

# California Courses Are Helped By Earthquake Shocks

By ARTHUR LANGTON

**T**HE EARTHQUAKE of March 10 which devastated various sections of Southern California, while a major catastrophe, may have been instrumental in improving the turf of the affected areas. Such an hypothesis cannot be proved conclusively, of course, because there is no possibility of making a controlled experiment involving seismic disturbances. But this much is known: the season of heavy growth on many Southern California greens either started or was considerably augmented in the days following the first and heaviest temblor.

There may be no sounder basis for the belief than coincidence—in other years the season of growth has started about this time—but there are enough greenkeepers willing to go on record in support of the idea to lend it considerable weight. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the ground which surged 8 feet in one direction, snapped back half that distance and was accompanied by a vertical movement of several inches—did something beneficial by way of loosening topsoil.

The writer was standing on a golf course about 25 miles distant from the point of heaviest shock when the first and greatest temblor occurred. He observed, before he had time to get excited, that the ground shimmied in waves. After this he lost interest in observing finer details of the shake, but it is his impression that grass roots must have been disturbed considerably. Golf courses of Long Beach were sufficiently jarred to crack open fairways and tear water-mains apart. Damage at the Virginia Country Club was partially compensated for by the fact that the layout gained four feet of territory on its northern boundary as a result of the real estate disturbance.

The possibility that the temblor did help local greens and fairways suggests that turf can be greatly benefitted by systematic cultivation if such a thing were possible. In the Pacific southwest where the variation between summer and winter temperatures is not very great, there is

more of a tendency for the soil to pack into a solid mass because of the consequent lack of contraction and expansion, so that there are many blessings awaiting the man who can devise some scheme for shaking the soil grains apart—some scheme, that is, which will not interrupt the steady, though occasionally barely perceptible, stream of play throughout the year.

The addition of bone meal, shell marl,



White streaks show fairway repairs made necessary at the Virginia C. C., Long Beach (Calif.) by the earthquake.

or other lime fertilizer is beneficial in improving the texture but is rather slow about showing results, so slow as to create much doubt as to its actual merit. Spiking is helpful, is an absolute necessity on adobe-bound greens, but no spiker yet devised will puncture deep enough without ripping turf to satisfy many greenkeepers on the Coast. This because only too frequently the adobe layer is several inches beneath the surface. Disking is an excellent remedy except that in California there is an unholy horror of suggesting that temporary greens be used even during the process of the most helpful treatments. It simply isn't done except under the stress of the most urgent necessity.

Expatriated Old Country greenkeepers in



The earthquake shook down this bank at the Virginia Country club.

modern hoseless irrigation originated in the same district as have many other devices in general use on golf courses.

As for depending entirely upon materials contained in the topsoil to regulate the soil texture, the results never have been completely satisfactory. Even a first class greenkeeper's knowledge of soil chemistry is limited to a few fundamental facts. He has not the means to make an intensive study of each one of the several soils in his care. So his treatments consequently are those which he has stumbled upon as being most satisfactory for the time being—but not necessarily the best treatments.

The Green Section has done noble work for the common cause in this respect, but the advice of this worthy group cannot be taken as gospel for soils several thousand miles removed from Washington, D. C. The same applies to the directions of application sent with fertilizers, disinfectants, and stimulants by manufacturers and distributors, even though these firms have the best interests of all greens at heart. When the various mercury-chlorine compounds were sent to California to cure brown-patch, hundreds of square feet of turf was burned because western greenkeepers obeyed to the letter the instructions which had accompanied the chemicals. After this bitter experience the prescriptions were diluted and much more satisfactory results were obtained. This is but an example taken from any number of instances.

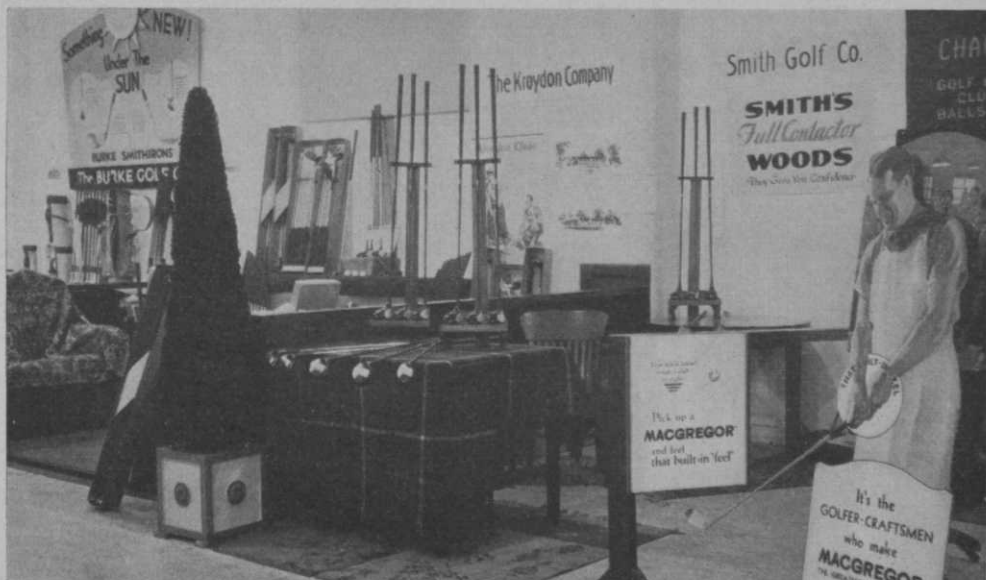
desperation sometimes attack greens with a pitchfork, lifting the sod and giving it a thorough shaking, much as one would a carpet. The method probably is efficacious but most greenkeepers do not have nerve enough to attack their pet greens in such outrageous manner.

Tees certainly benefit from whole-hearted renovation applied every four or five years and the practice is customary on many courses. A good method is to strip the turf, cultivate and level the exposed surface, replace the sod, topdress and roll lightly. The teeing ground can be treated in this manner and be put back in play again within a period of a fortnight. Results are excellent and the renovated tees compare favorably with new ones.

But this does not solve the problem of improving the soil texture of greens by mechanical cultivation. At least two Southern California greenkeepers are working on super spiking devices which will aid in the solution if they fulfill their creators' hopes. It is not at all unlikely that they will be successful, judging by past performances. The power mower and

Lest we be accused of the heinous crime of destructive criticism, an answer must be found to the question, "What's to do about it?" Putting out the lights and going to sleep has been tried too often without apparent success to be suggested as a remedy. Perhaps the custom of Southern California greenkeepers to go fishing when trouble threatens is meritorious. But it is to be feared their colleagues in other states will demand something less fishy and more tangible as a solution.

Earthquakes are out of the question; a satisfactory mechanical cultivator has yet to be devised; and chemical means of renovation, though adequate at times, are not completely satisfactory. If the question were put to greenkeepers of the Pacific slope, about every other answer with profanity excluded would be, "If the greens were constructed right in the first place there would be no need to do anything about it." Alas! But that is begging the question, and if there was no



Chicago's golf show, held in the Lytton Building, drew 26,000 people to herald spring with a buying itch for new equipment.

trouble there would be no need for greenkeepers.

Ask the question of a member of the Southern California Greenkeepers' Association and he would tell you that the prime requisite to cure all soil evils and to answer all turf questions is the establishment of a turf experimental station in his district. Which is something for which this lively organization has been appealing, praying, begging, and shouting for several years. Located as they are in the center of year-round golf interest, the member greenkeepers find themselves beset on all sides with peculiar and intricate problems of maintenance and no scientific facilities to aid in their solution. The group has appealed to the state for aid through the medium of the California Citrus Experimental Station, but this is whistling in the dark since budgets and appropriations have been cut to the core.

Still the question of how to renovate the soil of western golf courses in satisfactory manner remains unanswered and as far as this writer is concerned it will remain unanswered for some time. We have no desire to bring down on our head just yet the wrath of any greenkeeper who has tried any method we might suggest and found it sadly wanting.

## Heart of America Amateur to Be Played May 16-18

**H**HEART OF America golf tournament will be played on May 16-17-18 at four Kansas City courses and is expected to draw golfers from Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Oklahoma. There will be a pro-amateur event held the first day at Oakwood G. C., with suitable prizes for the successful teams.

In addition to the regular amateur championship, a special flight is being prepared for inter-collegiate competition and teams from nearby colleges are being invited to enter. The inter-collegiate bracket will be a 36-hole event, the first 18 holes at Oakwood G. C. and finals at Woodhill G. C.

Finals of the amateur championship will be played May 18 at Meadow Lake and Old Mission Golf clubs.

## VULCAN'S NEW LINES SHOWN IN FOLDER

Portsmouth, O.—Vulcan Golf Co. shows its five new lines for men and its four new lines for women in an attractive folder giving illustrations and complete details of the clubs.

Price range, design and construction of the clubs makes the Vulcan deal for 1933 one that ought to do a good volume of business in pro shops.