

Phillip Tocque Excerpt

Wandering Thoughts or Solitary Moments, P. Tocque, pp. 118-120, MUN CNS, FF 1013 T6 1846):

About fifteen years ago, at this season of the year, a very singular and very extraordinary sound was heard in the neighbourhood of Bonavista, and of Bird Island Cove. It commenced about three o'clock in the afternoon, and lasted until the next day about noon. The men of Bird Island Cove were going about nearly all night, some with loaded guns- some with hatchets- and others with any weapon they could command. The sound is described as resembling distant thunder. It has also been compared to the growl of a bear, the bellowing of a cow, etc, conveying a deep sepulchral tone. What is most strange and unaccountable is, that it appeared alongside of every body, although at the time some were at a distance from each other of from one to five miles. Men hauling wood at the time thought the sound came out of the ground immediately under the slide or sledge, and in some instances were so alarmed as to leave the wood behind. Several females thought a bear had got into their bedrooms, and ran terrified from their dwellings. James Porter informed me, that when he first heard the sound he took his loaded gun and proceeded in the direction whence the sound came (supposing it had been a water-bear) until he came to the edge of a cliff, when the sound seemed as if it issued out of the solid rock, and so deep and strong as to make his whole body tremble. By what means this singular sound was brought into existence I am unable to explain. It could not have originated from the rumbling sound made by the ice, because no ice at the time was near the coast - neither would the noise made by the ice be heard in the peculiar manner this sound was heard; it does not appear to have been symptoms of an earthquake, because no trembling, nor the slightest motion was felt in the earth; and nothing remarkable occurred immediately after the sound passed away, except that two days afterwards one of the heaviest seas ever known took place. The origins of this sound could hardly be the eruptions of some distant volcano (the nearest of these being in Iceland); though Sir Stamford Raffles states, that the detonations produced by the eruption of Tomboro, a volcanic mountain in Sumbawa, were heard at a distance of nine hundred and seventy miles. This sound is termed by the inhabitants of Bonavista and Bird Island Cove, "the thunder growl". It probably had its origin in the atmosphere.

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Information Provided by Mr. Doug Cole