

# 'LLOYDS of LONDON'

By PETER B. KYNE

## COMING TO THE EL PORTAL SOON

### WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:

Jonathan Blake, penniless orphan, and his playmate, Horatio Nelson, son of prominent churchman, uncover a plot to loot the gold cargo of brig Maggie-O in Norfolk, England, harbor in the year 1770. They board the Maggie-O, watch the thieves at work, and make their escape. When Horatio is unable to go with him, because Horatio is to enter the Navy, Jonathan sets off for London, 100 miles away, alone, to inform Lloyds of London of the fraud. He is about to be ejected from Lloyds by a waiter when the tolling of the Lutine Bell, signifying news of a maritime disaster, sounds in the room.

### CHAPTER FOUR

The bell at Lloyd's hung directly over a rostrum and nobody was ever known to mount that bell except the waiter whose duty it was to ring the bell. Having rung it once, silence settled over the coffee house instantly. The waiter then read from a bulletin:

The brig Maggie-O, Corunna to London, reported sunk in the Channel off Burnham-Thorpe, in Norfolk. Total loss claimed on vessel and cargo.

There was a moments silence, then everybody appeared to sigh at once and scrape his chair, as if the shock of this news had caused him an involuntary instinct to retreat from a heavy loss. Then silence again, shattered by a shrill childish voice:

"The Maggie-O didn't sink by accident. She was scuttled for the insurance—please, please, don't throw me out. I must see Mr. Lloyd. He's being robbed. I must tell him . . ."

"Much you know about it, you young lunatic," the waiter said grimly, and dragged the boy toward the entrance. As he pulled open the door a gentleman stood in the entrance. "Your name, sir," the waiter queried, still holding fast to the boy's nape.

"Benjamin Franklin. I have an engagement here to meet Dr. Johnson and Mr. Boswell."

The waiter let go Jonathan to receive Mr. Franklin's hat and cane and the boy took advantage of this momentary relief to dodge under waiter's arm and back into the coffee house. He ran to the rostrum, was pursued by another waiter and collared there.

"I tell you the Maggie-O was scuttled," he screamed. "Mr. Lloyd must not pay the insurance. It's a swindle."

A stentorian voice shouted: "Waiter, let go that boy. What the devil do you mean by man-handling the little fellow. Boy, come here."

Jonathan beheld a gentleman in his middle forties rising from his table and crooking a finger at him. He came over. "Are you Mr. Lloyd, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"No, lad. My name is John An-

gerstein. I am an underwriter and I have underwritten the thousand pounds of the insurance on the Maggie-O and her cargo. What ground have you for crying to this company that the Maggie-O was not sunk by accident but was purposely sunk-scuttled?"

Jonathan told his story, while John Angerstein's kind eyes appraised him. "Remarkable," Angerstein murmured. "You appear to have arrived in London a few minutes ahead of the news of the loss of the Maggie-O. How did you manage to get here so soon?"

"I walked, sir."

"You walked a hundred miles?"

"Yes sir. I had to. I had no money to buy a ride on the coach and nobody would give a ragamuffin like me a ride."

"What caused you to come to Lloyd's?"

"I heard one of the sailors mention Lloyd's of London and the insurance that would be collected when the Maggie-O was sunk."

"Remarkable! Quite! You're a fine brave lad and an honest one into the bargain. You're hungry, aren't you?" And as the boy nodded, he called to a waiter: "Here, you, take this boy to a table and feed him as much as he'll eat. Then bring him and the bill to me. As you pass the rostrum ring the bell twice."

At the signal for the good news, John Angerstein arose and informed his fellow underwriters of the information that had just reached him. "Has there been any news received of the whereabouts of the brig Seahorse?"

As if in answer to his query a waiter mounted the rostrum and rang the bell twice. "Brig Seahorse, Le Harve to London with wine, spoken in the Channel three days ago."

"We'll have a committee from Lloyd's, together with the London police, waiting to board her when she docks. If the gold is found in her master's quarters the proof of barratry will be sufficient for a conviction. May I suggest that our chairman take charge of this matter and give it the most thorough investigation?"

He returned to his seat and sat, playing with his watch seals and beaming benevolently upon his fellow underwriters. He was in this good mood when the waiter brought Jonathan back to Angerstein's desk and presented the bill for the boy's meal.

"Now then, young fellow, m'lad," said John Angerstein, "thanks to your warning the underwriters at Lloyd's have probably been saved a terrible loss. The Maggie-O carried insurance in the sum of one hundred thousand pounds on hull and cargo, of which I was responsible accustomed to exercising command, gave him John Angerstein's orders.

Jonathan followed the butler

down into the servants' quarters in the basement. "I dare say you're alive with vermin," the butler announced bluntly.

sible for ten thousand. You'll have to remain on hand as a witness, provided we can prove this villany. Lloyd's will provide board and lodging for you—likewise a complete outfit of clothing of which you stand so sadly in need. If we find that gold aboard the Seahorse you may rest assured you will be handsomely rewarded for your good work."

"And wot," piped Jonathan plaintively, "will become of me after that?"

"Why—why—I do not know. You will return to your home, I dare say."

"Do you consider, sir, that I look like a boy with a 'ome to go to?"

"Upon my word, you do not—now that you mention it. Have you parents—relatives—"

"No, sir. I've been living with a horrible old woman since my parents died. She claims she is my aunt, by marriage, which doesn't make 'er a relative of mine, does it, sir? And she keeps a dirty little pub and gets drunk every night and beats me, and I've never 'ad enough to eat until today, sir."

"Hum-m-m!" mumbled John Angerstein and smiled a little. "Well, Blake?"

"I'd like to go to work for you, sir. Couldn't I be your errand boy? I'd like to grow up into an insurance underwriter."

"We'll see, we'll see," Angerstein murmured. "Watson!"

A middle-aged man with one leg off at the knee, came hopping over to Angerstein's table. "Watson, take this waif out and buy him everything he needs in the way of clothing. See to it that he gets the best. Then take him to my home and turn him over to the butler, with instructions to have him bathed and clothed and given a bed in the servants' quarters. Watson," he explained to Jonathan, "is my chief clerk."

"Thank you, sir."

"Hum-m-m! Got some manners about you—for a brat. Have you had any schooling?"

"A little bit, sir."

"You'll have to have a big bit if you wish to have a seat in Lloyd's coffee house. Well, you appear to have the right spirit—honesty, courage, persistence, and quite a bit of personality. You must have come of good stock . . . well, take him away, Watson."

Watson took the boy away, to a store where he purchased for him a complete new outfit of clothing; then they journeyed together in a four wheeler to John Angerstein's residence in Regent street. Like all of the houses in that street it was a formidable old Georgian house, handsome and dignified, like it's owner. A butler in livery met them at the door and turned up his aristocratic nose at sight of the ragged Jonathan. He turned it down again promptly when Watson (Jonathan had already discovered Watson was an ex-officer of the British Navy and had lost his leg in battle) with the air of command inseparable from those who have

"I am not," Jonathan replied firmly. "I'm raged, but I 'ave always been clean. I shall report your insulting language to Mr. Angerstein."

"Ah, that's better, me lad." The great man laid a friendly hand on the plack poll. "The scullion will bring a tub and fill it with hot water. When you have thoroughly tubbed yourself and discarded these rags—let us trust forever, the master's valet will cut your hair. Here are your sleeping quarters."

For the second time that day the boy displayed an uncanny judgment of human nature and a fearlessness that, in after life, was to insure the success of whatever enterprises in which he might engage. He knew his threat to report the butler's not at all polite observation to Mr. Angerstein had given that pompous individual pause, so he tried another shot now.

"I will assume that you meant no offense by that remark about vermin," he said with a dignity far beyond his years. "I shall forget it." He drove his index finger into the butler's fat paunch. "Happenances often deceive even very wise men." He recalled the fact that Horatio sometimes assumed an air of pomposity when speaking with him; it was half in jest, half in earnest, designed to let Jonathan know that, despite their comradeship, Horatio was above him socially. So he said to the butler: "Never forget that, my good man."

"Thank you, sir, thank you," the latter replied humbly.

A week later John Angerstein had Jonathan summoned to his library after dinner. He smiled as he noted the boy's handsome, intelligent face; there was a healthy glow in it now; the paleness and peakedness of malnutrition were gone. "Well," said Angerstein, "you were right about the Maggie-O being scuttled. The police found the gold under the floor of the cuddy of the Seahorse, and the crew of the Maggie-O rounded up in your precious relative's groggery in Burnham-Thorpe, readily confessed to save their necks. The two captains will presently be hanged on Tower Hill. The various syndicates that had written insurance on the Maggie-O and her cargo are therefore relieved of the risk."

"What's a syndicate, sir?"

"A group of men who pool their money and write insurance or underwrite the policies given by other insurers. I am the head of one such syndicate. I have had a meeting with all of the syndicates interested in the Maggie-O and each syndicate has agreed to give you ten per cent of the sum your honesty and courage and intelligence saved them. This sum I shall invest for you in my syndicate and the interest it will earn will be ample to clothe you board you and educate you in some excellent school. I shall have Watson look into the matter for you. You will never see your precious Anty Blake again, lad!"

(Continued on Page Ten)