

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 knew 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.