

PUTTY GRACE, THE ROOKWOOD HUMORIST, BOBS UP AGAIN!

Putty Grace, the well-known humorist of Rookwood, is famous for his wheezes, but his latest stunt bids fair to cap the lot. In his own estimation it is the greatest jape of the term, but disillusionment is his sorrowful portion, which makes him wish he had not started!



Putty's Great Idea!

A screamingly, funny, long, complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood.

BY

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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Turned Down!

"I'VE got it!"

It was Teddy Grace—generally known as "Putty" in the Fourth Form at Rookwood—who spoke.

There were half a dozen juniors gathered in Jimmy Silver's study, and they were busy in discussion. Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell, Conroy and Oswald and Townsend, all had something to say, and they were saying it, without very much regard for one another's remarks. Teddy Grace had been rather silent for some minutes—which was quite unusual with Putty of the Fourth.

He was sitting in the window-seat, with a deeply corrugated brow, indicative of intense reflection. He broke his silence by the sudden statement that he had "got it."

But the meeting did not pay much heed. Apparently they were more interested in their own ideas than in Putty's.

The subject under discussion was important—nothing less than the next performance of the Rookwood Players, the amateur dramatic society of the Classical Fourth. Jimmy Silver was keenly interested in it, and so was Lovell; but Raby and Newcome found cricket more attractive, and they had given the meeting a miss.

"We've settled that it's going to be a comedy," said Jimmy Silver, who seemed deaf to Putty's remark. "That's one thing done. But—"

"I've got it!" repeated Putty.

"But the question arises," said Arthur Edward Lovell—"what comedy? Shakespeare won't do."

"Too jolly heavy!" said Townsend.

"Something a bit more modern," suggested Oswald.

"The fact is," continued Jimmy Silver thoughtfully, "there's an old proverb that if you want a thing well done you'd better do it yourself. That applies to comedies as well as other things."

"Hear, hear!" said the meeting.

"Well, we can write Latin verses," said Lovell. "If we can do that, we can write a comedy, which is easier."

"Of course we can!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I've got it!" bawled Putty crescendo.

Jimmy Silver glanced across to the window-seat.

"Hallo! Did you speak, Grace?" he asked.

"Yes, I jolly well did!" said Grace warmly. "Can't you fellows listen for a minute, and give your silly chins a rest? I tell you I've got it!"

"Keep it, then!" suggested Lovell. "Take it away and bury it. Now, about writing a comedy, I don't mind offering to do the work—"

"But what about the audience, in that case?" asked Conroy.

"Eh? What about the audience?"

"Will they stand it?"

Arthur Edward Lovell bestowed a very expressive look on the Australian junior.

"If Conroy is going to be a funny idiot—" he began.

"Will you fellows lend me your ears?" asked Putty Grace. "I tell you I've got an idea."

"Time you had, anyhow!" said Conroy.

"Oh, let's give Putty a hearing!" said Jimmy Silver resignedly. "He won't be happy till he gets it. Go ahead, Putty, and cut it short."

"We've agreed on a comedy," said Putty. "Now, my idea is a comic play of school life—"

"Nothing comic about school life," objected Arthur Edward Lovell. "Jolly serious bizney, if you ask me."

"Oh, it has a comic side!" retorted Putty. "There's the way you do your construe, frinistance—"

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell.

"There's the way Townsend does his hair—"

"Why, you cheeky fathead!" said Townsend warmly.

"Are we going to have a play about Lovell's construe and Towny's top-knot?" asked Oswald.

"No, ass! There are other funny things! There's Bootles!"

"Bootles?"

The juniors stared at Putty. Mr. Bootles was their respected Form master, and, though undoubtedly he had his funny ways, they had certainly not thought of him in connection with comedy.

"Bootles!" said Putty. "Bootles is just what we want!"

"Fathead! Do you think Bootles would take a part in a Lower School play?" snorted Lovell.

"I don't mean that—"

"Well, what do you mean, if you mean anything?"

"I mean Bootles as a character study," explained Putty. "Bootles is simply a goldmine to a comedian. Easy enough to make up as Bootles, and an actor like me—ahem!—could imitate his wonderful accent, and the way he jerks his head, like a tortoise looking out of its shell, in a way that would bring down the house."

Jimmy Silver shook his head decidedly.

"N.G.!" he answered. "Twouldn't be respectful."

"An artiste can't afford to be a respecter of persons," answered Putty loftily.

"And you couldn't do it—"

"I could do it on my head, ass!"

"We had that idea before," said Jimmy Silver. "Peele made up as Bootles, and I must say he did it jolly well, though he's a beast in other things. But we cut it out—"

"Never mind Peele!" said Teddy Grace. "I could act Peele's head off! I tell you I've been studying Bootles in class, and he's often struck me as the very thing for farce—"

"My hat! You'd better let Bootles hear you say so!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, I wouldn't tell him," said Putty. "I wouldn't hurt his feelings."

"I fancy it's your feelings that would be hurt chiefly!" chuckled Lovell.

"Bootles simply asks to be caricatured," continued Putty. "If not, why does he wear those whiskers, and jerk his napper like a tortoise, and say 'What, what?' like a peculiar parrot? I tell you a comedian who saw and studied Bootles would make his fortune on the stage, simply by acting him to the life. Now, I could do it—"

"Bow-wow!"

"The comedy should be written round a central character," resumed Putty, unheeding. "I'll take on the central character—"

"Cheeky ass!"

"And I'll undertake to make 'em simply yell," said Grace confidently. "Fou leave it

THE POPULAR.—No. 269.

to me. I suppose you want this play to be a success? Well, I'll make it a success."

"Ass!"

"I don't mind standing the necessary props myself," said Putty. "My pater will send me the tin if I ask him. I can get the things at Rookham. Leave it to me."

"But we're not going to play Bootles!" bawled Jimmy Silver. "I tell you it's too thick, even if you could do it. Suppose Bootles heard?"

"He won't. He won't see our comedy, I suppose."

"No; but—"

"We sha'n't call the character by his name on the programme. We'll call it Twittles, or something—"

"But—"

"You're as full of butts as a billy-goat!" grunted Putty. "Now, is it a go?"

"No, it isn't, ass! For one thing, you couldn't do it!"

Putty rose.

"Suppose I convince you of that?" he said.

"You couldn't!"

"I'll try. I'll get over to Rookham on my bike to-morrow, and bag the things I want for the part. To-morrow evening I'll make up as Bootles."

"Bosh!"

"And I'll make you think it's really Bootles!" hooted Putty wrathfully. "I'll come to this study as Bootles, and you won't know the difference!"

"Well, if you do, we'll have a Bootles comedy, and you can play the part!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

"Done!" said Putty at once.

And he left the end study.

"Cheeky ass!" said Lovell, with a snort. "Putty can act a bit, but if he thinks he's going to take the fat parts away from the old hands, he's making a mistake. Let him come here made up as Bootles! I'll surprise him if he does!"

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"We'll let him come and try to spoof us," he said, "and then we'll jolly well collar him and rag him as a warning. The silly ass! As if he could take us in like that! Now, about the comedy!"

And the discussion went on with animation, minus Putty Grace.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Putty Means Business!

JIMMY SILVER smiled the next morning as he glanced at Putty Grace in class.

It was evident that Putty had not given up the remarkable scheme he had propounded in the end study the previous evening. Putty, in fact, very seldom did give up a scheme that had once found a resting-place in his fertile brain.

In spite of the fact that the dramatic society had unanimously turned down the idea, Teddy Grace was sticking to it, and it was quite clear that morning that he was collecting data for the part.

He watched Mr. Bootles as a cat watches a mouse, as if he thirsted for the pearls of wisdom that dropped from the Form master's lips.

Little Mr. Bootles himself noticed it at last.

Putty was a clever pupil, and had a good place in the class; but he had never distinguished himself for such very close attention to his Form master before.

Now his eyes were glued to Mr. Bootles, and his ears open for every syllable that fell from him.

He made it a point to speak to Mr. Bootles as often as he could, asking him questions that were really almost frivolous, for the sake of drawing the little gentleman's attention, and studying his voice, his manner, his gestures, and his whiskers.

Mr. Bootles was a nice little gentleman, and his pupils liked and respected him, but his greatest admirer would not have denied that he had his comic ways.

These, of course, were lost upon Mr. Bootles himself, but he was the only person they were lost upon.

When he jerked his head forward in speaking to a fellow, it did remind one inevitably of a tortoise, and his way of ejaculating "What—what?" was undoubtedly entertaining.

Putty Grace was storing his memory with Bootles, so to speak, with a view to the part he intended to play.

THE POPULAR.—No. 239.

Tubby Muffin had been called upon to construe, and he had acquitted himself in his usual manner—which did not meet with the approval of his Form master.

"You may sit down, Muffin," said Mr. Bootles crushingly, "and you may write out that passage fifty times after lessons!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Muffin.

"You neglected your preparation last evening, I think, Muffin!"

"Oh, no, sir!" said Tubby. "I was simply slaying away at it like—like anything, sir!"

"I fear, Muffin, that you are more prone to wander into the paths of exaggeration and prevarication than to pursue sedulously the strait and narrow path of veracity!" said Mr. Bootles, with ponderous severity.

"Splendid!" ejaculated Putty involuntarily.

"What?"

Mr. Bootles' eyes turned on Grace at once in great astonishment.

"What—what—what did you say, Grace? What—what?"

Putty crimsoned.

"I—I—" he stammered.

He couldn't explain that that ponderous speech of Mr. Bootles was a perfect gem for his part in the comedy.

Such an explanation certainly would not have placated the master of the Fourth.

"You were pleased," said Mr. Bootles, "to utter an encomium upon my remarks to Muffin, Grace?"

"I—I—"

"I am very much obliged to you for your good opinion, Grace, but it is perhaps unnecessary for me to point out that a member of my Form is not called upon to express approval of my observations! You will take fifty lines, Grace! What—what? Bless my soul! You are laughing, Silver!"

"W-w-was I, sir?" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"You were!" said Mr. Bootles severely. "There is nothing whatever to cause risibility in this incident, Silver! In order to restore you to a state of gravity suitable for the Form-room, you also may take fifty lines!"

"Oh!" murmured Jimmy.

"I shall expect these lines by tea-time!" said Mr. Bootles. "You will have the kindness to remain serious in class!"

Jimmy Silver was serious enough after that. It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and he was not anxious to gather up any more lines.

When the Classical Fourth were dismissed, Jimmy Silver came up to Putty in the passage.

"You shrieking ass!" he said.

"Hallo! What's the row?"

"You've got me fifty lines!" growled the captain of the Fourth. "I've a jolly good mind to make you do them!"

Putty grinned.

"Isn't Bootles splendid, though?" he said.

"Eh?"

"For the comedy, I mean. Why, the fellows will simply shriek when I turn him on on the stage!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Jimmy. "You can't do it, and you're not going to do it, and, for goodness' sake, give us a rest on the subject!"

"I'm going to Rookham for the things this afternoon."

"You can go to Jericho, if you like!"

That afternoon Jimmy Silver & Co. were busy on the cricket-field, and Jimmy was bowling to Mornington at the wicket when Putty wheeled out his bicycle and disappeared.

The Fistical Four were coming in to tea when Putty came back, and he turned up with a large parcel.

Jimmy Silver glanced at it as he followed Grace into the School House.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"The theatrical stuff," explained Putty. "I've bought the whole shoot at the costumer's. He had just what I wanted. I'm going to my study to practise now. I'll drop in on you presently."

"As Bootles?" snorted Arthur Edward Lovell.

"You bet!"

"Look out for squalls if you do."

"Oh, I'm going to take you in, you know."

"Rats!"

The Fistical Four went to their study, not very pleased. Putty was comparatively a new fellow at Rookwood, and the Co. agreed that he thought much too much of himself for a new fellow. They did not believe for one moment that he could "make up" as Mr. Bootles sufficiently convincingly to "take them in," and if he tried it on, and failed,

they agreed that it would be for his own good to make an example of him.

"What about your lines, Jimmy?" asked Raby, as they sat down to tea. "Bootles said tea-time, you know."

Jimmy Silver grunted.

"How could I do lines when I was playing cricket?" he said.

"Better ask Bootles that!" chuckled Newcome.

"I'll do them after tea," said Jimmy. "I don't suppose old Bootles will say anything, he's really a good sort. Pass the sosses, and never mind the lines!"

The Fistical Four were hungry, and they devoted their attention to tea, which was not finished when Tubby Muffin rolled into the study, with a fat grin on his face.

"I say, Jimmy—"

"Look after the cake!" said Lovell.

"I'm not after your blessed cake!" said Muffin indignantly. "I came to tell you about Putty."

"Well, what about Putty?"

"He's making-up in our study!" chuckled Muffin. "I say, he's imitating old Bootles, and he's doing it jolly well! He's got just old Bootles' cackle when he speaks. Higgs and Jones minor are chortling no end. Jones says if Putty came into the Form-room like that, he wouldn't know him from the real Bootles' bird!"

"Rot!" growled Lovell. "He couldn't take this study in! Let that cake alone, you fat bouncer!"

Tubby Muffin had come with news, but he had a hungry eye on the cake. Lovell picked up a cricket-stump, and Reginald Muffin retired from the end study with a grunt, and without any cake. Lovell kicked the door shut after him.

"I'll keep this stump ready for Putty if he comes here playing the goat!" he said. "I can jolly well tell him—"

Tap!

"Come in!" sang out Jimmy Silver.

The door opened.

The Fistical Four stared at the figure that presented itself in the doorway.

Either it was Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, or his double.

The juniors jumped up.

Prepared as they were for Putty's impersonation, they were not prepared for this.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Lovell, in astonishment.

"Silver!"

"Hallo!" said Jimmy.

"What—what? How dare you address me in that familiar and disrespectful manner, Silver!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!" roared Lovell. "Have his whiskers off! You silly ass! Do you think we believe you're old Bootles? Have him down!"

"What—what? Upon my word— Yaroooooop!"

With one accord the Fistical Four rushed upon their visitor, and he came to the floor with a bump, with the four juniors sprawling over him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Genuine Article!

"A H! Ah! Ow! Ooooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Give him beans!"

There was a roar of laughter in the end study, accompanied by a roar of anguish from the Fistical Four's unhappy victim.

Along the passage came a crowd of juniors, curious to know what the uproar was about.

At the sight of Jimmy Silver & Co. and their victim there was a howl of astonishment.

"Are you potty?" shrieked Conroy. "What are you doing to Mr. Bootles?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't Bootles!" chuckled Lovell. "It's a dear old practical joker asking for trouble! Bump him!"

"Help! Yoop! Help! Bless my soul!"

"Don't he keep it up?" chortled Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have his silly whiskers off!" roared Lovell. "The silly ass! As if we'd believe that they were real whiskers! As if they look real! You could see a yard off that they were spoof!"

And Lovell grabbed the whiskers and jerked at them.

"Yaroooo!"

It was a fendish yell from the owner of the whiskers.

To Arthur Edward Lovell's surprise, they did not come off.

"I say, he's got these whiskers fixed on jolly tight!" ejaculated Lovell, in astonishment.

"Upon my word! Yow-ow! Wooooop! Help! Are the boys mad? Help!" Conroy rushed at Lovell, and dragged him off by main force.

"You burbling ass!" he gasped. "Let Mr. Bootles alone!"

"Tain't Bootles!"

"It is, you frabjous ass!"

"I tell you it's Putty!"

"He, he, he!" came from Tubby Muffin.

"Putty's still in our study!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Putty's in the study, making-up before the glass!" said Jones minor. "Did you think— Oh, my hat!"

Frozen silence fell upon the Fistical Four.

They jumped away from Mr. Bootles as if that little gentleman had suddenly become red-hot.

The dreadful truth dawned upon their minds.

If Putty was still in his study, evidently this visitor was not Putty. And if it was not Putty, it must be Mr. Bootles himself.

They had jumped to a conclusion too hastily, and it was the august person of their Form master that they had bumped on the floor, and it was Mr. Bootles' own genuine whiskers that Lovell had yanked at!

They could not speak.

They could only stand rooted and frozen, staring at Mr. Bootles as if they were mesmerised, while Conroy and Pons and two or three other fellows helped the Form master to his feet.

Mr. Bootles was breathless and stuttering, and he was in a state of towering wrath, which was really not to be wondered at.

"Bless my soul!" he spluttered. "You—you—you have dared to—to lay hands upon me—to lay hands upon your Form master! Bless my soul! F-follow me to the Head at once! You shall be expelled from Rookwood! You—you shall be flogged! You—you—you—"

Words and breath failed Mr. Bootles simultaneously.

"Oh, ye gods!" groaned Jimmy Silver, overcome.

"You—you audacious young rascals—"

"It was a mistake, sir!" put in Mornington. "They took you for somebody else, sir!"

"Nonsense! How could they take me for somebody else?" hooted Mr. Bootles. "Do not talk nonsense, Mornington!"

"We—we did, sir!" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"Nonsense!"

"You—you don't think we'd have laid hands on you, sir, if we'd known it was you?" gasped Raby.

"I—I'd sooner have cut my hand off, sir!" stuttered Lovell. And really he hardly exaggerated, in his horror at what had been done. "We—we thought it was a jape sir!"

"What—what?"

"We—we thought it was a chap got up, sir—private theatricals you know, sir!"

"What utter nonsense!"

"We—we thought so, sir!"

Mr. Bootles adjusted his glasses, which Oswald had fished from under the study table, and blinked at the Fistical Four. The horror they evidently felt, which showed plainly enough in their faces, placated him a little. He realised that there must have been a mistake, though their explanation sounded absurd enough to his ears.

"You couldn't think we—we meant it, sir—" murmured Newcome.

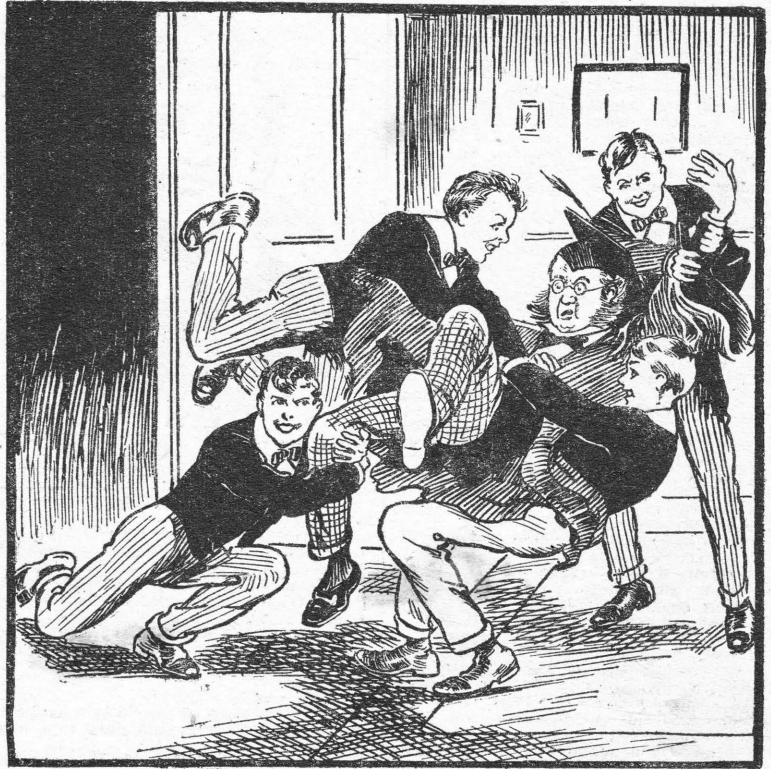
"I should be sorry to believe that you were capable of a deliberate assault upon your Form master," said Mr. Bootles, more calmly. "I accept your explanation, absurd as it sounds; but that does not alter the fact that you have hurled yourselves upon me, and dragged me over, and caused me a very severe shock! I shall cane you most severely!"

The Fistical Four were almost relieved to hear it. They had dreaded being marched into the Head's study, to listen to a sentence of expulsion from the school. A caning was light in comparison.

"Oswald, go to my study and fetch me my cane!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Yes, sir!"

Dick Oswald scudded away, and Mr. Bootles pumped in breath while he waited.



BUMPING THEIR FORM MASTER! Jimmy Silver & Co. sprang as one man at Mr. Bootles. "Bump him!" roared Lovell. "Have his whiskers off! You silly ass! Do you think we believe you're old Bootles?" "What—what? Bless my soul!" The Fistical Four's visitor came to the floor with a resounding bump, with the Co. sprawling over him! (See Chapter 2.)

The Fistical Four rubbed their hands in unhappy anticipation. When Oswald returned, Mr. Bootles took the cane and swished it.

"Now!"

What followed was painful—very painful.

It was seldom that Mr. Bootles caned very severely; but on this occasion he let himself go. By the time he had finished he was again breathless, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were almost doubled up.

"Let that be a lesson to you!" said Mr. Bootles grimly. "I came to your study, Silver, as you had not brought me your lines. Are they done?"

"Ow-wow No, sir!"

"They are doubled!" said Mr. Bootles.

And he tucked his cane under his arm and marched away. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another dolorously.

"Ow-wow-wow!" mumbled Lovell.

"Oh dear!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Tubby Muffin.

"I say, you fellows do look a set of lame ducks! He, he, he!"

Lovell directed a feeble kick at the fat Classical. Muffin dodged it easily, and chuckled again.

"Muffin," groaned Jimmy Silver, "tell Putty Grace we're coming to slaughter him—when we feel better! Ow!"

"He, he, he!"

The Fistical Four limped into their study and slammed the door to shut out the grinning crowd. And, although there was plenty of sympathy for them among the juniors, there was no doubt that the Rookwooders saw the comic side of the affair; and as the door closed on the hapless Co. the chuckles in the passage were loud and long.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Punishing Putty!

THERE was woe in the end study that evening.

There was not precisely weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, but there was something near it.

After being handed and rolled over by the juniors—even in an absurd mistake for somebody else—it was natural that Mr.

Bootles should have considered it an occasion for severity. And he had laid on the cane not wisely, but too well. Never before had the chums of the Fourth dreamed that their little Form master was so athletic.

It was time for prep, but instead of thinking of prep, the Fistical Four groaned and moaned, and groaned again, and said things.

"Who'd have thought the little beast had so much beef in him?" moaned Lovell.

It is much to be feared that Arthur Edward was alluding to his Form master in that disrespectful way.

"Yow-ow-ow!" was Jimmy Silver's answer.

"I don't blame Bootles," groaned Raby.

"After all, we bumped him over, and that idiot Lovell tugged at his silly whiskers!"

"I thought it was Putty and false whiskers! The little wretch shouldn't wear such funny whiskers! Ow!"

"Can't blame Bootles. But that villain Putty—"

"That fathead Putty—"

"That putty-brained scallywag, Putty—"

"That—that unspeakable, burbling jabber-wock, Putty!"

On the subject of Putty Grace the suffering juniors were eloquent. They thought of a surprising number of things to say about Putty. All the things they said were unflattering.

"We'll go to his study presently," said Lovell, in a gasping voice. "We'll snatch him bald-headed—"

"We'll scalp him!" groaned Newcome.

"We'll boil him in oil!"

"That'll be some satisfaction when we feel better!" mumbled Jimmy Silver.

"Putty's landed us in this, with his potty idea of making up as Mr. Bootles. Of course, he couldn't do it! We ought to have known that he couldn't do it. We ought to have known— Yow-ow!"

"Of course we ought!" moaned Lovell.

"But those whiskers—they're real, of course, as they wouldn't come off; but—but they're too funny for anything really, you know! Bootles oughtn't to go about in those whiskers in a s-ricious world like this. Ow, ow!"

"But Putty—"

"That idiot Putty—"

"I—I think I feel well enough to slaughter Putty now," said Jimmy Silver, at last.

The Fistical Four were not recovered yet, by any means; but they were eager for vengeance. They agreed in laying the whole blame of their mistake upon Putty Grace's head, and they were most heartily agreed that Putty Grace was to suffer for his sins.

On that, as the poet remarks, there was no shadow of doubt, no possible, probable shadow of doubt, no possible doubt whatever.

Arthur Edward Lovell selected a cricket-stump, and Raby opened the door. The Fistical Four emerged into the passage, where they were greeted by a loud chortle from a crowd of fellows.

"Feel better?" queried Conroy.

"Ow!"

"Looking for Putty?" asked Tubby Muffin. "I say, I gave him your message, and he's ready for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we're ready for him!" said Jimmy Silver. "What Putty's going to get will stop him from being funny for some time to come, I think. If he doesn't, he will get some more!"

"Follow on, you fellows!" called out Mornington. "Let's be in at the death!"

A crowd of Classical Fourth followed Jimmy Silver & Co. to Study No. 2.

Jimmy kicked open the door.

"Hallo!" came the cheery voice of Teddy Grace from within. "Walk right in, gents! Don't stand on ceremony!"

The Fistical Four certainly weren't there to stand on ceremony. They walked right in.

Then they stared.

Putty of the Fourth was evidently prepared for war.

His aspect was startling. He had fastened on leg-guards, and there was a rug tied round his waist in the style of a kilt. His head was defended by a fencing-mask, and a teatray hung down over his waistcoat like a breastplate. On his back was a thick cushion, and several other cushions and pillows were disposed about his person. He made a most extraordinary object in his peculiar armour, but clearly he was well defended. A large amount of hitting was required to get through his defences.

The Fistical Four blinked at him. Outside the study, the Classical Fourth crowded round the doorway, chortling.

Putty swung an Indian club in his hand lightly.

"Ready!" he said. "Pile in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chump!" roared Lovell. "Take that rubbish off!"

"What are you going to do with that stump?" questioned Putty.

"Give you a jolly good hiding!"

"Then I think I'll keep the rubbish on, thanks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver gave the humorist of the Fourth a glare.

"You've got to have it," he said. "I expected to find you got up more or less like Bootles—"

"My dear man, I'm not risking my props in a scrap. I've got up in my family suit of armour for this happy meeting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take it off!" roared Lovell.

"Rats!"

"Oh, go for him!" exclaimed Raby. "Pile in!"

Putty swung the Indian club.

"Look out for your nappers!" he said. "I know I couldn't brain you—even I can't perform impossibilities, but—"

Whiz!

Jimmy Silver caught up a cushion, and it whizzed at Putty, and smote him unexpectedly on the teatray. There was a crash and a clang, and Putty tottered. Before he could recover, the Fistical Four were upon him with a rush. The club clattered to the floor, and Putty clattered after it, with a loud crash from his armour.

"Wallop him!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Putty struggled in the grasp of the four newscame juniors. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome rolled him over, and Lovell put in some rapid work with the stump. Putty, with his nose grinding into the carpet, was remarkably well placed for a castigation.

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Go it!" yelled Tubby Muffin. "Give it to him, you fellows! He kicked me for just tasting his cake this afternoon! Bang him!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 239.



"PUTTY GRACE."

Whack, whack, whack!

"I say, not too hard, old chap!" murmured Newcome.

A cool voice came from the carpet:

"Oh, don't mind me, old nut! If the exercise does Lovell any good, let him rip!"

"M-m-mum-my hat!" stammered Lovell.

"Ain't I hurting you, you beast?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not at all, dear boy! Keep it up!"

"Yank those pillows off the silly dummy!" hooted Lovell. "Now, then, I'll make the beast squirm!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The stump whacked on Putty's garments with such effect that the dust rose from them.

"A dozen will do," said Jimmy Silver mercifully.

"Two dozen," said Lovell.

"Make it eighteen," said George Raby. "After all, the silly ass can't help being a born idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry, Putty, but it's your own fault," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, don't mind me!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Arthur Edward Lovell made it eighteen, and he put considerable vigour into every one of them. No sound of sorrow came from Putty of the Fourth, however, and the juniors crammed round the doorway were yelling with laughter all the time.

Lovell gasped when he had finished.

"There, I think that will be a lesson to the silly ass!" he said breathlessly. "You'll get the same again, Putty, if you play the goat any more, and get fellows licked."

"Done?" asked Putty calmly.

"Yes, you chump!"

"You might let a fellow get up, then."

"Let the ass get up," said Jimmy Silver, in wonder. "Blessed if he seems to mind!"

"Not at all," said Putty, rising and stretching himself, with a clank of his armour. "If you're quite finished, you may as well travel."

"Ain't you hurt?" roared Lovell.

"Not at all. I've got a pillow in my bags!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a yell from the passage.

Arthur Edward's face was a study. In the excitement of the moment he had not observed that Putty of the Fourth was plumper than usual, but he observed it now. "Why, you—you—" he stammered.

Putty of the Fourth stepped to the fender, and jerked out the poker from the bars of the grate. There was a fire in the grate, and the end of the poker was red.

"Good-bye!" he said.

"I'm going—"

"Exactly! Get a move on!"

"I'm going to wallop you!"

"Enough's as good as a feast," said Putty. "You might damage me next time. Mention it to me if this poker scorches your nose, Lovell—"

"Yaroooh!" Lovell jumped back. "You silly ass, put that poker down!"

"If it scorches you, Silver—"

"Yow! Keep off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. incontinently beat a retreat from Study No. 2. There was no arguing with a red-hot poker.

"Good-bye!" sang Putty sweetly.

"I—I—I!" gasped Lovell.

"You want some more of the poker? Here you are—"

"Yarooop! Keep off, you potty duffer!"

"And here—"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Fistical Four fled.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Putty's Triumph!

"REP!" said Newcome.

The Fistical Four were feeling better at last. The agony had abated, as Lord Macaulay would have expressed it. And the Co. turned their attention to preparation, and by the time that was over they had recovered some of their customary good humour.

"After all, it wasn't exactly Putty's fault," said Jimmy Silver considerably. "He's a silly goat, but it really wasn't his fault that we took Bootles for him. I think we can let him off."

Lovell granted.

"He ought to be licked for his cheek," he said.

"Let him rest," said Raby. "I'm rather glad he had that pillow in his bags, after all. What about the comedy?"

"I say, Jimmy!" Tubby Muffin looked in at the door. "I say, I can't get into my study."

"Stay out, then," suggested Newcome.

"That fathead Putty is keeping the door locked," said Tubby Muffin. "The silly ass thinks Lovell is still after his scalp. I've told him I'll protect him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"I don't see anything to cackle at, Lovell," said the fat Classical. "Look here, how am I to get into my study? Putty won't open the door—he won't even answer me!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"I'll speak to him," he said.

Jimmy Silver went along the passage and tapped at the door of Study No. 2. He turned the handle, but the door was locked, and did not open.

"Putty!" called out Jimmy.

"Hallo!" came Putty's cheerful voice from within, accompanied by a chuckle from Jones minor.

"You can open your door, fathead!"

"I prefer to keep it locked, thanks. You see, I'm not in my armour at present, and the poker's cold!"

"Ass! It's all right—pax, you know."

"What about Lovell?"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"I'll keep the door locked, I think!"

"Fathead!"

Jimmy returned to the end study a little perplexed. It was not much like Putty to keep in cover in this way, but apparently he did not feel safe in venturing out of his quarters.

"Go and tell him it's pax, Lovell," said Jimmy.

"Rats!" answered Lovell. "It isn't pax. I'm going to punch his silly nose when I see him!"

"My dear ass—"

"Don't jaw so much, Jimmy! Let's get on with the comedy."

"Look here, how am I going to get into my study?" demanded Tubby Muffin warmly.

"Blessed if I know," answered Lovell. "But I know how you're going out of this—on your neck, if you don't walk!"

Tubby Muffin gave a snort and departed, slamming the door after him. The Fistical Four settled down to the agreeable, though rather difficult, task of writing a comedy better than William Shakespeare's. It was nearly nine when they tired of the task, and decided to adjourn to the Common-room. Lovell tried the door of Study No. 2 on his way to the stairs. It was still locked.

He thumped on the panels.

"Putty, you ass!"

"Hallo, fathead!"

"You may as well come out and have your nose punched," said Lovell.

"Bow-wow!"

"Are you going to stay locked up till bed-time, you chump?" exclaimed Arthur Edward. "If you do, I'll punch your nose in the dormitory!"

"My dear man, you couldn't!"

"What?"

"Getting deaf?" asked Putty, through the door. "You couldn't, you know. You're not much good as a fighting-man, Lovell!"

"Why, you—you cheeky rotter!" roared

Lovell. "I'll jolly well mop up the dormitory with you to-night!"

"Bow-wow!"

Lovell bestowed a terrific kick on the door, and marched on down the passage with a red and wrathful face.

His chums were grinning.

"The cheeky ass!" said Lovell, breathing hard, as they came into the junior Common-room. "I'll jolly well show him whether I'm any good as a fighting-man! I'll make a squashed tomato of his blessed nose. I'll mop up the dormitory with him!"

"Lovell!"

"Oh, my hat!"

It was the well-known and rather squeaky voice of Mr. Bootles in the doorway.

Lovell spun round in dismay.

The little gentleman in the doorway blinked at him severely over his spectacles.

"Lovell!" he repeated sternly.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"You were uttering threats, Lovell. I have received a complaint from Grace——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"It appears, Lovell, that you intend violence towards Grace after lights-out to-night. Is this the case?"

Lovell gasped.

There was a murmur from the juniors in the Common-room.

"The—the awful sneak!" stuttered Lovell.

"D-d-did Putty—I mean Grace—did he tell you so, sir?"

"I heard your own remark, Lovell. But certainly Grace has acquainted me with the fact that you intend to use violence towards him in the dormitory."

"The beastly sneak——"

"What? What?"

"I told him I was going to punch his nose in the dormitory, sir!" mumbled Lovell.

"You are well aware, Lovell, that a disturbance in the dormitory after lights-out is distinctly contrary to the rules of the school."

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Lovell.

"I fear, Lovell, that the punishment I have already administered to you to-day has not properly impressed you with a sense of due subordination."

"Oh!"

The little Form master came into the room, taking a cane from under his arm. Jimmy Silver & Co. were grimly silent. They were amazed to hear that Putty had "sneaked" to Mr. Bootles, and inwardly they were resolving to visit condign punishment upon his head for that infraction of the unwritten laws of the Lower School.

"Lovell, I am afraid that you are incorrigible. It is my painful duty, Lovell, to administer further punishment to you."

Lovell grunted.

"Hold out your hand, Lovell!"

The juniors looked on in silence as Arthur Edward extended his hand for the cane.

Swish!

"Now the other hand, Lovell!"

Swish!

"I trust, Lovell, that this chastisement has brought you to a proper sense of discipline."

Lovell set his teeth. It hadn't—that was quite certain. Lovell's intentions towards Putty Grace at that moment were more Hunnish than ever.

The little gentleman turned to Jimmy Silver:

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir?" murmured Jimmy.

"I understand that you visited Grace's study, and were a party to assaulting him with a cricket-stump."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

"Is this the case?"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"Then hold out your hand, Silver!"

Swish!

"Raby! Newcome! You were parties——"

"Yes, sir!" mumbled the juniors.

Swish! Swish!

The Fistical Four rubbed their hands and glowered. The little Form master blinked at them over his spectacles.

"I trust this lesson will not be lost on you," he said. "Now, Silver, there is one other matter I must refer to. It appears that you are planning to perform a comedy——"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Jimmy.

"You have agreed to allow Grace to take the principal part on a certain condition——"

"P-P-Putty hasn't told you, sir?" gasped Jimmy Silver, in amazement.

"I am aware of the whole circumstances. Silver. It appears that you have agreed with Grace that he is to take the principal

part in the comedy on condition that he succeeds in making himself up as myself to the extent of deceiving you as to his identity——"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" muttered Jimmy, utterly confused. "I—I——"

"Very good," said Mr. Bootles. "And as Grace has fulfilled his part of the contract, you will be called upon to fulfil yours, Silver. All the Form are witnesses."

"Wha-a-at? I—I——"

"Oh crumbs!"

"My hat!"

There was a howl of amazement in the Common-room.

It was caused by Mr. Bootles.

That gentleman had taken hold of his whiskers, and with a jerk removed them from his face.

With another jerk he removed his eyebrows, and then his moustache. Then he whisked off a wig and a cap.

And then, though the make-up was still on his face, it was possible to recognise Putty of the Fourth.

The Fistical Four stared at him blankly.

"P-P-Putty!" stuttered Lovell.

"Tain't Bootles at all!"

"Putty, you spoofing villain——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington. "It's a fair catch! You took him for Bootles, and no mistake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver blinked.

There was no doubt that it was a fair catch. Even now Jimmy could hardly believe that it was indeed Putty of the Fourth who had walked into the Common-room, made up as the Form-master, and camed the Fistical Four one after another.

Putty grinned cheerfully.

"I think you'll have to admit that it's a catch—what—what?" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you spoofing rotter!" gasped Lovell. "You—you've taken us in, you—you——"

"Didn't I tell you I would?" chuckled Putty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm holding you to the arrangement, dear boy," continued Putty genially. "The principal part in our comedy is going to be a Bootles character, and I'm going to play it—what—what?"

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"It's a go!" he said. "I said so, and I stick to it. And now bump him!"

"Here, I say, that's not in the programme! Oh, my hat!"

Putty of the Fourth had gained his point, but that was not all that he had gained. He had gained also a record ragging, and the Fistical Four collared him and bumped him, and rolled him on the floor till the hapless impersonator yelled for mercy. After which Jimmy Silver & Co. felt better.

THE END.

(There will be another Splendid Long Complete Story, dealing with the further adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. and Putty Grace of Rookwood, entitled: "Mr. Bootles the Second!" by Owen Conquest, in next week's Bumper Number.)



(Continued from page 10.)

been disproved; and Chunky considered that he was entitled to belief. Indeed, he was feeling considerable indignation at his word being doubted.

Mr. Peckover put the fifty-dollar bill into his pocket-book, and restored the latter to his pocket.

The Hillcrest master spoke a few words in a low tone to Miss Meadows, and then took his departure.

That morning Cedar Creek was on its very best behaviour. Miss Meadows' usually sweet temper was a little tart.

Mr. Peckover was still keen to find out precisely who had been his rescuer, though his motives now were probably not all of kindness and gratitude.

When lessons were over, and the Cedar Creek crowd came out into the playground, the two claimants were surrounded at once by eager questioners, keen to hear the details of their respective yarns.

Frank Richards & Co. remained aside from the crowd. They were in a very perplexed mood.

"What on earth ought a chap to do about it?" Frank asked his chums. "I—I couldn't have stayed quiet while one of those young rogues bagged the money. But that part is all right. They haven't got the dollars; but——"

"No need to give yourself away old fellow," said Beaulere. "You don't want the cash, and Miss Meadows would be wrathful if she knew you'd disobeyed her. Let's keep mum."

Frank Richards nodded. In fact, it was not easy to see what could be done, apart from letting the rival claimants "rip."

"I say, Richards"—Chunky Todgers came up—"look here, you galoots ought to stand by me. Some of the fellows don't believe that I rescued Peckover at all——"

"You fat fraud, you didn't!"

"If you doubt my word, Richards——" began Chunky, with a great deal of dignity.

"Your word! Oh, my hat!"

"Chunkee wordee no goodie!" chimed in Yen Chin. "Flanky knowee that me always speake thuth."

"You rascally heathen!" growled Frank.

"Me, Yen Chin, good boy——"

"You lying heathen!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers. "I guess I'd have bagged that fifty but for you and your whoppers. Here, I say, Lawless, wharrer you at, you jay? Yaroooh!"

"Leggy goey!" yelled Yen Chin.

Bob Lawless had suddenly grasped the rival heroes of Cedar Creek in a powerful grasp.

Crack!

There was a loud concussion and two terrific yells as Bob brought their heads together.

Then Frank Richards & Co. walked away, leaving the rival heroes yelling and rubbing their heads, which was all the reward the heroic youths received, and certainly all they deserved.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's Gripping Long Story of the Chums of the Canadian Backwoods, entitled: "A Put-up Job!")

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