

THE SPIRIT OF THE PUTT

By JOHN CAMPBELL HAYWOOD.

They were playing the third hole and had reached the green. He in seven, because his thoughts were upon the girl; she in fifteen because her thoughts were upon him. The putting green lay in a triangle bounded by trees, heavy and dark with summer foliage. The shadows lay deep. Only the white of the spindle stood out boldly against the sombre background.

"Now, he said cheerfully, "two putts and you're in."

"Oh, Billy, if I only could!"

He watched silently. The ball missed by a foot and rolled ten feet beyond.

"Try again. It's easy—keep your eye on the ball after you have the line to the hole—don't—don't think I'm watching."

She missed again—and again. He stood patiently, spindle in hand, marking the hole.

"Billy," she shrieked suddenly, "move away quickly—the hole's on fire!"

He went swiftly to her side.

"What is it, darling?"

"Look! Look!"—she clung to him, wildly pointing.

Out of the hole a thin vapor was rising—it swerved and gyrated, taking shape as it rose until it formed the head and shoulders of a man—a man whose misty eyes met theirs with a brooding intensity that seemed to sound the deeps of unutterable disgust. Still rising, the vapor circled to a waist line—there were no arms, only a head and torso, held to the can by a whip of fog.

"What—what is it?" she cried.

Billy's arm was around her—a great

strong arm whose muscles pressed into her back. Before he could answer that he didn't know—which he didn't—a terrible wail came from the misty form, and when it had been gathered in by the woodlands, a voice thundered:

"I am the Spirit of the Putt, the Essence of the Goose-neck, the Soul of the Schenectady." Here another terrible wail rustled through the trees. "That is what IT is." A back draught widened his mouth into a horrible leer.

"Is there no peace for me? Old and young chatter and trample back and forth over my bed—my mouth is always open for the sweets some people bring—those who think of me—who think and think and study to please until they do the right thing—but you—why are you here? What has golf to do with love—or love with golf? Nothing! Unless you love to putt—unless you love ME! As for that!"—the spindle rose from the ground and pointed to Billy—"you cannot love That and Me too! Choose!"

"Oh, Billy, he says I can't love golf and you too!"

"That is what he says—he's the spirit of golf—he knows." Billy seemed quite glum about it.

"Well, Billy," she whispered, "had I better give up golf until—"

"When, dear?"

"Until we are married."

A sigh trembled down the spirating form of the Spirit of the Putt. He knew what Billy ought to say and Billy said it. What was it: "Yes" or "No?"