

A GAY DOG LOCKED OUT!



Cyril Peele, gay dog of the Rookwood Fourth, tells of his narrowest escape from expulsion.

LOCKED out of school at midnight! That was my fate on a bitterly cold night in January. And, to make matters worse, I was feeling sick and ill as I stood in the old quad and surveyed the silent school. A half-moon was casting fitful gleams over the school and sparkling from a million points of frost on the flagstones. Bare branches were rattling in the icy wind. And I stood alone and hopeless, doomed to get the bullet whether I rang to be let in or spent the night outside and was discovered absent in the morning.

I suppose I deserved it, for I had admittedly been out on the spree.

Three or four of us had gone to a Sixth Form man's party at the Peal o' Bells. Smythe and Tracy of the Shell, and Townsend of the Fourth and my pal Lattrey had been at the party. We all went out together. Our means of exit was by a small dormer window in the cloak-room on the ground floor, which we left unfastened for our return.

We hired a private room at the Peal o' Bells, and beside a roaring fire we had a good feed, followed by cigarettes and sherry—and a game of banker. The air grew thick with smoke. After a time I began to feel blue round the gills. The cigarettes and wine in the

not room had given me a peculiar feeling under the waistcoat, as though a little bird were fluttering about inside my works.

"My dear man, what on earth is up with you?" drawled Smythey, as he gathered in my pocket-money following a losing hand. "You're as white as a bally sheet."

"I—I feel a bit funny!" I gulped feebly. "I think, if you fellows don't mind, I'll get back to school and go to bed."

"Best place for you if you feel like that," yawned Towny, with rather a contemptuous grin.

So I tottered out and began to pad the hoof back to Rookwood. The cold air revived me for a minute or two, but not for long. Passing Croft Spinney I felt really ill. I sank down on a fallen tree, and for the next twenty minutes I heartily wished I was dead.

When I was able to walk again, I went on to the school, and it was there I discovered that the window had been locked. For a few moments I stood there dazed, looking blankly at the window. I could only suppose that some master or prefect had been on the prowl and, finding a window unfastened, had locked it. I wondered what I could do, and what the others would say when they arrived.

For about half an hour I stood and shivered in the black shelter of the school wall, waiting for the fellows. They seemed a fearfully long time coming. It was understood that we should all be back by midnight, as, of course, the inn was closed at that time. Misgivings thronged inside me, and slowly I began to realise the truth.

They *had* come back! It was they who had fastened the window. Thinking that I was already in bed, they had accidentally shut me out.

I was utterly done. I had, in fact, only one ray of hope. Quickly but silently I made my way to the Sixth Form windows on the ground floor. Carthew of the Sixth had been the host at our party, and I would have to wake him and get him to let me in.

I hauled myself on to Carthew's narrow window-sill and tapped cautiously on the glass with my knuckles. No answer! I tapped again. Carthew had evidently gone to sleep. I wriggled with suspense, and in doing so accidentally wriggled myself off the window-sill. I dropped on my back in the quad and let out a yell! I choked it back quickly, but the damage was done.

A window shot up.

"Who's that?" called out Bulkeley, the captain of the school.

I suppressed a groan. My number was up with a vengeance! Quickly I rushed into the shadows.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "That's someone breaking bounds."

The fact that I'm still at Rookwood is due wholly and solely to my presence of mind at that moment. My brain seemed to work under forced pressure. I knew Bulkeley would come out with a couple of prefects. He would come out by the side door, near which a big laurel bush grows. I was behind that bush in fifteen seconds.

It was then touch and go. If Bulkeley shut the door, and unlocked it again when he returned, it was the finish. Luckily he didn't. He left it ajar while he raced round the building with Neville and Catesby. And no sooner had they disappeared than I disappeared, too—up the back stairs. When they peeped into our dorm I was fast asleep—or looked it.

I wouldn't go through that experience again for twenty pounds.

THE END