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MIKE FINK.

"THE Last of the Boatman" has not become altogether a mythic personage. There are around us those who still remember him as one of flesh and blood, as well as proportions simply human, albeit he lacked somewhat of the heroic in stature, as well as being a "perfect terror," to people!

As regards Mike, it has not yet become that favorite question of doubt—"Did such a thing really live?" For have we heard the skeptic inquiry—"Did such a thing really die?" But his death in half a dozen different ways and places has been asserted, and this, we take it, is the first gathering of the mythic have—that shadowy and indistinct enlargement of outline, which, deepening through long ages, invests distinguished mortality with the sublimer attributes of the hero and demi-god. Had Mike lived in "early Greece," his flat boat feats would, doubtless, in poetry, have rivalled those of Jason, in his ship; while in Scandinavian legends, he would have been a river god, to a certainty! The Sea Kings would have sacrificed to him every time they "crossed the bar," or advised, as far as any interference went, to "lay low and keep dark, or, pre-haps," &c.

The story of Mike Fink, including a death, has been beautifully told by the late Morgan Neville, of Cincinnati, a gentleman of the highest literary taste, as well as of the most amiable and polished manners. "The Last of the Boatmen," as his sketch is entitled, is unexceptionable in style, and, we believe, in fact, with one exception, and that is, the statement as to the manner and place of Fink's death. He did not die in Arkansas, but at Fort Henry, near the mouth of the Yellow Stone.

In the year 1822, steamboats having left the "keels" and "broad-horns" "entirely out of sight," and Mike having, in consequence, fallen from high estate—that of being "a little bit the almighty man on the river, any how"—after a term of idleness, frolic and desperate rowdiness, along the different towns, he, at St. Louis, entered the service of the Mountain Fur Company, as a trapper and hunter: and in that capacity was employed by Major Henry, in command of the Fort at the mouth of the Yellow Stone river, when the occurrence took place of which we write.

Mike, with many generous qualities, was always a reckless "re devil"; but, at this time, advancing 14 years and decayed in influence, above all become a victim of whiskey, he was morose and desperate in the extreme. There was a government regulation which forbade the free use of alcohol at the trading posts on the Missouri river, and this was a continual source of quarrel between the men and the commandant, Major Henry—on the part of Fink particularly. One of his freaks was to march with his rifle into the fort, and demand a supply of spirits. Argument was fruitless, force not to be thought of, and when, on being positively denied, draw up his rifle and sent a ball through the cask, deliberately walked up and filled his can, while his particular "boys" followed his example, all that could be done was to look upon the matter as one of his "queer ways," and that was the end of it.

The state of things continued for some time; Mike's temper and exactions growing more unbearable every day, until, finally, a "split" took place, not only between himself and the commandant, but many others in the fort, and the unruly boatman swore he would not live among them. Followed only by a

youth named Carpenter, whom he had brought up, and for whom he felt a rude but strong attachment, he prepared a sort of cave in the river's bank, furnished it with a supply of whiskey, and, with his companion, turned in to pass the winter, which was then closing upon them. In this place he buried himself, sometimes unseen for weeks, his protegee providing what else was necessary beyond the whisky. At length attempts were used, on the part of those in the fort, to withdraw Carpenter from Fink; foul insinuations were made as to the nature of their connection; the youth was twitted with being a mere slave, &c., all which (Fink heard of in spite of his retirement) served to breed a distrust between the two, and though they did not separate, much of their cordiality ceased.

The winter wore away in this sullen state of torpor; spring came with its reviving influences, and to celebrate the season, a supply of alcohol was procured and a number of his acquaintances from the fort coming to "rouse out" Mike, a desperate "frolic" of course, ensued.

There were river yarns, and boatman songs, and "nigger break-downs," interspersed with wrestling matches, jumping, laugh, and yell, the can circulating freely, until Mike became somewhat mollified.

"I tell you what it is, boys," he cried, "the fort's a skunk hole, and I'd rather live with the bars than stay in it. Some on ye's been trying to part me and my boy, that I love like my own cub—but no matter. Maybe he's poisoned against me; but, Carpenter, (striking the youth heavily on the shoulder,) I took you by the hand when it had forgotten the touch of a father's or a mother's—you know me to be a man, and you ain't going to turn out a dog!"

Whether it was that the youth fancied something insulting in the manner of the appeal, or not, we can't say; but it was not responded to very warmly, and a reproach followed from Mike. However, they drank together, and the frolic went on, until Mike, filling his can, walked off some forty yards, placed it upon his head, and called to Carpenter to take his rifle.

The wild feat of shooting cans off each other's head was a favorite one with Mike—himself and "boy" generally winding up a hard frolic with this savage, but deeply-meaning proof of continued confidence; as for risk, their eagle eyes and iron nerves defied the might of whisky. After their recent alienation, a doubly generous impulse, without a doubt, had induced Fink to propose and subject himself to the test.

Carpenter had been drinking wildly, and with a boisterous laugh snatched up his rifle. All present had seen the parties "shoot," and this desperate aim, instead of alarming, was merely made a jest.

"Your grog is split, forever, Mike!" "Kill the old varmint, young 'un!" "What'll his skin bring in St. Louis?" &c.

Amid a loud laugh, Carpenter raised his piece—even the jester remarked that he was unsteady—crack!—the can fell—a loud shout—but, instead of a smile of pleasure, a dark frown fell upon the face of Fink. He made no motion except to clutch his rifle as though he would have crushed it, and there he stood, gazing at the youth strangely. Various shades of passion crossed his features—surprise, rage, suspicion—but at length they composed themselves into a sad expression; the ball had grazed the top of his head, cutting the scalp, and the thought of treachery had set his heart on fire.

There was a loud call upon Mike to know what he was waiting for, in which Carpenter joined, pointing to the can upon his head and bidding him fire, if he knew how.

"Carpenter, my son," said the boatman, "I taught you to shoot differently from that last shot! You've missed once, but you won't again!"

He fired, and his ball, crashing through the forehead of the youth, laid him a corpse amid his, as suddenly hushed companions!

Time wore on—many at the fort spoke darkly of the deed. Mike Fink had never been known to miss his aim—he had grown afraid of Carpenter—he had murdered him! While this feeling was rising against him, the unhappy boatman lay in his cave, shunning both sympathy and sustenance. He spoke to

none—when he did come forth, 'twas as a spectre, and only to haunt the grave of his "boy," or, if he did break silence, 'twas to burst into a paroxysm of rage against the enemies who "turned his boy's heart from him!"

At the fort was a man by the name of Talbot, the gunsmith of the station; he was very loud and bitter in his denunciations of the "murderer," as he called Fink, which, finally, reaching the ears of the latter, filled him with the most violent passion, and he swore that he would take the life of his defamer. This threat was almost forgotten, when one day, Talbot, who was at work in his shop, saw Fink enter the fort, his first visit since the death of Carpenter. Fink approached; he was careworn, sick, and wasted, there was no anger in his bearing, but he carried his rifle, (had he ever gone without it?) and the gunsmith was not a coolly brave man; moreover, his life had been threatened.

"Fink," cried he, snatching up a pair of pistols from his bench, "don't approach me—if you do, you're a dead man!"

"Talbot," said the boatman, in a sad voice, "you needn't be afraid; you have done me wrong—I'm come to talk to you about—Carpenter—my boy!"

He continued to advance, and the gunsmith again called to him—

"Fink, I know you; if you come three steps nearer, I'll fire, by—"

Mike carried his rifle across his arm, and made no hostile demonstration, except in gradually getting nearer—if hostile his aim was.

"Talbot, you've accused me of murdering—my boy—Carpenter—that I raised from a child—that I loved like a son—that I can't live without! I'm not mad with you now, but you must let me show you that I couldn't do it—that I'd rather die than done it—that you've wronged me—"

By this time he was within a few steps of the door, and Talbot's agitation became extreme. Both pistols were pointed at Fink's breast, in expectation of a spring from the latter.

"By the Almighty above us, Fink, I'll fire—I don't want to speak to you now—don't put your foot on that step—don't."

Fink did put his foot on the step, and the same moment fell heavily within it, receiving the contents of both barrels in his breast! His last and only words were,

"I didn't mean to kill my boy!" Poor Mike! we are satisfied with our senior's conviction that you did not mean to kill him. Suspicion of treachery, doubtless, entered his mind, but cowardice and murder never dwelt there.

A few weeks after this event, Talbot himself perished in an attempt to cross the Missouri in a skiff.

SOME FEATS OF STRENGTH.

AMONG the Greeks the successful athlete was crowned with laurels and loaded down with wealth and honors. When Egeuetus, in the ninety-second Olympiad, triumphant in games, entered Agrigentum, his native home, he was attended by an escort of 300 chariots, each drawn by two white horses, and followed by the populace, cheering and waving banners. Milo six times won the palm at both the Olympic and Pythian games. He is said to have run a mile with a four-year old ox upon his shoulders, and afterward killed the animal with a blow from his fist, and ate the entire carcass in one day! So great was his muscular power that he would sometimes bind a cord round his head and break it by the swelling and pressure of the veins. An ordinary meal for Milo was twenty pounds of meat, as much bread, and fifteen pints of wine.

Thessalia was of prodigious strength and colossal height, and, it is said, alone and without weapons, killed an enormous and enraged lion. One day (it is so recorded) he seized a bull by one of its hind feet, and the animal escaped only by leaving the hoof in the grasp of the athlete.

The Roman Emperor Maximus was upward of eight feet in height, and like Milo, of Crotona, could squeeze to powder the hardest stone with his fingers and break the jaw of a horse by a kick. His wife's bracelet served him as a ring, and his every day meal was 60 pounds of meat and an amphora of wine.

While a prisoner in Germany, Richard I. accepted an invitation to a boxing match with the son of his jailor. He received the first blow, which made him stagger; but, recovering, with a blow of the fist killed his antagonist on the spot.

Topham, who was born in London in 1710, was possessed of astonishing strength. His armpits, hollow in the case of ordinary men, were with him full of muscles and tendons. He would take a bar of iron, with its two ends held in his hands, place the middle of the bar behind his neck, and then bend the extremities by main force, until they met together, and bend back the iron straight again. One night, perceiving a watchman asleep in his box, he carried both the man and his shell to a great distance, and deposited them on the wall of a church-yard. Owing to domestic troubles he committed suicide in the prime of life.

The famous Scanderberg, King of Albania, who was born in 1448, was a man of great stature, and his feats of sword exercise have never been equaled. On one occasion, with a scimeter, he struck his antagonist such a terrible blow that its tremendous force cleaved him to the waist. He is said to have often cloven in two, men who were clad in armor from head to foot. On one occasion the brother and nephew of a certain Ballaban, who had been convicted of cruelties toward the Albanians, were brought to him, bound together. Transported with rage, he cut them in two with one stroke of his weapon.

Maurice, Count of Saxony, the hero of Fontenoy, inherited the physical vigor of his father, and was especially noted for the surprising muscular power or "grip" of his hands. On one occasion, needing a corkscrew, he twisted a long iron nail round into the required shape with his fingers, and with this extemporized implement opened half a dozen bottles of wine. Another time, when stopping at a village blacksmith shop to have his horse shod, he picked up a number of new horse-shoes, and with his hands snapped them in two as readily as if made of glass, much to the surprise and disgust of the smith.

If history is to be believed, Phyllus of Crotona, could jump a distance of fifty-six feet. The exercise was practiced at the Olympic games and formed part of the course of the Pentathlon.

Strutt, an English authority on games and amusements, speaks of a Yorkshire jumper named Ireland, whose powers were something marvelous. He was six feet high, and at the age of eighteen leaped, without the aid of a springboard, over nine horses ranged side by side.—He cleared a cord extended fourteen feet from the ground with a bound, crushed with his foot a bladder suspended at a height of sixteen feet, and on another occasion lightly cleared a large wagon covered with an awning. Col. Ironside, who lived in India early in this century, relates that he met in his travels an old white-haired man who with one leap sprang over the back of an enormous elephant flanked by six camels of the largest breed.

A curious French work published in Paris in 1745, entitled "The Tracts Toward the History of Wonders Performed at Fairs," mentions an Englishman, who at the fair of St. Germain in 1723, leaped over forty people without touching them. In our own day we are familiar with many remarkable exhibitions of strength and endurance. Dr. Windsip, with the aid of straps, lifted a weight of 3,600 pounds, and with the little finger of his right hand could raise his body a considerable distance from the ground.

An Excited Darkey.

A POLICEMAN who was beating through "Kaintuck" yesterday afternoon was halted by a little old negro man who had business in his eye and both hands, tightly clenched, as he said:

"Say, boss, am you gwine to be 'round yere to-morrer forenoon?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Waal, dar's gwine to be de powerfullest fuss up yere dat ole Kaintuck eber saw, an' you'd better have about six pa'r o' handcuffs an' shackles wid you."

"Why, what's the trouble now?" "Truble 'nuff, sah. You see, de old man Jenkins, 'round on Illinoy street,

am gwine to die afore night. Dat's settled for shuah."

"Yes." "Waal, de old man has axed me to sort o' boss de fun'ral 'rangements, kase he knows I'm solid on sich dings. Ize 'tended fun'erals so long dat Ize got de hang of 'em, you see."

"Yes."

"Waal, dar's Dekun Allen, libin' ober'on Calhoun street, one of de most pompous Africans in Detroit. Just as shuah as a black man shuffles off de coil anyhow 'round heah de Dekun he alius wants to boss de fun'ral bizness."

"Does, eh?"

"He does, sab, an' he's de poorest han' you eber saw. He can't start a hymn, nor make any sort o' speech on de shinin' qualities of de late deceased. Why, what d'ye 'spose de Dekun got off ober heah on Clay street at a fun'ral in January?"

"I can't say."

"Why, he said dat man cometh up like a flower an' am cut down. De deceased wasn't a man at all, but a girl, an' de ideah of flowers comin' up in January! Sich ignorance, sah, needs rebuke."

"Well, what about this fass to-morrow?"

"Waal, sah, Ize been requested to boss dat fun'ral. Ize been requested by de werry man who am gwine to form de subject of de sad occasion. De Dekun will be ober dar as usual, puttin' on scollops an' tellin' folks to stand back an' so on. He'll swell up an' walk 'round wid his hands behin' his walk, same as if he owned de hull street, an' same as if I wasn't knee-high to a clothes-hoss."

"Well."

"Well, sah, dar will be a rekonter between the Dekun an' myself. De werry minit dat he begins to swell up I shell shed off my Sunday coat an' puroced to mangle him widin two inches of his life! I'll do it—I'll do it, sah, if I hev to go to the State Prison for a fousan' y'ars!"

"I wouldn't."

"But I will, sah. Ize giben you far warnin', sah, an' if you ara not on han' wid a one-hoss wagin, to convey de body of de Dekun to his late home, it won't be my fault. Dat's all, sah—all except dat I strike wid boaf fists to once, 'an dat de pusson struck at soon pines away an' dies. Good day, sah!"

Had Read the Bible.

BIBLICAL scholars are sometimes entrapped. In a little town of Bavaria, the other day, sat an aged frau-lien and her minister, who was at least, supposed to know the bible by heart.—The frau-lien enjoyed a joke in spite of her age; and the reverend father, although a thoroughly pious man, was not a whit behind her. Indeed there is nothing in the sacred profession which interdicts a good wholesome laugh, and nothing which makes a man so sad that he can see only the gloomy and cloudy side of life. Our frau-lien said:

"Father, you may have heard that some of the peristent explorers in the Holy Land have just discovered a huge heap of bones which are supposed, on pretty good authority, to be those of the children Herod killed."

"Ah, indeed!" said the minister thoroughly interested, "I had not heard of it."

"Yes," continued the frau-lien, "and strange to say, nearly half of the bones were as white as the snows of the Alps, while the others were as black as ebony."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the pastor, "that is certainly very remarkable."

"And the problem to be solved is," continued the frau-lien, "whether the white bones belonged to the girls and the black ones to the boys, or vice versa. The explorers were greatly vexed by the matter and could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. Now, what do you think, father?"

"Oh," wittily rejoined the pastor, "of course the black bones belonged to the girl babies, and the white ones to the boy babies."

We ask the same question of our readers, and they had better guess several times before they read the rest of the paragraph. When they have settled the matter, they can refer to the answer of the frau-lien, who, with a merry twinkle in her eye, said: "Father you must have read your bible to very little purpose, for the account tells that only boy babies were killed by Herod."