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BLUE WATER

A TALE OF THE DEEP
SEA FISHERMEN

BY FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE.

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How the Story Started.

Frank Westhaver, known as "Shorty," lives at Long Cove on Bay of Fundy coast with his mother and his uncle, Captain Jerry Clark. He and his chum Lemuel Ring, drink a bottle of rum, whereupon Frank's uncle tells him the story of his father's fondness for drink and how the "Grace Westhaver" went down off Sable Island with ten of her crew and her skipper. This has the desired effect upon Frank. He finishes school with credit to himself and spends the summer as an apprentice to "Long Dick" Jennings. In August his uncle takes him on a fishing trip as spare hand aboard the Kastalia. While at anchor in Canso after the first fishing trip, Frank rescues a French boy from ill-treatment by his fellow-sailors. The two boys try their hand at dory fishing.

CHAPTER SIX—(Cont'd.)

Shipping the oars, the boys pulled away from the anchored schooner in the direction indicated. How beautiful the vessel looked as she rode lazily over the sunlit swell! The long bowsprit, clipper bow, slender topmasts scraped and varnished with their gilded trucks and colored wind-vanes or "highfliers" fluttering lazily in the morning air, the beautiful run and sheer of the black hull—riding deeper now with the weight of the fish below

—all served in a distinctive way to enhance the trim appearance of the able Bank schooner. The sea itself was like glass and dotted around the horizon by the tiny dories which strung around the circle of blank ocean like the rim of a wheel with the vessel as a common centre. Far away to the south the sails of another schooner could be discerned, while a smudge of smoke to the north betokened the presence of some ocean liner plowing her appointed course. Impressed with the beauty of it all—the immensity of the ocean and the frailness of their tiny eighteen-foot dory, the boys pulled silently, with the ripple of their passage and the working of the oars against the thole-pins alone breaking the quiet of the sleeping sea. About a mile from the vessel Shorty unshipped his oars. "Vast rowin!" he grunted. Jules backwatered, and the dory floated motionless.

"Gimme the end line o' that first tub!"

Jules cast the tub bucket adrift and handed the looped end of the baited and coiled trawl to his companion, who proceeded to make it fast to the small buoy anchor.

"All right, Sabot. Ship yer oars an' pull down to'ards Westley Canson thar." And Shorty hove the buoy, with its black ball inserted, over into the water, while, as Jules rowed, the buoy-line was paid out. When the line had snaked over the gunwale and the buoy floated, black ball upraised, far astern, Frank hove the anchor out, and, standing with the tub before him, he threw the baited line into the sea by means of a heaving stick—the baited hooks and their dependent gangins coming clear of the main or back line as he dexterously whirled the line out of the coil in the tub. With the adept manner of an old trawler, Shorty hove the gear out without a single snarl—twenty-one hundred feet of line with six hundred and seventy hooks on gangins or snoods spliced into it requires some skill to handle—and when at last the gear had been "shot," he grunted a "vast rowin'" to his dory-mate and made the "tub end" of the trawl fast to the second anchor and threw it over.

Riding to the riding of the last anchor, they lazed away the time for twenty minutes in order to give the fish prowling over the bottom, two hundred and seventy feet below, a chance to sample the succulent herring and squid bait, which, oily, tasty, and glittering, was well calculated to lure any ordinary cod to bite. Jules and Shorty, with the ease and abandon of hardened trawlers, stretched themselves out in the bow and stern of the dory and lit up their pipes.

Jules, lolling over the bow, was the first to speak. "O-ah, Shortee!" he cried suddenly. "Regardez le requin! Oh, le gros requin!" And he pointed into the cool green depths below them. "What?" ejaculated the other. "Rekin? What th' deuce is that? Oh, yes, a shark. Gee, ain't he a brute!" A long, rakish black body, fully eight feet in length, floated in the water just below the dory. The dorsal and tail fins quivered slightly, and a wicked blue eye winked as the boys looked over the dory gunwale.

"Look at th' blighter winkin'," cried Shorty. "He's awaitin' 'til we start a-haulin' th' trawl, then he'll make a snap for a fish. Gimme th' fork an' I'll poke him, th' dirty blue dog!" The pew, or pitchfork was handed over, and Shorty poised it for a lunge. "Steady now, not a word!" hissed the boy, and his arm drove down like lightning.

Bang! There came a smack on the dory bottom which almost stove the thin planks, and the water swirled in foam as the shark, with the fork imbedded in his eye, lashed around. Shorty yanked the pew clear, and Mister Shark sunk down into the depths below. "That got him," growled the harpooner jubilantly. The French lad laughed nervously. He didn't like sharks, and said so.

"I no lak dem requin. One man I know trawl in doree got hand bit off by requin one tam. Me much afraid." Shorty spat contemptuously. "Tcha! they ain't no 'count. I've caught 'em on the trawl plenty o' times up th' Bay Shore. Me'n Long Dick bez sprits'yarded them lots o' times. Yank their jaws open an' jam a piece o' wood 'cross their mouth so's they can't

shut it. They're a pest—gittin' in among yer gear an' cuttin' it all t' pieces. Me'n Dick lost three tubs o' trawl one afternoon 'count o' sharks." Sh-hu-u-uh! A great black bulk broke water a scant cable's length away, and a jet of steam-like vapor shot into the air. "Whale!" cried Shorty. "Baleine!" piped Jules, and they watched the huge mammal up-end with a lazy roll and sound for the depths again after striking the water a resounding smack with his enormous tail. Sh-hu-u-uh! Another huge black head appeared, blew a jet of vapor, and sounded, and almost instantly a whole school of a dozen or more broke the glassy mirror of the sea.

"Look! a hull fleet o' them!" shouted Shorty excitedly. "Gosh! Warn't that a monster! Geewhillikins! they're in among th' gear. Look at Westley shoutin' an' wavin' his oars! Thar's Jud Haskins doin' th' same. They're foul o' his gear. Look at his dory! Look at him tearin' through th' water! Ah, he's swampin'—no, he's cut adrift—"

The gambolling school were breaking water all around, and the men were standing up in the dories shouting and yelling. Jud Haskins was fouled, sure enough, and to save being towed under by the entangled Leviathan he had cut his trawl. With the shouting and yelling the huge mammals, more frightened than the men were, plunged for the depths, and when they broke water again the school were far to windward and well clear. It was but the happening of a minute, and all that remained as evidence of the incident was the sight of Haskins and his dory-mate rowing up to the weather buoy to pick up the end of their parted trawl.

"Waal, ain't this a day, Sabot?" ejaculated Shorty. "Sharks an' then whales. Wonder what'll happen next?" He gravely stowed his pipe away, and shipped the gurdy winch across the bow gunwales of the dory. "Callate we'll haul th' gear now, Sabot. I'll gurdy up the anchor an' you coil the line as it comes in."

The anchor line, wound up by the little hand-winch, came in quickly, and in a few minutes the anchor with the end line of the trawl showed at the rail.

"Ketch hold!" The boy unshipped the winch and placed the hardwood pulley or roller into the dory gunwale, and while Jules hung on to the trawl, he slipped the woollen circlets or "nippers" over his hands and grasped the line. "Now for th' haul! Git yer anchor out th' way, Sabot, an' bring th' tub over her an' coil th' gear as I haul it in. Savvy?"

"I savvy," answered the other, obeying the commands.

"Now!" And Shorty commenced heaving the twenty-one hundred foot length of heavy trawl over the roller, while Jules, immediately aft of him, coiled the gear back in the tub again.

A good hundred feet of the line was hauled in, and the first dozen hooks came up with the baits still on them. "Good sign," grunted Shorty. "Allus more on th' trawl than comes up on th' first shot o' gear. Ah, here he comes! We ain't skunk dory, anyway. Stand by t' gaff any that falls off. Uh!" And a huge cod came limply up to the gunwale. Grasping the line off the roller, the boy swung the fish inboard by a dexterous turn of the wrist, and the jerk caused the hook to break free, while the fish flopped into the pen prepared for it in the bottom of the dory.

Hauling steadily with the old fisherman's pull, Shorty braced his feet firmly, and grasping the wet, hard cotton line with his nipped hands, pulled the trawl over the clacking lignum-vitae wheel with but a momentary pause when he lifted an extra heavy fish over the gunwale and snapped it off into the pen. Jules behind him, coiled deftly, and broke off only to gaff an escaping fish or to twist the hook out of a cod with the gob stick when it proved too much for his mate to slat clear.

It took the boys a good hour and a half to haul the gear, and when they brought the last buoy aboard Shorty was dripping perspiration with his exertions. The sky had become overcast in the meantime and the dory rolled over a great swell, which tossed them upon its crest and then dropped them into a valley of limpid green. Shorty loosened his oilskin coat and glanced over the fish in the dory bottom. "Callate we ain't done so had for our first set Bankin'. Thar's a good eighty or a hundred large fish thar." Now for th' second tub. Sling the other gear out th' way, an' gimme a drink from th' dory jar beside you." Jules understood hardly a word of what his companion was saying, yet with wonderful boyish intuition he knew almost exactly what he was asked to do.

"Cast th' tub geket off now an' heave out that gear, Sabot. I'll row this time—"

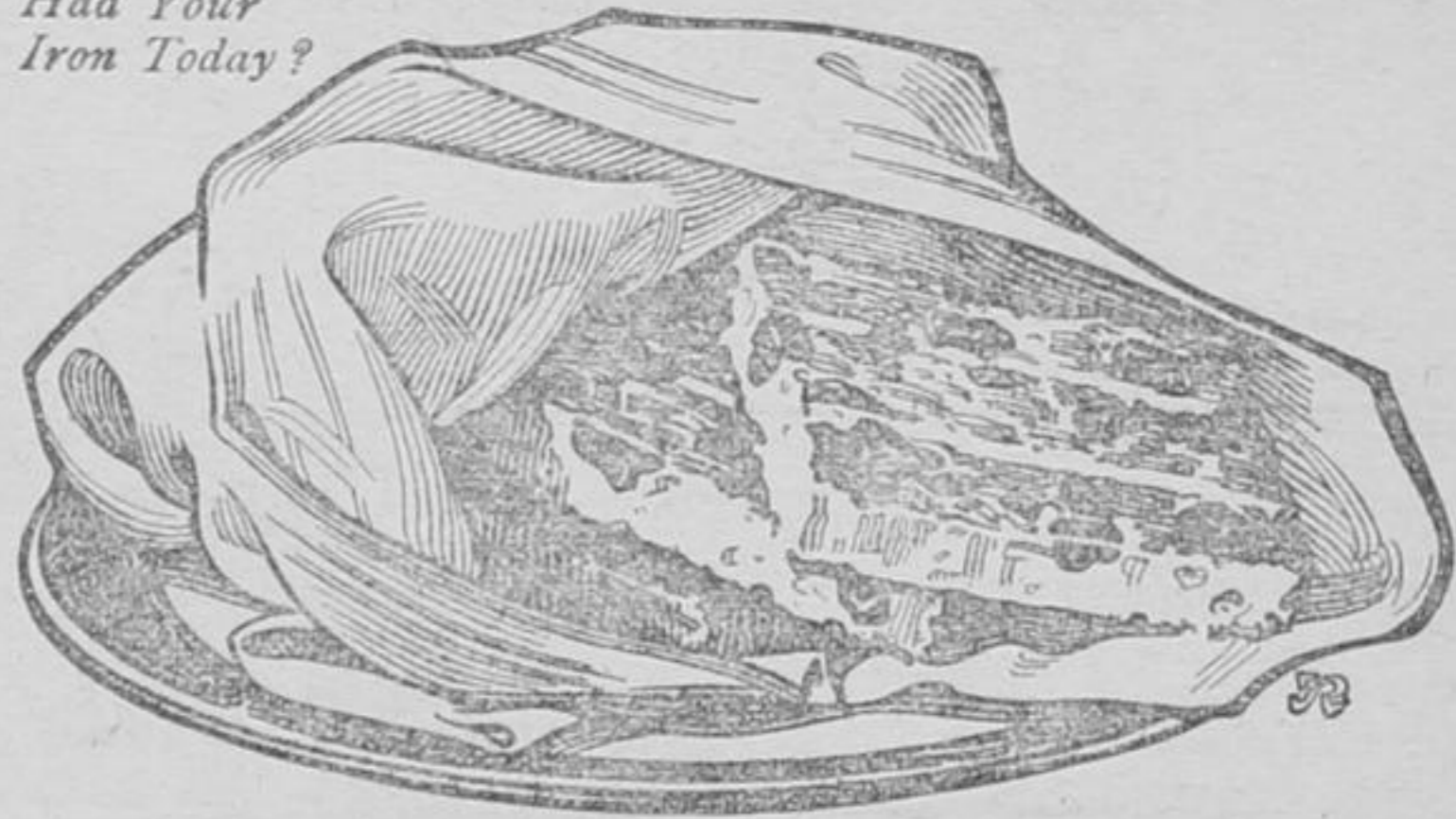
Bang! The report came from the schooner, and a gippy sack fluttered from the signal halliards at the topmasthead.

"What's dat?" cried Jules. "Th' queer thing's h'isted!" replied the other. "Tie up yer tub again an' skip yer oars. Were wanted back aboard."

From all points of the compass the dories could be seen pulling towards the schooner, and when the boys ranged alongside in the swell they were greeted with shouts and jests from the men already aboard and those in the dories waiting to lay alongside and pitch out their fish. "How many d'ye git, Shorty?" "High dory, I callate!" "Ain't no slinks or skate among that set o' your'n, is they?" "Back achin'!" And so on.

When it came their turn to pitch out, Jules hove the painter up to the

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cook, and they lurched alongside the rolling vessel, while Shorty hove the tubs of trawl up to the men aboard. Uncle Jerry glanced down into their dory. "Good boys," he said. "You got quite a little haul thar. Mighty good for one tub." And both youngsters felt proud.

It takes quite a bit of strength and dexterity to stand in a lurching dory and pitchfork heavy fish over the rail of a schooner rolling and diving in a seaway, but Shorty and his small dory-mate did the job quite creditably. When the work was finished they threw their forks aboard, and, watching their chance when the dory rose on a swell, they leaped for the rail and tumbled aboard, while the men hauled their dory forward to the midship rail and hove it up into the nest. (To be continued.)

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"How about me?" groaned Sauce Pan from a corner. "Mistress says she's ashamed to have me in the kitchen. Once I was just as shiny and silvery as Coffee Pot. I wish I were like you, Double Boiler. You enameled ware fellows are always so clean. You are the favorites in this kitchen."

"Cheer up," squeaked the enameled ware cup with a sleepy yawn. "I heard Mistress say today she is going to replace all you fellows with SMP Enameled Ware utensils."

"She's wise," admitted the dirty-faced Sauce Pan sadly. And silence descended on the kitchen.

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