities. In a profession where errors in judgment are profoundly costly and waste may involve thousands of dollars to say nothing of club prestige, it is proper and fitting that the science of greenkeeping should be taken seriously.

Already several district experimental stations are functioning and it is to be hoped that before this decade is over there will be many more. Eventually there will be an experimental station for each city around which there is a group of golf courses. The metropolitan district of New York City is now solving many of its problems through an experimetal station at New Brunswick. Ohio and Minnesota now have experimental stations and all states, with the possible exception of those sparsely settled, will follow suit, sooner or later.

The metropolitan district of Chicago soon will have its experiment station also, sponsored by the Chicago District Green Section and the Mid-West Greenkeepers Association. With over 200 courses in this area and more being added annually it is only fitting that turf culture should be given rightful consideration.

Plans for the establishment of this experimental station have been underway for some time and it will soon be a reality. In this accomplishment Mr. G. M. Peters, Mr. Joe Davis and Mr. Chick Evans of the Chicago District Golf Association have given the fullest co-operation to the Mid-West Greenkeepers Association.

Optimism is not out of place when considering the possibilities of this experimental station. The development of turf culture is bound to be stimulated. Not only will it bring new knowledge to the profession of greenkeeping but it is expected to be a tremendously profitable investment.

Scientific and practical greenkeeping will go hand in hand in the future. The new station at Chicago will have a practical greenkeeper on its board of control. Especial attention will be given to the practical problems of greenkeeping. The future of greenkeeping is limited only by the vision of those in the profession. Experimental stations, stressing practical problems as the Chicago station will do, cannot fail to stimulate interest and to assist in the promotion of golf.