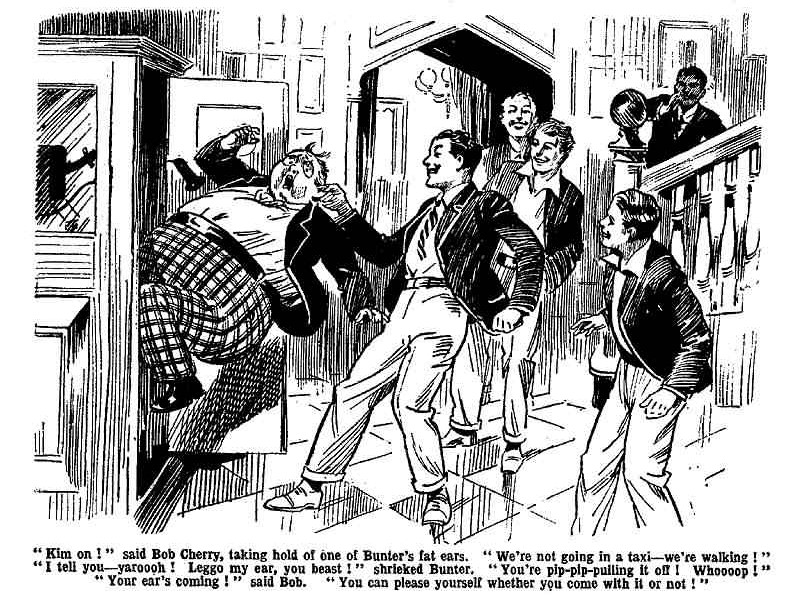
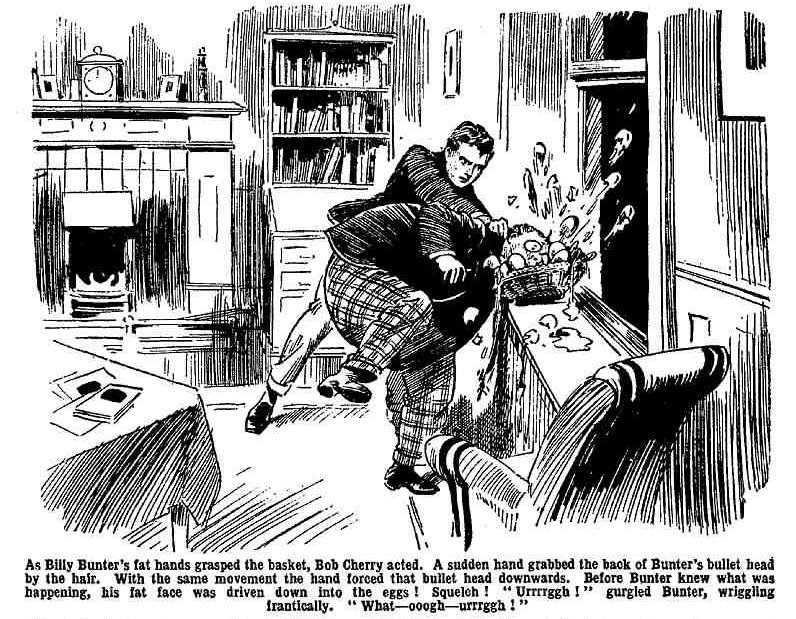
 **THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
  
 Putting Paid to Quelch!  
  
B**uzzzz!Billy Bunter jumped.  
 It was enough to make any fellow jump.  
 There was nothing surprising, of course, in the telephone bell buzzing at fort Wharton Lodge. Still, it was rather startling, when a fellow was just bending over the instrument and he was just about to begin when that sudden raucous buzz, announcing that somebody was ringing up, made him jump.  
 “Beast!” grunted Bunter.  
 Not only had it made him jump, but it was irritating and annoying. For Bunter was in a hurry to phone.  
 Harry Wharton & Co. were going to the pictures at Wimford that afternoon. So was Bunter. The Co. were going to walk. Bunter wasn’t.  
 Bunter did not see why he should walk a mile to save a taxi fare. He would not have to pay the fare, so why should he?  
 So Bunter had rolled down to form for the taxi. Once the taxi was phoned for, the beasts who wanted him to walk would have to make up their minds to it. He would present him with what diplomatic gentleman call a “fait accompli” — an accomplished fact which could not been got out of. But he had to put that phone call through before the Greyfriars Fellows spotted him, otherwise he was liable to be jerked away from the instrument by his back hair, and there would be no taxi for him. And the beasts might come down from Harry Wharton’s den any minute. There was no time to waste  
 Obviously, whoever was ringing up Wharton Lodge had to be got rid of—quick! If somebody came to take the call it was all up with Billy Bunter’s little game, and all up with the taxi. Having jumped, as the sudden ring startled him, Billy Bunter jerked off the receiver, and applied a large mouth to the mouthpiece.  
 “Hallo!” he squeaked. “Wrong number! Good-bye!”  
 From whom that call had come Bunter neither knew nor cared. All he knew and cared about was that the caller had to be got rid of, quick! He couldn’t phone for a taxi while some bothering ass was talking on the line, so the bothering ass had to be cut off.   
 “What?” came a clear, sharp voice over the wires. “Is that not Wimford one- double-O?”  
 Bunter jumped—for the second time! That sharp voice was more startling than the sudden buzz of the bell had been. For Bunter knew that voice! It was the voice of Mr. Quelch, his Form-master at Greyfriars School. What the thump was Quelch phoning Harry Wharton’s home for in the Easter holidays? Even a beak, in Bunter’s opinion, ought to have sense enough to know that fellows had enough of him at school and didn’t want to hear from him in the hols.  
 “Oh crikey!” gasped Bunter.  
 “What? Mr. Quelch speaking!” came the sharp voice. “Is that Colonel Wharton? I did not catch what you said. Please call Colonel Wharton to the telephone.”  
 That Billy Bunter had not the slightest intention of doing.  
 For one thing, Colonel Wharton had gone out in the car that afternoon, so he couldn’t. For another, he wanted the phone himself!  
 Holding the receiver in his fat hand, the Owl of Greyfriars glared at the instrument through his big spectacles. It was useless to cut off. Quelch knew that he had the right number, and would only ring again. Bunter had shut off the first ring fairly quickly, but another ring would bring Wells, the butler, to the telephone.  
 “Beast!” murmured Bunter.  
 “Eh? Who is speaking? Is that Colonel Wharton?” came Mr. Quelch’s voice, in puzzled tones.  
 Bunter had a brainwave. By answering as Colonel Wharton it was easy enough to get rid of Quelch. Making his voice as deep and gruff as possible, he grunted into the transmitter.  
 “Yes!”  
 “Colonel Wharton speaking?”  
 “Yes. What do you want?” grunted Bunter.  
 “Eh?”  
 “I asked you what you wanted.”  
 “Really, Colonel Wharton——”  
 “I’m in a hurry!”  
 “I regret, Colonel Wharton, if I have telephoned at an inconvenient moment.” came the voice of the Remove master of Greyfriars, in tones of polite sarcasm.  
 “All right! Good-bye!”  
 “Colonel Wharton, I scarcely understand this! I was ringing up to tell you that my health is now sufficiently restored for me to make a journey, and that I intended to accept your kind invitation to pass a few days of Wharton Lodge—”  
 “What?” howled Bunter.  
 For the third time Bunter jumped.  
 Quelch, his “beak” at Greyfriars, coming to Wharton Lodge in the holidays! That would not have mattered had not Billy Bunter been honouring the Lodge with his own fat presence for Easter. But in the circumstances it mattered very much—very much indeed!  
 Bunter had enough, more than enough, of beaks in term time. Beaks in the hols! Quelch had been ill, too. For the latter part of last term his place at Greyfriars had been taken by a temporary beak. Tarter-tempered than ever, very likely, and his temper was always tart enough. It was all together too thick.  
 “Did you speak, Colonel Wharton?”  
 “Look here—” gasped Bunter.  
 “Let us have this clear, sir!” came the shop voice, rather sharper now.” It was my intention to arrive by the six o’clock train at Wimford. If, however, my visit is in any way inconvenient——”  
 “Oh, yes!”  
 “Did you say yes, Colonel Wharton?” came in freezing tones over the wires.  
 “Yes—yes, rather! The fact is, it would be frightfully inconvenient at the present time!” gasped Bunter.  
 “That is enough, sir!”  
 There was quite a whirr on the wires as Mr. Quelch, at the other end, rang off.  
 “Oh crikey!” gasped Billy Bunter.  
 He grinned.  
 Quelch evidently believed that it was Colonel Wharton who had been speaking at the Wharton Lodge end. He would not, nine. Billy Bunter had effectually put paid to Quelch!  
 “He, he, he!” cachinnated Bunter.  
 “Hallo, hallo, hallo!” came a roar from the hall. “Here he is!”  
 The telephone cabinet in the hall of Wharton Lodge had a half glass door. Bunter blinked round in alarm as he heard Bob Cherry’s powerful voice, and sighted five faces looking at him through the glass. Harry Wharton jerked the door open.  
 “I say, you fellows!” gasped Bunter. “Don’t interrupt me? I—I—I’m just phoning to—to a dying relative!”  
 “What?” gasped Wharton.  
 “I’m not ringing up a taxi, old chap!” assured Bunter. “You fellows clear off and wait. I shan’t be a minute!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!” roared the Famous Five.  
 “Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Clear off while I speak to Quelch—I—I mean, my dying relative—”  
 Bob Cherry took hold of a fat ear.  
 “Kim on!” he remarked.  
 “Yarooooh!”  
 “Come on, you fat ass!” said Harry Wharton, laughing. “We’re not going in a taxi; we’re walking!”  
 “I tell you—yarooh! Leggo my ear, you beast!” shrieked Bunter. “You’re pip-pip-pulling it off! Whooooop!”  
 “Aren’t you coming?” demanded Bob.  
 “No, you rotter! Wow!”  
 “Well, your ear is.” said Bob Cherry cheerily. “You can please yourself whether you come with it.”  
 “Yarooooooh”  
   
  
Billy Bunter decided to come with his ear. A parting would have been altogether too painful. He rolled out of the telephone cabinet, roaring.  
 “Beast!” he hooted. “I say, you fellows I’m jolly well not going to walk, so there! If we were at Bunter Court we could have the choice of half a dozen cars!”  
 “Lets see Bunter off for Bunter Court while we’re in Wimford this afternoon!” suggested Frank Nugent.  
 “Hear, hear!” said Johnny Bull heartily.  
 “The hear-hearfulness is terrific!” grinned Harry Jamset Ram Singh, the dusky nabob of Bhanipur.  
 “Beast! Leggo my ear!” howled Bunter. “I’ll walk!”  
 He rubbed a red fat ear, and blinked wrathfully through his big spectacles.  
 “I say, you fellows——”  
 “Oh, come on!” said Harry Wharton.  
 “But, I say, isn’t Smithy coming it?” asked Bunter.  
 Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was also a guest at Wharton Lodge that Easter—a rather unusual guest.  
 “No, he doesn’t want to come.” answered Harry. “He’s got a book he won’t leave.”  
 “Well, look here, I wouldn’t leave Smithy behind!” urged Bunter. “You fellows go and tell him it’s a jolly good picture at Wimford. I’ll wait for you.”  
 “Fathead!”  
 “I’m not going to phone for a taxi while you gone to speak to Smithy——“  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “You’re jolly well not!” agreed Bob, and he made a grab at Bunter’s fat ear.  
 The Owl of the Remove jumped away.  
 “Beast! I’m coming!”  
 And Bunter came. Harry Wharton & Co. started cheerfully, in the bright spring sunshine, to walk to Wimford.  
 Bunter grunted and rolled after them. Still, he reflected that he had “put paid.” to Quelch. Had he not interrupted that telephone call, Quelch would certainly have come to stay at Wharton Lodge! Now certainly he wouldn’t! And that happy certainty almost consoled Billy Bunter for having to walk to Wimford.  
  
 **THE SECOND CHAPTER.  
  
 An Unexpected Meeting!**HERBEERT VERNON-SMITH stood at an upper window watching the juniors as they disappeared below. He had declined to join the party for the cinema at Wimford, on account of a book he was reading and did not want to leave. But when Harry Wharton & Co. left him, that book was very soon thrown aside.  
 The chums of the Remove were not suspicious, or you might have suspected that that book was only an excuse for staying behind.  
 The bounder had a faint sneer on his face as he watched from the window. At the same time, he was feeling a little remorseful and uncomfortable. He had a slight feeling of contempt for fellows who were so easily taken in; at the same time, he rather envied them for it. And he was not quite satisfied with himself and his intentions for that afternoon.  
 He stood for quite a long time out the window after the juniors had gone, with a clouded brow, uncertain in his mind.  
 The Bounder had been a week at Wharton Lodge, the guest of the captain of the Remove. Naturally, the scapegrace of the school had to be on his good behavior there. It was pleasant enough—the chums of the Remove were agreeable fellows, and they made it a point to be as agreeable as possible to Smithy, who was down on his luck these days.  
 There were plenty of occupations to fill up a fellow’s time—so long as his tastes were healthy and wholesome. That, really, was the trouble. Smithy had some tastes that were not shared by the cheery Co., and after a few days he was hopelessly bored.  
 “Rotten!” he granted, as he turned from the window at last.  
 He went downstairs, put on his straw hat, and strolled out of the house. He went slowly down the drive to the gate.  
 It was not often that the Bounder of Greyfriars felt ashamed of himself—it was a new and uncomfortable feeling. He tried to shake it off, but not quite successfully.  
 His lip curled at the thought of walking to Wimford, seeing the picture, teaing at the tea shop, and walking home. That made quite a pleasant afternoon for the other fellows. The black sheep of Greyfriars wanted something more exciting than that.  
 There were races at Elmbridge, a few miles away. Harry Wharton & Co. were not even aware of that. It was a matter of no interest to them. It was very interesting indeed to the Bounder.  
 He works slowly down the leafy lane towards Elmdale, where he was going to take the train for Elmbridge. His mind was not fully made up—which was unusual for Smithy, who generally knew very decidedly what he was going to do.  
 “Oh, my hat!” he ejaculated suddenly.  
 He stared at a figure coming up the lane. It was that of a rather tall young man, with a short, dark mustache over a hard, tight lipped mouth, and a pair of brown eyes that were as keen as a hawk’s. The Bounder knew him at a glance.  
 It was Mr. Smedley, the temporary master who had taken the place of Mr. Quelch at Greyfriars last term.  
 The Creeper and Crawler!” muttered Vernon-Smith. “What the thump is he doin’ here?”  
 Mr. Smedley sighted him the next moment.  
 He paused for a second in his walk, and the Bounder felt, rather than observed, that Mr. Smedley was a little disconcerted at meeting him face to face. But he came on after that almost imperceptible pause, and the Bounder smiled sarcastically as he raised his hat. At Greyfriars school, last term, the new master of the Remove had had a very distinct “down” on the black sheep of the Form, and had watched him like a cat. It seemed wildly improbable, yet the suspicion shot into smithy is mined, but it was on his account that Mr. Smedley was here in Surrey.  
 “Vernon-Smith!” said Mr. Smedley, with a nod, as he came up.  
 “Yes, sir! Fancy meetin’ you here!” said Smithy. His eyes glimmered with sardonic amusement. “I’m staying at Wharton’s place, near here, for the hols, sir. Perhaps you were coming to see me there, sir?”  
 “Certainly not.” said Mr. Smedley. “Why should you suppose so?”  
 “You’ve taken such an interest in me, sir, said the school broke up for Easter.” said the Bounder blandly.  
 The hard, sharp eyes glinted at him.  
 “I do not quite understand you, Vernon-Smith!” said Mr. Smedley. “What do you mean?”  
 “You see, sir I really owe it to you that I’m getting’ this holiday with Wharton! My father sent me to a tutor’s place for the holidays, and I cleared off instead of goin’ there——”  
 “Indeed!”  
 “.And the pater’s dropped in at the place and found it all out.” said Vernon-Smith.  
“It seems that you phoned to him, sir, and that made him a bit suspicious.”  
 “It was my duty to warn your father, Vernon-Smith, that I had reason to believe that you were disobeying his commands.  
 “Oh, quite, sir! And my father was very grateful; and I’m sure I am.” said the Bounder meekly. “Some masters forget all about their Form, sir, in the holidays, and it’s very kind of you to remember me like this!”  
 Mr. Smedley looked at him, long and hard. The Bounder’s manner was quite meek and respectful; but Mr. Smedley was quite aware that the young rascal was laughing in his sleeve.  
 “the pater was rather shirty about it.” went on the Bounder. “But, owing to some circumstances, he came round and gave me permission to spend the holidays with Wharton, instead of going back to the tutor’s. It’s rather an improvement, and I feel that I owe it to you in a way, sir, and that I ought to thank you for your kind interest in me.”  
 Mr. Smedley breathed rather hard.  
 There was nothing in the Bounder’s words to which he could; but the mocking glimmer in his eyes was very irritating.  
 “That’s why I thought you might be comin’ along to see me here, sir!” added the Bounder pleasantly. “As you take such an interest in me, sir, I thought you might want to be satisfied that I really was staying with Wharton, and not goin’ off on my own, as I did before.”.  
 “If that is intended for impertinence, Vernon-Smith——”  
 “Oh, sir! Not at all! Didn’t you know that I was staying with Wharton, sir?” asked Smithy.  
 Mr. Smedley did not answer that question. But the Bounder was quite aware that he had known.  
 He had no doubt that Smedley had been on the phone again to his father to learn the result of the millionaire’s visit to the tutor’s. If so, it was very probable that Mr. Vernon-Smith had told his son’s Form-master how matters stood.  
 The Bounder barely suppressed a grin. He was quite certain in his mind that the Creeper and Crawler, as the Remove fellows had nicknamed Mr. Smedley, was there to see how he was behaving himself. But the Creeper and Crawler had not caught him out this time!  
 “You are not with your friends this afternoon.” remarked Mr. Smedley.  
 “No, sir. They’ve gone to the pictures in town. I’m takin’ a stroll to admire the beauties of nature! Have you noticed the primroses along the lane, sir?” asked the Bounder.  
 Mr. Smedley’s eyes glinted. The Bounder was well aware that, at that moment, Mr. Smedley would have been very glad to box his ears. However, he could scarcely do so. But he had had enough of the Bounder’s scarcely veiled cheek, and he gave the junior a curt nod, and walked on his way.  
 Vernon-Smith grinned, as he also went his way. He was assured that Smedley was there on his account, in the hope, or, rather, the expectation, of discovering something to his discredit. Why the man was keen on his trail he could not guess, and he was very far from even dreaming of the true reason.  
 But about the fact itself there was no doubt. The   
 Bounder was glad that unexpected meeting had taken place at a safe distance from his intended destination that afternoon.  
 He worked on a little distance, and then turned his head and glanced back. Mr. Smedley was not to be seen in the winding lane.  
 But the Bounder’s keen eye scanned the hedgerows and the meadows behind him, and he glimpsed a grey soft hat showing over the hawthorns near the lane. Mr. Smedley was wearing a soft grey hat!  
 The Bounder gave a low whistle.  
 He knew, in a flash, that Mr. Smedley had drawn his own conclusions from seeing him without his friends that afternoon. He guessed—correctly—that Vernon-Smith was engaged upon some shady escapade.  
 The Bounder worked on.  
 The man was keeping an eye on him—to ascertain where he went, and what he was up to!  
 Smithy grinned.  
 Probably Mr. Smedley expected to see him disappear into the billiards-room at a “pub,” or something of the kind. Of the spots the new that there were races at Elmbridge, and suspected his destination.  
 Was the man, after all, following him! Upon the answer to that question, dependent whether Smithy carried out his plans for that afternoon.  
 The whistle shrieked, and the train moved  
 It was in motion when a tall figure suddenly crossed the platform, and was just in time to jump into the guard’s van.  
 Had not the bounder been keenly on the watch, certainly he would not have observed it; and, as it was, he could not have said for certain that that figure was Mr. Smedley’s.  
 But he knew that it was! The train rolled out of the station, and the Bounder laughed. Smedley was on the same train—he had no doubt of that—and his plans for the afternoon were changed! He had been half-ashamed of his intention, anyway, and was not wholly sorry to “chuck” it. And he had found an entertainment at least as amusing as going to the races—which was pulling the leg of the man who was shadowing him.  
  
 **THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
  
 Keeping it Dark!**  
“I SAY, you fellows!”  
 “Buck up, Bunter!”  
 “Shan’t!”  
 Bunter was tired.  
 He had worked nearly half a mile! Half a furlong was enough for Bunter—in fact, too much!  
 Moreover, he had more to carry than the other fellows! His circumference was at least twice as large, likewise his diameter. And he had packed away at least twice as much at lunch as any other fellow in the party. And the April afternoon was warm! For these reasons, and the still more important reason that he was slack and lazy, Bunter refused to back up.  
 He slowed down more and more, in fact.  
 “Is this a funeral march?” Johnny Bull inquired, with sarcasm.  
 “Beast!”  
 “for goodness’ sake get a move on, Bunter!” said Harry Wharton. “Shall we tip you over and roll you along like a barrel?”  
 “If that’s your manners to a guest, Wharton—”  
 Harry Wharton laughed. Bunter was a guest, it was true; but there was no doubt that he was a rather peculiar guest, with manners and customs all his own.  
 “Look here, I’m going on!” grunted Johnny Bull.  
 “Who’s stopping you?” growled Billy Bunter. “You’ll improve the landscape by taking your face away!”   
 “You cheeky fat snail!” roared Johnny.  
 “Yah!” retorted Bunter  
 “My esteemed and idiotic fat Bunter——” murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.  
 “Yah!”  
 Billy Bunter came to a halt. There was a style by the wayside, and the fat Owl of the Remove proceeded to rest his weary fat limbs on it. Johnny Bull gave a snort and marched on. He was fed up, for one! The other fellows rather shared his feelings, but they paused.  
 “Buck up, old fat man!” urged Bob Cherry.  
 “I’m tired!” said Bunter, with dignity. “I say, you fellows, let’s wait here. We can get a lift if we wait. Might pick up an empty taxi going back to Wimford.”  
 “I couldn’t pick up a taxi!” answered Bob, shaking his head.  
 “Why not?” demanded Bunter.  
 “Too heavy” explained Bob.  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “You silly ass!” roared Bunter. “I’m not asking you for any rotten jokes. After all I’ve done for you, I think you fellows might stand me—”  
 “We’re standing you!” said Bob. “you’re not easy to stand; but we’re standing you!”  
 “You silly fathead! I mean, stand me a taxi! Let’s wait here for one! After all I’ve done for you——”  
 “The donefulness is not terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter.”  
 “That’s all you know!” said Bunter. “How would you like Quelch here in the holidays?”  
 “Quelch!” repeated Harry Wharton. “What about Quelch?”  
 “Oh! Nothing!” said Bunter hastily you  
 “Can’t say I should like a beak about in the hols.” s aid Bob Cherry. “is Quelch coming here, Harry?”  
 “I believe my uncle’s asked him.” answered Wharton. “He’s at Bournemouth now—you remember he was seedy, and was away in the term—we had the Creeper and Crawler in his place. I don’t exactly yearn for his jolly old society; but I should be rather glad to see him, all the same.”  
 “Glad!” snorted Bunter.  
 “Well, yes; because if he’s well enough to come here, he’ll be well enough to come back to Greyfriars. And that means that Smedley won’t come back.”  
 “Oh!” said Bunter. “That’s all right, of course. Quelch is a beast, but not such a beast as Smedley. I’d rather have him than the Creeper and Crawler next term. I’m glad he’s got well, so far as that goes.”  
 “Has he got well?” asked Nugent. “How do you know?”  
 “Oh, I don’t know!” Billy Bunter was not a bright youth. But he was bright enough to know that he had better keep dark that little trick he had played on the telephone at Wharton Lodge. At the same time, Bunter had his own inimitable way of keeping anything dark.   
 “Then what do you mean, fathead?” asked Frank.  
 “Oh, nothing, old chap! All the same, you fellows have had a jolly narrow escape of having Quelch here!” said Bunter. “It was a bit inconsiderate of your uncle to ask him, Wharton, while I’m staying with you.”  
 “What?”  
 “Well he might have known that I shouldn’t care for a beak about in the hols. But people are so selfish. If there’s anything I can’t stand, it’s selfishness.”  
 “Fan me!” murmured Bob Cherry.  
 “Still, he won’t come now, so it this was the s all right! With”  
 “How do you know he won’t come?” said Wharton, puzzled.  
 “That’s telling!” grinned Bunter.  
 “You blithering ass!” said Bob. “Why can’t you tell us?”  
 “Well, least said soonest mended.” said Bunter astutely. “Wharton’s fatheaded old uncle would be waxy, if he knew.”  
 “If he knew what?”  
 “Oh, nothing!” said the Owl of the Remove. “Still, you’d be jolly well landed with Quelch, I can tell you, but for my presence of mind. Considering what I’ve done for you, you might stand a fellow a taxi. But for me, you’d find Quelch there when you got back from the pictures! How would you like that?”  
 The juniors stared at Bunter, and then exchanged glances. There was something rather mysterious in this  
 It was true that none of them felt exactly overjoyed at the idea of their Form master paying Wharton Lodge a visit. They had a great respect for Henry Samuel Quelch, the Remove master of Greyfriars; but they did not revel in his society. Still, as Wharton pointed out, if he was well enough to visit Wharton Lodge, it showed that he would be well enough to come back next term; which was a consummation devoutly to be wished! But how Billy Bunter could possibly know anything about his intentions was a mystery—which had to be solved. Wharton’s face was growing rather grim. It was obvious that the fat Owl had been “on” to something.  
 “What have you been doing, Bunter?” asked Wharton quietly.  
 “Nothing, old chap.”  
 “Have you been prying into the letters?” said Bunter were only. “I opened that one for Smithy the other day by mistake, as I told Smithy! As if I wanted to know what Vavasour had to say. The beast kicked me——”  
 “How do you know anything about Quelch, then?”  
 “I don’t know anything about him, of course! Nothing at all!”  
 “Then how do you know he won’t come?”  
 “Well, he couldn’t very well, if he was told that it was frightfully inconvenient—”  
 “What?” gasped Wharton.  
 “Not that I told him!” said Bunter hastily. “I haven’t spoken to him on the telephone at all.”  
 “On the telephone?”  
 “Not at all, old chap! He wasn’t just ringing up when I went to the phone to call a taxi——”  
 “Oh crumbs!” gasped Bob Cherry.  
“The crumbfulness is terrific!” murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.  
 “You—you—you unspeakable idiot!” gasped Wharton in dismay. “What have you been doing? What did you say to Quelch on the phone?”  
 “Nothing, old fellow! Not a word! He wasn’t there! It was somebody else rang up—my brother Sammy, to be exact. I mean, nobody at all rang up! That’s what I really meant to say. As for letting Quelch think that it was the stuffy old colonel speaking, the idea never entered my head at all. Still, I’m pretty certain that he would calm down. I could tell that by the way he snorted.”  
 “Snorted?”  
 “Like a rhinoceros! ” said Bunter. “Frightfully offended, you know! Serve him jolly well right! It’s a bit thick, having a Form-master barging in in the hols. Not that I spoke to Quelch, you know! He wasn’t on the phone! I haven’t heard anything about him since Greyfriars broke up! May be dead and buried, for all I know! Still, you’ve got out of having him here owing to my presence of mind, and I think you might stand a fellow a taxi. I really think that!”  
 The juniors gazed at Bunter.  
 “Well, my hat!” said Wharton at last. “You howling, footling, frabjous idiot! You dangerous maniac—”  
 “Oh, really, Wharton—“  
 “Luckily, I know Quelch’s number at Bournemouth— my uncle wrote it down in the telephone directory. Come on!”  
 “I say—yarrrooop!” roared Bunter, as Wharton grasped his collar and jerked him off the stile  
 He landed in the road, with a bump and a roar  
 “Whoop! Beast!”  
 “You fellows go after Johnny.” said Wharton. “I’ll join you later. I’ve got to take Bunter back first——”  
 “What for, you beast?” yelled Bunter.  
 “To phone Quelch—”  
 “Wha-a-at!”  
 “And tell him you’ve been pulling his leg!”  
 “Why, you—-you—you idiot!” gasped Bunter. “He would be fearfully waxy—”  
 “Buck up!”  
 “Shan’t!” groaned Bunter, in alarm and wrath. “ I tell you I never spoke to Quelch on the phone—and he didn’t think it was your uncle speaking—and I never said it would be frightfully inconvenient for him to come—and I never said— Whoop! Yarooop! Oh crikey!”  
 “You blithering, blethering owl!” roared Wharton. “You’ve got to set this right before my uncle comes in. I’m going to kick you all the way back.”  
 “Yarooh! If that’s the—wow—way you treat a guest—yaroop—I shall jolly well clear off—”  
 “Get going!”  
 “Beast! Leave off kicking me.” yelled Bunter, hopping wildly. “I’m going, ain’ t I? I—I want to go—I—I— yarooooooop!”  
 And Bunter went!  
 He started back for Wharton Lodge at rapid run, with Harry Wharton behind him letting out a foot whenever Bunter slacked down. Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh and Frank Nugent, grinning, walked on after Johnny Bull. Bunter had got out of that war to Wimford! He had got a run instead of a walk! It was a rapid run, too! Certainly this was not the way that guests were treated as a rule, in the best circles. But Billy Bunter was so very extraordinary a guest, that there was no help for it.  
 Hoping, skipping, and jumping, gasping and gurgling and spluttering, Billy Bunter bounded away on the home trail; with an active foot behind him helping him on his way. From the bottom of his fat heart the Owl of the Remove wished that he hadn’t displayed that wonderful presence of mind in dealing with Quelch on the telephone!  
  
 **THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**  
  
 **Spoofing the Shadower!**HERBERT VERNON-SMITH strolled out of the station at Elmbridge in the bright April sunshine with his hands in his pockets, his straw hat on the back of his head, whistling. He looked like a fellow carelessly up his keys, bed and enjoying himself that sunny spring afternoon. He was very careful not to glanced round or glance back. He was perfectly well aware that Mr. Smedley had been in his train, and the tide of the same station, keeping an eye on him. And the Bounder was cheerfully prepared to let him get on with it.  
 There were plenty of people coming out of the station, the races, though only a small country meeting, attracted the usual crowd. With so many people about a shadower’s task was not difficult, and Smithy make it as easy as possible. Outside the station there were a number of taxicabs, but there were plenty of people wanting them, as the race course was a mile out of the town. Smithy was in no hurry—he stood admitted for one to come back, his chief object to being to give Mr. Smedley plenty of time to spot him. While he was waiting he dropped the light cane he carried, and in stooping to pick it up, surreptitiously glanced back under his arm. He had a glimpse of a soft grey hat among the crowd of people in the station entrance, which was quite enough for him.  
 He waited over five minutes till an empty taxi came back, and then signalled to the driver and bagged a taxi. Standing with his hand on the open door, he spoke to the driver in quite a loud voice, as if he did not care if all the world heard him. As a matter of fact, he wanted Smedley to hear.  
 “How far is it to the race ground?” he inquired.  
 “About a mile, sir!” answered the taxi-man.  
 “Have they started?”  
 “Oh, yes, sir; the first race was at two-thirty. Get you there in a few minutes, sir.”  
 “Right-ho!” said the Bounder, and he stepped into the cab and slammed the door. The taxi buzzed away out of Elmbridge.  
 It took a road that was followed by a good many other vehicles. Looking through the little window at the back, Vernon-Smith so on other taxi buzcing out of Elmbridge behind him. He could not see who was in it, but he guessed—and grinned! He called to his driver.  
 “Is this a straight road for the races?”  
 “Straight as a string, sir.”  
 “Well, look here, go round a bit—take the first lane.”  
 The driver stared at him for a moment. Then he nodded.  
 “Right!” he answered.  
 And leaving the stream of vehicles that were bound the races, Smithy’s cab turned into a leafy lane and buzzed on under the branches of spreading trees.  
 The Bounder looked back again through the little window, and grinned. Another taxi had turned from the road after him.  
 He needed no more proof that the Creeper and Crawler was in that taxi, keeping him in sight. He could not see the occupant, but he knew that it was Smedley. He spoke to his driver again.  
 “Go round about a mile, and then get back to the road.”  
 “Right!”  
 Probably the driver was puzzled by those instructions, but it was no concern of his. He drove on, through winding lanes; and emerged into the main road at last.  
All the time the second taxi remained at the same distance in the rear. It had passed a dozen turnings or more, taking none of them, and if Smithy had doubted before, he could not have doubted now that he was being followed.  
 He sat grinning.  
 Certainly he was not going to the races with the Creeper and Crawler watching him! As a matter of fact, his mind had not been quite made up. His father had collected of that dreary vacation at the tutor’s, trusting him to behave himself in good company. Harry Wharton & Co. had given him a friendly welcome; but it was, of course, on the unspoken understanding that he played the game while he was at Wharton Lodge. Colonel Wharton had been very kind to him, certainly never dreaming that a schoolboy under his roof would think of going “blagging.”  
 The Bounder’s conscience had been far from easy, and it was rather a relief to him than otherwise to be prevented from carrying out his disreputable plans. And there was no doubt that he derived entertainment and satisfaction from pulling the leg of the man who was shadowing him, hoping to “catch him out.”  
 The racecourse was in sight in the distance when Vernon-Smith spoke to his driver again.  
 “Take the next turning,” he said, “and then stop!”  
 “Right, sir!”  
 No doubt the man was puzzled by the vagaries of his passenger. But he did as he was told.  
 The taxi whirled off the road again into a shady lane. The Bounder had a minute before his pursuer also turned the corner. A minute was more than enough for him.  
 He jumped out and shoved a ten shilling note into the surprised drivers hand.  
 “Keep on to the races.” he said swiftly. “That’s twice your fare! I’m not going, after all; but I want you to drive up to the entrance! Catch on?”  
 “Blowed if I do, sir!” answered the taxi-driver. “But I’ll do as you say.”  
 “Quick, then! It’s a bit of a joke on a chap who is following me—I’m pulling his leg!” said Smithy. “Buzz off!”   
 “Right!”  
 The taxi buzzed on again.  
 Vernon-Smith leaped into the trees beside the lane.  
 Behind a beech trunk there, screened by a mass of brambles, he watched the lane; and a few moments later grinned at the sight of the second taxi coming around the corner.  
 Keeping carefully in cover, he watched it; and as it passed he had a plain view of the man sitting inside—a tall man with hard features under a soft grey hat! It was Mr. Smedley!  
 The taxi was gone in a few moments, buzzing on after the now empty vehicle that was going to the race ground.  
 The Bounder chuckled.  
 Emerging from the trees, he walked back the way he had come to Elmbridge.  
 Mr. Smedley had gone on, nothing doubting that the scapegrace of the school was ahead of him in the first taxi; nothing doubting that he would run the young rascal down.  
 The bounder could imagine him rooting through the crowd, among the spectators and punters and bookmakers, looking for a fellow who was not there, and he chuckled with amusement.  
 But he lost no time!  
 Smedley could have only one object in what he was doing—to inform Mr. Vernon-Smith of the behavior of his son at Wharton Lodge. It was a puzzle to the Bounder that the man should be so keen on mailing him, but there was no doubt about that keenness. And it was necessary for the Bounder to approve an “alibi.”   
 If a report was sent to his father that he had been seen at Elmbridge races that afternoon, it was essential for him to be able to prove that he had been somewhere else at the time.  
 He did not waste a minute. He kept on the trot back to Elmbridge, and bagged another taxi without delay. Money was not so plentiful with Smithy as it had been at one time, but he did not think of that now, or care about it. He jumped into the taxi.  
 “The picture palace at Wimford, as fast as you can go!” he said. “Make her move!”  
 The taxi cut away by lanes, across the country to Wimford. The driver “made her move,” asked Smithy directed, and the ground was covered fast. It was not much after four o’clock when the bounder stepped out of the taxi at the cinema in Wimford, where he knew he would find the chums of the Remove—impeccable witnesses that he had not been at the races that afternoon.  
 “Hallo, hallo, hallo!” ejaculated Bob Cherry, feeling a tap on his shoulder as the lights went up after a picture  
 “Here you are, what?” drawled the Bounder.  
 “Smithy! You came after all, then?”  
 “Yes, here I am!”  
 “The gladfulness to see your ridiculous countenance is terrific!” said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.   
 “Isn’t Wharton here?”  
 “He went back with Bunter.” said Frank Nugent. “Haven’t you seen him?”  
 “No, I went for a run around the country before coming here! What’s the time?”  
 “Good! You fellows will remember that I was here with you, just after four, if necessary.”  
 “Eh! Why?” asked Bob, in astonishment.  
 “Here comes the giddy picture!” said the Bounder. And he sat down without answering Bob’s question.  
 It was quite a good British picture, and the juniors enjoyed it. But the Bounder did not give it a lot of attention. He was thinking of Mr. Smedley, probably still rooting after him on the racecourse at Elmbridge; and he found that mental picture more entertaining than the one of the screen.  
  
 **THE FIFTH CHAPTER.  
  
 Own Up!**“Beast!”  
 “This way!”  
 “Yah! Rotter! Wow!”  
 Billy Bunter did not want to enter the telephone cabinet in the hall at Wharton Lodge. But he had to. A pesky sure of frump feet landed him there with a roar.  
 “Wells!” called out Harry Wharton.  
 Wells, the Butler, was a grave and well-trained gentleman of middle age. Seldom did Wells’ composed face express emotion of any sort. But it registered a startled surprise now, as the colonel’s nephew helped his extraordinary guest to the telephone with his foot  
 “Oh! Yes, Master Harry!” gasped Wells.  
 “Has my uncle come in yet?”  
 “Not yet, Master Harry!”  
 “Right! You’ve got time, Bunter— buck up!”  
 “Shan’t!” gasped Bunter.  
 “I’ll get the number!”  
 “Beast!”  
 Harry Wharton opened the telephone directory. It was a local volume, but on the page assigned for that purpose, various numbers had been written, in among them Mr. Quelch’s number at Bournemouth. Having found the number, Harry rang up the exchange. As he did so, the fat Owl of the Remove made a strategic movement to retreat.  
 The bare idea of telling Mr. Quelch that he had “spoofed” him on the phone, made Bunter cringe with terror.  
 But there was no retreat for the hapless Owl. Holding the receiver with one hand, Harry Wharton grabbed Bunter’s neck with the other.  
 “Leggo!” howled Bunter.  
 From the Hall, Wells gazed at the scene in amazement from a little distance. Had, Wharton been there, he certainly would have wanted to know what it meant. Fortunately, the old Colonel was still out in the car.  
 “Take the receiver, you fat chump!” snapped Wharton.  
 “Shan’t!” gasped Bunter. “Think I’m going to tell Quelch? Why, you silly ass, he might whop a fellow——”  
 “All the better!”  
 “Beast! If he didn’t whop me here he would take it out of me at Greyfriars next term. You know he would!” gasped Bunter.  
 “Shouldn’t wonder!” said Harry. “Will you take the receiver? My uncle tom’s in it will be too late! I shall have to tell him what you’ve done so that he could ring up Quelch and explain. And he will kick you out of the house for playing such a potty trick——”  
 “Oh lor’! I—I say, why not keep put it dark?” groaned Bunter. “You don’t want Quelch here, any more than I do! Let him rip, old chap! See?”  
 “They’ve answered.” said Harry. “Take the receiver and explain. If you don’t, you’ve got to deal with my uncle!”  
 “Oh crikey!” groaned Bunter. He took the receiver and put it to his fat ear. Why Wharton couldn’t let well alone, Bunter did not understand. But it was clear that Wharton couldn’t, or wouldn’t, and everything was better than dealing with the grim-visaged old colonel. Colonel Wharton often gave the fat Owl rather grim looks; he was no admirer of Billy Bunter’s manners and customs. If you found out that Bunter had used his name on the phone and insulted an invited guest, there was really no telling what the colonel might do. Not only was he fairly certain to put Bunter out, but it was very probable that you might thrash him first.  
 “Who is speaking?” came a sharp voice on the wires. It was Mr. Quelch at the other end.  
 “Me, sir!” gasped Bunter.  
 “What? Who?”  
 “Bib-bib-bib-bib——”   
 “What?  
 “Bib-bib-bib-Bunter!” stuttered the fat Owl.  
 “Bunter! Indeed! Why have you rung ne up, Bunter?” Mr. Quelch’ s tone was politely inquiring. He did not seem particularly joyful at being rung up by William George Bunter in the holidays.  
 “I—I—I——” stammered Bunter.  
 “What?  
 “It—it was me, sir!”  
 “What do you mean, Bunter? I do not understand you. Make yourself clear.”  
 “Oh lor’!”  
 “What did you say?”  
 “I—I—I hope you’re better, sir. Hope you’re quite well, sir!” Bunter felt but this was a diplomatic beginning. “I—I hope you’ll be able to come back to Greyfriars next term, sir.”  
 “I have every hope of doing so, Bunter. Is that all?”  
 “Oh! No. That—that’s good news, sir. We—we loathe that man, Smedley. He’s an awful worm, sir——”  
 “Are you speaking of the gentleman who has temporarily taken my place at Greyfriars, Bunter?” came in freezing tones.  
 “Yes, sir; and——”  
 “Then kindly speak of him more respectfully. Or rather, do not speak of him at all. Have you anything else to say?”  
 Bunter gave Wharton an imploring blink. Wharton gave him a glare in return. The fat Owl squeaked into the mouthpiece.  
 “Oh! Yes, sir. It was me, sir!”  
 “What was you, Bunter. I fail to understand you.”  
 “Me that spoke on the telephone about an hour ago, sir” groaned Bunter. “It—it wasn’t Colonel Wharton at all, sir.”  
 “What?” came in a formidable roar over the wires.  
 As he heard it Bunter was glad that there was the length of a telephone wire between him and Henry Samuel Quelch.  
 “Oh, crikey!” groaned Bunter.  
 “Bunter! About an hour ago I telephoned to Wharton Lodge. Are you speaking from Wharton Lodge?   
 “Oh dear! Yes, sir. I’m staying here with Wharton, sir. He was so pressing about it. I gave up a lot of engagements and——“  
 “Did you take the call I supposed was taken by Colonel Wharton?”  
 “That’s it, sir. You see, the old fossil——”  
 “What?”  
 “I mean the old colonel, sir, was out, so I—I took the call, sir. And—--and somehow you—you fancied it was him speaking.”  
 “You told me so!” roared Mr. Quelch.  
 “D-d-did I, sir? What I meant was, that it—it wasn’t, sir. That’s what I really meant, sir!”  
 “You young rascal! You dared to—to—to——” Mr. Quelch seemed choking.  
“Then I have not spoken to Colonel Wharton at all?”  
 “Nunno.”  
 “You dared to tell me, in his name, that it would be inconvenient for me to accept his invitation!” gasped Mr. Quelch.  
 “That was only a—a joke, sir!” groaned Bunter. “J-j-just one of my little j-j-jokes, sir.”  
 “Upon my word!”  
 “I—I didn’t want to keep you away, sir. I—I don’t hate having beaks about in the holidays!”  
 “You young rascal! I shall request Colonel Wharton’s permission to chastise you when I arrive.”  
 “Oh lor’!”  
 “How dare you play such a trick?”   
 “I—I didn’t; I—mean*——* Oh crikey!”  
 “That’ll do, you fat chump!” said Harry, and he took the receiver from Bunter, who staggered away, gasping.  
 “Mr. Quelch! Harry Wharton speaking! I hope you will forgive Bunter that Semitic, sir. He told you what he had done, and came back at once to telephone and explain to you——”  
 This was putting it rather favourably for Bunter.  
 “A most unfeeling and stupid trick, Wharton. I supposed that it was your uncle speaking, and—and——“  
 “Bunter’s a silly ass, sir, and he’s tried to set it right—I pointed out to him what a fathead he was. Can I give my uncle a message, sir? He will be delghted to hear from you that you’re coming. He’s out now——”  
 “Oh, certainly, Wharton! I rang up this afternoon to say that I should arrive by the six o’clock train at Wimford. But——” Mr. Quelch seemed to hesitate. He knew now that it was not his intended host who had told him that his visit would be frightfully inconvenient. But some disagreeable impression, perhaps, lingered in his mind. “But perhaps I had better and up later, and speak to Colonel Wharton.”  
 There was a sound of a car on the drive.  
 “My uncle’s just coming in, sir.” said Harry. “Hold the line!”  
 “Oh very well, Wharton!”  
“ And—and—and if you’d be so awfully good, sir, as not to—to mention Bunter’s silly trick to him, sir——”  
 “Very well, Wharton! If the foolish boy is staying with you I certainly do not desire to cause any unpleasantness.”  
 “Oh, thank you, sir!” said Harry gratefully. “I’ve jolly well kicked him, sir—I mean he’s sorry he played that silly trick. I suppose you will be coming back to Greyfriars next term, sir?”  
 “Yes, Wharton. My health is sufficiently restored. Quotes  
 “That’s jolly good news, sir!” said Harry, so heartily that there was no mistaking his sincerity, though it was true that his satisfaction was largely founded on the unpopularity of the Creeper and Crawler. Mr. Quelch gave a little, gratified cough.  
 “I am glad that you are pleased, Wharton, my boy!”  
 “We shall all be jolly pleased, sir. Here’s my uncle! Uncle, it’s Mr. Quelch on the phone!”  
 Colonel Wharton took the receiver, and Harry left him to it. In the hall Billy Bunter gave him an uneasy blink.  
 “I say,” he mumbled. “If that old beast tells the other beast— Wow! Leggo my ear, you rotter! Wow!”  
 Harry Wharton went out to join his friends at Wimford. Billy Bunter was left rubbing his ear, and to his own devices. His host had had enough of that peculiar guest, for the present.  
  
 **THE SIXTH CHAPTER.  
  
 Mr. Smedley Blows In!  
  
B**ILLY BUNTER stared.  
 Or, to put it more correctly, he glared!  
 His glare might almost have cracked his spectacles!  
 “Is it going to bring beaks?” Bunter demanded of space.  
 Bunter could not help thinking that it was altogether too thick, as he stared, and glared, at the tall figure coming up the drive at Wharton Lodge.  
 Left on his own, after Wharton had gone to join his friends at the cinema, Billy Bunter had first gone up to Wharton’s den, where the Bounder had been left with the book he professed to be unable to leave when the other fellows went out.  
 Bunter was a gregarious animal, and, fascinating as his company was, he never liked being left to it. But he found Wharton’s rooms deserted. The Bounder had evidently changed his mind and gone off somewhere.  
 “Beast!” remarked Bunter, and rolled away in search of some of some other victim. He was feeling less disposed than ever to walk to Wimford.   
 Now that he was on his own there was nothing to prevent him from ringing up a taxi, except the circumstance that, being on his own, he would have to pay the fare! That was a lion in the path, so he did not think of a taxi!  
 Fortunately, it was not very far from tea time, and Miss Amy Wharton, the colonel’s sister, graciously—though perhaps not very enthusiastically—welcomed the fat Owl to tea.   
 The juniors were teaing at the cinema, and Miss Wharton’s company, though gracious and pleasant, was not exactly exhilarating to Bunter. However, that takes a good, and there were plenty of them; and Bunter told Miss Wharton about his school life—how popular he was, and how all the fellows were deeply attached to him, to the extent of almost scrapping with one another in their rivalry to bag him for the “hols.” Perhaps Miss Wharton, on her side, did not find the company exhilarating, for, after tea, she disappeared, and Bunter was on his own again.  
 He drifted into the hall, where he found Thomas, a youth in buttons. He entertained Thomas, for want of a better listener, with a description of the glories of Bunter Court, till Thomas, answering an imaginary call from Wells, dodged down the service staircase and escaped.  
 After which Billy Bunter posted himself at the tall hall window and watched the drive, wondering when the beasts were coming in. Colonel Wharton came through the hall and went round to the garage, and Bunter guessed that he was going to take the car to the station for Mr. Quelch, whose train was soon due. He would have offered to go with him, but for his dislike of the idea of meeting Quelch. That meeting, Bunter felt, could not be postponed too long. After the colonel had driven away, the fat junior stood blinking at the window, reflecting how bitterly, how rottenly, he was treated by fellows he had done so much for. And then, to cap and crown his utter disgust, he sighted a tall figure coming up the drive, and recognised Mr. Smedley, the temporary master of the Remove at Greyfriars.  
 Really, it seemed as if it was going to rain beaks!  
 Not only was Quelch coming, but here was Quelch’s substitute coming, also! As he was walking, and had no bag, it did not look as if he was coming to stay, which was something to be thankful for. Still, there he was, and Bunter blinked at him inimically from the hall window, mindful of several whoppings that Mr. Smedley had given him last term at school—though not so many, probably, as he had deserved!  
 Mr. Smedley, as he came up the steps, noted the fat face and glimmering spectacles at the hall window, which was open.  
 Bunter stared at him, not at all respectfully.  
 At Greyfriars he trembled at Smedley’s frown. But matters were quite altered now.  
 The news from Quelch showed that he was coming back to Greyfriars next term. So there would be no more Smedley there! The temporary master’s engagement, of course, terminated when the permanent master came back.  
 If Smedley wasn’t going to be at the school anymore—as obviously, now, he wasn’t, Bunter had nothing to fear from him. When Bunter had nothing to fear he was as bold as a lion.  
 So he stared at Mr. Smedley from the window, rather as if that gentleman was a stray dog that had wandered on the premises  
 “Oh! You are here, Bunter!” remarked Mr. Smedley, glancing at him.   
 “Looks like it!” said Bunter carelessly. He was not going to waste a “sir” on a man who could no longer cane him!  
 Mr. Smedley looked at him rather hard.  
 Bunter stared back coolly.  
 He wanted to make it quite clear that he wasn’t afraid of Smedley. Who was Smedley, anyhow?   
 “If you’re after Smithy——” went on Bunter, with a grin.  
 “What?”  
 “He’s gone out!” groaned Bunter. “Nothing doing.”  
 Mr. Smedley had been about to ring the bell. He paused, and stepped along a pace or two, towards the big window where Bunter was leaning his fat elbows on the sill and grinning out at him.  
 “Possibly, Bunter, you fancy that you may venture to be impertinent, now that you are not at school.” He said quietly.  
 Bunter yawned.  
 Yawning, in the face of a Form-master, was a thing that a fellow never ventured to do at Greyfriars. It was rather an agreeable thing to think of doing; but not a thing that a fellow could actually do. Now a Bunter could do it, if he liked—and he did!  
 Mr. Smedley’s cold hard eyes glinted.  
 “I think I shall have to teach you better manners next term, Bunter.” he said, in the same quiet tone.  
 “He, he, he!” Bunter changed his yawn into a fat chuckle. “I fancy not! “You see, you won’t be there”  
 Mr. Smedley started.  
 “What? What do you mean?” he exclaimed sharply.  
 Bunter grinned cheerfully. Smedley’s return to the school depended on whether Mr. Quelch was sufficiently recovered to resume his duties there. Evidently the headmaster had not yet notified Smedley. Bunter knew the facts, as it happened—and Smedley didn’t.  
 No doubt the fellow was keen enough to hang on to his temporary job, if he could. He was only one of those dashed tutors, supplied by the scholastic firm of Leggett & Teggers, and if he wasn’t wanted at Greyfriars next time he would be looking for another job. That was quite an amusing thought to Billy Bunter.  
 “I happen to know, you see.” drawled Bunter. “Quelch is coming back next term, see? So you won’t be there, Smedley.” Into the circumstances Bunter considered that he could venture to call the man Smedley, and he did.  
 Mr. Smedley compressed his lips hard. He was a short tempered man; but even a good tempered man might have been annoyed by Bunter’s impertinence. But he remained calm. Perhaps he was after information.  
 “Indeed.” he said. “you seem to be well informed, Bunter.”  
 “Not much goes on without my getting on to it, you know.” said Bunter complacently “The fact is, I’ve had a talk was Quelch on the telephone. He told me all about it.”  
 “Indeed!”  
 “We shall be a jolly glad to have him back.” remarked Bunter. He’s got his faults; but there’s nothing creepy or crawley about him. Not the sort of man the fellows would call the Creeper and Crawler! He, he, he!”  
 Mr. Smedley started again. Possibly this was his first intimation of the name by which he was called in the Greyfriars Remove.  
 “Not the sort of man to go prying after a fellow in the hols.” went on Bunter, who was beginning to enjoy this peculiar conversation. “If he here, it won’t be to see what Smithy’s up to. He wouldn’t phone to a fellows pater in the holidays. He, he, he!”  
 Mr. Smedley’s eyes glittered.  
 “Sneaking, I call it!” went on Bunter. Having “got away” with his cheek, so far, it was like Billy Bunter to go right over the limit. “Mean! If you’ve come here nosing after Smithy, I can jolly will say—— Yaroooooooh!” Smack!  
 If ever a fellow had asked to have his head smacked, it was Bunter! But he did not seem to expect it. Smedley’s smite took him quite by surprise.   
 “Yarooh! Whooop! Wow!” roared Bunter, as he staggered back from the window, slipped on the polished oak floor of the hall, and sat down with a mighty bump. Yow-ow-ow! Beast! Whoooooop!”  
 Mr. Smedley rang the bell.  
 “Ow! Wow!” Bunter sat and held his head, as Wells came across the hall to the door. “Beast! Wow!”  
 Wells glanced at him. Then he opened the door. Billy Bunter staggered to his feet, as Mr. Smedley was let in.  
 “Is Colonel Wharton at home?”  
 “No, sir; the master’s gone to the station in the car. Miss Wharton is at home.”  
 “I will wait till Colonel Wharton returns. Please give him my card.”  
 “Yow-ow-ow-ow!”   
 “Very well, sir!” Wells took the card, which bore the style and title of Eustace Smedley, M.A., Oxon. Wells had heard the juniors speaking of their temporary “beak” at school, so he knew who Mr. Smedley was.   
 “Please come in, sir.”  
 He showed Mr. Smedley to the library.  
 Billy Bunter blinked after them, through his big spectacles, in wrath and indignation. His head was singing from that hefty smack.  
 “Beast!” he roared.  
 Mr. Smedley glanced round. Wells stared.  
 “If you jolly well think you can smack a fellows head, you’re jolly well mistaken, see!” roared Bunter. “You’re not the Greyfriars the, you beast, and you’re jolly well not going there any more! Who’s afraid of you, I’d like to know? Yah! Your sacked, you are!”  
 “Master Bunter——” gasped Wells.  
 Mr. Smedley made a stride towards Bunter. Bunter had stated that he was not afraid of Smedley. But that hurried bound, as Smedley came towards him, looked as if he was, after all.  
 Stairs, as a rule, presented difficulties to Bunter. He had so much weight to carry up a staircase. But on this occasion he did the stairs at about sixty m.p.h. He fairly flew.  
 Mr. Smedley stopped.  
 Bunter reached the landing, and blinked over the banisters at him. Wells stood horrified.  
 “Yah!” roared Bunter, over the banisters. As Mr. Smedley had not pursued him up the stairs, the fat owl of the remove felt safe in hurling defiance down at him, ready to run at a sight of further chase. “Yah! You’re sacked, Smedley. You ain’t coming back to Greyfriars any more! I can jolly well tell you you ain’t wanted! We don’t want a Creeper and Crawler there, I can jolly well tell you! Yah!”  
 And having delivered that Parthian shot, Bunter disappeared up the staircase. Wells had to make strenuous efforts to conceal a grin, as he showed Mr. Smedley into the library, there to await the colonel’s return.  
  
 **THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.  
  
 A Shock for the Colonel!   
  
M**R LUCIUS TEGGERS—alias Eustace Smedley—listened, as he heard the sound of footsteps and voices in the hall. He had waited about a quarter of an hour, when he heard the sound of the car arriving.  
 Colonel Wharton had returned, apparently not alone. Who his companion was Mr. Smedley did not know, or care; certainly never guessing that it was Mr. Quelch, the Form-master whose place he had taken at Greyfriars, and whom he had never seen. If you minutes later the door of the library opened, and a tall, bronze- complexioned old gentleman came in, with a carb in his hand. Mr. Smedley rose.  
 “Colonel Wharton?”  
 “Yes, sir!” said the common. “You are Mr. Smedley—my nephews Form master at Greyfriars, I think?”  
 “His temporary Form-master, sir!” answered Mr. Smedley, with a smile, as he shook hands with the colonel.  
 The old military gentleman’s keen eyes were rather scrutinising. He had heard some talk among the juniors on the subject of their temporary beak, and was aware that they did not like him. He had heard some reference to a Creeper and Crawler. So he had rather wondered what the man was like.  
 “Please sit down, sir!” said Colonel Wharton. “I am very glad to make your acquaintance. The boys are all out of doors at present——”  
 He was courteous, but a little puzzled to know why Mr. Smedley had called at Wharton Lodge. Mr. Quelch, the Remove master was an old friend; but Mr. Quelch’s substitute he had never met before, or heard of till the boys came in the Easter holidays. And though he was not a man to be prejudiced by careless remarks made by schoolboys, such a name as the Creeper and Crawler could hardly fail to make an unfavourable impression.  
 Still, he found Mr. Smedley to be a well groomed and well mannered young man, and certainly he would never have dreamed of suspecting that Mr. Smedley had no right to that name at all.  
 Lucius Teggers had got away with his borrowed name at Greyfriars. Even Herbert Vernon-Smith had not the remotest suspicion that Eustace Smedley, master of the Remove, was in reality, his own custom Lucius Teggers, junior partner in the firm of Leggett & Teggers. Had the Bounder suspected that, he might have suspected, too, why Mr. Smedley was so keen to land him into trouble with his father; for he knew that the Lucius Teggers was his rival for the millionaire’s millions.  
 Well-groomed and well-mannered as Mr. Smedley was, there was something in his hard mouth, and sharp wary eyes, that the colonel did not like. That uncomplimentary nickname, the Creeper and Crawler, was in his mind.  
 “I must beg you to excuse this intrusion, sir!” said Mr. Smedley.  
 “Not at all, sir!”  
 “In fact, it is a somewhat unpleasant duty that has called if me here, Colonel Wharton, I am sorry to say.”   
 The Colonel’s grizzled eyebrows lifted.  
 “My nephew—” he began.  
 “Your nephew, sir, is my head boy in the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars, and a credit to the form, and the school, in every way!” Mr. Smedley hastened to say.  
 “I am glad to hear that, sir!” said the colonel, smiling. “I rather feared from what you said, that Harry had been giving you some trouble.”  
 “Not in the least! If all schoolboys were like your nephew, sir, a schoolmaster’s task would be an easy one. But I am given to understand that another Remove boy is staying with him over the holidays——”  
 “Half-a-dozen, sir!” said the colonel. “Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, Bull, Bunter, and Vernon-Smith.”  
 “I refer to Vernon-Smith.”  
 “Oh!” said Colonel Wharton rather grimly.  
 “Probably you are aware, sir, that this boy, Vernon-Smith, was expelled from school last term——”  
 “I have heard something of it.” said the colonel briefly. “but as Dr. Locke decided to allow him to remain——”  
 “That was not because the Head excused his disgraceful conduct in any way, sir. His father——”  
 “I have heard something of this, Mr. Smedley.” said the Colonel, a little restively. “It seems that his father resolved to disinherit him, if he was expelled from school, and he was given a chance to amend his conduct. From what I have heard, he has done so, or certainly he would never have been allowed to stay here with my nephew and his friends.”  
 “I have only too much reason to think, sir, that he has not done so.” said Mr. Smedley.  
 “My nephew thinks so, sir, or he would not have asked him here. At all events, I must point out that I have no concern with the conduct of Mr. Vernon-Smith’s son at school.”  
 “I am not referring to his conduct at school, sir, which is in my province, as his Form-master. I am referring to this conduct here.”  
 “Here!” ejaculated the colonel.  
 “Precisely.”  
 “Mr. Smedley! You are not suggesting that a schoolboy, staying under my roof, and for whom I am therefore responsible, would be allowed to act in any way of which his headmaster would not approve.”  
 “Without your knowledge, sir.”  
 “Good gad! Let us be plain, sir! You have come here to tell me that this boy, whom I trust, and whom my nephew trusts, is deceiving both of us?”  
 “I am sorry to say, yes.”  
 “If that is correct, sir, the boy leaves this house immediately. But I hope, and believe, that there is some mistake. I really fail to see how you can be aware of what he is doing, either good or bad.”  
 “I will be frank, sir! I regard the boy as a disgrace to his school, a danger to the other boys in his Form, and for that reason I should be glad if he did not return to Greyfriars next term.”  
 “I understand that! But how——”  
 “For that reason, sir, I have considered it my duty to keep some observations on him during the holidays.”  
 The colonel grunted.  
 “That is not usually considered a Form-master’s duty, Mr. Smedley.”  
 “The circumstances are unusual, sir!”  
 “Possibly—possibly—but——”  
 “I came here this afternoon, sir, with the intention of ascertaining whether Vernon-Smith really was here, or whether he had taken French leave, as he did earlier in the holidays when sent to a tutor’s—”  
 “You may be satisfied on that point, Mr. Smedley. The boy I certainly is at Wharton Lodge.”  
 “I met him as I was coming here—he was alone, without any of his friends.”  
 “They are generally together.” said the colonel. “But if Vernon-Smith’s was taking a walk by himself, I see no harm in it.”  
 “You will alter your opinion, sir, when I tell you that he took the train to Elmbridge, and engaged a taxi to drive him to the races there!”  
 “Impossible!”  
 “As I have said, sir, I consider it my duty to keep this incorrigible young rascal under observation. I therefore followed him this afternoon——”  
 “Followed him!” ejaculated the colonel.  
 “Yes, sir, and was in the same train going to Elmbridge. At that place, I heard him inquire of ae taxi driver about the races, and engage the man to drive him there.”  
 “Good gad!”  
 “I followed him in another taxi, to make absolutely sure. I arrived at the entrance to the race ground, just as his taxi was coming empty away.”  
 “Good gad!” repeated the colonel blankly.  
 “I entered the place, sir, but failed to find them in the crowd there.” went on Mr. Smedley. “I then decided to come here and acquaint you with the facts. That you would not approve of——”  
 “Approve, sir!” roared colonel Wharton. “By Jove, sir, if the young rascal has done anything of the kind, I shall kick him out of this place, sir, and send a letter to his father acquainting him with the reason! By Jove, sir!”  
 Mr. Smedley’s eyes glimmered.  
 “I am sorry to say, sir, that there is no doubt on the subject. If the boy has returned, you will the question him. If he has the effrontery to make denials, apart from what I have seen with my own eyes, it would be easy to identify his taxi driver at Elmbridge—I made a note of the number of the taxi so—”   
 “This is a painful matter, sir!” said Mr. Smedley. “But I felt bound to apprise you—allowing the boy, as you do, to associate with your nephew——”  
 “Certainly, certainly! But good gad! One moment!” The colonel rang the bell, and Wells appeared at the door. “Is master Vernon-Smith in the house, Wells?”   
 “No, sir, he went out early in the afternoon.”   
 “Not with his friends?”  
 “No, sir! Sometime after them.”  
 “Have any of them returned?”  
 “Only Master Bunter, sir.”  
 “Ask him to come here.”  
 “Very good, sir!”  
 The butler withdrew, leaving the colonel in a rather fuming state, and Mr. Smedley with a grave and composed expression, that gave no clue to the bitter satisfaction in his heart. He had no doubt that he had landed his fish at last—and it was Colonel Wharton who was going to pass on the necessary information to Mr. Vernon-Smith! Which exactly suited Mr. Lucius Teggers!  
  
 **THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.  
  
 Bunter Does His Best!   
  
“S**HAN’T!”  
 That was Billy Bunter’s answer.  
 He blinked at Wells, through his big spectacles, in alarm.  
 The butler coughed.  
 “The master desires you to go to the library, sir!” he murmured.  
 “Shan’t!” repeated Bunter. “Not till that beast Smedley is gone! Just like him to tell the old fossil that I cheeked him! I say, is the old bean waxy?”“If you are referring to Colonel Wharton, sir——”  
 “You know I am!” roared Bunter. “Is the old fossil shirty? What?”  
 “Really, sir——”  
 “I jolly well shan’t go!” growled Bunter.  
 “Very well, sir!” said the butler. “I will tell the master so.”   
 “Hold on!” gasped Bunter. “I—I—I’ll go! Really, it was impossible to let Wells return to the master of Wharton Lodge with such a message. Even the Owl of the Remove realised that.   
 And Bunter went.  
 He was feeling extremely uneasy as he entered the library. He had no doubt that Smedley had complained of his impudence, and that was why he was sent for.  
 “Come here, Bunter!” rapped the colonel, as the fat junior hesitated on the threshold.  
 “It—it wasn’t me!” gasped Bunter.  
 It was clear from the grim expression on the core nose bonds old face that he was “waxy” and “shirty.”  
 “What?”  
 “I—I mean—he smacked my head!” gasped Bunter. “That’s why I called him a beast! Besides, I never called him a beast. As quotes  
 Colonel Wharton glared at him.  
 “What is this stupid boy chattering about?” he snapped.  
 “Besides, he ain’t our beak now!” gasped Bunter. “Now Quelch is coming back he ain’t our beak any more. So——”  
 “Conlonel Wharton desires to ask you some questions concerning Vernon-Smith, Bunter.” said Mr. Smedley.  
 “Oh! I—I thought——”  
 “What is the matter with the boy?” snapped the colonel testily. “Bunter, come here! What are you afraid of, you young donkey? Where is Vernon-Smith?”  
 “Oh, Smithy?” said Bunter, greatly relieved to discover that he was not the fellow booked for trouble. It did not matter if Smithy was! “He’s gone out—”  
 “I understand that there was a party for the cinema at Wimford this afternoon. Why did not Vernon-Smith’s go with the others? Quotes  
 “He had a book he wouldn’t leave.” answered Bunter. “At least, he said so.”  
 “But he went out afterwards?”  
 “I suppose so; he was gone out when I looked for him.” answered Bunter, in wonder. “He hasn’t come in yet.”  
 “Do you know where he went?”   
 “He never told me. I thought I should send him reading one image for him! Of course, I might have known that he was pulling our leg! Fat lot he cares about reading!”  
 Mr. Smedley smiled. The colonel frowned.  
 It was obvious to both of them that the Bounder had affected that interest in his book in order to be left behind when the other fellows went to the pictures. Evidently the book had been thrown aside after they were gone, and Smithy had gone out on his own.  
 Billy Bunter blinked at them. He had guessed, at the sight of Mr. Smedley that the creeper and crawler was after Smithy again. Now it was plain enough for even Bunter to see that Smedley was making trouble for the Bounder at Wharton Lodge.  
 Bunter was not the fellow to help that on. He had no great liking for Smithy, who, indeed, had kicked him for opening one of his letters by mistake—a mistake that Bunter made too often! But he was not going to help the Creeper and Crawler to nail Smithy—not if Bunter knew it!  
 “I say, Smithy hasn’t gone to the races!” he exclaimed.  
 “What?” roared Colonel Wharton.  
 “You can take that from me!” said Bunter, blinking at him. “He stayed in this afternoon to read that book—awfully interesting book! I never thought he was staying in because he wanted to get away on his own.”  
 “Good gad!”  
 “Nothing of the kind.” said Bunter cheerfully. “I don’t suppose he knew that there was any racing at Elmbridge this afternoon. I dare say he’s never heard of the place at all—I know I haven’t——”  
 “What?”  
 “It’s not Smithy’s fault if a Highcliffe fellow wrote to him and told him to put his shirt on Bonny Boy at Elmbridge. Smithy can’t help what a Highcliffe fellow wrote to him and told him to put his shirt on Bonny Boy at Elmbridge. Smithy can’t help what a Highcliffe fellow writes to him!” argued Bunter.  
 “Good gad!” repeated the colonel, staring blankly at the happy Owl of the Remove. “do you mean to say, Bunter, that you have seen a letter—in which some blackguardly young rascal advised Vernon-Smith——”  
 “Not at all! I hope I’m not the fellow to open a fellow’s letter.” said Bunter. “Besides I opened it by mistake! I told Smithy so.”  
 “Go, for goodness’ sake!” snapped colonel Wharton.  
 Bunter rolled to the door. Got there he turned. He felt that it was up to him to put in another word for poor old Smithy and save him from the machinations of the Creeper and Crawler.  
 “I say, it’s all right about Smithy.” he said. “There was nothing about the races at Elmbridge in that letter from Vavasour. The fact is, he never had a letter from a Highcliffe man at all. I know that for certain, because I opened it by mistake——”  
 “Leave this room, you young donkey!”  
 Bunter rolled away satisfied that he had done his best for Smithy and put a spoke in the wheel of that beast, the Creeper, and Crawler!  
 Colonel Wharton torment of his grizzled Mr. Ashe.  
 “The matter could hardly be clearer, I think, sir!” remarked Mr. Smedley.  
 “No!” said the colonel, with a deep breath. “No! The facts speak for themselves! The young rascal! The young scoundrel! As soon as he returns I will question him in your presence, sir, and in that of Mr. Quelch.”  
 “Mr. Quelch!” repeated Mr. Smedley, with a start.  
 “It fortunately happens that his Form-master, Mr. Quelch, is in this house!” said Colonel Wharton. “No doubt you will be pleased to make his acquaintance, sir.”  
 Mr. Smedley did not look particularly pleased. But, Wharton did not notice his expression as he rang for Wells again, and asked the butler to request Mr. Quelch to come to the library as soon as he could, and asked the butler to request Mr. Quelch to come to the library as soon as he could.  
 “Fortunately Quelch is here!” said the colonel. “We shall be able to consult him in this matter. As the boy’s Form-master, he has a right to be consulted.  
 “Oh, quite, sir!” said Mr. Smedley  
 Mr. Quelch entered the library.  
 He was director presented to Mr. Smedley, with whom he shook hands politely. He was probably pleased to make the acquaintance of the young man who had been his substitute in the Remove Form-room at Greyfriars School, and he assumed his most agreeable smile.  
 But that smile faded from his face as Colonel Wharton proceeded to explain the purport of Mr. Smedley’s visit.  
 A very cold look came over Quelch’s face.  
 It was true that he had no high opinion of Vernon-Smith. It was true that he doubted whether the headmaster had them wisely in giving the young rascal unknown chance at the school. But Vernon-Smith was a member of his Form; a lamb in his flock, so to speak. And the idea of a Form-master occupying the holidays in keeping watch on a boy away from school was extremely repugnant to Mr. Quelch. He could not help thinking that such a form master must be actuated rather by dislike than by duty. His look became colder and colder as he listened. His feeling was that Mr. Smedley had exceeded his duty—very much exceeded it—and he had a desire to defend that member of his Form if he could.  
 “I am sorry, Mr. Smedley, that this boy of my form should have given you trouble in my temporary absence!” he remarked icily. “No doubt will be a relief to you to hear that I am returning to Greyfriars at the new term, and that Vernon-Smith will trouble you no more.”  
 Mr. Smedley’s eyes glinted. But his answer was polite.  
 “I am very glad to hear that your health is restored, Mr. Quelch.” he answered. “there is no doubt, then, that you will return?”  
 “Non, sir, and you will receive a communication from Dr. Locke to that effect.” said Mr. Quelch. “As for Vernon-Smith, I still hope that it may be some mistake in this matter.   
 “There seems hardly room for a mistake, sir!” suggested Mr. Smedley.  
 “We have not yet questioned the boy!” said Mr. Quelch obstinately. “And I have every hope that he may be able to explain. Certainly I consider it my duty as his Form-master to see that he has ample opportunity.”  
 “I will tell Wells to send him to us immediately he returns.” said Colonel Wharton. “His return can hardly be delayed much longer.”  
 “Probably not, sir, as the races at Elmbridge conclude at six o’clock.” said Mr. Smedley.  
 That remark elicited an audible sniff from Quelch  
 The minutes seemed very long as the three gentlemen waited for Wells to announce that the Bounder had come in.  
  
 **THE NINTH CHAPTER.  
  
 Facing the Music!**HARRY WHARTON& CO.came out of the Imperial Cinema at Wimford   
in the April sunset in a cheery bunch.  
 Wharton had been rather surprised when, on joining his friends there, he had found the Bounder with the Co. He was rather pleased as well as surprised. Possibly he had seen signs of boredom in his guest at Wharton Lodge and wondered whether Smithy found his present company rather tame—as certainly it was in comparison with the company the Bounder had looked forward to in the hols. So he was glad to find that Smithy had joined up, after all, and seemed as merry and bright as any member of the party; in fact, the merriest and brightest. Smithy had a secret source of entertainment, which he did not confide to the other fellows.  
 The half-dozen juniors walked out of Wimford, sauntering along the long country road that led to the Lodge in cheery sprints. So cheery were their spirits that they were not even dashed by the knowledge that they would find their respected Form-master, Mr. Quelch, at Wharton Lodge when they arrived there. If he had come by the six train, he must have arrived there some time ago, as it was now more than half-past six. After all, as Bob Cherry remarked, beaks don’t bite in the holidays; and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, observed that the esteemed Quelch’s barkfulness had always been worse than his bitefulness.  
 It was news to the Bounder that Mr. Quelch was expected, but he did not seem to mind. In fact, nothing could have dashed the Bounder’s cheery spirits during that walk, and he was so merry and bright that the Famous Five found his presence as agreeable as Billy Bunter’s absence—which was saying a great deal!  
 Thinking of Smedley rooting over the race-ground, and sending a report to his home and father which could be disproved from end to end, was sheer joy to the Bounder. Never had he had such a chance of pulling the leg of the Creeper and Crawler; and the deeper Smedley went into the matter, the bigger fool he would look! Smithy hoped—and, in fact, longed—for him to take the matter before his father. Mr. Vernon-Smith, certainly, would be wrathy with his son to begin with, but his wrath would quickly be transferred to the Creeper and Crawler when Smithy proved his complete innocence.  
 It was rather new to Smithy to be absolutely innocent of any charge brought against him. So he only hoped that Smedley would make the most of this affair, so that his unaccustomed innocence might have a really good advertisement.  
 In a cheery bunch, the Famous Five and Smithy came up the drive at Wharton Lodge. Billy Bunter met them in the doorway.  
 He was waiting for them.  
 “I say, you fellows, they’re here!” he stated.  
 “Quelch? asked Harry Wharton.  
 “Yes—and Smedley!” grinned Bunter.  
 “Smedley!” yelled the Bounder.  
 “He’s after you, Smithy!” chuckled Bunter. “The three old donkeys are in the library now, waiting for you!”  
 “Oh, my only summer straw!” gasped the Bounder.  
 His eyes danced.  
 If Smedley was there, it meant that he had brought his accusation to Wharton Lodge, and was going to make it in his presence! Smithy rejoiced at the coming interview.  
 “What on earth is Smedley doing here?” asked Bob Cherry. “Has your uncle invited the whole jolly old staff from Greyfriars, Harry?” “Not that I know of!” said Wharton, laughing. “I know Quelch might be coming, but I certainly never thought of Smedley!”  
 “Sorry to have landed you with him!” said Vernon-Smith. “It’s me he’s after, of course. I met him this afternoon in the lane.”  
 “Oh!” said Harry, rather uncomfortably  
 “He’s after Smithy all right!” grinned Bunter. “I say, you fellows, they’ve got an idea that Smithy’s been to the races! I put in a word for you, Smithy.”  
 “You fat idiot!”   
 “Oh, really, Smithy! I say——”  
 “Will you kindly go to the library, Master Vernon-Smith?” Wells swam up. “ The master desires to see you.”   
 “Greatest pleasure in the world!” answered Vernon-Smith. “You fellows hang on here, will you? You’re been wanted soon. As quotes  
 “Do you want us?” asked Nugent.   
 “Naturally! Smedley’s got anything against me, you’re my witnesses that I’ve been a shinin’ character ever since I here.”  
 “The shinefulness of your esteemed character has been preposterous, my esteemed Smithy!” declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. “We are all terrifically idiotic witnesses of that!”  
 “You won’t be kept waitin’ long!” said the Bounder.   
 And he strolled to the library door and went in, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. in a puzzled and rather perturbed group in the hall.  
 Three serious and rather grim faces were turned on Herbert Vernon-Smith as he entered the library.  
 Grim faces, however, had no dismaying effect on the Bounder of Greyfriars.  
 He walked up to Mr. Quelch.  
 “Wharton mentioned that you might be here, sir!” he said, in his most respectful manner. “It’s a great pleasure to see you looking so well, sir, after your illness!”  
 Mr. Quelch coughed.  
 “Thank you, Vernon-Smith!” he said.  
 “I hope, sir, that you will be back next term.” said the Bounder. “I’m afraid I’ve sometimes given you trouble in the form, sir; but I shall be as glad as any fellow in the Remove to see you back again!”   
 Mr. Quelch coughed again.  
 “I am glad to hear it, Vernon-Smith” he said. “but, Colonel Wharton desires to speak to you on a somewhat serious topic.”   
 “Smithy turned to the old colonel. He was carefully taking no notice of Mr. Smedley’s presence in the room.  
 “Vernon-Smith,” said Colonel Wharton in a deep voice, “it is disagreeable to me to have to call you, a guest under my roof, to account. But if you have acted as Mr. Smedley believes, you are no fit associate for my nephew and his friends, and it will be my duty to send you home at once, and acquaint your father with my reason for doing so!”  
 “Does Mr. Smedley accuse me of anythin’, sir?”  
 “Let us be brief!” grunted the colonel. “Have you been at the races at Elmbridge this afternoon?”  
 The Bounder raised his eyebrows.  
 “Certainly not, sir!”  
 “You deny it?” rapped Mr. Smedley.  
 “Oh, quite!”  
 “An absolute falsehood, colonel Wharton!” said Mr. Smedley. “Bad as I know this boy to be, I am amazed at his effrontery!”  
 “The matter is one of proof, sir!” said Mr. Quelch, taking up the tale, as it were, as the colonel seemed rather nonplussed.  
 “Proof, sir!” exclaimed Mr. Smedley warmly. “I have told to what I saw with my own eyes! Is my word doubted, sir?”  
 “This boy in my Form, sir, will be allowed every opportunity to defend himself!” said Mr. Quelch grimly. “What you saw maybe explained. At all events, I insist upon this boy being given an opportunity to explain it  
 “Thank you, sir!” said the Bounder. “I knew you’d see fair play, sir!”  
 “Do you dare——” exclaimed Mr. Smedley. His temper was rising.  
 “I will answer my Form-master, and not you, sir!” said the Bounder. “Mr. Quelch has a right to question me!”  
 “Please questioned the boy, Mr. Quelch!” said Colonel Wharton. “The matter certainly should be in your hands.”  
 “Very well; I will do so. Vernon-Smith, Mr. Smedley so you that in a lane near this house this afternoon and followed you. He states that you took a train to Elmbridge——”  
 “That is correct, sir.”  
 “That you questioned a taxi driver with regard to the races——”  
 “Quite true, sir.”  
 “And drove off in the taxi, giving the man directions to take you there.”   
 “And drove off in the taxi, giving the man directions to take you there.”   
 “Exactly!”  
 “Then,” boomed Colonel Wharton, “you admit that you went to the races, you young rascal!”  
 “Nothing of the kind, sir!” said the Bounder, with icy coolness. “I got out of the taxi before it reached the race-ground and went to the pictures.  
 “If that is true, Vernon-Smith’s, why did you act in a manner so calculated to draw suspicion upon you?” exclaimed Mr. Quelch, eyeing that bright member of his Form very dubiously.  
 “Because I knew that Mr. Smedley was following me and watching me, sir; and I wanted to pull his leg!” said the Bounder, with perfect coolness.  
 “Wha-at!”  
 “I saw him hop into the guard’s van of my train; I knew he was listening while I talked to the taxi driver at Elmbridge, and I spotted him following me in another taxi!” said the Bounder. “the whole thing was a stunt to pull his leg and make a fool of him and teach him not to spy on Greyfriars fellows in the holidays!”  
 “Bless my soul!” gasped Mr. Quelch.  
 “Good gad!” murmured the colonel, tuggging at his moustacheo  
 Mr. Smedley’s face was white. His eyes burned. It was not easy for him to keep his hands off the Bounder at that moment. For a long minute there was silence in the library at Wharton Lodge—a silence that might almost have been cut with a knife!   
  
 **THE TENTH CHAPTER.  
  
 Plenty of witnesses!**   
  
HERBERT VERNON-SMITH smiled.  
 He was enjoying this.  
 He was not done yet! He was going, if he could, to make the Creeper and Crawler fairly cringe. The witnesses to his spotless innocence were at hand—waiting outside the door to be called in. But he was not going to call them in yet. He was going to enjoy thoroughly the discomfiture of the Creeper and Crawler!  
 Mr. Quelch broke the silence  
 “That is a somewhat extraordinary statement, Vernon-Smith.” he said at last. “You deny, then, having been to the races at all?”  
 “Certainly, sir!”  
 “When Mr. Smedley reached the race-ground, he found your taxicab turning away empty. He naturally supposed that it had discharged its passengers there.”  
 “I meant him to, sir!”  
 “You intended to delude him?”   
 “I intended to make a fool of him, to show him up for his spying!” said the Bounder, very deliberately and distinctly. “I didn’t know he was coming here. I thought he would go to my father, or phone, as he did before. I wanted my father to know the kind of man he was.”  
 Mr. Quelch coughed.  
 “You impertinent young scoundrel!” gasped Mr. Smedley. “ You have uttered a whole tissue of falsehoods!”   
 Mr. Quelch, with a sniff, whisked out of the room. Colonel Wharton gave his visitor an expressive glance. It was time for Smedley to go!  
 Breathing hard, Mr. Smedley crossed to the door. The Bounder’s eyes were on him with impudent mockery. Mr. Smedley clenched his hands—but he restrained his rage, and passed out into the hall., Colonel Wharton gave a grunt as he went. That was all his farewell to the unfortunate Creeper and Crawler.  
 “He, he, he!” Billy Bunter, blinking in at the doorway, chuckled. Bunter’s private opinion was that Smithy had, as a matter of fact, been at the races. But it was a great satisfaction to him to see the Creeper and Crawler so thoroughly discomfited. “He, he, he!”  
 That unmusical cachinnation brought Mr. Smedley’s eyes on the fat junior as he passed. Bunter grinned at him.  
 “He, he, he!” he squeaked.  
 And he turned his podgy back on Smedley, and grinned at the fellows in the library.  
 “I say, you fellows! Lucky Smedley ain’t coming back next term, what? He would jolly well take it out of you for this if he was, Smithy.”  
 The Bounder laughed. He had no doubt about that!  
 “He, he, he! Jevver see a man so sick?” chuckled Bunter. “Spying on a fellow in the hols! I’m jolly glad he’s going to be sacked. Not quite Greyfriars style, what? I’m jolly glad—— Ow! Wow!”  
 Smack!  
 “Whooop!” roared Bunter.  
 He was unaware that Mr. Smedley had stopped in the hall till he received that hefty smack on his bullet head.  
 It pitched him headlong into the library where he sprawled yelling at the feet of Colonel Wharton  
 “Great gad!” ejaculated that gentleman.  
 “Yarooooh!”  
 “Mr. Smedley!” roared the colonel. The white, furious face stared after the sprawling Bunter for a second and then vanished. Mr. Smedley strode to the front door, which Wells was opening for him. A tall, angular figure loomed up, and Quelch’s gimlet eyes glinted at him.   
 “Mr. Smedley! This violence——” rapped the Remove-master.  
 “Mind your own business!” snapped Mr. Smedley. His temper was at boiling point, and he really looked, for the moment, inclined to handle the majestic Quelch himself as he had handled Bunter.   
 “What?” gasped Mr. Quelch.  
 “Your hat, sir!” murmured Wells, shocked.  
 Mr. Smedley almost snatched his hat from the butler, jammed it on his head, and strode out of Wharton Lodge. He deeply regretted by that time that he had ever entered it.  
  
 **THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.  
  
 Bob Obliges!**THE following day Billy Bunter had a very thoughtful expression on his fat face. Anyone who had observed that fat and fatuous youth might have been aware that deep thoughts were working in Bunter’ s podgy brain.  
 Nobody, whoever, observed Bunter.  
 Billy Bunter’s unimportance was unlimited. Besides, nobody would ever have suspected Bunter of thinking! Such a process was not in his line at all!  
 Nevertheless, the fat Owl of the Remove was thinking hard!  
 He had carefully avoided Quelch so far as possible! He disliked the glint in the gimlet eyes when they turned on him.  
 Quelch and said nothing about the trickery on the telephone. But Bunter was well aware that it was not forgotten.  
 He had no doubt that, had they been at school, Quelch would have given him six! Fortunately, they were not at school!  
 It was awkward and disagreeable for Bunter! A fellow did not like having a grim old gaegoyle glaring at him! Quelch’s face at table would really have taken Bunter’s appetite away—had not been possible! Luckily, it wasn’t!  
And though Quelch had said nothing so far, that was no guarantee that he wasn’t going to say anything. If he mentioned the matter to the colonel, there would be a thunderstorm. Apart from the national unpleasantness of having a beak about in the holidays, Bunter was uneasy and worried. Hence the deep shades of thought that corrugated his fat brow.  
 “I say, you fellows! Come along with me!” said Bunter, when the juniors went out after lunch that day.  
 “Where, and why?” asked Bob Cherry.  
 “I’ve got something on!” said Bunter mysteriously.  
 “I can see that!” assented Bob. “You’ve got my necktie on!”  
 “Oh, really, Cherry—”  
 “And Nugent’s shoes—”  
 “Look here—”  
 “And Inky’s tiepin—”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “You fellows know I came here without any baggage.” said Bunter, with dignity. “I suppose you’re not going to make a fuss about my borrowing a few things. Look here, I tell you I’ve got something on—I’ve been thinking it out!Come along with me, and I’ll show you.”  
 The chums of the Remove, rather puzzled, followed Bunter. He led the way across the gardens into the park. Room home 1000 a year and lo:  
 They had no objection to a walk in the park after lunch—though it was surprising that Bunter hadn’t! Generally he curled up like a cat and went to sleep after a meal.  
 “What on earth has the fat duffer got in his fat head?” asked the Bounder, as he followed with the Famous Five. Smithy was carefully keeping in company with his friends, since Mr. Smedley’s visit. He had a suspicion that the linx eyed Creeper and Crawler was not very far away from Wharton Lodge.  
 “Blessed if I know!” said Harry Wharton. “I know what he’s got on his head—my best straw hat! But I don’t know what he’s got in it.”  
 Bunter led on, and the juniors walked through the park, bright and fresh with the green of a sunny spring.  
 The house disappeared from their view behind. Bunter reached the bank of a little stream that meandered through the park, flowing from the Surrey downs, and murmuring on his way to join the Wyme, which flowed past Wimford. In some places the little stream in the woodland was narrow enough to be jumped; but it was nowhere more then a few feet deep. At one spot, where a path met it, it was crossed by a single plank that rested on a large stone on either side.  
 There Bunter halted and blinked round at the astonished juniors, with a sly gleam behind his big spectacles.  
 “Here’s the place!” he said. Bunter stepped on the plank. It was firmly set on the stones, but it gave a creak under Bunter’s weight.  
 “Well, what about it?” asked Wharton, in wonder.  
 “I’ve got an idea! ”  
 “You have!” exclaimed Bob, in astonishment. “Whose is it?”  
 “Oh, really, Cherry! Now, look here, you fellows, we don’t want Quelch here, do we?” went on Bunter. “He needn’t have come at all if Wharton hadn’t barged in and meddled when I put paid to him on the phone! I dare say you’re sorry you barged in, Wharton, now the beast’s landed on us—”  
“You howling ass!”   
 “Well, he’s here now, and that’s that!” said Bunter. “The question is, to get shut of him! See! That’s what I’ve been thinking out.”  
 “Well, my only hat!”  
 “Now, this is the idea.” went on Bunter, where the juniors gazed at him blankly. “Suppose that plank shifted while I’m standing in the middle of it--what would happen? ”  
 “You’d get a wash you’ve wanted for a long time!” said Johnny Bull.  
 “The washfulness would be terrific and beneficial.”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Oh, don’t cackle!” said Bunter impatiently. “You see that stone you’re standing by, Bob? If you gave it a shove with your foot, it would shift, and then anybody standing where I’m standing now would go plop into the water and get a jolly good ducking. See?”  
 “You want me to shift the stone?”  
 “No!” roared Bunter. “Not while I’m on the plank, you fathead. When Quelch is on the plank!”  
 " Quelch!” yelled the juniors.  
 “That’s the idea!” said Bunter complacently. “That’s what I’ve been thinking out! You take him for a walk, Wharton, to show him the park—”  
 “Do I?” gasped Wharton.  
 “Yes, old chap! You lead him here, and walk across the plank first to show him that it’s safe—see? Quelch follows! Bob’s hiding behind that tree—”  
 “Am I?” gurgled Bob.  
 “Yes, old fellow! You nip out, give that stone a shove with your foot, and what happens? Quelch takes a header! See?”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!” roared the Bounder.  
 “Funny, what?” grinned Bunter. “stands to reason Quelch will catch a cold—a specially as he’s had influenza only recently. Even if he doesn’t he will have to stay in his room rest of the hols, and we shall be shut of him. Either way we score—he goes, or he’s laid up with a cold! See? What do you fellows think of that for a stunt?”  
 “My only aunt!” gasped Smithy.  
 Bunter blinked at the Famous Five, apparently in expectation of an outburst of enthusiasm at that remarkable stunt. They gazed at him.  
 “Safe as houses!” he added. “Bob waits till Quelch is in the middle of the plank, where I am now! Then he pops out and kicks that stone away—see? Quelch, being in the water, won’t spot him! Safe as houses! I thought this out entirely by myself!”  
 “You dangerous maniac that!” gasped Harry Wharton  
 “Oh, really, Wharton—”  
 “Hold on, though!” said Bob Cherry, with a cheery glimmer in his eyes. “F Bunter’s taken the trouble to think out a stunt like this, I don’t think it ought to be wasted.”  
 “Why, you silly ass—” exclaimed Harry.  
 “My dear man, Bunter’s stunt isn’t going to be wasted.” said Bob. “My belief is that it would work.”  
 “Of course it would!” exclaimed Bunter eagerly. “Easy as falling off a form.”  
 “Let’s have it clear, though.” said Bob. “The jolly old victim to be ducked is standings on the plank where you are now.”  
 “Yes, old chap.”  
 “And then I shove the stone with my foot  
 “Yes.”  
 “Like that!”  
 “I say, don’t—— Yarooh! Whooop! Gurrrrgggghh!”  
 Splash!  
 Under that hefty drive of Bob Cherry’s boot the stone shifted, the plank toppled, and Billy Bunter shot off into the water.  
 There was a mighty splash as he went in.  
 “Grooogh! Urrggh!” gurgled Bunter, as he went under.  
 “Good!” exclaimed Bob Cherry heartily. “Works like a charm!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!” yelled the juniors.  
 “Urrggh! Gurrggh! Wurrggh” A fat, streaming face emerged from the war. “I say, you fellows—— Yurrgh! Gurrrggh! Wurrreeggh!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Beast! I’m wet! I’m soaked! I’m drenched! Gurrggh!”  
    
  
 “Ha, ha, ha!” shrieked the juniors.  
 “Splendid!” said Bob Cherry. “Do it again, Bunter!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Beasts! Gurrggh! You blithering idiot, I didn’t mean you to shove the plank while I was on it!” shrieked Bunter.  
 “I did.” answered bob.  
 “Ha ,ha, ha!”  
 “Ow! I’m all wet! Wow! I’m soaked! Groooogh! Ooogh! Ugggh!”  
 Billy Bunter, soaked down from head to foot, was indeed a strange sight to behold as he struggled to dry land. His clobber, tight in the ordinary way, had shrunk considerably, for his star hat, still perched on his fat head, was battered beyond repair.  
 “Better go in and change your clothes, Bunter.” chuckled Harry Wharton. “You’re not so likely to catch a cold as poor old Quelch, but——”  
 “Urrrrggggh!”  
 “Tell me your next stunt, won’t you, Bunter?” urged Bob. “I’ll play up just the same as this time.”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Urgggh! Beast! Wurrggh!”  
 Harry Wharton & Co., chuckling, continued their stroll in the park—what time Billy Bunter headed for the House, and a towelling, at top speed. It was probable that Bunter’s next stunt for getting shut would not be confided to the chums of the Remove pressed; and absolutely certain that he would not request the assistance of Bob Cherry!  
  
 **THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.  
  
 The Face at the Window!**   
“DON’T look up!” said the Bounder.  
 “Eh?”  
 “Don’t look up; there’s a jolly old eye on us!”  
 “Who—what——”  
 “The Creeper and Crawler—don’t look up!”  
 “Oh!”  
 The Greyfriars fellows were rambling along the lane about half a mile from the gates of Wharton Lodge.  
 Owing to Billy Bunter’s remarkable stunt they were not enjoying Bunter’s company, which did not seem to have any diminishing effect on their spirits.   
Bunter was changing his clothes after his ducking, though whose clothes he was changing into was a question that might have interested the juniors, had they thought of it. But there were not thinking of Bunter; they were thinking chiefly of ginger-pop as they came along by the Old Oak Inn.  
 The old inn stood back from the road with a sign-board creaking from the branch of an ancient oak that stood before it. Under the wide-spreading branches were a table and a bench—very inviting to the eye on a bright and sunny April day. Possibly the Bounder was thinking of Smedley, and wondering whether he was still in the neighborhood—an idea that did not cross the mind of the other fellows. Anyhow, only the Bounder noticed a face at an upper window of the inn as the juniors came up, and caught the glint of the hard, hawkish eyes watching the party.  
 He was careful not to look up, and to warn his companions not to do so. They passed under the branches of the tree, and sat in a cheery row on the branch after table  
 “Mean to say that Smedley is here?” asked Bob Cherry.  
 “He’s in a room here, and he had his eye on us as we came up.” answered Vernon-Smith. “You won’t see him; he won’t show up while we’re around. He doesn’t want to tip us that he’s spying about the place.”  
 Johnny Bull gave a grunt of disgust.  
 “Mean cad!” he growled. “What the dickens is his game? Think he’s here to keep an eye on you, Smithy?”  
 “I don’t think he’s here to admire the scenery.” answered the Bounder sarcastically.   
 “But what on earth is the matter with the man?” exclaimed Wharton, puzzled. “Why is he so keen on catching you out, Smithy?”  
 “He doesn’t seem to like me, somehow.”  
 “Well, I could understand it at school; but it’s simply extraordinary for a beak to take this sort of thing on in the holidays.”  
 “Beats me hollow!” said Frank Nugent.  
 “The hollowfulness is terrific.”  
 The innkeeper, a stout and red faced jovial gentleman with white whiskers, came out to attend to his customers. He brought them ginger-beer, and went back into the porch of the inn, where he gazed sleepily on the landscape. The subject of Smedley was dropped till he was out of hearing again.  
 It beats me.” said the Bounder slowly. “I can’t make the man out. He’s dead set on tripping me up—that’s a cert! I don’t see why he should be, but he is. I’m not exactly a popular fellow with the beaks at school. Quelch would have been rather pleased to see me go; but—but that doesn’t seem to account for it. The man’s got a personal down on me.”  
 “Looks like it.” said Johnny Bull. “anyhow, he’s a mean rotter to spy on a fellow like this! And I’m jolly glad he’s not coming backa to Greyfriars next term!”  
 “Same here!” assented Smithy. “it rather gets on a fellow’s nerves.”  
 “Look here, let’s show him that we know he’s here, and make him jolly well ashamed of himself!” said Johnny. “If he’s really putting up in this quarter to watch you, Smithy, it would make him feel no end of a fool if we spotted him, and let him see that we know this game.”  
 “Let’s!” agreed Harry Wharton.  
 “I’ve got a better idea than that.” answered the Bounder coolly. “I’ve done nothing to the brute that I know of, but he’s after me like a cat after a mouse. I’m going to give him tit for tat. Leave it to me.”  
 “Well, it’s your bizney, I suppose.” said Harry Wharton, a little dubiously.  
 Disgusted as the juniors were with the surreptitious the proceedings of the Creeper and Crawler, they did not quite like the look on Smithy’s face. The Bounder was a fellow to hit back hard if he was attacked, and not particularly scrupulous in the methods he used. Still, it certainly was Smithy’s affair; the other fellows had to admit that.  
 The Bounder tapped with his glass on the table, and a fresh supply of ginger-beer was brought. This time Mr. Hodge, the innkeeper, was not allowed to depart. Vernon-Smith engaged him in conversation, and Mr. Hodge was very willing to comply. Leaning on the oak-tree the red-faced, white-whiskered stout gentleman told them the local news.  
 “Have they got the bandit yet?” asked Vernon-Smith, after a while.  
 “Ain’t heard of him.” answered Mr. Hodge.  
 And the Famous Five glanced rather curiously at Smithy. They had not heard of any by hold up at Elmbridge.  
 “He’s hanging about this neighborhood somewhere.” said the Bounder. “They’ and the correct and we’ll to certain ve got his description out. You want to keep an eye open for a man like that in a lonely place like this, Mr. Hodge. He was last seen on this very road only today.”  
 “You don’t say!” ejaculated Mr. Hodge.  
 “I jolly well do!” answered the Bounder. “I read his description outside the police station at Wimford this morning. As quotes  
 Harry Wharton & Co. at silent. They new that the Bounder had not been to Wimford that morning.  
 “What’ll he be loike?” asked Mr. Hodge, with interest.  
 “Rather tall fellow, about five feet nine or ten, well dressed, looks like the Londoner, clean shaven, except for a small, dark moustache.”  
 “Gosh!” exclaimed Mr. Hodge, startled.  
 “Smithy!” moaned Bob. He realised that the Bounder was giving the description of Mr. Smedley.  
 “Seen anybody about like that?” asked Smithy calmly, taking no notice of Bob’s remark. “Brown eyes—very sharp and keen——”  
 “Gosh!”  
 “Dressed in rather well-cut gray tweeds, grey soft hat, dark tan shoes.” went on the Bounder, remembering details of Mr. Smedley’s outfit.  
 “Gosh!”  
 Mr. Hodge looked alarmed.  
 “If you see a man answering to that description, keep an eye on him, Mr. Hodge.” said the Bounder casually. “Luckily, he’s unarmed now—he dropped his revolver after shooting the cashier at Elmbridge—this morning——as quotes  
 “Gosh!”  
 “You’ve got a pretty thick orchard at the back—a man might dodge in there to wait till dark. Might even put up at your inn!” added the Bounder. “It’s a lonely spot! Well, you’ll know him if you see him! Come on, you fellows, we shall be late for tea!”  
 Mr. Hodge was looking absolutely flabbergasted. Quite unaware that the guest at his inn had been spotted at the window, never dreaming that the juniors were acquainted with him, the innkeeper naturally had not the slightest suspicion that the Bounder was pulling his leg—for the benefit of Mr. Smedley.  
 Vernon-Smith rose from the table. The Famous Five rather slowly followed his example.  
 “Look here, Smithy——” said Wharton uneasily.  
 “Come on! We’d better all keep together, with that bandit loose in the neighborhood!” said the Bounder, calmly.  
 “look here——” murmured Bob.  
 “Oh, come on!”  
 The juniors were in rather a difficult position. Certainly, they had no objection to any jape on the Creeper and Crawler. But Smithy’s airy inventions for that purpose rather took their breath away. Whoever, they could not very well give the Bounder away to Mr. Hodge; and in a rather uneasy frame of mind they followed him from the inn—leaving Mr. Hodge staring blankly, rather like a newly landed codfish.   
 “Gosh!” they heard him stutter as they went, “Gosh!” Evidently, he had fitted Smithy’s description of the “bandit” to his guest at the Old Oak, and was alarmed.  
  
  
 **THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER   
  
 The Bandit!**MR. SMEDLEY glanced from the window of his room at the inn and scowled at the juniors as they walked down the lane. Mr. Smedley, alias Lucius Teggers, was not in a good temper. The sight of Herbert Vernon-Smith had rather the effect on him of a red rag on a bull, since the scene at Wharton Lodge the previous day.   
 Leaving the little diamond paned window, he threw himself into a creaking easy chair and lighted a cigarette.  
 He smoked, with a knitted, angry brow.  
 He had no idea that the juniors knew that he was there. Only the Bounder had spotted him at the window, and he had been very careful not to let the Creeper and Crawler observe that he was spotted.  
 Mr. Smedley was very anxious not to be spotted.  
 His presence in the vicinity of Wharton Lodge had to remain a secret if he was to catch the Bounder “on the hop.”  
 His dislike of the scapegrace of Greyfriars had intensified into something like hatred. He knew there was no doubt about it—that the fellow was a shady young rascal—and could he but have proved, to Mr. Vernon-Smith’s conviction that the Bounder was the same reckless scapegrace as ever, his game was won.  
 But he had had no luck!   
 At Greyfriars, he had failed to show the young rascal up in his true colours. Next term—but there was to be no next term for him! Mr. Quelch was going back—and that settled that! Unless he succeeded in landing his fish during the Easter holidays it looked as if his game was up. Mr. Smedley had to disappear; and Lucius Teggers could go back to the office of Leggett & Teggers in Regent Street, London; and gives up his hope of ousting Vernon-Smith and inheriting millions in his place.  
 But the rub was that he couldn’t! For Lucius Teggers was by no means the modal, businesslike, well conducted young man that Mr. Vernon-Smith believed him to be. He was over head and ears in debt—and is that fact came to light it was the death blow to all his hopes from Mr. Vernon-Smith!  
 Somehow, he had to “nail” the scapegrace of Greyfriars before the crash came! Once he was taken up by the millionaire financier, his creditors would be willing enough to wait.  
 Haunting the vicinity secretly, keeping watch like a cat at a mouse hole, surely he would catch the young scoundrel sooner or later!  
 He hoped so, at all events!  
 Meanwhile, he had to lie low! He had stayed the night at Wimford, and in the morning looked for a suitable spot within easy distance of Wharton Lodge, yet well out of the way. He had found it in that solitary wayside inn.  
 Having taken up this quarters there, he had remained indoors, not intending to go out again till dusk in case any of the Wharton Lodge party should be rambling about. He was glad of that precaution now, as the juniors had stopped at that very inn for ginger-beer.  
 Possibly Mr. Hodge, the innkeeper, was already a little puzzled by the fact that his guest, who had told him that he was on a walking tour, chose to remain indoors in his room all through a golden April afternoon.  
 Mr. Hodge was a slow thinker, and though he was puzzled, he did not go over his head about what was no business of his—till after that talk with the Bounder under the oak-tree.  
 After that, Mr. Hodge could have little doubt why his guest chose to remain in his room on a glorious afternoon.  
 Mr. Smedly’s desire to keep “doggo,” in fact, led, to Smithy’s extraordinary invention of a bandit. Little dreaming of what was in the innkeepers mind, Mr. Smedley smoked his cigarette, and thought over his problem while the sun sank lower in the west, and dusk gathered over the little inn.  
 Obviously, he had to keep doggo—if Vernon-Smith’s spotted him, the young rascal would be very careful not to kick over the traces. After dark, the spy could watch for him and shudder him easily enough. There was a chance yet of “pulling it off.”  
 Thinking over this pretty problem, Mr. Smedley glanced from his window from time to time. He caught sight of the stout innkeeper in earnest conversation with the ostler of the inn. A country cart came lumbering along the lane and stopped—the horse for water at the trough, the carter for ale at the bar. Landlord and ostler entered into whispered talk with the carter, who stared at what they told him and then picked his whip out of the cart. All three went into the inn.  
 Mr. Smedley observed all this, but without the slightest interest, or any suspicion that it had any connection with his worthy self.  
 As the dusk was falling, he decided to get out of doors; he was more than fed up with his room.  
 He took his hat and stick, walked out of his room and started to descend the dusky staircase. To his surprise, he observed the innkeeper, the ostler, and the brawny carter in a group at the foot of the stairs.  
 “’Ere he comes Mr. Hodge!” said the ostler.  
 Mr. Smedley stopped halfway down the narrow old staircase. The ostler had a pitchfork in his hands. The innkeeper had a big pewter tankard, evidently for use as a weapon. The brawny carter had a whip with the thong wound round his hand, swinging the heavy metal butt. It was so evident that their intentions were hostile, that Mr. Smedley stared at them, hardly believing his eyes. His way out of the inn was barred by three determined men—why, he could not begin to imagine.  
 “Stey where y’ar, you roog you!” said Mr. Hodge. “Don’t you try to get away!”  
 Mr. Smedley wondered whether he was dreaming!  
 “He ain’t getting away, he ain’t, Mr. Hodge!” said the carter. “Not without his ’ead cracked, he ain’t!”  
 “Garge ain’t back yet.” said Mr. Hodge. “That there boy takes his time getting to Elmdale. P’r’haps Piper wasn’t at home, though.” Mr. Piper was the village constable at Elmdale. Apparently, “George ” had been sent to fetch Mr. Piper!  
 “What does this mean?” exclaimed the amazed Mr. Smedley. “Are you all mad, or drunk, or what? I am going out.”  
 “You ain’t!” said Mr. Hodge stolidly. “Not till the pleeceman comes, anyhow”  
 “The policeman!” ejaculated Mr. Smedley.  
 “ I dessay you know what a pleece-man is!” jeered Mr. Hodge. “I dessay you’ve had a pleeceman’s hand on your shoulder afore now.”   
 “You must be mad!” said Mr. Smedley blankly.  
 “Mad or not, you ain’t going, not till Piper comes!” said Mr. Hodge. “You try to get out, and you’ll see! Stey whurr yar! And don’t think we’re afraid of your gun—we know you ain’t got it now.”  
 “My—my—my gun!” said Mr. Smedley faintly.  
 “The same which you shot the cashier along to Elmbridge!” said Mr. Hodge. “Oh, we knows you all right”  
 “Watch him, sir!” said the ostler anxiously. “He’s got a desprit look in his eyes , sir.”  
 “I’m a-watching him, Charley!” answered Mr. Hodge. “and you watch him, too, and if he comes down, you stick that there fork into him.”  
 “Trust me!” said Charley.  
 “You pack of drunken fools!” roared Mr. Smedley. “I will leave this inn at once. And if you dare to molest me——”  
 “You just troy it on!” said Mr. Hodge  
 “For whom do you take me for?” exclaimed the temporary master of the Greyfriars Remove. He realised that there must be some extraordinary mistake here. It was clear that he was supposed to be some desperate character.  
 “You know well enough,” said Mr. Hodge “We’ve got your description——”  
 “My description!” gasped Mr. Smedley.  
 Five feet nine or ten, dark brown eyes, very sharp.” recited Mr. Hodge. “Looks like a Lunnoner; dressed in grey tweeds, soft gray ’at—dark tan shoes—oh, we knows you all roight.”   
 “He’s the man!” said the carter, with a nod. Obviously that description was Smedley’s. “Looks a pretty villain, too! Look how he’s clenching his ’ands! Wouldn’t like to meet him alone on a dark night.”  
 “I believe you!” said Mr. Hodge.  
 Mr. Smedley had supposed that the ale of the Old Oak was the cause of this amazing demonstration. But he could see that the three men below were not intoxicated. Neither did they seem to be mad! Apparently they took him for some desperate character, whose description—as recited by Mr. Hodge—certainly tallied remarkably with his own.  
 “You are making a ridiculous mistake!” he exclaimed. “My name is Smedley, as I have told you——”  
 “I dessay you got plenty of names, in different places!” said Mr. Bunch, with a nod. “I don’t know the name of the bandit what shot the cashier at Elmbridge this morning! But I knows his description all roight.”  
 “Good heavens!” gasped Mr. Smedley. “You must be insane! I am a school master—”  
 “Ear him!” said Charley “He’ll say he’s a Member of the ’Ouse of Cummings next!”   
 “I tell you——” gasped Mr. Smedley, utterly confounded by this unexpected and astonishing occurrence. “I tell you——”  
 “Perheps you tell me why you’ve stayed indoors all afternoon and a-going out at dusk!” jeered Mr. Hodge.  
 Mr. Smedley breathed hard. Certainly, he did not want to explain that; though the exclamation was not that he was a hold-up bandit dodging the police!”  
 “That’s got him, sir!” said the ostler. “He ain’t got nothing to say.”  
 “He knows we know him all roight, Charley!” said Mr. Hodge, “and we’re a-keeping of him here till Mr. Piper comes! That boy George is taking his time, the young limb.”  
 Mr. Smedley gritted his teeth.  
 “I am going out,” he said, “and if you dare to stop me——” He came striding down the stairs.  
 The next moment he jumped back and scrambled frantically up the narrow staircase again. The three men below had gone into action at once! The carter made a swipe with the butt of his whip as Charley made a lunge with the pitchfork and Mr. Hodge hurled the tankard!  
 Mr. Smedley easily eluded the whip-butt and the pitchfork by his leap back — but he did not elude the tankard.   
 It crashed—landing on his chest, and he sat down on the upper stairs with a but bump and a yell; and the pewter pot clattered down the steps and was promptly recovered by Mr. Hodge.   
 “Ow!” spluttered Mr. Smedley. “Ooooh! Oh! Ah! Woooooh!”  
 “Stey whurr y’ar,” said Mr. Hodge, “and you won’t be ‘urt till Mr. Piper comes!” But we ain’t letting a bandit get away! Mabbe there’ll be a reward! Anyhow, here you stay till the pleeceman comes!”   
 “Ow! Oh! Urrrgh!” gasped the hapless Creeper and Crawler, sitting on the stairs and rubbing the spot where the tankard had landed.  
 A shock-headed lad came in at the door. He had a half brick in his hand, apparently picked up for use as a weapon if there was a struggle with the bandit.  
 “You been a long time, young Garge!” said Mr. Hodge accusingly.  
 “Mr. Piper was a-planting his beans, sir!” said George. “But he’s coom.”   
 A stout constable followed the boy in.  
 “Now”, he said. “What’s all this?”  
   
  
 **THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.**   
  
 **The Arm of the Law!**  
“THERE he is, Mr. Piper!”   
“That’s the roog!”   
 “Him what shot the cashier to Elmbridge——”  
 “Lost his gun, from what the young gentlemen said, Mr. Piper!” said the innkeeper encouragingly, “and we’re all ready to help!”  
 Mr. Smedley staggered up. He was glad, at least, to see a man in uniform—not being a bandit! Mr. Baker, the Elmdale constable, was not wholly in uniform. He had slipped on his tunic and helmet, at the call of duty; but he still more the corduroy trousers of unofficial hours. He was not looking pleased. Panting out his beans was an important matter to Mr. Piper—and he was unaccustomed to dealing with desperadoes Elmdale was a quiet little spot, and in point of fact, very much behind the times—it had no crime to speak of.  
 “Constable!” gasped Mr. Smedley. “I am glad to see you here! These stupid men appear to take me for some criminal—”  
 “We knows you all roight!” said Mr. Hodge. “Young gentlemen comes along this afternoon and gives me the description, what you read up at the police station in Wimford.  
 “What’s he done?” demanded Mr. Piper. “Garge ‘ere tells me about a bank hold-up at Elmbridge! I ain’ t been notified.”  
 “I know nothing of it!” gasped Mr. Smedley.   
 “I know nothing of it!” gasped Mr. Smedley. “I have a schoolmaster, on a walking tour in the country——”  
 “Stays in his room all afternoon!” said Mr. Hodge “Starts to go out at dusk! Looks loikely, don’t it?”   
 “I ain’t been notified.” said Mr. Piper. ” They been talking of putting my cottage on the phone, but they been talking about it this ten year, and it ain’t on the phone yet! So I ain’t been notified. I ain’t heard of any hold-up at Elmbridge, but if that’s the man——”  
 “I am not!” shrieked Mr. Smedley.  
 “How’d you get the description, Hodge?”  
 “Young gent comes along and tells me the man’s about.” answered the innkeeper. “Gives me the description he read up at the police station to Wimford. Not knowing the man was on the premises, mind you! Knocked me as flat as a flounder, it did! So I sends Garge to fetch you, and ——”  
 “Let’s hear that description!”  
 Once more Mr. Hodge recited the description of Mr. Smedley. Mr. Piper’s eyes were suspiciously on him, noting every detail. There was no doubt that the description fitted.  
 The constable’s face grew more and more suspicious, as was natural in the circumstances.  
 “You come down ‘ere.” he said. “Mind, don’t you try to bolt! I ain’t got any ’andcuffs with me, but Mthr. Hodge will lend me a cart-rope.”  
 “Ready and willing!” said Mr. Hodge. “Garge, go round to the stables and get a rope—a good thick ‘un!”  
 “You fool!” roared Mr. Smedley.   
 “Fool’s better’n a roog, any day!” answered Mr. Hodge. “You coom down and give yourself up, you roog, you!”  
 Mr. Smedley descended the stairs. In the official presence he was safe from the whip-butt, the pitchfork, and the tankard! But his escape was cut off! All hands were ready to seize him at a sign of bolting!  
 “Now, I go to see into this!” said Mr. Piper. “Name?”  
 “Smedley!” hissed the Creeper and Crawler.  
 “Whurr you coom from?”  
 “London. I am a schoolmaster on holiday——”  
 “Seeing as I ain’t been notified.” said Mr. Piper. “ I don’t want to make any mistake. You got something about you to prove it?”  
 “He’s got a bag in his room, said Mr. Hodge. “I dessay the bank’s money is in it.  
 “Any objection to a man looking into your bag?” asked Mr. Piper. “If you’re a schoolmaster, name of Smedley, you’ll have something about it along of your toggery, I dessay.”  
 Mr. Smedley caught his breath. He plenty of proof that he was Mr. Smedley, tutor, if allowed to make his own selection. But in his bag were private papers, relating to his own personal affairs, which, if suspected, would have proved that he was not only Mr. Smedley, but also the Lucius Teggers, junior partner in the firm of Leggett and Teggers, of Regent Street.  
 Not for worlds would he have allowed curious eyes to peer into the contents of his bag! He felt a chill at the bare thought of being identified as Lucius Teggers, nephew of Mr. Vernon-Smith, the millionaire!  
 He was fairly caught.  
 The Bounder had intended to make things extremely uncomfortable for him. But he had never dreamed how very uncomfortable he had made them, for he had not the remotest suspicion that the Creeper and Crawler had another name besides Smedley.  
 His hesitation an uneasiness could not possibly escape the watchful eyes on him. Suspicion in the village constable’s mind crystallized at once into certainty. His hand fastened on Smedley’s arm.  
 “You fool!” panted Mr. Smedley. “How dare you! Release me at once!”  
 Mr. Piper’s grip tightened  
 “You letting me look into that bag of yourn?” he demanded.  
 “No! I—I refuse!”  
 “And whey, if you’re a schoolmaster a-walking on a tower” demanded Mr. Piper sarcastically.  
 “I have my reasons! I refuse to allow my bag to be opened! There is nothing in it that is not my own, but——”  
 “But what?” jeered Mr. Piper grimly.  
 “I will have you reprimanded for this by your superiors!” howled Mr. Smedley. “If you were not a born fool you would see that you are making an idiotic mistake! Release my arm!”  
 “I ain’t been notified, and I ain’t got authority to open that there bag.” said Mr. Piper. “But that the tide goes to the police station, and you goes along with it.”  
 “I tell you——” shrieked Mr. Smedley in helpless rage.  
 “You can tell Inspector Stacey at Wimford!” answered Mr. Piper coolly. “You’re took up on suspicion, you are.”  
 “You fool—you idiot—you dolt!”  
 “Nice language for a schoolmaster, I don’t think!” said Charley. “He’s your man all roight, Mr. Piper.”  
 “I can prove——” howled the hapless Smedley.  
 “Nobody’s stopping you!” answered Mr. Piper. “I ain’t keen on a walk to Wimford, if you ain’t the man! Prove who you are!”  
 “I—I—I——”  
 Mr. Smedley stammered helplessly.  
 “Garge, you fetch that there bag down!” said Mr. Piper.  
 “’Ere’s the rope, Mr. Piper! Shall I tie his ’ands?” asked Garge’ “Charley’ll ’old ‘im  
 “You dare——” gasped Mr. Smedley.  
 “Not if he goes quiet!” said Mr. Piper. “It ain’t proved yet that he’s the bandit, though I ain’t got any doubts about it, personal. But I ain’t been notified, and if he goes quiet——”  
 “You dolt!” shrieked Mr. Smedley. “Do you fancy, for one moment, that I will allow you to take me to a police-station?”  
 “I don’t see ‘ow you’re going to stop me!” grinned Mr. Piper. “And if you give any trouble I’ll tie up your hands fast enough!”” “P’r’aps Charley’d better coom along with his pitchfork.” suggested Mr. Hodge. “He’s a desprit character. Shooting of a cashier in a bank—”  
 “P’r’haps he had!” said Mr. Piper thoughtfully.   
 Mr. Smedley almost foamed at the mouth. He was going to be marched into the market town of Wimford, with a policeman’s grip and an ostler following with a pitchfork. He gurgled with rage!  
 “This way!” said Mr. Piper.  
 “Stop!” gasped Mr. Smedley. He had thought of a last and desperate resource. “I am known to people in this neighborhood; they can identify me.”  
 “Why didn’t you say that afore?” asked Mr. Piper suspiciously. “Who’s the people you mean?”  
 “Colonel Wharton, at Wharton Lodge. You must know him!”  
 “Everybody round these parts knows Colonel Wharton,” assented Mr. Piper, “but I don’t fancy as he knows you.”  
 “I will walk to Wharton lodge, if you like!” gasped Mr. Smedley. Anything was better than being marched off to the Police Station with a crowd following as soon as they entered the market town place. “Colonel Wharton will identify me at once.”  
 “Well, it ain’t a quarter as far as Wimford.” said Mr. Piper slowly. Perhaps he saw here a chance of getting back to his beans! “And the colonel might lend me the car to run you in, being a magistrate himself.”  
 “He’s a pulling of your leg, Mr. Piper.” said Charley. “He’s going to dodge you, into, going up to the lodge.”  
 “He ain’t,” said Mr. Piper grimly. “I ain’t letting go of his arm till we get there; likewise, you can foller on, Charley, and bring the bag in one ’and your fork in the other.”  
 And the procession started, Mr. Piper marching on with heavy official tread, holding Mr. Smedley’s arm in a grim official grip. Charley, the ostler, following, carrying the bag—which he had little doubt was stacked with loot from the bank—in one hand, his pitchfork in the other. Mr Hodge and the carter watched them go. Mr. Smedley was glad, at least, that the Surrey Lanes were dusky and deserted. The bare thought of being walked into the town, along brightly lighted pavements, with a curious crowd staring and following, made him shudder. Fortunately it was not so bad as that. But it was bad enough, and he was bill with great as he walked along, his arm safely held in the arm of the law.  
  
 **THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER  
   
 Funny!**

“I Say, you Fellows!”  
 Billy Bunter fairly shrieked. Seldom, or never, had the Owl of the Remove been so wildly excited.  
 “I say— he, he, he!——I say—--Smedley— He, he, he! I say, you fellows! He, he, he!” gurgled Bunter.  
 “Hallo, hallo, hallo!”  
 “What’s up, fathead?”  
 Harry Wharton & Co. were in the hall of Wharton Lodge, chatting in a cheery group before a log fire, when William George Bunter burst in on them, his little round eyes almost popping through his big, round spectacles.  
 “What about Smedley?” asked the Bounder. If there was news of the Creeper and Crawler, Smithy was very keen to hear it.  
 So weres the other fellows. They had wondered a great deal at what had been the outcome, if any, of the extraordinary yarn Smithy had spun to Mr. Hodge at the Old Oak Inn.  
 “S-Smedley!” stuttered Bunter. “He, he, he! I say, you fellows, he’s coming. A bobby’s got him!”  
 “A bobby!” yelled the juniors.  
 “Yes, rather. A bobby’s got him. I say, what do you think he’s done?” asked Bunter. “think he’s committed a murder or something?”  
 “Fathead!”  
 “Where is he?” asked the Bounder.  
 “They’re coming to the side door. I spotted them from a window. I say, Smedley looks in a fearful rage!”  
 “What on earth can have happened?” gasped Bob. “You awful ass, Smithy—”  
 The Bounder chuckled.  
 “Let’s go and see.” he suggested.  
 The juniors hurried away. A ring at the door had already called Thomas there. The party that Bunter had spotted from a window had arrived.  
  
   
  
 The April evening was closing in, but the light from the windows illumined the group. Thomas stared as he opened the side door. The juniors gazed in wonder mingled with merriment. It was a startling and extraordinary scene. Mr. Piper, stout and resolute, stood there with his official grasp on the arm of Mr. Smedley, who was pale and red by turns with suppressed fury. Behind them stood Charley, with bag and pitchfork, watchful and wary for an attempt on the part of the bandit to escape.  
 The Bounder laughed aloud. He had had no doubt that he had caused trouble for the spy lurking in the Old Oak Inn, but he had never dreamed of it to this extent. Unaware that the man was passing Bunter alone name, he had not supposed that Mr. Smedley would have any difficulty in proving his identity. His blow had hit harder then he had expected or supposed for a moment.  
 “Ask the Colonel if he’ll kindly see me, Thomas!” said Mr. Piper. “I got a suspicious character ’ere what says the colonel knows him.”  
 “The master’s gone out for a walk with Mr. Squelch,” answered Thomas; “but Master Harry’s here.”  
 “What is it, Piper?” asked Harry, coming out of the doorway into the porch. “What’s the trouble?”  
 “You know me, Wharton!” gasped Mr. Smedley, before the constable could speak. “Tell this fool—this dolt—who I am!”   
 “Better language, my man!” said Mr. Piper severely. “You can’t insult the law like that here”  
 “Fool! Idiot! I will complain to your superiors—”  
 “You ’old your row, my man!” said Charley; and he gave Mr. Smedley a gentle pope with the pitchfork as a hint to be quiet. There was a fearful howl from Mr. Smedley as the sharp prong pricked him in the back.  
 “Ha, ha, ha!” yelled the Bounder.  
 “You seen this man afore, Master Harry?” asked Mr. Piper.  
 “Yes.” dasped Wharton. “Oh, yes!¨  
 “It’s like this—” began the Elmdale constable.  
 “Fool! Dolt! Scoundrel Tell this fool—”   
 Another poke from the pitchfork reminded Mr. Smedley that it was not his cute to speak.  
 “Shut it, you!” said Charley. “Don’t you keep on a-interrupting of Mr. Piper, you roog!”  
 “Ha ,ha, ha!”  
 “It’s like this,” resumed Mr. Piper, Smedley having been reduced to infuriated silence. “I was at my beans when young Garge, the boy at the Old Oak, Com’s along, and he says, says he, that they’ve got the bandit at the inn, he says, and will I go along and take him in charge, he says. There a- watching of him, he says, to see that he don’t bolt. So I only stops to finish the row of beans, and of I goes, and I finds this here desprit-looking character. Name of Smedley, he says; but he won’t open that there bag of his, and not being notified——”  
 “Tell this fool——”  
 “Mr. Hodge says, says he, the man’s been keeping indoors all day, and started to go out at dusk, and they stopped him! Says he can prove who he is, but won’t open his bag. You got that the bag safe, Charley?”  
 “I got it safe, Mr. Piper.” answered Charley. “The colonel, being a justice, can ’ave it opened and see what he’s got—-all the bank’s money——”  
 “So I took him up.” said Mr. Piper. “But he makes out that the colonel knows him, sir, so I brings him here——”  
 “Oh, my hat!” gasped Wharton.  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Tell this fool who I am, Wharton!” shrieked Mr. Smedley. “Tell him that I am your Form-master at Greyfriars cress!   
 “Loikely, ain’t it?” grinned Charley derisively.  
 “There’s a man wanted, and the description fits him.” said Mr. Piper. “I ain’t been notified, but there’s been a bank holdup along to Elmbridge, so Mr. Hodge ’ears, and this man’s description——”   
 “Tell this fool——”  
 “Oh dear!” gasped Wharton. The—the fact is it—it’s all right, Pipter! I know this gentleman—he’s a schoolmaster—his name is Smedley——”  
 “You know him?” exclaimed Mr. Piper.  
 “Oh, yes! Yes! In fact, he has been a master at my school!”  
 “Oh!” said Mr. Piper. “You sure of that, Master Harry?”  
 “Oh, quite!” gasped Wharton. “All these fellows know him! Please release him, Mr. Piper. I assure you it’s all right—my uncle would say so if he was here——”  
 Mr. Piper released Smedley’s arm rather grudgingly. Charley, the ostler, looked very dubious.  
 “If it’s all right, why can’t he say so” asked Charley. “Why can’t he let a officer of the law look into that there bag if he’s all right?”  
 “ I don’t know! Mr. Smedley,” exclaimed Wharton, “surely you could have proved who you were by letting the constable examine your belongings—“  
 “I want no impudence from you, Wharton!” roared Mr. Smedley. “I will see that this man is punished for this insolence.”  
 “I done my dooty!” said Mr. Piper stolidly. “I got the description, and you acts suspicious. Schoolmaster or not, you got something in that ther bade you don’t care from office of the war to see. But if Master Harry answers for you——”  
 “Yes, yes!” exclaimed Wharton. “I assure you we all know him well. He has been a temporary master at Greyfriars.”  
 Mr. Piper still seemed to hesitate.  
 “We all know him well.” said Nugent.  
 “The knowfulness is terrific!” declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.  
 “Well,” said Mr. Piper, convinced at last, yet with a lingering doubt. “If you takes the responsibility, Master Harry——“  
 “ Yes, yes! That’s all right!”  
 “You can go, my man!” said Mr. Piper, gruffly.  
 Mr. Smedley did not wait to be told twice. With a face convulsed with fury, he smashed his bag from Charley and disappeared in the dusk.  
 Mr. Baker and Charley departed more slowly, still in a rather dubious frame of mind. And when they got back to the Old Oak, and discusseb the matter with Mr. Hodge, over certain tankards of ale, the three of them continued to be rather dubious —Bo no doubt their minds were set at rest later when they learned that there had been no hold-up at Elmbridge at all, and that nobody was “wanted.”   
 “Its too bad, Smithy.” said Harry Wharton, laughing as the juniors went back to the hall. “It’s too—— Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha! ”   
 “It worked out better then I expected!” chuckled the Bounder . “what the dooce can Smedley have in that bag that he’s a friend for a constable to see? His face was worth a guinea a box—”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”   
 “After this he may be fed up with hanging about here and spying on a fellow.” chuckled Smithy. “He’s findin’ it a bit excitin’.”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 When Colonel Wharton and Mr. Quelch came in they were greeted by sounds of merriment. They smiled benignantly at the group of merry juniors, who were evidently enjoying life.   
 It was probable that Mr. Smedley was not enjoying life that balmy April evening. It would have been difficult to find a more exasperated and enraged man than the Creeper and Crawler as he tramped round, bag in hand, looking for a lodging for the night.  
  
 **THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.  
  
 Eggy!**“He, he, he! If an!”  
 Bob Cherry started.  
 That squeaky, unmusical cachinnation was familiar enough to his ears. But it was rather startling to hear it at that moment.  
 Harry Wharton & Co. were gathered in Wharton’s den. Bob had left his comrades, and come along to his own room, to fetch his “bolo,” with which he was going to display his skill.  
 But he forgot all about the bolo as he opened his door, and that fat chuckle fell on his ears.  
 Bunter was not with the Co. Nobody knew when Bunter was; nobody, as a matter of fact, cared.  
 Bob Cherry, quite unexpectedly, found Bunter.  
 Bunter was in Bob’s room. That cachinnation announced the fact. And Bob, who was about to switch on the light, refrained. He stared across the room at the window. It was open, and a fat figure was framed against the bright April starlight.  
 “He, he, he!”  
 Bunter, obviously, was up to something. And Bob, remembering his schemes for making Mr. Quelch’s tired of staying at Wharton Lodge, guessed what it was.  
 Bunter certainly was not at Bob’s window to admire the fine April scenery. He could have done that, if so inclined, from his own window. But Bob’s window overlooked the terrace before the house. Bunter’s didn’t! And Mr. Quelch walked on the terrace after dinner. At that very moment, Bob knew, the majestic figure of Henry Samuel Quelch was pacing below.  
 “The fat idiot!” breathed Bob.  
 Bunter, leaning from the window, blinking through this big spectacles, had, of course, his butt to them. He did not see Bob, therefore, as that youth tiptoed across the room for a closer inspection of the fat Owl’s proceedings.  
 Bob made no sound as he approached. But he very nearly betrayed himself as he looked over Bunter’s shoulder.  
 On the bed window-sill, in front of Bunter, was a lidless rush basket, full of eggs. Evidently Bunter had “snaffled” that basket of eggs from the regions below.  
 There were more than a dozen eggs in the basket! And what Billy Bunter was going to do with them was fairly clear! There were intended for the benefit of Mr. Quelch!  
 Bob almost gasped aloud.  
 But he kept silent! He was standing close enough to Bunter to touch him, but the fat junior, intent on the terrace below, had no suspicion that he was not alone. There was a sound of footsteps in the dusk below.  
 “He, he, he!” Bunter chuckled softly. “He, he, he! Safe ’as houses! Even if he spots this window, tain’t my window! He, he, he! Better let him have the lot all at once—and the basket, too! He, he, he!”  
 The footsteps on the terrace were drawing nearer as Mr. Quelch paced slowly and majestically along.  
 Bunter gave a final blink below to ascertain the precise position of the Remove master about to pass underneath. Then his fat hands grasped the basket to lift it from the sill.  
 But he did not lift it! At the psychological moment Bob Cherry acted—swiftly!  
 A sudden hand grabbed the back of Bunter’s bullet head by the hair!  
 Before Billy Bunter knew what was happening his fat face was driven down into the basket of eggs  
 “Urrrrggh!” gurgled Bunter. “What the—— Ooogh! Urrrggh! Wurrggh!”  
 He wriggled frantically.  
  
   
   
Heedless of his wriggling, Bob Cherry, with a heavy hand, squashed the fat face down among the eggs till the last one was cracked, and the streaming eggs and shells plastered Billy Bunter’s face from his streaming hair to his sticky chin.  
 “Wurrrrggh!” came in a suffocated gurgle from the Owl of the Remove.  
 Bob Cherry chuckled and released the fat head. Those eggs, it was certain, would never be dropped on Quelch now! Leaving Bunter to disentangle his features from the squashed eggs, he stepped back and switched on the light  
 Billy Bunter lifted a streaming, dripping, eggy, shelly face from the basket. He turned, blinking wildly through streaming eggs.  
 “Gurrrrggh!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!” roared Bob Cherry. He could his head out of the door and yelled; “Hallo, hallo, hallo! Roll up, you men! Come and look at Bunter!”  
 Harry Wharton’s door was open. The Co. came out, followed by the Bounder. The stared along the corridor.  
 “What—” began Wharton.  
 “Come and see!” roared Bob.  
 “Gurrrggh! Wurrggh! Urrggh!”  
 The juniors ran up. They stared into the lighted room at a staggering figure that clutched and grabbed and dabbed streaming eggs and broken egg shells from its sticky face. There was a roar:  
 “Bunter!”  
 “What the thump—”  
 “Urrrggh!” Bunter gurgled and gasped and blinked wildly through eggy spectacles. “Wurrgh! I say, you fellows——Urrrggh!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Bunter had a basket of eggs to drop on Quelch’s napper!” exclaimed Bob.  
“I caught him in time, and his face seems to have got mixed up with the eggs—”   
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “The mixfulness is terrific!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 Press “Googgh! Groogh! I didn’t—I wasn’t—I—I—— Oh crikey! I’m all eggy! Urrgh! I’m all sticky! Gurrgh! Look at me!” shrieked Bunter.  
 “We’re looking!” chartered Nugent. “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “I’m all eggy—I’m all sticky— Grooogh” howled Bunter.  
 “You fat villain!” gasped Harry Wharton, and he stared across to the window and grabbed up the rush-basket, swimming in broken eggs.  
“You’ve got to learn not to play tricks on Quelch——”  
 “Gufffggh!”  
 “And that will be a tip for you!” added Wharton, as he up-ended the egg basket over Bunter’s head and slammed it on like a hat period  
 It bonneted Bunter! Egg streamed down all round him. He gave a horrible gurgle! His last state was worse than his first.  
 “Ha, ha, ha!” shrieked the juniors.  
 “Wuirrrrggh! Gurrrrggh! Beast! Oooogh! Oh crikey! Ow! Urrrgggh!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha!”  
 “Ow! Beast! Wow! ! I’m all sticky! I’m smothered with eggs! I—I—  
Grugggggh!”  
 “Ha, ha, ha! ”  
 Harry Wharton & Co. yelling, left him to it. Wild howls and gurgles followed as they went.   
  
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 It was quite a long time befor Bunter was seen again. He had a lot of washing to do. Washing had no genuine appeal for Bunter; but he’s in the owl of the Remove felt that he needed it now!  
 And much less Bunter objected to the presence of a beak in a spot which he honoured with his distinguished presence, in the holidays, it was unlikely that he would think of egging Quelch any more. Bunter was tired of eggs.  
THE END.