

# Buy Product PLUS HELP Dealer Gives

By B. R. LEACH

*If you can hear the truth that you have spoken,*

*Turned and twisted into a trap for fools.*

—KIPLING.

NOT so long ago a greenkeeper wrote me asking for a remedy for poison ivy, or poison oak as it is called in some sections of the country. It seems he had the boys grubbing out this nuisance along one side of the fairway and nearly all of them got a bad case of the itch. Fortunately, our local druggist, a skilled pharmacist, has a remedy for ivy poisoning of his own compounding which will knock this particular variety of skin irritation deader than a cold potato in 24 hours. We shipped the greenkeeper an adequate supply of the preparation c.o.d. \$3.00 plus charges.

On various other occasions I have prescribed for sickly rhododendrons, given directions for the removal of tapeworm from a wire-haired fox terrier, advised of the hallmark distinguishing the edible mushroom from the poisonous toadstool, have indicated the relative futility of trying to cure a horse afflicted with the heaves, and otherwise made myself generally useful.

All of which indicates to me that the bulk of the world's population badly needs information on one or more points and are having difficulty in obtaining it, principally because they don't always use their heads sufficiently in determining where to go for aid in solving their problems.

Consider, for instance, a newly elected green-committee chairman who not long ago asked me how much a golf club in the New York district should spend per annum for course maintenance. That's the sort of question that throws you back on your heels. The easiest answer I could have given him, from my standpoint, would have been a shrug of the shoulders and the three words, "I don't know." But in this turf racket one learns to be quick on one's feet and to stall for time. Consequently I assumed an interested and in-

telligent facial expression and camouflaged some high-pressure brain activity by asking a few casual questions.

"In what degree of perfection," I asked, "do you propose to maintain this particular golf course? Will conditions be satisfactory if the course presents all the aspects of an intellectually refined cow pasture? Do you wish to handle the course by spending a sum adequate to stave off the kicks of all but a few incorrigible members, or do you plan to spend a lot of jack for a de luxe layout so that the members will raise hell at the end of the year when they pay the assessment?"

In the meantime I was jabbing the old bean for a clue as to where and to whom I could send this babe in the woods so that he could obtain relief on this question of the annual budget. All this in conformity with my famous slogan, "*What Leach doesn't know he knows who does know.*"

Just like that the old brainpan clicked and I had it. Simple as mud. Turning to my questioner I gave him the age old sales talk of the Iroquois Indians, which goes as follows:

## Supply Men Practical Experts

"You understand, of course," said I, "that determining the amount of your budget for the coming year would be mere child's play to a man of my varied attainments, a mere wave of the foot as it were. Unfortunately, however, my various interests are crowding me atrociously and I simply cannot spare the time for an intensive consideration of your problem. Under the circumstances here is what I suggest: Are you acquainted with X—, the golf course supply dealer? You say his private stock of Scotch is o.k.? Aint it so, brother! Well, at any rate, you get in touch with X—; he will straighten you out on your budget perplexities with quickness and dispatch. You can bank on whatever he tells you as being the gospel truth, first because he is located right up in your neck of the woods, knows intimately the nineteen holes of practically every golf course in the New

York area and can tell you within \$67.50 of what it will cost you to maintain your course in o.k. order. Believe me when I tell you that these golf course supply men know golf course maintenance costs to the last nickel. They have to know because that's part of the business."

All of which I think you will concede was good advice. Had this green-chairman been located in any other district I should have sent him to a knowing and conscientious dealer.

All this brings to mind the innumerable occasions when I have figuratively pulled both feet out of the quicksands by putting my problem to a sound dealer in golf course supplies.

From my own experience and from what greenkeepers and club officials tell me it is fairly obvious that golf course supply dealers as a whole are selling something more than moving machines, fertilizers and bamboo poles, and that extra something is *service*, and, as you and I know, service is the commercial commodity which oils the wheels of progress and keeps the world going smoothly on all four cylinders.

### Dealer Has Right to Profit

Now, as a matter of fact the average golf course supply dealer is an unimaginative, matter-of-fact sort of a cuss and he is kept pretty busy trying to pry enough jack out of some of the slow-pay golf clubs on his books to keep the business out of the red. If he gives any thought at all to the amount of service he renders a golf club in the course of a year's time he probably figures that the more service and help he can give a club, the more stuff he can sell that club and the more money he can make thereby. Now if that isn't a low, common, vulgar, selfish, narrow-minded, unintellectual viewpoint and philosophy of action and conduct then I'm a female red-breasted canary. The fact that the only thing which keeps the U. S. A. from going to hell in sixty days net is the 99,758,633 other individual in this country who hold the same business philosophy, is neither here nor there. It seems to be the fixed idea in certain quarters that golf course supply dealers have no right to make money, although this attitude is probably less pronounced than was the case ten years ago at which time a prosperous dealer had the social status of a jaundiced polecat.

All this reminds me of a certain dentist located not very far from where I am sitting two-fingering this typewriter. About three weeks ago this fang specialist soaked



Landscaping around the club swimming pool is too often forgotten, but not at Columbian Country Club (Chicago district), as this picture proves. Columbian's pool cost \$10,000, not including the filtration system.

me \$10 for filling one tooth, said operation taking up 28½ minutes of his valuable time. Y'understand I'll be damned lucky if that filling stays with me more than three months at the most, at the end of which time he doubtless figures on mining me for another ten spot. Just wait until his wife comes to my nursery for some more evergreens. I'll recover that ten spot plus interest. Incidentally this dentist is chairman of a golf club and from what they tell me tried hard to buy everything at cost plus 2 per cent. What that gent needs is a good stiff hypodermic injection of "live and let live."

Probably the most outstanding example in this country of a money-making individual is Henry Ford. They tell me that Mr. Ford has so much jack that he can't count it. The peculiar thing about all this consists in the fact that the more money Mr. Ford scrapes together the more he pays his labor. The more money he makes the better car he builds and the lower price he sells it for and the more money he makes, all around and around in a beautiful little circle. Every public-serving industry comprising the country as a whole was developed by *selling at a good profit*.

### Does His Pet War Dance

Last February, at the annual meeting of the National Greenkeepers Association, I took a few pot shots at service bureaus. Theoretically, service bureaus may be o. k., but in my personal opinion they end up by proving paralyzing in their final result. "Pay us \$100 per annum," says the service bureau to the individual golf club, "and we will supervise your purchases and save you many times the cost of our service."

Whereupon the service bureau lines up the clubs, and the manager begins to play the poor dumb dealers one against the other, nicking off a ten per cent discount here and a five per cent discount there, so that at the end of the year the report can show the Palooka Country Club how they saved \$321.82.

The dealers began to tighten up on all these five and ten per cent discounts to the service bureaus. Their profits weren't enough to stand the strain. I know one company in this country which at one time gave a five per cent discount to bureaus. Then ceased giving the discount and increased the technical service rendered to the clubs in connection with the use of its product.

### Tells His Idea of "Service"

The company might easily have pocketed the five per cent additional profit and let it go at that, but intelligent business houses nowadays are too smart to resort to that sort of penny-pinching profit-making tactics. The company was wise enough to realize that its product was sound and that money spent in teaching the golf courses to use it intelligently would result in greater volume of sales and larger *net* profit. The golf courses profited by the elimination of wasted and uninformed use of the product. I take the attitude that *this* sort of service is constructive in nature and of mutual value to buyer and seller, whereas the brand of service dispensed by the service bureaus in the shape of the five per cent discount is not productive of enduring economy.

One evening last summer I saw a big car go by my place at 60 miles an hour. I said to my wife, "That looks like G—'s car." On the way back he stopped and we chewed the rag for a few moments. It seems that one of this dealer's golf-club customer's power sprayer was out of commission as the result of a small part getting out of whack. G—, when notified of the breakdown, had traveled 20 miles after supper to get the part, would then travel an additional 40 miles to reach the club owning the temporarily indisposed sprayer. Furthermore, I know this fellow well enough to wager \$50 that he rolled up his sleeves and got his big belly all covered with grease and oil while helping the half-crazed greenkeeper to insert and adjust the part so that the sprayer could be immediately put back on the job of spraying the greens with mercury compound so as

to keep them from being ruined by brown-patch. Furthermore, I'll wager another \$50 that when the club concerned got the bill for this little night excursion it contained one item only, viz.:

1 sprayer part replacement...\$2.68

It is this sort of goings-on that has gradually but firmly convinced me that golf course supply dealers as a class are a pretty sound bunch of lads to tie to in a pinch. They're right there with bells on when you need them. I used to casually wonder why greenkeepers as a class were generally on such friendly terms with the dealers and why they kept in such close touch with each other.

Put yourself in the position of the greenkeeper with a busted sprayer and 18 greens being eaten alive by brown-patch. What would the green committee have to say, and the members, with the greens all shot? Plenty. All this averted by the dealer's quick action and cooperation. It's fairly obvious that when the club needs another piece of machinery, the greenkeeper, if he has his way, is going to throw that business to the dealer who gave him real help, or "service"—whatever you want to call it. The transaction may be made even in spite of the fact that the initial cost of the machine may be somewhat higher. In the words of the poet, it's a long road that has no breakdowns.

ARE we wise to use velvet bent or creeping bent or any grass decidedly different to patch our greens?

Those of us who have propagated any grass different from our greens, and used it, have "patch-work" greens. Should we not stick to your original grass for nurseries to supply patching material until we are ready to change over at least a whole green?

Where bents come into a mixed grass green from seed they are not as noticeable as when patched in; they blend with the original grass. Four inch plugs of velvet bent, spattered over a green, soon blend, and merely look like a dappled horse.

This is, of course, a matter of personal opinion, but worth considering before making a "crazy quilt" of our greens.

Have you noticed the fine appearance of greens of one kind of grass, as may be seen at the Unicorn Country Club, the Salem Country Club, and at other courses?—Robert A. Mitchell, in *N. E. Grnkpr.* "Newsletter."