

# THE STRANGER

By JOHN GOODWIN

CHAPTER 22.  
The Skipper's Decision.  
A warm drizzle set in with the dusk over the little coast town of Bampton. Somewhere out at sea the fog strewn of a lighthouse beamed like a lost cat.

Leaning on a gate in a lane that skirted the hillside high above the town, a man of tall stature gazed out over the misty sea with thoughtful, brooding eyes. He was wrapped in a black mackintosh, and a tweed hat was pulled low over his face. The morning of the fog siren seemed to please him, mournful though it was, and now and again he glanced up at the darkening sky. Not till the gloom had intensified did he set off along the lane, with a light, noiseless step.

He looked about him as he went, like one who is in unfamiliar country, and not quite sure of his own bearings. Turning a sharp corner where the road was fenced with high thorn hedges, he came upon a very snug little biou villa, standing well back from the road among shrubbery, with a neat green gate. A white flag-staff, taut and well rigged, stood up from a patch of grass near the house.

The wayfarer had evidently been looking for this house. He paused at the gate, looked around him, opened it, and went in, the winding path between the laurels. The porch of the house was dimly lit, but before he reached it the man halted and scanned the windows keenly. He was about to make for the door when footsteps became audible in the road, and the gate clicked.

The tall man hesitated a second, and then dodged noiselessly in among the laurel bushes, which afforded an effective screen. A burly man wearing a bowler hat and a long oilskin came up the path, quite unconscious that he was being watched as he passed, and, reaching the porch, rang the bell.

"Mr. Grier in?" he asked the maid who answered the door. The next moment the visitor was inside.

The man in the laurel bushes protruded his head, and looked with pensive surprise at the door through which the man had passed.

"The mate?" he murmured. "I remember him. He is older, and fatter, but it is the mate. Strange. So birds of a feather still hang together—after all these years!"

The unbidden visitor considered, and then went quietly round the house to the back, where the light from a parlor window shone out dimly across a small grass plot. This window seemed to attract the man. He crept close to the side of the house, and moved very gently towards the light.

Meanwhile the caller who had entered the house took off his oil-skin and was showing in the parlor, brightly lighted, where a man of about 70 with a gray close cropped beard, keen blue eyes and a face seemed all of wrinkles, was seated in an arm chair with a tumbler by his side.

"Evening, Capt. Grier," said the caller, as the door closed.

The older man rose and frowned slightly.

"I'll be obliged to you, Jim, if you'll drop that title," he said. "Mister Grier, if you please."

"Anything you like," replied the visitor with a grin. "I got the habit of doing so as I was told, when I sailed as your mate, 'em'."

"First officer, they call 'em now, I believe. But we're always Bob and Jim when we're ashore," said Mr. Grier rather impatiently. He motioned his visitor to a chair and jerked his head toward the whiskey bottle. "You haven't come for nothing."

"We're old friends, but we don't see much of each other."

"I came to ask you if you've seen this," said Jim, taking a press clipping from his notebook, "knowing you ain't much of a readin' man. It's in the papers again today, an' it says," he added, handing the clipping to Grier, "that Capt. Grier, who commanded the S. S. Carriemore in 1909 is asked to communicate with E. Motistont, Middle Temple, London, if you'd like to know, Bob, what you're going to do about it."

Mr. Grier flung the clipping back at his visitor with intense irritation.

"You're the third fool in two days that's asked me that question," he said viciously. "Only this morning a man in the town that knows me slightly came up here and showed me the thing. Said he noticed it in the paper, wanted to know if I was the Capt. Grier that was meant. One of these silly, gossipin' fools!"

"Ah," said the mate, "an' what might you have answered him, Bob?"

"I said I wasn't," retorted Grier, "an' that I knew nothing about it. The name I go by here is Richard, not Robert."

The mate nodded approvingly.

"So you ain't going to answer it, eh?"

"No, I'm not," said Grier. He lowered his voice. "Look here, Jim. It's a long time since the Carriemore was lost, but I take particular care not to have it raked up. She was a rotten ship, as you know, insured for a lot over her value. I lost her for the owners. You remember how it was worked. They paid me \$5,000 for the ship, and the night the bidders did out of it. You got a thousand yourself."

"Hush!" whispered the mate nervously. He glanced at the half-open window, and crossing the room closed the sash. "Things get overheard, Bob, when you least expect it. Don't talk so loud."

"You're quite right, Jim," murmured the older man, "though, of course, we're all right here. He lowered his voice to a little above a whisper. "Well, throwing away a ship and doing the underwriters is an awkward job. Clever as I thought I'd been, I had a bad time at the Board of Trade inquiry. I can't think of it, but they suspended my ticket for twelve months."

He spat into the fire.

"A lot I cured, I'd done with the sea. Settled down at Sunderland on my five thousand. Turned it into a bit more. Came here a year ago and took this little place. I don't think about the Carriemore, Jim. People know I was a sea-faring man, an' that's all. Though the jobs over two years ago, I don't think of the folks who knew me as dead, you never know when a thing like that is going to crop up again. The law's a long arm, you know. Truth come to light that you'd think was dead and buried. For it was a job that'd mean three years in quod, Jim."

"How do I know who this lawyer is, an' what he wants with me?" asked the older man, inquiry. "No lawyers for Bob Grier, I don't like the breed. It looks like a trap."

He rose and pointed a finger at his old shipmate.

"An' that's why, Jim, wild horses won't make me rise to that advertisement. No matter what that lawyer's of, or what his law is, he won't get hold of me. It's too risky. I shall deny I'm Robert Grier of the Carriemore; let 'em prove it if they can. An' if they worry me I shall slip right out an' go abroad for a bit. I wouldn't let anybody pump me—not for a thousand quid cash!"

"You're right, Jim," said the mate warmly. "I'm with you all the way."

That's what I came here about; I was a bit nervous. You and me were both in the job. Then you'll keep mum!"

"Mum as the dead," whispered ex-Capt. Grier. "He had a hand on the mate's shoulder. 'No matter what they offer, you an' me know nothing about the Carriemore, nor the Florida coast, nor anything connected with it. That's agreed?'"

"Absolutely," replied the mate with decision. He helped himself to whiskey with an air of relief. "An' now I'll be gettin' home. Good-night, Jim."

The two men shook hands and the mate departed. As he went out through the gate into the lane he chuckled.

"There ain't a man alive could shake Jim off that," he murmured to himself. "Right he is. What he says he sticks to."

The mate had been gone some twenty minutes when another visitor rang the bell of Acaela Villa.

"Is Captain Grier in?" he inquired.

The maid servant, who was a mere child of 14, with a huge bobbed cap, looked up at the lengthy proportions of the caller with awe. A pair of intensely keen eyes twinkled under the wet tweed cap, and water streamed from the black mackintosh.

"Wait a minute, please," said the maid, and entered the parlor. A deep growl was heard. She returned, looking rather flustered.

"Will you please state your business sir, Mr. Grier says."

The caller took out a half sheet of paper, scribbled a few words on it, and folded it carefully in four.

"Give him that."

The maid took the note, and, presently reappearing, held open the sitting-room door.

"This way, sir, please."

The visitor entered the room. Captain Grier was standing erect by the fireplace. He stared at the stranger, his eyes were bright with anger, and his beard bristled with suspicion.

"What do you want?" he growled.

"Just five minutes private conversation with you, Captain," replied the visitor easily. He spoke with a strong cockney twang. It was admirably done, and Grier did not for a moment guess that it was assumed.

"I don't know you," he snapped.

"It's hardly likely you would," was the reply. "It's a mighty long time since we met. Twenty-two years or more, I should think. But I remember you as if it were yesterday."

He paused, and Grier, for a moment, guessed that it was assumed.

"You're a liar!" exclaimed Grier. His wrinkled face turned a deep plum color, and he breathed hard.

"Come, come, Captain," said the visitor pleasantly. "That's hardly the way to put it. One would think you had reasons of your own for denying it. Such a simple fact is easily enough proved."

Captain Grier bit his lip. He was no actor. He saw that he had made a blunder.

"I sailed as a fireman on that ship," said the stranger. "You are quite sure, Captain, you don't recall me?"

He thrust open his mackintosh, and boldly pushed his hat to the back of his head. Grier looked at him with faintly puzzled eyes. He cast his memory back through the years, wondering if it was fancy, or whether he had seen that high forehead and those brooding eyes before.

"Fireman, was you?" he muttered.

"Very likely. They're a tough lot of blackguards. If you think you can walk into my house like this with a pack of lies I'll make you sorry for yourself! I know what your name is. It's the visitor gently, leave all that out. In forty years I have never feared man, woman or devil, I face any risk that seems good to me, and a shady sea captain has no chance of putting the wind up me. I came here as your friend, and to do you a good turn. There's something I want done, and you will do it."

Grier subsided, and merely glanced at him. The man's eyes made him shiver.

"You are being advertised for at this moment," said the visitor, watching Grier keenly. "By a London advertiser, who with various other people, is anxious to discover your whereabouts. Knowing from what I do of you that you might not come forward at all, I came here to insure that you will do so. And he added, "I can tell you exactly what it is these people want of you."

Grier looked up quickly.

"Can you?" he growled.

"The advertisement," and I tell you I'm not the man. But if you know what the thing means, let's hear it."

There was a ring at the bell.

"You remember, on the 19th of June, 1906, about thirty miles off Key West, the lookout man on your vessel sighted something in the water?"

There was a knock at the door, and the little maid poked her head in.

"Gentleman to see you, please, sir," she lisped, "name of Mr. Norman Vile."

"What another of 'em!" he said, furiously. "What name?"

"I never heard of him in my life. Tell him I won't see him—I'm not in."

But the door was pushed open, and Norman Vile appeared, looking eager and somewhat anxious.

"Captain Grier," he said, inquiringly, with an apologetic look at the angry skipper, "I'm sorry, but I've got to have come a long way to see you, and my business is very urgent."

He turned at that moment, and for the first time caught sight of Captain Grier's companion. Speech was stricken from Vile's lips. His jaw dropped, and his face went white as death.

(To be Continued.)  
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WROXETER APPROVES EXPENDITURE FOR RINK  
Special to The Advertiser.  
Wroxeter, March 9.—The ratepayers of the village of Wroxeter, by a vote of 61 to 28, on Monday expressed their approval of the bylaw submitted to them to borrow \$2,000 to complete a skating rink.

Settlement of the service between Wroxeter Rural Telephone Company and Gorrie and Fordwich and Springbank Telephone Company was placed in the hands of the railway commission, which was represented by Mr. Daggar at a public meeting recently held. The Bell Telephone Company was represented by Mr. Ashley. As a result there will be a free service all around.

Mrs. Harry Brown and two children of Vancouver Island are visiting relatives here after an absence of ten years.



The Boxites are beginning to perk up a bit and give Cynthia a little stimulus in her efforts to make the Mail-Box more and more interesting.

"Goldie" sent in simply heaps and heaps of encouragement with her letter today, and then there is "December Bride's" suggestion about the Boxite badge.

"Think you would like a lot of fun it would be to spy a badge and say 'There's one of the mysterious correspondents.' And on your holidays you would find all sorts of folks with a 'tie that binds,' if we were all wearing Cynthia Grey brooches. I would be thrilled to have my initials on it. How about silver with a wee bit of blue enamel? I am awfully eager to know what the Boxites think of it."

Am beginning to receive a great many requests for seeds. I hope somebody will find time to send off a package to the Mail-Box.

Goldie!  
Dear Cynthia, I enclosed find some recipes for the Cook Book. How much longer have we to send recipes in? I might find time later to copy more than I have found tasted good.

I am so glad you are asking the members of your page not to ask for anything, although I know many a needed one received help. It does rob the column of interest, though, doesn't it? So let's all stand by Miss Grey and help her make the page of interest to all. We might send in some household economy suggestions, some experiences with your training of the children, and we might also tell what we think of the different departments of The London Advertiser.

I'm so glad Gump is able to be up. I think his sayings in a recent paper were so splendid. Can you imagine making enough pills to have ball-bearing joints? Think I'll buy a box when I tell the rheumatism coming on. What say?

Must away. We are nicely settled in our new home now, but will find lots to do when spring comes—both outside and in the house. Yours truly, GOLDIE.

Am more than delighted to find some one backing me in my fight to make the 'page as interesting as it is possible. Your letter was full of encouragement, Goldie, as well as the nice recipes. Am sure you will find time to write us again.

Song of 16 Verses.  
Dear Cynthia and all the Boxites—Here I am again after an absence of a few months. I was glad to see so many old Boxites coming back to visit us again.

I hope Calamity Ann may have success with the cook-book. I will see if I can't find some recipes to send in.

Out of the where someone was wishing that songs would be published in the Mail-Box again. So do I. I wonder if any of the Boxites have the words of any songs. I have a number of "Barbaric Ellen." I am not sure which. It has about 16 verses, but I would be pleased to get any of it. It will sign as before, self-addressed envelope.

We are thinking about getting up an egg supper around Easter-time. What would you suggest for us to have to eat? We would like to have eggs cooked in different ways.

Well, I must close now and get to work. Will sign as before.  
JOLLY JEAN.  
Can anyone answer Jolly Jean's queries? Write again, Jean. Thanks for the recipes.

Shorty.  
Thanks ever so much for the recipes and the mite. Shorty. Make your next letter longer and tell us about the syrup.

Hard Soap.  
Thanks for the recipes and cook-book mite, Mrs. J. S. I am publishing the recipe you sent in for Spoo-ondyke.

A large tomato can makes a good container for laundry soap, as it weighs when full about a pound and a quarter, and two of them make the proper amount for a can of lye, weighing about 13 ounces. Dissolve the lye in a quart of cold water and add this to the two tins of melted fat. One tablespoon of borax, 1 tablespoon of ammonia, stir until the color of honey. It should not be stirred too much, as stirring will make it separate. Just stir occasionally and pour out to set."

Another Bulletin.  
Dear Cynthia—Here's lettin' you know what I got 'em 'ere resposers. I got the big envelope with the millun or so in. The's the one I'm after tellin' you about. Let's see there do be Hopeful. Mrs. W. C. E. Signet E. Tomboy Taylor, Doonside, Diana, Jassy, Mother of Twins, Penholder, English Edythe, Nuisance Lass o' Laughter, Mrs. Pete, Coronio M. H. Tiger Lily, Honey Comb, Munorca, V. S. also Aunt Tomboy's address an sum to be privately acknoildd.

My dere folks when Izy wuz bizzzy, he want nere so bizzzy ez me. I'm tellin' yur there be a fugh of us in this very lard city wuz do like to perform on the stage. Kinda play actin' an makin' cline jilts of our-sels, an more so me, an az usual Calamity's tryin to be the bull show, and I do kepe her so tarnation bizzzy that she's, wal, "rale bizzzy," konsiderin she's kook bukin' goin' on the stage, studin an doin' the job she tuk for life an'—Oh, yah, tryin to help another play actin' crowd to kepe frum turnin ther backs to the frunt

The next story: "The Convenience of an Appetite."

"I Avoided an Operation Appendicitis Disappeared"

Mrs. James Wells, Odora, Ont., writes:—



Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills  
One pill a dose, 25c a box. All dealers or Edmanston, Bates & Co., Ltd., Toronto.

an 'rememberin them to speke out, why she ain't got no time to do no correspondin' much, but here she be, and I betcha the kompositors an things wisht I wuzn't, eh?"

There ez per usual I'm blunderin' an' stumblin' round an' I nere fer- got to izzu a warnin', which iz—No more Seidter. Botch Pie—please! Now I gess I better get out afore I'm exincted, like the cat exincted the canary."

"Y' haint! You gezzed rite. How didja know it wuz

"P. S. tifer"—If you don't send in yer resposers agin, Gladys Canhee, I'll stick yer phizog to de bottom of anther wun, see?"

"P. S. tifer the tooth"—Attention Mrs. W. C. E. Please note that I have given your complete supper recipe the name of "Tom-mas-burg," and placed same under "Meats." I have taken the name from Tomatoes, Macaroni and Hamburg, the chief ingredients. Hope it is quite all right. C. A.

Eva.  
I have a letter from Eva, who asks for The London Advertiser, March 18 and 20, either sex. Her address is in the Mail-Box.

BURGESS BEDTIME STORIES

THE BRAVERY OF MANY TONGUES.  
By Thornton W. Burgess.

Sometimes it quite amazes me. How very brave a tongue can be. —Hooley the Owl.

Usually just after jolly, round, red Mr. Sun began to daily climb up in the blue, blue sky, the Crows and his friends left their roosting places in the Green Forest and started out for the daily hunt for food. They went the same way one way and some another. But this morning, instead of starting out to hunt for food, that whole flock of Crows, with Hooley the Owl, headed straight for another part of the Green Forest. There had been a little talk before the start, but as they were in the air all talking ceased.

Blacky, with Mrs. Blacky right behind him, led the way straight to that part of the Green Forest in which was the nest they had built and used the year before. Some of their friends knew all about that nest, but others had never seen it. They flew high so as to look down. When he was above the tree in which was the nest, Blacky circled around. All the others did the same thing, and of course all saw the nest. Also all saw Mrs. Hooley on the nest. Then, still silent, they flew down and alighted in trees surrounding the one in which was the nest. You see they had not yet discovered Hooley, and size was quite necessary to know where Hooley was.

Now Hooley had been hunting late that morning. He had arrived just a few minutes after the Crows. One of them saw him coming, and at once gave the alarm. Instantly those Crows were in the air again, and every one began peering at the top of his or her lungs. Such a racket as they made! They could have been heard a mile away. Some of the boldest swooped in front of him. Others tried to get behind him and pretend that they were very brave by swooping down and threatening to peck.

Hooley paid no attention to them. He kept straight on to the tree in which were the nest and Mrs. Hooley. In his great claws was a mouse which he was bringing to Mrs. Hooley. But the instant he was rid of that mouse Hooley sat bolt upright on a branch of that tree, ruffled up his feathers, snapped his big hooked bill and hissed angrily. It was daytime, but Hooley was anything but a sleepy-looking bird.



Those noisy Crows took good care not to get too near.

Those noisy Crows took good care now not to get too near. There was no chance to get behind him unseen. For Hooley's head would turn like a windmill and see them equally behind him. Not a Crow would get near enough to strike him without being seen. And not a Crow dared try it.

But how those Crow tongues did go! And such brave tongues as they were! They told Hooley and Mrs. Hooley all sorts of dreadful things that were going to happen to them. They told them that they had got "beave that nest and never be seen there again." They told them that they didn't leave at once they would have their eyes pecked out. My, my, but they were brave, brave, brave tongues! They boasted and threatened and called names.

For all the bravery of those tongues Mrs. Hooley continued to sit on that nest, and Hooley continued to sit on guard, hissing, snapping his bill and growing angrier every minute without showing the least sign of fear.

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The next story: "The Convenience of an Appetite."



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