

he acted injudiciously in refusing a guide? He suspected so, now that it was too late. Revolving all this in his mind, he once more put his horse in motion, and descended the hill, where, to his relief, the road, for it was now more like one, showing that he was coming once more to the vicinity of a settlement, took a turn inward from the shore, and ran along the borders of a deep gully, by which it wound away from the lake and the bare hillside.

Now he had become once more the keen soldier, alert and watchful, and he carefully examined his pistols to make sure that they would not fail him.

He rode on deeper and deeper, as it seemed, into the sunset forest. All about him was as still and lonely as though the virgin isolation had been inviolate since the beginning of time. There was a smoky, resinous odor in the air, and the great trees brooded about the path in a peace which only lonely remote fastnesses such as this can hold.

On and on he went, and as he travelled, his fears and suspicions began once more to vanish, and his anxious care to relax into a hope that after all he might reach Castle Monmouth that evening, though late. As this thought entered his mind, the road took a quick turn at the top of a wooded hill, and as his horse entered the defile and began to descend the slope, there rose out of the growth near by, a loud cry as of a wild beast. The horse, recoiling in terror, plunged forward and struck some unseen obstacle that obstructed the path, and before he could prevent himself, Etherington was thrown violently forward, and as he struck the ground, lost consciousness.