

# Indiana Palladium.

EQUALITY OF RIGHTS IS NATURE'S PLAN—AND FOLLOWING NATURE IS THE MARCH OF MAN.—BARLOW.

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## BURIED ALIVE.

FROM THE DIARY OF C. HODGSON, ESQ. DECEASED, FORMERLY OF BRISTOL, ENG.

I had been subject to epileptic fits from my youth upwards; which, though they did not deprive me of animation in the sight of those about me, completely annihilated my own consciousness. I used to be attacked at all times and seasons, but most commonly about the full of the moon. I generally had a warning of a peculiar nature when these attacks were coming on, that it would be difficult to describe; it was a sensation that, to be known, must be experienced.

My excellent wife Martha, (I mean my first wife, who has been dead now for the best part of forty years) used to say, that she always observed an unusual paleness over my complexion, otherwise ruddy, for a day or two before the fit came upon me.—Bless her soul! she never let me be one moment out of her sight, from the instant she had a suspicion of my approaching malady. This benevolent caution on her part was a great means of enabling her to subdue the violence of the fit when it came, for which purpose her experience had pointed out to her several useful applications. I married again after her decease, because I was oppressed beyond bearing by my loneliness, which none but persons in such a situation—I mean widowers—can tell.—My second wife, whom I have also buried, was not so penetrating in the faculty of observation. She was a woman of an admirable thirst; and to her economy it was, that under God, I owe my preservation, in the terrible event I am about to detail. Had I been interred in lead it would have been all over with me!

Our family burying place in Bristol is in — Church, where there is a general vault, in which all persons who can see the officials high enough may be interred, until their friends forget them; which, for that matter, in trading towns is not usually a very long time; but this is only granted provided they are buried in lead. I suppose they are turned out of their metal coffins in the end, as they are in London and other places, that the old lead may buy a carousal for the churchwardens and sexton, and make room for new tenants to be served in the same manner. But to my story—to my excellent wife's thrif I owe my preservation. Willing to save as much money as possible at funeral, she had my body, with all the usual and proper grief attendant on the ceremony, put into a stout fir coffin, the weight of which was increased by a couple of old hundred weights placed, one at my head, the other at my feet. Thus the thing passed off well, & money was saved to my heirs. I hereby cast no reflections on my dear departed wife's regard for me. I was convinced, as I told her, that her motive was good; and well did it turn out for me that she was a thrif and considerate. She was a true Bristol woman, and as the good citizens generally are there, pretty keen and close-fingered; but it is error on the right side.—She was called Susannah, the daughter of an opulent and ancient common councilman, and I got my freedom of the city by marrying her: she was plain in her person, as all Bristol-born women formerly were—but I wander again from my story.

I had made a most excellent dinner—of this I have a perfect recollection. Of more than this I can recollect nothing, until coming out of my fit, as I suppose—for I quickly imagined, feeling the usual sensations, that I was recovering from one of them)—I say, that on coming to myself, I was surprised to feel pinioned in utter darkness. I had no space to stir, if I would, as I soon found, while I struggled to loosen a sheet, or some such thing in which I was scantly enveloped. My hand would not reach my head when I attempted to make it do so, by reason of my elbow touching the bottom, and my hand the top of the enclosure around me. It was the attempting to do this, and finding myself naked, except with the aforesaid covering, that struck me. I had been entombed alive. The thought rushed suddenly upon me. My first sensations were those of simple surprise. I was like a child aroused out of a deep sleep, and not sufficiently awake to recognise its attendants.

When the real truth flashed upon me in all its fearful energy, I never can forget the thrill of horror that struck me! It was as if a bullet had perforated my heart, and all the blood in my body had gushed through the wound! Never, never, can hell be more terrible than the sensations of that moment! I lay motionless for a time, petrified with terror. Then a clammy dampness burst forth

from every pore of my body. My horrible doom seemed inevitable; and so strong at length became this impression—so bereft of hope appeared my situation—that I ultimately recovered from it only to plunge into the depths of a calm, resolute despair. As not the faintest ray of hope could penetrate the darkness around my soul, resignation to my fate followed. I began to think of death coolly, and to calculate how long I might survive before famine closed the hour of my existence. I prayed to God that I might have fortitude to die without repining, calmly as I then felt. I tried if I could remember how long man could exist without food. Thus the tranquillity of my despair made me comparatively easy, if contrasted with the situation which I felt myself afterwards when hope began to glimmer upon me. My days must in the end be numbered—I must die at last—I was only perishing a little sooner than I otherwise must have done. Even from this thought I derived consolation; and I now think life might have closed calmly upon me, if the pangs of hunger had been at all bearable; and I have been told they are much more so than is commonly believed.

If my memory serves me correctly, this calm state of mind did not last long. Reason soon began to whisper me, that if I had been buried and the earth closed around my coffin, I should not be able to expire, which I could now do with ease. I did not, of course, dream of the vault in which I was placed, but considered at first I had been buried in earth. The freedom of respiration gave me the idea that after all, I was not carried forth for interment, but that I was about to be suffocated inevitably. Such is the inconsistency of the human mind, that I, who had just now resigned myself to die by famine, imagined this momentary mode of death a hundred times more formidable.—The idea that I was not yet interred increased my anxiety to make myself heard from without. I called aloud and struck the sides and lid of the coffin to no purpose, till I was hoarse and fatigued, but all in vain. A deathly silence reigned around me amid my unbroken darkness. I was now steeped in a fearful agony; I shrieked with horror; I plunged my nails into my thighs and wounded them: the coffin was soaked in my blood; and tearing the wooden sides of my prison with the same maniacal feeling, I lacerated my fingers and wore the nails to the quick, and soon became motionless from exhaustion. When I was myself once more, I called aloud my wife's name. I prayed, and, I fear, I blasphemed, for knew not what I said; and I thus continued until my strength again left me, and nature once more sought replenishment from temporary insensibility. At this time I had a vision of a most indefinite character, if it was one, and not a glance (as I am induced to think it was) between the portals of death into the world of spirits. It was all shapeless and darkness. Images of men and women, often numberless, in a sort of shadowy outline, came before and around me. They seemed as limbless, from decay—Their featureless heads moved upon trunks hideously vital; in figure like bodies, which I have seen drawn forth from burned dwellings, each bearing rather a hideous misshapen mass than a human resemblance. Thick darkness and silence succeeded; the darkness and silence of a horrible reality. If, as I suspected, I slept about this time from weakness, it was but to awake again to more fearful consciousness of my dreadful situation.

Fresh but vain efforts to make myself heard were reiterated as far as my strength would allow. I found with no great difficulty I could turn on my side, and then over on my belly. I tried by lifting my back and by a violent strain, to burst open the coffin-lid; but the screws resisted my utmost strength. I soon contrived to force my finger through this cloth, though not without considerable difficulty. Faint enough was the light it revealed, but it was a noon-day sun of joy to me.—By an uneasy strain of my neck I could see obscurely through the opening, but everything was confused in my brain—My sight was clouded, heavy and thick. I at first could only perceive there was light, but could distinguish no object.—My senses, however, seemed to sharpen as new hopes arose. I closed my eyes for a minute together, and then opened them, to restore their almost worn out power of vision. At length I could distinguish that immediately opposite to me there was a small window, crossed by a massive iron bars, through which the light

of others! I had no monstrous crimes to repent of, yet hundreds of criminal men were in the full revelry of life! I fancied I heard the toll of a bell; breathless, I listened; it was a clock striking the hour! The sound was new life to me. "I am not inhumed at least, but perhaps am unwatched," such were my thoughts: "interment will take place; my coffin will be moved; I shall easily make myself heard then." This was balm to me; I shouted anew, struck my prison broads with all the power left me and ceased only when exertion was no longer possible.

Men may fancy how they would find themselves under similar circumstances, and the like trying occasions, but it is seldom a correct judgment can be previously formed on such matters. It was only at intervals that I was so fearfully maddened by my dreadful situation as to lose the power of rational reflection, or so overcome as to be debarred the faculty of memory. Stretched in a position where my changes consisted only of a turn on my side upon hard boards, the soreness of my limbs was excruciatingly painful. When I drew up my feet a few inches, my knees pressed the cover of the coffin, so that this slight shift of position brought no relief. My impatience of the restraint in which I was kept, began at length to drive me well nigh into real madness. I was fevered, my temples burned and throbbed, my tongue became dry, light flashed across my eyes and my brain whirled round. I am certain that my existence was preserved solely by the diminished strength and subsequent feebleness which I experienced, and which, from its rendering me insensible to the increasing exacerbation of my brain's heat, allowed nature to resume her wonted temperature. But alas! this was only that I might revive to encounter once more irremediable horror. Who could depict the frenzy, the unspeakable anguish of my situation! I thought my eyes would start from my head; burning tears flowed down my cheeks; my heart was swollen almost to bursting. I became restless in feeling without finding space for a fancied relief in a new change of position. In my mental anguish, at times, however, I forgot my motionless bodily suffering, my rack of immovable agony.

How many hours I lay in this my state of active and passive torture, I cannot tell. My thirst, however, soon became intolerable. My mouth seemed full of hot ashes. I heard again the hollow sound of a clock-bell, of no small magnitude, judging from its deep intonation. No cranny which I had hitherto observed in my prison let in light, though I well knew there must be some fissure, or fresh air for the continuance of life could not have been admitted; how else had I existed? It was night, perhaps, when I first came to myself in my prison of "six dark boards." I groped in vain over every part of their wooden surface which I could reach; I could find no chink; could see no ray. Again I heard the hollow knell, and again, still in my state of agony. Oh! what were my feelings!

For a long time after this, I lay steeped in my suffering, or, at least, for a long time as it seemed to me. My head was bruised all over—my limbs were excessively sore—the skin rubbed off in many places with my suffering—my eyes aching with pain. I sought relief by turning on my right side, (I had never before turned but on my left,) when I felt under me a hard substance, which I had not before perceived. I grasped it with some difficulty, and soon found it was a knot from the coffin plank which had been forced inwards, in all probability after I was placed there. I saw also a dim light through a hole as large as a half-crown piece, just below where my chin came. I put my hand to it, and found it covered with coarse cloth, which I easily imagined was the lining of my coffin. I soon contrived to force my finger through this cloth, though not without considerable difficulty. Faint enough was the light it revealed, but it was a noon-day sun of joy to me.—By an uneasy strain of my neck I could see obscurely through the opening, but everything was confused in my brain—My sight was clouded, heavy and thick. I at first could only perceive there was light, but could distinguish no object.—My senses, however, seemed to sharpen as new hopes arose. I closed my eyes for a minute together, and then opened them, to restore their almost worn out power of vision. At length I could distinguish that immediately opposite to me there was a small window, crossed by a massive iron bars, through which the light

streamed in upon me like joy into the soul of misery. I now cried with delight, I thought I was among men again, for the pitchy darkness around me was dispersed. I forgot for a moment my sufferings; even the fearful question how I should get free from my durance before famine destroyed me, was for a long time absent from my mind and did not recur until I could look through the fissure no longer, from the giddiness caused by a too earnest fixness of gaze.

I soon concluded, from the massive stones on each side of the opening and the strength of the bars, that I was in a church vault, and this was confirmed, when I came to distinguish the ends of two or three coffins which partly intersected between me and the light. I watched the window until the light began to grow dim, with feelings no language can describe—no tongue can tell! As the gloom of night approached, my heart began to beat fainter, and my former agonies returned with tenfold weight, notwithstanding which, I imagine I must have slept some time. I was sensible of a noise like the grating of a heavy door upon its hinges, when I revived or awoke I cannot say which, and I saw the light of a candle stream across the fissure in my coffin. I called out, "for the love of your own soul release me—I am buried alive!" The light vanished in a moment; fear seemed to have palsied the hand that held it, for I heard a rough voice desire the holder of it to return. "If there be any one here he's soldered up. Tom hand me the light; the dead never speak—Jim the snatcher is not to be scared by rotten flesh!" Again I called as loud as I could, "I am buried alive—save me!" "Tom, the axe," cried the undaunted body-snatcher—"the voice comes from this box. The undertakers made too great haste, I suppose." In a few minutes I was sitting upright in my coffin.

[Here, after detailing his reception at home, and the surprise of his friends, Mr. Hodgson says he had public thanks for his deliverance returned in his parish church; and that ever afterwards he cherished a strong regard for resurrection men, who never craved a guinea of him in vain.]

From the Western Monthly Review.

## MIKE FINK.

THE LAST OF THE BOATMEN:  
And sketches of Trappers among the Rocky Mountains.

The following *adenda* to the sketch, given in the Western Souvenir, are furnished us by a valuable correspondent of St. Louis. He has 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 New-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 Miche Phinck, whilst his father spelled his 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; & 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 steamboats. When Mike first set foot on keel boat, he could mimic all the tones of a trumpet, and he longed to go to New-Orleans, where he heard the people spoke French and wore their Sunday coats every day. He served out his pupilage with credit.—When the Ohio was too low for navigation, he spent most of his time in the neighborhood of Pittsburgh, killing squirrels with his rifle, and shooting at a target for 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 the 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 effects being perceptible. His language was a perfect sample of the 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 boatmen; for he usually enforced his wit with a sound drubbing, if any one dared 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 favor; for Mike made proclamation—"I am a salt river roarer; and I love the swimming, and as how I'm chock full of fight," &c.—and so he was in truth, for he had a *cheer amie* in every port which he visited, and always had a circle of worshippers 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 180 pounds; height about 5 feet 9 inches; broad round face, pleasant features, brown skin, tanned by the sun and rain; blue but very expressive eyes, inclined to grey; broad white teeth, and square brawny form, well proportioned, & 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 boatman, in the year 1814 or 15, and occasionally afterwards till 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, 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 8 or 9 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 40 or 50 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 boy 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 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 *gentle 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 friends Carpenter and Talbot engaged in St. Louis with Henry and Ashley, to go up the Missouri with them, in the threefold 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 purpose of trade and security.