
THE FUGITIVE

even if my absence had been reported, Saxe would never venture to send a small party so far afield. It was the allies, through whose lines I was seeking passage, that I needed to avoid. And to escape discovery I must find a safe hiding place before dawn. The rough walls of a home of some pretensions loomed black to the right, but the stones had been shattered by cannon shot, and offered no protection. Yet I found here the trace of a road leading southward, and I mounted again and rode forward with greater confidence, meeting with no evidence that troops had passed that way.

I must have covered two miles, and faint light was already visible in the east, when the road skirted the edge of a wood, and turned sharply to the west. Just at the turn, dark, seemingly deserted, appeared a small hamlet. Not to exceed a half-dozen houses were huddled there, the most of them small peasant shacks; but the one closest to the road was a larger, square building, with a creaking sign in front. Beyond doubt, and not long