DISCHARGING OF AN AMERICAN LAKE.

On the morning of June the 6th, 1810, being a day observed as a general holiday in the state of Vermont, about one hundred individuals, resident in a thinly populated portion of that state, assembled with shovels, spades, hoes, crowbars, and pickaxes, and marched to a lake called Long Lake, voting that they would have a "regular frolic." Not that their object was entirely of this character; on the contrary, they had the useful purpose in view of drawing off a small current of water from the lake in question, for the supply of certain mills situated at a short distance below. It was only from the uncertain and speculative nature of their attempt that they bestowed on it the name of a frolic, or, in American phraseology, a "scrape." They accordingly set to work in execution of their design, and, ere a few hours of the day passed over, the consequence was a true "scrape," in the English sense of the word. A most awful and desolating eruption of water signalized that attempt, such as has seldom, probably, been seen even in America, a land where waters move on a scale unknown anywhere else. In order to understand fully the nature of this occurrence, it is necessary to explain briefly the character, relative position, and extent, of the sheet of water thus fortuitously and unexpectedly discharged.

Long Lake, before it was drained, was a beautiful sheet of water, about a mile and a half in length from north to south, and, where largest, three-fourths of a mile in breadth. At the southern extremity, the lake was pointed in shape, and shallow, but it rapidly swelled out, in the form of a pear, and became very deep, varying from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet. Only about five hundred yards, indeed, of the length of the lake, at the southern end, was less than this depth, so that the whole contained body of water was very great. The only supply of Long Lake came from a small rivulet on the western side, and the sole outlet was through a trifling sluggish streamlet at the southern point, where the shore was low. The eastern and western banks were bold and elevated. The northern shore, with which we have chiefly to do at present, was about half a mile in length, and was generally low, rising not more than five or six feet above the surface of the lake, and consisting of a narrow belt of sand, succeeded by a bank of light sandy earth. The descent here, from the surface of the water, was bold and rapid, and the lake's greatest depth was at no great distance from the shore. Against the inclined plane of the northern bank, the whole waters may be said to have rested, and this plane was covered over with a sheet of calcareous deposit, from two to six inches thick, lying on a mass of sandy earth. This deposit was the true support of the lake, having long preserved, doubtless, the soft bank from the wearing action of the water, when agitated by storms.

Such a preservative was much required, for the northern boundary was extremely narrow. The ground continued level only for about five rods, and then descended rapidly for other two hundred rods, where it reached the shores of a second lake, called Mud Lake, which was about three-fourths of a mile in length, and half a mile in breadth. There had never been any natural connection between Long Lake and Mud Lake. The difference in their level was about two hundred feet, and Mud Lake discharged itself in an opposite direction from the former; towards the north, namely, by a rapid stream called Barton River. On this stream, about four miles below Mud Lake, was situated a hamlet called Keene-Corner, where there were a grist-mill and a saw-mill, named Wilson's mills. About seven miles farther down the little valley of Barton river, stood the village of Barton, and below this were two other mills, at various distances. With the exception of the cleared land about these mill-hamlets, the whole country in this neighbourhood was covered with a thick forest, reaching to the very shores of Barton river and the two lakes, and also covering the ground between them.

Barton river, in the summer season, gave but an insufficient supply of water to the mills of Keene-Corner, which was a great inconvenience to the inhabitants, and had frequently provoked discussions of the question, "Whether it was not practicable to let out part of the water of Long Lake into Mud Lake, and so furnish an additional supply to the mills on Barton river?" An affirmative conclusion was generally come to on the point, and, at last, on the holiday of June the 6th, 1810, the inhabitants, as has been mentioned, with a body of neighbours collected from all quarters around, marched to Long Lake to make the long-meditated attempt, though so little aware of the consequences as to regard the enterprise half as a frolic.

About ten o'clock, the band reached the northern shore of Long Lake, and after selecting the track that seemed most feasible, began to cut down the trees, and to dig a channel for the water across the belt of sandy earth forming the boundary of the lake. They commenced within a yard of the water, and by three o'clock had dug a trench five feet wide, and eight feet deep, from that point to the brow of the declivity leading to Mud Lake. The command was then given that all hands should leave the trench, and, this being done, some of the men commenced with their pickaxes to break as much as they could of the cake of calcareous deposit already alluded to, expecting that, when this was accomplished, the water would carry before it the little sand left in the trench, and flow in a gentle stream over the declivity. When a portion of the deposit was broken, the water *did* press over the aperture, but, to the surprise of the workmen, it did not flow into the trench. The sand under the deposit was a species of quicksand, and the issuing stream, instead of flowing along the trench, began to sink beneath the deposit, and to work down a portion of the quicksand with it. The portion of the deposit thus