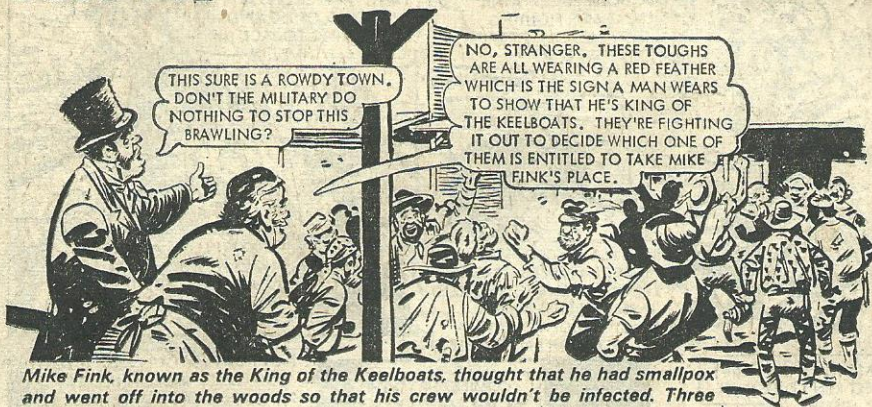


When Mike Fink hears that someone else claims to be King of the Keelboats, he can't wait to meet him—and start the sparks flying!

KING OF THE KEELBOATS



THIS SURE IS A ROWDY TOWN. DON'T THE MILITARY DO NOTHING TO STOP THIS BRAWLING?

NO, STRANGER. THESE TOUGHS ARE ALL WEARING A RED FEATHER WHICH IS THE SIGN A MAN WEARS TO SHOW THAT HE'S KING OF THE KEELBOATS. THEY'RE FIGHTING IT OUT TO DECIDE WHICH ONE OF THEM IS ENTITLED TO TAKE MIKE FINK'S PLACE.

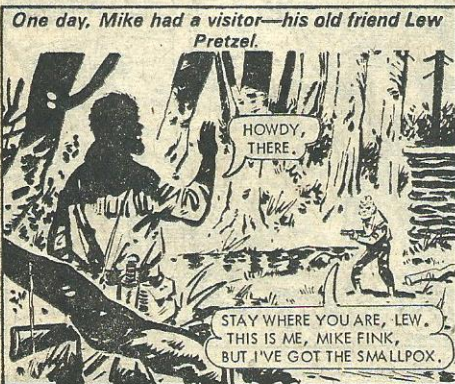
Mike Fink, known as the King of the Keelboats, thought that he had smallpox and went off into the woods so that his crew wouldn't be infected. Three weeks later his crew sailed into Louiseville, where they broke the news that Mike Fink was dead or dying!



But Mike wasn't dead yet.

MISTER DEER, YOU SURE ARE GONNA MAKE ME A FINE MEAL.

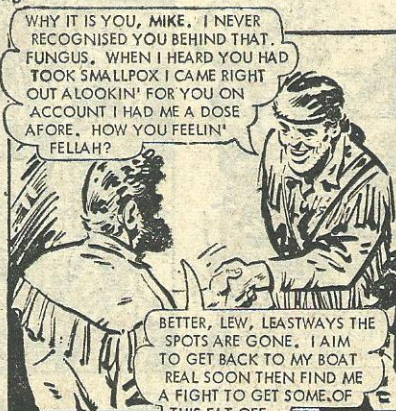
THERE'S PLENTY OF FIGHTING GOING ON ALONG THE RIVER, MIKE. THE BOATMEN ARE SCRAPPING TO SEE WHO'S GOING TO BE NEXT KING OF THE KEELBOATS, SEEING AS HOW YOU'RE THOUGHT TO BE DEAD.



One day, Mike had a visitor—his old friend Lew Pretzel.

HOWDY, THERE.

STAY WHERE YOU ARE, LEW. THIS IS ME, MIKE FINK, BUT I'VE GOT THE SMALLPOX.



WHY IT IS YOU, MIKE. I NEVER RECOGNISED YOU BEHIND THAT FUNGUS. WHEN I HEARD YOU HAD TOOK SMALLPOX I CAME RIGHT OUT ALOOKIN' FOR YOU ON ACCOUNT I HAD ME A DOSE AFORE. HOW YOU FEELIN' FELLAH?

BETTER, LEW, LEASTWAYS THE SPOTS ARE GONE. I AIM TO GET BACK TO MY BOAT REAL SOON THEN FIND ME A FIGHT TO GET SOME OF THIS FAT OFF.



WHAT? I'LL SOON SEE ABOUT THAT.



An hour later, as Lew moved on...

THERE'S A FELLER CALLED BARBARY JONES AT NATCHEZ WHIPPING THEM ALL, MIKE. I RECKON HE'S YOUR BEST BET FOR A GOOD SCRAP.

THANKS, LEW, AND SO LONG. I'M HIGH TAILING IT FOR WHEREVER HE IS—AN' HE'LL BE THE ONE THAT'S SORRIEST I AIN'T DEAD.



Next morning, Buckeye Pearce, the skipper of a passing keelboat, hailed Mike at his riverside camp.

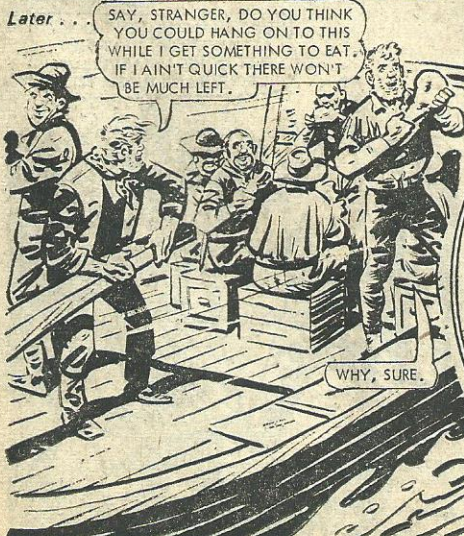
HEY, THERE, STRANGER, YOU GOT ANY MEAT TO SPARE?

WHY, HOWDY, CAPTAIN. SURE I GOT PLENTY OF FRESH MEAT. I MIGHT TRADE SOME FOR A TRIP TO NATCHEZ.



IT'S A DEAL, STRANGER, BRING HER IN, PETE. GET THE OLD STOVE AGOIN' COOKIE.

OLD BUCKEYE DOESN'T RECOGNISE ME WITH THIS BEARD.



Later... SAY, STRANGER, DO YOU THINK YOU COULD HANG ON TO THIS WHILE I GET SOMETHING TO EAT. IF I AIN'T QUICK THERE WON'T BE MUCH LEFT.

WHY, SURE.

Although the steersman had been pretending it was no effort, he had really been having his work cut out.



ALL RIGHT, MISTER. YOU GET YOURSELF SOME GRUB. I'LL HOLD THIS FOR A WHILES.

IT AIN'T HARD. YOU'LL MANAGE FINE.



THE OLD RIVER IS MIGHTY CALM AND GENTLE TODAY. REAL PEACEABLE.