

difficult to use the sights of my gun, not to mention the trouble I had in keeping the clay from them and from the muzzle. The reindeer still grazed quietly on. When they raised their heads to look round I had to lie as quiet as a mouse, feeling the water trickling gently under my stomach; when they began to nibble the moss again, off I went through the mud. Presently I made the disagreeable discovery that they were moving away from me about as fast as I could move forward, and I had to redouble my exertions. But the darkness was getting worse and worse, and I had the mate to the north of me, and presently he would start them off. The outlook was anything but bright either morally or physically. The hollow was getting shallower and shallower, so that I was hardly covered at all. I squeezed myself still deeper into the mud. A turn in the ground helped me forward to the next little height; and now they were right in front of me, within what I should have called easy range if it had been daylight. I tried to take aim, but could not see the bead on my gun.

Man's fate is sometimes hard to bear. My clothes were dripping with wet clay, and after what seemed to me most meritorious exertions, here I was at the goal, unable to take advantage of my position. But now the reindeer moved down into a small depression. I crept forward a little way farther as quickly as I could. I was in a splendid position, so far as I could tell in the dark, but I could not see the bead any better than