

NARROW ESCAPE!



by Frank Richards

SKIP RUGGLES, in the general estimation at Felgate, was an ass. His loyal chums, Tom King and Dick Warren, averred that he was the biggest ass at Felgate School. Skip was quite unconscious of being an ass. His own impression was that he was a rather bright sort of chap, if you came to that. But whether Ruggles of the Fourth was an ass, or not, he knew that he was not the biggest ass at Felgate, as he listened to Perkinson of the Fifth talking to his chum Purring. That distinction undoubtedly belonged to Percival Perkinson.

The two Fifth-form men, when they stopped to talk under one of the old Felgate oaks, did not heed a fat junior sitting on the wall chewing toffee. Probably they did not even notice him there. Perkinson, certainly, wouldn't

have heeded him anyway. To a senior man, a tremendous games-man like Perkinson, a Fourth-form junior was too inconsiderable a microbe to be heeded. Anyway the massive old oak was between them, and they were deeply interested in their topic: Skip passed either unnoticed or unheeded.

"Will he be wild?" said Perkinson. "Will he be waxy? Will he be going right off at the deep end? What? You'll laugh when I tell you. . . ."

"You're mad, old chap," said Purring. "Just before the Walcot match . . . why, we've got to go in and change in half an hour."

"What difference will it make to that?"

"Well, if Kye spotted you——"

"How could he?"

Skip grinned, as he heard that. Evi-

dently old Perk had had another of his perpetual spots of bother with his form-master, Mr. Kye. Apparently he had done something to Kye, by way of reprisal.

"Kye's jolly keen," said Purringe.

"I'm not exactly a fool!" said Perkinson: That was a statement which many fellows at Felgate would have doubted. Perkinson, at Soccer, was a delight to all eyes: Langdale, the Felgate captain, would no more have left Perk out of the side than he would have left out himself. Perk was such a winger as crowds of fellows might have dreamed of being, without a hope of the dream coming true. But off the football field, Perk was not what any fellow would have called bright.

"Um!" said Purringe.

"Safe as houses," said Perkinson, "and I can jolly well tell you that I'm the only man at Felgate who ever called his beak an ass, to his face, and got away with it."

Skip nearly fell off the wall, as he heard that!

"The old ass!" Perkinson snapped the words. Evidently, he was very resentful towards Kye. "Did he tell me, in form, before all the fellows, that my Latin would disgrace a kid in the Second Form? Did he rag me all over the shop because I mistook a future indicative perfect for a subjunctive perfect? Who wouldn't, I'd like to know? Did he tell me that I couldn't write the simplest sentence in Latin without a mistake? Did he or did he not?"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, I'll show him whether I can write a sentence in Latin without a mistake," said Perkinson, vengefully, "I've done it, see? Next time Kye goes

to his study, he will find his Lucretius wide open on his table, with a sentence in Latin written across the title-page — Magister noster asinus est! Will he like it?"

"Oh, suffering cats!" said Purringe. "You've written 'Our master is an ass' for Kye to see?"

"In Latin!" grinned Perkinson. "He wanted a sentence in Latin — now he's going to get it. Ha, ha."

"You awful ass!" gasped Purringe. "Think he won't know your fist?"

"No, he jolly well won't, as I've done it in capital letters. Think I'm a fool?"



Purringe was gazing at Perk in dismay, almost in horror.

"Yes, I jolly well do!" hooted Purringe. "Mad as a hatter, just before the Walcot match, too. You won't be playing Soccer this afternoon, Perk. You'll be going up to the Head."

"How's he to know?"

"Oh, rats! You're ass enough to sign your name to it. If you haven't done that, you've done something else just as idiotic."

"Look here, Purringe——"

"If Kye saw you going to his study——"

"Kye was in Common-Room."

"If some other beak was about——"

"Nobody was about! I was jolly careful about that. I wasn't there more than a minute. Nipped into his study, nipped out again, and there you are!" Perkinson chuckled. "You know old Kye – browsing over his dashed Lucretius half his time? Well, this time, he will see 'Magister noster asinus est' in capital letters on the title-page! Ha, ha!"

Perkinson laughed. He seemed to expect Purringe to laugh too. But Purringe did not laugh. He was gazing at Perk in dismay, almost in horror.

"You frightful ass!" he said.

"Will he like it?" chuckled Perk. "Will he be wild? What?"

"I wonder," said Purringe, thoughtfully, "whether we can beat Walcot without you on the wing, Perk. Langdale will have to play Cadby, who's not half your form. If they wash us out, the men will scrag you for letting us down."

Perkinson stared.

"Who's going to let you down?" he demanded. "I'm playing, ain't I? What the dickens do you mean, George Purringe?"

"I mean that you can forget Soccer this afternoon, you priceless ass. You

won't be playing Soccer. You'll be going up to the Head."

"If you think that Kye will spot me——"

"I don't think – I know!" hissed Purringe. "Think Kye will fancy there's another such priceless ass in his form? Think he won't remember ragging you and you looking as if you'd like to dot him one on the eye? You nattering nitwit, he will think of you first thing."

"Rot!" said Perkinson.

"I tell you——"

"Rubbish!"

"You're for it!" said Purringe. "You've cooked your goose all right, this time. You will do these things, Perk. You will try to be clever, when you haven't as much brains as a bunny rabbit. Get ready for Kye to march you off to the Head! Forget all about Soccer. 'Magister noster asinus est'—pah! You should have written 'Perkinsonus noster asinus est'. That would have been nearer the mark. You priceless, piffling, potty——"

No doubt Purringe intended to follow up all those adjectives with a noun. But Perkinson did not wait for the noun. The adjectives seemed enough for him. He turned on his heel and walked away, leaving his pal to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Purringe stared after him, frowning. Then he too walked away, still frowning. Skip Ruggles was left sitting on the wall in solitude, slowly and thoughtfully finishing his toffee: and with the knowledge that, whatever King or Warren might say on the subject, he was by no means the biggest ass at Felgate!

II

"Come on, Skip."

"We want front places to see old Langdale's mob wipe up Walcot."

"What are you mooning about, fat-head?"

"Get a move on."

Tom King and Dick Warren had been looking for their plump chum, Skip Ruggles, to march him off to Big Side to watch the Walcot match. First-eleven matches at Felgate were worth watching, especially with Perkinson of the Fifth playing for School, and displaying on the football field the brilliance that was so sadly lacking in the form-room. Few fellows at Felgate would willingly have missed seeing old Perk urge the flying ball. Even Skip, though his chief interest in life lay in the

tuck-shop, was keen. But at the moment he seemed to have some other matter on his mind. His chums found him adrift in the quad, with a thoughtful and worried look on his fat face.

"Anything-up?" asked Tom.

"Well, yes," said Skip, slowly. "I say, old Langdale would be cut up if he had to leave that man Perkinson out, wouldn't he?" "Old Langdale", captain of Felgate, was the idol of the Lower School. Skip, like other juniors, worshipped him from afar. A hot-headed ass like Perkinson could take anything that was coming to him: but if he did not matter, old Langdale did.

"Well, rather," said Tom, staring. "But he won't have to leave Perk out.



The three juniors looked round as Mr. Kye came out.

Why should he? He's the best winger we've got. He isn't the ass at Soccer that he is at everything else."

"Langdale may have to," said Skip.

"Rot!" said Warren. "Nothing the matter with Perk, is there?"

"Lots!" answered Skip. "You fellows listen to this." And Skip related what he had heard, sitting on the wall by the old oaks.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Tom King, when he had heard.

"Oh, scissors!" said Dick Warren.

"The born idiot!" said Tom.

"The howling ass!" said Warren.

"Kye will spot him first thing," said Tom. "Perk doesn't know that but anybody could tell him. Why, Kye will run him down the minute he sees that rot in his Lucretius, and question him point-blank. Perk doesn't even know how to tell a lie, even if he would. He couldn't get away with a crammer any more than he could get away with a construe from Livy. Oh, the ass!"

"His number's up!" said Warren.

"Right up!" said Tom. "Kye will be after him like a tiger – no Soccer for Perk. Old Langdale will have to find another man at the last minute. By gum, he ought to be kicked."

"Here comes Kye!" murmured Warren. "I wonder if he's seen it yet – looking for Perk, if he has."

The three juniors looked round at Mr. Kye. He came out at the door of Common-Room. Not often was the Fifth-form beak a person of any interest to Lower boys. But just now he was a person of the deepest interest. If he was after Perkinson——!

Apparently he was not. His countenance wore its usual aspect of serenity. Obviously, if he had seen "Magister noster asinus est" scrawled across the

title-page of his Lucretius, he would not have looked so serene. His brows would have been knitted – his eyes would have been glinting: there would have been every sign of tremendous wrath. There was no such sign: so it was clear that Kye had not gone to his study yet: he was simply taking a stroll in the quad before he settled down to his usual happy hour with Titus Lucretius Carus.

"He's not seen it yet," said Tom.

"Poor old Perk – when he does!" sighed Warren.

"Oh, bother poor old Perk!" said Skip, morosely. "If he likes to call his beak an ass, he can take what's coming to him. But old Langdale – it will be like a kick in the pants for him, to lose Perkinson, playing Walcot."

"Rotten!" agreed Tom.

"I say, old Kye doesn't look as if he's seen it yet," went on Skip. "He will, the minute he goes to his study. Suppose I cut in——"

"Eh!"

"What?"

"Well, suppose I did?" argued Skip. "I could blot out what Perkinson's written in his dashed Lucretius – or tear out the page, or something – now we know Kye ain't in his study – see?"

"You ass, if Kye caught you there, he'd put it down to you——"

"I'd chance that," said Skip. "If only he stays out a few minutes, I could cut in——"

"He's coming back now," said Warren.

Mr. Kye's stroll in the quad was brief. No doubt he was keen, in the leisure of a half-holiday, to get to the entrancing hexameters of his favourite classic. He was coming back to the House: and there could be little doubt



Mr. Kye sat up. "You - you - you - !" he gasped.

that, when he went in, he would head for his study. It was too late for intervention.

Or was it?

Skip caught Tom King by the arm. His fat face was eager.

"Look here, Tom - look here, Dick - you stop him somehow, and give me time. Barge into him - anything you like - keep him for a few minutes somehow while I cut in."

Skip did not wait for an answer. He dashed into the House. Tom King and Dick Warren were left staring blankly at one another. Skip had taken them quite by surprise. He had left them the startling task of barging into a senior member of the Staff: the only way of

delaying Kye. That ass, Skip - that unlimited fathead, Skip - that clown, Skip——! But——

"Play up!" breathed Tom: and Warren nodded.

They had to play up. Skip, evidently, was cutting in to Kye's study: and if Kye caught him there, it was only too probable that he would have to answer for Perkinson's fatuous fatheadedness. Skip banked on them: and they couldn't let him down. So they played up.

Mr. Kye had almost reached the door, when the two juniors came along at a rush. Not, apparently, seeing a stout form-master in the way, they crashed into him. It was a tremendous crash.

“Ooooooh!” gasped Mr. Kye, as he spun.

Kye rolled. King and Warren tottered.

Kye sat up, gurgling for breath.

“You – you – you——!” he gasped. “You utterly stupid – clumsy – foolish – reckless – ooooooooooooooh!”

“Oh, sir! So sorry——”

“Hope you’re not hurt, sir——”

“Such stupid clumsiness – such utterly reckless rushing about – upon my word! Are you blind? Cannot you see where you are going? Are you absolutely without sense! Upon my word! I have a great mind to report this to your form-master – such utterly outrageous recklessness and stupidity——”

“Oh, sir——!”

“Please, sir——”

“Pah!” Mr. Kye tottered up, still gasping. King and Warren looked as contrite as they could. “Pah! How dare you rush about in the quadrangle like wild Indians? Upon my word.”

Kye was rather winded, and he was angry. He spent the next two or three minutes in telling King and Warren what he thought of their thoughtlessness, their recklessness, their clumsiness, their stupidity, their utter want of common-sense. That, from the juniors’ point of view, was all to the good, as it gave Skip more time. Finally, Kye went in, still breathing stertorously: leaving Skip’s chums hoping for the best.

In the meantime, a breathless Skip had hurtled into Mr. Kye’s study. The first object that met his eyes was the open volume of Lucretius, with the sentence “MAGISTER NOSTER ASI-NUS EST” sprawling across the title-page in inky capitals. Blotting it out was obviously impracticable. Skip, with a hasty fat hand, tore out that title-page,

crumpled it, and crammed it into his trousers’ pocket. Then he shot out of the study.

He had just about time. On the stair, going down, he passed Kye, coming up. Kye did not even notice him – there was nothing special to notice, in a fat Fourth-former coming downstairs. Kye, still short of breath, went on to his study: Skip rolled out into the quad. There he grinned reassuredly at two anxious chums.

“Okay!” he chuckled. “Just did it! Look!” He displayed a crumpled title-page. Tom King grabbed it, carefully tore it into minute fragments, and dropped the fragments into the fountain in the quad. That was the safest place for Percival Perkinson’s message to his beak.

III

“Perkinson!”

“Oh!”

Every fellow in the changing-room looked round. Why Mr. Kye, master of the Fifth, suddenly appeared in the doorway, with a red and angry face, when first-eleven men were changing for a Soccer match, only Purring guessed.

Old Langdale, and his men, were in cheery spirits: looking forward to a good game, and to beating Walcot. In most respects, it was admitted that the sides were fairly level. But had Walcot a winger like Perkinson in their ranks? They certainly had not. Perk might be at the bottom of his form: but he was tops at Soccer. Perk was going through Walcot like a knife through cheese. Perk was, as usual, going to do wonders. They all knew it, and Perk knew it himself: and his face was cheeriest of all: not only with the happy anticipa-

tion of doughty deeds at Soccer, but with the pleasing recollection that he had paid out old Kye for ragging him in form! Kye's sudden sharp voice, however, came like a cold douche.

"Yes, sir!" faltered Perkinson. He had a jolt of dismay. Had Purring been right – was old Kye going to pick on him first thing! Why should he? It looked like it!

"Perkinson! A trick – a prank – an insensate outrage – has been perpetrated in my study! Was it by you?"

Perkinson stood dumb. The game was up, then! Purring gave him a look, expressive of "I told you so!"



Perkinson stood dumb. The game was up then!

Perk did not even notice it. He was gazing dumbly at Kye. The Walcot match was fading out for him. He was not going to play Walcot! He was going up to the Head! His knees, strong and sinewy as they were, knocked together. Kye was going on:

"Of all the boys in my form, Perkinson, I am convinced that only you are capable of playing so impertinent, so childish, a trick on your form-master. Only you, Perkinson, are capable of a foolish, infantile act unworthy of a small boy in the Second Form. Answer me, Perkinson! Did you, or did you not, tear out the title-page of my volume of Lucretius?"

Perkinson tottered, as he heard.

Astonishment overwhelmed him.

"I, sir?" he gasped.

"You, Perkinson! The title-page of my volume of Titus Lucretius Carus has been roughly torn out, disfiguring the volume – an act of obtuse vandalism. Was this done by you, Perkinson? Answer me."

Perkinson was so overcome that he could hardly gasp out "No, sir!" His brain, such as it was, seemed to be turning round. Kye hadn't read what Perk had written for him to read on that title-page, after all. It was not that. Somebody, it seemed, had torn out that title-page, and Kye hadn't seen it. It was the torn-out title-page that worried Kye: and he had, as Purring had predicted, thought of Perkinson first thing. But Perk, whatever he had done, certainly hadn't torn out that title-page: and he just managed to gasp out breathlessly "No, sir."

"It was not you, Perkinson?"

Perk recovered a little.

"No, sir!" he answered, quite firmly.

"It certainly was not I. I never tore out

that title-page, sir – never even dreamed of it. If somebody's torn a page from your book, sir, I never knew anything about it."

Mr. Kye gave him a long, searching look.

"Very well, Perkinson." he said, "If you give me your word on that——"

"I do, sir."

"Naturally, Perkinson, I thought of you first. You have played foolish tricks before, and you are an utterly obtuse and unthinking boy. But I can take your word, Perkinson, and I shall

look elsewhere."

Exit Kye!

"Oh, crumbs!" breathed Perkinson. It was a cold day: but he had to mop a spot of perspiration from his forehead.

IV

Percival Perkinson did play for Felgate that day and they did beat Walcot. He had had the narrowest of narrow escapes: and to whom he owed it he never knew – any more than he knew who was the biggest ass at Felgate: though Skip Ruggles could have told him!

IT ALL STARTED WITH THE GREEKS

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century that German archaeologists uncovered it again.

The present, or modern, Games began in 1896. It was a Frenchman named Baron Pierre de Coubertin who brought them about.

In 1893 he called an international conference to discuss the idea, and three years later Greece, as mother of the Olympics, built a new stadium in Athens, modelled on Olympia. And on April 6th, 1896, the King of Greece declared the new Games open.

Oddly enough, the Olympics caused little interest in Britain at that time. We made no effort to send our best team. And the newspapers paid little attention to the Games.

We didn't take much more notice of the 1900 Games in Paris either.

In 1904, when the Games were held in St. Louis, U.S.A., we did not even send a team, and all but one of the events was won by America.

Then in 1905 we woke up and the

British Olympic Association was formed under Lord Desborough, one of our greatest all-round sportsmen, to raise money and pick British teams.

And in 1908 London was host to a Games, widened to include archery, hockey, lacrosse, clay-pigeon shooting, skating, tennis and yachting.

The Olympics were firmly established again. Greater in scope than the original games and open to the world. They have grown in interest with fans ever since, through Stockholm in 1912, Antwerp 1920, Paris 1924, Amsterdam 1928, Los Angeles 1932, Berlin 1936, London 1948, Helsinki 1952, Melbourne 1956 and Rome 1960.

And we have had heroes with a far bigger following than Coroebus of Elis, winner of the first Olympic race, ever achieved – Dick McTaggart, Terry Spinks, Judy Grinham.

From Greece in 776 B.C. to Rome in 1960 is a long journey. But the spirit of the first Olympic Games lives on today.