

As the sun sank low, I made extraordinary efforts to free myself from my surroundings. My reckless energy pierced the tangled brushwood, overcame the rugged hills, and leaped from rock to rock, but all to no purpose. The unusual exertion only caused me to perspire excessively and rendered my clothes damp and uncomfortable for the chilly autumn night.

Twilight came on and immediately it was dark, intensely dark. No moon shed her pale light to light my foot-steps but here and there a solitary star twinkled through the trees to remind me of the heaven above. I stumbled forward on the rugged pathway, thinking myself fortunate if I did not fall into a lake or a bog. Luckily there were none such in the highlands on which I wandered. I hugged the hill-tops. From them at least one could discern the neighboring hills looming darkly up against the sky. But the valleys lay in the deep shadows where lurked death in the dark and treacherous waters of lake or swamp. Who could tell but that some unlucky person, in circumstances like mine, had already sunk into those gloomy depths without leaving a sign of the place where he died. A splash, a scream, a ripple on the water—and no trace remained on the smooth, black surface to tell the tale of midnight death. When compelled to enter a valley by the necessity of crossing it or by the desire to obtain drinking water, I made my way with extreme caution—not advancing a foot without making sure of every step and peering into every opening. I went groping about in the dark woods with my hands before me, stumbling over inequalities in the path, bumping my head against a tree now and then, and, even crawling on my hands and knees over rocks and dangerous places. About an hour after sunset, while still beset with these difficulties, I discovered the position of the north star from a small clearing, and an hour later a pale light on the southern horizon told me in what direction lay the city of Ottawa. By these two guides I tried to direct my course to the south west. It was of little use. Not only did the nature of the country turn me from my course but my guides were too often hidden by the trees or the clouds. At times in fact, I would find myself completely turned round and seeking the north star in the east or the west.