

DECLARATION BY THE MATE OF THE "ROSENEATH" (1882)

Information has been received at Irvine by Mr Hall, late master of the Glasgow barque Roseneath, which foundered in the Straits of Magellan in May last, that the first officer of the ship, in charge of the second boat, who was supposed to have perished, had been picked up by a Pacific steamer, and was on his voyage home. This officer, whose name is Samson, has since arrived in London. It should be stated that the captain and Mrs Hall, with seven of the crew, were picked up by a passing vessel, after being seven days at sea in an open boat; and, as nothing was heard of the other boat or its five occupants for months, they were naturally given up for lost, a presumption which, in the main, now turns out to have been too well founded. One of the party, however, the first officer, Mr Samson, had the good fortune to escape from a terrible position, and has at length found his way back to his native land, after undergoing most painful and perilous experiences. His statement is as follows:—

"My name is Charles Samson, and I am thirty-four years of age. I belong to Portsmouth, and have been seafaring since 1861. I joined the Roseneath on April 10th, 1880, in London, as chief mate. She belongs to Messrs Hatfield, Cameron, and Co., of Glasgow, owners of the 'Bay' line. The barque, which was of 622 tons register, was built in Quebec in 1873. On my joining the vessel we went to Granton for a cargo, and took it to Buenos Ayres; from there we went to Java, and thence to Boston with a cargo of sugar, calling in at Port Natal in distress. From Boston we went to Georgia, New Brunswick, for a load of timber, which we conveyed from that place to Buenos Ayres. From that port we proceeded to Mejillones [port in northern Chile, Ed.], whence we took our departure on April 11th, 1882, with a cargo of grain [actually, guano, Ed.] for Liverpool. We experienced fine weather up to May 6th, when heavy gales set in from N.N.W., continuing until the 10th of the same month, when the ship had to be hove to. In doing that she sprang a leak, and started her sternpost.

On May 12th -- two days later — the barque was making so much water that we had to abandon her— she was, in fact, sinking. We took to the boats, of which there were two. The captain, Mr John Macmillan Ball, went into the long boat with his wife and his child — a little girl about two years and a half old — the boatswain (John Poole), the steward, and four able seamen. There was none too much time for getting into the boats, as night was coming on and the ship making water rapidly. There were two

bags of bread and several tins of preserved meat put into the captain's boat. I did not notice whether any water was put in, but plenty could be caught, as there was rain and snow. I have heard since that the captain and those with him were picked up seven days later, only one of his party having died from the exposure.

I took to the pinnace. I had with me the carpenter, two able seamen, and one ordinary seaman. I took two bags of bread, several tins of preserved meat, and one bucket of water on board. When we pushed off from the foundering ship we must have been about $54\frac{1}{2}$ South and $74\frac{1}{2}$ West; at all events, that was the position when I last took observations — at noon. It was nearly four o'clock when we found ourselves obliged to shove off from the ship on account of the boat being stove in. There was about tea feet of water in the barque when we abandoned her, but all her masts and spars were standing, and she was hove to. My boat drifted away to the southward, and in the haze we lost sight of the barque before she foundered, and also of the long boat, in charge of Captain Hall.

We made for the land, which we reached the following day, May 13th, but although anxious to find a place to haul the boat up, so that I might patch her up, as she had been badly stove in, I was unable then to do so. Next day, however (May 14th), I did succeed in doing this, but we thought it advisable to launch her again, and pull southward, intending to make for Cape Horn. All this time we were suffering dreadfully from cold and exposure, but our stock of provisions remained nearly intact.

We went on this way for three days, until, on May 17th, we fell in with three canoes manned by Indians. They gave us chase, and there being no wind we could not get along. I noticed that the canoes were each built of three pieces of wood — a bottom and two sides fastened together. There were about five men and two women in each. Two of the canoes had European-made oars. We were pulling with two blades of oars — that was all we had. We rowed as fast as we could, but the Indians soon came up to us, shouting and gesticulating for us to stop. They had fires in their canoes, made of a mossy substance, for it was very cold, it being then in the dead of winter, and there were thin sheets of ice upon the small inlets.

The Indians soon caught up to us, and came swarming into the pinnace, The sea was smooth at that time, I gave them some biscuits and tobacco, and I judged from their manner that they were friendly. After remaining an

hour on the boat, they turned forwards their canoes, and waved their hands, as if to wish us good-bye. They were apparently just about to step into their canoes when some of the women pushed into their hands axes, which had been previously concealed, and in a moment, before I could realise what was happening, they turned upon my four companions and killed them.

One of the Indians had been armed with, instead of an axe, a spear about eight inches in length attached to a stick. With this he struck one of my crew, a Frenchman, the spear entered his eye, and the point of it came out at the back of his skull. Another of my mates had his face chopped clean off. I cannot tell the particular nature of the wounds of the other two, but all four were killed instantaneously as it were, partly, perhaps through being in such an exhausted state when attacked. I was not struck. They apparently designed not to touch me, and afterwards I thought this might be because I had made them presents.

The bottom of our boat was full of blood and water. The Indians knelt on the dead bodies to strip off their clothing, which was not easy, the flesh being much swollen. This done, they threw the corpses into the sea, and rowed the boat to shore with me in it, their women taking charge of the canoes. Having hauled the boat on the beach, they made me disembark, and then followed my example. Afterwards they stripped me of most of my clothes, motioning me to stand still, and whilst I did so they turned the boats upside down and lit a fire.

The Indians were perfectly naked, except that the men had a covering round their loins, and the women sealskins over their backs. They were all copper-coloured, and ranged from 4ft. 6in. to 5ft. in height, being very stout in proportion to their stature. They slept near the shore that night, compelling me by signs to remain with them, although, of course, I could not understand their language. This was on one of the Terra del Fuego islands, which abounds with rats about the size of English cats. Early in the morning the Indians took to their canoes again, and rowed about, apparently in search of adventures, and to gather limpets from the rocks, these being, as far as I could see, their chief food, except when they managed to catch a seal. I lived principally on mussels; I had seal flesh only once or twice. At night we went on shore again, and my captors made a wigwam, in which we all slept together men, women, children, and dogs.

This kind of life continued from day to day. They were always on the move during daylight, and every night settled down in a fresh place. Before going to sleep the Indians always smoked. Generally they made pipes of a peculiar kind of seaweed found in the Straits of Magellan, with the quills of penguins for mouthpieces. They first put the tobacco in a big mussel shell and bake it into a fine powder, in which condition they smoke it. After taking four or five draughts their eyeballs project and turn upwards into their heads, their lower jaw falls as if they were paralysed, and they vomit horribly. Men, women, and children all seemed to indulge in this practice. There were only about half as many women as men. These people first took me northward and then returned southward through some narrow strait. After a time they gave me a jacket in place of the one they had taken from me.

When I had been living with them for about twenty five days, a party of them went off one night with my boat. Next morning they returned with a whaleboat in tow and a Portuguese on board. This man afterwards told me that the Indians had captured him in the same way as they did me, and that they had murdered all the rest of his crew, In fact, we saw the stripped corpses the next day when we were taken to an opposite island to fetch some provisions; and I ascertained that they had enticed the crew on shore there, and then assassinated them.

Two days later a party of the tribe brought an Indian sailor in a canoe, and I learnt from him by signs, for I could not understand his language, that he, too, belonged to a shipwrecked party, all of whom, except himself, had been treacherously murdered, so it would seem as if these savages always spare one of their victims. I can't account for this, unless it is because they wish to get some reward from the ocean steamers, which I know do sometimes give them tobacco and provisions for taking care of shipwrecked mariners.

Soon after the arrival of this poor Indian sailor we were all taken up through rocks and shoals towards the northward, to a point, as near as I can guess, about twenty-five miles from Sandy Point [Punta Arenas, Ed.], in the Straits of Magellan. Almost as soon as we arrived there I sighted a steamer, and asked the Indians to take me on board of her, but they refused. A day or two after I saw another homeward bound, and begged them to row me out, but they refused, and got behind an island to avoid

our being seen.

We had been in the Straits of Magellan about four days when another gang of Indians of a different tribe altogether came and built their wigwams alongside of us, and there was a great deal of smoking and chattering among them all night. Next morning I was down on the beach when this fresh gang came down to launch their canoes. Up to this time I had been in daily dread of being murdered like my comrades, and, having lived for weeks on mussels and an occasional taste of seal fish, I had become so weak that I could hardly stand.

This second gang of Indians, however, had been making signs of friendship to me, and as I found that my original captors were not disposed to let me get on any passing steamer, I thought I would try my luck with the new party. Therefore, when they were about to go off in their canoes, I motioned them to take my own boat, which they did, and I got into it with them. They put off in such a hurry that they left one of their gang behind, but he jumped into the water, and swam out 200 yards, and rejoined them in the boat. He had no sooner done this than the other tribe caught sight of us, and they set up such a yelling as was terrible to listen to — men, women, children, and dogs all joining in. They at once launched their canoes and put out after us but they were too late, for I hauled the mast and went out into the middle of the stream, and made for the strait.

There were nineteen in the boat besides myself. The Indian sailor was with us, but we had been obliged to leave the Portuguese behind us, as he was too exhausted to move near to the boat. Having left our partners behind, we made through the narrows, and were knocking about for ten days in search of a steamship. During that time I suffered terribly from the cold. At dusk every night we went on shore, and at daylight launched the boat again and went out to look about and to gather shellfish from the rocks. At last we sighted the Pacific liner Aconcagua, which stopped and took me on board, and conveyed me to Valparaiso, from whence I was sent home to England in the steamship Galatia by the British Consul.

I was treated very kindly by the passengers on board the Aconcagua. Of course, I have lost everything, and when I applied to the Board of Trade for my certificate to be given up to me, I found I had been reported as dead. I shall, however, get the certificate back again after certain

formalities have been gone through, and don't suppose I shall have any difficulty in getting employment.

The gang of Indians to whom I owe my release belong to the Patagonian side. I believe the steamers of the North Pacific are in the habit of stopping to conciliate the tribes by gifts of food and tobacco, with the view of inducing them to save the lives of any poor fellows who may be wrecked. I expect it was on this account they brought me to the Aconcagua to be taken on; and it shows what a little good treatment will do, for, from all that I know, I believe the occasional treachery of these natives towards the white men has been brought about by the ill-treatment they have had to put up with from the whites."

DECLARATION BY CAPTAIN WILLIS OF THE "ALLEN GARDINER"

The following is the statement of Captain Willis, of the Mission yawl Allen Gardiner, taken at the Falkland Islands, relative to the discovery of nine bodies belonging to the San Raphael [sic], of Liverpool, burnt at sea, off Cape Horn, on the 4th of January last:—

That on the 23rd of April last [1876], I was at the mission station, Ushuwia [Ushuaia, Ed.], Terra del Fuego, when a number of Indians, in 18 canoes, arrived from New Year's Sound, Hoste Island, and reported as follows:—

Some time last summer, a canoe was passing from Rous Island to Black Head, for seal. The Indians saw something white lying on the ground, and a flag flying (two miles inside the Black Head), but no sign of life or smoke. They did not land, as they thought it a trap laid by the natives of Waterman Island, with whom they had quarrelled. Twenty-one days after other canoes came, and, these things being still visible, three men and women went in a canoe to the place; the men landed whilst the women kept the canoe off the rocks. They found six corpses lying exposed, and under the white object, which turned out to be a boat sail, spread on some bushes, was a dead body and two men alive, one dying, the other just able to crawl about. The Indians removed the dead, and brought water and fire from their canoes for the living. They gave them water to drink and cooked them a shag to eat. They would have taken the strongest with them, but were unable to do so owing to the rugged nature of the coast. The Indians left, and did not return for some days, by the reason of bad weather. When they next visited the place the two survivors had died.

One of the natives offered a sovereign for food, a piece of Albert chain we bought from a child, and saw the face of a watch hanging from a woman's neck. After discharging our cargo of provisions, I, and the Rev. Mr. Bridges, determined to go to the place ourselves if the report was true. We left Ushuwia on the 26th, and took with us one of the natives from New Year's Sound, and two from the station. Tried to get by way of False Cape, but did not succeed, owing to the heavy weather. Returned to Ushuwia on the 6th of May, and sailed again on the 9th, going through the south-west arm of Beagle Channel and Talbot Passage. We arrived at Indian Cove on the 17th, and obtained assistance of two natives who

directed us to Rous Sound.

We landed on a headland two miles north of Black Head, Hoste Island, and then saw the bodies of eight men and one woman lying exposed on the open ground; the six found by the Indians appeared to have been placed two and two by the survivors, and the last three by the Indians. They were fully clothed; there was no mark of violence on the bodies; they were so much decomposed that it was impossible to remove them, so we covered them as they lay with turf. Many clothes and books were lying about. An epitome, Sailing Directions, bibles (mostly destroyed by wet), an Holosteric barometer, a portion of a chest, a bucket, some empty beef tins, a chart, and a note in pencil. In a bay about half a mile to the N. W., there was the remains of a boat, two lifebelts, and the name board of a ship, "San Raphael"; and some distance from this to the north of Hind Island we found a sextant, destroyed. On the inside of the box was written in pencil, "M'Adam, Balfour, Williamson, and Co."

On an islet in New Year's Sound, the Indians had hidden the chronometer, the binoculars on another a mile distant. The headland where the bodies of the poor creatures were found is about 250 feet high, and separated from the main island by a deep chasm some 50 feet wide. It was quite impossible for any one to pass on to the mainland, except by canoe or boat. If the unfortunate people had reached the main they might have lived for months on mussels, berries, and fungi. On the clothes lying about near the bodies were the names of seven — M'Adam, M. Proctor (Captain's wife), Reid, Stewart, Swift, Daly, and Umblant; the last name was on a bag. I did not search the clothes on the bodies — they were too much decomposed. I returned to Ushuwia, landed Mr. Bridges and the natives, and then sailed for the Falklands.

J. C. T. Willis, Master of the Allen Gardiner.

[COPY OF NOTE.]

Lat. 54 30 S., long. 71 W., Feb. 15, 1876.

Dear John, —When you receive this your mother and me will be no more. We have been 41 days on this desolate island on very low diet. Your mother and me are very weak. I am about blind; I can scarcely see the paper I am writing on. My watch and your mother's chain I give to Willie, my Albert to yourself, and you must wear your mother's ring; the earrings

for Jessy. My instruments, clothes, and gold watch, and £3 12s to assist in maintaining Willie, and I hope you will be as a father to him, kind, and giving him good advice; the furniture to yourself. There are the chronometers, one telescope, one night. The chronometer marked Webster, and telescope, you must take to the office, and you can see if there is any money due for me, if there is it will have to go for the maintenance of William, and his mother joins with me in hoping he will be a good boy and not forget his God, and we hope that you and Jessy may live long together in happiness and peace in fear of the Lord, and now we send you our last, kind, loving blessing, and may God bless you all is the sincerest wish of your parents.

James M'Adam.

To John Fleming, 84, Canterbury-street, Everton, Liverpool.

DECLARATION BY THE FIRST OFFICER OF THE "GOLDEN HIND"

From the New-Orleans Times, Jan. 9 [1873]

One of the most extraordinary instances of human privation on record has been brought to light through Mr. John Saville, first officer of the American ship Golden Hind, who reached this city from Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday. The wreck of the ship Golden Hind has already been recorded, but the unparalleled sufferings of the portion of the crew who yet survive, we believe has never yet been made public. In a long interview, yesterday, Mr. Saville detailed the fearful particulars, and we give the frightful story in his own words.

THE FIRST OFFICER'S NARRATIVE

"The American ship Golden Hind, Captain Benjamin F. Robbins, left New York on the 12th of February, on a voyage to San Francisco. When in the latitude of St. Catherine's, we experienced a series of westerly gales, which continued for nearly a month with great violence. On the 13th of June last, when on the west side of Patagonia, and at the Pacific entrance to the Straits of Magellan, the pintles and gudgeons of the rudder gave way, and it floated off. Three days were consumed in constructing a temporary one of spare spars. It lasted about a week, but in another heavy gale this was also carried away, and we drifted, at the mercy of the winds. On the second day after the last disaster the Golden Hind struck between two rocks, one forward, and one aft, on the western coast of Patagonia. Three boats were hurriedly prepared, the men put on extra suits of clothes, laid in a small quantity of provisions, and at 7 o'clock that evening lowered away. In the hurry of departure nearly all of our nautical instruments were left on board, and, in fact, many articles absolutely necessary. There were three boats lowered, the first under the command of Captain Robbins, the second commanded by myself, and the third in charge of Mr. Webb, the second mate. Each contained seven men. Mr Webb, asserting that he know the situation better than we did, parted company almost immediately, and it being then quite dark, we lay under the lee of the land until morning. The sea, at the time we left the ship, was breaking over her fore yard, and during the night she beat to pieces on the rocks.

The next morning the last vestige of the Golden Hind had disappeared,

and a search, which continued two days was made for the other boat, but no trace of her could be seen. We have long concluded that she was swamped, and that her entire crew were drowned. Upon examination it was found that we had a small box and a bag of hard-bread, the latter soaked with sea-water, about twenty cans of beef, a little tea and coffee. An allowance of one cracker to each man, and one can of beef to fourteen, was at first issued, but this speedily decreased to half a cracker, and finally we did not taste beef more than once a week.

A few days after we left the wreck the Captain's boat was swamped and we lost our compass, the only instrument we had, and a quantity of provisions. An attempt was made to reach Sandy Point, a Chilian convict settlement, and the coaling station of the Pacific mail steamers, about two-thirds of the way through the Straits of Magellan, but our course could only be determined by the sun and stars.

It was then Mid-Winter, the mountains along the coast were covered with snow and ice, and the mercury must have been several degrees below zero. We pulled close to the land, working all night in fair weather, and during a heavy blow landing and going into camp. There were plenty of scrub trees along the coast; and as we were provided with two hatchets and a good supply of matches, a fire was always to be procured. During these visits we secured quite a good supply of shell-fish resembling the muscle [mussel, Ed.]; but we found that this diet brought on constipation, and the entire party became unwell. For about twenty days the men held out admirably; but in the bitter cold a number were frost-bitten, and our legs and feet were terribly swollen.

On going into camp we constructed a tent of the boat's sail and a mizzen royal sail, with the oars. A fire was built in the centre, and, the fourteen men sat around it the night through. We suffered terribly from loss of sleep, as no one dared to remain away from the fire for fear of freezing to death, and the tent was too small to hold all in a reclining position. At the end of the twentieth day the general debility from insufficient food, and the extreme pain in our limbs rendered the progress slow, and we camped for several days at a time. The allowance of bread had been reduced to a quarter of a cracker a day, and very often the men did without for a day or two to help out the supply. Their conduct throughout the dreadful ordeal was most courageous. Every man rendered implicit obedience, and, although the ravages of hunger rendered each almost an animal, the

general welfare was never lost sight of.

Almost the entire month of July was spent in pulling in what we believed to be the direction to Sandy Point. The only human beings we met were an Indian and two squaws in a canoe. They treated us cordially, and willingly exchanged a duck for a small quantity of tobacco, but they had no other provisions. We had secured from the ship two rifles, and one of the crew shot a duck, but the powder became wet, and our weapons were useless. A dead duck, found amongst the rocks, was also secured and eaten, but, with the exception of the shell fish, this was the only food we secured.

In the latter part of July the weather became fearfully tempestuous, and, after several days of fruitless buffeting, we went into our last encampment. It was a terribly bleak and desolate spot, shut out from the sea by high cliffs, and filled with low stunted trees. We found, however, a few roots, some berries, and, strange to say, a little celery, and, not knowing whether the vegetables were poisonous or not, each man partook ravenously of whatever he could find. The high tides prevented our securing any shell-fish, and the few seals we saw were too timid to capture; but we secured water in abundance from the streams running down the mountain.

Here the men became seriously ill. Their legs were swollen to frightful proportions, but few could wear their boots, and a majority wandered about with their feet tied up in old cloth and pieces of canvas. Some, unable to walk at all, crawled about on their hands and knees. At length a man named White, a seaman, became delirious, and shortly afterwards died. The ground was so hardly frozen that it was impossible to dig a grave, so we carried the body a short distance from the tent, and laid it in the bushes. The next one attacked was a young fellow we called Dan — sailors, you know, never give their full names except on the articles — and he died within three hours after he became delirious. The carpenter, a man from Liverpool, was the next victim; then we lost Charley, a German seaman, and finally another sailor called Frank. All of them died within ten days of each other, and all were laid side by side out in the bushes. As each one left us, we took his clothes to keep the living ones warm, but during all those days not one of us had a mouthful of food.

At length the steward, taking one of the men out with him into the brush, returned with slices of meat, which were roasted over the fire and eagerly

devoured. We all of us know we were sustaining life on the bodies of our dead companions, but no man asked a question. Sometimes we had it boiled and sometimes roasted. It tasted something like beef, but it makes me shudder now to think of it.

When we had eaten almost all of the last body the schooner Eagle, of Port Stanley, Falkland Island, out seal-fishing, hove in sight. One of our men crawled up to the head of the rocks, and waving the American flag, with the union down, attracted their attention. They picked us up and treated us all with as great kindness as if we had been their own kindred. We found that we had pulled about two-thirds of the way through the Straits of Magellan, and were then within sixty miles of Sandy Point. There, after the third day, the Eagle landed us, and the Chilian Governor at once provided us with everything in the way of food and clothing we required. He would have sent us by the steamer to Valparaiso, but before she arrived the United States sloop-of-war Ossipee put into port and took us on board: Capt. Robbins, myself, the steward, and five seamen who were left of a crew of twenty-one. From the time the Golden Hind went to pieces we spent forty-eight days in open boats, with only the subsistence I have named. The Captain of the Ossipee shipped the six seamen, although all of them were on the sick list, and brought Capt. Robbins and myself to Rio de Janeiro. There I met Capt. Gorham Crowell, of the bark Colin E. McNeil, who kindly volunteered to bring me to New-Orleans."

Mr. Saville requested our reporter to state that the treatment he had received during the voyage of the McNeil could not have been more courteous had he owned the vessel, and he desires to earnestly thank Capt. Crowell for unremitting attentions.