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. Kyan 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, inclosing 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" meeting. 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 get 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 Grace to marry him. She confesses that she loves him, but says she fears to displease 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 finds 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 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 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 deserted. He is taken to an 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. Keziah and Grace nurse Ellery, who is suffering from brain fever. The doctor and Keziah spread a report that Grace and Ellery are engaged.

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)

Some one was talking excitedly on the sidewalk beyond the lilac bushes at the border of the Daniels property. Voices answered. Didama Rogers darted out of her yard and past the house in the direction of the sounds. Salters rose and walked down to the gate. Emulous Sparrow, the fish peddler, was seated in his cart, which was surrounded by men and women, neighbors of the Danielses. There was a perfect storm and questionings and ejaculations. Salters opened the gate and joined the group. A moment later he came running back, up the walk toward the piazza.

"Cap'n," he shouted. "Cap'n Elkanah, here's news! What do you think? A telegram's just come from Nat Hammond. He's safe and sound in New York, and he'll be here day after tomorrow."

They could not believe it and rushed out to hear more. Emulous, glowing with importance, affirmed that it was so. He had seen the telegram at the store. It was for Grace Van Horne and they were just going to send a boy over to the shanty with it.

Captain Elkanah seized Salters by the arm and led him out of the group. The old man's face was alight with savage joy and his voice shook with exultation.

"I'll tell you one thing it means," he whispered. "It means the end of Ellery, so far as his marrying her is concerned. She gave her word to Hammond and she'll keep it. She's no liar, whatever else she is. He may be minister of the Regular church, though I'll never set under him, but he'll never marry her, now."

CHAPTER XVIII.

In Which a Reception Is Called Off.

Far out on the Pacific coast there are two small islands, perhaps a hundred miles distant from one another. The first of these is uninhabited. On the other is a little colony of English-speaking people, half-breed descendants of native women and the survivors of a crew from a British vessel cast away there in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

On the first of these islands, the smaller one, the Sea Mist had been wrecked. Driven out of her course by a typhoon, she staggered through day after day and night after night of terrific wind and storm until, at last, there was promise of fair weather. Captain Nat, nearly worn out from anxiety, care, and the loss of sleep, had gone to his stateroom and the first mate was in charge. It was three o'clock, the wind still blowing and the darkness pitchy, when the forward lookout shrieked a warning. "Breakers under the lee!" Almost the next instant the ship was on a coral reef, full of water, and the seas breaking over her from stem to stern.

Morning came and showed a little patch of land, with palm trees and tropical vegetation waving in the gusts and green in the sunshine. Captain Nat ordered the boats to be lowered. Much as he hated the thought, he saw that the Sea Mist had made her last voyage and must be abandoned. He went to the cabin, collected papers and charts and prepared to leave. The ship's money, over ten thousand dollars in gold belonging to the owner and to be used in trade and speculation among the East Indies, he took with him. Then the difficult and dangerous passage through the opening in the reef was begun.

Only the captain's boat reached the shore. The mate's was caught by a huge breaker, dashed against the reef and sunk. Captain Nat, his second mate and five of his men were all that was left of the Sea Mist's company. And on that island they remained for nearly two weeks. Provisions they had brought ashore with them. Water they found by digging. Nat hid the gold at night, burying it on the beach below high-water mark.

Then, having made sure of his location by consulting the chart, he determined to attempt a voyage to the second island, where he knew the English colony to be. Provisions were getting short, and to remain longer where they were was to risk starvation and all its horrors. So, in the longboat, which was provided with a sail, they started. Charts and papers and the gold the skipper took with them. None of the crew knew of the existence of the money; it was a secret which the captain kept to himself.

A hundred miles they sailed in the longboat and, at last, the second island was sighted. They landed and found, to their consternation and surprise, that it, too, was uninhabited. The former residents had grown tired of their isolation and, a trading vessel having touched there, had seized the opportunity to depart for Tahiti. Their houses were empty, their cattle, sheep, goats, and fowl roamed wild in the woods, and the fruit was rotting on the trees. In its way the little island was an Eveless Eden, flowing with milk and honey; but to Captain Nat, a conscientious skipper with responsibilities to his owners, it was a prison from which he determined to escape. Then, as if to make escape impossible, a sudden gale came up and the longboat was smashed by the surf.

"I guess that settles it," ruefully observed the second mate, another Cape Codder, from Hyannis. "Cal'late we'll stay here for a spell now, hey, Cap'n."

"For a spell, yes," replied Nat. "We'll stay here until we get another craft to set sail in, and no longer."

"Another craft? Another one? Where in time you goin' to get her?"

"Build her," said Captain Nat cheerfully. Then, pointing to the row of empty houses and the little deserted church, he added, "There's timber and nails—yes, and cloth, such as 'tis. If I can't build a boat out of them I'll agree to eat the whole settlement."

He did not have to eat it, for the boat was built. It took them six months to build her, and she was a curious-looking vessel when done, but, as the skipper said, "She may not be a clipper, but she'll sail anywhere, if you give her time enough." He had been the guiding spirit of the whole enterprise, planning it, laying the keel, burning buildings to obtain nails and iron, hewing trees for the largest beams, showing them how to spin

"He'll Never Marry Her, Now."

ropes from cocoanut fiber, improvising sails from the longboat's canvas pieced out with blankets and odd bits of cloth from the abandoned houses. Even a strip of carpet from the church floor went into the making of those sails.

At last she was done, but Nat was not satisfied.

"I never commanded a ship where I couldn't h'ist Yankee colors," he said, "and, by the everlastin'! I won't now. We've got to have a flag."

So, from an old pair of blue overall, a white cotton shirt, and the red hangings on the church pulpit, he made a flag and hoisted it to the truck of his queer command. They provisioned her, gave her a liberal supply of fresh water, and, one morning, she passed through the opening of the lagoon out to the deep blue of the Pacific. And, hidden in her captain's stateroom under the head of his bunk, was the ten thousand dollars gold. For Nat had sworn to himself, by "the everlasting" and other oaths, to deliver that money to his New York owners safe and, necessary expenses deducted of course, untouched.

For seven weeks the crazy nondescript slopped across the ocean. Fair winds helped her and, at last, she entered the harbor of Nukahiva, over twelve hundred miles away. And there—"Hammond's luck," the sailors called it—was a United States man-of-war lying at anchor, the first American vessel to touch at that little French settlement for five years. The boat they built was abandoned and the survivors of the Sea Mist were taken on board the man-of-war and carried to Tahiti.

From Tahiti Captain Nat took passage on a French bark for Honolulu. Here, after a month's wait, he found opportunity to leave for New York on an American ship, the Stars and Stripes. And finally, after being away from home for two years, he walked into the office of his New York owners, deposited their gold on a table, and cheerfully observed, "Well, here I am."

But Trumet did not hear the yarn immediately. All that it heard and all that it knew was contained in Captain Nat's brief telegram. "Arrived today. Will be home Thursday." That was all, but it was enough, for in that dispatch was explosive sufficient to blow to atoms the doctor's plans and Keziah's, the great scheme which was to bring happiness to John Ellery and Grace Van Horne.

Dr. Parker heard it, while on his way to Mrs. Prince's, and, neglecting that old lady for the once, he turned his horse and drove as fast as possible to the shanty on the beach. Fast as he drove, Captain Zebedee Mayo got there ahead of him. Captain Zeb was hitching his white and ancient steed to the post as the doctor hove in sight.

"By mighty!" the captain exclaimed, with a sigh of relief, "I'm glad enough you've come, doctor. I hated to go in there alone. You've heard, of course."

"Say, ain't it wonderful! I'm tickled all up one side and sorry all down t'other. Nat's a true-blue feller, and I'm glad enough that he ain't shark bait; but what about the minister and her? She's promised to Nat, you know. Are you goin' to tell Mr. Ellery?"

"Certainly not. And I hope he hasn't been told. He's getting well fast now, but he mustn't be worried, or back he'll go again. We must see Mrs. Coffin. Keziah is our main hold. That woman has got more sense than all the rest of us put together."

But it was Grace, not Keziah, who opened the shanty door in answer to their knock. She was pale and greeted them calmly, but it was evident that her calmness was the result of sheer will power.

"Won't you come in, doctor?" she asked. "Good afternoon, Captain Mayo."

Dr. Parker entered the building, but Captain Zeb remained outside, stammering that he cal'lated he'd better stay where he could keep an eye on his horse. This was such a transparent excuse that it would have been funny at any other time. No one smiled now, however.

"Is—is Mrs. Coffin—er—Keziah aboard?" the captain asked.

"No, she isn't. She went to the parsonage a few hours ago. Mr. Ellis brought the mail and there was a letter in it for her. She said it was important and that she must go home to see about some things. She'll be back pretty soon, I suppose."

Parker found his patient sleeping soundly and had not disturbed him. Returning to the living room he spoke to Grace.

"Humph!" he grunted, watching her from under his brows, "everything seems to be all right in there. He mustn't be told anything that will upset him. He's getting well fast and I want it to continue."

"Yes, I understand."

"Hum! Er—have you heard— Has anyone been here?"

"Yes, I have heard. The telegram came and I answered it."

"You did? Well, it's a miracle and we're all thankful, of course. Did you—er—er——"

"Doctor, I must go home. I mustn't stay here any longer. You know why not. I must be at home when he comes. You must get some one to take my place. Aunt Keziah will stay, of course, and perhaps Mrs. Higgins would come."

"But stay through tomorrow, at any rate. Nat won't get here until Thursday, and I may be able to find another nurse by that time. And what I shall say to him," motioning toward the other room, "I don't know."

"Must you say anything? Just say that I have been called away for a few days on—on some business. Don't tell him. Don't tell him the truth, doctor, now. He is too weak and I am afraid——"

She stopped and turned away. The doctor watched her pityingly. He would have liked to say much more, but he could not, under the circumstances. He stammered a good-by and, with a question concerning Mrs. Coffin's whereabouts, went out to join Captain Zeb.

"Well?" queried the latter anxiously. "How is it? What's up? What's the next tack?"

"We'll go to the parsonage," was the gloomy answer. "If anybody can see a glimmer in this cussed muddle Keziah Coffin can."

Keziah was on her knees in her room, beside a trunk, the same trunk she had been packing the day of the minister's arrival in Trumet. She was working frantically, sorting garments from a pile, rejecting some and keeping others. She heard voices on the walk below and went down to admit the callers.

"What's the matter, Keziah?" asked Dr. Parker sharply, after a look at her face. "You look as if you'd been through the war. Humph! I suppose you've heard the news?"

Keziah brushed back the hair from her forehead. "Yes," she answered slowly. "I've heard it."

"Well, it's great news, and if it wasn't for—if things weren't as they are, I'd be crowing hallelujahs this minute. Trumet has got a good man safe and sound again, and the Lord knows it needs all of that kind it can get."

"Yes."

"Yes. But there's the other matter. I've been to see Grace. She didn't say so, but it was easy enough to see; the man she promised to marry and thought was dead, is alive. She's a girl of her word—she promised him and she promised her dying uncle—and she'll marry him. And then what will become of John Ellery? He'll go downhill so fast that a ship's anchor wouldn't hold him. If he doesn't die I'll have to send him away somewhere, and the Regular church will lose the minister we've fought so hard for."

"Yes," concurred Zebedee, "and them blasted Danielses'll run the shebang and the rest of us'll have to sing small, I tell you."

"So we've come to you, Keziah," went on the doctor. "Do you see any salvation?"

"Yes, I do."

"You do? Where?"

"In Nat Hammond. If he knows Grace doesn't want to marry him, do

"Doctor, You Leave This to Me."

you suppose he'll hold her to her promise? But"—she hesitated—"doctor, you leave this to me. So far as John and Grace are concerned you needn't worry. I'll take it on myself to see that they have each other, as the Almighty meant 'em to. Leave it to me. Just leave it to me. I know I can do it."

Captain Elkanah Daniels and his friend were feeling better and they were busy. Trumet had a new hero now. On Wednesday the Boston papers printed excerpts from Captain Hammond's story, and these brief preliminary accounts aroused the admiration of every citizen. It was proposed to give him a reception. Elkanah was the moving spirit in the preparations. Captain Nat, so they learned by telegraphing, would arrive on the noon train Thursday. His was not to be a prosaic progress by stage all the way from Sandwich. A special carriage, drawn by the Daniels' span and escorted by other vehicles, was to meet the coach at Bayport and bring him to Trumet in triumphant procession. All this was to be a surprise, of course.

Wednesday afternoon the Daniels following was cheered by the tidings that Grace Van Horne had left the beach and was at her old home, the Hammond tavern. And Mrs. Poundberry reported her busy as a bee "gettin' things ready."

Thursday was a perfect day, and the reception committee was on hand and waiting in front of the Bayport post office. The special carriage, the span brushed and curried until their coats glistened in the sunshine, was drawn up beside the platform. The horses had little flags fastened to their bridles, and there were other and larger flags on each side of the dashboard. Captain Daniels, imposing in his Sunday raiment, high-collared coat, stock, silk hat and gold-headed cane, sat stiffly erect on the seat in the rear. The other carriages were alongside, among them Captain Zebedee Mayo's ancient chaise, the white horse sound asleep between the shafts. Captain Zeb had not been invited to join the escort, but had joined it without an invitation. Kyan Pepper was there also, not yet fully recovered from the surprise which Lavinia's gracious permission had given him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Natural Advantage.

"I suppose," said Mr. Meekton, "it would be in a certain sense a saving of time to let the women run the affairs of the country."

"For what reason?"

"When a man discusses politics he wants to stop everything else, but a woman can go right on with any sort of animated conversation and never drop a crochet stitch."

CHURCH ESTATE BILL PASSES

Flynn Measure Provides For Title According to Canons

RELIGION ENTERS DEBATE

Charge That Law Would Be First Step to Bring State and Church Together—Will Affect Billion Dollars in Property.

(Special Harrisburg Correspondence.)

Harrisburg.—The Flynn bill, providing that title to church property shall be vested according to the canons of the respective denominations, which was defeated in the Senate by a vote of 24 to 12, and then reconsidered, was put through by a vote of 27 to 12. The three additional votes were furnished by Alexander, of Clearfield, and Huffman, of Monroe, who did not vote originally, and Buckman, of Bucks, who originally voted against the bill. Endsley, of Somerset, and Giger, of Chester, who voted against the bill did not vote at first. Sones, of Lycoming, and Miller, of Lehigh, who failed to be recorded on the bill at first, voted against it.

Senator Hoke, of Franklin, made a bitter attack on the bill, charging that it would be the first step to bring the State and Church together. He declared that it was not true that the Roman Catholic Church was arrayed solidly in support of the bill, and presented a petition from a number of members of that church opposing the measure. He said that a billion dollars worth of church property would be affected by the passage of this bill and that legal chaos would result. "I hope it will not pass," said Senator Hoke. "I am told that an agreement was made to effect its passage in consideration of the enactment of the measure requiring the reading of the Bible. Any Senator who votes for it under such an agreement would be recreant to his duty as a citizen and as a legislator." The bill was supported by Senator McNichol, of Philadelphia. He denied the statement made by Senator Hoke that other denominations than the Catholic Church would be affected by the bill. John G. Johnson and George Wharton Pepper, he said, had given an opinion that only the Roman Catholic Church would come under its provisions. He declared that he was surprised at the attitude of Mr. Hoke, who had been so greviously pleading for justice in the submission of women's suffrage.

"This bill has as much justice in it as the other, and it affects two million inhabitants of this Commonwealth. Our church has relations with the government abroad, and has no desire to affect the same arrangement here. If that were true, I would be the last man to ask for its passage. It aims to be a constructor of morals, so to teach the young to be good citizens." The vote in full follows:—For the bill—Alexander, Beidleman, Buckman, Catlin, Crow, Dalx, Earley, Gerberich, Graff, Hall, Homsher, Huffman, Hunter, Jarrett, Kline, Kurtz, Magee, McNichol, Moore, Morgan, Nulty, Saltus, Sheatz, Thompson, Vare, Washbern. Against—Cooper, Dewitt, Fisher, Heacock, Hilton, Hoke, Judson, Napp, Miller, Senseich, Snyder, Sones, Absent or not voting—Clark, Endsley, Gyger, Herbst, Jones, Martin, McIlhenny, Mills, Sproul.

The Humes bill, giving the initiative and referendum to second and third class cities, was sent back to the Senate Municipal Affairs Committee from the second reading calendar, after one of the hottest parliamentary battles of the session. Democrats and Republicans gave vent to some very tart criticism of the manner in which bills are handled by Lieutenant Governor Reynolds, and Mr. Reynolds apologized. When the motion to recommit was made by Senator Salus, and seconded by Senator Vare, objection was made by Senator Jarrett, of Mercer, who demanded a roll call. Senator Huffman, Democrat, of Monroe, started to urge defeat of the motion, but was stopped by a point of order raised by Senator Crow, who said the Chair had already declared the motion carried and that the bill was no longer before the Senate. "As the motion to recommit was made and seconded and I declared it carried," said the Lieutenant Governor, "I must sustain the point of order of Senator Crow." This surprised friends of the bill, as none heard motion put.

Less Liquor Licenses.

Completed figures show that there are 57 less liquor licenses in Luzerne county than there were last year, one brewery and one distillery having suspended business. The gross liquor license income to the county was $413,525, of which the State got $125,896.37, including the brewery, wholesale and bottling fees, which run about $67,000.

'Phone Hearing Opens.

The State Railroad Commission met here to hold a hearing on the telephone rate question in compliance with the Coniff resolution, recently passed by the House. The Commission has failed so far to appoint an auditor to examine the books of the Pennsylvania and the Reading lines on coal rates. The commission will shortly act, but did not care to move pending the agreement of the railroad companies and the complainants regarding the person to be selected as examiner.

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