

of Tyrol. It is true, the Bavarians and the miserable French have destroyed the fine castle, but the ruins of the ancient seat of our princes remain to us. We will now ascend to those ruins, and up there you shall hear the message which the Archduke John sends to you."

The whole force of the Tyrolese thereupon moved up the mountain-path leading to the castle of Tyrol, headed by Andreas Hofer and Baron von Hormayr.

On reaching the crest of the hill, Hofer stopped and alighted from his horse. He knelt down amidst the ruins of the castle with a solemn, deeply-moved face, and holding the crucifix on his breast between his hands, and lifting his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed with fervent devotion: "Thanks, Lord God, thanks for the aid that thou hast hitherto vouchsafed to us! Thanks for delivering the country and permitting us to be Austrians again! O God, grant now stability to our work—and preserve it from falling to ruin! If Thou art content with me, let me further serve and be useful to my native country! I am but a weak instrument in Thy hand, my God, but Thou hast used it, and I pray Thee not to cast it aside now, but impart to it strength and durability, that it may last until the enemy has been driven from the country, and the whole Tyrol is free again for evermore! I kiss the dear soil where our princes walked in former times, and where they swore to their Tyrolese that they should be freemen, and that their free constitution should be sacred for all time to come!"

He bent down, kissed the moss-grown stones, and encircled them tenderly with his arms as though they were an altar before which he was uttering devout vows and prayers. The Tyrolese, who had gradually reached the summit, had silently knelt down behind Andreas Hofer, and were praying like him.

One sentiment animated them all and illuminated their faces with the radiant lustre of joy: the Tyrol was delivered from the foreign yoke, and they, the sons of the country, had alone liberated their beloved fatherland.

"Now, men of the Tyrol," shouted Hormayr, "listen to the message which the Archduke John sends to you."

And amid the solemn silence of the Tyrolese, and the peals of the Meran church-bells penetrating up to them, Hormayr read to them a document drawn up by the Archduke John, by virtue of which he resumed possession of the Tyrol in the name of the emperor, declared it to be incorporated with the imperial states, and solemnly vowed that, as a reward of its loyalty, it should remain united with Austria for all future time. At the same time, the ancient constitution and the former privileges were restored to the Tyrolese, and Baron von Hormayr was appointed governor of the Tyrol.

CHAPTER XX.

ELIZA WALLNER'S RETURN.

ALL Windisch-Matrey was again in joyful commotion to-day, for a twofold festival was to be celebrated: the return of the men of Windisch-Matrey, who had so bravely fought for the country and so aided in delivering it; and then, as had been resolved previous to their departure, Eliza Wallner's wedding was to come off to-day.

She had redeemed her pledge, she had proved that she was a true and brave daughter of the Tyrol, and Anthony Wallner, her father, was no longer angry with her; he wished to reward her for her courage and intrepidity, and make her happy. Therefore, he had sent a messenger secretly and without her knowledge to Windisch-Matrey, and had ordered his wife to decorate the house festively, and request the curate to repair to the church and perform the marriage rites. The returning Tyrolese were to march to the church, and, after thanking God for the deliverance of the Tyrol, the curate was to marry Eliza Wallner and her lover in presence of the whole congregation.

Since early dawn, therefore, all the married women and girls of Windisch-Matrey, dressed in their handsome holiday attire, had been in the street, and had decorated the route which the returning men were to take, and adorned the church with wreaths and garlands of flowers.

Wallner's wife alone had remained at home, for she had to attend to the preparations for the wedding-banquet, with which she and her servant-girls had been occupied during the whole of the previous day. There were a great many things to be done yet; the table had to be set in the large bar-room for the wedding-guests; the roasts had to be looked after in the kitchen; and the whole house had to be decorated, and festoons of flowers to be suspended round its entrance.

"Schröpfel might render me good service now," said Wallner's wife, eagerly. "I have so many things to attend to, and he does not move his hands, but sits like a log at the door of dear Ulrich von Hohenberg, and cares for nothing else. Oh, Schröpfel, Schröpfel, come here! I want to see you!"

At the staircase leading down into the hall appeared the sunburnt, furrowed face of old Schröpfel.

"If you want to see me, you must come up here," he shouted. "I have been told to stand guard here, and I will not desert my post, even for the sake of Mrs. Wallner, until I am relieved."

"He is a queer fellow," said Mrs. Wallner, laughing, "but I must do what he says."

She hastened up-stairs. At the door of the room where the prisoner was confined stood the servant, pressing his face to the brown panels of the door.

"Now, Schröpfel," asked Mrs. Wallner, laughing, "can you see through the boards? For you put your eyes to the door as though it were a window."

"It is a window," said Schröpfel, in a low voice, limping up a few steps to his mistress. "I have bored four small holes in the door, and through them I am able to see the whole room and all that the prisoner is doing. Look, Mrs. Wallner! the hole below there is my window when he is in bed and asleep; I can see his face through it. The hole a little above it enables me to watch him while he is seated at the table, and writing or reading; and through the hole up here I can see his face when he is pacing the room."

"You are a strange fellow," said Mrs. Wallner, shaking

her head. "You watch the poor sick prisoner as though he were an eagle, always ready to fly from the nest."

"He is about what you say," said Schröpfel, thoughtfully. "He is no longer sick, and his wings have grown a great deal during the week since he was here. I believe he would like to fly from here."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Wallner, with a shrug. "He loves my Lizzie, and I do not believe that he who loves that girl will wish to fly away before she flies with him."

"I do not know about that; I have my own notions about it," said Schröpfel. "He is a Bavarian for all that, and the Bavarians are all faithless and dishonest. I swore to watch him and not lose sight of him, and I must keep my oath; hence, I shall not leave the door until I am relieved."

"Then you will not come down-stairs and help me fix the wreaths and garlands, set the table, and clean the knives?"

"No, dear Mrs. Wallner, I am not allowed to do so, much as I would like to assist you. A sentinel must never leave his post, or he will be called a deserter, and Mr. Wallner always told me that that was a great disgrace for an honest fellow. Now, as I am an honest fellow, and, owing to my lame leg, cannot serve the country in any other way than watching this prisoner, I shall stay here as a sentinel and take good care not to desert."

"Well, do so, then," exclaimed Mrs. Wallner, half angrily, half laughingly. "But you may go in to the gentleman and tell him to be of good cheer, for Eliza will come back to-day, and the wedding will take place immediately after her return, when he will be free. Tell him to prepare for the ceremony; for, when the bells commence ringing, the returning defenders of the country will have reached the village, and we are to go with him to the church, where the curate will await us."

"Of course, I shall tell him all this," growled Schröpfel, and Mrs. Wallner hastened down-stairs again.

"Yes, I shall tell him," murmured Schröpfel to himself, "but I wonder if it will gladden his heart? During the first few days, when he had the wound-fever, he talked strange things in his delirium, and derided and scorned our beautiful

Lizzie, who, he said, was bent upon becoming an aristocratic lady. Since he is well again, he abuses her no longer, but he looks very sombre, and during the whole week he has not once inquired after his betrothed. God blast the accursed *Boafok* if he should love the girl no longer, and if he did not honestly intend to make her his wife! I will go in to him and see how he receives the news."

Ulrich von Hohenberg was seated in his armchair, and gazing musingly out of the window. He did not turn when the old servant entered his room; he seemed not to have noticed his arrival, but continued staring at the sky even when Schröpfel stood close to him. The face of the young man was still pale and wan, and under his eyes, formerly so clear and cheerful, were to be seen those bluish circles indicative of internal sufferings of the body or the soul. However, since the wound-fever had left him, he had never uttered a complaint, and the wound, which was not very severe, had already closed and was healing rapidly. Hence, it was doubtless grief that imparted so gloomy and sickly an appearance to Captain Ulrich von Hohenberg, and it was this very suspicion that rendered Schröpfel distrustful, and caused him to watch his prisoner night and day with sombre vigilance.

He stood a few minutes patiently, and waited for the captain to address him; but Hohenberg continuing to take no notice of him, he resolutely laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Sir, awake!" he exclaimed sullenly.

The captain gave a slight start, and pushed the servant's hand with an angry gesture from his shoulder.

"I am awake," he said; "it is therefore quite unnecessary for you to lay hands on me. What is it? What do you want of me?"

"I want to tell you only that our men will return this morning, and that this will be a great holiday in Windisch-Matrey. For our men are victorious, and the country is delivered from the enemy. Mr. Wallner has written to us that the brave Tyrolese delivered the whole country in three days, that they have taken prisoners eight thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry, and captured eight guns, two stands of colors, and two French eagles. Besides, several thousand

French and Bavarians have perished in the gorges and on the battle-fields. Very few of our own men have been killed, and not one of them made prisoner. Now the whole country is free, and our victorious men are coming home."

Not a muscle in the captain's face had betrayed that he had heard Schröpfel's report. He still stared quietly at the sky, and his features expressed neither grief nor surprise at the astounding news.

"You do not ask at all, sir, if Eliza Wallner will return with the men?" asked Schröpfel, angrily. "I should think you ought to take some interest in that, for Lizzie is your betrothed."

"She is not!" cried the captain, starting up indignantly, with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

"Yes, she is," said Schröpfel, composedly. "I myself heard the girl say to her father and the men of Windisch-Matrey: 'He is my bridegroom; I love him, and you must not kill him.' And because she said so, the men spared your life, although Anthony Wallner-Aichberger was very angry, and would not forgive his daughter for having given her heart to an enemy of her country, a Bavarian, and, moreover, a nobleman, and not to an honest peasant. But Lizzie begged and wailed so much that her father could not but yield, and promised her to forgive all if she proved that she was no traitress to her country, but a true and brave daughter of the Tyrol; after doing so, he would permit her to marry her Bavarian betrothed. And now she has proved that she is a true and brave daughter of the Tyrol, and the whole country is full of the heroic deeds performed by Lizzie Wallner, and of the intrepidity which she displayed under the most trying circumstances. And to-day, captain, you will meet again your betrothed, who saved your life, and who went with the men only to perform heroic deeds that would induce her father to consent to her union with you. I tell you, sir, beautiful Lizzie Wallner, your betrothed, will return in an hour or two."

The young man's face crimsoned for a moment, and when the color disappeared from his cheeks, their pallor was even more striking and ghastly than before.

"Eliza Wallner fought, then, very bravely against—against my countrymen?" he asked, pantingly.

"No, she did not fight, sir, but she went into the thickest shower of bullets to carry away the wounded Tyrolese, and attend to their injuries; and she drove a hay-wagon directly toward the enemy, and our men were concealed behind the hay, and she brought a keg of wine to our men while the bullets were whistling round her; and, finally, she and the other women escorted the Bavarian prisoners to Castle Steinhach."

The young man uttered a cry, and buried his face in his hands.

"What a disgrace, oh, what a disgrace!" he groaned, despairingly; and in his grief he seemed to have entirely forgotten the presence of the servant, for he wept, wept so bitterly that large scalding tears trickled down between his fingers. "Our brave soldiers were defeated by miserable peasants," he wailed. "The Bavarian prisoners were marched off under an escort of women!"

Schröpfel stood as if petrified, and this outburst of the grief of the usually haughty and laconic young man filled him with the utmost surprise and confusion.

However, the captain suddenly dried his tears and dropped his hands from his face.

"And Eliza Wallner, you say, led the women who escorted the Bavarian prisoners?" he asked, in a firm, almost menacing voice.

"Yes, sir, she did," said Schröpfel. "And now her father is reconciled with her, and, to prove it, he will marry his daughter to you to-day."

The captain said nothing; only a proud, scornful smile played around his lips for a moment.

"Yes," added Schröpfel, "the wedding will come off to-day. Immediately after their return the procession will move to the church, where a thanksgiving service will be held; it will be followed by the marriage ceremony. Mr. Wallner wrote to his wife to send you to the church as soon as the bells commenced ringing, and to keep you in the vestry until you were sent for. Remember, therefore, as soon as the bells

commence ringing, I shall call for you and take you to the vestry."

The young man was silent, and gazed thoughtfully before him; he then threw back his head with an air of bold resolution.

"All right," he said, "I shall accompany you. Did you not say that my baggage had been sent hither from the castle?"

"Yes, yes, Miss Elza sent every thing hither by her servants, and she herself came with them. And during the first days, when you had the wound-fever, she came here at least three times a day and asked how you were, and cried and lamented, and entreated me for God's sake to admit her to your room only for a brief moment. But I had sworn not to admit any one to my prisoner, nor to permit him to speak with any one; hence, I could not make an exception even in favor of the kind-hearted young lady. She comes nevertheless every day and inquires about you; and she begged hard and long until Mrs. Wallner permitted her to send your dinner always from the castle. As you will be free to-day, I may tell you all this, for it will no longer do any harm."

"No, it will no longer do any harm," said the captain, with a peculiar smile. "Listen, I wish to dress up for to-day's ceremony, and don my gala uniform. Therefore be so kind as to fetch it."

"I will, captain, I will fetch the uniform and be back directly," said Schröpfel, cheerfully, limping hastily toward the door. But outside he stood still and pressed his finger thoughtfully to his nose. "I do not know exactly what to think of it," he murmured to himself. "At first he uttered a loud cry and said Lizzie Wallner was not his betrothed; afterward he lamented piteously because Lizzie Wallner escorted the Bavarian prisoners; and finally he asked for his gala uniform in order to dress up for the ceremony. Well, we shall see very soon if he has honest intentions toward Lizzie and really loves her. If he thinks he can play her a trick, he had better beware, for I shall never lose sight of him; I shall always be behind him, and if he does not treat the girl as he ought to, I will strike him down with my fists like a mad bull! I will do it, so help me God!"