

Cap'n Hoxworth get four naked Honolulu girls into his cabin at one time . . . Well, as a sinner, our cap'n just don't compare."

Nevertheless, Abner waged relentless campaigns against Captain Janders, particularly in the matter of novels, which the captain read ostentatiously immediately after each Sabbath sermon. "You will learn to call such books abominations," Abner mournfully predicted.

Janders fought back with irony: "You converting any more old whalers, Brother Hale?"

The question infuriated Abner, symbolizing as it did the world's pernicious habit of rejoicing over the downfall of sanctimonious men. Actually, he could have turned the tables on the captain, so far as the old whaler was concerned, for the man was agonizingly eager to win back his Bible before reaching Cape Horn. "Many's a sailor's been lost at the Horn, Reverend," he constantly pleaded. "Don't make me round the Horn without a Bible!"

But Abner had absorbed one fundamental lesson on this trip: the established church must not be maneuvered into a position of danger by the backsliding of fools who were never truly saved in the first place. It is such who have the greatest power to damage the church and they must be denied the opportunity of doing so. Frequently, on the long leg south Abner would sit on a trunk in his stateroom and analyze this case with his seven companions: "I was too prompt to accept this man . . . too eager for merely another number rather than for a secured soul. We must never repeat this foolish mistake in Hawaii."

And then, on the evening of November 24, just as Keoki placed on the half-moon table the Saturday night suet pudding, an unexpected gale from the southwest struck the *Thetis* port-side and threw her well onto her beam ends. Since the storm had come without warning, the after hatch had not been closed and torrents of cold gray water cascaded into the cabin. The lamp swung parallel to the decking. Food and chairs and missionaries were swept into a jumble and buried in new floods ripping down the hatchway. There were screams, and from the stateroom where Jerusha lay ghastly ill, Abner heard a plaintive cry, "Are we sinking?"

He stumbled to her and found her berth drenched with water, and everything in confusion. "We shall be safe," he said firmly. "God is with this ship."

They heard the hatchway being hammered into place and smelled the loss of air. Then the cook shouted, "Cape Horn is rushing out to meet us."

"Will the storm last long?" Brother Whipple inquired.

"Maybe four weeks," the cook replied, picking up the debris of his meal.

On Sunday, November 25, Abner ventured on deck to survey the damage, and reported breathlessly, "All the livestock was swept away. That first big wave almost capsized us." One by one the missionaries, those who were not confined to their bunks, viewed the storm and discovered what the cook meant when he said that Cape Horn had come to meet them. A cold, dismal fog enveloped the ship where the warm waters of the Atlantic met the icy wastes of the Antarctic, and the waves rose high in the gloom, falling away into icy depths.

"I'm fearfully cold," Jerusha told her husband, but there was nothing he could do. The little *Thetis* kept probing southward toward the Cape itself, and each day took her into colder waters. The thermometer stood at thirty-nine degrees, with no fires allowed on board. Bedding was wet from the dousing and all gear was molding in unaired boxes. Most of the time the hatchway was covered, so that no air swept into the dank confined cabin, and with no freedom for walking, griping biliousness overtook the missionaries.

On Tuesday, November 27, John Whipple hurried below with heartening news. "We can see Staten Island to port, so we must be approaching the Cape. The waves aren't as big as we feared." He led his companions aloft to view one of the bleakest, loneliest lands on earth, lying off the tip of the continent. Through partial mist its low treeless hills were visible, and Whipple said, "We are seeing it in summer. Imagine what it must be like in winter." But the missionaries were looking not at Staten Island, but rather at the terrifying waters that lay ahead.

There, at the southern tip of the habitable world, in a latitude of fifty-five degrees, the earth-girdling southern currents that thundered in from the lower Pacific crashed into the turbulent swells of the Atlantic, and the missionaries could see that the resulting waves were mountain-high and clothed with fog and fear. If a sailor were lucky enough to hit Staten Island with an easterly at his back, he could penetrate these monstrous waves with some hope of success, but when, as in late November of 1821, both the set of the Pacific and the bearing of its winds were from the west, there was slight chance of doubling the Cape.

But Captain Janders, face grim within the rim of sandy whiskers, was stubbornly determined to prosecute every chance. "I'll not be the captain who has to write in his log, 'Today abandoned hope of doubling Cape Horn and turned back across the Atlantic

to try Cape Good Hope.' If you write that in your log, they never let you forget it. You're the Yankee who couldn't double the Cape." So he gambled that either the wind would veer to the east and blow him through, or that the Pacific swell would somehow abate and allow him to beat into the wind, no matter where it stood.

"I am convinced that one or the other will happen," Janders repeated doggedly. But on the evening of Thanksgiving Day he stumbled down into the cabin and said dourly, "If any of you missionaries have personal knowledge of God, I would appreciate your prayers now."

"Do the winds continue against us?" Abner asked.

"Never seen 'em so bad," Janders growled.

"Will we have to turn back?" one of the wives inquired.

"No, ma'am, we won't!" Janders said firmly. "There'll be no man say I tried the Cape and failed."

When he was gone back to the deck John Whipple said, "I see no fault in supporting him with our prayers."

"Nor do I, Brother Whipple," Jerusha said, and Dr. Whipple prayed: "Let us recall the reassuring words of Proverbs: 'I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into the heavens, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name?' Brethren, we who stand at the ends of the earth, where the winds are gathered in God's fist against us, let us not forget that it is the just man whom God tries. The evil man passes and repasses this Cape with no concern, for he has already been tested. It is you and I who have not been tested. Let us pray that these winds abate in our favor, but if they do not, let us doubly rely upon the Lord."

By Saturday, December 1, the *Thetis* had spent seven full days negotiating a distance of one hundred and ten miles. During breaks in the storm, the forlorn missionaries had seen blunt and brutal Tierra del Fuego to the north and had retired to freezing berths, huddling together in fear and seasickness. The tempest from the west did not abate.

On Sunday, December 2, the *Thetis* turned due west to find a channel which would carry them north of Cape Horn itself, perched on an insignificant island to the south, but this day the waves from the Pacific were terrifying even to Captain Janders. Once, when the *Thetis* heeled far over onto her beam ends, he looked in dismay at Mister Collins, who was brave enough to say, "I've never sailed in a worse sea, Captain. We'd better run for it." In an instant Captain Janders swung his tiny brig about

and sent her running before the violent storm, eastward past dangerous rocks, and within three hours, at the amazing speed of nearly thirty knots, the little *Thetis* lost all the westward progress she had acquired in eight days.

On December 3 Mister Collins asked the fatal question: "Shall we run across the Atlantic, sir, to Cape Good Hope?" and Captain Janders replied, "We shall not!" and he trimmed his sails once more for the westerlies that roared in upon the great Pacific swells. At noon of that day John Whipple reported startling news to the frightened and freezing missionaries: "I think we're right where we were eight days ago! I'm sure that's Staten Island to the south and the point of Tierra del Fuego to the north." His wife asked weakly, "You mean to say that we're being driven backward?" When her husband nodded, she said softly, "John, I have to fight so hard to stay in my berth that my elbows are bleeding. Do see how poor Sister Hale is." And when John looked, he saw that her elbows and knees were bleeding, too. But there was nothing anyone could do but lie in his cold, wet berth and fight the frantic rolling of the ship.

On December 4 the *Thetis* reached far to the south, so that the sun barely set at all, and night consisted only of a mysterious ashen haze, holding low upon the turbulent sea. And when it looked as if there might be better wind toward the Antarctic, Captain Janders tried his next trick. Running boldly on a tack that carried him away from the protecting island behind which mariners customarily doubled the Cape, he led his tiny brig into the waters of the Drake Passage, roughest in the world. It was a gallant move, but toward morning a vast Pacific accumulation swirling with sleet and snow swept down on the *Thetis*, lifted her high, and threw her sideways, so that water rushed into the terror-stricken cabin and filled the lower berths. "Abner! Abner!" bruised Jerusha screamed from the floor, forgetting his proper title. "We're drowning." He replied calmly, picking her up gently and moving her into John Whipple's upper bunk, "No, my beloved companion, God is with this ship. He will not abandon us." The terrifying shaking continued, accompanied by fresh torrents of water slopping aft from some ruptured forward area. "We cannot stand this!" a hysterical wife screamed. "God is with this ship," Abner quieted her, and in the weird darkness, with water about his ankles and the sobbing of those who thought they would soon be dead, he prayed in a strong voice and reminded the missionaries that they had come on this voyage to do God's work and it was notorious that God tested His chosen and that their way was never quick or easy. "We shall ride through this storm and see the pleasant valleys of Hawaii," he

affirmed. Then he went to each freezing stateroom and helped lift luggage out of berths into which it had been swept. No attempt was made to serve meals, but when Captain Janders looked below and saw the work Abner was doing, he shouted to the cook, "Bring some cheese aft to these poor people." Abner asked, "Are we rounding the Cape?" and Janders replied, "Not yet, but we will be." However, toward six in the evening it became apparent that the night's waves were to be even more tumultuous, so he said at last to Mister Collins, "We'll run for it," and once more within less than an hour they lost all they had gained in two days.

On December 5 the wounded brig *Thetis*, coated with ice, was back at the Atlantic entrance to the waters that guarded the Cape, and there was no sign of either an easterly wind or an abated swell, so Captain Janders kept his ship tacking idly back and forth, waiting, and about ten o'clock at night it looked as if the big chance had come, for the wind seemed to veer. Crowding sail, the captain lashed his ship into the swells and for the remaining two hours of that gray day the *Thetis* chewed awkwardly into the heavy seas and apparently made some progress.

On December 6 the brig actually accomplished forty-eight miles into a snowstorm, bucking a sea as choppy and as sickening as any the missionaries had so far experienced. There was not the abstract terror of the ship on beam ends, but there was the constant rise and fall, wallow and recovery that made even inanimate objects like trunks and boxes creak in misery. The cold, intensified by the sleet and snow, grew worse, and wives huddled beneath wet blankets, shivering and convinced that death would be preferable to two more weeks of Cape Horn. But Brother Whipple reported heartily to all that at last the brig was making headway.

On Friday, December 7, the wind perversely returned to its former heading; the seas became more confused; and once again the *Thetis* stood on her beam ends. This time she came perilously close to foundering. Heavy trunks that had been cleated down tore loose and piled brutally into berths. Timbers creaked ominously as if they could bear no more, and the little brig fell sickeningly into a trough out of which it seemed it might not recover. "Oh, God! Let me die!" Jerusha prayed, for a trunk had her pinned against the bulkhead. Other women were crying, "Brother Hale! Can you move this box?" for they knew that he was the only missionary then capable of constructive work.

It was some minutes therefore before he got to Jerusha, and he found her wandering in speech. "Let me die, God. It wasn't Abner's fault. He was good to me, but let me die!" she whim-

pered. He pulled the trunk away and felt her limbs to see if they were broken, but as he did so, he heard her prayer for death. "What did you say?" he asked, appalled. "God, let me die!" she prayed blindly. With a violent slap he thrashed her on the cheeks and cried, "Mrs. Hale! You may not blaspheme!" He continued slapping her until she recovered her wits, and then he sat beside her and said, "I am afraid, too, my beloved companion. I am afraid we are going to drown. Oh!" And he braced himself for a wild ride down the hollow of a wave, and the shattering pause, and the groaning climb. "Do even you think we are lost?" Jerusha asked softly. "I am afraid," he said humbly, "but we must not blaspheme, even if we are deserted." She asked, "What did I say, dear husband?" He replied, "It's best forgotten. Mrs. Hale, will you pray?" And in the cold, dark 'tween-decks he coached her in what he thought would be their last prayer.

At that moment above decks, Captain Janders was shouting in fury, "Goddamnit, Mister Collins, we can't make it!"

"Shall we run for Good Hope, sir?"

"We shall not."

"We'll founder, sir," Collins warned.

"Turn around, and we'll lick our wounds in the Falklands," Janders replied.

"And then?"

"We'll go through the Strait of Magellan."

"Yes, sir."

SO THE HAMFERDITE brig *Thetis*, seventy-nine feet long, two hundred and thirty tons out of Boston, was finally turned away from Cape Horn, and on a northeast heading, which took advantage of the strong winds, it shot up to the Falkland Islands, which hung in the South Atlantic off the coast of Patagonia.

The Falklands were a group of rocky, wind-swept, treeless islands used by whalers—and those who could not double the Cape—for recuperation, and when the forbidding group hove into view on December 10 they seemed to the bruised missionaries like fragments of Beulah Land, and as soon as the *Thetis* had anchored in a rocky cove, all hastened to be among the first ashore. All through the brief, gray starless night John Whipple inspected the cold ground, and at dawn he hailed the brig with good news: "There are geese and ducks here and some small cormorants. Bring all the guns!" He organized a hunting party that was to provide the *Thetis* with fresh food for many weeks. Mister Collins led another group that found sweet water to re-