EASTON GAZETTE.

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ADVERTISEMENTS

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THE LAST OF THE BOATMEN.

[Many of our readers will recollect the story of "*The last of the Boatmen*," by the followiug biographical sketch, which we copy from Flints Western Monthly Review, it would seem that *Mike Fink* was not an imaginary character, under whose name that race of peculiar beings called Western Boatmen were shadowed forth, in all their eccentricity, to the world; but rather a genuine biped, of human flesh and blood.]

Mike Fink, the last of the Boatmen.—Every reader of the Western Souvenir, so undeservedly brushed, like a summer butterfly, from among its more fortunate sister butterflies, in the pool of oblivion, well remember the vivid and admirable portrait of *Mike Fink*, the last of the boatmen. People are so accustomed, in reading such tales, to think them all mere fairy web fabric of fiction, that. probably, not one in a hundred of the readers of that story imagine for a moment that it gave, as far as it went, a most exact and faithful likeness of an actual personage of flesh and blood, once well known on our waters, and now no more. We are obliged to omit some strange curses, and circumstances of profanity and atrocity, though they seemed necessary to a full develop nent of character, which it cannot be supposed for a moment we exhibit with any other view than to show the monstrous anomalies of the human character under particular circumstances, as Dr. Mitchell would show a horned frog, in relation to the lower animals. The most eccentric and original trait in his whole character, was the manner in which he subjected his *chere amie*, when he doubted her fidelity, to a rifle shot test, similar to those hereafter described. We are compelled to omit the anecdote altogether. The following *addenda* to the sketch given in the Western Souvenir are furnished us by a valued correspondent at St. Louis. He had them as he informs us, from an intelligent and respectable fur trader, who has frequently extended his peregrinations beyond the Rocky Mountains, and who was to start the day after our correspondent wrote, for Santa Fe, in Mexico. Our correspondent assures us that he gives the account of this gentleman, touching the extraordinary Mike Fink, nearly in his own words. We only add, that we have followed his example, in the subjoined in relation to the narrative of our correspondent.

Mike Fink was born in Pittsburgh, Pa. where his brothers, &c. still reside. He had but little knowledge of letters, especially of their sounds and powers, as his orthography was very bad, and he usually spelled his name Mike Phinck, while his father spelled it with an F. When he was young, the witchery which is in the tone of a wooden trumpet, called a river horn, formerly used by keel and flat boat navigators on the western waters, entranced the soul of Mike, while yet a boy; and he longed to become a boatman. This soon became his ruling passion; and he served as a boatman on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, and their tributary streams, which occupation he pursued until this sort of men were thrown out of employment by the general use of steam boats. When Mike first set foot on a keel boat he could mimick all the tones of a trumpet and he longed to go to N. Orleans, where he heard the people spoke French, and wore their Sunday clothes every day.—He served out his pupilage with credit. When the Ohio was too low for navigation, Mike spent most of his time in the neighbourhood of Pittsburg, killing squirrels with his rifle, and shooting at a target or beef, at the frequent Saturday shooting matches, and company musters of the militia. He soon became famous as "the best shot in the country," and was called *bang all*, and on that account was frequently excluded from participating in matches for beef; for which exclusion he claimed and obtained the *fifth quarter* of beef, as it is called, (the hide and tallow) for his forbearance. His usual practice was to sell his fifth quarter to the tavern or dram shop keeper for whiskey, with which he "treated" every body present, partaking largely himself. He became fond of strong drink, but was never overpowered by its influence. He could drink a gallon of it in twenty-four hours, without the effect being perceivable.

His language was a perfect sample of the half horse and half alligator dialect of the then race of boatmen. He was also a wit; and on that account he gained the admiration, and excited the fears of all the fraternity of the boatmen; for he usually enforced his wit with a sound drubbing, if any one dare to dissent, by neglecting or refusing to laugh at his jokes for as he used to say, he told his jokes on purpose to be laughed at in a good humored way, and that no man should make light of them. The consequence was Mike always had a chosen band of laughing philosophers about him. An eye bunged up, and a dilapidated nose or ear, was sure to win Mike's sympathy and favour, for Mike made proclamation—'I am a salt river roarer; and I love the wimming, and as how, I'm chock full of fight,' &c.; so he was in truth, for he had a chere amie in every port he visited, and always had a circle of worshippers around him, who would fight their deaths (as they called it) for him. Among these were two men, *Carpenter* and *Talbot*, Mike's fast friends and particular confidants. Each was a match for the other in prowess, in fight, or skill in shooting, for Mike had diligently trained them to all these virtues and mysteries. Carpenter and Talbot figure hereafter.—Mike's weight was about one hundred and eighty pounds; height about five feet nine inches; broad round face, pleasant features, brown skin, tanned by sun and rain; blue, but very expressive eyes, inclining to grey; broad white teeth, and square brawny form, well proportioned and every muscle of the arms, thighs and legs were fully developed, indicating the greatest strength and activity. His person, taken altogether was a model for a Hercules, except as to size.

He first visited St. Louis, as a keel boat man, in the year 1814 or '15, and occasionally afterwards, 1822, when he joined Henry and Ashley's company of Missouri trappers. Many shooting feats of Mike's are related here, by persons who profess to have witnessed them. I will relate some of them, and you can make such use of them as you please.—In ascending the Mississippi above the mouth of the Ohio, he saw a sow with eight or nine pigs on the river bank; he declared, in boatman phrase, he wanted a pig and took up his rifle to shoot one; but was requested not to do so. Mike, however, laid his rifle to his face, and shot at each pig successively as the boat glided up the river under easy sail, about forty or fifty yards from shore, and cut off their tails close to their rumps, without doing them any other harm. In 1821, a short time before he ascended the Missouri with Henry and Ashley's company, being on his boat at the landing in this port he saw a negro lad standing on the river bank, heedlessly gaping in great wonderment at the show about him. This lad had a strange sort of foot and heel, peculiar to some races of the Africans. His heel protruded several inches in the rear of the leg, so as to leave nearly as much of the foot behind as before it. This unshapely foot offended Mike's eye and outraged his ideas of symmetry so much, that he determined to correct it. He took aim with his rifle, some thirty paces distant at the boy's unfortunate heel, and actually shot it away. The boy fell, crying *murder*, and badly wounded. Mike was indicted in the circuit court of this county for the offence, and was found *guilty* by a jury. I have myself seen the record of the court. It appeared in evidence that Mike's justification of the offence was, "that the fellow's long heel prevented him from wearing a *genteel boot*." His particular friend, Carpenter, was also a great shot; and he and Mike used to fill a tin cup with whiskey, and place it on their heads by turns, and shoot at it with a rifle, at the distance of seventy yards.—It was always bored through, without injury to the one on whose head it was placed. This was often performed, and they liked the feat the better because it showed their confidence in each other.

In 1822, Mike and his two friends, Carpenter and Talbot, engaged in St. Louis with Henry and Ashley, to go up the Missouri with them, in the three fold capacity of boatmen, trappers and hunters. The first year a company of about sixty ascended as high as the mouth of the Yellow Stone River, where they built a fort for the purposes of trade and security. From this place, small detachments of men, ten or twelve in a company, were sent out to hunt and trap on the tributary streams of the Missouri and Yellow Stone. Mike and his two friends and nine others were sent out to the Muscle Shell river, a tributary of the Yellow Stone. When the winter set in, Mike and his company returned to a place near the mouth of the Yellow Stone; and preferring to remain out of the fort, they dug a hole or cave, in the bluff bank of the river for a winter house in which they resided during the winter. This proved a warm and commodious habitation, protecting the inmates from the wind and snow. Here Mike and his friend Carpenter quarrelled a deadly quarrel, the cause of which is not certainly known, but it was thought to have been caused by rivalry in the good graces of a squaw. The quarrel was smothered for the time by interposition of mutual friends. On the return of spring the party revisited the fort, where Mike and Carpenter over a cup of whiskey revived the recollection of their past quarrel, but made a treaty of peace, which was to be solemnized by their usual trial of shooting a cup of whiskey from off each other's head as their custom was. This was at once the test of mutual reconciliation and renewed confidence.

A question remained to be settled who should have a first shot. To determine this, Mike proposed to "sky a copper" with Carpenter; that is, to throw up a copper. This was done, and Mike won the first shot. Carpenter seemed to be fully aware of Mike's unforgiving temper and treacherous intent, for he declared that he was sure that Mike would kill him. But Carpenter scorned life too much to purchase it by a breach of his solemn compact, in refusing to stand the test.—Accordingly he prepared to die. He bequeathed his gun, shot-pouch and powder horn, his belt, pistols and wages to Talbot, in case he should be killed. They went to the fatal plain, and whilst Mike loaded his rifle and picked his flint Carpenter filled his tin cup with whiskey to the brim, and without changing his features, he placed it on his head as a target for Mike to shoot at, Mike levelled his rifle at the head of Carpenter, at the distance of sixty yards. After drawing a head, he took down his rifle from his face, and smilingly said, "hold your noddle steady, Carpenter, and don't spill the whiskey, as I shall want some presently?" He again raised, cocked his piece, and in an instant Carpenter fell and expired without a groan.—Mike's ball had penetrated the forehead of Carpenter in the centre, about an inch and a half above the eyes. He coolly sat down his rifle, and applying the muzzle to his mouth blew the smoke out of the touch-hole without saying a word, keeping his eye steadily on the fallen body of Carpenter. His first words were, "Carpenter! have you spilt the whiskey?" He was then told that he had killed Carpenter. "It is all an accident" said Mike, "for I took as fair a head on the black spot on the cup, as I ever took on a squirrel's eye. How did it happen!" He then cursed the gun, then the bullet, and finally himself.

This catastrophe (in a country where the strong arm of the law cannot reach passed off for an accident: and Mike was permitted to go at large, under the belief that Carpenter's death was the result of contingency. But Carpenter had a friend in Talbot, who only waited a fair opportunity to revenge his death.—No opportunity offered for some months after, until one day Mike in a fit of gasconading, declared to Talbot that he did kill Carpenter on purpose, and that he was glad of it. Talbot instantly drew from his belt a pistol (the same which had belonged to Carpenter,) and shot Mike through the heart. Mike fell to the ground, an expired without a word. Talbot also went unpunished, as nobody had authority, or inclination, to call him to account. The truth was, Talbot was as ferocious and dangerous as the grizly bear of the prairies. About three months after Talbot was present in the battle with the *Aurickarees*, in which Col Leavenworth commanded, where he displayed a coolness, which would have done honor to a better man. He came out of the battle unharmed. About ten years after, he was drowned in the Titan river, in attempting to swim it. Thus ended "the last of the boatmen."

There are several other strange characters who have spent most part of their lives beyond the verge of civilized society, among the savages. You have recorded the chronicles of the Bte. Boy.* But the story of Bte. Kiews, a Frenchman, would surpass it. The history of Mike Shuck, a misanthropic trapper of the Missouri, would be still more strange. He holds communion with no man except to barter his furs and peltries for powder, lead, traps, &c. and then disappears for years, nobody knows where.—His story has been written after a sort, some years since, by major Wetmore of the United States army.

The sufferings & almost incredible adventures and miraculous escapes of Glass a Scotchman, would astonish all that have a taste for adventures. If my friend to whom I am indebted for the story of Mike Fink, in part, were not about to depart so soon, I would procure the leading facts in relation to these several persons, as he is familiar with their true history, and has frequently seen all of them.

*In Recollections of the last ten years.

A GIANT.—A London paper states that there is at present living at Pitna, in Sweden, a young man, 19 years of age, who is nine feet five inches in height and who, when only 8 years old, was 5 feet four inches high. He is about to travel through Europe to exhibit himself to the curious.

[From the Token for 1830.]

CHOCORUA'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'HOBOMOK'

THE rocky county of Stafford, New Hampshire, is remarkable for its wild and broken scenery. Ranges of hills towering one above another as if eager to look upon the beautiful country, which afar off lies sleeping in the embrace of heaven; precipices, from which the young eagles take their flight to the sun; dells rugged and tangled as the dominions of Roderick Vich Alpine, and ravines dark and deep enough for the death scene of a bandit, form the magnificent characteristics of this picturesque region.

A high precipice, called Chocorua's Cliff, is rendered peculiarly interesting by a legend which tradition has scarcely saved from utter oblivion. Had it been in Scotland, perhaps the genius of Sir Walter would have hallowed it, and Americans would have crowded there to kindle fancy on the altar of memory.—Being in the midst of our own romantic scenery, it is little known, and less visited; for the vicinity is as yet untraversed by rail roads or canals, and no 'Mountain House,' perched on these tremendous battlements, allures the traveller hither to mock the majesty of nature with the insipidities of fashion. Our distinguished artist, Mr. Cole, found the sunshine and the winds sleeping upon it in solitude and secrecy; and his pencil has brought it before us in its stern repose.

In olden time, when Goffe and Whalley passed for wizzards and mountain spirits among the superstitious, the vicinity of the spot we have been describing was occupied by a very small colony, which, either from discontent or enterprise, had retired into this remote part of New Hampshire. Most of them were ordinary men, led to this independent mode of life from an impatience of restraint, which as frequently accompanies vulgar obstinacy as generous pride. But there was one master spirit among them who was capable of a higher destiny than he ever fulfilled. The consciousness of this had stamped something of proud humility on the face of Cornelius Campbell; something of a haughty spirit strongly curbed by circumstances he could not control and at which he scorned to murmur. He assumed no superiority; but unconsciously he threw around him the spell of intellect and his companions felt, they knew not why, that he was 'among them but not of them.' His stature was gigantic, and he had the bold quick tread of one who had wandered frequently and fearlessly among the terrible hiding-places of nature. His voice was harsh, but his whole countenance possessed singular capabilities for tenderness of expression; and sometimes, under the gentle influence of domestic excitement his hard features would be rapidly lighted up, seeming like the sunshine flying over the shaded fields in an April day.

His companion was one peculiarly calculated to excite and retain the deep, strong energies of manly love. She had possessed extraordinary beauty; and had in the full maturity of an excellent judgment, relinquished several splendid alliances, and incurred her father's displeasure, for the sake of Cornelius Campbell. Had political circumstances proved favorable, his talents and ambition would unquestionably have worked out a path to emolument and fame; but he had been a zealous and active enemy of the Stuarts and the restoration of Charles the Second was the death-warrant of his hopes. Immediate flight became necessary, and America was the chosen place of refuge. His adherence to Cromwell's party was not occasioned by religious sympathy, but by political views, too liberal and philosophical for the state of the people, therefore Cornelius Campbell was no favorite with our forefathers, and being of a proud nature, he withdrew with his family to the solitary place we have mentioned.

It seemed a hard fate for one who had from childhood been accustomed to indulgence and admiration, yet Mrs. Campbell enjoyed more than she had done in her days of splendor; so much deeper are the sources of happiness than those of gaiety. Even her face had suffered little from time and hardship. The bloom on her cheek, which in youth had been like the sweet-pea blossom, that most feminine of all flowers, had, it is true, somewhat faded but her rich, intellectual expression, did but receive additional majesty from years and the exercise of quiet domestic love which where it is suffered to exist always deepens and brightens with time, had given a bland and placid expression, which might well have atoned for the absence of more striking beauty. To such a woman as Caroline Campbell of what use would have been some modern doctrines of equality and independence?

With a mind sufficiently cultivated to appreciate and enjoy her husband's intellectual energies, she had a heart that could not have found another home.—The bird will drop into its nest though the treasures of earth and sky are open. To have proved marriage a tyranny and the cares of domestic life a thraldom, would have affected Caroline Campbell as little as to be told that the pure sweet atmosphere she breathed, was pressing upon her so many pounds to the square inch! Over such a heart, and such a soul, external circumstances have little power; all worldly interest was concentrated in her husband and babes and her spirit was satisfied with that inexaustible fountain of joy which nature gives and God has blessed.

A very small settlement, in such a remote place was of course subject to inconvenience and occasional suffering.—From the Indians they received neither injury nor insult. No cause of quarrel had ever arisen; and, although their frequent visits were sometimes troublesome they never had given indications of jealousy or malice. Chocorua was prophet among them, and as such an object of peculiar respect. He had a mind which education and motive would have nerved with giant strength, but growing up in savage freedom, it wasted itself in dark fierce, ungovernable passions. There was something fearful in the quiet haughtiness of his lip—it seemed so like slumbering power, too proud to be lightly roused, and too implacable to sleep again. In his small, black, fiery eye expression lay coiled up like a beautiful snake.—The white people knew that his hatred would be terrible; but they had never provoked it, and even the children became too much accustomed to him to fear him.

Chocorua had a son, about nine or ten years old to whom Caroline Campbell had occasionally made such gaudy presents as were likely to attract his savage fancy. This won the child's affections, so that he became a familiar visitant, almost an inmate of their dwelling, and being unrestrained by the courtesies of civilized life he would inspect every thing, and taste of every thing which came in his way. Some poison, prepared for a mischievous fox, which had long troubled the little settlement, was discovered and drank by the Indian boy and he went home to his father to sicken and die. From that moment jealousy and hatred took possession of Chocorua's soul. He never told his suspicions—he brooded over them in secret to nourish the deadly revenge he contemplated against Cornelius Campbell.

The story of Indian animosity is always the same. Cornelius Campbell left his hut for the fields early one bright, balmy morning, in June. Still a lover, though ten years a husband, his last look was turned towards his wife, answering her parting smile—his last action a kiss for each of his children.—When he returned to dinner, they were dead—all dead! and their disfigured bodies too cruelly showed that an Indian's hand had done the work.

In such a mind grief, like all other emotions, was tempestuous. Home had been to him the only verdant spot in the wide desert of life. In his wife and children he had garnered up all his heart and now they were torn from him, the remembrance of their love clung to him like the death-grapple of a drowning man, sinking him down, down, into darkness and death. This was followed by a calm a thousand time more terrible—the creeping agony of despair that brings with it no power of resistance.

'It was as if the dead could feel
The icy worm around him steal.,

Such, for many days, was the state of Cornelius Campbell. Those who knew and reverenced him, feared that the spark of reason was for ever extinguished. But it rekindled again, and it came with a wild, demoniac spirit of revenge. The death groan of Chocorua would make him smile in his dreams; and when he waked, death seemed too pitiful a vengence for the anguish that was eating into his very soul.

Chocorua's brethren were absent on a hunting expedition at the time he committed the murder; and those who watched his movements observed that he frequently climbed the high precipice, which afterward took his name probably looking out for indications of their return.

Here Cornelius Campbell resolved to effect his deadly purpose. A party was formed under his guidance to cut off all chance of retreat, and the dark-minded prophet was to be hunted like a wild beast to his lair.

The morning sun had scarce cleared away the fogs when Chocorua started at a loud voice from beneath the precipice commanding him to throw himself into the deep abyss below. He knew the voice of his enemy, and replied with an Indian's calmness. 'The Great spirit gave life to Chocorua; and Chocorua will not throw it away at the command of a white man.' Then hear the Great

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