

Lloyds of London

(Continued from Page 6)

and Jonathan sprang to fill the order, accepting another smart slap from the proprietress as he slid past her. As he passed her again, with a mug in each hand she hissed:

"Mind, Jonathan, ye don't let that scum pay ye with them worthless Portugee coppers."

Jonathan nodded, served the drinks and resumed his seat. But his interest in Widow Blake was gone; his young ears were cocked to catch more of the conversation at the table, for the pair were sufficiently far gone in liquor and too contemptuous of the befuddled widow and a mere child to be at all cautious.

"Drink up, shipmate," the older man urged scornfully, "an' maybe this rotten rum'll put some brass in ye're backbone." They drank and the voice continued. "They're goin' to do the job tonight, while this thick fog holds. Young Scroggins, the skipper's boy, heard 'em a discussin' of it an' told me, on my promise to see to it that he gets his fair share o' the loot, same as the able seamen. 'ere's the sloop, in from Spain with a wheakin' consignment o' gold ingots for discharge in London. She's 'eld up 'ere by the fog for a wee. The plan is to lay her onlongside our brig an' transfer the ingots to our hold; then she's hauled off an' scuttled an' we sayves ourselves as best we can. The gold's supposed to 'ave gone down with 'er, but all the time it's syfe aboard the Sea-orse, an' Lloyd's o' London mykes good on the insurance. Sweet, I calls it. But us bloody foremast 'ands, wot moves the gold, 'ave to 'ave our fair whack; if we don't get it we blow the game to Lloyd's, for which we're richly rewarded, an' on the first bright day we walks out to see them connivin' skippers 'ung in chains.

"They should listen to reason," the older man agreed, but even Jonathan could see that he was timid, as becomes one who has lived a life of intimidation and upon whose person had been visited all too frequently the appalling brutalities so prevalent in the English navy and mercantile marine in those days. "But," he added on a whining note, "wot if they refuse to?"

"They can be chucked overboard, m'lad; they'll drown as quick as you an' me. Come on. Let's go back to the ship."

They rose and Jonathan heard the clink of coins thrown on the table. The men had reached the door and Jonathan was about to pick up the coins, when Widow Blake screeched at his elbow, "Portugee coppers! Didn't I tell yer?"

Jonathan leaped for the door, but surprisingly the old lady followed swiftly, in time to give him a shove and send him flying through the open portal out into the middle of the street, where the fog immediately swallowed him. He picked himself up and, following the sound of the sailers' heavy boots on the cobblestones, trailed soundlessly on his bare feet some six feet behind of the men when one of them lighted his pipe. Behind him Widow Blake was creaming and cursing,

demanding his immediate return to the groggery to be beaten within an inch of his life.

The salt tang of the English channel and the not unpleasant odor of decaying seaweed tar and wet canvas apprized him presently that he was approaching the waterfront. He followed the two men out onto a rickety dock and watched them descend a stairway to a float beside which a skiff lay tied. Jonathan was standing within four feet of them and by the illumination the boy saw across the stern of the skiff the name, Maggie-O. He had not lived in this fishing village two years not to realize that this skiff belonged to a vessel of the same name.

"Maggie-O has the gold aboard," he reflected, with that mental lucidity so often found in very young children who have known the worst that life can give. "And the gold is going to be changed to the Seahorse Nice work, I calls it. Horatio must hear o' this, seein' as 'ow he's me partner."

He returned to the street as the two men pulled off into the fog and ran for half a mile until he found two lamp posts glowing faintly and about six feet apart. He knew where he was now, for these lamp posts flanked the carriage entrance to the rectory of the Reverend Mr. Nelson, whose only son, a lad of Jonathan's age and much too democratic in his choice of associates to please his father was, by some strange freak of boyish tolerance and admiration, Jonathan's sole friend and playmate. Upon the two occasions when Reverend Mr. Nelson had found the disreputable Jonathan on the premises, he had ordered him to be off and promised him a birching if he should show his nose there again. So Jonathan was grateful now for the fog that hid him, as he crossed the lawn and peered into the lighted window of the living room of the rectory.

His heart filled with pity for Horatio as he surveyed the scene within. Mr. Nelson was tutor to his own children—four in number, the other three being girls, and Jonathan realized by the unhappiness evident in each little face, that their father was striving to teach them something very difficult to learn. As a matter of fact, the unimaginative martinet was demanding that his ten year old daughter Susannah, decline the Latin noun, agricola. She failed miserably and burst into tears. Horation, a pale, rather delicate lad dressed in shorts and a long-tailed coat that made him look not unlike a dressed-up sparrow, twisted nervously on his seat and glanced around the room for inspiration, for experience had told him that each of his sisters would, in turn, fail to decline agricola that his father would then demand that Horation decline it—and Horation realized that he also would fail and be penalized accordingly.

His glance rested on a pale little face framed in a shock of black hair, close to the window; then a finger beckoned to him—violently. A signal that spelled the necessity for haste, regardless of consequences. So, while his father was busy terrorizing Susannah, Master Horatio slipped silently, as if greased, out of the room. A moment later he appeared beside Jonathan.

"Well, my good fellow," he saluted the urchin patronizingly

"and what's in the wind now?"

"Gold! Crime. Murder on the high seas," Jonathan whispered.

"Explain," Horation commanded.

So Jonathan explained while his pal listened gravely and without interruption.

"You did well, my man," he announced gravely at the conclusion of the tale, "to bring this matter to my attention. I will consider what measures to take to unhorse these scoundrels." And he advanced one foot and scratched the end of the small pale chin as if employed in most profound thought on a most perplexing problem. Ailing in this as miserably as he would have failed to decline the Latin noun, agricola, he said peremptorily:

"Well well, m good Jonathan, speak up. What do you suggest?"

Tell me and I shall give your suggestion due consideration"

"It seems to me," Jonathan replied judicially, "that we must be sure of our ground before we tell Lloyd's of London about the swindle."

"Ah, yes. Lloyd's must, of course, be informed at the earliest possible moment to prevent the payment of the insurance."

"So you and I, Horatio, must steal a small boat and go out to the scene of the crime, observe it and—er—ah—"

"Flowwow me," commanded little Horation Nelson, and in his childish treble there was something of the tone that was to lead England's navy to glorious victory thirty-five years later at Trafalgar.

(Continued Next Week.)



BED ROCK

GEOLOGISTS tell us that even bed-rock moves. But it shifts so gradually that it makes a safe, sure base for the largest structure. This bank, too, is moving with the times. But the movement is always gradual, along predetermined lines. Every succeeding move has merely served to further strengthen and consolidate its underlying stability. Each year finds this bank in even better position to serve its many clients and depositors.

First State Bank

SINCE 1905

— Member Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation —