

Carried away by the soul-stirring words and promises of the Capuchin, full of ardor to serve the fatherland, and desirous of obtaining absolution, the men took up arms, and even a company of women was formed for the holy service of the fatherland.

At night on the same day three hundred sharpshooters had rallied around the martial friar, and with them he marched toward Unterau, constantly receiving re-enforcements on the road; for the inhabitants everywhere rose again as one man, and with their redoubted rifles on their shoulders descended every lateral glen and ravine, and joined his command to conquer or die under him.

And joyful news arrived from all sides, announcing that the inhabitants were rising throughout the Tyrol. Already Peter Mayer and Peter Kemnater had gathered around them all the sharpshooters of the neighboring towns and villages, and their four companies now united with the friar's troops. News also came from Andreas Hofer: he had emerged again from the cave, and at his call all the sharpshooters of the Passeyr valley had rallied around him, and companies had flocked to him from all parts of the country to fight again under their beloved commander-in-chief. Andreas Hofer had marched with them across the crest of the precipitous Janfen, and his army gathering strength like a mountain-torrent from every tributary stream which crossed its course, soon embraced all the able-bodied men of Passeyr, Meran, and Algund.

The Tyrolese had risen a third time to defend the independence of their country.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FIRST BATTLE.

WHAT the four men had sworn at the inn of Brixen, and what Andreas Hofer had agreed upon with his friend Speckbacher, had succeeded. The whole Tyrol had risen and was eager for the fray. A small army, commanded by Father

Haspinger, was encamped near Brixen, and received hourly fresh accessions. Peter Kemnater and Peter Mayer were still traversing the country, and calling upon the peasants to repair to Father Red-beard's camp near Brixen, and their appeals were readily complied with. The brave peasants of Rodeneck, Weithenthal, and Schoneck, led by their courageous pastor, George Schoneck, came into camp; and so did Anthony Wallner with the four hundred men who had followed him from the Puster valley.

Father Haspinger received these brave men exultingly, and folded their leader, Anthony Wallner, tenderly to his heart.

"You have fought again like a hero," he exclaimed, patting his cheeks affectionately; "the whole Tyrol is extolling your exploits at the murderous battle of Taxenbach, and they are telling wonderful stories about the surpassing heroism and bravery you displayed on that occasion."

"It is true, we fought bravely," said Anthony Wallner, sighing; "but it did not do much good, for the enemy was ten to one, and we were finally unable to check his advance. But we followed him, and will now unite with you, reverend father, in order to expel him once more from the country. I believe there will be another battle on Mount Isel, for the enemy is always intent on forcing his way to Innsbruck, believing that the whole Tyrol is subjugated so soon as the capital has fallen into his hands. We must strive, therefore, to meet him there once more; for you know the old prophecy, saying that Mount Isel will be a lucky place for the Tyrolese."

"I do know it," said the friar; "and if it please God we will verify it. The freedom of the Tyrol is buried on Mount Isel near Innsbruck, and we will disinter the golden treasure there and cause it to shed its lustre once more on our mountains and valleys. You shall help me to do it, Anthony Wallner, you and your famous sharpshooters of Windisch-Matrey. But previously I think, my friend, we shall have something to do here; for our scouts have returned with the news that the enemy is approaching. His column is headed by Saxon and Bavarian troops under the French general, Royer; his forces are followed by the main army under the commander-

in-chief, Marshal Lefebvre, or as he proudly call himself, the Duke of Dantsic. General Royer has got already as far as Sterzing, and if we do not interfere the Saxons will soon reach Brixen."

"But we will interfere," cried Anthony Wallner; "we will not allow them to advance to Brixen, and I will occupy immediately with my sharpshooters the mountain-passes on the route of the enemy. We will receive the Duke of Dantsic with fireworks which will sadden his heart."

"Do so, dear Anthony," exclaimed Haspinger, joyfully. "I myself will first go to Brixen and teach the members of the municipality better manners. Their terror and anguish have rendered them quite eloquent, and they have dissuaded many hundred peasants, who were passing through Brixen to join my command, from so doing, and induced them to return to their homes. I shall speak a serious word with those gentlemen, and teach them a little patriotism."

Haspinger nodded kindly to Anthony Wallner, and calling ten of his best sharpshooters to him repaired to the city hall of Brixen, where the members of the municipality were assembled. He made them a furious speech, which, however, did not impress the gentlemen as forcibly as the threats which he added to it. He swore that, if the members of the municipality would not have the tocsin sounded immediately and send out mounted messengers to call out the peasants and send them to him, he would cause every one of them to be hanged or shot in the morning! And this oath was effectual enough, for the terrified gentlemen knew full well that Father Haspinger had the power and the will to fulfil his oaths. Hence, the tocsin was sounded, mounted messengers were sent out in all directions, and on the following morning upward of two thousand able-bodied men arrived at Haspinger's camp.*

"All right," said the friar; "if Andreas Hofer and Speckbacher join us with their forces, I believe we shall succeed, and St. Cassian will have understood our prayers."

While Anthony Wallner and his sharpshooters occupied the mountain-gorges this side of Brixen on the road to Mitte-

* "Gallery of Heroes: Andreas Hofer," p. 110.

wald, Joseph Speckbacher and his men had penetrated far beyond Mittewald toward Sterzing, and had learned that the Saxons, under General Royer, were resting at Sterzing with the intention of advancing in the morning through the wild valley of the Eisach toward Brixen.

"Well, if the Saxons are resting we must work in order to prepare eternal repose for them," said Joseph Speckbacher, gayly. "Now come, my brave lads, we must take the Saxons between two fires. They are miserable scoundrels and traitors. Ah, they do not shrink from serving the rapacious conqueror Bonaparte, and turning their arms against their German countrymen, merely because the French emperor orders them to do so, and because we refuse to submit to the foreign yoke and are determined to preserve our German tongue and our German rights! How disgraceful it is that Germans should attack Germans at the bidding of the foreign oppressor! Therefore, we will punish the Saxons and Bavarians in the name of God and the Holy Virgin. We will let them advance down the defile, and attack them only after they are in it. They cannot retrace their steps, for we are behind them; nor can they advance very far, for Father Red-beard will meet them in front. Now come and let us make festive preparations, as it behooves those who are expecting distinguished guests. We will erect a few triumphal arches to them, and show them how avalanches roll down our mountains. Ah, we will build up for them artificial ruins which will excite their sincere admiration!"

"Yes, yes, we will!" shouted the peasants, who went to work, singing and laughing. In the first place, they erected "triumphal arches" to the enemy; that is to say, they obstructed the road by raising a number of abatis, besmeared with pitch the wooden railing of the bridge built across the Eisach near the village of Pleis, loosened the planks of the bridge, and began to build "avalanches." They felled a considerable number of tall larches, tied ropes to both ends of them, lowered them half-way down the precipitous side of the mountain, and fastened the ropes above to the strong branches of trees firmly rooted in the soil of the crest. Then they threw huge masses of rock and heaps of rubbish on these

hanging scaffolds ; and after the "avalanches" had thus been completed, they withdrew cautiously and rapidly into the mountain-gorges. Only Zoppel, Joseph Speckbacher's servant, and an old peasant remained near the "avalanches." They stood on both sides of the ropes, hatchet in hand, casting fiery glances into the defile on the bank of the Eisach, and between overhanging wood-clad precipices.

Profound silence reigned all around ; only from time to time a rustling noise was heard in the shrubbery ; the flashing barrel of a rifle was then seen, and it seemed as though the fleet-footed chamois appeared on the heights above. But they were Tyrolese sharpshooters who had climbed up to the watch-towers of their natural fortresses to espy the enemy and on his appearance to welcome him with the bullets of their rifles.

Profound silence reigned all around, and the two men were still standing, hatchet in hand, by the side of the ropes holding the artificial avalanches.

All at once a loud, shrill whistle resounded in front of the entrance to the defile ; it was repeated all around the gloomy gorge.

"That is the signal that the enemy has passed the inn *am Sack* and is entering the defile of the Eisach," murmured Zoppel, examining once more the edge of his hatchet with his hand. Then he looked down attentively into the depth, where only a footpath meandered close along the bank of the foaming Eisach.

A few soldiers were now seen entering the defile yonder, where the road projected between two jutting rocks forming the background of the gorge.

The form of a Tyrolese sharpshooter appeared at the same moment on the top of the precipitous rock. He stepped close to the edge of the rock, allowed the soldiers, who looked around slowly and distrustfully, to advance a few steps, and then raised his rifle. He fired ; one of the soldiers fell immediately to the ground, and the Tyrolese sharpshooter reloaded his rifle. He fired again, and laid another soldier prostrate.

The two reports had accelerated the march of the enemy.

The soldiers entered the defile with a hasty step ; in order to advance, they had to remove the two soldiers who were writhing in the agony of death and obstructing the narrow path, and throw them into the waters of the Eisach, which received with a wild roar the two corpses, the first victims of the reopening struggle.

Meanwhile the Tyrolese sharpshooter on the height above had reloaded his rifle and shot another soldier. On seeing this, he uttered a loud *Jodler*, made a leap of joy, and nodded laughingly to the enemy, who cast threatening glances on him. But he did not see that one of the officers below called four soldiers to him, pointed his hand at the top of the rock, and gave them a quick order. The four soldiers sprang at once from the ranks and disappeared in the shrubbery covering the base of the rock.

The sharpshooter was reloading his rifle, when the shrubbery behind him rustled, and, on turning hastily, he saw one of the soldiers rushing toward him. A cry of rage burst from the lips of the sharpshooter. He then raised his rifle and fired. The soldier fell, but at the same moment one of his comrades hastened from the thicket toward the top of the rock. Another cry burst from the sharpshooter's lips, but this time it sounded like a death-cry. He saw that he was lost, for already the uniforms of the other two soldiers were glittering among the trees, and the second soldier was only a few steps from the edge of the rock where the sharpshooter was standing. The Tyrolese cast a last despairing glance around him, as if to take leave of heaven and earth, and of the mountains and valleys of his beloved Tyrol. Then he threw down his rifle and seized the soldier furiously. His arms encircled the body of his enemy like iron clasps, and he forced him with irresistible impetuosity toward the edge of the rock.

"In God's name, then," he shouted in a loud voice echoed by the rocks all around. "In God's name, then !"

With a last effort he threw himself with the soldier into the depth, and both disappeared in the waters of the Eisach.

Speckbacher's servant the faithful Zoppel, had seen and

understood everything; and when the two sank into the foaming torrent, he wiped a tear from his eyes.

"He died like a brave son of the Tyrol," he murmured, "and the Holy Virgin will assuredly bid him kindly welcome. But we, Hisel, will avenge his death on the accursed enemy below."

"Yes, we will," cried the peasant grimly; and he raised his hatchet with a furious gesture.

"It is not yet time," said Zoppel thoughtfully. "Just wait until a larger body of troops has entered the defile. See, Hisel, how splendid they look in their gorgeous uniform, and how proudly they are marching on!"

The Saxons did march on proudly, but not with drums beating. They advanced in silence, filled with misgivings by the profound stillness which surrounded them all at once, listening attentively to every sound, and examining anxiously the top of every projecting rock.

The head of the serried column had arrived now directly under the hanging "avalanche" in the middle of the gloomy defile. The silence was suddenly broken by a loud angry voice, which seemed to resound in the air like the croaking of the death-angel.

This voice asked, "Zoppel, shall I cut the rope now?"

"Not yet! not yet!" replied another voice; and the precipitous rocks all around echoed "Not yet! not yet!"

The Saxons gave a start and looked up. Whence came these voices? What meant that huge black mass suspended on the precipitous side of the mountain right over their heads?

Thus they asked each other shudderingly and stood still, fixing their eyes on the black mass of rock and rubbish, which filled their hearts with wonder and dismay.

"Let us retrace our steps! Let us not penetrate farther into the defile," murmured the soldiers with trembling lips, but in so low a tone that the officers marching by their sides could not hear them.

But the officers, too, were filled with strange misgivings; they ordered the soldiers to halt, and hastened back to General Royer to report to him the mysterious words which they had

heard, and to ask him whether they were to halt or retrace their steps.

"Advance at the double-quick!" commanded the general, sternly.

"Advance at the double-quick!" they repeated to their soldiers along the whole line; the latter, in obedience to this order, hurried on under the black mass which still hung threateningly over their heads.

All at once a powerful voice above shouted out: "Now, Hisel, in the name of the Holy Trinity, cut the ropes!" Thereupon they heard the strokes of two hatchets.

The soldiers, who were rushing forward in serried ranks, looked up again, and indescribable horror seized them. The black mass of rock and rubbish which had hitherto hung over them, commenced moving and rolling down with a terrible crash. A cloud of dust rose and filled the gloomy defile as with the smoke of powder. At the same time a heavy fire burst forth on all sides, and from amid the leafy screen the deadly bullets of the sharpshooters brought death with every discharge into the allied ranks. A death-like silence then ensued for a moment, for out of the depths rose the wails and lamentations of the hundreds of soldiers who had been crushed and mutilated by the "avalanche." The Tyrolese, filled with curiosity and compassion, looked down into the defile. The smoke and dust had disappeared, and they could distinctly survey the scene of horror, devastation, and death, in the gorge.

Happy those whom the falling "avalanche" had hurled from the narrow footpath into the foaming torrent! It is true, death had been in store for them there, but it had quickly put an end to their sufferings. But what was the agony of those who lay buried under the fragments of the rocks, their limbs fearfully mutilated! What were the sufferings of the hundreds of soldiers lying on the road, on this narrow, gory path, upon which the "avalanche" had thundered down!

It was a horrible sight; even the Tyrolese trembled on beholding this rubbish, these fragments, whence large numbers of bloody corpses protruded, and amidst which torn, mutilated limbs were moving, while here and there soldiers, covered all

over with dust, and bleeding from fearful wounds, tried painfully to raise themselves from the ground.

Those of the Saxons who had not been struck by the terrible avalanche, fell back shuddering. When the Tyrolese saw this, their compassion at the cruel fate of the dead gave way, and with deafening shouts they burst forth from their concealment, and, mingling with the enemy, a frightful slaughter took place.

The Saxons rallied, however; courageous discipline presided over unskilled valor, and the column advanced slowly and painfully in the direction of the bridge, through a murderous fire, and surmounting the ruins which obstructed the road and covered the bodies of their comrades.

All at once exultant shouts and cheers resounded at the entrance of the defile, and the clarion-notes of martial music joined in these stirring acclamations. Fresh troops, re-enforcements of the Saxons, were coming up from the rear. The Bavarians had arrived with their artillery, which they had placed in a very favorable position; they had already taken the two farm-houses at the entrance of the gorge where the Tyrolese had taken position, and were now rushing into the defile. The Tyrolese, dismayed at this impetuous advance, retreated into the mountains.

For two days the struggle was continued in these gorges near Mittewald. For two days Saxons and Tyrolese opposed each other in this fratricidal contest, in which Germans fought against Germans in obedience to the behests of the tyrant who had subjugated all Germany, and to whom only the undaunted Tyrol still offered a stubborn resistance.

The victory was long undecided. Once the forces of the Duke of Dantsic succeeded at one extremity of the defile in driving back the sharpshooters under Joachim Haspinger, the Capuchin, and clearing a passage for the Saxons struggling in the gorge. But the Capuchin had retreated only to bring up fresh forces, dispatch messengers to Speckbacher, Peter Mayer, Andreas Hofer, and Anthony Wallner, sound the tocsin, and concentrate more armed peasants. And Speckbacher came up with his brave sharpshooters in the rear of the Saxons: Anthony Wallner and his men made their appearance like-

wise; Peter Mayer brought up fresh forces; and Andreas Hofer sent word that he would be on hand speedily. But the Saxons were likewise re-enforced, both by the French, who moved up from Brixen, and the Bavarians, who approached from Sterzing.

The contest was continued with unabated violence, and both sides struggled obstinately for the victory. But the Tyrolese fought for their rights, their liberty, their German country; the Saxons and Bavarians fought for tyranny, for the foreign oppressor, and the subjugation of their countrymen. God granted victory to the Tyrolese, and in the defile of Mittewald upward of a thousand Saxons had to atone by their death for having fought at the bidding of the French conqueror on German soil against their German countrymen.

The Tyrolese fought for their rights, their liberty, their German country; and the Duke of Dantsic, the proud marshal of France, was defeated by the despised peasants; he had to flee from their wrath, and arrived without his cloak and hat, trembling and deathly pale, on his foaming horse at Sterzing, which he had left a few hours previously with the firm conviction that he would inflict a crushing defeat upon the "haughty peasant-rabble." Now this "haughty peasant-rabble" had defeated him.

God is with those who fight for the rights and liberty of Germany. God is with those who rise boldly against French tyranny and French arrogance!

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST AT INNSPRUCK.

God is with those who fight for the rights and liberty of Germany. He had granted another victory to the Tyrolese.

Animated by their brilliant successes, the patriots no longer stood on the defensive, but, flocking from all quarters to the standard of Hofer, assembled in great multitudes on Mount Isel, the scene of their former triumphs, and destined to be