

KEZIAH COFFIN

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

Illustrations by
Ellsworth Young

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SYNOPSIS.

Mrs. Keziah Coffin, supposed widow, is arranged to move from Trumet to Boston, following the death of her brother, for whom she had kept house. Kyran 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. Ellery causes a sensation by attending a "Come-outer" meeting. Ellery's presence is bitterly resented by Eben Hammond, leader of the meeting. Grace apologizes for her guardian and Ellery escorts her home in the rain. Capt. Nat Hammond, Eben's son, becomes a hero by bringing the packet into port safely through fog and storm. Ellery finds Keziah writing a letter to some one, including money in response to a demand. She is curiously startled when informed of the arrival of Nat. Nat calls on Keziah, and it develops that they have been lovers since youth. Daniels remonstrates with Ellery for attending "Come-outer" meetings. Ellery is caught by the tide and is rescued by Nat. They become friends. Ellery meets Grace while walking in the fields and learns that she walks there every Sunday. The clergyman takes dinner Sundays with the Daniels. Annabel, the captain's daughter, exerts herself to make an impression on him. She notices with vexation his desire to be away every Sunday at a certain time. She watches him through a spy glass. Nat again importunes Keziah to marry him. He says he has had a quarrel with his father, who wants him to marry Grace. Ellery asks Keziah to marry him. She confesses that she loves him, but says she fears to dispense her guardian. Elkanah Daniels tells Eben about the meetings between Ellery and Grace. Eben declares he will make Grace choose between him and the preacher. Grace tells him in a faint, following the excitement of Elkanah's visit. Just before he dies Eben exacts a promise from Nat and Grace that they will marry. Keziah breaks the news to Ellery and later he receives a note from Grace saying she is to marry Nat, and asking him to try to see her again. Keziah tells the story of her own marriage with a man who turned out to be a good-for-nothing, and who was reported to have been lost at sea, and of her love for Nat, whom she cannot marry because the husband is alive. Captain Nat sails for Manila to be gone two years. He says he and Grace have decided not to marry until he returns. Nat is overdue, and it is feared that he has been lost at sea. Keziah gets a letter from her husband saying he is coming back. Grace goes on a visit to relatives of the Hammonds. A vessel flying distress signals is discovered off the coast. Ellery goes with party to board the vessel. A man is found suffering from smallpox, the rest of the crew having despaired.

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

The sick man was raving in delirium when he reached him, but the sound of the water lapping the sides of the sauceman brought him to himself. He seized Ellery by the arm and drank and drank. When at last he desisted, the pan was half empty.

The minister laid him gently back in the bunk and stepped to the foot of the ladder for breath. This made him think of the necessity for air in the place and he remembered the little window. It was tightly closed and rusted fast. He went up to the deck, found a marlin spike, and, returning, broke the glass. A sharp, cold draught swept through the forecastle, stirring the garments hanging on the nails.

An hour later, two dories bumped against the side of the San Jose. Men, talking in low tones, climbed over the rail. Burgess was one of them; ashamed of his panic, he had returned to assist the others in bringing the brigantine into a safer anchorage by the inlet.

Dr. Parker, very grave but business-like, reached the deck among the first. "Mr. Ellery," he shouted, "where are you?"

The minister's head and shoulders appeared at the forecastle companion. "Here I am, doctor," he said. "Will you come down?"

The doctor made no answer in words, but he hurried briskly across the deck. One man, Ebenezer Capen, an old fisherman and ex-whaler from East Trumet, started to follow him, but he was the only one. The others waited, with scared faces, by the rail.

"Get her under way and inshore as soon as you can," ordered Dr. Parker. "Ebenezer, you can help. If I need you below, I'll call."

The minister backed down the ladder and the doctor followed him. Parker bent over the bunk for a few moments in silence.

"He's pretty bad," he muttered. "Mighty little chance. Heavens, what a den! Who broke that window?"

"I did," replied Ellery. "The air down here was dreadful."

The doctor nodded approvingly. "I guess so," he said. "It's bad enough now. We've got to get this poor fellow out of here as soon as we can or he'll die before tomorrow. Mr. Ellery," he added sharply, "what made you do this? Don't you realize the risk you've run?"

"Some one had to do it. You are running the same risk."

"Not just the same, and, besides, it's my business. Why didn't you let some one else, some one we could spare— Humph! Confound it, man! didn't you know any better? Weren't you afraid?"

His tone rasped Ellery's shaken nerves.

"Of course I was," he snapped irritably. "I'm not an idiot."

"Humph! Well, all right; I beg your pardon. But you oughtn't to have done it. Now you'll have to be quarantined. And who in thunder I can get to stay

with me in this case is more than I know. Just say smallpox to this town and it goes to pieces like a smashed egg. Old Eb Capen will help, for he's had it, but it needs more than one."

"Where are you going to take— him?" pointing to the moaning occupant of the bunk.

"To one of the empty fish shanties on the beach. There are beds there, such as they are, and the place is secluded. We can burn it down when the fuss is over."

"Then why can't I stay? I shall have to be quarantined, I know that. Let me be the other nurse. Why should anyone else run the risk? I have run it. I'll stay."

Dr. Parker looked at him. "Well!" he exclaimed. "Well! I must say, young man, that you've got— Humph! All right, Mr. Ellery; I'm much obliged."

CHAPTER XVI.

In Which Ebenezer Capen Is Surprised.

Before sunset that afternoon the San Jose was anchored behind the point by the inlet. The fishing boats changed moorings and moved farther up, for not a single one of their owners would trust himself within a hundred yards of the stricken brigantine.

The largest of the beach shanties, one which stood by itself a quarter of a mile from the light, was hurriedly prepared for use as a pesthouse and the sick sailor was carried there on an improvised stretcher. Dr. Parker and Ellery lifted him from his berth and, assisted by old Ebenezer Capen, got him up to the deck and lowered him into the dory. Ebenezer rowed the trio to the beach and the rest of the journey was comparatively easy.

The shanty had three rooms, one of which was given up to the patient, one used as a living room, and, in the third, Capen and the minister were to sleep. Mattresses were procured, kind-hearted townspeople donated cast-off tables and chairs, and the building was made as comfortable as it could be, under the circumstances. Sign boards, warning strangers to keep away, were erected, and in addition to them, the Trumet selectmen ordered ropes stretched across the lane on both sides of the shanty. But ropes and signs were superfluous. Trumet in general was in a blue funk and had no desire to approach within a mile of the locality. Even the driver of the grocery cart, when he left the day's supply of groceries, pushed the packages under the ropes, yelled a hurried "Here you be!" and, whipping his horse, departed at a rattling gallop.

The village sat up nights to discuss the affair and every day brought a new sensation. The survivors of the San Jose's crew, a wretched, panic-stricken quartette of mulattos and Portuguese, were apprehended on the outskirts of Denboro, the town below Trumet on the bay side, and were promptly sequestered and fumigated, pending shipment to the hospital at Boston. Their story was short but gruesome. The brigantine was not a Turks Islands boat, but a coaster from Jamaica. She had sailed with a small cargo for Savannah. Two days out and the smallpox made its appearance on board. The sufferer, a negro foremast hand, died. Then another sailor was seized and also died. The skip-



Dr. Parker Looked at Him.

per, who was the owner, was the next victim, and the vessel was in a state of demoralization which the mate, an Englishman named Bradford, could not overcome. Then followed days and nights of calm and terrible heat, of pestilence and all but mutiny. The mate himself died. There was no one left who understood navigation. At last came a southeast gale and the San Jose drove before it. Fair weather found her abreast the Cape. The survivors ran her in after dark, anchored, and reached shore in the longboat. The sick man whom they had left in the forecastle was a new hand who had shipped at Kingston. His name was Murphy, they believed. They had left him because he was

sure to die, like the others, and, besides, they knew some one would see the distress signals and investigate. That was all, yes. Santa Maria was it not enough?

Captain Zeb Mayo went about cheering for his parson. Mrs. Mayo cooked delicacies to be pushed under the ropes for the minister's consumption. The parish committee, at a special session, voted an increase of salary and ordered a weekly service of prayer for the safe delivery of their young leader from danger.

Keziah Coffin was, perhaps, the one person most disturbed by her parson's heroism. She would have gone to the shanty immediately had not Dr. Parker prevented. Even as it was, she did go as far as the ropes, but there she was warded off by Ebenezer until Ellery came running out and bade her come no nearer. Keziah, after more expostulation, went back to the parsonage. She wrote to Grace and told her the news of the San Jose, but she said nothing of the minister's part in it. "Poor thing!" sighed Keziah, "she's bearin' enough already."

The sick sailor grew no better. Days and nights passed and he raved and moaned or lay in a stupor. Ebenezer acted as day nurse while Ellery slept, and, at night, the minister, being younger, went on watch. The doctor came frequently, but said there was no hope. A question of time only, and a short time, he said.

Capen occupied his mind with speculations concerning the patient.

"Do you know, parson," he said, "seem's if I'd seen the feller somewhere afore. Course I never have, but when I used to go whalin' 'yages I cruised from one end of creation to 'other, pretty nigh, and I might have met him."

That night the sick man was much worse. His ravings were incessant. The wooden clock, loaned by Mrs. Parker, the doctor's wife, ticked steadily, although a half hour slow. Ellery, glancing at it to see if the time had come for giving medicine, suddenly noticed how loud its ticking sounded. Wondering at this, he was aware there was no other sound in the house. He rose and looked in at the door of the adjoining room. The patient had ceased to rave and was lying quiet on the bed.

The minister tiptoed over to look at him. And, as he did so, the man opened his eyes.

"Halloo!" he said faintly. "Who are you?"

Ellery, startled, made no answer.

"Who are you?" demanded the man again. Then, with an oath, he repeated the question, adding: "What place is this? This ain't the fo'castle. Where am I?"

"You're ashore. On Cape Cod. At Trumet."

"Trumet! Trumet!"

He was struggling to raise himself on his elbow. Ellery was obliged to use force to hold him down. He struggled again. Then his strength and his reason left him simultaneously and the delirium returned. He began to shout a name, a name that caused Ellery to stand upright and step back from the bed, scarcely believing his ears.

All the rest of that night the man on the bed raved and muttered, but of people and places and happenings which he had not mentioned before. And the minister, listening intently to every word caught himself wondering if he also was not losing his mind.

When the morning came, Ebenezer Capen was awakened by a shake to find John Ellery standing over him.

"Capen," whispered the minister, "Capen, get up. I must talk with you. You used to be a whaler, I know. Were you acquainted in New Bedford?"

"Sartin. Was a time when I could have located every stick in it, pretty nigh, by the smell, if you'll set me down side of 'em blindfolded."

"Did you ever know anyone named—? He finished the sentence.

"Well! I wanted to. Pretty decent feller one time, but a fast goer, and went downhill like a young one's sled, when he got started. His folks had money, that was the trouble with him. Why, 'course I knew him. He married—"

"I know. Now, listen."

Ellery went on talking rapidly and with great earnestness. Ebenezer listened, at first silently, then breaking in with ejaculations and grunts of astonishment. He sat up on the edge of the bed.

"Rubbish!" he cried at last. "Why, 'tain't possible! The feller's dead as Methusalem's grandmarm. I remember how it happened and—"

"It wasn't true. That much I know, I know, I tell you."

He went on to explain why he knew. Capen's astonishment grew.

"Judas priest!" he exclaimed again. "That would explain why I thought I'd seen— There! heave ahead. I've got to see. But it's a mistake. I don't believe it."

The pair entered the sick room. The sailor lay in a stupor. His breathing was rapid, but faint. Capen bent over him and gently moved the bandage on his face. For a full minute he gazed steadily. Then he stood erect, drew a big red hand across his forehead, and moved slowly back to the living room.

"Yup," he said, "it's him. Mr. Ellery, what are you goin' to do about it?"

"I don't know. I don't know. I must go somewhere by myself and think. I don't know what to do."

The minister declined to wait for breakfast. He said he was not hungry. Leaving Ebenezer to put on the coffee-pot and take up his duties as day nurse, Ellery walked off along the beach. By and by he heard Capen calling his name.

"Mr. Ellery," shouted Ebenezer. "Mr. Ellery, where be you?"

"Here!" replied the minister.

The old man came scrambling over the sand. He was panting and much excited.

"Mr. Ellery!" he cried. "Mr. Ellery! It's settled for us—one part of it, anyhow. He's slipped his cable. Yup. He must have died just a little while after you left and after I gave him his medicine. I thought he looked kind of queer then. And when the doctor came we went in together and he was dead. Yes, sir, dead."

"Dead!"

"Um-hm. No doubt of it; it's for good this time. Mr. Ellery, what shall we do? Shall I tell Dr. Parker?"

Ellery considered for a moment. "No," he said slowly. "No, Capen, don't tell anyone. I can't see why they need ever know that he hasn't been dead for years, as they supposed. Promise me to keep it a secret. I'll tell—her—myself, later on. Now promise me; I trust you."

"Land sakes, yes! I'll promise, if you want me to."

The next day the body of "Murphy," foremast hand on the San Jose, was buried in the corner of the Regular graveyard, near those who were drowned in the wreck of that winter. Capen remained at the shanty another week. Then, as the minister showed no symptoms of having contracted the disease and insisted that he needed no companion, Ebenezer departed to take up his fishing once more.

Ellery himself was most urgent in the decision that he should not go back to the parsonage and his church just yet. Better to wait until he was sure, he said, and Dr. Parker agreed.

Dr. Parker told him of Grace Van Horne's return to the village. She had come back, so the doctor said, the day before, and was to live at the tavern for a while, at least. Yes, he guessed even she had given up hope of Captain Nat now.

"And say," went on Parker, "what



The Old Man Came Scrambling Over the Sand.

I want to know is whether you think I could leave you for a couple of days? The Ostab County Medical Society meets at Hyannis tomorrow and I had promised myself to take it in this year. But I don't want to leave you, if you need me."

Ellery insisted that he did not need anyone, was getting along finely, and would not bear to his friend's missing the medical society's meeting. So the physician went. John Ellery did not feel cheerful that afternoon. The tired feeling he had spoken of so lightly was worse than he had described it, and he was despondent for no particular reason. That night he slept miserably and awoke with a chill to find a cold, pouring rain beating against the windows of the shanty.

He lay down on his bed and tried to sleep, but though he dozed a bit, woke always with a start and either a chill or fever fit. His head began to ache violently. And then, in the loneliness and misery, fear began to take hold of him.

Night came. The rain had ceased and stars were shining clear. Inside the shanty the minister tossed on the bed, or staggered back and forth about the two rooms. He wondered what the time might be; then he did not care. He was alone. The smallpox had him in its grip. Why didn't some one come? Where was Mrs. Coffin? And Grace? She was somewhere near him—Parker had said so—and he must see her before he died. He called her name over and over again.

The wind felt cold on his forehead. He stumbled amidst the beach grass. What was this thing across his path?

A rope, apparently, but why should there had never been any before. He climbed over it and it was a climb of hundreds of feet and the height made him giddy. That was a house, another house, not the one he had been living in. And there were lights all about. Perhaps one of them was the light at the parsonage. And a big bell was booming. That was his church bell and he would be late for the meeting.

Some one was speaking to him. He knew the voice. He had known it always and would know it forever. It was the voice he wanted to hear. "Grace!" he called. "Grace! I want you. Don't go! Don't go! Grace! oh, my dear! don't go!"

Then the voice had gone. No, it had not gone. It was still there and he heard it speaking to him, begging him to listen, pleading with him to go somewhere, go back, back to something or other. And there was an arm about his waist and some one was leading him, helping him. He broke down and cried childishly and some one cried with him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Real Trouble Makers.

"Does your auto give you any trouble?"

"Not so much as the police."

STATE RATES ARE GIVEN BIG JOLT

Cannot Interfere With Interstate Commerce.

VICTORY FOR THE SHIPPERS.

Commerce Court Upholds Orders Of Interstate Commerce Commission and Powers Of Congress.

Washington.—The Commerce Court upheld the Interstate Commerce Commission's orders in the Shreveport, Texas, rate cases, and in many respects sustained principles which the railroads are asking the Supreme Court to adopt in the 45 state rate cases now awaiting decision. The Supreme Court entirely upheld the powers of Congress and the Interstate Commerce Commission to remove discriminations caused by a state railroad commission enforcing intrastate rates lower than interstate rates which have been held to be reasonable.

Because of the similarity of the Shreveport case to the state rate cases, Attorney General McReynolds filed a brief in intervention in the state rate cases with the Supreme Court as a "friend of the court." Attorneys for the state of Minnesota filed their reply, but expressed the opinion that the Shreveport decision would not affect their case, because the state of Minnesota, as distinguished from Texas, is seeking to sustain the right of a state to establish a system of intrastate rates, presumably reasonable in themselves and having no reference to interstate commerce.

The decision is a broad affirmation of the power of Congress and of the authority of the commission to remove discrimination induced by rates made by a state railroad commission, which are lower than interstate rates held to be reasonable.

In view of low Texas state rates, Shreveport, La., immediately over the Texas line, found it impossible to compete with Dallas, Texas, for example, because the interstate rates from Shreveport were much higher than those from Dallas to the same destinations in Texas.

The commission found that the discrimination against Shreveport by the Texas state-made rates was obvious and conceded that the interstate rates were reasonable. Evidence was brought to show that the lower Texas rates were imposed for the declared purpose and in pursuance of a settled policy of the Texas Railroad Commission to give Texas jobbers preferential advantage over their competitors in Louisiana and other states.

The commission, therefore, orders the railroads to remove the discrimination. To do so, it would have been necessary for the railroads to advance their Texas state rates in opposition to the state commissions' orders. The railroads applied to the Commerce Court to set aside the Interstate Commerce Commission's order.

It was urged that the Federal Commission had no control of state-made rates. This contention the Commerce Court rejected by holding that the action of the Texas State Commission resulted in a violation of the "undue preference" section of the federal law. The court distinctly upheld the paramount authority of the Interstate Commerce Commission. It says, in effect, that the carriers were not under compulsion to obey the order of the Texas commission, because that, by the Interstate Commerce Commission order, had been superseded by direction of a "superior authority" and that, therefore, they had "ceased to be bound by any inconsistent laws or administrative policy."

The effect of the court's holding is that no state may, by its state rates, impede the flow of commerce from other states or protect its own shippers against outside competition.

SATISFACTION IN TOKIO.

Japanese Newspapers More Tranquil Over Anti-Alien Land Bill.

Tokio.—Satisfaction is generally expressed here over the decision of President Wilson to send Secretary of State Bryan to Sacramento, Cal., to consult with the legislators there on the question of the proposed alien land ownership legislation. The majority of the Japanese newspapers adopt a more tranquil tone.

WOMAN TO GET \$3,000 POSITION.

Mrs. Rogers Slated For Receiver Of Leadville Land Office.

Washington.—Mrs. Annie C. Rogers, wife of a business man in Leadville, Col., was designated by Secretary Lane, of the Interior Department, for appointment as receiver of the Land Office at Leadville at a salary of \$3,000 a year. Mrs. Rogers is a widely known suffragist.

LAST OF TRIPLETS DIES.

Mrs. Hope Allcorn Had Faith and Charity As Sisters.

Greenwich, Conn.—The death here of Mrs. Hope Trower Allcorn, the last of triplets born in England 80 years ago, and named Faith, Hope and Charity, is announced. Charity lived to be only 50 years old. Faith died at the age of 74.

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