

Dry Law Brings Kid's Ruin and Red Figures to Golf

By HERB GRAFFIS

THESE is a pleasing promise that the nightmare and nausea of prohibition is approaching its end. November voting gave such positive evidence of powerful rebellion against the impractical puerilities of prohibition that even the cagiest politicians have heeded. If the overwhelming majorities for modification of prohibition legislation have only the effect of continuing political mouthing and are not vigorously followed up by those qualified to interpret and impress the lesson of the late elections so our legislators will act, then sane citizens deserve the mocking snickers of the professional prohibitionists and bootleggers who cuddle together under the eighteenth amendment.

The golf clubs have stood for a lot of unjustifiable slander as a result of prohibition. The kill-joys have voiced the opinion that the golf club is the devil's dug-out and roistering guys pay weighty annual deficits just for the privilege of beating Brother Barleycorn in a finish fight. The golf clubs have stood for it, turning the other cheek in a meek fashion. A simple statement of fact about many golf club restaurants being unable to meet the competition of adjoining roadhouses where people can go and have a few drinks of expensive and low grade anti-freeze solution never has been publically offered in rebuttal. The statement would be no reflection on the character of golf club membership for these days the golfer represents an excellent cross-section of the active American. In one American city a district attorney called in club presidents and read to them dire warnings of what might happen if ginger-ale that might be used as set-ups were served. This gentleman was conscientiously heeding his oath but there was a slight inference that he was actuated by the then prevailing political expediency for within three blocks of where he read the riot act there were, to this writer's certain knowledge, seven speakeasies doing a lively business. With-

in two miles of this gentleman's own golf club, at that time, there were five roadhouses that were by no means arid according to evidence your reporter very willingly consumed. How many more establishments there were doing a rushing retail business in liquor within the boundaries above mentioned, can not be said, for one investigator with a normal sense of moderation, has his limitations. The case is cited to bring out the fact that the golf club, from viewpoint of ethics, is only an average American business establishment in this prohibition matter and the golf industry differs not a bit from other businesses ranging from aeroplanes to zithers, in its attitude toward the virtues and defects of prohibition.

Further on this ethical basis; the membership of golf clubs is deeply concerned because of the youngsters. The average golf club member's boys and girls are in such social circumstances that they are prominently exposed as prey of the prohibition monster. Earlier in the regime of prohibition there was a general reluctance to have the youngsters of the members attend Saturday dinner dances at the clubs. Then it became apparent that the youngsters were going to roadhouse speakeasies. That discovery undoubtedly was responsible for an about-face in policy governing these parties. During the past summer the youngsters constituted a goodly percentage of the attendance at golf club dinner dances but there was evidence of parental compulsion. The club parties were too dry for a lot of the kids, according to some of our young friends. Now, when a condition like this arises and we simply keep on mouthing without insisting upon relief and protection, we must shamefully plead guilty to a wretched disregard of our responsibilities.

The Business End of Prohibition

There is one highly important phase of this subject that concerns the golf clubs as a business and that is the effect moder-

ation of the present laws could have on the financial side of the club operation.

Whenever you get into a session with veteran and successful club managers they will tell you that the reason today's chances of a clubhouse being operated at a profit are about one out of 15 is prohibition. Many interviews with club managers have revealed that none of them want whiskey back but they are anxious to see beer and light wines returned. Their desire is based on two counts, (1) a mild and palatable beverage fits in with the country club atmosphere of relaxation and hospitality, and (2) the profit from a conservative volume of beer and wine sales would mean the elimination of the house deficit that a majority of the clubs have today.

To get to the arithmetic of the matter, let us take the golf club situation in 1918 when the legislation that cultivated Al Capone as its flower became effective.

At that time there were about 900 golf clubs in the United States. The average number of members was between 150 and 175. The clubs had a high standard of food and service broke even or made money, even with this limited membership because the bar always brought in a nice profit. At that time beer sales were by far the biggest part of the bar business, so the oldsters in golf club management state. Those were the days that established today's punishing policy of the highest grade of food, service and appointments, at a fairly moderate price—a price too low to be comparable with the tariff of commercial food service establishments that catered to the public.

Today the maintenance of that policy, sans the support of beer sales, means most of the 18-hole golf clubs run between \$2,000 and \$8,000 annual house deficit. About the only place where a golf club can be sure of making money is on its beverage sales these times; the average annual beverage sales at an 18-hole club running \$4,352 and at the nine-hole clubs, \$853. No small amount of this is soft-drinks sold to the caddies. Today's average membership of golf clubs is tremendously increased over the 1918 figure. The 18-hole clubs average 304 regular members and the nine-hole clubs, 138. These figures do not take into account the number of women who have golf club membership privileges.

Eliminating the profit from the caddie beverage business we find that the 18-hole golf club makes about \$8 per year per

member on its beverage business. This figure does not seem high when it is compared with the number of meals served at the average metropolitan district golf club. The number of meals served is the best index of member, women and guest patronage at the club.

For Moderation

There is no reason to believe that the past twelve years has resulted in any change in the American preference for beer despite the fact that the recent crops of adolescents have been addicted to the consumption of convenient gin, a practice that was a certain sign of moral turpitude as late as the time when your correspondent was running a poor second to Euclid on the high-school track. Consequently those figures of possible profit to golf clubs seem conservative. We have noted at political and private parties, business affairs and conventions, and at those few but highly popular golf club events where beer was available that the beer was the favorite drink by a wide margin. In very few localities is beer unobtainable at the present time, but it's not the same cleanly and honestly made product we used to get and should have back. We will get it, too if the manifestations of the November election are continually kept before the powers that be. And with beer back there will be a decided improvement in the operating picture at the golf club from a financial viewpoint, to say nothing of the club and domestic social benefit.

The golf clubs as a powerful group of enlightened and unselfish citizens can properly exercise their persistent effort for modification of the Volstead act on the platform that concludes a post-election editorial in one of the country's foremost Republican newspapers. In summarizing the election expression this editorial said:

"The experiment has been conducted for ten years, and each year the results have departed farther from the expectations of those who planned it. There is no point in continuing an experiment indefinitely when its results are so evident."

IDEAL'S POWER GREEN MOWER TO HAVE COLUMBUS DEBUT

Lansing, Mich.—Ideal Power Lawn Mower Co. is to make the first public showing of its new power green mower at the greenkeepers' show, Columbus, O., Feb. 3-6. The new mower weighs less than 100 lbs. and sells for less than \$200. Details of the new machine will be given in February GOLFDOM.