

Mike sent word for his crew to return to the boat, as they were sailing within the hour—but one man was already paddling to Poulter's Elbow for all he was worth.



COME ON, YOU LAZY LAYABOUTS. GET THEM FURS ABOARD. WE SAIL IN HALF AN HOUR.

Two nights later, Mike's keelboat was moored two miles downstream from Poulter's Elbow. Mike was expecting visitors and he didn't have long to wait.



INDIANS!



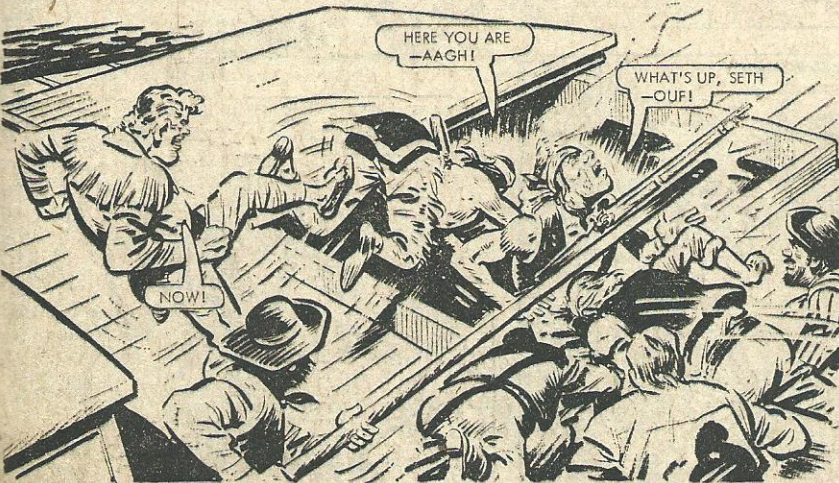
GUESS THIS IS ONE TIME YOU SLEPT A LITTLE MITE TOO LONG, FINK. NOW WHERE'S THE GOLD HIDDEN? AN' IT AIN'T ANY USE LYING BECAUSE I'M GOING TO LOOK IN THE HOLD ANYWAY.

POULTER! SO YOU AND YOUR MEN ARE THE "INDIANS"! WELL, THE GOLD-DUST IS DOWN BELOW ALL SEWN UP IN AN OLD BEAR SKIN.

In less than ten seconds Poulter and all his men, except two guards, had opened the hatch and gone below.



GIVE US A LIGHT DOWN HERE. IT'S AS BLACK AS PITCH.



HERE YOU ARE —AAGH!

WHAT'S UP, SETH —OUF!

NOW!



HATCH ON, LADS, CLAMP IT DOWN, THEN WE CAN SIT BACK AND RELAX FOR A WHILE.

WONDER HOW LONG IT'LL BE BEFORE THEY FIND OUR GOLD-DUST AN' DECIDE THEY DON'T WANT IT AFTER ALL.

IT WAS A TRAP SURE ENOUGH, POULTER. BUT NOBODY TOLD ME ANYTHING EXCEPT THAT YOU AND YOUR GANG WERE NO GOOD SKUNKS WHO SEEMED TO HAVE QUIETENED DOWN FOR A WHILE. NO, YOU GAVE YOURSELVES AWAY. THE ARROWS YOU USED WERE MADE BY SHAWNEES, CHOCTAWS AND CATABAS—AN' THEM THREE TRIBES HATE EACH OTHER LIKE POISON. IT JUST WASN'T POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO FORM A MIXED WAR PARTY.

Minutes later the first panic-stricken yell rent the air.



I RECKON THEY'VE ONLY BEEN DOWN THERE FIVE MINUTES AN' THEY SURE DON'T SOUND HAPPY ABOUT IT.

HELP, LET US OUT!

OPEN THE HATCH!

When Mike did open the hatch it was after hearing confessions about more than a dozen crimes.



GUESS YOU COULDN'T SEE DOWN THERE THAT GOLD-DUST WAS MUZZLED AND HAD A PAIR OF FANCY LEATHER GLOVES ROUND HIS PAWS. GUESS YOU REDSKIN BRAVES AIN'T ALL YOU'RE CRACKED UP TO BE—IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

IT WAS A TRAP. WHO TOLD YOU? I'LL KILL HIM.



Look out for another tale of life on the keelboats soon, lads!