

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, Pepper, who she had kept house for. Her husband, Eben, offers marriage, and is indignantly refused. Capt. Elikanah 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 angry at seeing his pocket into port safely through fog and storm. Ellery finds Keziah writing a letter to some one, enclosing 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, 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 get away every Sunday at a certain time. Eben 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 Grace to marry him. She confesses that she loves him, but says she fears to displease her guardian. Elikanah Daniels tells Eben about the meetings between Ellery and Grace. Eben declares he will make Grace choose between him and the preacher. Grace finds him in a faint, following the excitement of Elikanah's visit. Just before he dies Eben exacts a promise from Nat and Grace that they will marry. Nat and Grace break the news to Ellery and later he received a note from Grace saying she is to marry Nat, and asking him not 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 curiously, 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 on board to board the vessel. A man is found suffering from smallpox, the rest of the crew having decided to desert. Eben abandoned shack on shore and Ellery helps nurse him. Before he dies it is discovered that he is Keziah's husband. Ellery, left alone in quarantine, is found wandering in a delirious condition by Grace. She takes him back to the shanty and sends for help.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

Early the next morning, just as day was breaking, a buggy, the horse which drew it galloping, rocked and bumped down the lighthouse lane. Dr. Parker, his brows together and his lips set with anxiety, was driving. He had been roused from sleep in the hotel at Hyannis by a boy with a telegram. "Come quick," it read. "Mr. Ellery sick." The sender was Noah Ellis, the light keeper. At the ropes, early as it was, he found a small group waiting and gazing at the shanty. The lightkeeper was there and two or three other men. They were talking earnestly.

"How is he, Noah?" demanded the doctor, jumping to the ground.

"I don't know, doc," replied Ellis. "I ain't heard sense last night when I telegraphed you."

"The devil!" Dr. Parker swore impatiently. "Who is with him then? You haven't left him alone, have you?"

"No-o," Noah hesitated once more. "No-o, he ain't alone. She's there."

"She? Who? Keziah Coffin?"

"I don't call 'tate Keziah's heard it yet. We was waitin' for you 'fore we said much to anybody. But she's there—the one that found him. You see, he was out of his head and wanderin' up the lane 'most to the main road and she'd been callin' on Keziah and when she come away from the parsonage she heard him hollerin' and goin' on and—"

"Who did?"

"Why—the lightkeeper glanced at his companions—"why, doc, 'twas Grace Van Horne. And she fetched him back to the shanty and then come and got me to telegraph you."

But Parker did not wait to hear the rest. He ran at full speed to the door of the shanty. Grace herself opened it.

"How is he? demanded the doctor.

"I think he seems a little easier; at any rate, he's not delirious. He's in there. Oh, I'm so thankful you've come."

"Is that the doctor?" called Ellery weakly from the next room. "Is it?"

"Yes," replied Parker, throwing off his coat and hat. "Coming, Mr. Ellery."

"For God's sake, doctor, send her away. Don't let her stay. Make her go! I've got the smallpox and if she stays she will die. Don't you understand? she must go."

"Hush, John," said Grace soothingly. "Hush, dear."

Dr. Parker stopped short and looked at her. However, he waited no longer, but hurried in to his new patient.

CHAPTER XVII.

In Which Keziah Decides to Fight.

The news was flying from house to house along the main road. Breakfasts were interrupted as some neighbor rushed in to tell the story which another neighbor had brought to him or her. Mr. Ellery was very sick and

it was feared he had the smallpox. Grace Van Horne was with him, had taken him back to the shanty, and insisted upon staying there until the doctor came.

At the Daniels's house the servant girl rushed into the dining room to serve the toast and the story at one swoop. Captain Elikanah's dignity deserted him for an instant and his egg spoon jingled to the floor. Annabel's face turned a dull red. Her eyes flashed sparks.

"Pa!" she cried, "I—I if you don't do something now I'll never—"

Her father shook his head warningly. "Debby," he said to the maid, "you needn't wait."

Debby departed reluctantly. After the kitchen door had closed, Captain Elikanah said: "My dear, we mustn't be too hasty in this matter. Remember, Mr. Ellery is very sick. As for the Van Horne girl, we haven't heard the whole truth yet. She may not be there at all, or it may be just an accident—"

"Accident! Pa, you make me boil. Accident! Accidents like that don't happen. If you let her stay there, or if—Oh, to think of it! And we were calling him a hero and—and everything! Her! He stayed there just so she might—"

"Hush! hush, child!"

"I shan't hush, Pa, are you going to let him disgrace himself with her?"

"No, no. Probably there ain't any idea of his marrying her. If there is—"

"If there is you put him out of the church and out of town. And as for her—O-oh! And we've been having him here at dinner and—and I have—Oh, I shall die! I wish I was dead!"

Then followed hysterics and agony, greedily listened to by Debby, whose ear was at the crack of the door. Captain Elikanah soothed and pleaded and tried to pacify. It ended by his promising to investigate and, if necessary, take steps immediately.

Lavinia Pepper sprang the mine on her brother. Kyan was horrified. He had grown to be one of Ellery's most devoted worshippers.

One of the very first to hear of the minister's illness was Keziah Coffin. Mrs. Parker told her and Keziah started for the beach before the tale of Grace's part in the night's happenings reached the village. She did not wait for a conveyance, hardly waited to throw a shawl over her shoulders, but began to cross the three miles on foot. She had walked nearly two-thirds of the distance when Captain Zeb Mayo overtook her and gave her a seat in his chaise.

They said little during the drive, the shock and anxiety forbidding conversation. At the ropes was the same group, larger now, and Dr. Parker's horse was hitched to one of the posts.

"You can't go in, Mrs. Coffin," said Thoph Black. "The doctor give us his orders not to let nobody get by. I guess nobody wants to, but all the same—"

Keziah paid not the slightest attention to Mr. Black. She stooped beneath his arm, under the rope and was on her way to the shanty before they realized her intention. The living room

was empty, but at the sound of her step some one came from the room adjoining. That some one was Grace.

Dr. Parker appeared, holding up a hand for silence.

"Hush!" he cried. "He's quiet now and I think he will sleep. Don't talk here. Go outside, if you must talk—and I suppose you must."

Grace led the way. Fortunately, the door on the side not visible from the spot where Captain Zeb and the rest were standing. Keziah, bewildered and amazed at the girl's presence, followed dumbly.

"Now, auntie," whispered Grace, turning to her. "You want to know how he is, of course. Well, I think he is better. The doctor thinks so, too. But why did you come here?"

"Why did I come? Why, because my place was here. I belonged here. For the love of mercy's sakes what are you doin' here? With him? And the smallpox!"

"Hush, I can't help it. I don't care. I don't care for anything any more. I'm glad I came. I'm glad I was the one to find him and help him. No matter what happens—to me—I'm glad. I never was so glad before. I love him, Aunt Keziah. I can say it to you, for you know it—you must know it. I love him and he needed me and I came. He was calling my name when I found him. He might have died there, alone in the wet and cold, and I saved him. Think what that means to me."

The door opened softly and Dr. Parker came out.

"He's asleep," he said. "And he's better, much better. And I'll tell you something else, if you won't make too much noise about it—he hasn't got the smallpox. He is pretty close to brain fever, though, but I guess he'll dodge that this time, with care. On the whole, Keziah, I'm glad you came. This young lady," with a movement of the head toward Grace, "has done her part. She really saved his life, if I'm not mistaken. Now, I think she can go away and leave him to you and me. I'll pretty nearly guarantee to have him up and out of this—this pesthole in a fortnight."

Here was joyful tidings, the better for being so unexpected. Keziah leaned against the boards and drew a long breath. Grace said nothing, but, after a moment, she went into the house.

"That's a good thing, too," commented Parker, watching her as she went. "I wanted to talk with you, Keziah Coffin, and right away. Now, then, there's something up, something that I don't know about, and I rather guess you do. Young women—even when they're her kind and that's as good a kind as there is—don't risk smallpox for any young man they pick up casually."

Keziah considered. "All right, doctor," she said, when she reached a decision, "all right; I'll tell you the whole thing."

She went on to tell all she knew of her parson's love story.

Dr. Parker listened.

"Hum!" he said thoughtfully. "I see. What made her change her mind so suddenly? You say, or you gather from what Mr. Ellery told you, that she had all but agreed to marry him. She cares for him, that's sure. Then, all at once, she throws him over and accepts Nat. Of course her uncle's sudden seizure was a shock and he wanted Nat to have her, but she isn't the kind of girl to be easily swayed. But never mind that, that doesn't count now. Let's look at things as they are this minute. She's here and folks know it. As they do know it they'll begin to talk, and the more they talk the farther from the truth they'll get—most of 'em. Nat, poor chap, is dead, so her promise to him is canceled. Ellery will get well if he isn't troubled. If she leaves him he'll go to pieces again, so she mustn't leave. And she can't stay without an explanation. I say let's give the explanation; let's come right out with the announcement that they're engaged."

"But she's a Come-outer and—there's the church."

"Well, I know it. But he never was so popular as he is now. And she isn't by any means a steady-going Come-outer. Why, Zeke Bassett and the rest have been finding fault with her and calling her a backslider. That'll help. Then you trust me to whoop up her heroism and the fact that without her he would have died. We can do it, Keziah. Come on! I've tackled a good many jobs, but match-making isn't one of 'em. Here goes to tackle that."

Keziah was delighted; here was what after her own heart. But she still hesitated.

"Doctor," she said, "you've forgot one thing, that's Grace herself. Would she marry him now, knowing it may mean the loss of his ministry and all, any more than she would at first? I don't believe it."

"That's your part, Keziah. You've got to show her she must marry him or he'll die; see?"

Keziah's hesitation was at an end. Her face lit up.

"I say good!" she cried. "And now I want to give you a piece of advice, your course for the first leg, as you might say: you see Cap'n Zeb's Mayo."

"Humph! Cap'n Zeb is the first man I mean to see."

Captain Zeb listened with his mouth and eyes open. Mrs. Mayo was with him when the doctor called, and she, too, listened.

"Well!" exclaimed the captain, when the plea for support was ended. "Well, by the flukes of Jonah's whale! Talk about surprises. Old lady, what do you say?"

"I say go ahead, Zeb. Go ahead! If Mr. Ellery wanted to marry Zebedee's sister, and I knew he really wanted to, I'd—do believe I'd help him get her. And Grace Van Horne is a good girl. Go ahead."

"Say, doc, there'll be a lively row, and I kind o' like it," said Captain Zeb.

There was, and it was lively enough to suit even Captain Zeb. Dr. Parker, on his calls that day, was assailed with a multitude of questions concerning Grace's presence at the shanty. He answered them cheerfully, dilating upon the girl's bravery, her good sense, and the fact that she had saved Mr. Ellery's life. Then he confided, as a strict secret, the fact that the two were engaged. Before his hearers had recovered from the shock of this explosion, he was justifying the engagement. Why shouldn't they marry if they wanted to? It was a free country. The girl wasn't a Come-outer any longer, and, besides—and this carried weight in a good many households—what a black eye the marriage would be for that no-account crowd at the chapel.

Captain Zebedee, having shipped with the insurgents, worked for them from sunrise to sunset and after. Zeb was something of a politician and knew whom to "get at." He sought his fellows on the parish committee and labored with them. Mrs. Mayo and the doctor's wife championed the cause at sewing circles. They were lively, those sewing meetings, and the fur flew. Didama Rogers and Lavinia Pepper were everywhere and ready to agree with whichever side seemed likely to win.

It was by no means a one-sided struggle. Captain Elikanah, spurred on by the furious Annabel, marshaled his forces and proclaimed that Ellery, having disgraced the Regular Society, should no longer occupy its pulpit. He hinted concerning a good-sized contribution toward a parish house, something the society needed. If Ellery was discharged, the contribution would probably be made, not otherwise. And this was a point worth considering.

Daniels also wrote to his influential friends of the National Regular Society. But Captain Zebedee had forestalled him there and both letters were laid on the table to await further developments. As for the Come-outers, they were wild with rage and Grace was formally read out of their communion.

Meantime Keziah, installed as head nurse at the shanty, was having her troubles. The minister was getting better, slowly but surely getting better. The danger of brain fever was at an end, but he was very weak and must not be excited, so the doctor said.

He had expressed a wish to talk with his housekeeper. "I've got something to tell you, Aunt Keziah," he said weakly. "Some news for you and—"

"Cat's foot!" snapped Keziah briskly. "don't start in tellin' me news now. I've got my hands full as 'tis. News'll keep and you won't, if you talk another minute."

She could manage him; it was with Grace that she had her struggle. First, and bluntly, she told the girl that her leaving was useless. The secret was out; it had been made public. Everyone knew she was in love with John and he with her. Their engagement was considered an established certainty. Grace was greatly agitated and very indignant.

"Who dared say so?" she demanded. "Who dared say we were engaged? It's not true. It's a wicked lie—and—Who is responsible, Aunt Keziah?"

"Well, I suppose likely I am, much as anybody, dear."

"You? You, Aunt Keziah?"

"Yup; me. You are in love with him; at any rate, you said so. And you're here with him, ain't you? If you two ain't engaged you ought to be." She argued and pleaded and coaxed, and, at last, when she began to think she had prevailed, Grace brought forward another objection. She had given her word to her uncle. How could she break that promise to a dying man? She would feel like a traitor.

"Traitor to who?" demanded the housekeeper, losing patience. "Not to poor Nat, for he's gone. And don't you suppose that he and Eben understand things better now, where they are? Do you suppose that Nat wouldn't want you to be happy? I know he would, for I knew him."

It was still unsettled when the long talk was over, but Grace agreed not to leave the minister at present. She would stay where she was until he was himself again, at least. Keziah was satisfied with the preliminary skirmish. She felt confident of winning the victory, and in the prospect of happiness for others, she was almost happy herself. Yet each time the mail was brought to the shanty she dreaded to look at it, and the sight of a stranger made her shake with fear. Ansel Coffin had threatened to come to Trumet. If he came, she had made up her mind what to do.

The parish committee was to meet. Captain Elikanah had announced his intention of moving that John Ellery be expelled from the Regular church. There was to be no compromise, no asking for a resignation; he must be discharged, thrown out in disgrace. The county papers were full of the squabble, but they merely reported the news and did not take sides. The fight was too even for that.

One afternoon a few days before the date set for the meeting Elikanah and two or three of his henchmen were on the piazza of the Daniels home, discussing the situation. They were blue and downcast. Annabel was in the sitting room, shedding tears of humiliation and jealous rage on the hatcloth sofa.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

When Fish Go to Bed.

Did you know that fish go to bed in the winter? Prof. Dyche, state fish and game warden for Kansas, says: "Sure thing, fish have beds. I have seen them piled up four or five fish deep for a space at least 3 by 10 feet. Usually they find a place below a log or some kind of an obstruction in a stream where there is an eddy. They can maintain their positions there without much effort. I don't know whether they sleep or not, but fish will spend most of a winter in that way."

"When the water gets extremely cold the fish become sluggish. They can move around a little, but they lose all their alertness. They can even be caught by hand. All you need to do is to cut a hole in the ice for it. Some fish will come to the hole for air. It is an easy matter to slip your hand under the fish slowly and you may lift him clear of the water before he makes a wiggle."

Cypress water tanks defy decay for more than a quarter of a century.

COMMERCIAL

Weekly Review of Trade and Market Reports.

Bradstreet's says:

"Trade reports continue to present contrasts in that a line of demarcation has to be drawn between immediate and future orders. On the one hand, business for current or nearby deliveries is good to active, all depending on the section of the country considered, the stimulating influence being furnished by greatly improved weather conditions. Against this development must be cited the fact that there is a general disposition, except in the Northwest and parts of the Southwest, to wait until tariff matters become clearer before anticipating future requirements.

"Crop reports are encouraging. Winter wheat is in excellent shape and needed rains are reported in the States west of the Mississippi.

"In the South the general report is favorable as to crop progress or planting.

"Wheat, including flour, exports from the United States and Canada for the week aggregate 3,494,924 bushels, against 3,169,514 bushels this week last year.

"Business failures for the week were 275, which compares with 248 in the like week of 1912. Business failures in Canada numbered 21."

Wholesale Markets

NEW YORK.—Wheat—Spot irregular; No. 2 red, nominal; No. 1 Northern Duluth, 103c f o b afloat opening navigation.

Corn—Spot firm; export, 63½c f o b afloat.

Oats—Spot steady; No. 3, 40½@41c; No. 4, 39½@40c; natural white, 38½@41c; white clipped, 39@42c.

Potatoes—Steady; Bermuda, new, brl, 33@35.50.

Butter—Creamery extras, 33½c; firsts, 32c; seconds, 32½c; state dairy firsts, 23@23½c; process extras, 31½c; factory, current make, seconds, 27c.

Cheese—State, whole milk, fresh, white or colored, average fancy, 12½@13c; do under grades, 11½@12½c.

Live Poultry—Firm; Western fowls, 18c; chickens, broilers, Southern, 30@32c; turkeys, 15. Dressed firm; fresh killed Western fowls, 16½@19c; turkeys, 15@25c.

PHILADELPHIA.—Wheat—Car lots, in export elevator, as to location: No. 2 red, 1.03@1.04; steamer No. 2, 1.01@1.01; No. 3 red, 98@99c; No. 1 Northern Duluth, 1.01½@1.02½.

Corn—Car lots, for local trade, No. 2 yellow, natural, 63½@64c; steamer yellow, natural, 62½@63c; No. 3 yellow, natural, 62@62½c.

Oats—No. 2, 42@42½c; standard white, 41½@42c; No. 3 white, 40½@41c; No. 4, 37@39c; sample, 35@36c.

PHILADELPHIA.—Eggs steady; Pennsylvania and other nearby current receipts, free cases, 55.75 per case; Western firsts, free cases, 55.75.

Live Poultry—Firm; fowls, 18@19c.

BALTIMORE.—Wheat—No. 2 red, 110; No. 3 red, 107½; steamer No. 2 red, 102. The closing was easier; No. 2 red spot and April, 110; May, 110½.

Corn—Contract, 58½c; steamer mixed, 56½c; no established grade, 55½c.

Rye—No. 1, 71@72c; No. 2, 68@68½c; No. 3, 63@64c; No. 4, 61@62c. Bag lots, nearby, as to quality, 60@65c.

Hay—Timothy—No. 1, \$17.50; standard, \$16.50; No. 2, \$16; No. 3, \$12@14. Clover Mixed—Light, \$15.50@16; No. 1, \$15@15.50; No. 2, \$11@13.50; heavy, \$11.50@13.50. Clover—No. 1, \$11@12; No. 2, \$9@10.

Oats—White—No. 2, 42@42½c; standard, 41½c; No. 3, 39½@40c.

Straw—Straight Rye—No. 1, \$18; No. 2, \$17@17.50. Tangled Rye—No. 1, \$11@12; No. 2, \$10@11. Wheat—No. 1, \$8; No. 2, \$7.50@8. Oat—No. 1, \$9@10; No. 2, \$8@8.50.

Butter—Creamery, fancy, 36c; creamery, choice, 34@35; creamery, good, 32@33; creamery, prints, 34@36; creamery, blocks, 33@35; ladies, 25@27; Maryland and Pennsylvania rolls, 22@24.

Cheese—Per lb, 16½@18c.

Eggs—Maryland, Pennsylvania and nearby firsts, 18c; Western, firsts, 18; West Virginia, firsts, 18; Southern, firsts, 17. Re-crated and re-handled eggs, 16c to 1c higher.

Live Poultry—Chickens, old hens, 17; do, old roosters and stags, 10@11; do, winter, 2 lbs and under, 25@28; do, spring, 1½ lbs and over, 32@33; do, 1 lb and under, 28. Ducks—White Pekins, 15c; do, Muscovy, 13@14; do, puddle, 15. Pigeons, young, per pair, 30c; do, old, per pair, 30c.

Live Stock

KANSAS CITY, MO.—Cattle—Dressed beef and export steers, \$8.25@8.75; fair to good, \$7.25@8.15; Western steers, \$7@8.40; stockers and feeders, \$6@8; Southern steers, \$6.50@8.25; Southern cows, \$4.50@7.50; native cows, \$4.50@7.75; native heifers, \$6.35@8.50; bulls, \$6.25@7.40; calves, \$6.50@9.50.

Hogs—Bulk, \$8.50@8.70; heavy, \$8.45@8.55; packers and butchers, \$8.50@8.70; light, \$8.60@8.75; pigs, \$7.50@7.75.

Sheep—Colorado lambs, \$7.50@8.35; yearlings, \$6.25@7.90; wethers, \$6@7; ewes, \$5.50@6.75; stockers and feeders, \$4.50@6.

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