

Wreden, perceiving the danger and uselessness of a continuance of the struggle, ordered his troops to retreat; and no sooner had the Bavarians received this longed-for order, than they fell back at the double-quick from the bridge and took the road to Sterzing.

This retreat of the enemy was greeted by the renewed cheers which Eliza Wallner had heard; and, both laughing and weeping for joy, she hastened to fold her father to her heart, and thank God that no bullet had hit him.

Wallner embraced her tenderly, and imprinted a kiss on her forehead.

"You have behaved very bravely, Lizzie," he said; "I saw how you carried our poor brethren out of the thickest of the fight. My heart was proud of you, and I should not have wept to-day even though you had fallen in the sacred service of the fatherland. But I thank God that nothing has happened to you, and I beseech you, dearest Lizzie, do not accompany us any farther. I now believe again in you, and I know that you are a true daughter of the Tyrol, although you unfortunately love a Bavarian. Therefore go home; for it is no woman's work that is in store for us; we have a hard struggle before us, and a great deal of blood will be shed before we have driven the mean Bavarians and the accursed French from our beloved country."

"No, father, I shall stay with you," exclaimed Eliza, with eager determination. "I am not able to sit at home and spin and pray when my father is fighting for the country. Mother can attend alone to our household affairs, and Shröpfel will assist her; but you cannot attend alone to the hard work here, and I will help you, dearest father. I will be the doctor and surgeon of your men until you have found a better and more skilful physician. You must not reject me, dearest father, for you would commit wrong against the poor wounded who have no other assistance than what they receive at my hands and at those of the women whom I beg and persuade to help me."

"You are right, Lizzie; it would be wrong in me to send you home and not permit you to assist and nurse the wounded," said her father, gravely. "May God and the Holy Vir-

gin help and protect you! I devote you to the fatherland to which I devote myself."

He kissed her once more, and then turned to the Tyrolese, who, encamped in groups on the edge of the forest, and reposing from the struggle, were partaking of the bread and meat which they had brought along in their haversacks.

"Brethren," exclaimed Anthony Wallner, in a powerful voice, "now let us be up and doing! We must cut off the enemy's retreat to Sterzing. We must also occupy the Mühlbach pass, as Andreas Hofer ordered us to do in the Archduke John's name. The enemy has set out thither, and if he gets before us through the gap of Brixen and reaches the bridge of Laditch, we shall be unable to prevent him from passing through the Mühlbach pass and marching to Sterzing. Hence, we are not at liberty to repose now, but must advance rapidly. One detachment of our men, commanded by my Lieutenant Panzl, will push on quickly on the mountain-road to the Mühlbach pass. The rest of us will follow you, but we must previously detain the enemy at the gap of Brixen; and while we are doing duty, another detachment of our men will go farther down to the bridge of Laditch and destroy it in order to prevent the enemy from crossing the Eisach. Forward, my friends! Forward to the gap of Brixen! We must roll down trees, detach large fragments from the rocks, and hurl them down on the enemy; we must fire at them from the heights with deadly certainty, and every bullet must hit its man. Forward! forward! To the bridge of Laditch!"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the Tyrolese, with enthusiastic courage. "Forward to the bridge of Laditch!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE BRIDGE OF LADITCH.

NIGHT had at length brought some repose to the exhausted Bavarians. At no great distance from the gap of Brixen they had halted late in the evening, and encamped on the bare

ground in the valley below. The green turf was their bed, a stone their pillow ; nevertheless, they had been able to enjoy a few hours of peaceful slumber, for they were familiar with the habits of the Tyrolese ; they knew that they never undertook any thing, not even a hunting-excursion, in the dead of night, and that they had nothing to fear from them until sunrise.

But now the first streaks of dawn illuminated the sky ; it was time, therefore, to continue the march. Lieutenant-Colonel von Wreden rose from the couch which the soldiers had prepared for him of moss and branches, and reviewed, accompanied by his officers, his small force, which began sullenly and silently to form in line. A cloud darkened Wreden's face when, marching through the ranks, he counted the number of his soldiers. He had arrived yesterday at the bridge of St. Lawrence with nearly four hundred men ; scarcely one-half of them were left now ; the other half lay slain at the bridge of St. Lawrence, or, exhausted by the loss of blood and by the pains of gaping wounds, had sunk down on the road and been unable to continue the march.

"And these poor men will likewise be killed to-day unless speedy succor comes," murmured the lieutenant-colonel to himself ; "we are all lost if the miserable rabble of peasants reach the gap of Brixen before us. We are all lost, for we shall be entirely cut off from our friends and surrounded by our enemies, who are able to avail themselves of their mountain fastnesses and hiding-places, while we must march through the valley and across the open plain. But all these complaints are useless. We must do our duty ! The soldier's life belongs to his oath and his king ; and if he falls in the service, he has done his duty."

And with strong determination and bold courage the lieutenant-colonel threw back his head, and fixed his eye steadfastly on his soldiers.

"Forward," he shouted, "forward, boys ! Forward against these miserable peasants, who have violated the faith they plighted to our king. Forward ! forward !"

The column, headed by Lieutenant-Colonel von Wreden, commenced moving. His eyes glanced anxiously over the

plain now opening before them. Suddenly they are riveted on a point yonder on the mountain-road leading southward to Italy. What is that ? Does it not flash there like a mass of bayonets ? Does it not look as though a brilliant serpent, glittering in blue, red, and gold, were moving along the road ? It draws nearer and nearer, and the lieutenant-colonel is able to distinguish its parts. Yes, these parts are soldiers ; this serpent consists of regiments marching along in serried ranks.

Lieutenant-Colonel von Wreden uttered a cry of joy and galloped forward. Already he discerned distinctly the uniforms of the staff-officers riding at the head of the column. They were friends ; they were French soldiers headed by General Bisson.

Wreden galloped forward to salute the general and communicate to him in brief, winged words his own disaster and his apprehensions regarding the immediate future.

"Well, you have nothing to fear now," said General Bisson, with a pleasant and proud smile. "It was no accident, but a decree of Fate, that caused us to meet here. I was ordered by my emperor to march with a column of four thousand men from Mantua to Ratisbon, and I am now on the road to the latter place. Hence, our route leads us through the gap of Brixen, and as a matter of course you will join us with your troops. I hope our united forces will succeed in routing these miserable peasants !"

"Yes, if we could meet them in the open plain," sighed Lieutenant-Colonel von Wreden. "But in their mountains and gorges our thousands will vainly struggle against their hundreds. The bulwarks of their mountains protect them."

"We shall drive them from these bulwarks," said General Bisson, haughtily. "But I believe the rabble will not even wait for this, but take to their heels as soon as they see the head of my column. Therefore, join my regiments, lieutenant-colonel, and let us march fearlessly through the gap of Brixen."

Half an hour afterward they had reached the dark and awe-inspiring gap of Brixen, and the united Bavarian and French troops marched with a measured step along the narrow road, on both sides of which rose steep gray rocks, covered

here and there with small pine forests, and then again exhibiting their naked, moss-grown walls, crowned above with their snowy summits glistening like burnished silver in the morning sun.

The column under General Bisson penetrated deeper and deeper into the gorge. Enormous rocks now closed the road in their front and rear. A profound, awful stillness surrounded them; only here and there they heard the rustling of a cascade falling down from the mountains with silvery spray, and flowing finally as a murmuring rivulet through the valley; now and then they heard also the hoarse croaking of some bird of prey soaring in the air; otherwise, all was still.

General Bisson, who was riding in the middle of his column, turned smilingly to Lieutenant-Colonel Wreden: "Did I not tell you, my dear lieutenant-colonel," he said, "that these miserable peasants would take to their heels so soon as our column came in sight? They were, perhaps, able to cope with your few hundred men, but my four thousand men—"

The loud crash of a rifle interrupted his sentence; a second, third, and fourth report followed in rapid succession. The heights seemed all at once to bristle with enemies. Like an enormous man-of-war, lying at first calm and peaceful, and then opening her port-holes, these gray rocks seemed suddenly to open all their port-holes and pour out death and destruction.

From the rock in front yonder, from the steep mountains on both sides, from the precipitous hill jutting out in their rear and closing the gloomy gorge, rifle-shots rattled down with unerring aim; every bullet hit its man, every bullet struck down a soldier in the ranks of the Bavarians and French; then were heard the triumphant cheers of the Tyrolese, who, for a moment, stepped forth from their safe hiding-places, danced on the rocks, jeered at the enemy with loud, scornful words, and disappeared again so quickly, that the bullets which the soldiers fired at them glanced harmlessly from the flanks of the rocks.

But the Tyrolese fought not with their rifles alone against the enemy marching through the deep and awful gorge. Nature had prepared other means of defence for them; it had

given them trees and rocks. They hurled the trees, which the storms had felled years ago, and which fragments of rock had held on the brink of the precipice, into the depth of the gorge; they detached large fragments from the rocks, and rolled them down on the soldiers, many of whom were crushed by these terrible missiles. And when these trees and rocks fell into the depth, and spread death and confusion in the ranks of the soldiers, the Tyrolese profited by this moment to aim and strike down additional victims by their rifle-bullets.

And there was no escape for these poor soldiers, who, exposed to the fury of their enemies, did not even enjoy the consolation of wreaking vengeance upon them. In silent despair, and shedding tears of rage, the French and Bavarians continued their march; the corpses of their brethren, which the rear-guard met on the horrible road, could not detain them; they had to pass over them, and abstain even from coming to the assistance of their dying friends; crushed under their feet, the latter had to give up the ghost.

At length the gorge widens before them; the rocks in front recede on both sides, and a bright, expansive plain opens to their view. The soldiers greet this prospect with loud cheers of delight, which their officers dare not repress in the name of discipline; for, on emerging from an open grave, a soldier feels like a human being, and thanks God for the preservation of his life. Hundreds had fallen, but several thousands were left, and their ardent rage, their fiery revengefulness longed for the struggle in which they might avenge their fallen comrades. And Fate seemed intent on fulfilling their wishes. Yonder, at the extremity of the plain through which the soldiers were now marching; yonder, on the bank of the Eisach, was seen a motley crowd ascending the slopes of the mountains on both sides of the river.

"Yes, there are the Tyrolese, there are our enemies," cried the Bavarians and French, with grim satisfaction; and they marched at the double-quick toward the bank of the river.

"The peasants, I believe, intend to prevent us from crossing the river," said General Bisson, with a contemptuous shrug.

"They have taken position in front of the bridge of Laditch, and so closely that I can see nothing of it," replied

Lieutenant-Colonel von Wreden. Suddenly he uttered a cry of surprise, and looked steadfastly toward the extremity of the valley, where the rocks jutted out again into it, and where the furious Eisach makes a sudden bend from one side of the valley to the other. Formerly there had risen here, between tremendous rocks, the majestic arch of the bridge of Laditch. For many centuries past this wonderful arch had spanned the abyss; it was a monument dating from the era of the ancient Romans, and Cæsar himself, perhaps, had crossed this bridge on his march against the free nations of the North. But now this arch had disappeared, or rather its central part had been removed, and between its two extremities yawned a terrible abyss, through which the Eisach rushed with thundering noise.

"The Tyrolese have destroyed the bridge!" exclaimed Von Wreden, in dismay.

"Ah, the brigands!" said Bisson, contemptuously. "It will, therefore, be necessary for us to construct a temporary bridge in order to get over to the other side."

Yes, the Tyrolese had destroyed the bridge of Laditch; and while a small division of their men had quickly moved on to occupy the Mühlbach pass, the others, under the command of Anthony Wallner, had taken position on the opposite bank of the Eisach, in order to prevent the enemy from crossing the river. All the men from the neighboring village of Laditch had joined the forces of Anthony Wallner, and on the mountains stood the sharpshooters from the villages far and near, called out by the tocsin, and ready to dispute every inch of the beloved soil with the enemy.

The columns of the Bavarians and French approached, and shots were exchanged on both sides. "Forward!" shouted Anthony Wallner, and he advanced with his brave men to the Puster valley, close to the bridge upon which the enemy was moving up.

The bullets whistled around him, but he paid no attention to them; he saw only the enemy, and not the dangers menacing him. But the other Tyrolese saw them only too well. Up in the mountains they were brave and resolute; but in the plain, where they were on equal ground with the enemy,

they felt ill at ease and anxious. Moreover, the odds of the enemy were truly formidable, not only in numbers but also in arms. Only a part of the Tyrolese were provided with rifles and muskets; more than half of them were armed only with flails, pitchforks, and clubs. The soldiers had not only their muskets, but also field-pieces, whose balls thundered now across the plain and carried death into the ranks of the Tyrolese.

Terror and dismay seized the sharpshooters; they turned and began to flee into the mountains. But an unexpected obstacle obstructed their path. A number of intrepid women, who had flocked to the scene from the neighboring villages, met them at this moment. They received the fugitives with threatening invectives; they drove them back with uplifted arms, with flaming eyes, with imprecations, and scornful laughter, down the slope, regardless of the bullets whistling around them, and of the enemy moving up closer and closer to them. The fugitives are obliged to turn and plunge once more into the struggle, which becomes more and more furious. Yonder, close to the fragments of the bridge, stand the Tyrolese; here, near the fragments on this side of the river, are the soldiers and the French engineers advancing to construct a temporary bridge across the chasm, and thereby unite again the disrupted ends of the ancient Roman structure.

The fire of the Tyrolese becomes weaker; loud lamentations burst from their ranks. They are exhausted and weary, owing to the heavy exertions of the day; hunger and thirst torment them, and their strength is gone.

"Give us something to eat! Give us something to drink!" they shout to the women occupying the mountain-path in their rear up to the solitary house, the inn *Zur Eisach*, which has already been hit by many a ball from the enemy's guns.

"Courage, brethren, courage!" shouted Eliza Wallner. "I will bring you refreshments."

And, like a gazelle, she hastens up the hillside, skipping from rock to rock until she reaches the battered house. The bullets whistle around her, but she laughs at them, and does not even turn to vouchsafe a glance at the danger. She leaps on courageously; now she reaches the house, she disappears

through the door, and no sooner has she entered than a cannon-ball strikes the wall right above the door. After a very brief space of time, Eliza Wallner reappears in the door. On her head she carries a keg, which she supports with both her uplifted arms. With a serene glance, with rosy cheeks and smiling lips, a charming picture of grace, loveliness, and courageous innocence, she descends the mountain-path again, and even the bullets of the enemy respect her; they whistle past her on both sides, but do not hit her. Eliza hastens down the slope, and now she reaches the bridge, and arrives where are posted the Tyrolese, who receive the courageous girl with deafening cheers.

All at once she feels a jerk in the keg on her head, and immediately after its contents pour in a clear cold stream down on her face and neck. A bullet had struck the keg and passed clear through it. Eliza bursts into merry laughter, lifts the keg with her plump, beautiful arms from her head, and stops the two holes with both her hands, so that the wine can no longer run out.

"Now come, boys," she shouts, in a loud, merry voice; "come and drink, else the wine will run out. The enemy has tapped the keg; he wished to save us the trouble. Come and drink."

"Stand back, Lizzie," shouts Panzl to her; "step behind the rock yonder, that the bullets may not hit you."

"I shall not do it," said Eliza, with a flushed face; "I shall not conceal myself. I am a true daughter of the Tyrol, and God will protect me here as well as there.—Come, boys, and drink. Bring your glasses, or rather apply your mouth to the keg and drink."

Two young Tyrolese sharpshooters hastened to her. Eliza held up the keg; the two young men knelt before her and applied their mouths to the holes made by the bullet, and sucked out the wine, looking with enamoured glances up to the heroic girl who looked down on them smilingly.

"Now you have drunk enough, go and fight again for the fatherland," she said, and signed to two other sharpshooters to refresh themselves from the keg. The two young men hastened back to their comrades, not knowing whether it was



ELIZA WALLNER BRINGING THE WINE.

the wine or the sight of the lovely Tyrolese girl that filled them with renewed courage and enthusiasm.

The two other Tyrolese had drunk likewise. Suddenly another bullet whistles along and darts past close to Eliza's cheeks, causing her to reel for a moment. A cry of dismay burst from the lips of those who saw it; but Eliza already smiled again, and she exclaimed, in a merry voice: "Make haste, boys! else another bullet will come and pierce the keg again, when the wine will run into the grass. Therefore, make haste!"

Two other Tyrolese hastened up to drink; then two more, and so on, until the keg was empty.

"Now you have refreshed yourselves," cried Eliza, "and you must bravely return to the struggle."

And the Tyrolese took position on the river-bank, with redoubled courage and enthusiasm, to prevent the French from finishing the temporary bridge.

But the fire of the enemy thinned the ranks of the Tyrolese fearfully; their shots became few and far between, and gradually a regular panic seized them. They began to give way; even the scornful cries of the women, who tried to obstruct their path, were powerless to keep them back. They pushed the women aside, and rushed resistlessly up the mountain-path.

At this moment loud cheers burst from the lips of the enemy. The Tyrolese started. They looked back, and saw to their dismay that the engineers had succeeded in finishing the temporary bridge across the Eisach, and that nothing prevented the enemy now from passing over to their side of the river.

"Surrender! Lay down your arms!" shouted Lieutenant-Colonel von Wreden, on the other bank.

The Tyrolese were silent, and gazed with mute dismay upon the bridge. All at once they heard a voice resounding on the hills above them as it were from the clouds. This voice shouted: "The imperialists are coming! The Austrians, our saviours, are coming!"

And at the same time a detachment of light-horse appeared on the heights of Schaps. They galloped down the slope, and

were followed by several companies of chasseurs and infantry, who rushed down at the double-quick.

Loud, exulting cheers burst from the lips of the Tyrolese, and found thundering echoes in the mountains and gorges.

The French and Bavarians started, for this sudden apparition took them completely by surprise; they had not even suspected that the Austrians had already invaded the Tyrol. They hesitated, and did not venture to cross the river.

This hesitation of the enemy and the arrival of the Austrians filled the Tyrolese with transports. Some threw down their rifles to embrace each other and swing their hats merrily, while others were dancing with their rifles as though they were their sweethearts; and others again sang and warbled ringing Tyrolese *Jodlers*. Finally, some of them, filled with profound emotion and fervent gratitude, sank down on their knees to thank God for this wonderful rescue and the long-wished-for sight of the dear Austrian uniforms.

The French and Bavarians, in the mean time, thunderstruck at the sudden arrival of the Austrians, whose numbers they were as yet unable to ascertain, had made a retrograde movement in their first terror. But this did not last long. "If we do not want to perish here to the last man, we must try to force a passage," said General Bisson. "Forward, therefore, forward!"

The troops moved, and began to march across the bridge.

But now the Austrians had come close up to them. The Tyrolese received them with deafening shouts of "Long live the Emperor Francis! Long live Austria!"

Then they turned once more with fervent enthusiasm toward the enemy. "Down with the base Bavarians! Forward! forward! Down with them!" they shouted on all sides; and the Tyrolese rushed with furious impetuosity upon the enemy. Their scythes and flails mowed down whole ranks, and many soldiers were soon laid prostrate by the unerring aim of the mountain sharpshooters. Mountains of corpses were piled up, rivers of blood flowed down into the waters of the Eisach, and the crimson-colored waves carried

down through the Tyrol the intelligence that the struggle for the fatherland had commenced.

Nevertheless, the forces of the enemy were too numerous for the Tyrolese and the small advanced guard of the Austrians to annihilate them entirely. The Bavarians and French forced a passage through the ranks of their enthusiastic enemies with the courage and wrath of despair; hundreds of them remained dead on the bloody field, but nearly two thousand ascended the Eisach toward Sterzing.

Anthony Wallner beckoned to his daughter, and stepped with her behind a jutting rock. "First, Lizzie, my heroic girl, give me a kiss," he said, encircling her with one of his arms, and pressing her fondly to his broad breast. "You have been your father's joy and pride to-day, and I saw that the dear little angels were protecting you, and that the bullets for this reason whistled harmlessly around you. Hence, you are now to render an important service to the fatherland. I must send a messenger to Andreas Hofer, but I need the men for fighting here; and, moreover, the enemy might easily catch my messenger. But he will allow a Tyrolese girl like you to pass through his lines, and will not suspect any thing wrong about her. Now will you take my message to Andreas Hofer?"

"I will, father."

"Run, then, my daughter, run along the mountain-paths; you can climb and leap like a chamois, and will easily get the start of the enemy, who is marching on the long roads in the valley. Hasten toward Sterzing. If all has passed off as agreed upon, you will find Andreas Hofer there. Tell him now in my name that the Austrians are coming up from Salzburg and that I have done my duty and redeemed my pledge. Tell him further that the whole Puster valley is in insurrection, and that we are bravely at work, and driving the Bavarians and French from the country. But tell him also to be on his guard, for we have not been able to annihilate the enemy entirely, and they will soon make their appearance at Sterzing. Let him be ready to receive the enemy there as they deserve it."

"Is that all, dearest father?"

"Yes, Lizzie, it is. Tell Andy what has happened here, and do not forget to tell him how you brought down the keg of wine that the boys might drink courage from it."

"No, father, I shall not tell him that. It would look as though I thought I had done something great, and wished to be praised for it. But now, farewell, dearest father. I will hasten to Andreas Hofer."

"Farewell, dearest Lizzie. The angels and the Holy Virgin will protect you. I have no fears for your safety."

"Nor I either, dearest father. The good spirits of the mountain will accompany me. Farewell!"

She kissed her hands to him, and bounded up the mountain-path with the speed and gracefulness of a gazelle.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE STERZINGER MOOS.

WHILE these events were going on below Brixen, Andreas Hofer had marched with the men of the Passeyr valley across the Janfen. The inhabitants everywhere had received him with loud exultation: they had risen everywhere, ready to follow him, to fight under him for the deliverance of the fatherland, and to stake their fortunes and their lives for the emperor and the beloved Tyrol. Hofer's column accordingly gained strength at every step as it advanced. He had set out with a few hundred men on the 9th of April; and now, on the morning of the 11th of April, already several thousand men had rallied around him, and with them he had reached the heights of Sterzing. Andreas Hofer halted his men here, where he had a splendid view of the whole plain, and ordered his Tyrolese to encamp and repose after their long and exhausting march. He himself did not care for repose, for his heart was heavy and full of anxiety; and his glance, usually so serene, was clouded and sombre.

While the others were resting and partaking gayly of the wine and food which the women and girls of the neighboring

villages had brought to them with joyous readiness, Andreas Hofer ascended a peak from which he had a full view of the mountain-chains all around and the extensive plain at his feet. His friend and adjutant, Anthony Sieberer, had followed him noiselessly; and on perceiving him, Andreas Hofer smiled and nodded pleasantly to him.

"See, brother," he said, pointing with a sigh down to the valley, "how calm and peaceful every thing looks! There lies Sterzing, so cozy and sweet, in the sunshine; the fruit-trees are blossoming in its gardens; the daisies, primroses, and hawthorns have opened their little eyes, and are looking up to heaven in silent joy. And now I am to disturb this glorious peace and tranquillity, tear it like a worthless piece of paper, and hurl it like Uriah's letter, into the faces of the people. Ah, Sieberer, war is a cruel thing; and when I take every thing into consideration, I cannot help thinking that men commit a heavy sin by taking the field in order to slay, shoot, and stab, as though they were wild beasts bent on devouring one another, and not men whom God created after His own likeness; and I ask myself, in the humility of my heart, whether or not I have a right to instigate my dear friends and countrymen to follow me and attack men who are our brethren after all."

"If you really ask yourself such questions, and have lost your courage, then we are all lost," said Sieberer, gloomily. "It is Andreas Hofer in whom the men of the Passeyr valley believe, and whom they are following into the bloody struggle. If Hofer hesitates, all will soon despond; and it would be better for us to retrace our steps at once, and allow Bonaparte and the French to trample us again in the dust, instead of lifting our heads like freemen, and fighting for our rights."

"We have gone too far, we can no longer retrace our steps," said Andreas Hofer, shaking his head gently, and lifting his eyes to heaven. After a pause he added in a loud, strong voice: "And even though it were otherwise, even though we could still retrace our steps, I should not consent to it. I shall never repent of having raised my voice in behalf of the Tyrol and the emperor; nor have I lost my cour-