

world where you can travel with so much economy of time as on the prairie, for you can go out in the morning, take one good look in every direction, and then sit down to your books and your papers with something like an absolute certainty that you have seen all that there will be to see for the next twelve or twenty-four hours."

Then, the prairie was not as large in appearance as my undisciplined and untrained imagination had pictured or tried to picture it. I found, what I ought to have known before, that the horizon is about as distant on one part of the earth's surface as on another, when one is standing on the level. Even from the deck of a ship, the whole of that part of the ocean surface that comes within the field of vision at any one time is included in a circle the radius of which is less than five miles. It is only when standing on some elevation that we acquire a larger horizon than this, and these elevated points on the prairie are few and far between. All that the eye of the traveller, when crossing it, can see at any particular time is a comparatively insignificant patch.

Some of the most startling and even tragic incidents of life on the prairie are connected with prairie fires. When one of these fires gets headway, and is backed up by a strong prairie wind—a phenomenon which is unlike anything else—it must be appalling in the extreme. My very first glimpse of the prairie fire happened to be connected with a tract of a few miles extent that had never been broken up, and, the air being quiet, the fire had not a very terrific aspect. It was, happily, unattended by any startling incidents.

I was rather pleased than otherwise at seeing this prairie fire. This was not because of its grandeur. In this respect it was not at all comparable to some of the scenes with which I was familiar in my boyhood. In point

of sublimity there is nothing in the way of fires, except it be a conflagration in a great city like that which laid waste the city of Chicago in 1871, that is at all comparable to one of the great bush fires which have occurred now and again in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and in other thickly wooded parts of this continent. And even twenty or thirty acres of log-heaps all on fire of a dark night, surrounded by the gloom of the primeval forest, with the men walking about among the flames like so many ghosts or demons, punching the burning logs and rolling them together—a scene with which everybody was once familiar who knew anything of the early settlement of this country—presented an aspect of sublimity with which the prairie fire at best, when viewed simply in the light of a spectacular display, but ill compares.

It was rather on account of its destructiveness that my heart warmed toward the fire referred to. A fellow-traveller, but a short time before the flames became visible, had been giving an account of some of the inhabitants of these plains which had not only greatly interested me, but excited in me a malevolent desire that they might speedily be burned out, and, if possible, exterminated. He had been giving me some facts and incidents concerning the venomous reptiles found in the prairies, which quite reconciled me to having my lot cast somewhat farther north. He told me that the men, when engaged in mowing the grass in the lowlands in that region, used to protect themselves from snake bites by swathing their legs up to or above the knee in hay ropes, and that it was not uncommon for one of these to find a "rattler" dangling from one of his limbs that had struck at him unawares and fastened his fangs in the hay ropes. A relative of my own told me that he was gathering sheaves one day and putting them in shocks, and at the moment happened to have