

KITTENS'

Gangsters Dogged By Kittens!

**But the Kittens are
Human!**

CHAPTER 1.

Robbed—and Doomed!

S MACK! Thud! Thud!
"Go it, boys! Oh,
well hit, Ted!"

"Quicker with your
left, Jimmy!"

In Scrapper Huggins' training gym, down White-chapel way, half a dozen of Thurston Kyles' Kittens—that tough and cheery gang of adventurers who were the Night Hawk's devoted followers—were enjoying a quiet hour together.

Next to fighting themselves they loved nothing better than to watch others at the game. And the two young Kittens in the ring, promising boxers who were training to be pro.'s, were putting up a fast and clever show.

Encouraged by the keen whispers of praise and expert advice, they were mixing it gleefully, getting faster and faster as the bout went on. Left, right, duck, sway and side-step. They boxed as finely before that small but critical audience as they would have done before the packed audience of the Albert Hall.

Yet it was no fight; only a friendly three rounds—and no hard feeling afterwards. Spite was something not known among the Kittens. Arguments were settled in a rough and ready way, with or without gloves, but when they were over the combatants settled down once more in the steady atmosphere of paldom that welded the little band into one.

They were a queer lot, the Kittens; kept together by loyalty and the love of thrills and

adventure. Rough and ready too, preferring straight hitting and a few words to polished manners. It was true that the less they saw of the police the better they liked it, but there was nothing crooked about them. Their distaste was the result of independence, not fear.

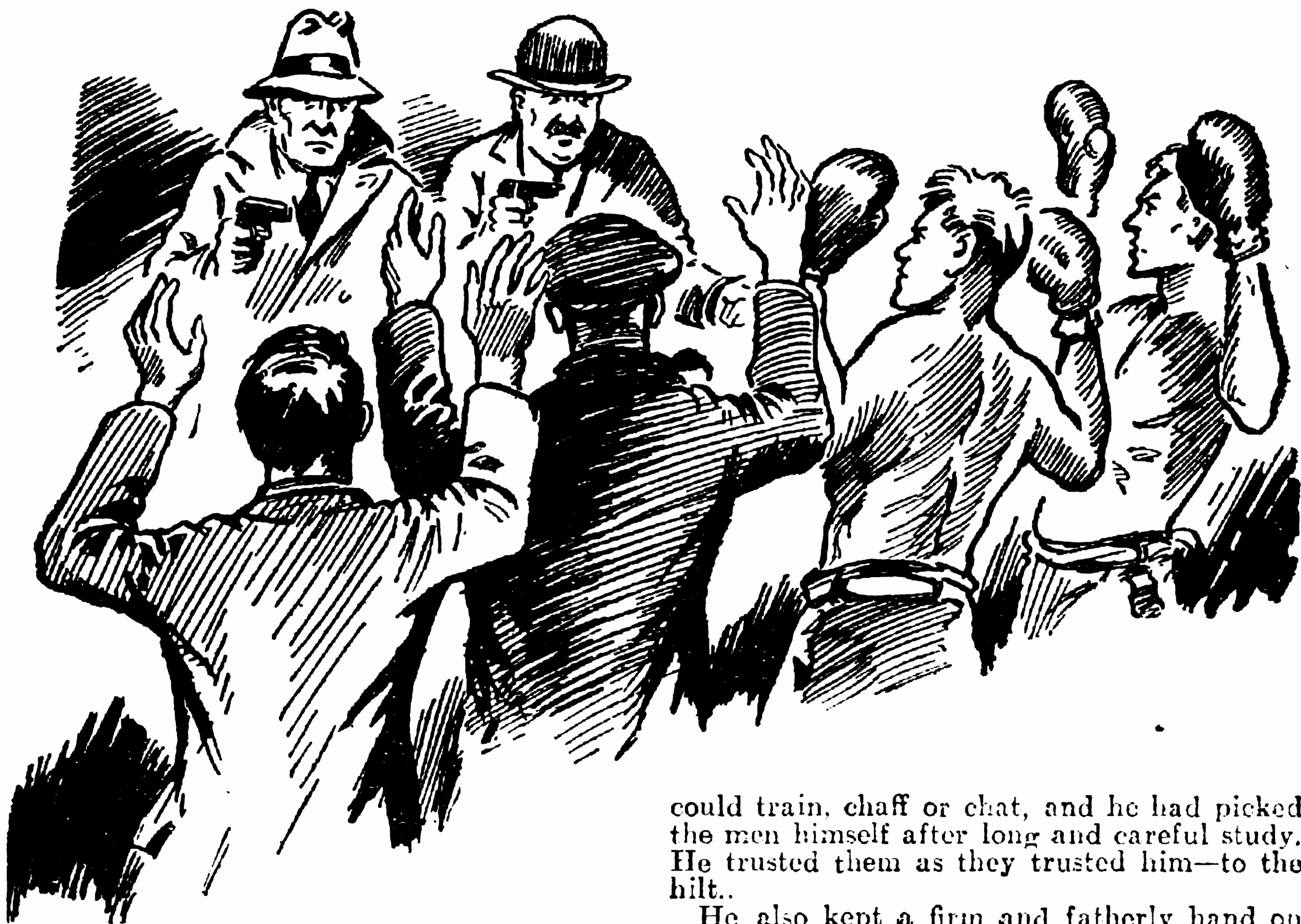
They were Thurston Kyle's Kittens—that was enough. The Night Hawk, their adored chief, always worked alone, fighting crime



of Dynamic Action Featuring the Night Hawk!

PREY!

By **JOHN
BREARLEY**



or enemies with his uncanny skill in science, his great wings and ruthless determination. He had resolutely cut Scotland Yard or any other authority out of his schemes. And the Kittens, of course, weighed in with him joyously.

Although they were already fairly well off as the result of their lavishly-paid services to Thurston Kyle, they still worked honestly at any job—provided it kept them out on the busy streets they loved and could be dropped the second the Night Hawk called them to action.

Never to a soul did they breathe a word of their exploits. It was only among themselves that they were known as the Kittens. To outsiders they were "Scraper Huggins' lot," and the other and more shady gangs that knew them—even the vicious "racecourse bunch"—usually gave them a wide berth, for harming one Kitten meant taking on the whole heavy-hitting squad forthwith. And the police, too, knowing they were "straight" to all intents and purposes, never troubled to inquire into their activities.

As for Scraper Huggins, he "ran" them. His gym. was their headquarters where they

could train, chaff or chat, and he had picked the men himself after long and careful study. He trusted them as they trusted him—to the hilt.

He also kept a firm and fatherly hand on the squad's finances, for the Kittens were a reckless crowd who poured their money away like water when they had any. At the present moment the wall-safe in the expugilist's little office contained a hefty treasure belonging to the men—a great wash-leather bag of cut and uncut gems to the value of many thousand pounds. They had been given to the Kittens by Prince Budrudin, Rajah of Bhuristan, for the gallant manner in which they had helped him to regain his long-lost throne.

In his quiet methodical way the Scraper was gradually disposing of the stones for hard cash. He had to take care, however, that no "official" inquiries arose as to where the jewels had come from, because that Bhuristan stunt of the Kittens was one exploit in their careers that had to be kept dark—very dark.

He had practically agreed to sell the whole consignment to a certain Dutch gentleman, who often dealt in precious stones without asking too many questions. The deal was to be clinched to-morrow. And when the cash was paid over, the Scraper firmly intended putting it straight into the bank, where, if the Kittens wanted it, they'd have to ask him for it.

"And that'll stop the beggars from bein' broke *all* the time!" he chuckled to himself as he watched the young well-trained boxers before him. "But won't they howl when I tell 'em! Ho, ho!"

He straightened up from the ring-post on which he was leaning, looking huger than ever in old flannels and sweater. Striking a little gong to end the bout, he vaulted into the roped square.

"Well done, lads. Very sweet li'l scrap!" he boomed benevolently. "They're comin' on, ain't they, boys?"

The other Kittens nodded, mixing chaff with good advice.

"Fine. Only Jim's left hand seems sorter paralysed!" said one.

"And Ted couldn't punch a hole in butter. More weight and shoulder behind it, Teddie, boy!"

The Scrapper grinned.

"Scat. Let 'em alone. Now, lads, into the shower bath and get dressed. And then —" The words died on his lips.

Crash!

"Hands up, all. Don't anyone move!"

FROZEN suddenly as if to stone, the Kittens stood where they were. The cheeriness of a second before had vanished abruptly. Cold waves of hostility radiated from them. Their lips became tight-set, their eyes hard and glinting.

For, with a fierce bang, the door of the gym. had flown open. A harsh command had followed instantly. In the doorway stood three masked men with levelled automatics, backing up that command in a language the Kittens well understood.

It was a hold-up! Here in the Kittens' headquarters!

Whoever the men were, they were daring customers, and they had picked their time well, for in about an hour's time the eight Kittens present would have been joined by a dozen more as others of the squad finished work and dropped in for the evening.

The outer door of the Scrapper's gym. was in a little side street; easy for the newcomers to have donned their masks unnoticed and stepped in through the little entrance, while the Kittens were absorbed in boxing. Closing the gym. door behind them now, they prowled further into the big training-room, keeping their guns well to the fore in case of need.

gins. We nailed the old squarehead this afternoon, and made him come across. See?"

His mocking eyes moved rapidly round the little room, and finally rested on the small wall safe by the Scrapper's battered desk. He grunted placidly.

"In there, I suppose, ain't they?"

"Go to blazes!" remarked Huggins promptly.

Parsons' fleshy face grew grim and vicious, and he hunched his powerful shoulders menacingly.

"Now, listen, Huggins—we ain't here for our health," he grated slowly, "nor to pass the time o' day! I've been keepin' an eye on you fellers. I know all about them stones, an' a bit about how you got 'em, see? I want 'em! I'm not goin' to risk hanging fer such as you—but I want 'em! An' if you don't want to be cripples fer the rest of your lives, boys, you'll poppy up without trouble. Like this!"

His gun chopped down, putting a bullet so close to the Scrapper's knee that a little piece of cloth flew out of his baggy flannels. The report of the shot was no louder than a hearty sneeze, for the gun wore a silencer.

The Kittens were well up against it. And no others expected for a good hour.

Yet still the Scrapper did not move. He was of the type who become obstinate as army mules under threats. Slowly Parsons' gun moved down again until the muzzle pointed squarely at the big man's knees. The muscles on his hand tightened. It was the taciturn Alf Jenkins who saved the situation.

"Aw, don't be a goat, Scrapper! Give him the stones. We kin always wring his neck afterwards!"

The other Kittens joined in at once. It was obvious that Parsons would carry out his tough threat, and the stones didn't weigh for a moment with Scrapper's safety in the balance.

With bitterness in every line of him, the giant Kitten gave way, turning reluctantly towards the safe. His big fingers fumbled with the combination until the door swung open.

"No tricks, mind!" snapped Parsons, and stepped closer in case any weapon was hidden there beside the jewels.

A moment later a washleather bag was tossed angrily at his feet. Immediately one of the other men stepped forward, picked it up, and opened it.

"All

CHAPTER 2.

Snub Butts in Handily!

IN his usual harum-scarum style, Snub Hawkins, Thurston Kyle's youthful assistant, whirled his two-seater gaily out of the Whitechapel Road traffic. A neat turn of the wheel, and he slid along the gutter to the mouth of the little side-street in which Scraper Huggins had his gymnasium.

He found another car parked there first, however—a hackney Daimler from a hire garage apparently—the driver of which gave him a cheerful professional nod as the lad edged up behind and skipped out. But when he turned the corner of the by-street, a ruder welcome greeted him. Before he could dodge, three men came blinding round the angle and knocked him spinning.

Nor did they stop to apologise. He had an instant's vision of three grimly-set faces in the uncertain light of a corner lamp, but that was all. The men tore past him and fairly hurtled into the waiting Daimler.

Two of them shot inside straight away; the third, a thick-set man with a bag, paused for a stride to shout an order to the driver. Snub, struggling with indignation and loss of breath, heard something that sounded like "Beat it for Saint"; and after that the Daimler purred instantly into its stride and was gliding through the West-bound traffic.

Pulling himself together and picking up his hat, Snub regained his temper and wind together. He had been rudely jostled, but the men were too far off now for reprisals. They had looked a tough trio, he thought—flash "roughs" on a hurried journey somewhere. He wagged derisive fingers after the Daimler's tail-light.

"Good-bye. I hope your axle breaks!" he called politely, and dismissing the incident, turned to continue his walk down the little street, cheery as ever.

With the assurance born of many a hearty welcome in the gymnasium, he banged open the outer and inner doors, and immediately came to a puzzled halt. There were usually a few of the Kittens in the big training-room, but this time it was completely empty.

It was not that, however, which made him knit his brows. The gym. might be deserted, but it was by no means quiet. The door of the Scraper's office was shaking and creaking under the force of hammer-like blows, frantic, heavy crashes that filled the room with noise. To Snub's further surprise, too, he saw that the big padded vaulting-horse had been turned over and rammed against the door.

He grinned. From the force of the blows only one man could be the author of them—the gigantic Scraper. Some of the festive Kittens must have japed him, locked and barred him in before bolting. Grinning wider than ever, Snub sauntered leisurely forward to take his part in the joke.

unclenched fiercely while he stood staring at his pals.

It was his strength and pluck that had gone a long way to saving them, short though their terrible imprisonment had been, for he had plunged through the first gust of fire to hurl himself at the door. Had it not been for Snub's quick work, however, even his mighty efforts would have been in vain. He laid a hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Thank 'ee, sir. Thank goodness you were 'ere."

"Rats!" panted Snub. "I had the evening clear and just dropped down for a chat. But, gosh, Scrapper, how on earth did it happen?"

Before answering him the huge man strode across to the big first-aid chest in the corner of the gym., returning with cotton-wool and a can of carron oil, which he handed to Jenkins with a brief nod. Not until he saw the taciturn one expertly bathing the boxers' burns with the soothing oil did he turn to Snub and briefly explain.

"So they grabbed the stones young Buddy gave the boys and bolted, leavin' us to burn!" he finished. Snub gasped his amazement and consternation.

"My hat! The crawlin' scuts! And I saw 'em go!" he snapped, remembering the three men who had collided with him at the street corner and raced away in the Daimler. The Scrapper wheeled on him fiercely.

"You saw 'em? Where? When? Which way did they go?" he panted.

Never before had Snub seen the genial giant look so terrible. His blackened face was set in deep harsh lines, but it was his eyes that made the lad gasp inwardly. They



Snub was knocked spinning as three men raced desperately past him. He did not know that they were "Red-eye" Parsons and his gangsters, escaping with thirty thousand pounds' worth of jewels.

were wide open and hard as agates; steady, expressionless, yet filled with a deep cold fire, like those of a lynx deprived of its kill.

"They

"Beat it for Saint Pancras!" he finished softly, without a second's hesitation. Calmness was fast returning. His voice had steadied and colour had come back to his face. But the deadly look in his eyes still burned. "Yes, St. Pancras. That's how I've been figgerin'. An' I'll get him!" His lips parted in a mirthless smile; he banged his fists together.

"He's beating it for Liverpool, where the rat comes from. He won't stop running till he's among his pals in some hide-away in the docks. An' he's taken our stones with him. He'll peddle 'em on the sly to the swell gamblers and con. men that work the Atlantic ships, see? Gosh, I know his sort backwards, and their tricks!" His war cry came again in a fierce deep snarl. "I'll get him!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Scrapper Weaves His Net!

THE Scrapper had no time for fancy detective work. But his knowledge of men was wide, deep and long, and he could use uncanny common-sense. With Snub behind him, he hustled back to the telephone in the fire-blackened office and jerked out a number. While he was waiting for it he grabbed a charred ABC from a pigeon-hole in the desk and ruffled the pages rapidly. At last one horny thumb indicated the trains to Liverpool, and after one quick glance Snub yanked out his watch and nodded.

"H'm! If you're right, he's got forty-five minutes to catch the fast night express, Scrapper. He'll do it all right!"

"Maybe," grunted Huggins. "But I'll have him before that!" A voice through the 'phone in answer to his call made him turn. "Hallo! 'Pancras cab-rank? Is Smithy there, mate? No? Charlie Roberts, then? Awright; tell 'im Scrapper Huggins wants to speak."

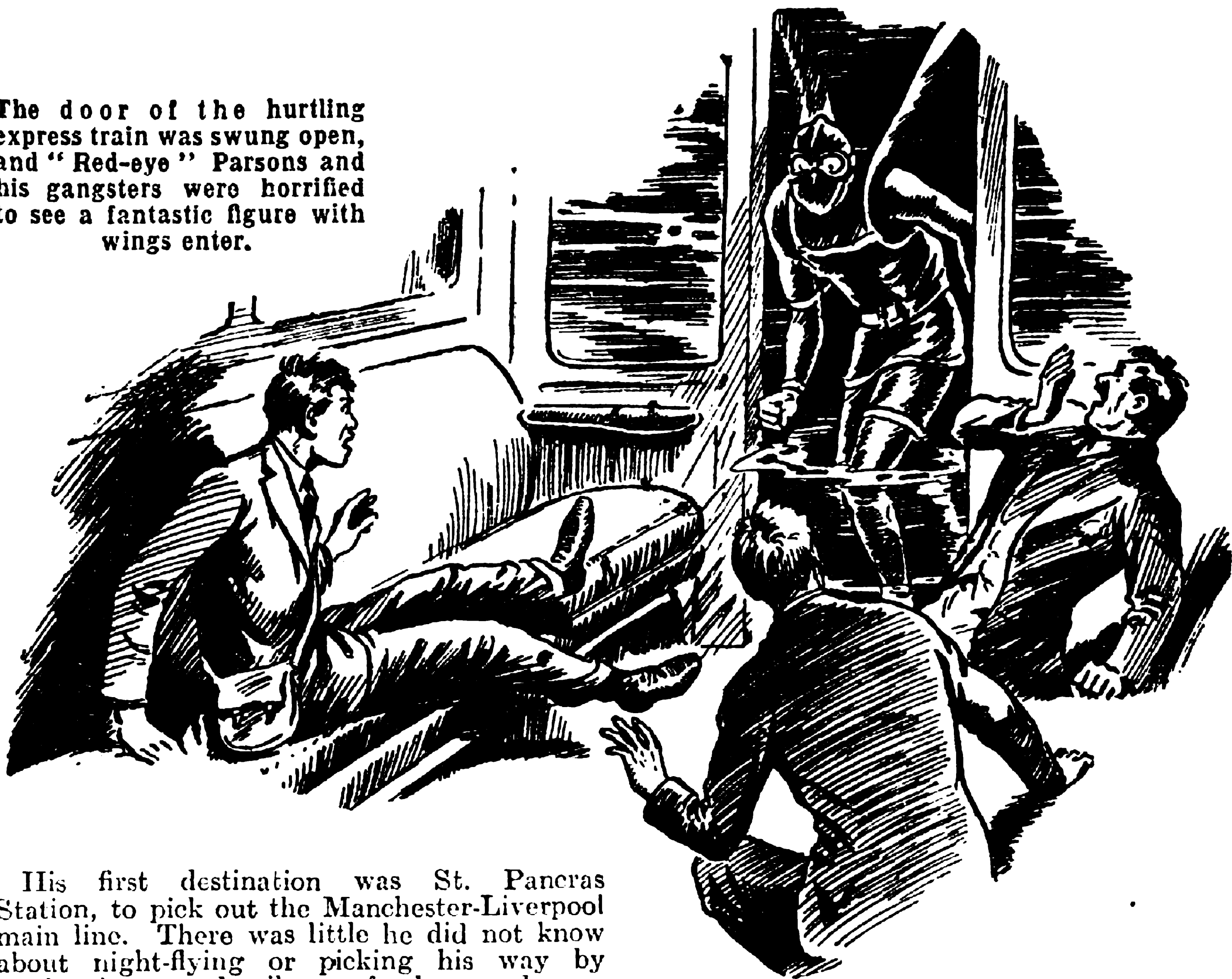
Keyed up with excitement, Snub stood by. During the next few minutes he listened to many strange conversations, and his admiration for Scrapper grew exceedingly.

"'Ullo! Charlie? Good! 'Op across to the station, will yer? Tell Nobby Clarke I want 'im, quick. He's sellin' papers just in front of the booking-'all. I want him immediate. Right!" There was a pause until:

"That you, Nobby? Then listen!" Grimly the Scrapper snapped out the story of the robbery and fire, following it with descriptions of Parsons' gang, and orders. "They're headin' fer your place, see? That's almost sure. They'll be gettin' the seven forty-five to Liverpool. Stop 'em till we get there. Savvy?"

Apparently Nobby Clarke, as keen a son of the London streets as could

The door of the hurtling express train was swung open, and "Red-eye" Parsons and his gangsters were horrified to see a fantastic figure with wings enter.



His first destination was St. Pancras Station, to pick out the Manchester-Liverpool main line. There was little he did not know about night-flying or picking his way by roads, rivers, and railways, for long and careful experience had given him unerring accuracy in such matters. Like an invisible phantom of darkness he hovered about the great station for a minute or so, making sure of his track. And then, with a vigorous swirl of his pinions, he was off—off on the trail of the Liverpool express.

He judged that by now the roaring train had something like thirty minutes start—which meant she was perhaps twenty-five miles ahead, eating up the lines at full speed by this time. It would be a stern, hard chase for a while, he knew, although a sardonic smile of confidence curled his lips at the thought. In a run from London to Liverpool, his wings would give any train in the world twenty-five miles start and a beating.

His programme of attack he had yet to settle—plenty of time for that as he streaked along. But one thing was certain: he meant to get Red-eye Parsons, the man who, in little over an hour, had left eight Kittens to a flaming doom and desperately wounded another, besides stealing the men's jewels.

The Kittens had earned those stones worthily; risked their lives, fought and sweated for them. They were not to be robbed by a flash gangster if the stern Night Hawk could prevent it.

For over an hour he flew at brilliant speed, keeping a rigid course eighty yards above the gleaming metals that wound beneath him;

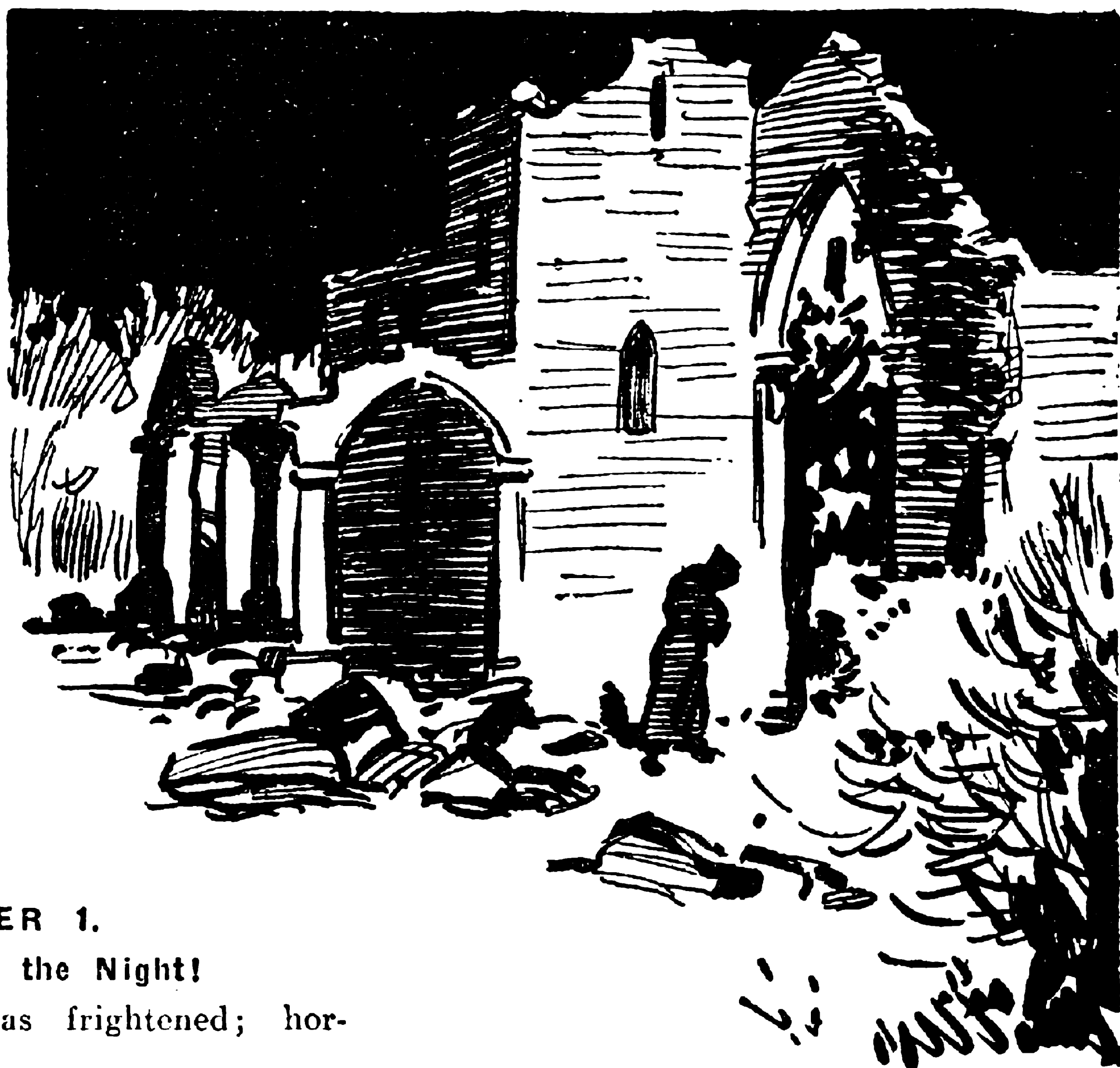
out of London, northwards into quiet Hertfordshire, a mysterious, avenging figure. Soon the glare of the capital was far behind. Suburban stations twinkled for a moment below and were passed.

Soaring higher, but keeping to the trail like a bloodhound, he hurtled on through the night sky above Bedford's bright ring of lights, and settled down once more. On and on, his amazing wings smoothly devouring the air, the keen kiss of the wind spurring him to greater efforts.

Over the Bedfordshire hills, the glimmering Ouse, and the borders of Northampton he glided. A glance at his wrist-watch and a rapid calculation suddenly sent him shooting in a steep climb, higher and higher into the darkness, his powerful glasses sweeping the countryside ahead, dotted

The MYSTERY of

By
EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS



CHAPTER 1.

The Figure in the Night!

TEDDY LONG was frightened; horribly frightened.

He crouched in bed, hugging the sheets and blankets tightly around him. Vaguely above the howl and whine of the boisterous March wind, he could hear the school clock chiming out the hour of midnight. And from the window the sound which had first awakened him was repeated.

Swoosh-tap! Tap-tap-swoosh!

It was an eerie, mysterious, ghostly sound. Teddy Long, who was the biggest funk in the Remove Form at St. Frank's, lay in his bed, transfixed with terror. There was something at the window—something horrible, something spectral. Teddy was sure of it, and he was a spineless wreck of humanity as he shivered in his bed, clutching nervously at the bedclothes.

The sound came again, accompanied by a doleful moan as the wind blustered round the Ancient House. Teddy Long, with a fascination over which he had no control, lowered the bedclothes a trifle and peeped over the top.

It was not entirely dark in the dormitory, for the moon, emerging from behind the scudding clouds, was shining into the West

Square. The window was clearly outlined to Teddy's popping eyes.

His heart nearly stopped beating. It seemed to him that a ghostly hand, with long, bony, skeleton fingers, was reaching across the glass, attempting to clutch hold of the window fastening.

A sound burst out from Teddy's throat—a half-choking scream. He had no control over it; he had uttered it without knowing it. Hubbard, who occupied the next bed, stirred uneasily and rolled over.

"It's coming in!" shrieked Teddy Long wildly. "Help!"

Hubbard sat up with a jerk, blinking.

"Of course not!" said Handforth. "What are you getting at, Vera? Have you heard anything this morning?"

"I've heard nothing," replied the girl. "I've only just come out."

"Well, go on," invited K.K., giving Handforth a curious glance. "What's that you were saying about ghosts?"

"I was only wondering, that's all," said the girl. "You may think me silly, but—Well, something rather funny happened in the night. I don't mean funny, really, but queer. Is it true that the monastery ruins are supposed to be haunted? When I asked father about it he laughed and said that there was some sort of legend—"

"The monastery ruins?" repeated Handforth, eyeing her closely. "What do you know about the ruins?"

"Nothing at all," said Vera. "Listen, you chaps. Don't laugh—don't think I'm a silly, imaginative girl. I'm a girl, but I'm not one of those frightened sort."

"Rather not!" agreed K.K. stoutly.

"Well, last night—it was just a little after midnight—I got out of bed to stop my window rattling," said Vera, becoming thoughtful. "And I can swear that I saw a quaint figure moving about amongst the ruins—a bent old man, wearing a long cloak like a monk. I thought I was dreaming at first—"

"I say, cheese it!" protested Handforth.

"You're kidding us, aren't you?"

"No, of course not."

"I mean, you've heard that yarn about Teddy Long and Hubbard?"

"What yarn?" asked Vera in surprise. "I don't know what you mean, Handy. I haven't heard any yarn. I've only just come out. I told mother and father about this figure as soon as I came down, and they laughed at me."

All the juniors were exchanging glances.

"Here, wait a minute!" said Parkington.

"You say you saw a figure in the ruins,



THRILLS!

