



PUTTY'S PRICELESS PRANK!

By
OWEN CONQUEST



THE FIRST CHAPTER A Trade Secret

"**E**XCUSE me, young gent!" Putty Grace of the Fourth looked around and stared blankly.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood. Usually there was a football match in progress on a "halfer," but on this occasion there was a vacant date. Consequently the members of the junior eleven were free to disport themselves in any way they fancied.

And most of the juniors fancied a visit to Watson's Mammoth Circus, which was paying a three-day visit to Coombe. Jimmy Silver and Co., together with Mornington, Erroll, Conroy, Rawson, Putty Grace, and a dozen other juniors, had decided to attend the opening afternoon of the circus, and had walked down to Coombe for that purpose.

Having exhausted the wild beasts and the side-shows, the juniors turned their attention to a large tent bearing a notice:

Three Shows Daily.
PROFESSOR BAMBOOZAL
(Of World Fame).
MYSTERY!
MESMERISM!
MIRTH!

Putty Grace, of Rookwood School, has an absorbing passion for practical joking, but never has this propensity proved so amusing as in this uproariously funny story.

The notice went on to inform the community generally that this amazing exhibition could be witnessed for the perfectly ridiculous sum of sixpence. Moreover, said the notice, those who were impressed by Professor Bamboozal, of world fame, could have their fortunes told by the same enterprising gentleman for another shilling.

"Looks all right," grinned Jimmy Silver, having read the notice. "Let's go in, you men."

"Bound to be a swindle," yawned Mornington. "But we're here to be swindled, anyway. Lead on, Macduff!"

The fellows immediately crowded around the entrance, and fished sixpences from their ample pockets to put in the professor's still more ample pockets.

Except Putty Grace.

Putty was a soft-hearted junior with an absorbing passion for practical jokes. Japes of all kinds were the breath of life to Putty. But he had a very generous nature, and just as he was about to follow Jimmy into the tent, he caught sight of a young lady in nurse's uniform, holding a collecting-box. She was collecting money on behalf of the Coombe Cottage Hospital.

Putty immediately unearthed a handful of coppers and dropped them into her box,

receiving as his reward a grateful smile which quite exhilarated him. And it was as he was about to go back to the professor's tent that the voice addressed him.

"Excuse me, young gent!"

Putty pulled up and stared at his interlocutor. The man who had spoken was a tall, melancholy person with broad-flowing moustachios. He was dressed in a faded riding-habit, and appeared to have had his last shave about the time of the Franco-Prussian war. A generous odour of spirits oozed from him.

Putty stared at him.

"Speaking to me?" he inquired.

"Yes, young gent. Were you about to go into the show run by Professor Bamboozal?"

"Eh?" ejaculated Putty, surprised. "Yes, I was. Why?"

"Then I wonder if you would mind 'aving a word with me on the quiet?" said the tall man.

Without giving Putty a chance to say whether he would mind or not, the tall man with the moustache led the way to the back of the tent. Putty followed, very mystified.

"Now, young sir," said the tall man, very secretively, "would you like to earn a ten-bob note?"

"What?"

"I want somebody to do me a service," he explained. "There's a ten-bob note waiting for whoever does me a little favour."

Putty blinked at him.

"Suppose you explain," he suggested. "I shall know then what you want."

"Well, I'll speak plain to you, sir," said the man softly. "I'm Professor Bamboozal, and I do a great deal of 'ypnotism in my shows."

"A good deal of what?" articulated Putty.

"'Ypnotism," explained the professor. "I 'ypnotise a member of the audience and make him do all sorts o' laughable things."

"Oh, do you?"

"Yes. Now, I'll be quite frank with you," went on the professor uneasily. "My shows are—are—well, look 'ere, the bloke I 'ypnotise is in the game, so to speak. He pretends to

be 'ypnotised, and he does everything I tells him. That's a trade secret, sir."

"Is it?" murmured Putty. "Rather a shady trade, I should think."

"Not a bit of it. The folk expect to be swindled, so what does it matter? They gets a good laugh out of it, even though they are doubtful whether the bloke is really 'ypnotised. Now, what I want you to do is this: when I ask a member of the audience to step up to the stage to be 'ypnotised, I want you to come forward."

"Oh!"

"I shall pretend to put the 'fluence on you, and then you'll do just whatever I tells you. And this 'ere ten-bob note will repay you for your trouble."

"You—you want me to pretend to be hypnotised?" ejaculated Putty.

"That's it," nodded the professor, eyeing Putty eagerly.

Putty's eyes glimmered. It was a bad sign. Whenever Putty's eyes began to glimmer, it meant that some kind of jape was forming in Putty's brain. And when Putty Grace thought out one of his extraordinary japes it was difficult to know where everything would end.

He drew a deep breath.

"I'm the very man you want," he said, turning to the professor.

"You'll do it?" cried the professor.

"Leave it to me."

"That's the way I like to 'ear you talk," smiled the professor genially. "You've got sense, you 'ave."

"But first of all," interrupted Putty, "take your ten-shilling note and shove it in that nurse's box over there."

He pointed to where the sister from the Cottage Hospital was still holding her collecting-box. The professor looked puzzled; but all the same he walked over and thrust a ten-shilling note through the slit in the top of the box.

"Is that what you want?" the professor asked as he came back.

Putty grinned cheerfully.

"Good man," he said. "Now you can get on with your show as soon as you like. I'll back you up when the time comes."

"You're a toff, young gent," exclaimed the professor. "I won't ask you to do anything too ridiculous. When I ask someone to step upon the stage, you come out before anyone else gets a chance. Don't forget."

"Leave it to me," grinned Putty.

The professor, evidently greatly relieved about something, strode away. Putty looked thoughtful for a moment, and then paid his sixpence and joined Jimmy Silver & Co. in the tent.

Soon afterwards the curtain went up, and Professor Bamboozal appeared and bowed to the applause of the audience.

The show had started.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Putty Pulls It Off.

"HOORAY!"

"Go it, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The professor was "going it." He was busy on his entertainment, which was, apparently, a mixture of mystery and mirth.

He had just produced a bowl of goldfish from a cigar, pulled mile upon mile of coloured ribbon from his top hat, and had wound up by squeezing no fewer than forty-two eggs from the very atmosphere itself.

A useful man to have about the home!

The professor beamed at the applause, and bowed to the audience.

"Ain't he a caution?" chortled Lovell.

"Go it, professor!"

"The next item is the hypnotism," mur-



"I shall pretend to put the 'fluence on you," said the professor, "and then you'll do as I tell you. And this 'ere ten-bob note will repay you for your trouble."

mured Jimmy Silver. "This is where the professor breaks down."

"I don't know so much," chipped in Putty Grace seriously. "Some of these fellows are very clever, you know."

The Rookwood fellows chortled.

"Good old Putty!" murmured Lovell. "You'd better go up and let him try on you."

"I wouldn't mind."

"Hem!"

"All very well to talk," interposed Mornington, a little sarcastically. "Bet you you won't do it."

"Done!" cried Putty at once.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"You're not going up there, you ass!"

"Why not?" demanded Putty. "If he can put the 'fluence on me, I'll believe in hypnotism."

"Let him go, Silver," said Mornington. "He won't look a bigger ass than usual. Impossible!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you fathead——" began Putty warmly.

"Sh! The professor's beginning."

Professor Bamboozal had advanced to the front of the stage, and a beaming smile crept out from beneath his flowing moustache.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, emphasising the conjunction in true circus fashion, "I shall now give you an almost incredible hex'ibition of 'ypnotism. 'Aving asked one of your number to be kind enough to walk up on this 'ere stage, I shall proceed to mesmerise him, and make him do a number of innercent but laughable tricks. Now which one of you will come up on this 'ere stage? Don't all speak at once."

The audience did not all speak at once. They gazed solidly and immovably at the professor.

With one exception.

Putty Grace was upon his feet almost before the words had left the professor's mouth.

"I don't mind coming up, sir," he said.

The audience turned and stared at him. The professor beamed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," trumpeted the professor, "you see before you a youth from one of England's greatest public schools, who hoffers to come up on this 'ere stage and be 'ypnotised. It is impossible for me, ladies and gentlemen, to 'ave bribed a Rookwood youth to assist me in this little experiment. That will convince you that my powers are perfickly genooine. Step this way, sir."

There was loud applause from the audience as Putty walked self-consciously to the stage. Shrill Rookwood cheers and laughter followed in his wake.

"Good old Putty!"

"Be a good boy, Putty dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The professor solemnly shook hands with

Putty Grace and told him to be seated while he put the 'fluence on him.

Putty sat down as directed. The professor stared at him in a terrifying fashion, and slowly moved his hands back and forth in front of Putty's eyes.

Then the professor straightened himself out, leaving Putty absolutely motionless in the chair.

"Ladies and gentlemen," declaimed the professor, "this lad is now under the 'fluence and entirely subject to my will." He turned to Putty. "Rise up!" he commanded majestically.

Putty rose up.

The audience waited breathlessly.

"You are a bulldog," said the professor.

"I am a bulldog," repeated Putty dazedly. "I am a——" He paused. "G-r-r-r!" he growled.

He dropped to his hands and knees, and prowled suspiciously about the stage. The audience grinned in wonderment.

"Good doggy," said the professor enticingly. "You shall have a bone in a minute. What do you say?"

"Woof-woof! G-r-r-r!" snarled Putty, eyeing the professor steadily.

Professor Bamboozal stared at Putty, and he became perceptibly more nervous.

He had intended that Putty should be a friendly bulldog, willing to do some canine tricks, and beg in a pretty manner for a bone. But Putty was not a friendly bulldog.

He seemed, in fact, to be a very unfriendly kind of dog indeed. He glared at the professor with an evil eye, and edged a little nearer his trouser-legs.

"Ahem!" gasped the professor. "Be quiet, Bonzo! Down, sir, down!"

"Go it, Putty!" yelled the Rookwooders. "Good dog, Putty."

Putty went it. He sniffed suspiciously for a moment and then shuffled towards his master on his hands and knees.

The professor retreated hastily.

"Ahem!" he choked. "You—you are not a dog, now. You are—what? Ow! Yarroooh!"

Putty had made a spring. The professor's information that he was now no longer a dog

fell on deaf ears. He clawed fiercely at the professor's trousers and leggings.

"G-r-r-r!" roared Putty ferociously. "Woof-woof! Grrh!"

The demented conjurer hopped frantically about the stage, dragging Putty with him. Loud howls of laughter rose from the audience, and the very tent rocked with mirth. Jimmy Silver & Co. sobbed feebly at the back of the tent.

"Leggo, you young fiend!" cried the professor. "You ain't a dog! You're a cat! A dear little pussy-cat! Yow-ow! Take 'im away from me. He's biting me."

"Oh, dear! Ha, ha, ha!" screamed the Rookwood juniors.

"Rescue!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Pull that ass Putty away, you chaps."

The juniors charged up on the stage, but Putty dodged hurriedly as they made for him. Avoiding their grasp, he jumped down from the stage, tore through the audience, and disappeared by the exit at the back.

A general gasp followed him.

He had gone.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at each other. Unless the professor was a fraud, Putty Grace was still under the 'fluence.

The professor pulled himself together. He had only one wish in life—to get near Putty Grace with a dog-whip. He would show Putty whether he was a dog or not.

Jimmy turned to him abruptly.

"Look here," he said. "I know that fellow. He's got a turn for practical joking, and it wouldn't surprise me if this was one of his fatheaded jokes." He paused awkwardly. "I want to know," he added, "whether you really hypnotised him or not. Is he under the 'fluence, or is it just a joke?"

"Of course he was under the 'fluence," snapped the professor loudly. "Are you implying, my lad, that I'm an impostor?"

"Oh, crikey! Nunno, but——"

"Enough!" the professor said briskly. "Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the entertainment. The next show is at seven-thirty. Admission sixpence. That is all. Good-afternoon."

Jimmy Silver & Co. wandered dazedly out of the tent. They looked at each other in

blank astonishment as they left the circus.

"My hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver, breaking into a grin. "Did you ever see anything so funny?"

"Never!"

"Well, hardly ever!" amended Mornington. "I thought the fathead was japing, as usual; but it seems he was actually under the professor's will."

"Rather funny if he's still a dog when we get to Rookwood," chortled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy uneasily. "Impossible."

And the juniors agreed that it was, indeed, impossible.

They were to discover that nothing was impossible to Putty Grace of Rookwood.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Doggish!

PUTTY chuckled breathlessly.

He slowed up to an easy pace. The gates of Rookwood were in sight farther along Coombe Lane.

Evidently Putty was enjoying himself.

"That's the first bit off the account," he grinned. "The professor will be sorry he asked me to help in his swindles. Cheek!" exclaimed Putty indignantly. "Blessed nerve of the man to expect me to swindle people for a ten-bob note. Well, after the professor-man has dragged up to Rookwood to take the 'fluence off me, I should think he will be rather sorry he picked on me."

Putty paused to consider. Would his proposed jape be safe?

He had a natural distaste for the cane. Mr. Dalton was an athletic kind of master, and he put considerable force into his punishment. Putty had had some, and he wasn't tremendously keen on having any more!

On the other hand, Mr. Dalton could not possibly cane a fellow who was under the influence of hypnotism. The fellow would not know what he was doing—he would be the slave of another's will. Hence to cane him would be out of the question.

But would the professor reveal the fact that Putty was only shamming? Putty shook his head. To do that the professor would have

to confess that he was only shamming himself, and he was not likely to admit that he was a fraud.

"Safe as houses," grinned Putty. "I can have the time of my life; jape all Rookwood, pay out the professor for his cheek, and not bag a single stroke of the cane. Oh, happy day!"

Tubby Muffin was lounging at the gates. Not having the necessary coin of the realm to take him to the circus, he had spent his afternoon in a profitable fashion by rummaging through the studies of the fellows who had been more fortunate.

A smear of jam on his fat face showed that he had been successful in his search. He had a contented shiny look as Putty approached. A bag of tarts in Oswald's study, and a plum-cake from the study of the Fistical Four had taken the edge off his appetite. Mornington's cupboard had provided half a dozen doughnuts and a bottle of cordial, and the three Colonials had added a tin of sardines and some whipped cream walnuts. All was grist that came to Tubby's mill.

He blinked lazily at Putty.

"I say, Putty, old fellow——" he began, and then paused. Putty was sidling towards him in a somewhat alarming fashion.

"What's up with you?" asked Muffin, staring at Putty's movements.

Putty's lip curled in a ferocious snarl.

"Urrrrrgh! Groo! Woof-woof!"

Tubby Muffin jumped.

"Wha-at?" he ejaculated.

"G-r-r-r! Boof-woof-woof!"

"What on earth—— Yaroooh!"

Tubby's sentence ended in a fearsome yell. The humorist of the Fourth crouched for a moment, and then sprang upon Tubby with a mighty spring. His fingers clutched Tubby's shoulder, and his teeth closed upon Tubby's ear.

It was only a gentle bite. The Falstaff of the Fourth could not have been hurt by that gentle grip. But judging by the yell he gave, his ear had been bitten completely off.

"Whooooop! Gerroff! He's mad! Help! Putty's biting me! Dragimoff! Yarooooooh!"

Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth were crossing the quad. They stopped as Tubby's

Rookwood's Reckless Rascal.

IN the year 1790 there came to Rookwood the most daring and defiant boy that ancient school has ever sheltered. To say that no feat requiring unlimited pluck was too risky for George Alfred Gower is not underestimating his foolhardiness. One word from any fellow would be enough to set this extraordinary boy attempting some mad venture—even at the risk of his life.

The routine of school-life, too, was not to Gower's taste and, needless to say, he was always in trouble with authority. But punishment seemed to have no effect on George Alfred—if anything, it made him more daring.

Not a building at Rookwood did this dare-devil fail to scale from the outside, including the Modern house. But there came the day, however, when Gower went beyond the limit. It commenced in the Form-room when Mr. Hardy, the Classical House master, attempted to birch the unruly boy for not doing his prep. Without warning, Gower snatched the birch from the master's hand and dashed from the room. Mr. Hardy chased after him, knowing that the boy was intent on taking some foolish risk. He was not mistaken. On reaching the quad., the master was horrified to see Gower climbing up the ivy on the School House, with the birch gripped between his teeth.

Mr. Hardy quickly summoned the school porter to fetch a ladder, and this was reared against the School House. Meantime, Gower had reached the roof, while the juniors swarmed into the quad. to see the fun.

When Gower saw the master ascending the ladder after him, he made for the flag-mast and climbed up it, and to the cheers and laughter of the boys gathered in the quad., he tied the birch to the top.

Reaching the roof, Mr. Hardy hurried across to the reckless rascal, and eventually prevailed upon him to descend. One hour later, George Alfred Gower was being flogged with the very birch he had tied to the mast, and it was not long afterwards that Rookwood saw the last of him. His parents were politely requested to take him away.



fiendish howls awoke the echoes around Rookwood's time-honoured stones. The captain of the school looked blankly at his chum Neville. What was wrong?

Together they raced towards the gates. Arrived there, they saw the origin of the yells. Tubby Muffin was screaming away as if for a wager. Putty Grace had clambered on his chest and was biting his ear.

"What the dickens—"

"Help! He's mad! He's biting me! Rescue! Yooop!"

Bulkeley strode forward and his grasp closed on Putty of the Fourth. With one wrench he pulled Putty from his prey, and the humorist of Rookwood sprawled on the ground.

"What on earth are you doing, Grace!" he snapped. "Have you gone off your head!"

"He's potty!" howled



"Gurrgh! Woof-woof-woof!" growled Putty at the dog, while the juniors and seniors regarded him with astonished eyes.

Muffin. "Potty's putty—I mean, Putty's potty! He climbed on me and chewed my ear!"

Putty of the Fourth picked himself up and eyed Bulkeley in a wicked fashion.

"Clear off, you young ass!" snapped Bulkeley. "If I have any more of your rot, I'll give you six."

"G-r-r-r!" snarled Putty.

Bulkeley and Neville jumped.

"What's that?"

"G-r-r-r! Oof-woof-woof! B-r-r-r! Urrrrgh!" answered Putty, giving selections from his repertoire.

The two prefects stared at him dumbfounded for one moment—not for two. Putty sprang. He landed on Bulkeley's shoulders, and his teeth caressed Bulkeley's neck.



Bulkeley staggered back. Neville and Tubby Muffin stood rooted to the ground.

"Yooop!" roared Bulkeley. "The young idiot's biting me. Pull him away."

"Have you lost your senses, you young fool?" exclaimed Neville, jerking Putty away from the captain.

"Hold him!" gasped Bulkeley. "He's dangerous. Bring him along. I'll give him

six with an ashplant, and see if that will restore his right senses."

"G-r-r-r! Boof-woof!" snarled Putty, wriggling in Neville's grasp.

"I believe the kid is really potty!" exclaimed Neville in alarm. "He ought to see a doctor."

"I'll doctor him!" snapped Bulkeley grimly. "I've got some medicine in my study that will work wonders on him."

"He, he, he!" came Tubby Muffin's fat cackinnation from the rear.

The two seniors marched the writhing form of Putty Grace into the quad; but when they got there, the Fourth-Form humorist gave a sudden turn and broke free. He streaked rapidly across the quadrangle.

Prowling about by the Modern House was the small brown form of an Airedale dog, belonging to Mack, the porter. It was an amiable dog, much liked by all the school on account of its chummy disposition. It answered—occasionally—to the name of Bob.

Putty streaked towards Bob like a hare, followed by the two prefects and Tubby Muffin. Bob wagged his tail as Putty approached; he knew Putty well.

But he jumped back in surprise when Putty dropped on his hands and knees, and crawling towards him, remarked:

"Urrrrgh! Boof-oof-woof!"

Bob circled cautiously. Was this a new game? Putty, he knew, was fond of games. He would often oblige by throwing stones for Bob to fetch. Bob blinked curiously at Putty, and stood by, wagging his tail.

Quite a crowd of fellows now began to collect. Amazed eyes watched Putty. Bulkeley and Neville regarded him wide-eyed with astonishment.

"I really do think he's mad," whispered Neville in alarm.

Bulkeley pursed his lips. Laughter was heard among the other fellows present.

"Well, by Gad, Putty knows how to treat his brother—what?" sniggered Hansom of the Fifth.

Putty lowered his head and roared. Possibly he was thinking he was a bull instead of a bulldog. He snarled and charged Bob head over heels.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the crowd.

"What is it? A new game?" demanded Lumsden.

"Blessed if I know. Kid gone cuckoo, I think."

There was a rush of feet, and Jimmy Silver & Co., home from the circus, appeared on the scene. They blinked at Putty in dismay.

"Great pip!" ejaculated Lovell. "He's still under the 'fluence. Well, carry me home to die!"

"Go it, Putty! Woof-woof, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The newly-arrived juniors burst into a howl of laughter as Putty tried to bite one of Bob's legs. But Jimmy Silver didn't laugh. He was looking seriously alarmed. If Putty was, indeed, in a state of hypnosis, it might do him some considerable harm.

Bulkeley strode forward again. Putty wheeled on him savagely.

"G-r-r-r! Grrrrrgh!"

Bulkeley jumped back—quite frightened.

"Good heavens!" he muttered. "The kid thinks he's a dog. He's bitten Muffin and me already. He's dangerous."

"Mind you don't get hydrophobia," chuckled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out!" exclaimed Newcome. "Here comes Dalton!"

There was a sudden silence as Mr. Dalton strode up.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

Not Hypnotised.

MR. RICHARD DALTON, the master of the Fourth, had a frown on his brow and a cane under his arm. Evidently he was anticipating trouble. He gave the juniors a severe look, and then his jaw dropped in blank amazement.

He had caught sight of Putty Grace.

Bob had by now properly entered into the spirit of the game. It seemed to Bob that the new pastime was for Putty to growl, and him to make playful snatches at Putty's nose. If he was quick enough, he could lick Putty's nasal organ; if he wasn't, he was rolled over.

Mr. Dalton, as he watched the curious

exhibition, seemed to have difficulty in finding his voice. Jimmy Silver looked on with a serious face.

"Boy! Grace!" gasped Mr. Dalton at length. "What is the meaning of this—this exhibition?"

He paused for a reply. He got one.

"Grrrrgh! Woof!" answered Putty at once.

"Wha-at!" gasped "Dicky" Dalton, staggering back. "Have you—have you taken leave of your senses, Grace?"

Again he paused for a reply. And again he got one.

It was not a reply in words. It took the form of an action. Putty sprang. He seized the Form-master about the knees, and tried to bite his trousers.

Mr. Dalton's face took on an expression that can only be called terrific.

"Bub-bless my soul!" he gasped. "Grace! Boy! Release me!"

"G-r-r-r! Woof-woof-woof!" snarled Putty fiercely.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell.

The crowd of juniors and seniors looked on in dumfounded amazement.

"Take this boy away," roared Mr. Dalton. "I do believe he is trying to bite me."

Lovell, Mornington and several other juniors swooped on Putty and dragged him away from the scandalised master. Mr. Dalton pulled himself together, and frowned in an angry fashion.

"What is the meaning of this?" he snapped.

"Are you quite sane, Grace?"

"Woof! Oof-woof! Yarrrrgh!" roared Putty.

"I think he cannot be sane, sir," said Bulkeley. "He was biting Muffin of the Fourth just now, and then he began to bite me also, when I intervened. I believe he fancies he's a dog."

"Great Scott!" murmured the crowd in wonder.

"Grace, is it possible that——"

"He's hypnotised, sir," Jimmy gulped in confusion.

Mr. Dalton stared at him.



Mr. Manders streaked across the quad, with Putty in pursuit. "Keep him off!" shrieked the Modern master. "He's mad!"

"What? Do you know anything of this matter, Silver?"

"Ye-yes, sir," gasped Jimmy. "Putty was hypnotised by a man at the circus."

"Wha-at? Kindly explain yourself, Silver."

Amid a dead silence, Jimmy breathlessly explained how Professor Bamboozal had put the 'fluence on Putty Grace, and omitted to take it off again. Mr. Dalton's face, as he listened, was a mixture of amazement and incredulity.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, drawing a deep breath. "What—what you say, Silver, passes all the bounds of credulity—yet it seems that it is an actual fact. If Grace is, indeed, in a state of subjection to another's will-power——"

There was a loud murmuring from the crowd.

"My only summer bonnet!"

"Putty—hypnotised!"

"Thinks he's a dog—phew!"

"Garrigh! Boof-woof!"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "Silver, you will take your bicycle, ride down to the circus and fetch this—this mesmerist here immediately. Lose no time in bringing him to Rookwood. If he will not come, you must call in the assistance of the police to make him. Understand?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "I'll cut off right away."

He left the group, and ran towards the bicycle shed. Soon afterwards he whizzed through the gates, and sailed away in the direction of Coombe. Putty carefully concealed a grin as he watched him depart.

"Bring the boy Grace into the house, Bulkeley," commanded Mr. Dalton. "He must be kept quiet until this absurd hypnotist reaches here. And on no account," added the master, turning to the crowd of juniors, "is any boy to make game of this unfortunate lad."

"Hooray!" said Putty silently.

Mr. Dalton turned away, and Bulkeley's grasp closed on the Fourth-Form humorist once more. Putty looked depressed. He had not accomplished half the things he had intended.

Mr. Manders, the sour-faced master of the

Modern House, was crossing the quad. Putty noticed that Mr. Dalton spoke to him for a few minutes, and that Manders looked in a horrified way in his direction.

Putty guessed that Dicky Dalton was relating how one of his scholars had suddenly become a dog. Putty licked his lips.

Manders passed by, and stared in undisguised horror at Putty. Teddy Grace drew a deep breath, and quivered all over. What a chance for a jape! How he could scare Manders!

He gave a sudden twist. Bulkeley and Neville grabbed at him; but for the second time that afternoon he managed to break free. Uttering a terrible snarl, he galloped furiously towards Mr. Manders.

"Look out!" gasped Bulkeley. "He's got away again."

"Collar him!"

Mr. Manders heard the shouts of the crowd, and Putty's terrible snarl. He turned about, and his face went green with fear as he saw Putty bounding towards him, clawing the air in a frenzied fashion.

The Modern master blinked at him in horror. Then he ran—wildly, chased by Putty, with the crowd bringing up the rear.

Mr. Manders streamed across the quad, uttering fearful cries for help.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"He's mad! Assist me before he bites me!"

"After him!" roared the crowd of juniors.

"Come back, you young ass!" yelled Bulkeley.

Putty did not come back. He was gradually overhauling Mr. Manders, and he snarled more ferociously with each step he took. The master's face was now a peculiar shade of grey. He cast one fearful look behind him, and then ran faster than he had ever run in his life.

The chase ended abruptly at the woodshed.

Mr. Manders wrenched open the door of the woodshed, tore inside, and slammed the door behind him. As it closed, Putty hurled himself at it; but he was too late. Mr. Manders had found sanctuary.

"G-r-r-r! Woof!" roared Putty furiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors helplessly.

"The professor's a wangler," said the policeman, "and I 'spect it was this 'ere boy he put under the 'fluence." And he pointed to Putty.



Really they could not help laughing. The spectacle of Mr. Manders fleeing across the quad, yelling for help, pursued by Putty of the Fourth roaring like a dog, was enough—as Lovell said—to make the Head laugh.

Bulkeley and Neville closed upon Putty at the woodshed. They grasped him—and this time their grasp was such that there was no getting away. Twice Putty had broken away from them. Bulkeley meant to see that there was no third time.

"Have—have you got him, boys?" asked a quivering voice from within the woodshed.

"Ha, ha—I mean, yes, sir," gasped Bulkeley. "He won't get away again."

There was a movement inside the woodshed, and then a loud bump.

"Yaroooh!" came a fiendish yell.

Evidently Mr. Manders had tripped over the faggots.

He opened the door and came out looking

very dusty and dishevelled. And at the same moment Mr. Dalton strode up.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"Did I not tell you to keep the boy quiet?"

"He broke away from us, sir," said Bulkeley.

"He chased Mr. Manders into the woodshed."

"Good heavens!"

Then there came a cry from Lovell.

"Here's Jimmy, sir."

The crowd turned to where Jimmy Silver was approaching. Putty grinned to himself; but his merriment changed to bewilderment as he saw that Jimmy Silver was accompanied, not by Professor Bamboozal, but by P.c. Cobb, the village constable.

"What the thump——" murmured Mornington.

"Where's the professor?"

"What? Do you know anything of this matter, Silver?"

"Ye-yes, sir," gasped Jimmy. "Putty was hypnotised by a man at the circus."

"Wha-at? Kindly explain yourself, Silver."

Amid a dead silence, Jimmy breathlessly explained how Professor Bamboozal had put the 'fluence on Putty Grace, and omitted to take it off again. Mr. Dalton's face, as he listened, was a mixture of amazement and incredulity.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, drawing a deep breath. "What—what you say, Silver, passes all the bounds of credulity—yet it seems that it is an actual fact. If Grace is, indeed, in a state of subjection to another's will-power——"

There was a loud murmuring from the crowd.

"My only summer bonnet!"

"Putty—hypnotised!"

"Thinks he's a dog—pew!"

"Garragh! Boof-woof!"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "Silver, you will take your bicycle, ride down to the circus and fetch this—this mesmerist here immediately. Lose no time in bringing him to Rookwood. If he will not come, you must call in the assistance of the police to make him. Understand?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "I'll cut off right away."

He left the group, and ran towards the bicycle shed. Soon afterwards he whizzed through the gates, and sailed away in the direction of Coombe. Putty carefully concealed a grin as he watched him depart.

"Bring the boy Grace into the house, Bulkeley," commanded Mr. Dalton. "He must be kept quiet until this absurd hypnotist reaches here. And on no account," added the master, turning to the crowd of juniors, "is any boy to make game of this unfortunate lad."

"Hooray!" said Putty silently.

Mr. Dalton turned away, and Bulkeley's grasp closed on the Fourth-Form humorist once more. Putty looked depressed. He had not accomplished half the things he had intended.

Mr. Manders, the sour-faced master of the

Modern House, was crossing the quad. Putty noticed that Mr. Dalton spoke to him for a few minutes, and that Manders looked in a horrified way in his direction.

Putty guessed that Dicky Dalton was relating how one of his scholars had suddenly become a dog. Putty licked his lips.

Manders passed by, and stared in undisguised horror at Putty. Teddy Grace drew a deep breath, and quivered all over. What a chance for a jape! How he could scare Manders!

He gave a sudden twist. Bulkeley and Neville grabbed at him; but for the second time that afternoon he managed to break free. Uttering a terrible snarl, he galloped furiously towards Mr. Manders.

"Look out!" gasped Bulkeley. "He's got away again."

"Collar him!"

Mr. Manders heard the shouts of the crowd, and Putty's terrible snarl. He turned about, and his face went green with fear as he saw Putty bounding towards him, clawing the air in a frenzied fashion.

The Modern master blinked at him in horror. Then he ran—wildly, chased by Putty, with the crowd bringing up the rear.

Mr. Manders streamed across the quad, uttering fearful cries for help.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"He's mad! Assist me before he bites me!"

"After him!" roared the crowd of juniors.

"Come back, you young ass!" yelled Bulkeley.

Putty did not come back. He was gradually overhauling Mr. Manders, and he snarled more ferociously with each step he took. The master's face was now a peculiar shade of grey. He cast one fearful look behind him, and then ran faster than he had ever run in his life.

The chase ended abruptly at the woodshed.

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"Where's the professor?"

"What's old Cobb want?"

Jimmy Silver and the constable came up to Mr. Dalton, watched in breathless silence by the crowd—masters, seniors and juniors.

"Where is the circus man, Silver?" asked Mr. Dalton, nodding to the policeman.

"I couldn't get hold of the professor, sir," replied Jimmy. "You see, sir, he's——"

"He's been took," interrupted P.c. Cobb.

"Took?" ejaculated Mr. Dalton.

"Ah! He's been took for telling fortunes—pretending to tell 'em, that is. He's a swindle."

"Do you mean that this man is in custody?" inquired Mr. Dalton.

P.c. Cobb nodded seriously.

"Ah! He is that! I took him up arter his show this arternoon. He gives out that he tells fortunes—which is agin the law."

Mr. Dalton looked nonplussed—so did Putty Grace.

"But—but I want him to release this boy from a spell of hypnotic influence," argued Mr. Dalton. "I must see him. It is important."

P.c. Cobb grinned.

"He ain't no 'ypnotist, sir," he said. "'E can't put the 'fluence on anybody. It's all a wangle."

"A—a what?"

"A wangle, sir. In plain English—a do. He bribes people to pretend to be 'ypnotised. 'E confessed that 'e put a ten-bob note in the 'ospital box this arternoon to make a Rookwood boy pretend to be put under the 'fluence. I 'spect this 'ere is the boy, sir."

He pointed to Putty.

That incipient humorist was fervently wishing the ground would open and swallow him. His face was a picture of dejection. He hadn't thought of this possibility.

Every eye turned on Putty.

Mr. Dalton was struggling for speech. Mr. Manders was looking perfectly apoplectic.

"Grace! Boy! Grace!" stuttered Mr. Dalton. "Is this true? Have you been only pretending to be under the influence of an absurd hypnotic spell?"

"Yes, sir," mumbled Putty; and this time he did not put in even so much as a tiny "woof!"

"Then this, I presume, was intended for

a practical joke against the scholars and masters of this school?"

"Nunno—not exactly, sir," groaned Putty. "I meant to make the professor come all the way up to Rookwood to take the fluence off me in punishment for his cheek in asking me to help him in a swindle."

There was a moment's silence, then:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a perfect volume of laughter. Everybody, except the two masters and Putty Grace, seemed to be on the verge of hysterics. Bulkeley and Neville were trying not to laugh—and were failing badly. Even P.c. Cobb was grinning expansively.

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "Grace, you will follow me to my study. I will give you a lesson which will help you to curb your humorous proclivities in future. I shall cane you most severely."

"Oh, crikey!"

"Follow me!"

He strode away into the house, followed by the dejected figure of Putty, leaving a crowd roaring with laughter.

For some time there was a rhythmical swishing sound in Mr. Dalton's study, like the slow, steady beat of a machine. This sound was punctuated at intervals by strangled yelps and moans, suggestive of suffering.

In due course the door opened, and Putty of the Fourth crawled into the corridor and wormed his way along the passage.

Lovell met him at the corner. Arthur Edward was disposed to be sympathetic.

"Had it bad?" he asked commiseratingly.

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"Do you mean—woof-woof-woof?" murmured Lovell.

Putty did not answer—in words, at any rate. He raised his right fist in the air and brought it down on Lovell's nose.

"Yaroorh!" roared Lovell, astonished.

Putty crawled on his way, slightly mollified by Lovell's furious yell.

And all over Rookwood that evening, nothing was heard but shouts of laughter and hysterical sobs. That was the closing celebration of Putty's priceless prank.

THE END