



Forbidden to Fight!

A Splendid Complete Story of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

THE FIRST CHAPTER

On the Warpath

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Ratcliff uttered that ejaculation in almost horrified tones.

The sour, ill-tempered Housemaster, who ruled the New House of St. Jim's with a rod of iron, had just emerged from his study to find a fierce fight in progress in the passage.

Mr. Ratcliff stopped short in amazement. His hands were raised aloft in pious horror.

Rough-and-tumble fighting was forbidden at St. Jim's, though—like many other forbidden things—it flourished exceedingly. The master who could successfully suppress "scraping" remained to be born.

But this particular "scrap" was a more serious affair than most, for it was taking place within the sacred precincts of Mr. Ratcliff's domain—under the Housemaster's very nose, so to speak.

Kerr of the New House and Blake of the School House were the belligerents. And they were evidently deeply engrossed in their task of pommelling each other; for they had failed to hear Mr. Ratcliff's door open, they had

failed to hear him speak, and they failed to see him standing there, viewing the scene with frowning disfavour.

"Bless my soul!" repeated Mr. Ratcliff.

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

To and fro tramped the combatants, their bodies swaying as they fought. They were breathing heavily, and they had evidently been "going it" for some time, judging by their appearance. Kerr's right eye had temporarily put up the shutters, and Jack Blake's nose was red and swollen through contact with Kerr's knuckles.

"Desist!"

Mr. Ratcliff's voice boomed down the corridor. The fighters heard it—they could hardly help doing so, for it resembled the rumble of thunder—and they lowered their hands to their sides, and stood blinking sheepishly at the Housemaster.

"How dare you?" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you indulge in a bout of fisticuffs on the very threshold of my study?"

"I—I—" stammered Kerr.

"We—we—" stuttered Blake.

"Your behaviour is no better than that of a pair of hooligans!" stormed Mr. Ratcliff.

"You, Kerr, are a member of my House, and

I shall punish you severely. You will write a thousand lines!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Kerr. "Might as well make it a million!" he added, under his breath.

"What did you say, Kerr?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff sharply.

"Nothing of any consequence, sir."

The Housemaster gave a snort, and turned to Jack Blake.

"As for you, Blake, I am powerless to deal with you, since you do not come under my jurisdiction. But I will report this unseemly conduct to your Housemaster!"

So saying, Mr. Ratcliff stalked away with rustling gown, leaving Kerr dabbing at his eye with a handkerchief, and Jack Blake caressing his nose.

There was a further shock in store for Mr. Ratcliff. When he emerged into the sunny quadrangle a moment later, it was to find another fight in progress.

Redfern of the New House and Clive of the School House seemed intent upon knocking each other off the face of the earth. They were fighting furiously.

Mr. Ratcliff halted. His frown resembled the frown of Jove of old. There appeared to be quite an epidemic of fighting on this particular afternoon, and Mr. Ratcliff could not understand it. He did not know that it was the eve of the junior footer election, and that the St. Jim's fellows were wildly excited in consequence.

Where there was smoke there was fire, and where there was an election there was fighting. It was a perfectly natural case of cause and effect.

Tom Merry, who had captained the junior eleven the previous season, had put up for re-election, and Figgins of the New House had put up in opposition. The School House stood solid for Tom Merry, the New House swore allegiance to Figgins. And "scrap" between the rival partisans were the order of the day.

This particular "scrap" between Redfern and Clive was quite a lively affair. They were pounding away at each other, no quarter being asked or given. And the most disgraceful part of it, from Mr. Ratcliff's point

of view, was that both Reddy and Clive seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves.

"Stop!" thundered the Housemaster. "This is the second unseemly brawl I have encountered within a few moments. It is disgraceful! It is monstrous! Stop! Do you hear me!"

The fight ended as if by magic. And Redfern and Clive exchanged rueful glances, which seemed to say eloquently, "We're in for it now!"

"Redfern?" fumed Mr. Ratcliff.

"Sir?"

"How dare you behave like a young savage?"

"Ahem! We—we were just having a few words, sir—"

"Words?" echoed Mr. Ratcliff. "Then I must say they were very forcibly addressed. You will take a thousand lines, Redfern."

"Whew!"

"As for you, Clive, I shall place a report before Mr. Railton, and request him to punish you severely."

Clive groaned, and Redfern groaned, and then they both groaned in chorus. Mr. Ratcliff left them to their dismal duet, and strode away. It was a half-holiday, and the Housemaster proposed to take an afternoon walk.

Several other fights happened to be going on at that moment; but Mr. Ratcliff, like the homeward-bound prodigal son, was sighted afar off, and the warriors melted away like snow in the sunshine. They were not anxious to come to loggerheads with the sour-visaged Housemaster.

Mr. Ratcliff strode on out of the gates, and wended his way towards the river. He did not anticipate coming upon any more fights. The riverside, he reflected, would be peaceful and serene. The silence would be broken only by the twittering of birds and the gentle lapping of the water.

But Mr. Ratcliff imagined a vain thing. No sooner did he set foot on the towpath than he caught sight of a couple of juniors engaged in a deadly hand-to-hand duel.

As in the previous instances, one of the combatants was a New House fellow, the other belonged to the School House.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was taking up the cudgels on behalf of Tom Merry, and Edgar Lawrence was fighting for the cause of Figgins.

They didn't see Mr. Ratcliff approaching. They had no eyes for anything but the business in hand.

Arthur Augustus was wildly excited. His arms were revolving like windmills. His coat lay neatly folded on the bank; his shirt-sleeves were rolled back, revealing a pair of slim but wiry arms. He was fighting furiously; but he wasted a good deal of valuable breath by hurling remarks at his opponent.

"How dare you say that Tom Mewwy is a wash-out an' a back numbah?" he panted. "How dare you insinuate that Figgins is the bettah man of the two? Bai Jove! I will administrate a feahful thwashin'—"

Biff!

Gussy's flow of eloquence was rudely interrupted by the arrival of Lawrence's fist on his nose.

Arthur Augustus reeled back a pace or two, and Lawrence was quick to follow up his advantage.

In the excitement of the moment Lawrence did not realise that his opponent was being driven rapidly towards the water's edge. He rushed in with a lightning jolt to the jaw, which lifted Arthur Augustus clean off his feet, and precipitated him into the river.

Splash!

"Yawcooop! Gug-gug-gug!"

The swell of St. Jim's disappeared below the surface for a second or two; then he came up spluttering.

Instantly Lawrence plunged to the rescue. He knew that Arthur Augustus was dazed, and might not be able to scramble ashore without assistance. And that assistance was readily forthcoming. Lawrence grasped the floundering Gussy round the middle, and propelled him, with a great effort, to the bank.

"Many thanks, deah boy!" panted Arthur Augustus, his sense of chivalry overcoming all other considerations. "I'm sowwy I thwashed you just now—"

"Thrashed me?" echoed Lawrence with a laugh. "Why, you duffer—"

He broke off suddenly. His tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth. For there, standing in the offing, so to speak, was Mr. Ratcliff!

The House-master was saying something. But in his raging fury he could not speak coherently. The two juniors could only catch the following fragments:

"Disgraceful—degrading—debasing—behaving like barbarians—display of fisticuffs—almost a tragedy—shocking—outrageous!"

Arthur Augustus shook himself like a drenched spaniel.

"I twust, sir," he said, "that you do not imagine that Law'ence delibewately knocked me into the wivah? It was a sheeah accident, sir—"

"Be silent!"—boomed Mr. Ratcliff, re-



"This fighting is disgraceful—it is appalling! I will see that both of you are adequately punished! Follow me!" Lawrence and D'Arcy collected their coats and followed the irate master (See Chap. 1.)

covering the power of coherent speech. "This is the third bout of fisticuffs I have witnessed this afternoon!"

"Pardon me, sir——"

"I will not pardon you, D'Arcy!" hooted Mr. Ratcliff. "It is disgraceful—it is appalling! I will see that both of you are adequately punished! You will return with me at once to the school!"

The Housemaster turned on his heel, and set out with rapid strides along the tow-path.

Lawrence and D'Arcy collected their coats and followed, looking as if they had just participated in a swimming-in-clothes contest.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Ban on Fighting.

"SOMETHING'S up!"

Monty Lowther made that pronouncement.

The Terrible Three of the Shell were standing in the school gateway when Mr. Ratcliff arrived with D'Arcy and Lawrence in tow.

It did not need the skill of a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that "something was up." There were storm-signals on Mr. Ratcliff's brow, and there was a wrathful gleam in his eye. He brushed the Terrible Three out of his path as he came stamping through the gateway.

The two drenched juniors came squelching behind him. They were looking very unhappy. Arthur Augustus, usually so immaculate in his appearance, was now a sorry spectacle. His sodden trousers clung limply to his legs, and his hair was like a wet mop. His usually immaculate topper was nothing more or less than a wreck.

"What on earth have you fellows been up to?" asked Tom Merry, in wonder. "Been taking a tub in your clothes?"

"Gwooooh!" gasped Arthur Augustus, with a shiver. "I have had a feahful duckin', deah boys! We were sewappin' on the tow-path, an' Law'ence accidentally knocked me into the wivah!"

"My hat!"

"Old Watty happened to come along, an' he's in a towahwin' wage," explained the swell of St. Jim's. "I wathah fancy he's goin' to weport us to the Head."

"Say not so," said Monty Lowther. "Surely fifty lines would meet the case? I dare say you'll have to write out a copybook maxim, something like this: 'Dear children, you should never let your angry passions rise; your little hands were never made to black each other's eyes!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

By this time Mr. Ratcliff was half-way across the quadrangle. He imagined that D'Arcy and Lawrence were following close on his heels, like a pair of faithful hounds. But when the Housemaster looked round, he was furious to find that the two juniors had lingered down by the gates, chatting to the Terrible Three.

"D'Arcy! Lawrence!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you loiter at the gates? Come here immediately!"

Arthur Augustus made a grimace.

"We're in for it, deah boys," he muttered. And he and Lawrence hurriedly joined the impatient Mr. Ratcliff.

It was to the Head's study that the Housemaster led the way. His two victims followed, shedding a trail of water along the corridor.

Mr. Ratcliff tapped on the door, and, in response to the Head's "Come in!" the procession stepped into the sacred apartment.

Doctor Holmes looked up from his papers.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated in amazement. "What does this mean, Mr. Ratcliff? How came these boys to be in such a deplorable state?"

"They were fighting and brawling on the river bank, sir," was the reply. "D'Arcy was knocked into the river by Lawrence, who then plunged in to his assistance. I may say, sir, that I have interrupted no fewer than three fights in the course of the afternoon! There appears to be quite an epidemic of hooliganism among the junior boys; and I have brought these young rascals to you, in order that you may make an example of them!"

The Head frowned.

"I have myself witnessed several bouts of fisticuffs from my study window," he said. "I must take drastic measures to prevent these unruly disturbances."

"Pway excuse me, sir——"

"Well, D'Arcy?"

"I am afraid you have ovahlooked the fact that there's an election comin' off to-morrow."

"An election?" echoed the Head, in surprise. "What has that to do with the matter?"

"You can't have an election without a certain amount of fighting, sir," chimed in Lawrence.

"Indeed!" said Doctor Holmes drily. "I fail to see why a schoolboy election should be made an occasion for horseplay and hooliganism. You have both behaved abominably!"

The culprits stood silent.

"Mr. Ratcliff has asked me to make an example of you," the Head went on. "But for the fact that you have both suffered immersion in the river, I should cane you. As it is, you will go and change into dry garments at once!"

Arthur Augustus and Lawrence left the study with alacrity. They were thankful to get off so lightly.

But the matter did not end there. Evidently the Head and Mr. Ratcliff had a long "confab" on the subject, for that evening the following announcement appeared on the school notice-board:

"NOTICE!

"The junior boys have recently been indulging far too freely in fisticuffs, and quite an epidemic of fighting seems to have spread through the school. I am determined that this deplorable state of affairs shall cease forthwith.

"All boys are hereby cautioned to refrain from fighting, no matter what the provocation. Should I receive any more complaints, I will take the drastic step of cancelling the forthcoming boxing tournament.

"(Signed) RICHARD HOLMES,
"Headmaster."

That announcement made quite a stir in the school.

"No more scrapping, by Jove!" said Monty Lowther, surveying the notice. "That's jolly awkward. Personally, I don't believe

in bloodless elections. A footer election's a tame affair, without any black eyes or swollen beaks knocking around."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners. "We've got to thank Ratty for this. Interfering old beast!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Still, an order's an order, and it's got to be obeyed," he said. "If any fellow's caught striking a blow, the Boxing Tournament will be done in. And that's unthinkable. Confound old Ratty and all his works!"

The Terrible Three felt the situation keenly. The footer election would be shorn of much of its excitement, now that fighting was forbidden. It would be, as Lowther had said, a "bloodless election," and therefore a tame affair.

But the fiat had gone forth, and the Head's decree was like unto the laws of the Medes and Persians. It would have to be obeyed.

Tom Merry and Co. lingered in the hall discussing the situation, when three juniors came swaggering arm-in-arm towards the notice-board. They were Racke and Croke, the cads of the Shell, and Mellish, the sneak and toady of the Fourth.

The trio halted in front of the notice-board, and read the announcement, and chuckled in great glee.

The news that fighting was forbidden didn't worry Racke and Co. in the least. On the contrary, it was cheering news. It meant that they would be able to "cheek" Tom Merry and Co. openly, without getting knocked down for their pains.

"All fightin' to cease forthwith!" chortled Aubrey Racke. "Good business! What d'you think of it, Tom Merry!"

"Br-r-r!" growled Tom.

"He doesn't seem wildly happy about it," grinned Croke. "I think we ought to take this opportunity of telling Merry what we think of him. I'll begin, and you fellows can chime in with a chorus of your own!"

Croke stepped up to Tom Merry, with his hands thrust carelessly into his pockets, and an insolent sneer on his face.

"You're a bumptious bounder!" he said deliberately.

"You're a rank outsider!" added Racke.

"You're a beastly upstart!" chimed in Mellish.

Tom Merry flushed angrily. Instinctively he clenched his fists, and he was about to hurl himself at Racke and Co., regardless of the Head's express commands, when Manners and Lowther seized him and dragged him back.

It was lucky that they did so, for Knox of the Sixth came striding into the hall at that moment.

Tom Merry was no favourite of Knox's, and the prefect would certainly have reported him for fighting, if he had been given the chance.

"Hallo!" What's going on here?" demanded Knox sharply.

"We are!" growled Tom Merry. And the Terrible Three went on, leaving Knox glaring after them.

"We're in for a happy time—I don't think," grumbled Manners. "Now that the no-fighting order has come into force, cads like Racke will be able to cheek us as often as they like. And we shan't be able to lift a finger against them. It's awful!"

"Awful isn't the word for it," said Monty Lowther. "It's appalling!"

Tom Merry felt the situation even more acutely than his chums. The cads seemed to make a dead set at him, insulting him in all sorts of ways, secure in the knowledge that he would be powerless to reply to their insults by hitting out straight from the shoulder.

All that evening, Racke and his cronies followed Tom Merry about, passing sneering remarks which goaded him to anger. But Tom was helpless, though he writhed under the taunts of the cads.

The climax came just before bedtime. Tom Merry and Co. went for a sharp sprint in the

quad, as was their custom, and Racke and Crooke and Mellish followed them out of doors. Then they began to chant an election chorus, which Racke had invented:

"If you want to lose each match,

Vote for Merry!

He ought to be in Colney Hatch—

Madman Merry!

If you want the team to suffer,

If you want the game made rougher,

If you want a hopeless duffer,

Vote for Merry!"



A flying figure came tearing down the village street. Hard on his heels came a pack of the "roughs" of the village. "Gweat Scott!" gasped D'Arcy. "It's old Watty!" (See Chap. 3)

Tom Merry stopped short in his stride. He was furious, and no wonder. To be called a madman, and a rough player, and a hopeless duffer, all in one breath, as it were, was enough to turn a docile lamb into a raging lion.

In that instant Tom Merry "saw red." He forgot the Head's order, forgot everything save the fact that he had been grossly insulted. He rushed at Racke and Co., and this time Manners and Lowther made no attempt to stop him. Indeed, they rushed with him.

The singers, who were half-way through another verse, ceased as if by magic.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Racke in alarm. "They're defying the Head's orders!" "Look out!" gasped Mellish.

The Terrible Three came on. They selected a man apiece, and hit out, straight from the shoulder.

Down went Aubrey Racke, with a bump and a roar. Down went Crooke, right on top of him; and Percy Mellish completed the human pyramid.

Tom Merry and Co. paused, panting. And then a harsh voice echoed through the gloom: "So you have defied the express commands of the Headmaster! You have dared! to resort to fisticuffs, after his stern caution! Very well! I shall report this outrage at once, and request Dr. Holmes to cancel the forthcoming Boxing Tournament!"

Tom Merry and Co. groaned in doleful chorus.

The fat was in the fire now, with a vengeance!

It was Mr. Horace Ratcliff who had come on the scene. Mr. Ratcliff had a habit of springing out of dark corners at unexpected moments. He had sprung out now; and the Terrible Three realised only too well what the consequences would be.

There would be no Boxing Tournament for St. Jim's!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Mr. Ratcliff's Dilemma

NEXT morning the expected happened. The worst came to the worst, and the Boxing Tournament was declared "off"—by order of the Head.

An atmosphere of gloom settled over St. Jim's. For the Boxing Tournament was one of the most popular events of the year, and its suspension came as a big blow.

Everybody was furious with Mr. Ratcliff. He had never been a universal favourite, and he was now more unpopular than ever. The Housemaster's ears must have burned that day, for all sorts of uncomplimentary things were said about him.

It was the day of the footer election. And never did an election pass off so quietly.

The juniors assembled in the Common-room that evening, and recorded their votes:

and Tom Merry was re-elected by a big majority.

There was no cheering, no flag-wagging, and no rejoicing. The juniors were feeling too sick about the cancelling of the Boxing Tournament.

"Congwats, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, slipping his hand into Tom Merry's as the fellows trooped out of the Common-room. "I knew, you'd get in. I've been doin' quite a lot of canvassin' on your behalf, an' I exercised my tact an' judgment, an' persuaded all the fellahs to vote for you."

Tom Merry smiled. He was not sure that he owed very much to the tact and judgment of Arthur Augustus.

"The question is," said Monty Lowther, "what are we going to do with ourselves for the rest of the evening? Personally, I want cheering up."

"Same here," grunted Manners. "I'm in the dumps, and the doldrums, and the dark depths of depression."

"And so say all of us," said Jack Blake. "I've never had the 'blues' so badly since I was a new kid."

"What about a feed down at the bunshop?" suggested Tom Merry. "There's still an hour and a half before locking-up."

Arthur Augustus nodded his approval.

"A toppin' ideah, bai Jove!" he said. "Havin' had a fivah frowm my patah this mornin', I shall be pleased to stand tweat."

"Good old Gussy!"

Thus it came to pass that the Terrible Three, accompanied by Jack Blake and D'Arcy, sallied forth to the village in the winter dusk. They all wanted cheering up, and a feed at the bunshop seemed the very thing.

Scarcely a word was spoken as they strode along the frosty road. They were thinking of the cancelled Boxing Tournament and of Mr. Ratcliff's tyranny.

The lights of Rylecombe glimmered ahead of them. Presently they swung into the village street—usually a quiet and peaceful thoroughfare.

But it was not quiet now. There was quite a commotion going on.

Tom Merry and Co. stopped short.



The youth at the pump-handle gave it a vicious tug, and a gushing stream of water shot over the New House master. "Help!" screamed Mr. Ratcliff. "Merry! D'Arcy—" "Fighting's forbidden, sir!" said Tom Merry sweetly (See Chapter 3)

"What the thump—" began Blake.

A flying figure came tearing down the village street. Hard on his heels came a pack of the "roughs" of the village, headed by a burly lout named Huggins.

"Gweat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in amazement. "It's old Watty!"

It was, indeed, Mr. Horace Ratcliff, who was endeavouring to lower the hundred yards' record.

The Housemaster had evidently done something to annoy the village roughs. It was Mr. Ratcliff's chief mission in life to annoy people. If they were St. Jim's fellows that he annoyed, they were unable to hit back; but the louts of the village were under no such restrictions. Mr. Ratcliff was nothing to them. They would cheerfully have ducked him at the village pump. This, in fact, was their intention!

Mr. Ratcliff, his coat-tails flying in the breeze, came rushing on.

The Housemaster was no athlete, and he

was already showing signs of distress. His breath came and went in great gasps; his pace slackened; and the villagers—there were three of them—were gaining rapidly.

Presently they caught up with him, and laid hands on his sacred person without ceremony.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Ratty's going through the hoop!"

"He's got these fellows' backs up, I suppose, and they're going to rag him," said Manners. "Do we interfere, Tommy?"

"No, we don't!" said Tom Merry grimly. "Have you forgotten that there's a no-fighting order in force?"

Manners grinned, and the rest of the juniors grinned also. This was an occasion when the no-fighting order would recoil on Mr. Ratcliff's head, and place him in a very awkward dilemma.

In the ordinary way Tom Merry and Co. would have rushed to the rescue; but they

had been forbidden to fight, and they had the law on their side, so to speak.

Mr. Ratcliff was hustled away towards the village pump. He struggled and squirmed in the powerful grasp of his captors, but he could not escape. Then he caught sight of the St. Jim's juniors, and shouted to them.

"Help! Merry! D'Arcy! Blake! Come and rescue me from these ruffians!"

The juniors stood still.

"Help!" repeated Mr. Ratcliff, his voice rising to a scream. "You can see the plight I am in! I am threatened with personal violence! These hooligans intend to immerse me at the pump!"

Still the juniors remained motionless.

The village louts hustled the Housemaster to the pump; and then the burly Huggins removed his coat, and grasped the pump-handle.

"Help! Rescue! Police!" yelled Mr. Ratcliff wildly. "Why do you not hasten to my assistance, Merry?"

"Fighting's forbidden, sir," said Tom Merry quietly.

"But—but this is an exceptional case——"

"The Head's express commands must not be set at defiance, sir," said Tom Merry, quoting Mr. Ratcliff's own words.

The village roughs evidently came to the conclusion that if they waited much longer they would lose their victim. The youth at the pump handle gave it a vicious tug and a gushing stream of water shot over the New House Master's head.

"Help!" screamed Mr. Ratcliff. "Merry! D'Arcy——"

"We are quite powahless to interfere, sir," chimed in Arthur Augustus, "unless——"

"Unless what?" panted the unhappy Housemaster.

"Unless the no-fightin' ordah is wescinded, sir, an' the Boxin' Tournament is permitted to take place. If you would pwomise to use your influence with the Head, sir, to bwing this about, we would willin'ly come to your assistance."

"Yes, rather!" said Jack Blake.

Mr. Ratcliff snorted with fury.

"This is a deliberate attempt to coerce me—to force my hand!" he panted.

The juniors did not deny it. For it was perfectly true. They had Mr. Ratcliff in a cleft stick, and unless he yielded to their terms he would suffer at the village pump.

Huggins began to work the pump-handle, and Mr. Ratcliff's head was again thrust in position under the spout.

Seldom had the Housemaster been in such a dreadful predicament. He felt that he could not face another stream of water. The juniors held the whip-hand, and he would have to give in.

"I—I consent!" he gasped. "Come to my aid, boys, and I will use my influence with Dr. Holmes to permit the Boxing Tournament to be held."

That was good enough for Tom Merry and Co. It was all they wanted.

With one accord they hurled themselves upon the villagers; and Mr. Ratcliff was rescued from the hands of the Philistines.

It was not until after a fierce and furious fight that the villagers were vanquished. It was a case of giants against pigmies; but the pigmies knew how to use their fists, and they won the day at the finish.

Huggins and Co. slunk away from the scene of the combat; and Tom Merry and Co. acted as a bodyguard to Mr. Ratcliff, and escorted that gentleman back to the school.

The Housemaster could easily have broken his promise, and the juniors would have been helpless. But, to do Mr. Ratcliff credit, he kept his word, and requested the Head to allow the Boxing Tournament to stand.

The no-fighting order was also withdrawn. Perhaps the Head realised, as many head-masters have done before him, that it was impossible to stamp out fighting at a public school. Boys would be boys, and so long as fights were fairly fought, it was far better that fellows should settle their differences that way, than by nursing their grievances, and bearing malice towards one another.

There was great rejoicing at St. Jim's when the Head's decision was made known. And the rejoicers-in-chief were Tom Merry and Co., the heroes of the School House.

THE END