

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. Kyran Pepper, widower, offers marriage, and 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 a "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 makes 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 catches him through a spy glass. She 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 good between them 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 Grace saying she is to marry Nat, and asking him not to try to see her again. Keziah tells Nat 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 see the wreck of the vessel. Keziah gets a letter from her husband saying he is coming back. Grace goes on a visit to relatives in the Hammonds. A vessel flying distress signals is discovered off the coast. Ellery goes with party to board the vessel. He is found suffering from smallpox, the rest of the crew having deserted. He is taken to an abandoned house on the shore. 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. News comes that Nat has arrived safely in Boston. The story of the wreck of Nat's vessel comes out and a home-coming is arranged.

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

"Here she comes!" shouted Ezra Simmons, the postmaster. "Right on time, too."

Sure enough! A cloud of dust in the distance, rising on the spring wind, and the rattle of rapidly turning wheels. The reception committee prepared for action. Captain Elkanah descended from the carriage and moved in stately dignity to the front of the post office platform.

The stage, its four horses at a trot, swung up to the platform.

"Hurrah!" shouted the committee, its uninvited guests and the accompanying crowd of Bayport men and boys which had gathered to assist in the welcome. "Hurrah!"

A passenger or two peered from the coach window. The stage driver ironically touched his cap.

"Thank ye," he said. "Thank ye very much."

Captain Elkanah frowned his disapproval.

"We are cheering Cap'n Nathaniel Hammond of Trumet," he explained haughtily. "We are here to meet him and escort him home. Where is he? Where's Cap'n Hammond?"

"Well, now, I'll tell ye; I don't know where he is."

"You don't? Isn't he with you?"

"No, he ain't. And he didn't come on the train, nuther. He was on it. The conductor told me he see him and set along with him between stations as far as Cohasset narrows. But after that he never see hide nor hair of him. Oh, that's so! Here's the mail bag, Ezzy."

Captain Zeb stepped beside the stage and put one foot on the wheel.

"Say, that," he whispered, "is that all you know? Where did he go to?"

"Well," the driver's voice dropped lower. "Well," he whispered, "I did hear this much. A chap I know was on the train and he said he see Cap'n Nat get off the cars at the Cohasset Narrows depot and there was a woman with him."

"A woman? A woman? What woman?"

"Blessed if I knew! And he didn't nuther. So long! Git dap!"

The reception committee and its escort drove slowly back to Trumet. The Daniels following was disgusted and disappointed.

Trumet spent that evening wondering what had become of Nat Hammond. Captain Zeb Mayo wondered most of all. Yet his wonderment was accompanied by vague suspicions of the truth. And, at eleven o'clock, when the village was in bed, a horse and buggy moved down the Turn-off and stopped before the Hammond gate. A man, slighted from the buggy and nearly plucky up to the side

door. There he knocked and then whistled shrilly.

A window overhead was opened.

"Who is it?" asked a feminine voice.

"Don't be frightened, Gracie," replied the man at the door. "It's me—Nat. I've come home again."

CHAPTER XIX.

In Which the Minister Receives a Letter.

John Ellery was uneasy. Physically he was very much better, so much better that he was permitted to sit up a while each day. But mentally he was disturbed and excited, exactly the condition which the doctor said he must not be in. Keziah and Grace had gone away and left him, and he could not understand why.

Mrs. Higgins, like's mother, was at the shanty and she did her best to soothe and quiet him. She was a kind soul and capable in her way, but she could not answer his questions satisfactorily.

He rose from the chair and started toward the living room. He would not be put off again. He would be answered. His hand was on the latch of the door when that door was opened. Dr. Parker came in.

The doctor was smiling broadly. His ruddy face was actually beaming. He held out his hand, seized the minister's, and shook it.

"Good morning, Mr. Ellery," he said. "It's a glorious day. Yes, sir, a bully day. Hey? Isn't it?"

Ellery's answer was a question.

"Doctor," he said, "why have Mrs. Coffin and—Miss Van Horne gone? Has anything happened? I know something has, and you must tell me what. Don't try to put me off or give me evasive answers. I want to know why they have gone."

Parker looked at him keenly.

"Humph!" he grunted. "I'll have to get into Mrs. Higgins's wig. You sit still. No, I'm not going to tell you anything. You sit where you are and maybe the news'll come to you. If you move it won't. Going to obey orders? Good! I'll see you by and by, Mr. Ellery."

He walked out of the room. It seemed to Ellery that he sat in that chair for ten thousand years before the door again opened. And then—"Grace!" he cried. "O Grace! you—you've come back!"

She was blushing red, her face was radiant with quiet happiness, but her eyes were moist. She crossed the room, bent over and kissed him on the forehead.

"Yes, John," she said; "I've come back. Yes, dear, I've come back to you."

Outside the shanty, on the side farthest from the light and its group of buildings, the doctor and Captain Nat Hammond were talking with Mrs. Higgins. The latter was wildly excited and bubbling with joy.

"It's splendid!" she exclaimed. "It's almost too fine to believe. Now we'll keep our minister, won't we?"

Mrs. Higgins turned to Captain Nat.

"It's kind of hard for you, Nat," she added. "But it's awful noble and self-sacrificin' and everybody'll say so. Of course there wouldn't be much satisfaction in havin' a wife you knew cared more for another man. But still it's awful noble of you to give her up."

The captain looked at the doctor and laughed quietly.

"Don't let my nobility weigh on your mind, Mrs. Higgins," he said. "I'd made up my mind to do this very thing afore ever I got back to Trumet. That is, if Grace was willin'. And when I found she was not only willin' but joyful, I—well, I decided to offer up the sacrifice right off."

"You did? You did? Why, how you talk! I never heard of such a thing in my born days."

"Oh, well, I—What is it, Grace?"

She was standing in the doorway and beckoning to him. Her cheeks were crimson, the breeze was tossing her hair about her forehead, and she made a picture that even the practical, unromantic doctor appreciated.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Nat," she whispered, "will you come in? He wants to see you."

John Ellery was still seated in the chair by the window, but he no longer looked like an invalid. There was no worry or care in his countenance now, merely a wondrous joy and serene happiness.

He held out his hands and the captain shook them heartily.

"Mr. Ellery," he said, "as they used to say at the circus, 'Here we are again.' And you and I have been doing all kinds of circus acrobatics since we shook last, hey? I'm glad you're pretty nigh out of the sick bay—and the doctor says you are."

"Captain," began Ellery. Hammond interrupted him.

"Hold on!" he said. "Belay right there if you and I are to cruise in the same family—and that's what I hear is likely to happen—I calculate we'll have overboard the cap'n and Misters. My name's 'Nathaniel'—Nat' for short."

"All right. And mine is 'John,' Cap'n—Nat, I mean—how can I ever thank you?"

"Thank me? What do you want to thank me for? I only handed over somethin' that wasn't mine in the first place and belonged to you all along. I didn't know it, that was the only trouble."

"But your promise to your father. I feel—"

"You needn't. I'm doin' the right thing and I know it. And don't pity me, neither. I made up my mind not to marry Grace—unless, of course, she was set on it—months ago. I'm tickled to death to know she's goin' to have as good a man as you are. She'll tell you so. Gracie! Hello! she's gone."

"Yes, I told her I wanted to talk with you alone, for a few minutes. Nat, Grace tells me that Aunt Keziah was the one who—"

"She was. She met me at the Cohasset Narrows depot. I was settin' in the car, lookin' out of the window at the sand and snuffin' the Cape air, somebody tapped me on the shoulder. I looked up and 'twas her. I was surprised enough to see her. I tell you. Way up there at the Narrows! I couldn't have said a word, anyway, and she never gave me a chance. 'Nat,' she says, 'don't talk now. Come with me, quick afore the train starts. I've come here on purpose to meet you. I must talk with you; it's important. You can go to Trumet on the next train, tonight. But now I must talk with you. I must. Won't you please come, Nat?'"

"Well, I went. The engine bell was beginnin' to ring and we had to move lively, I tell you. I swung her off the step just as the car began to move. So into the waitin' room we went and come to anchor on the settee. And then, John, we had our talk. Seems she left Trumet Wednesday afternoon. Got the lively stable man to drive her as far as Bayport, hired another team there and come on to Sandwich. Stayed overnight there and took the mornin' train which got to Cohasset Narrows just ahead of the one I was comin' on. She'd been so afraid of bein' late, she said. She must see me afore I got to Trumet."

"Well, she saw me and told me the whole yarn about you and Grace. She tried to break it to me gently, so I wouldn't feel too bad. She knew it would be a shock to me, she said. It was a shock, in a way, but as for feelin' bad, I didn't. I think the world of Grace. I'd do anything she wanted me to do; but most the way down on the train—yes, and long afore that—I'd been dreadin' my comin' home on one account. I dreaded tellin' her that, unless she was real set on it, she'd better not marry me."

"Nat, I want to tell you something. Something that only one other person knows. Grace doesn't know it yet. Neither does Aunt Keziah—the whole of it. And if she knew I told you even a part I'm afraid she would, as she would say, 'skin me alive.' But I owe her—and you—more than I could repay if I lived a thousand years. So I'm going to tell and take the consequences."

"Nat, when—that morning after your father died and after you and Grace had agreed to—"

"To do somethin' neither of us wanted to do? Yes, I know. Go ahead."

"That morning Aunt Keziah came home to the parsonage and broke the news to me. She did it as only she could do such a thing, kindly and pityingly and I made a fool of myself, I expect; refused to believe her, behaved disgracefully, and at last, when I had to believe it, threatened to run away and leave my work and Trumet forever, like a coward. She made me stay."

"Did, hey?"

"Yes. She showed me it was my duty to face the music. When I whimpered about my troubles she told me her own story. Then I



"Yes, John," she said, "I've Come Back to You."

learned what trouble was and what pluck was, too. She told me about her marriage and—excuse me for speaking of what isn't my business; yet it is mine, in a way—she told me about you."

Captain Hammond did not answer. His good-natured face clouded and he shifted in his chair.

"She told me of you, Nat, all about you—and herself. And she told me something else, which explains why she felt she must send you away, why she thought your marriage to Grace would be a good thing."

"I know. She told you that that darn scamp Anse Coffin was alive."

The minister started violently. He gasped in surprise.

"You knew it? You knew it?" he stammered.

"I know it now. Have known it for over a year. My findin' it out was

one of the special Providences that's been helpin' along this last voyage of mine. My second mate was a Hyannis man, name of Cahoon. One day, on that pesky island, when we was eatin' dinner together, he says to me, 'Cap'n,' he says, 'you're from Trumet, ain't you?' I owned up. 'Know anybody named Coffin there?' says he. I owned up to that, too. 'Well,' he says, 'I met her husband last trip I was in the Glory of the Wave.' I stared at him. 'Met his ghost, you mean,' I says. 'He's been dead for years, and a good thing, too. Fell overboard and, not beln' used to water, it killed him.'

"But he wouldn't have it so. 'I used to know Anse Coffin in New Bedford,' he says. 'Knew him well, I know you. And when we was in port at Havre I dropped in at a gin mill down by the water front and he come up and touched me on the arm. I thought same as you, that he was dead, but he wa'n't. He was three sheets in the wind and a reg'lar dock rat to look at, but 'twas him sure enough. We had a long talk. He said he was comin' back to Trumet some day. Had a wife there, he said. I told him, sarcastic, that she'd be glad to see him. He laughed and said maybe not, but that she knew he was alive and sent him money when he was hard up. Wanted me to promise not to tell any Cape folks that I'd seen him, and I ain't till now."

"Well, you can imagine how I felt when Cahoon spun me that yarn. First I wouldn't believe it and then I did. It explained things, just as you say, John. I could see now why Keziah gave me my walkin' papers. I could see how she'd been sacrificin' her life for that scum."

"Did you tell her—Aunt Keziah—when you met her at the Narrows?"

"No. But I shall tell her when I see her again. She shan't spoll her life—a woman like that! by the Lord! what a woman!—for any such crazy notion. I swore it when I heard the story and I've sworn it every day since. That's what settled my mind about Grace. Keziah Coffin belongs to me. She always has belonged to me, even though my own pig-headedness lost her in the old days."

He was pacing the floor now, his face set like granite. Ellery rose, his own face beaming. Here was his chance. At last he could pay to this man and Keziah a part of the debt he owed.

Nat stopped in his stride. "Well!" he exclaimed. "I almost forgot, after all. Keziah sent a note to you. I've got it in my pocket. She gave it to me when she left me at Cohasset."

"Left you? Why! didn't she come back with you on the night train?"

"No. That's funny, too, and I don't understand it yet. We was together all the afternoon. I was feelin' so good at seein' her that I took her under my wing and we cruised all over that town together. Got dinner at the tavern and she went with me to buy myself a new hat, and all that. At first she didn't seem to want to, but then, after I'd coaxed a while, she did. She was lookin' pretty sad and worn out, when I first met her, I thought; but she seemed to get over it and we had a fine time. It reminded me of the days when I used to get home from a voyage and we were together. Then, when 'twas time for the night train we went down to the depot. She gave me this note and told me to hand it to you."

"Good-by, Nat," she says. 'We've had a nice day, haven't we?'"

"We have, for a fact," I says. 'But what are you sayin' good-by for?'"

"'Because I'm not goin' to Trumet with you,' says she. 'I'm goin' to the city. I've got some business to see to there. Good-by.'"

"I was set back, with all my canvas flappin'. I told her I'd go to Boston with her and we'd come home to Trumet together tomorrow, that's today. But she said no. I must come here and ease your mind and Grace's. I must do it. So at last I agreed to, sayin' I'd see her in a little while. She went on the up train and I took the down one. Hired a team in Sandwich and another in Bayport and got to the tavern about eleven. That's the yarn. And here's your note. Maybe it tells where she's gone and why."

The minister took the note and tore open the envelope. Within was a single sheet of paper. He read a few lines, stopped, and uttered an exclamation.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"A Mighty Man Was He."

At a concert for charity in a country town Miss Carter obliged by reciting "The Village Blacksmith." At the conclusion of her recital the rural audience cheered. "Ancover!" they cried. "Ancover!" Miss Carter was about to grant the request when a burly fellow, very much out of breath, tapped her on the shoulder. "I've just come around from in front," whispered this man, excitedly. "I want yer to do me a favor." "Well, what is it?" queried Miss Carter. "It's this," whispered the intruder. "I happen ter be the fellow you've been talkin' about, and I want you to put in a verse this time sayin' how I let out bicycles."

Ox Made Investigation.

At a recent auction sale in Echt, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, a good deal of amusement was occasioned when a large ox, which the auctioneer was trying to dispose of, took into it head to walk into the auctioneer's box, and, after he had cleared the office of officials, made a minute inspection of the books, and retired from the rostrum evidently quite pleased with the way the sale was being conducted and with the state of the books. It is needless to say that the officials were much more excited than the ox, and made a quick exit, while the ox walked with the utmost deliberation.

INSTRUCTION IN SPRAYING

Farmers Near Ringtown, Wilness Orchard Demonstration

INCREASES THE APPLE CROP

Demonstrator Moore Told of Three Acres of Trees Yield Raised to 400 Bushels from Nothing—Campaign Against Pests.

Mahanoy City.—Prof. B. S. Moore, of the Pennsylvania Agricultural Department, gave his third annual demonstration in spraying at the farm of R. A. Breisch, near Ringtown, to a gathering of farmers from the surrounding country. The demonstrator went after the animal and insect life that infests orchards during the period of blossom, and while he worked he impressed upon his audience the importance of keeping after the parasites if the best results are to be obtained. The farmers present showed a keen interest in the work, but several of them complained that they had not the time.

The best answer to the complaint was the work done on the Breisch farm. Three years ago three acres planted to apples yielded very little more than enough to supply the family. An intelligent campaign against tree pests was started and kept up. The result was a yield of more than 400 barrels. The result was a yield of more than 400 barrels. The orchard is now in its third year of pest extermination, and its owner confidently expects a crop of more than 700 barrels and predicts even greater things for the future.

Admits Killing Comrade.

Williamsport.—John Carl, aged 28, one of five tramps in jail here on suspicion of being implicated in the murder of James Kilgallen, of Wilkes-Barre, at a tramps' resort east of the city several weeks ago, has confessed that he welded the stone which caused Kilgallen's death. He declared that he was attacked by Kilgallen, and used the stone in self-protection. Carl's home is in Shenandoah. He is known among his pals as "Shenandoah Mickey."

Promoter Goes to Jail.

Reading.—William J. Cotter, who was sentenced to pay a fine of \$500 and costs and a year and three months' imprisonment in the Berks jail, after being convicted of having conspired to defraud stockholders of a life insurance company, was taken to jail after having spent considerable time in a fruitless effort to obtain bail. Leo D. Jacoby, convicted with Cotter, and sentenced to one year's imprisonment and \$500 fine and costs, obtained bail.

Only One Jailbird.

Stroudsburg.—The Monroe county jail is no longer empty. Joseph B. Gray, former member of the Philadelphia police force, charged with embezzlement, was found guilty and sentenced by Judge Staples, who presided at the Clay trial in Philadelphia, to one year's imprisonment in the county jail. Gray last summer worked at Delaware Water Gap and ran an automobile garage.

Train Kills City Workman.

Chester.—Patrick McGrath, of Philadelphia, was struck and killed on the Pennsylvania Elevated Railroad here. He was huried fifty feet and horribly mangled. McGrath was employed at the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Eddystone, and was on his way to his boarding house in Letper ville.

Fire in Mine Blow-Up.

Shamokin.—While mining coal at Green Ridge Colliery Andrew Minchusky and Alexander Sacas were suddenly enveloped by a ball of fire from a terrific explosion of gas, caused, it is alleged, by one of the men exposing a naked light. Both men were hurled a distance and so badly burned that they will likely die.

Cash-Tossing Costly Fun.

New Castle.—According to word received here from Fernando Russo, a steel worker, now at Harrisburg, his savings, a small fortune, were thrown from a train near Philadelphia by his baby, Jose Russo, and his family is stranded. The parent gave his baby the pocketbook to play with.

Oppose Church Control.

Wilkes-Barre.—Polish church congregations in the Wyoming Valley, who are opposed to the Flynn Church bill, were represented at the hearing before the Governor in Harrisburg. Former Judges Wheaton and Jones and ex-District Attorney Salsburg appeared for those opposing the bill.

Truck Rider Breaks Record.

Altoona.—Squeezed into the narrow space between the bed and truck of an all-steel coach on a Pennsylvania Railroad train, where the slightest movement meant death, John McDermott rode all the way from Newark, N. J., to Altoona, eluding detection at Philadelphia and Harrisburg. He is the first person to do the trick on an all-steel coach. How he escaped being crushed to death on the first turn is a mystery, as the space was thought to be too small for a little man, whereas McDermott is six feet tall.

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