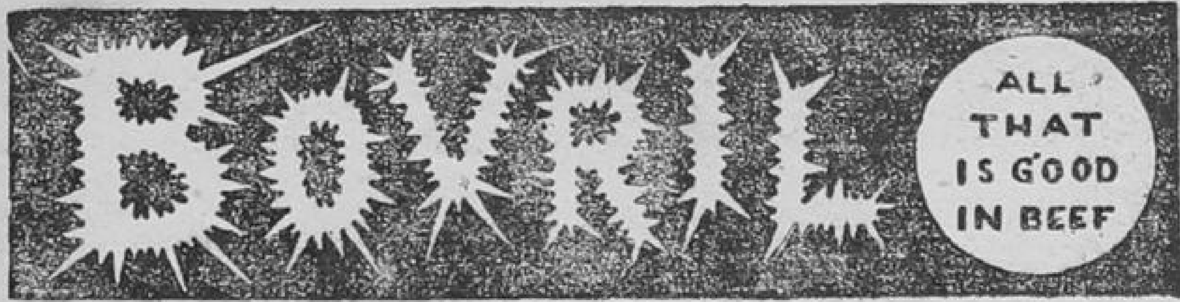

A MOST STRENGTHENING BEVERAGE

BLUE WATER

A TALE OF THE DEEP SEA FISHERMEN

BY FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE.

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CHAPTER ONE—(Cont'd.)

"Bet ye kain't," returned the other. To back up his words Lem called his chum's attention to the high-water mark on the bottle neck, and, tilting it up, proceeded to lower it by the process of absorption into his own.

"There!" he grunted with a gasp as he passed the rum over. "I've drunk it down to that nick. Beat that ef ye kin."

Shorty beat him, and a species of Bacchanalian Marathon ensued between the pair until the rum defeated them both. Lem was the first to succumb, and he sat on an up-ended trawl tub holding his head and trying to regain an equilibrium which seemed to be whirling and gyrating like a chip in an eddy. Shorty lay prone inside a dress keeler or gutting-table, feeling very dizzy and sick at times and happy and hilarious by turns. The long-neck lay between them, its remaining contents spilled on the floor, and thus they lay until Uncle Jerry, Long Dick, and Ezekiel Ring found them late that evening.

"Waal, I be everlastin'ly cussed ef this don't beat all my goin' a-fishin'," ejaculated Dick Jennings when he discovered the pair. "They've bin in here all afternoon a-broachin' my rum—th' young devils."

Zeke Ring strode over and yanked his young brother on to his feet.

"Whashmarrer?" mumbled Lem sleepily.

"I'll matter ye, you young swab," growled Zeke. "Home ye come now, an' ef I don't set ye up good an' proper, my name ain't what it is."

Frank was dead to the world, and repeated shakings, nudgings, and punchings by his uncle and Long Dick failed to elicit a sign of consciousness from him. Uncle Jerry's rage gave way to fear, and he turned to Long Dick. "What kind o 'rum was that ye had? 'Tain't no cheap rot-gut, is it?"

"No, siree," replied the other regretfully. "'Twas th' best Jamaica rum there is. I got it from Joe Spinney, mate o' the Ella McKay, what jest come up from th' south'ard two days ago, an' now 'tis wasted on a couple o' young sculpins——"

"Go'n git a bucket o' water, Dick," interrupted Captain Clark, and when the fisherman returned, he poured it liberally over his nephew's head.

"He gimme a kick," muttered the boy, feebly protesting against the cold douche. "Lemme git at him——"

Uncle Jerry gave him a shake. "Wake up, Frank. Rouse yourself!"

Shorty began to exhibit signs of consciousness, and Captain Clark turned to the other. "I'll carry th' lad home, Dick. Don't say anythin' about this to a soul. His mother 'ud go crazy ef she thought th' boy had bin drinkin'. Keep it quiet, an' tell th' Rings t' do th' same." And shouldering his inanimate burden, the big skipper trudged up the hillside in the dusk.

CHAPTER TWO.

Frank was aroused by his uncle at an early hour next morning, and, feeling sick and penitent, he dressed without taking the usual precautions. His mother was still a-bed, and Shorty, with a bad taste in his mouth, and his mind a complete blank after his recollection of the first two drinks of Long Dick's rum, was oppressed with a foreboding of trouble.

"Uncle's a-goin' t' tan me good this time," he muttered dismally, and, feeling very seedy, he crept quietly downstairs. His uncle was waiting outside the house, and engaged in whittling a stick. His face was stern, and he addressed his nephew harshly. "Follow me!"

Leading the way to a seat under a giant spruce, the Captain seated himself and motioned to the boy to follow suit. It was a glorious morning, sunny and clear, the bright blue of the sky flecked with fleecy white clouds racing past on the wings of the fresh westerly breeze which ruffled the waters of the bay into foam-streaked azure. The surf was thundering in on the rocky beach, and as far as the eye could see the blue water stretched before them with the white sails of the inshore fishermen's dories dotting the watery expanse. A large, lumber-laden square-rigger was standing out of Anchorville Bay, and her dingy topgallant sails could be seen flapping in the fresh breeze as she made sail. Yes, it was a grand morning, when one felt glad to be alive, but to Shorty's jaded soul these things appealed not.

"Boy," began his uncle, whittling away, "do you know that you are goin' a bit too far?"

Shorty said nothing, and the captain continued:

"Yesterday's shine in th' schoolroom has jest about cooked your goose, my son. A fine character you're a-makin' for yerself. First dodgin' school, then smokin', then drivin' that ox, fightin' with one o' yer schoolmates right afore my eyes, an' finishin' up by stealin' a bottle o' rum an' gittin' drunk. Boy! what d'ye think ye're a-comin' to?"

Shorty made no answer, and his uncle proceeded: "You don't seem to understand what ye're doin'. Think o' yer ma. Ain't she got a bird of a son for people t' be gossipin' about? I don't mind yer tricks, but what I mind is yer sneakin' off an' drinkin' that rum. What made ye broach that liquor? Did ye go down a-purpose?"

"No, sir. I jest blundered in thar' with Lem."

"Who broached the bottle first, you or Lem," queried the skipper. "Give me a straight bill now—no yarns. Was it you?"

"No!" answered the boy. The big skipper seemed relieved.

"Then I cal'late 'twas Lem that found the rum, eh?"

Frank nodded. It went sorely against his grain to inform on his chum, but there was an underlying severity in his uncle's questions which brooked no subterfuge.

"What did ye do when ye broached the stuff? Sit down an' enjoy it?"

"No," replied Shorty. "Me'n Frank had a try t' see who c'd drink th' most at one gulp."

"Huh." Uncle Jerry nodded grimly. Staring hard into the blue-grey eyes of his nephew as if to read his soul, he suddenly enquired:

"D'ye like th' taste o' that stuff, Frank?"

"No, I don't," replied the boy firmly. "Sooner hev lemonade or apple cider."

Uncle Jerry grunted again, and seemed to be debating in his mind what to say next. Picking up the stick, he commenced whittling deliberately.

"Boy," he said at last, "I want t' tell ye a story, an' you listen. See? Once there was a very fine man—name was Frank too— a fisherman he was, an' a big, handsome, strappin' feller—smart as a steel trap, an' a great favorite with all th' gangs what sailed with him. He had only one bad fault, and that was a kinder love for rum. He warn't a soaker, ye know, only he jest liked t' have a jug allus handy so that he c'd git a nip whenever he felt like it. He was a smart man, as I said afore, an' got on t' command his own vessel. He was more careful in them days, went easy on th' booze, but as he got on, his wife c'd see that it was gittin' a hold on him. Now he was a good feller, an' only laughed at his wife when she'd tell him about th' drinkin', but th' men as sailed with him was beginnin' t' talk aroun' th' ports about th' rum their skipper took t' sea with him. He'd stay sober at home, an' be half drunk all th' time at sea, and it warn't long afore this skipper an' his wife hed a quarrel. Then he goes off on a fishin' trip, an' when they got their salt wet they swung off for home, but not afore th' skipper takes a shoot inter Sant' Pierre for a little rum. It was breezin' up for a proper November blow when they left Sant' Pierre, but th' skipper, he started broachin' his liquor an' wouldn't take notice o' signs, an' swinging his whole four lowers, he starts running for Glo'ster afore a no'the-easter. All that day they carried their kites—even though it was blowin' a breeze o' wind with rain an' snow at times—an' when th' gang asks th' skipper t' shorten sail he only laughs them out of it an' passes his jugs aroun'. Purty soon half o' th' crowd were feelin' good an' not carin' a hoot for anythin'. Th' skipper had been below drinkin' all day, an' he gave th' course for t' raise Cape Sable 'thout botherin' t' check it up by th' log or lead. As I said, it was blowin' some, an' thick o' rain an' snow, an' long about two in th' mornin' they found themselves gittin' nervous as to their whereabouts.

"Th' skipper was still purty full, an' when th' gang asks him about haulin' up for a cast, he jest laughs, an' he was for broachin' another bottle when th' vessel hit th' Sable Island No'th-East Bar. She had all four lowers flyin', so she struck hard, an' with a howlin' gale drivin' a wild sea on th' lee shore where they lay, th' vessel soon went t' pieces, but before she went, ten o' her crowd went too. Jest fancy, boy! Ten men—all friends o' th' skipper—droppin' from th' riggin' inter th' sea an' drownin' afore his eyes. The captain knew it was his fault—knew that these men had bin sacrificed through his rum-swiggin', an' he had t' hang on t' his vessel's cross-trees an' watch 'em drop into th' sea. He h'ard them prayin' for their wives an' children, an' with never a word t' say to him they'd let go an' drop. Ten o' them he saw go out that night, an' then he goes himself. All through a little nip o' rum, Frankie! Eleven good men drowned, an' many a widow an' orphan t' mourn them; D'ye know who that skipper was, Frankie?"

"No," replied the boy in horrified wonder.

Slowly and quietly the fisherman spoke. "Frankie, it was your own father!"

"My father?" cried the boy incredulously. There was a trembling of his lips and a suspicious mistiness in his eyes. He swallowed hard upon a lump which rose in his throat, and his uncle regarded him with a sympathetic gaze strangely out of keeping with his burly, weather-beaten appearance. "Will you want t' tech liquor agen, Frank, after what I've told ye?"

"Never!" replied the boy vehemently, and his uncle believed him.

"Now, son, I've jest a few more words I want t' say t' ye. Frank, you've got t' stick t' school, an' quit this dodgin' an' skulkin' game. I want ye to, an' yer ma wants ye. It's for yer own good t' git all th' l'arning ye kin, even ef you don't think so. Now take me, f'rinstance, I kin only jest sign my own name, an' I hev t' do all my figgerin' an' tallyin' by notches an' strokes——"

"Aye," interrupted Shorty, "but you're a high-line fisherman all th' same, Uncle. I'm a-goin' fishin' when I git old enough, so what's th' use o' l'arnin' a lot o' stuff that ain't no good a-fishin'?"

"Now that's whar' you make a big mistake, son," returned his uncle. "I may be a high-line fishin' skipper an' all that, but all th' same I wish I had had a decent eddication. I kain't pass a pleasant hour in readin' a noospaper; I kain't figure up a simple sum 'thout cal'latin' on my fingers; I'm cut off from writin' a letter—things what any T Wharf lumper kin do, an' here I am, forty-two years of age, an' more ignorant than you are. Many's th' time, Frank, I'd wish t' God I c'd ha' had th' chance t' git th' schoolin' pou're gittin', an' here you are deliberately chuckin' yer chances away! Boy, ye must be crazy! D'ye think yer mother hez no pride? D'ye think she want ter hev a son what kin hardly sign his own name? An' let me tell ye, if I'd ha' bin eddicated I c'd be in a better position than I am to-day. I c'd ha' bin runnin' a plant o' my own instead o' runnin' a vessel, but there's whar' I've got t' stick until I die. Livin' a dog's life at sea 'count o' knowin' nawthin'. You're goin' a-fishin', ye say, but ye want t' be somethin' more'n a fisherman all yer life—at least I hope so—but, mark my words, boy, ef ye keep up th' game ye're playin' now, ye'll pass yer days as a poor, miserable, ignorant fisherman, fiit only for baitin' up an' haulin' trawls. By th' Lord Harry, Frank, ef ye only knew what I'd give t' go t' school again, ye'd never be in a hurry t' git away from it." Shorty was listening with bowed head, and with his bare toes he was nervously tracing patterns in the dust. His uncle regarded him with earnest eyes.

"Frank!" he resumed, after a pause. "What are you a-goin' t' do?"

The boy looked up gravely. He had never heard his uncle speak like this before, and it impressed him. "I'll go t' school, Uncle," he said finally.

"An' l'arn all ye kin?"

"An' l'arn all I kin, Uncle!"

(To be continued.)

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"Just Wumman."

It is odd that two of the most appealing and renowned Scottish songs of lowly life—songs that anyone not informed to the contrary would surely guess to be true folk songs born of the people—were written by titled ladies. Auld Robin Gray was written by Lady Anne Barnard, and Caller Herrin' by Lady Nairne. Both are admirable achievements of sympathetic imaginative art; yet the shrewd Laird of Dalziel was able to pick a flaw in Auld Robin Gray, as Lady Anne herself has appreciatively recorded. She was the eldest daughter of the Earl of Balcarres, and never a professional writer; and she tried hard to preserve her anonymity. But in the end the immense vogue of the song proved too much for her.

"I was persecuted to avow whether I had written it or not, or where I got it," she wrote in 1823. "However, I kept my counsel in spite of the gratification of seeing a reward of twenty guineas offered in the newspapers to the person who should ascertain the point past doubt. I must also mention the Laird of Dalziel's advice, who in a tete-a-tete afterwards said, "My dear, the next time you sing that song try to change the words a wee bit and, instead of singing, "To make the croun a pund young Jamie gaed to sea," say "To make it twenty merks"; for a Scottish pound is but twenty pence, and Jamie was na scuh a gowk as to leave Jennie and gang to sea to lessin his gear. It is that line,' whispered he, which tells me that sang was written by some lassie that didna ken the value of the Scot's money quite so well as an auld writer in the town of Edinbro' would have kent it.' "

Lady Nairne made no such slip when she was moved to composition by the cry of the fishwives passing along George Street, Edinburgh, burdened with their creels of fish that weighed from one and a half to two hundred pounds and calling musically the traditional words, 'Caller (fresh) herrin'! Caller herrin'! Wha'll buy my caller herrin'?"

She set the words of her song to an old familiar tune of Neil Gow, and they caught the public heart and fancy at once. There is no smallest false touch of ladyship to mar the unforgetable appeal of the fishermen's wives:

Wha'll buy my called herrin'?
Oh, ye may ca' them vulgar farin';
Wives and mithers, maist despairin',
Ca' them lives o' men!

"Aye," said a Scotch fishwife with whom a tourist chanced to fall into a conversation in which Lady Nairne was mentioned. "Aye, ma'am, she was a leddy, nae doot; but the hairt in her was juist wumman!"

Why Stars Twinkle.

If you look at the heavens on a clear, starry night, you will notice that some of the myriad bright points twinkle, whilst others shine with a perfectly steady light.

Those which shine with unwavering brilliance are the planets, worlds like our own earth, which revolve as it does, round the sun. But the twinklers are stars. They are themselves distant suns, many of them bigger than our own.

Our sun, for instance, is 800,000 miles in diameter, but Betelgeuse, a star in the great constellation of Orion, is no less than 200,000,000 miles across.

Now, why should planets shine steadily and stars twinkle? Some people are satisfied with the answer that twinkling is caused by the mistiness of our atmosphere. But that is no explanation at all, for planets must send their rays through just the same amount of atmosphere as stars.

The real reason is twofold. In the first place, the stars are thousands and thousands of times more distant than the planets, so that their rays have to pass over far greater distances of space to reach us. Now, though there is no air in space, there are countless millions of tiny bodies constantly travelling through it. Some are no bigger than pebbles others are of great size It is those bodies passing through the rays of a star that are the main cause of its twinkling.

The other reason is that, whilst the planets have no light of their own, but merely reflect the sun's brilliance, the stars are always sending out their own light, which is more brilliant at some times than at others.

Wind and Weeds.

In Sumatra the length of time a widow must wear her weeds is determined by the wind. After her husband's death she plants a flagstaff at her door, upon which a flag is hoisted. While the flag remains untorn by the wind etiquette forbids that she should marry. But as soon as a rent appears, no matter how tiny, she can lay aside her weeds.

Gigantic Trees.

Two gigantic kauri trees have been discovered in New Zealand, each estimated to contain as much sawable lumber as three acres of an average European forest.

Christening the Months.

The names of the months, as we know them today, date back to the days of the Caesars, and several of them show the influence of the belief in pagan deities.

January is named for Janus, the two-faced god, in order to signify the idea that this month looked forward to the new year as well as back upon the old. February takes its name from the Latin februare, to purify, because in that month ceremonies of funeral purification were held in Rome. March was called after Mars, the god of war, while April was derived from the Latin aperire, to open, this being the period of the yar when trees commence to bud. May was named for Maia, the goddess of growth, and June, July and August perpetuate the names of three of Rome's famous men—Junius, Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar.

As the Roman calendar originally began with March, the month which we know as September was the seventh, and owes its name to this fact—as do October, November and December, which were to the earlier Romans the eighth, ninth, and tenth months.

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Teacher's Symptoms.

The bright ten-year-old Clarence was summoned into the maternal presence and his mother said to him:

"Clarence, what became of that little pie I made for you as a treat yesterday? Did you eat it?"

"No, mother," said Clarence with a grin. "I gave it to my teacher at school instead."

Mother beamed.

"That was very generous of you, Clarence. And did your teacher eat it?"

"I think she did," answered Clarence. "She wasn't at school to-day."

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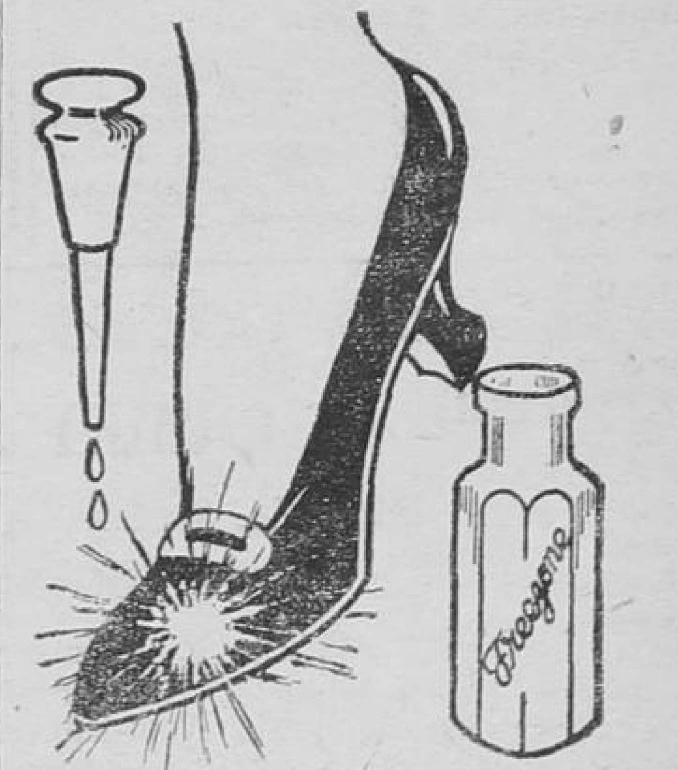

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