

in many places high basaltic cliffs arise, some of them out of the water, and tower high, to which the French voyageurs have given the name of "baru."

My favorite resort was somewhat difficult of ascent, and was only three or four rods broad on the top. Right on the brow of this cliff lay a large granite boulder weighing several tons. One day a number of boys having accompanied me, we took it into our heads to roll it down. I called to mind all the scraps of poetry I had memorised in my school-boy days, about tugging a big stone up the hill, or tearing it from the brow of the mountain. It would have been impossible for us to move it on level ground, but I saw a little more would give it a start; so we cut many levers of white birch, and after long tugging we got it on the balance,—After ascertaining that all was clear below, we let it go. It cut a clean path through the small trees or brushwood of the mountain, and went thundering far down on the level land below. It was early autumn while I remained there, and one warm fine day, the wind being strong from the south-west, we saw a smoke arising at the distance of about twelve miles. This circumstance would create but small interest in ordinary cases; but for us it was an object of deep solicitude, for the column of smoke which was that very moment growing larger, denser and blacker, was by the wind driven right over us. That whole region is covered with moss on the ground, with a good deal on the trees, as most of the trees are of the gummy or resinous kind. The gum or pitch, and the moss, are fuel for the flames, and in dry seasons it is not uncommon for large districts to be entirely burnt. In our case the fire came on at a fearful rate, and in the course of two hours was within four or five miles of us. The burnt leaves of the evergreen trees fell in blackened hail, and I saw a small piece of birch bark that had been borne four or five miles by the wind, fall and ignite some dry materials near me. Every tub, bucket, kettle, and pail, was filled with water, and men were on the house tops. We all, however, kept a good look out towards the canoes, intending to take to the water in the last extremity. But the wind veered a little to the westward, and drove the flame out to the lake above us. It was night before the flame died away, and I had fair view of it as it enveloped a whole mountain side, on the last promontory jutting out into the lake. I have seen great fires in cities, and the prairies burning under all circumstances. At night when the whole horizon is lit up the prairies in flames, it looks like a sea on fire. But neither city nor prairie showed the terrific grandeur and wrath of our northern forest in flames. The comparisons ever present to my mind on that day were, a world in flames, and the bottomless pit. The roar and smoke were too much to admit the nerves to remain quiet. On one occasion, during a conflagration, some of the Hudson Bay traders were travelling in a birch bark canoe, in a river of no great breadth. One of these periodic fires swept over the country, and came upon them, so that there was no retreat either way, and the only resource left was to find a shallow place in the stream, invert their canoe over their heads, while they were entirely submerged, all but their heads, and wait for the flames to pass. When they ventured to emerge, they found their canoe scorched. A river or lake of half a mile in breadth opposes no secure barrier to these fires. Another concomitant of these fires is, that they create such a rush of air to the burning region, as sends a strong current upward, bearing the flaming particles high over head, to descend in a shower of fire far around.