

CHAPTER IV

THE AMBUSCADE

THE afternoon had passed slowly and uneventfully, and hour had succeeded hour as Etherington journeyed, now under deep gloomy woods, now by vast marshy opens skirting the lake shore. The monotony was relieved at times by the necessity he was under of now and again dismounting, and leading his nervous and high-strung beast around or through some quagmire or stream, which impeded or crossed his path. The roadway, also, as the hours passed, became less a trail, and more and more a series of blazes on trees, or was only to be detected by broken limbs of shrubs; a task for an experienced woodsman, but exceedingly difficult to our traveller, who now began, as the evening approached, to doubt the possibility of proceeding much farther.

Once he had heard a long, low, significant howl, or moan, that seemed to penetrate to him there, from the distant deeps of the forest, and made his heart beat faster with a sudden apprehension, as he remembered the stories he had heard of wolves. But that had died away, and as he again came nearer the shore, and the road became easier to follow, his thoughts took another channel, and reverted to his past life in the old World, and his short campaign in the Peninsula before his exchange to his present position, as an extra aide-de-