

KEZIAH COFFIN

by
Joseph C. Lincoln
Author of
Cy Whittaker's Place
Cap'n Eri, Etc.

Illustrations by
Ellsworth Young
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SYNOPSIS.

Mrs. Keziah Coffin, supposed widow, is arranging to move from Trumet to Boston, following the death of her brother, for whom she had kept house. Ryan Pepper, widower, offers marriage, and is indignantly refused. Capt. Elkanah Daniels, leader of the Regular church offers Keziah a place as housekeeper for the new minister, and she decides to remain in Trumet. Keziah takes charge of Rev. John Ellery, the new minister, and gives him advice as to his conduct toward members of the parish.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

"Keziah," he commanded. "Hum—ha! Keziah, come in here a minute." Keziah came in response to the call, her sewing in her hand. The renovation of the parsonage had so far progressed that she could now find time for a little sewing, after the dinner dishes were done.

"Keziah," said the captain pompously, "we expect you to look out for Mr. Ellery in every respect. The parish committee expects that—yes."

"I'll try," said Mrs. Coffin shortly. "Yes, well, that's all. You can go. We must be going, too, Mr. Ellery. Please consider our house at your disposal any time. Be neighborly—hum—ha!—be neighborly."

"Yes," purred Annabel. "Do come and see us often. Congenial society is very scarce in Trumet, for me especially. We can read together. Are you fond of Moore, Mr. Ellery? I just dote on him."

The last "hum—ha" was partially drowned by the click of the gate. Keziah closed the dining-room door.

"Mrs. Coffin," said the minister, "I shan't trouble the parish committee. Be sure of that. I'm perfectly satisfied."

Keziah sat down in the rocker and her needle moved very briskly for a moment. Then she said, without looking up:

"That's good. I own up I like to hear you say it. And I am glad there are some things I do like about this new place of mine. Because—well, because there's likely to be others that I shan't like at all."

On Friday evening the minister conducted his first prayer meeting. Before it, and afterwards, he heard a good deal concerning the Come-Outers. He learned that Captain Eben Hammond had preached against him in the chapel on Sunday. Most of his own parishioners seemed to think it a good joke.

The sun of the following Thursday morning rose behind a curtain of fog as dense as that of the day upon which Ellery arrived. A flat calm in the forenoon, the wind changed about three o'clock, and beginning with a sharp and sudden squall from the north-west, blew hard and steady. Yet the fog still cloaked everything and refused to be blown away.

"Goin' out in this, Mr. Ellery!" exclaimed Keziah, in amazement, as the minister put on his hat and coat about seven that evening. "Sakes alive! you won't be able to see the way to the gate. It's as dark as a nigger's pocket and thicker than young ones in a poor man's family, as my father used to say. You'll be wet through. Where in the world are you bound for this night?"

The minister equivocated. He said he had been in the house all day and felt like a walk.

"Well, take an umbrella, then," was the housekeeper's advice. "You'll need it before you get back, I calculate."

It was dark enough and thick enough, in all conscience. The main road was a black, wet void, through which gleams from lighted windows were big, vague, yellow blotches. The umbrella was useful in the same way that a blind man's cane is useful, in feeling the way. Two or three straggling lanterns. John Ellery stumbled on through the mist till he reached the "Corners" where the store was located and the roads forked. There, he turned to the right, into the way called locally "Hammond's Turn-off."

A short distance down the "Turn-off" stood a small, brown-shingled building, its windows alight. Opposite its door, on either side of the road, grew a spreading hornbeam tree surrounded by a cluster of swamp blackberry bushes. In the black shadow of the hornbeam Mr. Ellery stood still. He was debating in his mind a question: should he or should he not enter that building?

As he stood there, groups of people emerged from the fog and darkness and passed in at the door. Some of them he had seen during his fortnight in Trumet. Others were strangers to him. A lantern danced and wobbled up the "Turn-off" from the direction of the bay shore and the packet wharf. It drew near, and he saw that it was carried by an old man with long, white hair and chin beard, who walked with a slight limp. Beside him was a thin woman wearing a black poke bonnet and a shawl. In the rear of the pair came another woman, a young woman, judging by the way she was dressed and her lithe, vigorous step. The trio halted on the platform of the building. The old man blew out the lantern. Then he threw the door open and a stream of yellow light poured over the group.

The young woman was Grace Van Horne. The minister recognized her at once. Undoubtedly, the old man with the limp was her guardian, Captain Eben Hammond, who, by common report, had spoken of him, Ellery, as a "hired priest."

The door closed. A few moments thereafter the sound of a squeaky melodeon came from within the building. It wailed and quavered and groaned. Then, with a suddenness that was startling, came the first verse of a hymn, sung with tremendous enthusiasm:

"Oh, who shall answer when the Lord shall call His ransomed sinners home?"

The hallelujah chorus was still ringing when the watcher across the street stepped out from the shadow of the hornbeam. Without a pause he strode over to the platform. Another moment and the door had shut behind him.

The minister of the Trumet Regular church had entered the Come-Outer chapel to attend a Come-Outer prayer-meeting:

CHAPTER IV.

In Which the Parson Cruises in Strange Waters.

The Come-Outer chapel was as bare inside, almost, as it was without. Bare wooden walls, a beamed ceiling, a raised platform at one end with a table and chairs and the melodeon upon it, rows of wooden settees for the congregation—that was all. As the minister entered, the worshippers were standing up to sing. Three or four sputtering oil lamps but dimly illuminated the place and made recognition uncertain.

The second verse of the hymn was just beginning as Ellery came in. Most of the forty or more grown people in the chapel were too busy wrestling with the tune to turn and look at him. A child here and there in the back row twisted a curious neck but twisted back again as parental fingers tugged at its ear. The minister tipped to a dark corner and took his stand in front of a vacant settee.

The man whom Ellery had decided must be Captain Eben Hammond was standing on the low platform beside the table. A quaint figure, patriarchal with its flowing white hair and beard, puritanical with its set, smooth-shaven lips and tufted brows. Captain Eben held an open hymn book back in one hand and beat time with the other. He wore brass-bowed spectacles well down toward the tip of his nose. Swinging a heavy, stubby finger and singing in a high, quavering voice of no particular register, he led off the third verse:

"Oh, who shall weep when the roll is called And who shall shout for joy?"

The singing over, the worshippers sat down. Captain Eben took a figured handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his forehead. The thin, near-sighted young woman who had been humped over the keyboard of the melodeon, straightened up. The worshippers relaxed a little and began to look about.

Then the captain adjusted his spectacles and opened a Bible, which he took from the table beside him. Clearing his throat, he announced that he would read from the Word, tenth chapter of Jeremiah:

"Thus saith the Lord. Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them."

"Amen!" The shout came from the second bench from the front, where Ezekiel Bassett, clam digger and fervent religionist, was always to be found on meeting nights. Ezekiel was the father of Susannah B. Bassett, "Sukey B." for short, who played the melodeon. He had been, by successive seizures, a Seventh Day Baptist, a Second Adventist, a Millerite, a Regular, and was now the most energetic of Come-Outers. Later he was to become a Spiritualist and preside at table-tipping seances.

Ezekiel's amen was so sudden and emphatic that it startled the reader into looking up. Instead of the faces of his congregation, he found himself treated to a view of their back hair. Nearly every head was turned toward the rear corner of the room, there was a buzz of whispering and, in front, many men and women were standing up to look.

Ezekiel Bassett stepped forward and whispered in his ear. The captain's expression of righteous indignation changed to one of blank astonishment. He, too, gazed at the dark corner. Then his lips tightened and he rapped smartly on the table.

"My friends," he said, "let us bow in prayer."

John Ellery could have repeated that prayer, almost word for word, years after that night. The captain prayed for the few here gathered together: Let them be steadfast. Let them be constant in the way. The path they were treading might be narrow and be-

set with thorns, but it was the path leading to glory.

"Scoffers may sneer," he declared, his voice rising; "they may make a mock of us, they may even come into thy presence to laugh at us, but theirs is the laugh that turns to groaning."

And so on, his remarks becoming more personal and ever pointing like a compass-needle to the occupant of that seat in the corner.

"O Lord," prayed Captain Hammond, the perspiration in beads on his forehead, "thou hast said that the pastors become brutish and have not sought thee and that they shan't prosper. Help us tonight to labor with this one that he may see his error and repent in sackcloth and ashes."

They sang once more, a hymn that prophesied woes to the unbeliever. Then Ezekiel Bassett rose to "testify." The testimony was mainly to the effect that he was happy because he had fled to the ark of safety while there was yet time.

Captain Eben called for more testimony. But the testifiers were, to use the old minstrel joke, backward in coming forward that evening. At an ordinary meeting, by this time, the shouts and enthusiasm would have been at their height and half a dozen Come-Outers on their feet at once, relating their experiences and proclaiming their happiness. But tonight there was a damper; the presence of the leader of the opposition cast a shadow over the gathering. Only the bravest attempted speech. The others sat silent, showing their resentment and contempt by frowning glances over their shoulders and portentous nods one to the other.

The captain looked over the meeting.

"I'm ashamed," he said, "ashamed of the behavior of some of us in the Lord's house. This has been a failure, this service of ours. We have kept still when we should have justified our faith, and allowed the presence of a stranger to interfere with our duty to the Almighty. And I will say, he added, his voice rising and trembling with indignation, "to him who came here uninvited and broke up this meeting, that it would be well for him to remember the words of Scripture: 'Woe unto ye, false prophets and workers of iniquity.' Let him remember what the divine wisdom put into my head to read tonight: 'The pastors have become brutish and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper.'"

"Amen!" "Amen!" "Amen!" "So be it!" The cries came from all parts of the little room. They ceased abruptly, for John Ellery was on his feet.

"Captain Hammond," he said, "I realize that I have no right to speak in this building, but I must say one word. My coming here tonight may have been a mistake; I'm inclined to think it was. But I came not, as you seem to infer, to sneer and scoff; certainly I had no wish to disturb your service. I came because I had heard repeatedly, since my arrival in this town, of this society and its meetings. I had heard, too, that there seemed to be a feeling of antagonism, almost hatred, against me among you here. I couldn't see why. Most of you have, I believe, been at one time members of the church where I preach. I wished to find out for myself how much of truth there was in the stories I had heard and to see if a better feeling between the two societies might not be brought about. Those were my reasons for coming here tonight. As for my being a false prop-

et and a worker of iniquity"—he smiled—"well, there is another verse of Scripture I would call to your attention: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'"

He sat down. There was silence for a moment and then a buzz of whispering. Captain Eben, who had heard him with a face of iron hardness, rapped the table.

"We will sing in closin'," he said, "the forty-second hymn. After which the benediction will be pronounced."

The Regular minister left the Come-Outers meeting with the unpleasant conviction that he had blundered badly. His visit, instead of tending toward better understanding and more cordial relationship, had been regarded as an intrusion.

So that old bigot was the Van Horne girl's "uncle." It hardly seemed possible that she, who appeared so refined and ladylike when he met her at the parsonage, should be a member of that curious company. When he rose to speak he had seen her in the front row, beside the thin, middle-aged female who had entered the chapel with Captain Hammond and with her. She was looking at him intently. The lamp over the speaker's table had shone full on her face and the picture remained in his memory. He saw her



"I'm Not Crying," She Gasped.

yes and the wavy shadows of her hair on her forehead. He had taken but a few steps when there was a rustle in the wet grass behind him.

"Mr. Ellery," whispered a voice, "Mr. Ellery, may I speak to you just a moment?"

He wheeled in surprise. "Why? why, Miss Van Horne!" he exclaimed. "Is it you?"

"I felt," she said, "that I must see you and—explain. I am so sorry you came here to-night. Oh, I wish you hadn't. What made you do it?"

"I came," began Ellery, somewhat stiffly, "because I—well, because I thought it might be a good thing to do."

There was a bitterness in his tone, unmistakable. And a little laugh from his companion did not tend to soothe his feelings.

"Thank you," he said. "Perhaps it is funny. I did not find it so. Good evening."

The girl detained him as he was turning away.

"I came after you," went on Grace rapidly and with nervous haste, "because I felt that you ought not to misjudge my uncle for what he said tonight. He wouldn't have hurt your feelings for the world. He is a good man and does good to everybody. If you only knew the good he does do, you wouldn't—you wouldn't dare think hardly of him."

"I'm not judging your uncle," he declared. "It seemed to me that the boot was on the other leg."

"I know, but you do judge him, and you mustn't. You see, he thought you had come to make fun of him—and us. Some of the Regular people do, people who aren't fit to tie his shoes. And so he spoke against you. He'll be sorry when he thinks it over. That's what I came to tell you. I ask your pardon for—for him."

She turned away now, and it was the minister who detained her.

"I've been thinking," he said slowly, for in his present state of mind it was a hard thing to say, "that perhaps I ought to apologize, too. I'm afraid I did disturb your service and I'm sorry. I meant well, but—'What's that? Rain?'"

There was no doubt about it; it was rain and plenty of it. It came in a swooping downpour that beat upon the trees and bushes and roared upon the roof of the chapel. The minister hurriedly raised his umbrella.

"Here!" he commanded, "you must take the umbrella. Really, you must. You haven't one and you'll be wet through."

She pushed the umbrella aside. "No, no," she answered. "I don't need it; I'm used to wet weather; truly I am. And I don't care for this hat; it's an old one. You have a long way to go and I haven't. Please, Mr. Ellery, I can't take it."

"Very well," was the sternly self-sacrificing reply, "then I shall certainly go with you as far as the gate. I'm sorry, if my company is distasteful but—"

He did not finish the sentence, thinking, it may be, that she might finish it for him. But she was silent, merely removing her hand from the handle. She took a step forward; he followed, holding the umbrella over her head. They plashed on, without speaking through the rapidly forming puddles.

Presently she stumbled and he caught her arm to prevent her falling. To his surprise he felt that arm shake in his grasp.

"Why, Miss Van Horne!" he exclaimed in great concern, "are you crying? I beg your pardon. Of course I wouldn't think of going another step with you. I didn't mean to trouble you. I only—if you will please take this umbrella—"

Again he tried to transfer the umbrella and again she pushed it away. "I—I'm not crying," she gasped; "but—oh, dear! this is so funny!"

"Funny!" he repeated. "Well, perhaps it is. Our ideas of fun seem to differ. I—"

"Oh, but it is so funny. You don't understand. What do you think your congregation would say if they knew you had been to a Come-Outers' meeting and their insisted on seeing a Come-Outer girl home?"

John Ellery swallowed hard. A vision of Captain Elkanah Daniels and the stately Miss Annabel rose before his mind's eye. He hadn't thought of his congregation in connection with this impromptu rescue of a damsel in distress.

"Possibly your Uncle Eben might be somewhat—surprised if he knew you were with me. Perhaps he might have something to say on the subject."

"I guess he would. We shall know very soon. I ran away and left him with Mrs. Poundberry, our housekeeper. He doesn't know where I am. I wonder he hasn't turned back to look for me before this. We shall probably meet him at any moment."

Fifty yards away the lighted windows of the Hammond tavern gleamed yellow. Farther on, over a ragged moving fringe of grass and weeds, was a black, flat expanse—the bay. And a little way out upon that expanse twinkled the lights of a vessel. A chain rattled. Voices shouting exultingly came to their ears.

"Why!" exclaimed Grace in excited wonder, "it's the packet! She was due this morning, but we didn't expect her in till to-morrow. How did she find her way in the fog? I must tell uncle."

She started to run toward the house. The minister would have followed with the umbrella, but she stopped him.

"No, Mr. Ellery," she urged earnestly. "No, please don't. I'm all right now. Thank you. Good night."

A few steps farther on she turned. "I hope Cap'n Elkanah won't know," she whispered, the laugh returning to her voice. "Good night."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MADERO, SUAREZ SHOT TO DEATH

Deposed Mexican Officials Slain in the Night.

NO CAUSE TO INTERVENE.

Tragedy Suggests the Favorite Mexican Method Of Removing Prisoners—Widows Not Allowed To See Bodies.

Mexico City.—Francis I. Madero, ex-President, and Jose Pino Suarez, ex-Vice-President, were shot dead while being removed under military escort from the national palace to the penitentiary.

The notorious fugitive law prevailed in the killing, the official version, as issued by President Huerta, saying that Madero and Suarez attempted to escape when their guards were attacked by Madero sympathizers.

President Huerta ordered the arrest of the officers and soldiers who acted as the escort and a rigid investigation is promised, the Mexican Government expressing regret.

President Taft declared that he saw in the tragedy only the killing of one Mexican citizen by another and that it did not constitute cause for intervention.

If he should deem invasion of Mexico necessary he would appeal to Congress for authority to order such action.

A message received from Ambassador Wilson states that all the foreign diplomats in Mexico City have declined to attend a dinner to be given by Foreign Minister De la Barra until the shooting of Madero and Suarez is explained.

The widows of Madero and Suarez made an attempt to see the bodies of their husbands, but their request was refused.

The streets of Mexico City are being patrolled by soldiers and the people are so awed that they dare not express abhorrence of the killings.

31 BUILDINGS BURNED.

Rehoboth, Delaware's Largest Summer Resort, Swept By Fire.

Seaford, Del.—Fanned by the heavy ocean winds, a fire which started from an explosion of gasoline in a garage destroyed 26 cottages and 3 stores, a church and a garage at Rehoboth, Delaware's largest summer resort, causing a loss of between \$150,000 and \$200,000. This is the fourth fire for Rehoboth within the past six months and the seventh within a year, and they are all thought to have been the work of an incendiary or incendiaries.

This last conflagration was the most disastrous, and though building operations will be begun just as soon as the debris can be cleared away, it is feared the resort will be crippled for the coming summer's business.

TO AMERICAN REDMEN.

Taft Turns First Spadeful Of Earth For National Memorial.

New York.—President Taft turned the first spadeful of earth Saturday in preparation for the national memorial to the North American Indians to be erected here on an eminence overlooking the harbor. With a pillared museum at its base beneath the towering pedestal, a bronze figure of an Indian is to stand with hand uplifted and two fingers pointing out to sea, the universal peace sign of the red man. This statue, which is to rise 165 feet above the crest of the hill, will stand where it may be seen by all the ships from the Battery to Sandy Hook as a lasting memorial to a vanishing race.

GOV. COLQUITT SPEAKS OUT.

Says If Washington Won't Protect Border, Texas Will.

Marlin, Texas.—"I think the President is all right, but he does not seem to understand that if the Federal Government does not protect the border with troops the State of Texas will," was the declaration of Governor Colquitt, of Texas, discussing the situation along the Rio Grande.

TURKISH SHELL HITS PLANE.

Bulgarian Machine Falls and Airmen Are Made Prisoners.

Constantinople.—A Bulgarian military aeroplane while reconnoitering over the fortress of Adrianople was hit by a Turkish shell and fell inside the lines. It was piloted by a Russian officer, Lieutenant Nikolai, who was made a prisoner by the Turks.

\$25,000,000 DEFICIENCY BILL.

Probably Will Be Largest Ever Passed By Congress.

Washington.—Work has begun by the House Appropriations Committee on the General Deficiency bill, the last appropriation measure of this session, and which probably will be the largest ever passed. It will total about \$25,000,000, of which \$15,000,000 is made necessary by the Sherwood Pension law.

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A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. Office at Palace Livery Stable, Bellefonte, Pa. Both phones. oct. 10, 1919.