

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOFER AND SPECKBACHER.

SCARCELY had the sun risen next morning when Baron von Hormayr arose and quickly prepared every thing for their departure. After seeing that his carriage was at the street door, he descended the staircase in order to go to Andreas Hofer.

Anthony Steeger followed him with a gloomy face, and watched his every movement attentively. "If he tries to take Andy with him," he said to himself, "I will strangle him. It is true, he has told me already that Hofer will accompany him, but I do not believe it, and he shall not coax him away. This time I shall be present, and see what he is after."

They stood now in front of Hofer's door, and Hormayr put his hand on the knob to open it, but it was locked on the inside.

"Andreas Hofer, Andreas Hofer!" he shouted out almost imperatively. "The time is up; come to me, Andreas Hofer!"

The door opened, and the tall, powerful form of the Sandwirth appeared in it.

"Here I am," he said, smiling calmly, "and you see I am ready to set out."

"You will accompany me then, Andy?" asked Hormayr, joyfully.

"You will leave us?" cried Anthony Steeger, indignantly.

"I was waiting for you, sir," said Andreas, quietly; "and if you had not come of your own accord, Tony, I should have called you, for you shall hear what I have got to say to the intendant. Come in, then, both of you, and let us speak a last word with each other. Anthony Steeger, Baron von Hormayr, our countryman, came hither to persuade me to accompany him and leave the Tyrol. Our friends will do the same thing, for the Bavarians and French are already entering the country. Speckbacher, Sieberer, and others, will save their lives for this reason, and go with the Austrians; and

the intendant thinks I ought to do the same, for the sake of my wife and children. However, I wished first to consult the good God. I did so all night long. I prayed and reflected a great deal, and it seemed to me as though the Lord spoke to me and enlightened my soul to find the true path. Listen then, Mr. Intendant of the Tyrol, and you, too, friend Anthony Steeger, to what I have resolved to do with God's assistance. I took an oath to serve the fatherland as long as I lived; as an honest man, I must keep my word, and stay in the Tyrol."

Anthony Steeger uttered a loud cry of joy, but Hormayr's face grew very sombre. "You do not see, then, that you are rushing upon your own destruction?" he asked. "You are intent on rendering your wife and children unhappy? You are bent on incurring the most imminent peril?"

"I will incur it courageously," said Hofer, kindly. "I know very well that what I am about to do is not prudent, but it is right. When the tempter took Jesus up into an exceeding high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said, 'All these things will I give Thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me,' the Saviour did not accept the offer, but remained true to Himself, and sealed His teachings with his death. I will follow the Saviour's example, and never, while I live, prove recreant to the love which I vowed to the dear Tyrol; never will I leave it, but I will stand by it and serve it to the last. Depart, then, Baron von Hormayr; I cannot accompany you, for the country keeps me here, and never will I abandon it whatever may happen!"*

"Is that your last word, Andreas?" asked Hormayr, gloomily.

"It is," said Hofer, gently. "But pray, sir, do not be angry with me for it. Were I more prudent and sagacious, I should certainly follow your advice; but I am only a plain peasant, and cannot but obey the promptings of my heart. Let the Austrians leave the Tyrol. Andreas Hofer cannot accompany them, nor can he look on quietly while the enemy is re-entering the country. Many brave men, many excellent sharpshooters will remain in the Tyrol, and I shall call upon

* "Gallery of Heroes: Andreas Hofer," vol. iii., p. 104.

them to rally round me. We have twice delivered the country from the enemy without any outside assistance, and we shall, perhaps, succeed a third time."

"But if you should fail," cried Hormayr, "if the seduced Tyrolese should curse you, if the tears and lamentations of your family should accuse you, if you ruin yourself and your country, then remember this hour, and the warning I gave you in order to save you!"

"I will, Mr. Intendant," said Andreas, calmly. "Every one must do his duty after his own fashion. You think you are doing yours by leaving the Tyrol; I think I do mine by staying in the country. God will decide which did right. And now, God bless you, sir! Greet Speckbacher and all the others; and when you see the Archduke John, tell him that my heart has not lost faith in him, and that I know full well he would never have given up the poor Tyrol if he could have helped it. And now, sir, do not look at me so indignantly; shake hands with me, and let us part in peace."

He held out his hand, but Hormayr, overcome by his emotion, spread out his arms and threw them around Hofer's neck with an air of impassioned tenderness.

"Farewell, Andy, farewell," he said, in a low voice. "I cannot approve of what you are doing, but I must love and admire you for all that. Farewell, farewell!"

He disengaged himself quickly, hastened out of the room, and walked hurriedly through the hall. A few minutes afterward his carriage rolled away with thundering noise.

"He is gone!" cried Anthony Steeger, joyously; "the tempter has left us, and you have remained firm, Andy; you did not allow yourself to be seduced by his blandishments. The Tyrol will reward you and love you for it for evermore!"

"If you speak the truth, it is well; if you do not, it is well too," said Andreas, calmly. "I remain because it is my duty, and because I feel that the Tyrol needs me. Anthony, the enemy is re-entering the country; we must drive him out a third time; that is my opinion."

"It is mine, too," replied Anthony Steeger, exultingly. "After succeeding twice in so doing, we shall expel him a third time also."

"It is true, it is a bad and mournful thing that Speckbacher is going to desert us," said Andreas, musingly; but Anthony Wallner and the Capuchin will surely stand by us, and Peter Mayer will not leave us either. Besides, you are here, and so am I, and we five men will raise our voices and call upon the people to rise and expel the enemy once more. I believe the brave men will listen to our voices, and not one of them will stay at home; all will come to us, bring their rifles with them, and fight the French and Bavarians."

"I think so too, Andy. When the brave Tyrolese hear your voice, they will come to a man, and we will achieve another Innspruck triumph, and gain another victory on Mount Isel."

"God grant it in His mercy!" exclaimed Andreas, touching the crucifix on his breast. "But I must set out now, my friend. So long as we are unable to cope with the enemy, we must avoid meeting him, conceal our forces, and prepare actively for the struggle. Hence, I shall not tell you where I am going, and no one shall learn of my whereabouts until the time has come for me to appear once more at the head of a strong and brave army. Do your duty here, Tony, and enlist courageous sharpshooters for the fatherland. Inform all the patriots secretly of my plan, and tell them that we must not heed the armistice concluded by Austria, but must fight on for our liberty and our emperor. Have my horse brought to the door, my friend; the sun is already over the mountains, and it is time for me to start."

Anthony Steeger hastened away; he saddled his friend's horse with his own hands and brought him to the door. Andreas vaulted with the agility of a youth into the saddle, and shook hands with his friend.

"Farewell, Anthony Steeger," he said; "you shall hear from me soon."

He then spurred his horse and galloped along the highway leading through the Puster valley. His horse knew the way very well; it was unnecessary for Andreas Hofer to guide him; he could let him trot along quietly, and absorb himself in his plans and thoughts. He was animated only

by one idea, that his beloved country was in danger, and that it needed him.

"I do not know if I shall be able to save it," he murmured to himself, "but I do know that I must not run away. I shall hide as long as it is necessary, and prepare myself by prayer and devotion. Forward, my horse, forward!"

And he rode on through the valley and across the heights. Profound silence reigned everywhere. It was yet early in the morning, the road was quite deserted, and Andreas could brood uninterruptedly over his thoughts and conceive his plans. All at once his musings were interrupted by the roll of a wagon approaching on the road. It was a large wagon with racks, drawn by four horses, and many men sat in it. Andreas Hofer was as yet unable to see who they were, but the red and white colours of their gold-and-silver-embroidered coats showed him that they were soldiers. When the wagon came closer up to him, he recognized them; they were Austrian officers and soldiers. But who was he that occupied one of the front seats among them? Who was that tall, slender man in the dress of the Tyrolese, his head covered with a pointed green hat? The wagon came nearer and nearer. Andreas Hofer halted his horse and looked steadfastly at the Tyrolese seated in the midst of the Austrian officers. "Good heavens," he murmured, giving a start, "I believe it is Joseph Speckbacher! Yes, yes, it is."

Now the wagon was close by his side, and it was really he, it was Joseph Speckbacher; and it was plainly to be seen that he had likewise recognized Andreas Hofer, for he uttered a cry, and a deep blush suffused his cheeks. But the Austrian officers had also recognized the brave Sandwirth, the universally beloved Barbone, and they shouted to the coachman to drive quicker and whip his horses into a full gallop. The coachman did so, and the carriage sped away at a furious rate. Andreas Hofer halted at the roadside; his tearful eyes gazed upon his friend, and when Speckbacher was whirled past him, Andreas exclaimed in a loud, mournful voice, "Speckbacher, are you too going to desert the country? They are driving you to your own disgrace, Joe!"*

* Andreas Hofer's own words.—See Mayr's "Joseph Speckbacher," p. 143.

The wagon passed him noisily, and Joseph Speckbacher's horse, which was tied behind, galloped rapidly after it. Andreas Hofer looked after his friend until a cloud of dust enveloped the disappearing wagon, and he heard only the sound of the wheels at a distance. He then heaved a deep sigh, wiped a tear from his eye, and rode on. But his heart was heavy and melancholy, and his thoughts returned again and again during his ride on the lonely road to Joseph Speckbacher, who had turned his back on the Tyrol and was about to leave it in the hour of its sorest distress. Suddenly he thought he heard his own name uttered behind; the call was repeated louder and more urgently.

Andreas Hofer halted his horse and turned. A cloud of dust came up the road like a whirlwind; now it opened, and the head and neck of a horse and the slender rider mounted on him came in view. The cloud veils his face as yet, but he comes nearer and nearer; his horse is now by Andreas Hofer's side, the rider stretches out his arms toward him and exclaims exultingly: "Andy, here I am! I heard what you said, and jumped from the wagon, untied my horse, vaulted into the saddle, and sped after you, my Andy. I had to overtake you and tell you that I do not want to be disgraced; that I will not leave the Tyrol unless you do too."

"I never will, Joe, unless I should die," said Andreas Hofer, solemnly. "But God be praised that I have got you back, for a piece of my heart would have left the country with you. But you are back, and I am so glad of it! And I must give you a kiss in the name of God, the country, and the Emperor Francis. Welcome home, good and faithful son of the fatherland!"

He encircled Speckbacher's neck with his arms and imprinted a kiss on his forehead. They remained locked in a long embrace, keeping their horses side by side, and gazing at each other with proud, smiling joy.

"And now tell me, Andy, what are you going to do?" asked Speckbacher, after a long pause. "I hope you will not look on quietly and peaceably while the Bavarians and French are re-entering the country? I could not bear it, and this was the very reason why I did not want to stay in the country;

for the Austrian officers told me, if I wished to remain in the Tyrol, I should have to keep very quiet and allow the enemy to take possession of the province, in accordance with the stipulations of the armistice. And you see, Andy, my heart revolted at that; therefore I wished to get away and remain abroad until the armistice had expired, when we would be once more allowed to fight bravely for our country and our emperor."

"No one shall prevent us from doing so now," said Andreas, calmly. "What do we care for the armistice? The emperor concluded it; we did not, and I believe the emperor will not blame us for disregarding it and continuing the war as we commenced it."

"You are right, we will do so," exclaimed Speckbacher, joyfully. "And now I will communicate to you some important news which the Austrian officers received only this morning. Anthony Wallner, of Windisch-Matrey is also of your opinion; he refuses likewise to acknowledge the armistice and make peace with the enemy. When the Bavarians, four days ago, intended to cross the frontier near Windisch-Matrey, Anthony Wallner and John Panzl went to meet them with four hundred sharpshooters whom they had gathered in great haste. They took position at the bridge of Taxenbach and tried to prevent the Bavarians from crossing it. The Bavarians were seven thousand strong, and Wallner had only four hundred men; but our friends, nevertheless, defended the bridge for seven hours, killed and wounded over three hundred Bavarians, and retreated into the mountains only because the odds were too great."*

"I know Anthony Wallner, and was convinced that he would not submit quietly," said Andreas, joyfully. "And we will follow his example, Joseph. The good God has imposed on us the task of defending the Tyrol, and we will fulfil it faithfully."

"Yes, we will, and we will begin this very hour. We must find out, above all things, if all of our countrymen are of our opinion, and if they are courageous enough

* Peternader, "Die Tyroler Landesvertheidigung im Jahre 1809," vol. ii., p. 84.

to continue the struggle, even after the Austrians have left us."

"What good did the Austrians do us while they were here?" asked Andreas, indignantly. "Let me tell you, Joe, on the whole I am glad that the Austrians are evacuating the province. It is better for us to fight alone, and trust only our own strength. Regular troops and insurgents never fight well together in the end, for there are always jealousies between them; they mutually charge each other with the blunders committed during the campaign, and grudge each other the glory obtained in the battles. Hence, it is better for us to be alone and have no other allies than the good God, the Holy Virgin, and her blessed Son."*

"You are right, always right, Andy," said Speckbacher. "We will go courageously to work, then; and you shall see, my Andy, that Speckbacher is still what he always was, and that he will henceforth never think of leaving the country, but will stand faithfully by it and fight until the enemy has been expelled once more, and we are free again. I will ride now through the whole Puster valley, and then from Brun-ecken through the Dux valley to my home, the Rinn; and I will stir up the people everywhere, and call upon the men to follow me and fight once more for liberty and the fatherland."

"Do so, Joe, and I will follow your example. I will return to the Passeyr valley; you shall all hear from me before long, and then my voice shall resound throughout the Tyrol. God will make it strong enough to penetrate to every ear, and fill every heart with enthusiastic devotion to the country and the emperor. Farewell, then, Joseph! The Tyrol and I have recovered you, and my heart thanks God fervently for it. Farewell, you shall hear from me before long!"

He nodded once more kindly to Joseph Speckbacher and galloped down the valley, while Speckbacher trotted up the mountain-path.

Andreas Hofer rode all day long through the country. He

* Andreas Hofer's own words.—See Mayr's "Joseph Speckbacher," p. 145.

saw the people everywhere in commotion and uproar ; they greeted him with jubilant cheers, and the men swore everywhere that they would not allow the enemy to re-enter the country without resistance ; that they did not believe in the pacific assurances of the proclamations with which the Bavarians had flooded the country ; that they were satisfied, on the contrary, that the enemy would revenge himself as cruelly as he had done after his return in May ; and that they were, therefore, firmly resolved to fight and expel the enemy once more.

"Get your rifles and ammunition, then, and prepare for the struggle," said Andreas Hofer everywhere to the men who were so full of ardor. "You shall hear from me soon, and learn what God wants us to do."

Andreas Hofer did not rest even at night. The great task which was imposed upon him urged him on incessantly. He therefore profited by the clear moonlight to ride across the Janfen, and at daybreak his horse neighed joyously and stopped at the bank of the foaming Passeyr, at no great distance from the white house of the Sandwirth, the home which contained his greatest treasures on earth, his wife and children.

But Andreas Hofer did not intend to return to them now ; he did not want to have his heart softened by the sight of his wife, who would certainly weep and lament on learning of his resolve to renew the war against the Bavarians and French. And for the same reason he wished to avoid meeting his children, whose dear faces might remind him that he was about to endanger the life of their father, and that their bright eyes might soon fill with tears of bitter grief. He would speak only to God, and solitude was to be his sole adviser. Andreas Hofer greeted his house and its beloved inmates with a long, tearful look ; he then dried his eyes and alighted. The horse neighed joyously and sped merrily down the hill toward his stable. But Andreas Hofer took a by-path and ascended the mountain through the forest and shrubbery to the Kellerlahn, a cave known only to him and some of his intimate friends, where his faithful servant had prepared him a couch, and kept always in readiness for him, in a secret cupboard fixed in

the rock, wine and food, some prayer-books, and writing-materials.

In this cave Andreas Hofer intended to pass a few days in prayer and solitude.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CAPUCHIN'S OATH.

A GREAT festival was to be celebrated at Brixen to-day. It was the 2d of August, the day of St. Cassian, and not only were the bones of this saint, which reposed in the cathedral adorned with two splendid towers, to be exhibited, as they were every year, to the devout pilgrims, but the pious bishop had resolved that these sacred relics should be carried in solemn procession through the whole city, that all might have an opportunity to see the saint's remains and implore the assistance of God in the sore distress which had befallen the Tyrol again. Since early morning, therefore, the peasantry had been flocking from all sides toward the gates of Brixen ; women and children, young and old men, came from all parts of the country to take part in the solemn procession and the devout prayers for the welfare of the country.

Among those who were wandering along the road to Brixen, was a monk of strikingly bold and martial appearance. His tall, broad-shouldered form was remarkable for its military bearing ; his long, well-kept red whiskers and mustache did not correspond to the tonsure on his head, which was covered with thin reddish ringlets ; and in striking contrast with it were likewise the broad red scar on his healthy sunburnt countenance, and the bright, defiant glance of his eyes, which indicated boldness and intrepidity rather than piety and humility. He had tucked up his brown robe, and thus exhibited his stout legs, which seemed to mock the soft sandals encasing his broad, powerful feet. In his hand he held a long brown staff, terminating at its upper end in a carved image of St. Francis ; and the Capuchin did not carry this staff in order to lean upon it, but he brandished it in the air like a sword,