KEZIAH COFFIN

by

Joseph C. Lincoln

Author of "Cy Whittaker's Place" "Cape Ari, Etc."

Illustrations by Ellsworth Young

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SYNOPSIS.

Mrs. Keziah Coffin, supposed widow of a voyager lost many years from Orham, is left, following the death of her brother, Nathaniel Hammond, sole heir to his fortune, without other marriage, and is indignantly refused Capt. Elkanah Daniels' offer of marriage. Nathaniel's will, Keziah's plan of housekeeping for the new millionaire, and she decides to remain in Orham. Her nephew, Kenelm Coffin, and Silas Kirby, the new manager, give her advice as to her conduct toward strangers in the parish. Keziah's reputation for generosity is established at Community meeting. Elkanah Daniels, Keziah's suitor, is elected chairman of the Board of Selectmen, leader of the Orham opposition for her benefit. Kenelm and Kirby encounter her home in the rain.

CHAPTER IV—(Continued.)

Ellery stood still in the rain and watched her. He saw her pass the lighted windows and open a door. Into the yellow radiance she flashed and disappeared. A minute more and the bulky form of Eben Hammond loomed to hand, a sou'wester on his head and his shoulders working themselves into an oilskin coat, burst out of the door and hurriedly limped down toward the shore. On the threshold, framed in light, stood his ward, gazing after him. And the minister gazed at her.

From the bay came the sound of oars in rowlocks. A boat was approaching the wharf. And suddenly from the boat came a hail:

"Hallloo! Ahoy, dad! Is that you?"

There was an answering shout from the wharf, a shout of joy. Then a hurtle of oars and a clamor of talk. And Grace still stood in the doorway, waiting.

The lantern bobbed up the slope. As it reached the tavern gateway, the minister saw that it was now carried by a tall, active man, who walked with a seaman's stride and roll. Captain Eben was close beside him, talking excitedly.

They entered the yard.

"Grace! Grace!" screamed Captain Eben. "Grace, girl, look who's come! Look!"

The tall man was forward.

"Hi, Gracie!" he cried in a deep, hearty voice. "Is that you? Ain't you got a word for your old mesmate?"

The girl stepped out into the rain. "Why! why, Nat!" she cried.

The big man picked her up bodily in his arms and carried her into the house. Captain Eben followed and the door closed.

John Kilbury picked his way homeward through the puddles and the pouring rain.

He found Keziah in the sitting room, seated by the table, evidently writing a letter. She looked tired and grave.

"Well," she exclaimed as he entered, "I guess you're soppin' now, aren't you? There's a light in your room. Take off your wet things and throw 'em down to me, and I'll dry 'em in the kitchen. Better leave your boots here now and stand that umbrella in the sink. The fire's on the stove, you'd better have something! Hot ginger tea or something? I think you not to go out such a night as this. Where in the world have you been?"

The minister said he would tell her all about it in the morning. He was now he thought he had better go up and take off his wet clothes.

Keziah dipped her pen in the ink and went on with her letter.

"I to-lose 'em dollars," she wrote. "It is all I can send you now. More than I ought to afford. Goodness knows why I send anything. You don't deserve it. But while I live and you be I can't—"

The minister called from the land door.

"Here is my coat," he said. "The cuffs and lower part of the sleeves are pretty wet. By the way, the park trustees to-morrow? They didn't expect her so soon on account of the fog. There was a passenger aboard whom I think must be that Nathaniel Hammond you told me of."

Keziah's pen stopped. The wet coat struck the hall floor with a soft thump. The tick of the clock seemed to fill the room. A sheet of paper diffuses rain hushed the window.

"Did you hear?" called the minister. "I said that Nathaniel Hammond Captain Eben's son, came on the park."

I didn't mean him, but he sure it was he. Eli—Mrs. Coffin, are you there? Do you hear me?"

The housekeeper laid the pen down beside the unfinished letter.

"Yes," she said. "I hear you. Good night."

For minutes she sat there, leaning back in her chair and staring at the wall. They she rose, went into the hall, picked up the coat, and put it out into the kitchen, where she hung it on the mahogany frame of the stove. After a while she returned to the hall and took up the lamp. "I'll leave to the lamplight," looked more tired and grave than ever.

CHAPTER V.

In Which Old Friends Meet.

When Ellery came down to breakfast the next morning, the wind had died down, and the rainfall seemed to have ceased. Sunshine was streaming through the kitchen windows. Breakfast was ready, and there was a pot of hot coffee ready to be served. Keziah was on end and met the young minister with a cheerful "Good morning!" and a smile that for him, in spite of the lack of sleep, was more than cordial. Ellery was surprised and pleased. He had been afraid that she would be cold and distant, or, if she should be kind, would show the effects of the scolding she had given him the night before. He had expected to make it pleasant for you. You've only got one way to make it pleasant. Well, then all I can do is hope through another scolding."

"Please don't, Nat. You know."

"No, I don't, Gracie."

"Well, perhaps you don't. But I know. I like you, Nat. I want to you as the straightest, truest friend I have gotten, and I want to keep on counting on you just that way. Marry Grace—"

"Course you can, Keziah. But—"

"Then don't say anything about it, please."

"Keziah, when you set your foot down you're pretty stubborn; but I've got something of a foot myself. You remember you said so a few minutes ago. Hi, hum! Well, anyhow I'm glad reminds me that I'm kind of worried about Grace."

"You are? Why? Isn't he well?"

"Pretty well, but he ain't strong and he gets too excited over things like last night's foolishness. Grace tells me that the doctor says he must be careful or he'll drop off some of these days. He had a shock five or six years ago, a little one, and I've been anxious about him ever since."

"You mustn't worry. How did Grace pick in your letter?"

"Why, I saw the harbor light on a stormy night. She's a brick, that girl, and gets prettier every minute. Wonder I'm some of the relatives I have, I guess, here don't carry her off by main strength. Shall make anybody a good wife."

"I'm sure. Have—have you ever thought of her that way yourself?"

"Keziah, that's enough! Don't be foolish. You and dad in partnership to get me married off! Good ways! Good ways! Ha, ha! Why, I was at sea the morning along the same time as Grace's father, and I know, again, even in fish. You know why."

"Why, Nat, I don't know. Tell me about yourself. Have you had a good voyage? How do you like your new ship? How did Zach Foster ever get the packet in the fog, anyway? Tell me everything!"

"Voyage was all right. Homer Pug got weather on the trip out, but I kept want bound so old salt couldn't be a bucket on a pleasant day. Packet? Well, I guess most people as ever I satisfied. As for Zach Foster, I don't know. Ha, ha! Somebody's coming! I'm gain to clear out. I'm glad you came, just through my catechism yet a little."

"No, you mustn't go. I want you to meet Mr. Ellery. Mr. Ellery, this is Nat's batch by the back door till I get rid of whoever it is that's comin'. Scout!"

"Nat" scouted, stopping to snatch up his hat as he ran. Keziah went into the dining room and Ellery followed. Mrs. Coffin was putting from the exertion of his walk. "Who—who—who?" puffed Captain Zeb, stopping his forehead. "How do you do, sir? Shiah! What? You ain't all alone? Thought you'd have a rabble of old salt matchers by this time. Have they been and gone?"

"No, they haven't been. I— My land, my pie!"

She rushed into the kitchen and snatched the pastry from the oven. Her new caller followed her.

"Ho! Ho! ain't been, Izzy?" he said. "That's queer."

"Why, I don't know. Here is there with the minister now."

"He is!" Giving the young fellow Hail Columbia, I calculate. Well, I'm ahead. He, he! When they told me how the minister passed hold of you, go fetch it! what was due him at the chapel last night I'd rip up and bonnet tell my wife shut the windows. She ain't the sociable kind, you know, and lonesome, and I needed prove it to em. Ha, ha! But Elkanah didn't get any fooms home. He's as solemn as a stuffed owl, and he's mad. I'm gain' to put my cap in. I'm partial cents, Izzy, I'm partial. Well, I'm gain' to somethin' to say, even if I wasn't chris and I wouldn't be a good plan to set change. Some of my customers go trip from town to town, could make the dining room table. Its case was was slack or they got extravagant and spent all their money."

Messes Will Still Be Meeting.

A soap box orator the other night said: "I'm a dough head; that's a fact, I hadn't forgot about God, but I was so busy about my business I didn't go and Grace and the old town and you and everything else. Now, sir, of my dough head. I'm dough head." "Sir, I don't know what you call this—"

"He lifted you, too. No wonder, considerin' what you did the—"

"Sailor! Never mind that. Poor chap! Well, he's rid of his sufferin's at last. Tell me about it. If you can without bringin' all the trouble back too plain."

So she told him of her brother's sickness and death, of having to give up the old home, and, finally, of her acceptance of the housekeeper's position. He listened, at first with sympathy and then with enjoyment for explanation.

"'Hi the Jumpin' Moses!' he exclaimed. "And Elkanah was goin' to turn you out of house and home. The mean, pernicious old—"

"Hush! hush, he's in there with Mr. Ellery."

"Eh? Elkanah?"

"Yes; there's in the study."

"He's in there? Prowl to the new parson, hey? Heaish kin, sez I'll bet."

"I ain't so sure. Mr. Ellery's young, but he's got a mind of his own."

Captain Hammond chuckled and slapped his knee.

"Ho, ho!" he laughed. "I've been hearin' somethin' about that mind. Went to the chapel last night, I understand, and he and dad had a set-to. Oh, I heard about it! Wish I might have been there to."

"How does your father act about it?"

"Tout the way a rooster alone acts when you spill water on it, sez I, sez I, he thinks of the minister he stirles his hat! I do wish I could have been there."

"What does Grace say?"

"Oh, she doesn't say much. I wonder whether if she felt the way I do, though we both keep quiet, and you, between ourselves and the ship's pump, that I never set eyes on the young chap's equal."

"Good! So do I. I like him."

Her friend leaned forward.

"Keziah," he said earnestly, "there's no sense in your slavin' yourself to death here. I can't see the matter, I'm pleasanter berth than that. Because I'm for me, anyhow, and I'm bound to make it pleasant for you. You've only got one way to make it pleasant for me. Well, then all I can do is hope through another scoldin'."

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"No, I don't, Gracie."

"Well, perhaps you don't. But I know. I like you, Nat. I want to you as the straightest, truest friend I have gotten, and I want to keep on counting on you just that way. Marry Grace—"

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"Hello, Keziah!" He Cried, Joyfully.

while feet loaded to the gunwale with fish and bait. Wanted to see you first, Keziah."

Mrs. Coffin pulled forward one of the kitchen chairs. He seated himself in it and it groaned under his weight.

"Where?" he whistled. "Never made up my mind much weather, was I? Do you think I ought?"

Keziah looked at him gravely.

"You know I'm glad, Nat," she said. "I'm glad that you would, but I don't want to hear you say it. Now, you come to another yourself and you have a talk. I've been counsin' on it ever since we set sight to off Orham."

The housekeeper took the other chair.

"I beg your pardon, Keziah," he said. "I'm a dough head; that's a fact. I hadn't forgot about God, but I was so busy about my business I didn't go and Grace and the old town and you and everything else. Now, sir, of my dough head. I'm dough head."

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IMPORTANT FACTS REGARDING PRUNING AND OTHER NECESSARY WORK IN VINEYARD

First Trimming After Planting May Be Done Any Time During Winter When Vines Are Dormant and Not Frozen—Varieties Require Different Methods.

(By GEORGE C. HUSSMANN, Pomologist, Oregon Experiment Station.)

In vineyard grafting, many operators, a month or so before grafting, cut off the stem of the vine to inch or two above where it is to be grafted (that the stock may bleed profusely. Water sprouts that otherwise would appear are thus in a great extent eliminated.

In ehch grafting, the vines are cut off at a smooth place near and grafted a little above the surface of the ground, unless it is desired to have the grafts establish themselves on their own roots, as it makes the removal of water sprouts and roots starting from the scion much easier and lessens the danger of injuring the scion before it is thoroughly knitted to the stock.

The first pruning after planting may be done any time during the winter when the vines are dormant and not frozen. The extent of pruning will depend on the growth made. If the growth has been small, all the wood except the strongest should be removed, and this one cut back to two eye. If a strong growth has been made and there is one straight well ripened cane, all other growth should be removed and this cane cut back to the height at which it is intended to bend the vine. The cane should be tied securely and the other two buds remaining the trunk or main body of the vine, which will grow upward erect and straight as possible.

If there was not enough ripe wood left to grow must be kept carefully tied to the stake to cause it to grow erect and also to protect it from being broken by the wind or other agency. When a shoot has grown to a foot above where it is intended to bend the vine, it should be tied to the stake. Only such shoots should be allowed to grow above the point of shaping the vine for the following season, all suckers should be promptly removed.

By the third year all vines should have erect, straight canes with two or more canes growing from the principal branches, and the wood for crown is to be formed and from which the growth of the vine is to be renewed from year to year.

The vine, when properties to do so, bears its fruit on shoots from the last year's wood growth, therefore, the cardinal point underlying all correct pruning, be the method of training which it may, is to grow and shape or adjust the main body or permanent part of the vine to the method of training desired. After this has been done the growth on this, the fruit-bearing part, should be so shaped as to ensure that it will delivering the fruit to year, never making it bear to the ground. Also is done the body of the plant gradually becomes more short and its fruiting capacity increases correspondingly as wasteful past growth is allowed at the expense of fruitbearing and the vines are easily kept clear of insects and fungous diseases by the manner of exposing the growth on the body of the vine so as to leave the body permanently clear of growth.

Not only do different countries have different methods of training and trashing, but methods often vary in the several districts of the same country. The inherent peculiarities of the varieties themselves often require special methods to obtain the best results. No attempt is made to describe methods other than those that appear most applicable and have proved most satisfactory in the vineyards of experience in various parts of the United States.

Vines headed back for different systems of training: A, The spur and bow system; B, the Kniffin system; C, the Iowarron Kniffin, Munson, umbrella, and overhead systems.

"Ahoy There, Elkanah!" Hailed Zebediah Cole.

ished then to the business series on to the bay, but there's about six you could see, Elkanah, and I'm a crowin' and gettin' like a pair of fried eels, and Lemuel Cole, he's a-hollerin' for—where's they're feedin' folks, Mr. Ellery, and I'm a-talkin' to you? Yesterday's account—they was the only passen's aboard, Mr. Ellery, Nathaniel Hammond, they put in this—time plays' high Wa-back in the ship. The bulkhead forward footin' ' the horn and his bo'sun was—no, I mean Nathaniel Hammond. After dinner—onroad best and calm, I'm a-talkin' to you, Mr. Ellery, sez sez I, sez I, sez I,