

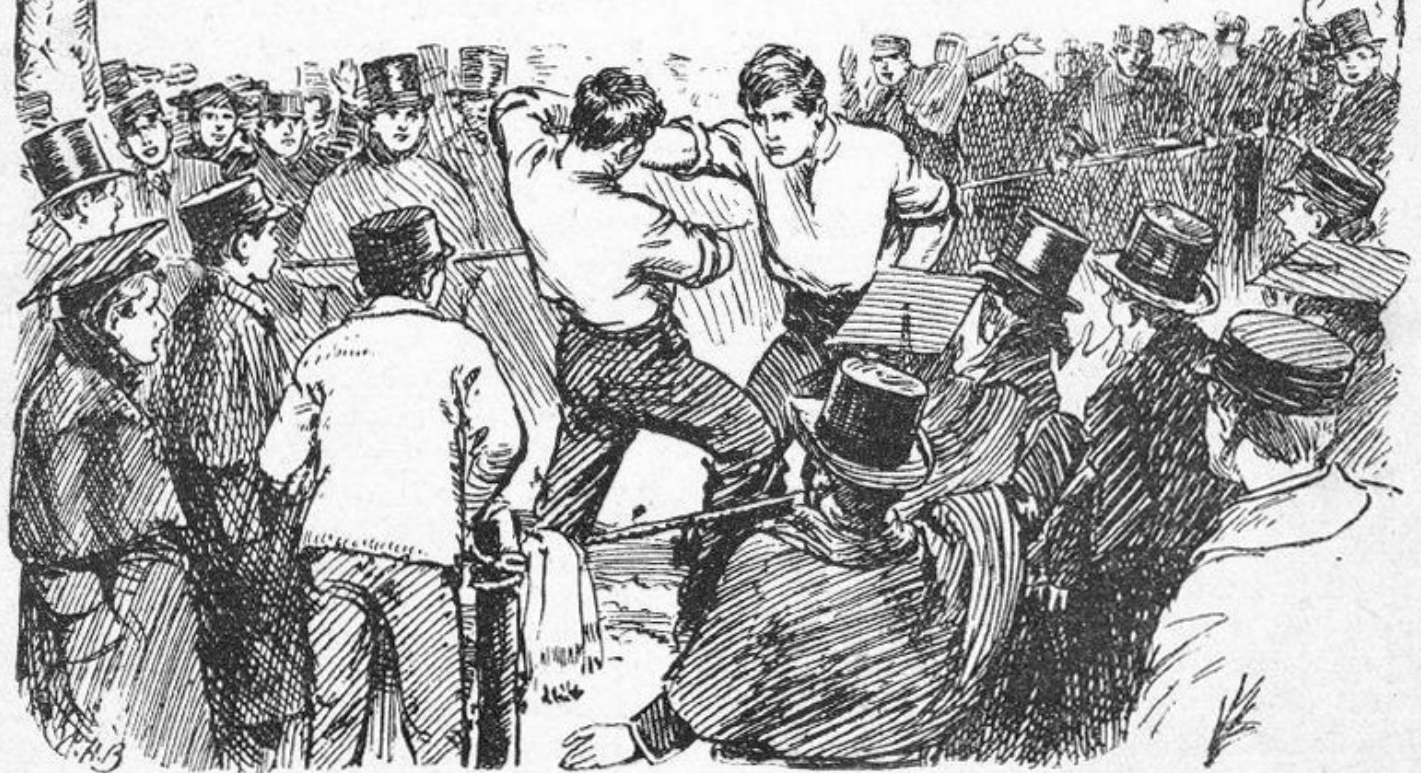
THE GREATEST FIGHT IN THE HISTORY OF GREYFRIARS SCHOOL BY ROBERT CHERRY

EDITOR'S NOTE.—As so many readers of the school stories of Greyfriars have written for particulars of the greatest fight which has ever taken place at Greyfriars School—a bout which would compare with the famous Williams v. Tom Brown fight at Rugby, or the "Slogger" Sawyer v. Simms affair at St. Jim's—we commissioned Robert Cherry to search for details. The search entailed an exchange of something like twenty letters with old boys, and the point is still unsettled. Still, if the Pryor-Ransom set-to is not actually the greatest fight Greyfriars has witnessed, it certainly is one of the greatest. —ED. HOLIDAY ANNUAL.]

EXACTLY what was at the root of the trouble between Jack Pryor and Stanley Ransom, it is almost impossible to say now, for the trouble, whatever it was, happened in the Christmas term of 1875.

As far as I have been able to discover, it seems that it was simply a case of two Sixth-Formers, who were thrown together a lot in prefect duties and on the playing-field, being unable to hit it off. There is ample proof that Jack Pryor and Stanley Ransom were not even on speaking terms for the better part of the term, and matters appear to have been nearly as bad as that for a couple of years when the unpleasant affair was brought to a startling head.

Jack Pryor, in the course of his duties as prefect, saw Stanley Ransom leaving the school long after lock-up one night, and waited for his return.



As appears to have been Pryor's way, he bluntly accused the other senior of breaking bounds. Ransom's answer is not known, but no doubt it was a galling one, and a blow was struck.

No one knows who struck it, but the news suddenly flashed through the school, that Pryor and Ransom were to fight. There was a tremendous amount of excitement when it was learnt that the fight would take place on the last day of the term, within an hour of the departure of the stage-coach—there was no railway serving Friardale in those days.

Everybody understood the reason for the postponement, because both Pryor and Ransom were leaving that term, and they wanted to take good "reports" home to their people, a decent enough motive, which most of the fellows appreciated. But the wait was very trying, and it is a wonder that the secret was kept for over a month, for Pryor and Ransom both went into strict training, and often watched each other at work in the meadow adjoining the school.

Then, early one morning, within a few days of Christmas, all Greyfriars made its way to a certain clearing in Friardale Wood.

Both principals were already there with their seconds, but it was too dark for faces to be seen. A real roped-in square was rigged up, and everyone waited breathlessly for daylight.

Presently Stanley Ransom sprang over the ropes, and, with a ringing laugh, threw off his jacket.

"If it's light enough for your man," he sang out to Pryor's seconds, "it's light enough for me!"

Pryor didn't answer, but he vaulted the ropes instantly, and, just as the first grey streaks of daylight found their way through the trees, the two stood up to one another, scaling to within a few pounds of each other's weight.

Some plumped for Pryor, because of his better shoulders and arms; others expected Ransom to win, on account of his finer legs and wonderfully developed muscles; but there seems to have been very little really to choose in the two fellows.

"Time!" was given in an excited voice, and

Ransom sprang in, with Pryor on his way to meet him. Ransom lashed out with a left-hand drive, but Pryor was not as hot-headed as a good many appear to have thought him, for he swept the blow aside, and jabbed hard to the body.

He connected, but Ransom made amends. He uppercut his man with a terrific right, then fought him right across the ring, until he was almost upon the ropes.

Once Pryor did actually touch the ropes, and it appears to have roused him to a wonderful extent. Ransom had been carrying everything before him for the last few seconds, and perhaps he was over-confident. All the spectators agreed that he might have paved the way to victory at that point in the great fight, if he had not been in such a hurry.

As it was, Ransom threw caution to the winds in a reckless attempt to finish out of hand, using both weapons with all his strength, and with only one thought behind them—to hand over the k.-o.

Pryor must have used his head wonderfully, for he seems to have drawn his opponent into a trap. Up to the moment Pryor's back touched the ropes there was only one man in it; then Pryor shot forward.

He, too, had a reckless strain in his temperament, and Ransom's left to the face seems to have been passed unnoticed by Jack. He was in and under the other fellow's guard, and his left streaked for the face. Almost at the same instant Jack's right swept up in a semi-circle, and there was never a doubt about connection being made.

The upper-cut landed full on the point of Ransom's jaw, and he was flung back a couple of yards. He swayed a little, then dropped to his knees, and an excited voice called "Time!"

There were cheers and counter-cheers, and everybody talked at once without troubling to listen. It had been an amazing first round, and both principals had suffered punishment.

So equal were the exchanges in the opening half of the second round that there was scarcely a point to choose between the two, but the closing stages saw a great change.

Ransom was fortunate in being within distance with a heavy jab to the body, and Pryor's hands dropped. Ransom seized his

opportunity with lightning-like quickness, and he fought his man to the ropes again. One terrific left-hand drive from him would have finished most fights, but Jack Pryor was as hard as a rock, and round two finished as the first had, with an upper-cut from Jack's right, which levelled matters up again, and sent Ransom to the ground for the second time.

The excitement now threatened to get out of hand, for it reached such a pitch that, at this late date, it is impossible to get clear details of the next five sessions.

At the seventh meeting Ransom appears to have had it all his own way, sending Pryor down twice within a few seconds.

At the eighth encounter Pryor electrified the spectators and roused his partisans to enthusiasm by rushing it at the start, and fighting his man to a standstill.

The fight which Ransom seemed to have won in the seventh round now ran entirely in Pryor's favour, and the excitement which attended the ninth session can be imagined. So great was it that again there are no details to be obtained. From the ninth round to the fifteenth it was a case of terrific hitting on both sides, and it is certain that the sixteenth meeting must have found both principals a good deal the worse for wear.

But the knock-out came suddenly and sensationally. Ransom saw an opening, and sprang in. His splendid left streaked to the point of Pryor's jaw, and his right was back for the follow-up; but Jack Pryor must have been a giant as far as stamina was concerned. His favourite upper-cut came into play again—a blow which was very near his last one; but it was a terrific shot.

Ransom appears to have countered instinctively, and his right drive never looked like missing. It landed full on the point of the jaw, and Jack Pryor swayed.

Just for a second he kept his feet; then he toppled over gracefully, and fell flat on his face. Then someone shouted, an excited sort of yell:

"Look at Ransom!"

There was no need to shout, though, for everyone was looking. Ransom was leaning forward, a sleepy expression on his handsome, rugged face. Then he slipped down, and lay where he fell like a log. He, too, was down and out before Pryor had had time to take the count.

I have to thank Canon Harper, of Wayland, near St. Jim's College, for the bulk of the above details. It was he who refereed the fight, and, of course, his verdict was a draw.

It is Canon Harper, too, who supplied the two, perhaps, most interesting facts of all—the one, that Pryor and Ransom left Friardale, a couple of hours later, seated together on the front seat of the stage coach, and sharing the same rug; the other, that Jack Pryor had been quite within his rights in accusing Stanley Ransom of breaking bounds, but if he had made further inquiries he would have learnt that Ransom had a special permit from the Head to be outside the school.

In the face of that, it is pretty safe to say that there was no real cause for the fight, except that it was one of those things which had to happen, and, according to Canon Harper, the very best thing in the world that could have happened, for it turned two enemies into chums.

