

Green-Chairman's Path to a Padded Cell

By B. R. LEACH

"It isn't the hunting that hurts the horses' hooves.

It's the hammer, hammer, hammer on the hard highway."

—Socrates, or some other sage.

LIfe isn't all beer and bowling nowadays. It seems almost impossible to bury one's checkered past in a deep, deep grave. Witness, for instance, the following letter, which recently popped up in my morning's mail:

Philadelphia, Pa.,
November 16, 1928.

Mr. B. R. Leach,
World's Leading Third Rate Turf
Authority,
Riverton, N. J.
Greetings, old top; greetings:

No doubt you remember me. I'm the guy who occupied the padded cell next to yours in the Philadelphia Insane Asylum in 1926. Don't you remember? I was Julius Caesar, trying to grow grass on my bald head, and you were Napoleon Bonaparte, fighting grubs on the St. Helena Golf Course. Those were the happy days—and gone forever.

Well, they let me out of the bughouse early in 1927 and I have, I believe, been entirely rational since gaining my freedom. I was certainly surprised, however, to find that you had been released without a keeper. You certainly had it bad. Furthermore, since reading your "close-up" on the greenkeeper in November GOLFDOM I am more than ever convinced that your cranium is still cracked and that they let you out too soon.

I understand that you went off your trolley trying to live on a turf expert's salary, which effort is enough, Lord knows, to break even a strong man, but I don't suppose it would ever occur to you in a thousand years as to the reason why I went "non decompos mentis." Well, it's a long story. Meet me in Philadelphia at noon on the 18th. We'll have luncheon together and I'll tell you all about it.

Affectionately yours,

HOMER JOHNSON.

Good old Homer. A scholar, a gentleman and an ornament to society. What happy memories were revived by his letter. That wonderful grub in the hoosegow for the feeble minded. No work. Nothing to worry about. Happy daze.

Well, I met Homer on the 18th. We had a wonderful luncheon at Woolworth's. I recall that the lemon meringue pie was especially delicious. Homer was looking exceedingly fit.

After luncheon we walked uptown to the Ritz Carleton, strolled into the lobby and ensconced ourselves in a couple of \$300 chairs. Then Homer had one of the flunkies bring us a couple of \$100 diamond studded ash trays and we proceeded to light up a couple of Pittsburgh stogies and relax. Did they throw us out? Why, certainly not. They thought we were a couple of eccentric millionaires. It was in the midst of these mellow surroundings that Homer recited the dramatic history of his troubles.

Chairman's Garland of Poison-Ivy

"According to your article in last month's GOLFDOM," said Homer, "you seem to be laboring under the impression that the greenkeeper gets a dirty deal. Well, I suppose he does have his troubles, but believe me when I say that he has a sweet dream of peace compared with the trials and tribulations of the green-committee chairman. Now don't argue with me about what I know. I've been all through it. I was chairman of the green-committee during 1925 at the Wykymaguk Country Club. You know that club? Very nice crowd. Ananias paid us a visit once. You recall Ananias? He was the fellow that spent his life walking around with a lantern looking for an honest man. Well, while he was visiting our club someone stole his lantern.

"Angus McDougale was our greenkeeper. A good old hard-boiled Scotch egg. Understand, I have nothing against the Scotch. Some of my closest friends are Scotch, but that old bozo certainly did drag me through a knot-hole in 1925. He had a single track

mind. All he thought about was his 18 greens. He always had his nose buried in creeping bent. You couldn't reason with him; a skeptical sort of guy, one of these fellows who look for the wishbone in a soft-boiled egg.

Shortly after my election to the green-committee chairmanship, Angus met up with me one day on the ninth tee and inquired as to the state of my health, which I assured him was all that it should be. Angus casually passed the remark that I had all the appearance of having a strong constitution, a sanguinary disposition and an adequate capacity for taking punishment, and that he hoped I had all these perquisites but that one could never definitely tell by appearances. Ah, woe. If I had only realized the significance of McDougle's remarks. He had seen them come, stay a while, and go.

Angus then raised the question as to how much money we were going to have to spend on the course during the year, to which I replied that the Board had appropriated \$25,000. It seems, however, that Angus didn't give a whoop in a rain barrel as to how much they had *appropriated*. What he wanted to know was how much we were actually going to have available to spend *on the course*. This seemed like a dampfool question to me and I am afraid I was rather short with Angus, but all I got out of him was a deep-seated grunt and a list of supplies a mile long which he claimed he needed right away. This list included 10 cars of mushroom soil, 5 cars of sand, 4 tons of lead arsenate, 2,000 gallons of gasoline, 4 barrels of motor oil, 2 gangs of fairway mowers, hand mowers, tools, etc., enough, so it seemed to me, to stock the A. E. F.

I had always heard that these green-keepers were an impossible lot and I straightway decided that now was the opportune time to tell Mr. McDougle where to get off. What, I reasoned, is the use of being elected chairman if one cannot exercise a modicum of authority? I consequently ordered him to order only 1 car of mushroom soil, 50 gallons of gasoline, 2 barrels of motor oil, repair the old fairway mower, and omit the sand and lead arsenate entirely. Whereupon Angus went on his way, leaving me in an irritated frame of mind and spoiling my game entirely.

Shooting the Roll

The next day old Jack Van ten eyck, the president of the club, got me in a

corner and imparted the news that the Board had decided to build a new asphalt parking place and to rebuild the road leading into the clubhouse. He said the job would only cost \$3,000 and it needed to be done mighty bad. I didn't raise any objection. He also casually stated that the \$3,000 for the job would naturally come out of the \$25,000 budget for course upkeep. I didn't raise any objection. It wasn't my money.

When Angus heard the news he literally pawed the air. Sweet spirits of nitre! How he did carry on. "Those pirates," said Angus, "are up to their old game again. There goes the money for my mushroom soil and the sand. They'll have us stripped to our naked hides before the season is over. My poor, poor greens. They're going to be starved again."

Why didn't I go and blister old man Van ten eyck? Be yourself, boy; be yourself. The old man buys lots of bonds and I'm a bond salesman. Would a rabbit spit in a bulldog's face?

Well, things went along for a while and then Van ten eyck's better half went on another of her intellectual rampages and stuck another knife in poor old Angus and me. It seems she attended a meeting of the local garden club on Wednesday morning and some long haired son of a sea cook gave a lecture on shade trees and what should be done to 'em to keep 'em in health and happiness. The next day Angus saw her poking the shade trees near the clubhouse with a carving knife. Angus is very very brave in his life-long fight with Scotch whisky but he has no use for knives, so he beat it.

In the meantime Mrs. Van is telling her bed and board what to do and where to do it. Doesn't it beat hell how some men walk a chalkline? Can you ever visualize either of us allowing our wives to tell us anything? You and I are strong men, not weaklings. At any rate, in a few days old Van gets me in a corner again and imparts the sad information that our magnificent shade trees surrounding the clubhouse are in imminent danger of collapsing unless their insides are filled with cement and what not, and that the Board had decided to have said trees repaired by a corps of tree experts. That the job would cost \$2,400, and of course it would be paid out of the course-maintenance funds. All I said was, "Yes, sir; thank you, sir." How did Van twist the Board around his little finger? Say, how does it always happen that a millionaire always gets his own way

while the rest of us white trash have the option of jumping in the lake?

Well, I could keep on telling you my troubles on this score until breakfast time, but it is enough to say that before the first of June that gang of cutthroats had nicked our original appropriation of \$25,000 down to 14,000 bucks. Angus was fit to be tied. What made me sore was that he blamed *me* for allowing that gang to get away with the dirty work. What, I ask you in all fairness, could I do to stop them? Besides which, it wasn't worrying me very much. I was still getting my three squares a day and I only had six months more to serve as chairman.

Naturally, as you can well understand, this piracy of our funds necessitated our cutting down on maintenance expenses all around. We dropped two or three men from the pay-roll and we went mighty light on manure, sand, fertilizer, and all the thousand and one things that Angus was always howling about. Well, you know how it is. You can't run a golf course on hot air, asphalt parking places, tree experts, and what not. The greens began to take on a billious sort of appearance, the fairways had all the appearance of suffering from a bad attack of prickly heat, and our sweet congregation of members began to murmur, then to kick, and shortly to raise merry hell generally.

They started by taking it out on Angus but they didn't get very far with that Scotch rock-crusher. He agreed with them in every particular but advised them that there was nothing he could do about it inasmuch as he was merely the green-keeper and that *I* was running the course. Me running the course! Sweet mother of Queen Anne! The only running I was doing was running around keeping out of sight.

Well, in late September came the great anti-climax. The Japanese beetle went on a picnic on our course and the grub population in our turf was greater than the combined population of this country, Canada and Mexico. They ate us out of house and home. It got so that when you made an iron shot you picked up a divot 3 feet by 6. That's why Angus had wanted the five tons of arsenate of lead.

One day my sweet comrade, Van ten ecyk, hunts me up on the course and proceeds to gently chide me for inattention to my duties as chairman of the green-committee. He confided to me that, in his opinion, I had a one-track mind and that the rails were rusty. Blamed me for the

multitude of troubles besetting the club. It is difficult to explain, but something *clicked* inside my brainpan. They say that I walked over to an old apple tree near the third tee and bit a chunk right out of the trunk. Angus and six members sat on me and held me down with great difficulty. They gently backed a padded wagon up to the spot and a couple of husky keepers took me away.

And so Homer ended his sad story. Now I knew why his scanty locks were prematurely grey.

"Homer," said I, "are you aware of the tragic aftermath to this sorry affair? No? Have you ever noticed that old man Van ten ecyk's right ear is badly mutilated? You have. Well, here's what happened.

"After they incarcerated you in the goofy house the Wykymaguk Club engaged me in a consultation capacity to clean up the grubs and get the turf back into shape.

"I made a thorough examination of the situation and told Van ten ecyk and the Board in meeting assembled that it would cost \$20,000 to fix up the course. This sum to include my fee of \$4,200 cash in advance.

"Van studied a few minutes and then said, 'That's \$50 per member. Well, we'll levy an assessment of \$150 per member. We need a new practice green, a pair of gate posts, a wing to the clubhouse and other things too numerous to mention. This is a good opportunity to get the money and these dumb members will never know the difference.'

"Right then and there *two* thingumajigs clicked in *my* brain pan. I climbed on Van ten ecyk, wrapped my legs around his middle and sunk my false teeth on his ear. They had to slam me with an empty Haig and Haig bottle before the keepers could subdue me and take me along to keep you company."

"Brother," sighed Homer, "dear brother!"

Brooklyn, N. Y.—Dyker Beach golf course, operated by Department of Parks, in five months from June 1 had 46,000 rounds of golf played. Income was \$36,000, maintenance, \$16,000, leaving net profit of \$20,000 for the city. Department issued 1,240 season permits at \$10 during the five months. Green fee for those not having season permits was \$1.00. High figure for day's play was on Sunday, Sept. 9, when 627 golfers played.

Greens for winter play have been provided.