



W. D. Chinery

Thirty-Seven Steps To York Downs

By W. D. CHINERY

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IT is some thirty-seven years ago that I commenced my training as a professional gardener, on a large private estate in the old country. From a golfing point of view it may be said I started in right, as my first job was assisting in cutting and laying turf. I obtained a varied experience in ten of the leading establishments in as many counties. One of the most important branches of horticulture is the upkeep of the spacious pleasure grounds including cricket, tennis, croquet, lawn, etc., and of the care of these I have had my share.

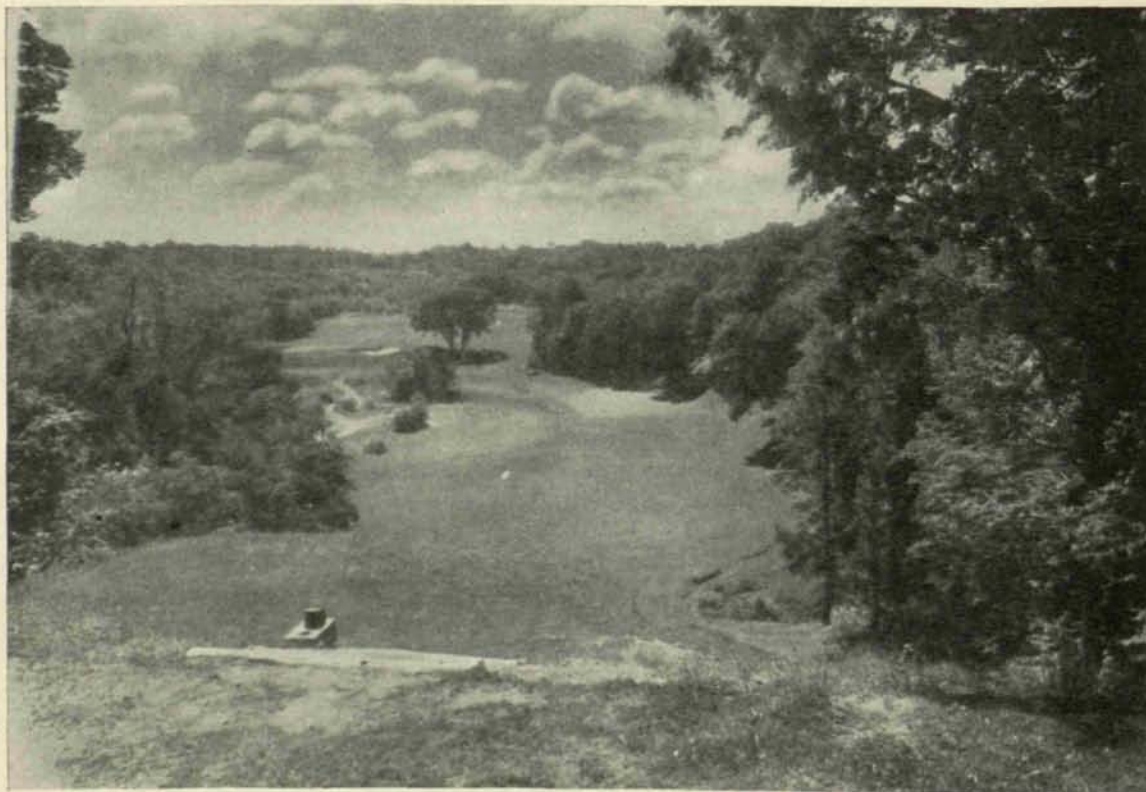
Coming to Canada fourteen years ago I endeavored to follow my profession, but soon found there was little scope for that class of gardening. I was fortunate in meeting with Mr. G. Cumming of the Toronto Golf Club,

who advised me to take up golf course work. My first charge was the Scarboro Golf & Country Club. During my stay of five years there, we had such notables of the golfing world as Mr. Charles Evans (Chick) of U. S. fame, Vardon and Ray, Mitchell and Duncan, the Canadian and U. S. Seniors, with several minor events.

York Downs, my present club, is one of several laid out five years ago, the architect in this case being Captain Alison.

Two Distinct Kinds of Soil

Our course takes in part of the Don River Valley, where we have several spectacular holes. There the soil is typical for the purpose being of a deep, friable black loam inclining to sand. The opposite may be said of the upper part of course, which is a very heavy adhesive clay, given to baking and cracking. To combat this evil we have, during the past four winters liberally treated the fairways with coarse sand, applying over 5,000 loads and with good results.



Third green from front tee, 250-yard hole, with sixth green in background. Creek to right. York Downs Golf Club, Eglinton, Ontario

During the same period on our long holes, say about 180 to 240 yards, i.e., our first shot, we have top dressed with compost, also all our approaches. From now on we intend to give more attention to our rough, which by the bye should receive more attention than is generally conceded.

Chain Harrow Invaluable

Two Toro Tractors (with five units each) take care of the course, in cutting, rolling, screening compost, chain harrowing, etc. A word or two about these harrows. I may say they are little known about here. I consider them one of the best implements that any golf club can have. They are invaluable for pulverizing and working in any top dressing, splendid for the rough, and when the course gets infested with worm casts towards the end of the cutting season.

Large Greens Not Desirable

There has been a tendency for some years to increase the size of putting greens, and here I think is cause for criticism. Too large a green does not improve the game, and is maintained only at great cost. The greens here were seeded down with South German bent, great care being exercised to obtain the very best seed, and they will average about 12,000 square feet in size.

One hears a lot these days about bent. Some things I hear are only to be accepted with the proverbial pinch of salt. For instance, that bent greens require little if any top dressing and will choke out weeds. All bunkum. That good bent grass when well grown has a tendency to choke out some weeds is true. My experience is that bent requires frequent top dressing and a copious supply of water. I might also add, frequent weeding. We have quite a variety of native bent in our neighborhood, which I am experimenting with, two kinds of which may be useful, but more of this anon.

Top Dressing Greens

We invariably weed our greens before this takes place and when desirable do not spare the use of good sharp, round toothed rakes. Raking tends to bring up any runners of clover that may be there, besides making a good bed for the compost, which should be of the right consistency for rubbing in. We use from two to three yards of finely screened compost, placed in as many heaps in proximity to the green, not dumping too frequently in the same place. The reason is obvious. As we have not acquired any of the top dressing machines, we have perforce to carry on by hand.

Our modus operandi is four men with flat, square mouth shovels and two bamboo poles, not too whippy.

We attack one heap first and deposit where most required, bearing in mind the hollows will always get plenty of food and cover. Trained men will distribute evenly and quickly over a large space. When half of the compost is on the green, two men with poles work compost well in. By then the whole green is covered, the process of rubbing in completed, the green then ready for cleaning off with the J. D. Rakes. Without too much hindrance from players six men thus equipped can top dress and finish a green in an hour at a cost of about \$2.50. It is well to cut such greens as short as possible, or reasonably so. They will then go for two or three days, thus avoiding picking up much top dressing. We use Sulphate of Ammonia in a dry state, also in liquid form, using a 50-gallon barrel with six foot boom. A light dressing of sharp sand at intervals we find highly beneficial in various ways.

Brown-Patch Disease and Watering

Space at this time will not permit me to go into the question of the brown-patch disease, although of great import, but I wish to say that I am closely watching the action of bichloride of mercury. I hope some of my confreres who have had experience with this and whose greens have suffered will give us some of their experience. Regarding watering, this is a point that has been threshed out time after time. Suffice to say we water when necessary, for preference early morning and late evening and for these reasons only, namely, there is less hindrance from players, and less evaporation than in between times.

Dame Nature often visits us with a heavy downpour to be followed soon after with brilliant sunshine, and thus Nature explodes the fallacy of day watering.

Training Assistants

In the March issue both Mr. Herbert Shave and W. J. Rockefeller have dealt with this subject, and their policies I fully endorse. Generally speaking the competent man will inspire confidence on both sides. Unquestionably the finest thing for any governing body is well trained and well directed labour. Without this the handling of the best of equipment and material is nullified. Mr. Shave has said, "Good greenkeepers are scarce." The reason is not far to seek. Allow me to quote an instance. During the past five years there have been many golf courses laid down around here, but not to my knowledge has there been an assistant appointed to take charge, not because there are no good men, but rather because they have not had the chance. I hope none of my readers will misconstrue this, but accept it in the spirit in which it is meant. None of us are too old to learn. I may be excused if I say in justice to myself, I



Plenty of trouble on Number 7 at York Downs, 456 yards of it. Taken from middle tee, showing creek

know of one whom I assisted and who is making good at Beach Grove Golf Club, Tecumseh, and on March 1st, my assistant went to the Thornhill Golf Club where they have 27 holes.

At York Downs last year was staged the Ontario Amateur and Ontario Open, and while it was on the cards to hold the Canadian Open here this year our officials ruled otherwise.

Have You Seen "Snow Mold"?

JUST at this time John Monteith, Jr., author of the article "Can You Identify Brown-Patch," appearing in this issue, is investigating "snow mold," an early spring type of turf kill having the general appearance of Brown-Patch. Members of the N. A. G. A. are requested to report all cases of the appearance of such a disease, with full description of the methods used for control and the results shown. Please state fully the exact appearance of the spots, and give information as to the location and drainage of the green or greens affected. If any unusual circumstances relating to original construction prevail, please give them in detail. Mail reports to the office of the association at 405 Caxton Building, Cleveland.