

VICTOR NELSON'S GREAT 15,000-WORD COMPLETE
FOOTBALL STORY STARTS BELOW!

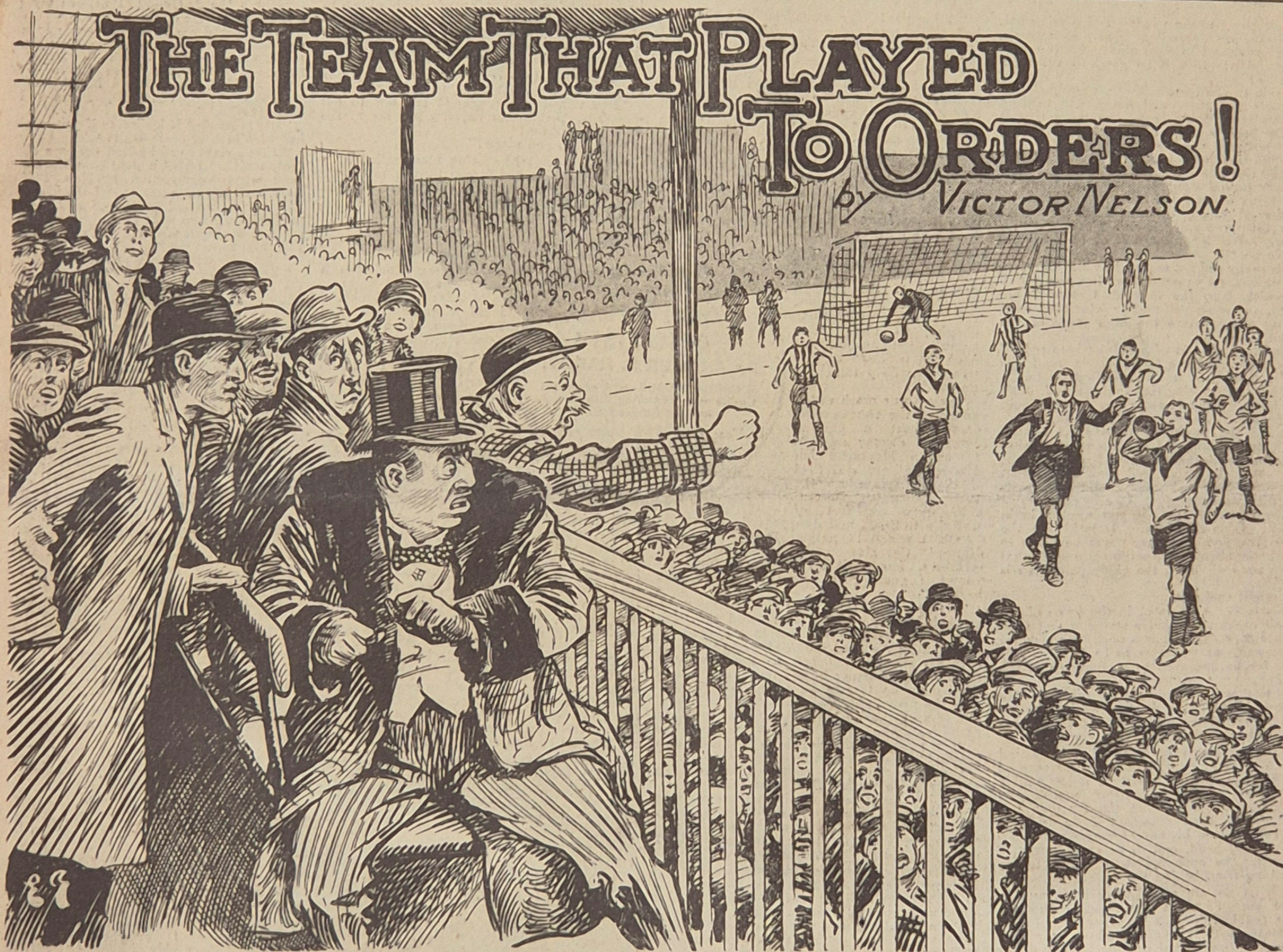
The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

EVERY MONDAY. SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

No. 1,285. Vol. XXVI.—New Series.]

THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending January 23rd, 1926.]



The Boy Millionaire Makes the Rascally Football Directors Writhe in Their Seats!

"Sorry I scored that goal, my dear old guys!" Don Darrel yelled down the megaphone. "My giddy foot slipped. But, cheer up! We haven't won yet!"

The 1st Chapter.

The Man at the Safe!

"HALLO! Who the dickens is this Abraham Darrel—a footballer?"

Jimmy Vasey, friend and tutor to Don Darrel, the "Boy with Fifty Millions," who was turning the pages of a well-known sporting pictorial, had given a sudden start.

Jimmy, Don, and the Redskin, Chuta, and also the shaggy Irish terrier, Snap, were quartered in a cosy private sitting-room of the Imperial Hotel, in the High Street, Prince-bridge, Midshire.

It was just after nine o'clock in the evening, and outside it was raining heavily, as it had been doing all through the day, confining the courages indoors.

Don Darrel, who had been inducing Snap to beg for lumps of sugar, looked up and grinned.

"A cousin," he said laconically.

Jimmy whistled.

"I might have known," he said, bringing the picture-paper over to Don. "He's rather older, but he's not unlike you, Don. Look!"

"Shucks! I hope I'm not like him in temper!" laughed the boy millionaire, as he studied the photograph in the centre of the yellow page. "My cousin Abraham was beginning to become quite a big noise in the footer world when his habit of getting riled quickly caused him to be suspended by the F.A."

"How did that happen, Donnie?" asked Chuta, who was growing interested.

"Ha, ha, ha! It—vaal, it did just sort of happen. From what I read at the time—I was in Mexico then—the opposing centre-forward of a team my cousin was playing against started to get fresh. Over and over again he fouled Abraham and backed at his ankles. Abraham told him politely he would dot him one on the nose if he didn't mend his ways. The other centre-forward didn't mend them; Abraham spoilt the appearance of his nasal

organ, and they had a beautiful set-to in the centre of the football pitch. There was trouble, and, as it was proved Abraham sort of struck the first blow, he received it in the neck from the F.A."

"The suspension must have been lifted," said Jimmy. "Do you see what it says under his photograph?"

Don Darrel nodded, and read aloud:

"Abraham Darrel, whom followers of football will recall as a very promising centre-forward. Darrel is on the point of again taking up the great winter game, and, if rumour is correct, this week-end will see him in Midshire, where it is thought likely he may sign on to play for the Midshire Wanderers."

"You secretive beggar! So this is why you dragged us from London to the Midlands at a moment's notice?" laughed Jimmy. "You can be as close as an oyster at times, Don. You have come here to meet your cousin?"

"You've guessed it, Jimmy. I've not seen him since he and his people came out to

Mexico to dad's ranch, ten years ago. He was about seven or eight then. Yes, he is like me, isn't he—the same handsome cast of countenance, I guess?"

"Oh, my aunt! Some people have strange ideas when it comes to judging their own personal beauty!" grinned Jimmy. "This is a surprise to me. I did not know you had any relations in England. And where did he get his name from?"

"Abraham? Oh, there's nothing strange about that," answered Don. "As a matter of fact, one of my middle names is Abraham, too, though I never use it. Our grandfather was a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln, so you can guess there were a few Abrahams dropped about in the family. But—Hurrah! I do believe it has left off raining at last!" he suddenly exclaimed, listening, with his head tilted towards the windows. "What about a stroll to stretch our legs?"

"You are right, Abo, my boy," said

(Continued overleaf.)

CYRIL PEELE IS FORCED TO SEE THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS!

Peele Pays the Price!



The 1st Chapter.
Unprecedented!

BUZZZZ! Mr. Dalton gave quite a jump. The Classical Fourth jumped as one man.

English history was the order of the day in the Rookwood Fourth Form-room. Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, had a way of making history quite interesting to his pupils, and the Form master and the Form were getting on quite nicely, when that sudden buzz of an electric bell came as an amazing interruption.

It sounded like the buzz of a telephone-bell, and in a Rookwood master's study the sound would not have been surprising. In a Rookwood Form-room it was very surprising indeed—in fact, astounding.

Buzzzz! The sound was repeated, loud and insistent. Then it suddenly stopped, and there was silence—a silence that might have been felt.

The Fourth Form fellows stared at one another.

Somebody, some practical joker of unusual nerve, was playing tricks in the Form-room during class, playing a practical joke and interrupting the lesson. The buzzing of the bell could mean nothing else. It was almost incredible—quite unnerving. Even Monsieur Moncedu, the French master, could not be ragged in class to quite that extent. And Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth, was about the last member of the Rookwood staff to be thus derided.

"My only hat!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell. "Some silly ass is asking for it. Look at Dicky's chivvy!"

Lovell was whispering that remark to his chums Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome. But in the deep, tense silence his whisper was heard all over the Form-room. Richard Dalton, familiarly known as "Dicky" in his Form, turned his eyes on Lovell.

"Silence!" he rapped out. "Oh! Yes, sir," gasped Lovell, turning very red.

"Someone has introduced an electric-bell into the room," said Mr. Dalton. "The boy who has this bell in his possession will stand out at once!"

He picked up a cane from his desk. The Classical Fourth looked round them, scanning one another in search of the hapless delinquent.

A good many glances were turned on Putty of the Fourth.

Putty's propensities as a practical joker were pretty well known, and his recklessness when in pursuit of a jape was fairly well known, too.

"That ass Putty, of course!" whispered Peele to Gower.

And Gower nodded. Mr. Dalton fixed his eyes on Teddy Grace. He knew Putty's humorous reputation as well as his Form did.

No one stood out from the class. The cane in Mr. Dalton's hand did not seem attractive perhaps to the practical joker, whoever he was.

"Grace!" rapped out Mr. Dalton. "Sir," answered Putty.

"Have you an electric-bell in your pocket?"

"No, sir."

"Or in your desk?"

"No, sir."

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood
appearing in the "Popular.")

Putty Grace plays up well in dishing the Black Sheep of Rookwood!

Putty of the Fourth had an injured expression on his innocent face. His look implied that he considered it rather hard to be suspected in this way.

But Putty's looks did not go for very much. Putty of the Fourth generally looked as if butter would not melt in his mouth. Indeed, it was his soft and innocent looks that had given him his curious nickname when first he came to Rookwood School.

Still, Putty, though an irrepressible japer, was known to be a veracious fellow. His word was not to be doubted.

If he said that there was no electric-bell in his pocket or in his desk, it could be taken for granted that that was so.

Mr. Dalton's searching glance left him and passed along the class, and every face was rather uneasy under that penetrating look.

Cyril Peele shifted under it very uncomfortably.

Peele was not in his Form master's good books, and he had too many sins upon his conscience to care about meeting Mr. Dalton's clear and steady eyes at any time.

"Peele!"

"Yes, sir," mumbled Peele sullenly.

"Is that bell in your possession?"

"No, sir."

"Stand up and turn out your pockets, Peele!"

The black sheep of the Fourth sullenly obeyed. This was not fair play, in Peele's opinion. Why couldn't Mr. Dalton take his word as he had taken Putty's? Peele did not remember, or did not choose to remember, that Mr. Dalton had caught him in untruthfulness times without number.

"It wasn't Peele," whispered Lovell to his chums. "Peele's not got the nerve. Dicky's off-side this time."

"Lovell!"

"Oh! Yes, sir," stammered Arthur Edward, realising that his stage whisper had again caught the Form master's ears.

"Take a hundred lines for talking in class!"

"Oh! Yes, sir."

Arthur Edward Lovell did not talk any more.

All eyes were on Cyril Peele as he turned out his pockets. But nothing in the nature of an electric-bell came to light.

Mr. Dalton set his lips.

"You may sit down, Peele. We will now proceed with the lesson. We have wasted enough time."

They proceeded with the lesson.

Apparently the incident was closed. Certainly, there would not have been much time left for English history had every fellow in the Fourth had to turn out his pockets for the Form master's inspection.

Once or twice, however, Mr. Dalton's glance turned on Putty.

But that humorous youth really seemed, like Caesar of old, to be above suspicion.

He had his book before him on the desk, and his hands held the book, and he had been sitting thus when the electric-bell had buzzed. Really, it seemed impossible that he could have been responsible for that startling buzz in the Form-room.

Putty, for once, was at the bottom of the class. He had deprived Tubby Muffin of his usual place in the last history lesson. Putty had attributed the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. to the fact that Henry was a dissolute monarch. This sample of Putty's humour had made the Fourth grin, but it made Mr. Dalton frown. Little jokes like this were quite out of place in the Form-room. So Putty had been sent to the bottom of the class, and he had remained there since. It was quite a pleasant change for Tubby Muffin not to be lowest in the class, and a change for Gunner not to be lowest but one. Still, being at the bottom of the class had

its compensations on a very cold day. It was not an honourable or distinguished position, but it was very close to the hot-water pipes. Tubby Muffin liked to lean his fat shoulders luxuriously back on the pipes, and he always looked hurt when his Form master told him not to lounge.

Buzzzz!

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell involuntarily.

It was really past belief.

The lesson had only been resumed three or four minutes when the electric-bell buzzed again in the Form-room.

Buzzzzzz!

Loud and prolonged and raucous it buzzed and buzzed, filling the Form-room with discordant sound.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Richard Dalton, and his brow was like thunder.

The bell ceased.

There was silence again—an awful silence. Mr. Dalton laid down his book.

"I command the boy who is ringing that bell to stand out before the class!" he thundered.

No answer.

"Very well," said Mr. Dalton, compressing his lips hard. "I shall make a search for the bell, and the boy in whose possession it is found will be caned with the utmost severity."

And Mr. Dalton, with a grim brow and a glinting eye, came in among the forms in search of the offender.

The 2nd Chapter.

After the Feast, the Reckoning.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. stood up, looking as meek as they could. All the Classical Fourth assumed their meekest expression—excepting Peele, who was scowling. Peele, for once in a way, had a clear conscience—the offending bell was not in his possession. But a meticulous search of Peele would have revealed something more offending than an electric bell—to wit, a packet of cigarettes, strictly forbidden to Rookwooders. So Peele, though he had a clear conscience on the subject in hand, had a worried mind on another subject not yet in hand. In turning out his pockets he had cunningly slipped that cigarette-packet through a hole in the lining of his jacket. But if Mr. Dalton handled the jacket, the smokes were certain to come to light.

Buzzzz!

It was the bell again.

Peele breathed more freely. The buzzing was at a considerable distance from him, at least.

Mr. Dalton stopped and looked round with a puzzled air.

Now that he was among the forms, he realised that the buzzing of the bell was at a little distance, and apparently not among the Fourth-Form fellows at all.

It was amazing; for unless the bell was in somebody's possession, how was it ringing? It could not be surmised that an electric bell was ringing somewhere "on its own," unless the Rookwood Form-room was haunted.

Buzzzz.

Mr. Dalton set his lips very hard.

Some of the juniors, meek as they looked, had hard work not to grin—their eyes glimmered, in spite of their meekness.

The situation was growing rather ridiculous.

Never had Richard Dalton been ragged in the Form-room like this before, and his expression showed that when the offender was discovered the results would be very discouraging for that offender.

Buzzzz.

Mr. Dalton stepped back from the class. He was quite aware now that the unseen bell was not among his boys.

He looked grimly round the Form-room. It really seemed as if some unknown person must be concealed in the room, buzzing that obnoxious bell to interrupt English history.

Mr. Dalton strode across to a tall, wall cupboard, where such things as easels and rolled maps were kept. He threw open the door and stared into the cupboard. The juniors watched him breathlessly. His grip was hard on the cane in his hand, and it looked as if woe would betide any playful youth discovered hidden in the cupboard. But no one was there. An easel was leaning on the interior wall—two or three rolled maps were visible, and some dusters—merely those and nothing more. Like Mrs. Hubbard, Mr. Dalton found the cupboard was bare of what he sought.

He turned back, quite perplexed. There was no other recess in the Form-room where a practical joker could have been hidden from sight. And yet—

Buzzzzzz!

It was the bell again.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Who—what—which—"

"It's that ass Putty, somehow," whispered Raby. "Look at him grinning like a Cheshire cat."

"He was waxy about Dicky putting him to the bottom of the Form," murmured Newcome. "He said he was going to make Dicky sit up for it. This is how he is doing it."

"But how?" asked Lovell.

"Blessed if I know."

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Dalton. The low murmur of whispering voices died away at once. The master of the Fourth was beginning to look rather dangerous.

Buzzzz!

Mr. Dalton almost spun round, as he heard that buzz behind him.

He was mystified.

The buzzing did not proceed from the cupboard; it did not proceed from the class. Whence did it proceed? So far as he could judge it came from the farthest unoccupied corner of the room; but surely that was impossible.

The Form-master's eyes were glinting; his temper was growing very hot. His face was flushed, too; he had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and he realised that he was cutting a rather absurd figure in the eyes of his boys. Serious as the matter was, most of the Classical Fourth found it difficult to suppress their grins.

"Some boy present is playing a foolish and disrespectful trick," said Mr. Dalton. "For the last time, I command him to stand out."

No one stirred.

Buzzzzzz!

Mr. Dalton strode away to the distant corner of the Form-room, following the sound, as it were. It was from that spot that the buzzing seemed to come, and he went to investigate. The juniors grinned as they watched him; it seemed to them impossible that the bell could be there. But there was one member of the Form who did not grin. That was Putty. His face became all at once extremely serious.

It was one of the Rookwood humorist's weaknesses that when he was on the trail of a jape, he never knew when to stop. He was always liable to carry a joke a little too far. And on this occasion, as on many others, Putty of the Fourth realised too late, that he had jested not wisely but too well.

Mr. Dalton halted in the corner, and stooped his head over the joints of the hot-water pipes.

The expression on his face became absolutely terrific, as he stretched his hand behind the pipes and lifted a little electric bell.

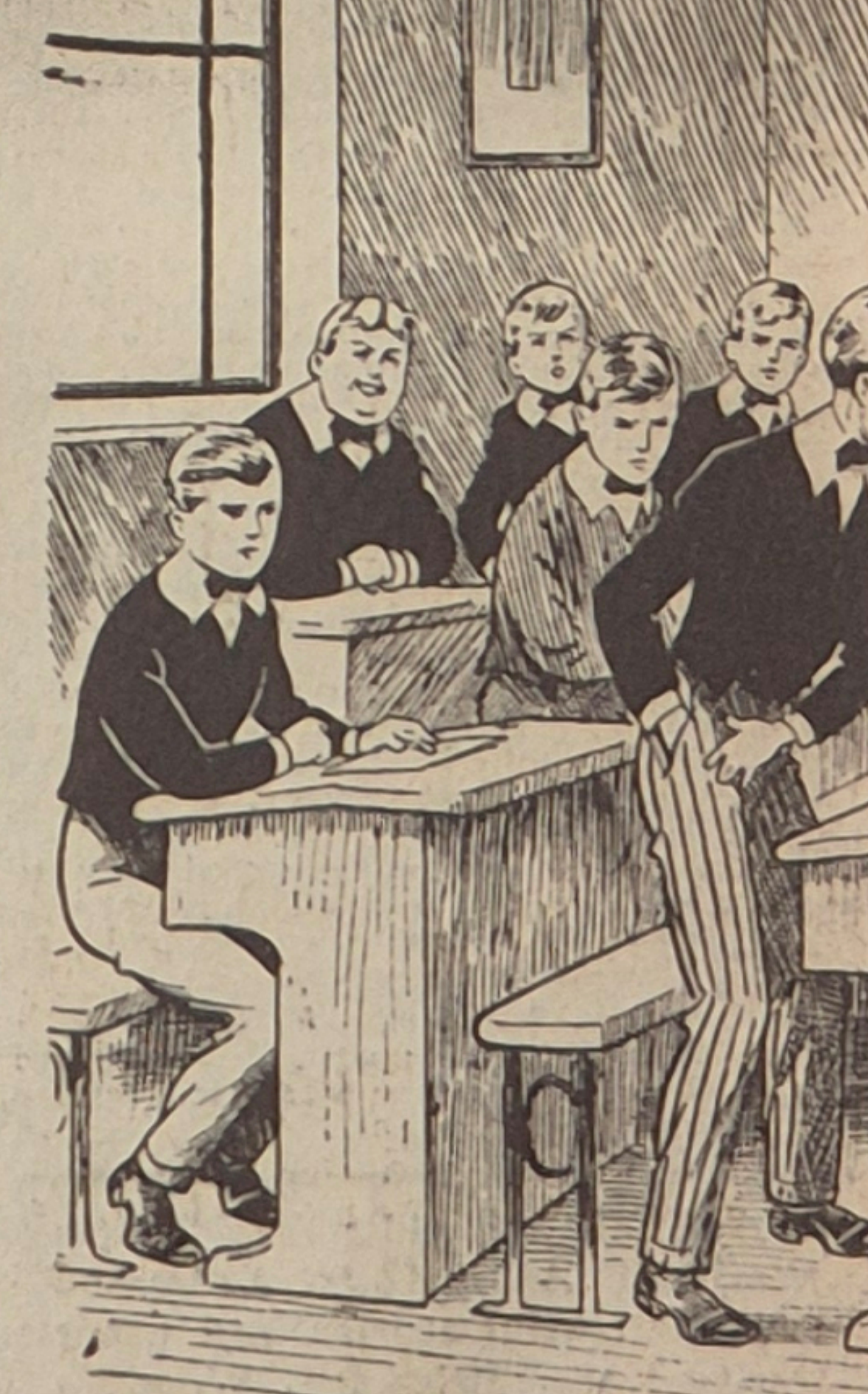
There was a gasp from the Form.

"He's got it!" murmured Mornington.

A wire was attached to the bell; a double insulated wire. Cunningly it had been trailed behind the hot-water pipes, next to the wall, out of sight. Mr. Dalton drew out the wire, slowly and carefully, and followed it up as he drew it out.

It led him back to his class.

Behind the Fourth—all looking round at



NOTHING DOING! All eyes were on Cyril Peele nature of an electric bell can

him—went Mr. Dalton, and he stopped at last exactly behind the form where Putty sat.

Putty's face was gravity itself now. He was feeling like Damocles of old, when the pendulous sword swung over his head by a single hair.

Behind the pipes at this spot was a tiny dry battery, hidden from sight till Richard Dalton spotted it and hooked it out. The double wire ran down under the pipes to the floor, and from the wall it ran under Putty's form. It was pressed carefully into a crack between two of the old oak floorboards quite out of observation till Richard Dalton jerked it up.

"Grace!"

"Hem!"

"Stand aside!"

Putty of the Fourth reluctantly stood aside. From under one of his boots came into view the end of the wire, attached to a little flat disc. In the centre of that disc was the button which Putty had been pressing with his foot whenever he wanted the bell to ring in the distant corner.

It was all clear now.

Richard Dalton gathered up the electric bell and wire, and battery, and disc. His face was grim. He carried Putty's paraphernalia to his desk and laid them down.

"Grace! Stand out before the class."

"Oh dear!"

"It was you who played this disrespectful trick, Grace, wasting my time and the time of the Form."

"Hem!"

"You denied having an electric bell in your possession, Grace, when I questioned you."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Putty at once.

"What?"

"You asked me whether I had a bell in my pocket, sir, or in my desk, sir," said Putty meekly. "I hadn't, sir."

Mr. Dalton gazed at him.

"That is quite true, Grace," he said, after a pause. "I acquit you of having deceived me, but your answer came perilously near to prevarication."

"Oh, sir!"

"You have wasted a quarter of an hour of the lesson, Grace. It would be unjust to detain the rest of the Form this afternoon to make up for lost time. You, however, will be detained the whole afternoon."

"Oh!"

"And now, Grace, you will bend over that desk."

With every trace of humour banished from his face, Putty of the Fourth bent over the desk. The cane rose and fell, with a sound as if carpets were being beaten in the Fourth Form-room.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

It was six, and every shot told, so to speak. Putty of the Fourth wriggled in anguish as the strokes descended. After the feast came the reckoning, and the reckoning was severe.

Mr. Dalton laid down the cane at last.

"You may go to your place."

Putty of the Fourth limped back to his place.

For the remainder of that morning no

one would have guessed that Putty of the Fourth was an irrepressible humorist, by his looks. He looked as if he found life an extremely serious proposition.

The 3rd Chapter.

Poor Putty!

"YOU asked for it, you know."

Thus Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Keep smiling!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly.

"You asked for it, and you've got it," said Lovell. "What are you grouching about?"

Putty of the Fourth did not look grateful or comforted. It was correct that he had asked for it, but he was evidently not pleased at having got what he had asked for.

It was a sunny, cold afternoon, and the Classical Fourth were playing the Modern Fourth at football that half-holiday. Putty had been down to play for the Classics. But the afternoon's detention knocked that on the head. Putty had to put in his half-holiday in the Form-room doing exercises.

For which reason he was grouching. Grouching did not make matters any better, but Putty seemed to find solace in it.

"It's rotten!" he said. "Why, it was no end of a jape! Dicky Dalton ought really to have laughed."

"Form masters don't like japes in a giddy Form-room," chuckled Raby. "You were a silly ass to try it on."

"Besides, we don't jape Dicky," said Newcome. "You should keep your fat-headed japes for somebody else."

"Well, he put me to the bottom of the class," said Putty. "I was bound to make him sit up. Look here, Jimmy, you can go and tell Dicky that I'm playing footer this afternoon, and you can't spare me. Dicky's a good man, and he never interferes with matches."

The captain of the Fourth shook his head.

"Can't be done," he said tersely. "You're getting a turn in a House match, Putty, but you're not indispensable, you know—half a dozen other chaps quite as good, and I should have to tell Dicky so if he asked me. Can't pull old Dalton's leg."

"You see, you asked for it," grinned Lovell. "I don't approve of japing old Dicky; and, really, it serves you right, Putty. Take my tip and let it be a lesson to you."

"Fathead!" answered Putty ungratefully.

The Fistical Four walked away to change for the football match, leaving Putty of the Fourth looking like anything but his usual cheery self. Although not, perhaps, so keen a footballer as Jimmy Silver & Co., he naturally wanted to play; and very much indeed he did not want to be detained.

He stood frowning at the sunny sky and the old Rookwood beeches, till a mocking chuckle interrupted his thoughts, and he glanced round at Cyril Peele. Peele was grinning.

"Your favourite Dicky has let you down this time—what!" chuckled Peele. "Do you like him quite so much as you did?"

Putty sniffed.

"You silly owl, Dicky's all right," he answered. "I expected trouble if he spotted me, and he did spot me. It's hard cheese, though."

"Serve you jolly well right," sneered Peele. "You were down on me hard enough for japing him. You and the rest, confound you!"

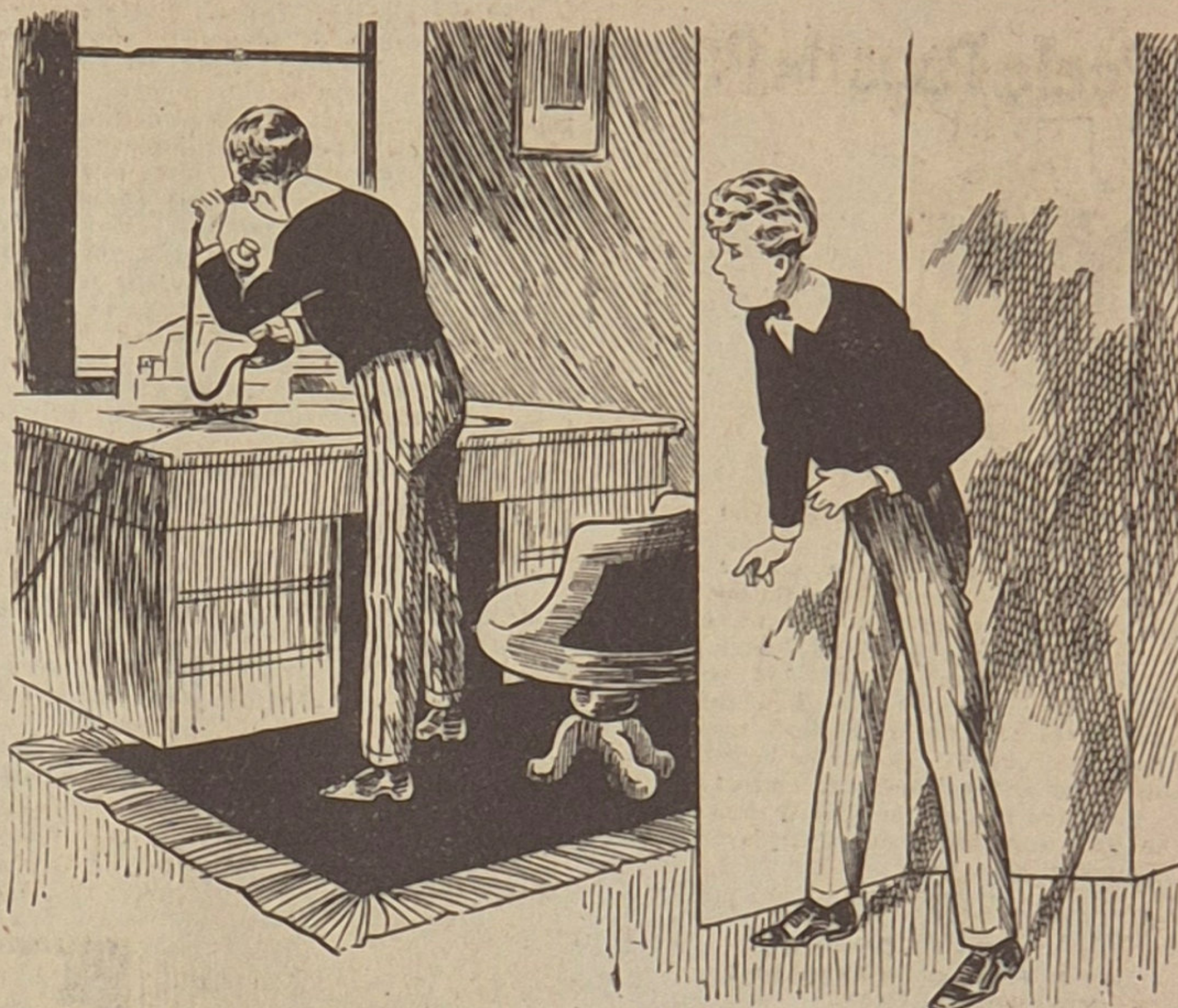
Putty's lip curled.

"That was a different matter," he said contemptuously. "You cut out a money-lender's advertisement from the Latcham paper, and dropped it where Mr. Dalton had been standing, and made out that he had dropped it there, and started a lot of talk about him. If we hadn't bowled you out and knocked the thing on the head, all Rookwood would have fancied that Dicky Dalton was hard up and going to money-lenders. That may be your idea of a jape, Peele; other fellows call it a dirty trick."

And having delivered that candid opinion, Putty of the Fourth turned his back on Cyril Peele and left him.

Peele looked after him with a scowl. His own dislike of his Form-master was intense, and he could not understand a fellow still liking and respecting Mr. Dalton, although he had received a severe punishment from him. Peele had been punished often enough, and had always thoroughly deserved his punishment, but every punishment had added to his dislike of "Dicky" Dalton. Putty of the Fourth was not built on the same lines. He grouched loud and long over his detention, but he was well aware that he had, as Lovell said, asked for it, and he did not even think of bearing malice on that account.

While the Classical Fourth footballers



THE WITNESS! "Latcham 101." Putty Grace jumped, behind the screen. So far it had not crossed his mind that the person who had entered the study was not Mr. Dalton. But the voice he now heard asking for a number was not that of Richard Dalton, master of the Fourth. It was the voice of Cyril Peele!

were going down to Little Side to meet the Moderns, Putty drifted rather dismally into the deserted Form-room.

There he had to remain while the rest of Rookwood was at leisure. Mr. Dalton came in and set him a detention task which was to last him till four o'clock.

Putty sat down to it glumly.

"You may leave the Form-room at four if your task is done, Grace," said the master of the Fourth.

"Thank you, sir."

"I am sorry that I have been compelled to detain you."

"So am I, sir!" murmured Putty demurely.

Mr. Dalton frowned and turned to the door.

"May I have my electric gadgets, sir, after I have done my task?" asked Putty respectfully.

Mr. Dalton looked at him.

"You may not, Grace. I have placed those things in my study, and they will be returned to you at the end of the term."

And with that the Form master left the Form-room, leaving Putty with a dismal countenance. The confiscation of his "gadgets" till the end of the term was the last straw, so to speak. Putty had looked forward to a little more entertainment with those gadgets, though not in the Classical Fourth Form-room. He was fed-up for the present with japes on Mr. Dalton.

Putty found it difficult to concentrate his mind on his detention task. After Mr. Dalton was gone he crossed to the windows and looked out into the Rookwood quadrangle. In the distance he could see the junior footballers on Little Side, and he had a glimpse of Bulkeley and his men playing Latcham Ramblers on Big Side. He caught sight of Mr. Dalton, in hat and coat, walking down to the gates, apparently going for a stroll. He noticed the Form master speaking to Peele, who was loafing by the beeches with his hands in his pockets, doubtless advising him not to slack about—advice which Peele often received and oftener needed. Peele stood scowling after the Fourth Form master when he walked away.

Putty returned to his desk, grunting; but his detention task did not tempt him. It occurred to him that as Mr. Dalton was gone out there was an opportunity of recapturing his electrical gadgets from the Form master's study. Probably Mr. Dalton had dropped it into some box or drawer, and would not think of them; anyhow, that chance could be taken. Putty had already sketched out a little scheme for making things entertaining for Mr. Greeley, the ponderous and pompous master of the Rookwood Fifth.

Putty of the Fourth did not stop to reflect; he seldom did. It was probable that Mr. Dalton would not be long gone; his half-holiday was not so leisurely as that of his pupils.

The detained junior looked out of the Form-room; the corridor was deserted.

Putty looked this way and that way, like Moses of old, and there was no one to be seen.

He left the Form-room and walked away quickly to Masters' corridor. In a couple of minutes he was in Mr. Dalton's study and had closed the door after him.

The "gadgets" were not to be seen. Putty glanced round the study, and looked in the bookcase and the table drawer. But the electric bell, the battery, and the coil of wire did not meet his eyes.

"Blow!" murmured Putty.

It was exasperating.

Mr. Dalton might return soon and Putty did not want to be caught in his study, especially when he was supposed to be in the Form-room working at Latin irregular verbs. He really did not want any more trouble with Mr. Dalton that day. But he wanted his electrical gadgets.

As he stood hesitating, there was a sound in the passage and a footstep outside the door.

Putty jumped.

He had not heard anyone coming along the corridor; but he heard the footstep at the door—he heard a hand on the knob.

His heart thumped.

The utter recklessness of his proceeding flashed into his mind as he heard that sound. Already he was in disgrace with his Form master, and now he was to be caught red-handed, as it were, in his Form master's study, rooting about in search of the gadgets which had been justly confiscated. At that moment Putty of the Fourth would have given a term's pocket money to be safe back in the Form-room, grinding away dutifully at his detention task.

There was no time for reflection.

Acting upon instinct, not upon thought, Putty of the Fourth backed behind a Chinese screen near the study window, and was out of sight when the door opened.

The footsteps came on into the study; the door closed.

Putty, out of sight behind the screen, scarcely breathed.

He had backed instinctively out of sight, because he simply dared not face Mr. Dalton. But he realised that if he was found out now matters would be worse instead of better.

He could only hope that Mr. Dalton would not remain long in the study. If he remained, Putty's game was up; but there was still a chance, and the hapless junior clung to it. He heard the footsteps cross quickly to the telephone, and heard the receiver taken off the hooks. He breathed more freely than. Apparently Mr. Dalton had come into his study to use the telephone, and it was quite possible that he would go when he had telephoned.

"Latcham 101."

Putty jumped, behind the screen.

So far it had not crossed his mind that the person who had entered the study was not Mr. Dalton.

But the voice he now heard asking for a number was not that of Richard Dalton, (Continued overleaf.)



Putty as he turned out his pockets. But nothing in the case to light.

Peele Pays the Price!



(Continued from
previous page.)

master of the Fourth. It was the voice of Cyril Peele!

Putty peered round a corner of the screen. Cyril Peele was standing at the telephone, the receiver to his ear, his back to Putty. And Putty of the Fourth grinned cheerily at Peele's back. It was only Peele—only a junior who had taken advantage of the Form master's absence to use the telephone! But as he heard Peele's voice over the transmitter, and caught on to what the cad of the Fourth was saying, the grin vanished from Putty's face and he grew grave.

The 4th Chapter.

A Trick on the Telephone!

"MR. SPINDLES!"
"Mr. Spindles speaking."
Peele grinned.

Putty of the Fourth, behind the screen, was no longer grinning. He knew the name of the Latcham moneylender, whose prominent advertisements appeared every week in the "Latcham Times."

Peele had spoken in his natural voice in calling up the exchange and asking for his number. But he was not speaking in his natural voice now. He had assumed a deep bass voice with considerable skill, evidently to give Mr. Spindles the impression that it was a man who was speaking to him. The meaning of that little piece of trickery was apparent as Peele went on:

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Spindles. Mr. Dalton speaking."

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Dalton! May I ask—"

"I have seen your advertisement in the 'Latcham Times,' Mr. Spindles. I am in need of some temporary accommodation."

"Oh, quite, quite."
"I am speaking from Rookwood School. I am master of the Fourth Form here."

"Quite so."
"My position, I take it, is a sufficient guarantee, Mr. Spindles. I require a loan of one hundred pounds. Can you possibly give me a call this afternoon to discuss the matter?"

"I have every wish to oblige you, Mr. Dalton. We do everything we can to oblige our clients," answered Mr. Spindles. "As a rule, however, business is conducted here in my office."

"I quite understand. But the circumstances are a little unusual," said Peele, still in the deep, bass voice. "In my position, I cannot possibly take the risk of calling at your office. You are, perhaps, acquainted with the name of Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood."

"Oh, yes, certainly. A very admirable gentleman, sir."

"Very, but extremely severe in his judgments, Mr. Spindles. To be brief, I cannot take the risk of allowing Dr. Chisholm to learn that I am obtaining temporary accommodation from a moneylender. I will be frank, and admit that it would cost me my position here."

Peele grinned over the telephone as he made that statement.

He could guess the effect that it would produce upon the Latcham moneylender.

Mr. Spindles was the kind of usurious gentleman who liked to meet "clients" who dared not allow their dealings with him to become known. He was known in Latcham as a "Shylock" and a very hard case, though at a first interview with a client Mr. Spindles could be as sweet as honey.

It was probable that a Form master in a public school, whose position depended upon keeping secret his dealings with Mr. Spindles, would have found Mr. Spindles a very exacting creditor! Mr. Spindles would not, perhaps, exactly have blackmailed him; but undoubtedly he would have put the screw on without mercy.

Behind the screen, Putty of the Fourth was as still as a mouse. He quite understood Peele's little scheme now.

It was a development of Peele's previous scheme, which had led to a ragging for the

cad of the Fourth. Indeed, Putty guessed now that Peele had "planted" that moneylender's advertisement on Mr. Dalton, with a view to this further development—a personal call from Mr. Spindles on the master of the Fourth! Peele's preliminary scheme had ended disastrously for him; but in his second move he seemed likely to be more successful. For Mr. Spindles' reply showed how very keen he was to get a gentleman in Mr. Dalton's position into his usurious clutches.

"My dear sir—my dear sir, I comprehend!" said the smooth voice of Mr. Spindles over the wires, some of the words coming to Putty's ears as he stood behind the screen. "I shall be glad to call upon you, if you so desire, after office hours. My office closes at four. If five o'clock would suit you—"

"Perfectly, Mr. Spindles."

"Then I will be with you, sir, at five o'clock," said the moneylender. "I shall be very happy to oblige you, Mr. Dalton. You will find my terms extremely reasonable, I hope, but we can arrange details when I call."

"Thank you, Mr. Spindles. Ask for Mr. Dalton, and you will be shown to my study. I shall expect you at five, and I am very much obliged."

"Not at all, sir—not at all."
Peele rang off.

very well for Mr. Dalton to tell him that Mr. Spindles' visit was a mistake—some unaccountable mistake on the telephone—a great surprise to the Form master—but all that Mr. Dalton could say would sound like lame excuses. If the Head knew that Mr. Spindles had called on a member of his staff to transact moneylending business, it might very likely cost Richard Dalton his position at Rookwood, in spite of any explanations that might be given. And the Head would know. As clearly as if the rascal of the Fourth had told him, Putty knew that Cyril Peele planned somehow to draw the headmaster's attention to Mr. Dalton's amazing visitor.

Putty was not much given to reflection, but he did some hard thinking now.

The outcome of his reflections was that he crossed to the telephone and rang up Mr. Spindles' office number at Latcham.

The 5th Chapter.

Looking After Dicky!

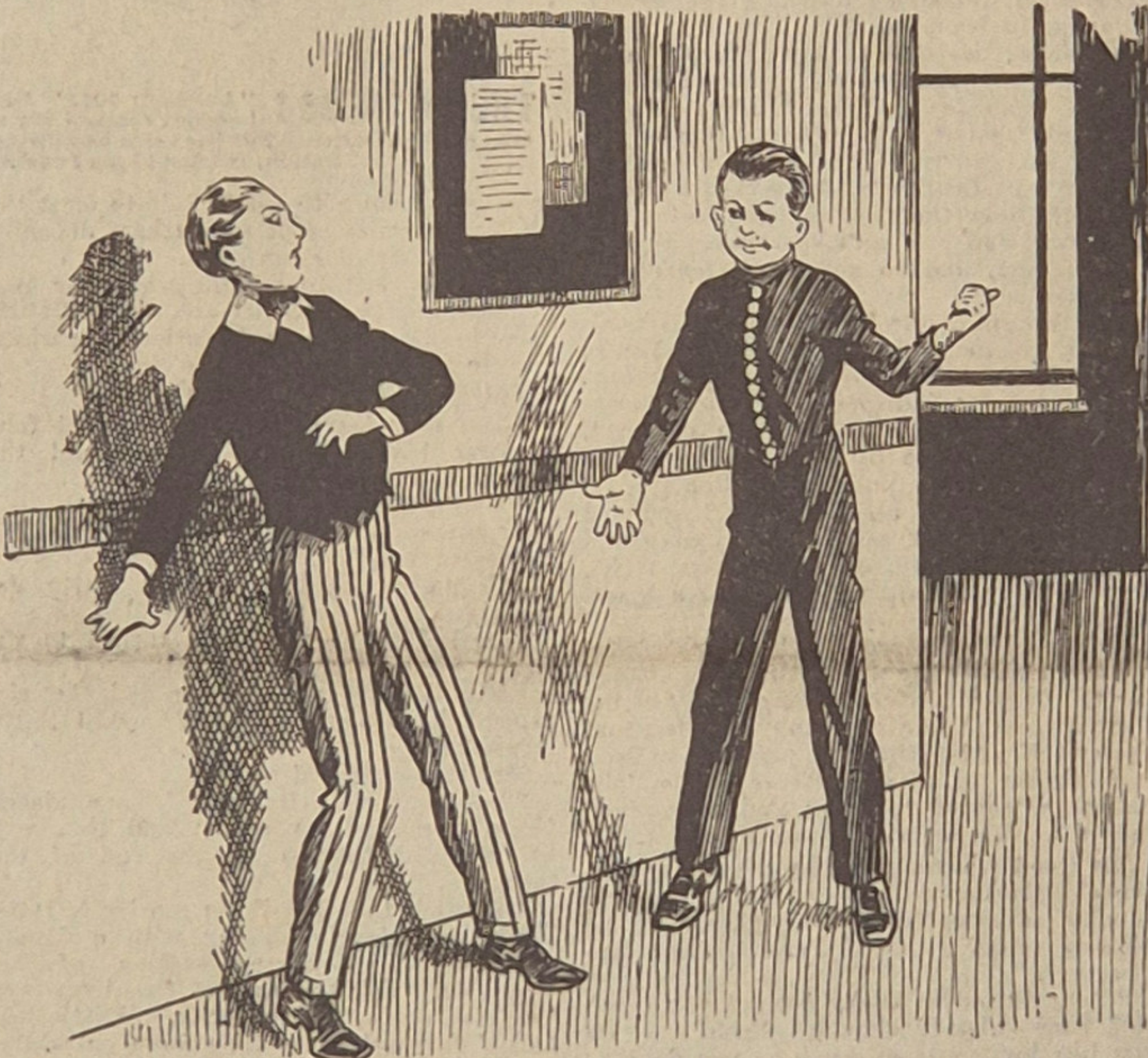
"GRACE!"

"Oh, my hat!"

It was a mutual surprise.

Richard Dalton, having returned from his walk, was coming to his study, when his study door opened and a junior stepped out quickly into the corridor.

Mr. Dalton stopped, and Putty of the Fourth stopped.



UNPLEASANT NEWS FOR PEELE! Cyril Peele staggered. "What—what—what do you mean? You fool!" he exclaimed shrilly. "You—you mean to tell me that Spindles asked for me, Tupper?"

And the gent's waiting in the visitors' room, sir," said Tupper.

He did not linger. The moment the receiver was back on the hooks, Peele darted across the study to the door and disappeared into the corridor, closing the door after him.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Putty.

Putty of the Fourth emerged from behind the screen.

"The awful rotter! The awful tick!" ejaculated Putty. "Great pip! If Spindles comes here to see Dicky Dalton—why, a dozen Rookwood men know him by sight—that fat old rascal! Why, it's enough to get Dicky the push!"

Putty whistled.

But for his accidental presence in the study no one would have suspected—certainly he never would have suspected—that Peele had borrowed Mr. Dalton's name to ring up the moneylender on Mr. Dalton's telephone.

Mr. Dalton himself would not guess that. The moneylender would call, and howsoever surprised Mr. Dalton might be by such a visit, there it was—the visit would have been made. Any Rookwood fellow who saw the fat man from Latcham might recognise him as the moneylender. In fact, it was absolutely certain that the visit would become known—Peele would take care of that. Peele would take excellent care to be on the scene and to point out the visitor as the Latcham moneylender. That was assured.

"Oh, my hat!" repeated Putty.

What was the result likely to be? Dr. Chisholm, worthy old gentleman as he was, was a stern old gentleman, severe, and hard to argue with or convince. It would be all

They looked at one another.

On Mr. Dalton's brow a thunderous frown gathered. Teddy Grace's countenance expressed blank dismay.

He had occupied five minutes on the telephone. Four would have seen him clear. The last minute had done it. Undoubtedly that Wednesday was not Teddy Grace's lucky day.

"Grace, what have you been doing in my study?"

"I—I—"

"Why are you not in the Form-room?"

"Hem!"

"Have you already completed your detention task?"

"Nunno."

"I think I can guess the reason for this surreptitious visit to my study," said Mr. Dalton sternly. "It was your intention to regain possession of the articles taken away from you in the Form-room this morning, Grace."

"Oh, dear! Yes, sir!" murmured Putty.

"Very good! Step back into my study!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Mr. Dalton entered his study and selected a cane from the table. Putty of the Fourth stood waiting with a dismal countenance.

It was for Mr. Dalton's sake that he had lingered in the room, to prevent the usurious Mr. Spindles calling at Rookwood that afternoon. But he could not explain that to his Form master. Peele's rascality excited his deepest contempt and disgust, but it was not for a junior to betray any fellow, however bad, to a master. Putty of the Fourth could say nothing in his own defence.

Besides, Mr. Dalton had guessed correctly—it was to recover the electrical gadgets that Putty had visited the study in the first place. Now he had to pay the reckoning.

Mr. Dalton swished the cane.

"I am sorry to have to punish you again, Grace, after already caning you to-day," he said.

Putty was about to say: "Same here!" but he decided that he had better not. Humour was out of place now.

"Hold out your hand, Grace."

Swish!

"The other hand!"

Swish!

"Now return to the Form-room and complete your task, Grace. If it is not completed satisfactorily I shall have no choice but to keep you in until it is completed."

"Yes, sir," murmured Putty of the Fourth meekly.

He left the study and returned to the Form-room, squeezing his hands under his arms. Twice that day he had felt the weight of Mr. Dalton's cane, once bending and now on his palms. Really, it was enough to make any fellow feel fed-up with Dicky Dalton. It was very much to Putty's credit that he was still feeling a friendly concern for the welfare of the Fourth Form master, and was still resolved to frustrate Cyril Peele's knavish tricks.

He set to work dimly on Latin irregular verbs.

It was nearly half-past four when his task was done, and he carried a neatly written paper to Mr. Dalton's study.

Richard Dalton was deep in papers when he arrived there. He was going to be busy till tea-time. He took Putty's exercise and glanced at it.

"Very good, Grace," he said icily. "You may go."

Putty went.

Mr. Dalton's manner lacked its usual geniality. Putty was in his Form master's bad graces now. He wondered what would have been Mr. Dalton's view had that gentleman known of the happenings on his telephone during his absence. But of that he knew nothing, and Putty certainly could not tell him.

As Putty of the Fourth walked away from the Form master's study he came on Cyril Peele.

Peele was loafing at the corner of the passage, with his hands in his pockets.

Putty grinned.

Evidently the cad of the Fourth was keeping one eye on Mr. Dalton's study. He did not mean to run any risk of missing the visit of the fat gentleman from Latcham.

"Waiting for somebody, old bean?" asked Putty.

"Find out!" replied Peele politely.

Putty smiled and walked on. He repaired to the Classical Fourth passage. The junior football match was over, and the Fistical Four had come into the end study to tea.

They smiled cheerily at Putty of the Fourth as he looked in.

"It's all right!" announced Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Is it?" asked Putty.

"Yes—we beat them."

"Eh? Beat whom?" Putty, in his interest in other matters, had quite forgotten the House match with the Moderns.

Arthur Edward glared.
"You silly owl! The Moderns, of course! We beat them by two goals to one!"

"It would have been three if I'd been there," said Putty. "But never mind that. I didn't come here to talk footer."

"Did you come to tea?" asked Jimmy, smiling. "Take a pew, old man, and take the cake!"

Putty sat down.

"I'll take a snack," he said. "I've got something to say to you chaps. It's rather important."

"More important than House matches?" asked Lovell sarcastically.

"Lots!"

"Well, you cheeky ass—"

"It's about Dicky Dalton—"

"Oh, can it!" interrupted Lovell. "I keep on telling you that you jolly well asked for what you got, and it serves you right! If you're thinking of another jape on Dicky, throw it away, or you'll get a ragging from this study! That's a tip!"

"I went to Dalton's study for my gadgets, and he spotted me when he came in," said Putty, unheeding.

"Licked?" asked Ruby.

"Yes."

"Well, that serves you right, too," said Lovell. "I think—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Putty. "I can believe anything but that!"

"What?" roared Lovell.

"Dear man, give your chin a rest for a few minutes—there isn't much time now before five o'clock."

"Anything happening at five o'clock?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Yes; and I want you to help."

"Go it!"

"Is it a jape?" demanded Lovell.

"Just that."

"Then cut it out! This study isn't japing Dicky Dalton; and my opinion is that the more he licks you the better it will be."

"Thanks for your opinion! Now dry up and let a chap get in a word," said Putty impatiently.

Lovell snorted, but he "dried" up at last, and Putty of the Fourth proceeded to explain. And the eyes of the Fistical Four grew wide with amazement as they listened.

The 6th Chapter. Awful for Peele!

CYRIL PEELE started a little.

Five strokes boomed out from the clock-tower of Rookwood.

Peele's heart beat a little faster.

At any moment now Mr. Spindles, of Latcham, might arrive at Rookwood, and ask to be admitted to Mr. Dalton's study. There was no doubt that the moneylender would keep the appointment—the arrangement had been explicit. And the moment the fat gentleman from Latcham appeared, Peele would spread the news that Spindles, the moneylender, had called on Mr. Dalton—and that news was certain to cause great excitement in the Fourth. While the astonished Form master was trying to make out why his visitor had called, Rookwood would be buzzing with the amazing news that the moneylender was there.

Mr. Dalton could give any explanation he liked; but facts were facts! It seemed to the cad of the Fourth that he could not fail to score. At the very least, Mr. Dalton's name would become a byword in the school—at the best, from Peele's point of view, he would be called over the coals by the Head.

It seemed to Peele that he had guarded every point, and that he could not fail to score; and, at all events, he was safe—no one could ever guess his complicity in the affair.

Yet he felt a little uneasy, and his heart beat faster as he heard the strokes of five from the clock-tower. The best-laid schemes of mice and men "gang aft agley," and Peele's cunning schemes did not always prosper—in fact, they seldom prospered. Still, this time he really did not see what was to go wrong.

There was a step in the passage, and Tupper, the house page, came along. Peele's eyes glinted.

He had no doubt that Tupper was going to Mr. Dalton's study to announce the arrival of a visitor. It did not occur to him that he was the person for whom Tupper was looking; he knew nothing of an interview between Tupper and Putty of the Fourth, and of a tip of a half-crown that had changed hands.

"Somebody called, Tupper?" asked Peele—he could not restrain his eagerness for news.

"Yessir," said Tupper. "In the visitors' room now, sir."

"Waiting there, is he?" grinned Peele.

"Yessir."

"What name did he give, Tupper? You can tell me, you know."

"Certainly, sir," said Tupper. "Name of Spindles was what he give me, sir."

Peele grinned.

"Spindles, eh? I think I've heard that name before."

"I've seed it, sir, in the advertisements in the Latcham paper, sir," said Tupper. "Moneylender's name, sir."

"Oh, yes—I remember now," said Peele carelessly. "Well, you'd better get on and tell Mr. Dalton."

Tupper stared.

"Tell Mr. Dalton!" he repeated.

"Yes; he wants to see Mr. Dalton, doesn't he?" asked Peele, staring in his turn.

"No, sir; he asked to see you."

"What?"

"Master Peele, sir—that's what he asked for, sir, and I come looking for you, sir—Master Grace said I should find you 'ere, sir."

Peele staggered.

"What—what—what do you mean? You fool!" he exclaimed shrilly. "You—you mean to tell me that Spindles asked for me?"

"Jest so, sir; and the gent's waiting in the visitors'-room, sir," said Tupper. And the page walked away, having delivered his message to Cyril Peele.

Peele leaned on the wall, gasping for breath.

He wondered if he was dreaming.

Certainly, it was he who had telephoned to Mr. Spindles, and made that appointment for five o'clock at Rookwood. But he had used Mr. Dalton's name—he had imitated a man's voice. He was certain that the moneylender had been deceived on that point.

What could it mean?

"Peele!" Arthur Edward Lovell came along the passage, with a very grave face. "Peele, you awful ass, what have you been up to? Do you think you can have moneylenders coming to see you at the school? If you've got any sense you'll get rid of that giddy visitor before he's seen."

Peele gasped.

"I haven't any visitor—I haven't—I didn't—I never—" he stammered incoherently.

"He's waiting for you."

"But I never—" stuttered Peele.

Lovell shrugged his shoulders.

"My advice to you is to sheer him off as sharp as you can," he said. "Some fellows have seen him already."

And Lovell stalked away.

Cyril Peele passed his hand over his forehead.

What did it mean—what could it mean? Spindles, the moneylender, had called to see him—him—instead of Richard Dalton! How could his cunning scheme have gone wrong to this extent? Had he, in some

only too well what that would mean for him.

"I—I tell you—"

"Oh, rats!" said Jimmy; and he walked away, leaving Cyril Peele to his terror.

Peele suppressed a groan. Something had gone wrong—frightfully wrong—that was clear. The only thing that remained, for him to do was to get rid of that awful visitor at the earliest possible moment, hoping and trusting that Mr. Spindles would get clear of Rookwood without being noticed or recognised.

Peele tottered away, feeling as if his limbs would hardly support him. But he was almost running when he reached the visitors'-room. Raby and Newcome were near the door of that apartment. They gave the cad of the Fourth expressive looks.

"You've done it now, Peele!" remarked Raby.

"Fairly done it!" said Newcome.

Peele did not heed them. He opened the door of the visitors' room and entered, closing the door quickly behind him.

It was deep dusk in the quad, and the light had not been turned on in the room. But Peele saw a figure standing at the window—a fat figure in an overcoat, holding a bowler hat in his hand.

Peele did not venture to switch on the light. Juniors were not allowed to use

Peele. "It's a mistake. I never telephoned—I—"

"Do you mean that some trick has been played on me?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Then I had better see the headmaster."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Kindly tell me where to find Dr. Chisholm!"

Peele gave a gasp of sheer terror.

"If a trick has been played, wasting a busy man's time, it is for the headmaster of this school to inquire into it. You see that, Master Peele?"

"For mercy's sake don't do anything of the kind!" howled Peele, his knees knocking together with fright. "I should get into no end of a row—it might be the sack for me—I—I—I—"

"It jolly well might!" said Mr. Spindles in a changed voice, which made Cyril Peele jump. "And serve you right if you did, you worm!"

Peele gazed at him open-mouthed. He was too dazed to try to understand how it was that Mr. Spindles, of Latcham, was speaking with the voice of Putty of the Fourth.

The door opened and Jimmy Silver stepped in. The light was switched on, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome followed Jimmy in. Peele glanced at them, and then his dizzy eyes fixed on Mr. Spindles. In the light he could see that gentleman quite clearly now—and he could see that the face was the face of Teddy Grace, with a large beard—one of the "props" of the Classical Dramatic Society—fastened to his chin.

Peele stared at him dizzily.

Putty of the Fourth cheerfully took off the beard and slipped it into a pocket. Then he peeled off the big overcoat, and revealed the fact that his plump appearance had been caused by a padding of several cushions. He grinned brightly at Peele.

"Yes, I think it might mean the sack for you, old bean, if the Head knew or if Dicky Dalton knew," he remarked cheerily. "It's rather lucky for you that the genuine Spindles hasn't turned up, what?"

Peele could only gasp. He felt as if his head was turning round and round.

"You horrid worm!" said Jimmy Silver. "Putty spotted you telephoning to Mr. Spindles' office this afternoon, in Dicky Dalton's name. Do you understand now, you rotter?"

"Oh!" gasped Peele.

Putty chuckled.

"The Spindles man isn't coming, old bean," he said. "After you'd cleared out of Dicky's study I rang him up and told him it was a trick and that he wasn't wanted at Rookwood."

"Oh!" gasped Peele again.

"He was quite cross," grinned Putty, "but he's not coming, old scout—which is rather lucky for you."

Peele pulled himself together.

"You—you rotter!" he muttered. "So—so you were there—you heard me—"

He backed away to the door, but the sturdy form of Arthur Edward interposed.

"Not yet!" grinned Lovell.

"Look here," muttered Peele, "it—it was only a jape—"

"That kind of jape is barred at Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver. "You'd be jolly well sacked if the Head knew, but we're letting you off with a flogging."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You've got the cane, Lovell?"

"Yes; I borrowed it from Bulkeley's study."

"Bend over that chair, Peele!"

Peele panted.

"I—I won't! I—I—"

"Then you'll come to Mr. Dalton!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "You can take your choice, Peele!"

Peele's choice was quickly made. And for several minutes afterwards anyone passing the door of the visitors' room would have been surprised to hear a sound of steady whacking, as if someone was beating a carpet in that apartment.

Mr. Dalton never knew.

He remained quite unaware of what he owed to his loyal friends and protectors in the Classical Fourth.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were satisfied to do good by stealth, as it were. And there was no doubt that they had done good, for there was a sudden end of Cyril Peele's scheming and plotting. He realised that it was not good enough; the results had been altogether too painful for Peele.

THE END.

(It's a scream, boys! "Muffin the Merciless!" next Monday's ripping long complete story of the chums of Rookwood School. Don't miss it on any account. Order your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND to-day and thus make certain of obtaining it!)



AN EYE-OPENER FOR PEELE!

"Serve you right if it did mean the sack, you worm!" said Mr. Spindles, in a changed voice which made Cyril Peele jump. Peele gazed at him open-mouthed. He was too dazed to try to understand how it was that Mr. Spindles, of Latcham, was speaking with the voice of Putty of the Fourth!

moment of mental aberration, given his own name on the telephone, instead of Mr. Dalton's? If not, how could this possibly have happened?

"Peele!"

It was Jimmy Silver now. Cyril Peele gave him a haggard look.

"Peele, you ass!"

"I never asked the man to call," breathed Peele. "I don't know him. I've nothing to do with him! It—it's some awful mistake!"

"Then you'd better explain to him and sheer him off," said Jimmy Silver dryly. "He says you telephoned this afternoon—"

"Telephoned?" stammered Peele.

"Yes; and made an appointment here for five o'clock."

Peele fairly tottered. Was it possible that he was wandering in his mind, and had actually given his own name on the phone? So far as he knew, the Latcham moneylender had never heard of his existence; yet here he was, waiting in the visitors'-room, asking to see Master Peele!

"Tell him to go away, Silver!" muttered Peele. "Tell him it's all a mistake—tell him—"

"He's not likely to take that from me," said Jimmy Silver. "Tell him yourself. Are you off your rocker, Peele? Don't you know what it will mean for you if it's found out that you've got a moneylender visiting you, right here in the school?"

The wretched junior panted. He knew

the visitors' room without special permission, and the lighted windows might have caused attention to be drawn to the spot. Attention was about the last thing in the world that Peele desired at that moment.

Only one thought was in his mind—to get Mr. Spindles to go, to explain as quickly as he could that it was all a mistake, and to get him to go, only to get him to go—at once! If someone should come to the visitors' room and find him there with the moneylender! The bare thought of it made the cad of the Fourth sick with terror.

"Mr. Spindles!" he gasped.

The fat, overcoated figure turned from the window. But the face was deeply in the shade, and Peele saw it very dimly, little more than a large beard.

"Master Peele?" asked a sharp, high-pitched voice.

"Yes, yes—it's all a mistake—"

"I do not understand you, Master Peele. I am here to keep my appointment with you—"

"I—I made no appointment—"

"What? I repeat that I do not understand you, Master Peele! Did you not telephone to my office at three o'clock this afternoon?"

"Yes—no, I mean—"

"You made the appointment for five o'clock, after office hours. I am here. Now you tell me that it is a mistake! Does that mean that you do not desire to do business with me, Master Peele?"

"Yes—no, I mean— Oh dear!" gasped