

"I cannot act otherwise, sir, I assure you I cannot," she said, beseechingly.

"Well, then, I cannot act otherwise either," he cried. "I shall not accept this mission, I shall not go to Munich, I shall stay here."

"No, no, I implore you to go!" exclaimed Eliza. "Save my imprisoned countrymen; save, above all, my Elza and her father! Oh, she is unhappy, she longs for her home; she is weeping for me, for you, sir! Make haste, make haste; have mercy upon Elza and myself!"

"Why should I have mercy when you have none?" he asked, quickly. "Let the prisoners die of grief; I am a prisoner too, and shall know also how to die. I shall not leave Innsbruck unless you promise me that you will become my wife on my return, and plight me your faith before the altar of God. I swear by all that is sacred to me, I will not leave this city unless I take with me your solemn pledge that you will overcome your pride and become my wife."

"Well, then," she said, blushing deeply, "go, then. Procure my Elza's release, bring her home, and then—"

"And then?" he asked, as she hesitated.

"Then you shall receive at the hands of the priest a bride who loves you, loves you with infinite tenderness," she said, in a low voice.

He uttered a cry of joy, and folded her to his heart. But she disengaged herself gently. "Make haste now," she said; "for the sooner you depart, the sooner you will return."

"I will set out immediately," he cried, radiant with joy. "But swear to me, Eliza, that I shall receive immediately on my return, even though it should be early in the morning, at the hands of the priest, my bride—the bride who loves me with infinite tenderness."

"I swear by the Holy Virgin," said Eliza, solemnly, "that if you bring my Elza to me here, you shall receive your bride at the hands of the priest on the day of your return, whether it be early in the morning or late at night."

"Captain Ulrich," shouted Cajetan Döninger, opening the door, "it is high time for you to set out. The carriage has been at the door for upward of an hour."

"I am ready," said Ulrich, holding out his hand to Eliza with a happy smile. "Farewell, Eliza; I shall return with your Elza in two weeks."

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 CHAPTER XXXVII.

## ELZA'S RETURN.

A SPLENDID festival was being celebrated at Innsbruck on the 3d of October, and there were great rejoicings in the city. A message of love and joy had reached Innsbruck from the headquarters of the Emperor Francis at Totis. Three of the former leaders of the Tyrolese insurrection, who had escaped to Austria at the time of the second invasion of the Bavarians—Sieberer, Frischmann, and Eisenstecken—had arrived at Innsbruck as couriers of the emperor. They had succeeded in passing through Styria and Carinthia, although both these provinces were occupied by French troops, and had safely arrived at Innsbruck amid the jubilant acclamations of the population. They brought cheering news from the Emperor Francis. He sent to the commander-in-chief of the Tyrol, his beloved and faithful Andreas Hofer, a large gold chain and medal containing the emperor's portrait; and he sent also three thousand florins as a gift to the brave sharpshooters. But better than all this was an autograph letter from the emperor, who extolled in it the bravery of the Tyrolese, called upon them to persevere in their resistance, and promised that Austria would succor them vigorously with money and troops. The letter stated that the emperor would soon dispatch Baron von Reschmann with funds and full instructions to the Tyrol, where he would act as commissioner and intendant of the army, and that the Tyrolese might confidently look for the speedy resumption of hostilities.

These joyful tidings were received with unbounded enthusiasm, and Andreas Hofer's face beamed with delight when he was formally invested with the gold medal and chain in the great church of Innsbruck, at the foot of the tomb of

Maximilian, by the Abbot of Wiltau, amid the tears and acclamations of a vast concourse of spectators, who afterward, preceded by the municipal authorities, accompanied him in solemn procession to the imperial palace. Andreas presented a splendid appearance in the fine gold-embroidered uniform which he wore to-day in honor of the celebration, in place of his Tyrolese costume; his heavy gold chain and the medal with the emperor's portrait, glittered under his fine black beard on his breast, and he wore a black hat with a plume and inscription to him as the commander-in-chief of the Tyrol, the gift of the holy sisterhood of Innspruck.

Andreas Hofer's face shone with happiness as he walked along in this manner amid the acclamations of the whole population and the ringing of all the bells; but his heart was nevertheless full of humility, and lifting his beaming eyes to heaven, he murmured to himself, "O my Lord and God, Thou hast accomplished every thing; Thou hast protected us and vouchsafed us victory! Glory to Thee alone! Preserve me, O Lord, from pride and arrogance, and let me recognize always that I am nothing but Thy unworthy servant, and that Thou alone vouchsafest us victory and blestest our cause!"

The imperial palace was festively decorated to-day, and a splendid banquet was to take place there in honor of the celebration. All the functionaries of Innspruck had been invited; a brilliant ball was to be given at night in the large throne-hall, and the beautiful girls of Innspruck were to dance to the inspiring notes of the orchestra in honor of the festive day. For the first time Andreas Hofer had permitted music and dancing, and all the beautiful girls of Innspruck were preparing to take part in the brilliant festival and enjoy the rare amusement.

All faces were radiant; even Eliza's sweet countenance was lit up to-day with the sunshine of happiness. A great joy had fallen to her share to-day, for Ulrich von Hohenberg had arrived early in the morning, and with him his uncle, old Baron von Hohenberg, and his daughter Elza. Ulrich had redeemed his promise; precisely two weeks had elapsed since his departure, and now, after these terrible days of suspense, which Eliza had passed in tears, in silence, and at the same

time in mysterious activity, Ulrich had returned, and with him Elza, Eliza's dearest friend.

Ulrich had looked on with an expression of quiet happiness when Eliza embraced her Elza again and again with tears of joy; she knelt down repeatedly by the side of the couch on which had been laid the old baron, whose strength had been utterly exhausted by the journey, the excitement, and the sufferings he had endured in prison; she pressed his hands to her lips tenderly, and withal humbly, and thanked God that her good old friend and her Elza, the better half of her life, had been restored to her.

But after this impetuous and joyous meeting, the old baron felt so very feeble that he urgently needed repose and silence, and Elza had to conduct him to the bedroom which had been prepared for him.

Eliza and Ulrich were alone now. She trembled, and, wishing to avoid this *tête-à-tête*, glided softly to the door; but Ulrich hastened after her and seized her hand.

"Eliza," he said, solemnly, "I have fulfilled all your wishes. I have brought back with me my uncle and your friend Elza; the King of Bavaria accepted the exchange which I offered; he released the baron and his daughter, and Andreas Hofer sets me free in his turn. I am, therefore, no longer a prisoner, and as a free man I ask you now, do you remember the oath you swore to me on the day of my departure?"

"I do," she whispered in a low voice.

"Repeat the oath to me," he said, imperatively.

"My oath was as follows: 'I swear by the Holy Virgin that, if you bring my Elza to me here, you shall receive your bride, who loves you with infinite tenderness, at the hands of the priest.'"

"You have not forgotten the words, Eliza. But will you fulfil them now?"

"You insist on it?" she asked, looking up to him timidly and mournfully.

"Yes, I do," he said, with a blissful smile.

"Well, then," she whispered, almost inaudibly, "I shall keep my oath."

He uttered a joyous cry, pressed her hand to his lips, and

gazed with an expression of infinite tenderness into her blushing, quivering face.

"Oh, do not tremble, love," he said; "do not look anxiously into the future. I shall know how to protect my wife from grief and humiliation. To make you happy shall be my sweetest joy; to see you honored and recognized by society will be my incessant effort, as it will be my bounden duty. You will fulfil your oath, and you must do it this very day. Let me go, then, and get a priest; and you, my sweet girl, place a myrtle-wreath on your head, for I shall call for you soon and conduct you triumphantly to the great church of Innsbruck; for our marriage shall take place publicly and in the face of the whole population."

"No, sir," she said, shaking her head gently. "I will redeem my promise, but I beg, nay, I implore you, permit me to make all necessary arrangements, and let me have for once my own way."

"And what do you wish, then, beloved?"

"I wish that no one should learn of our plan, and that you should conceal it all day long from every one, and speak of it to no one, neither with your uncle, nor with Elza, nor with Andreas Hofer."

"But how am I to get a priest to marry us?"

"Leave it all to me, sir. I will get a priest. I have confided only to my dear old friend Joachim Haspinger, the Capuchin, who was lately in Innsbruck, what would take place in case you should return with my Elza, and he promised that he himself would marry us. Accordingly, on being informed this morning by the courier of your speedy arrival, I sent at once a mounted messenger to Father Haspinger, and I am sure that he will come to Innsbruck to-day."

"You intended, then, to redeem your promise of your own accord!" exclaimed Ulrich, joyfully; "you thought of it without being reminded of it. Oh, I thank you, my Eliza, for I see now that you really love me."

"Yes, sir, I really love you," said Eliza, solemnly. "You will find it out this very day. Will you promise me now to conceal our plan from every one, and let me make all necessary arrangements?"

"I do, my sweet girl. Tell me what I am to do, and I will obey you silently and unconditionally."

"Well, then, dear Ulrich," she said, in a tremulous voice, "come to-night, at nine o'clock, to the chapel here in the imperial palace. As a witness, I hope you will find there our dear commander-in-chief, Andreas Hofer. Father Haspinger will stand before the altar, and your betrothed will kneel before the altar too, ready to become your wife, and love and serve you all her life."

"And I shall find there my betrothed, to whom I shall plight my faith before the altar, and whom I will love and cherish all my life!" exclaimed the captain, in profound emotion.

She bent her head gently, as if to accept his solemn vow. "Then you will come to the chapel at nine?" she asked.

"I will," he said, smilingly, "and you may be sure that I shall be promptly on hand. I shall be as punctual as the digger after a hidden treasure, who must disinter it at the stated hour, if he does not want to lose it entirely. I shall be at the chapel at nine o'clock."

"Very well, at nine o'clock. And now farewell until then, sir. I have a great deal to attend to yet in getting up the bridal dress and ornaments, for I do not want you to be ashamed of me to-day, Ulrich. Your bride must not look like a peasant-girl. She must be dressed up beautifully, like an aristocratic lady—like Elza, for instance."

"Dress as you please," he said, smilingly, "but do not believe that I shall ever be ashamed of the peasant-girl, and try to conceal the descent of my sweet, lovely wife."

"And will you ride with me to-morrow to my father's house?" she asked. "Will you present yourself to my father, Anthony Wallner, commander of the Puster valley, as his son-in-law? Oh, you know full well, Anthony Wallner is a hero; not only the Tyrol, but all Germany is familiar with the heroic deeds which he performed at the battle of Taxenbach against the Bavarians. He has taken the field again, and, after joining the forces under Joseph Speckbacher, and Father Haspinger, he will attack the Bavarians at the Pass of Lueg, and, if it please God, defeat them. I suppose, Ulrich, you

will accompany me to my father, Anthony Wallner, and ask your father-in-law to give you his blessing?"

"But you told me just now, Eliza, that he is not at home?"

"Well, then," she exclaimed, earnestly, "we will ride to the Pass of Lueg."

Ulrich was silent, and looked down in evident confusion; he did not see that Eliza fixed her eyes on him with a searching, mournful expression.

"Eliza," he said, after a pause, lifting his head slowly, "you possess a magnanimous heart and a delicate soul. Your heart will forgive me, therefore, for not fulfilling your wish, and your soul will understand that I cannot fulfil it. Your father is the commander of the Tyrolese, who have risen in rebellion against Bavaria, and he is fighting against the Bavarians, my countrymen and comrades. I have recovered my liberty, but I had to swear not to take up arms again during the present war against the Tyrolese. The King of Bavaria permitted me to take this oath, and ordered me to return to Munich, where I am to remain till the end of the war. I must set out for the Bavarian capital to-morrow, and my sweet, beloved wife will accompany me. After the war is over, and when there is peace again in the beautiful Tyrol, I shall return with my Eliza to her home, and ask my father-in-law, Anthony Wallner, to give me his blessing. I shall be at liberty then to praise his heroism loudly, and love and honor him as my wife's father. Do you understand that I cannot act otherwise, beloved?"

"I do," she replied; "I do understand that the Bavarian Captain Ulrich von Hohenberg cannot now go to the Tyrolese commander, Anthony Wallner, ask him, while he is fighting against the Bavarians, to bless him, and call him father-in-law. Let us leave it to the future to grant us peace and happiness."

"You understand that I cannot act otherwise," he said, anxiously. "But you are sad? I see a cloud on your forehead, Eliza."

"No, not a cloud," she exclaimed, shaking her head. "Every thing is clear in my mind, and I see distinctly what I

must do. Come, then, to the chapel at nine; every thing will be in readiness there."

"You will be there, my lovely bride," exclaimed Ulrich, blissfully, opening his arms to her. "Oh, do not avoid me, Eliza; you are mine now, your place is on my heart, do not avoid me! See, I am submissive and obedient, and I will not take what you do not give me of your own accord. But give me now your bridal present, Eliza; give me the first kiss of love!"

"No, sir," she said, almost anxiously; "on the wedding-day no pious bride must desecrate her lips by kissing or partaking of food before going to the altar. Only devout thoughts should fill her heart; and she ought to pray and implore the saints to vouchsafe happiness to her. Let me go, therefore, and fulfil my sacred duties."

"Yes, my sweet, innocent dove, I will let you go," said Ulrich, gently. "Pray to God and the saints for you and me, but be punctual to-night."

"I shall, sir. Now, farewell. Go out by this door, for Eliza is coming to me. I have to tell her a great many things yet."

"She will know your secret then? You will confide to her what I am not to betray to any one?"

"No, sir, I shall tell her nothing about it. No one but God must know my secret. For the last time, then, farewell, sir!"

"Farewell, Eliza! Oh, give me your hand!" Let me press it once to my heart! Oh, fear nothing, Eliza, my unholy lips shall not desecrate even your hand to-day. Now I will go, my child; farewell until to-night, my sweet love!"

He bowed to her with a blissful smile, and left the room quickly. Eliza looked after him, motionless, breathless, listening to his footsteps, and heaving a deep sigh when they died away in the distance. Then she laid both her hands convulsively on her heart.

"Oh, it is in great pain!" she murmured. "It seemed at one time as though it would break, and as though I should die on the spot. But I must not die, nor even weep. And I feel that the good God helps me, and that he approves of what I

am going to do. It was God Himself who prompted me to ask Ulrich if he would accompany me to my father. He was obliged to reply that he could not go to the enemy, though this enemy was to become his father-in-law. When he told me that, my heart bridled up, and was once more glad and strong. I knew all at once that I was doing right, and I will carry out my plan to the bitter end. But hush, hush! here comes Elza! I must put on a cheerful face now."

"Lizzie, my Lizzie, are you here?" asked Elza, opening the door.

"Yes, here I am, Elza," exclaimed Eliza, who hastened with a smiling face to her friend.

"And where is Ulrich? Why is he not here? Oh, I sat with such a throbbing heart at father's bedside; I longed so much for him to fall asleep! Oh, Lizzie, I have to tell you so many things! Ah, you do not know how happy I was during this splendid, charming journey! To be always by Ulrich's side, what a bliss! And how tenderly and attentively he took care of my dear old father, just like a good, grateful son, who would like to guess from his father's eyes every wish he might entertain. I often wept tears of joy on seeing him support my father, almost carrying him into the carriage, and arranging his seat for him, and on hearing him comfort the old man in gentle yet manly words. Ulrich did not speak of God and the saints, and yet what he said was pious, pious as a prayer of holy charity. Oh, how noble, good, brave, and gentle, Ulrich is!"

"And you love him, Elza, do you not?"

"Yes, I love him with all my heart, and shall for evermore. But where is he? Where is Ulrich? Was he not with you?"

"He was, Elza; he left me at the moment when you came."

"He was here so long? And what did you speak of? Oh, tell me, Eliza, what did you speak of?"

"Of you, Elza," said Eliza, with a wondrous, radiant expression.

"Ah, of me!" exclaimed Elza, joyfully. "Oh, tell me, Lizzie, do you think he loves me?"

"I do not believe it, Elza, I know it for certain. He intrusted me with an important commission for you, and asks of you a great proof of your love. Come, Elza, let us go to my room. We will be sure there not to be overheard by any one. I will tell you everything there."

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 CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE WEDDING.

NIGHT had come, and the people of Innsbruck had not yet set bounds to their rejoicings. All the streets were brilliantly illuminated; a festive performance was played at the theatre, and the apartments at the imperial palace began to fill with the guests who had been invited to the ball.

But while the palace was shining with splendid lustre for the first and last time during the reign of Andreas Hofer, one of its wings had remained gloomy and silent. It seemed as though the loud voices of the world shrank from penetrating hither. Even the sentinel pacing the long, deserted corridor, trod more softly and crossed himself every time he reached the end of the passage. For the imperial chapel lay at the end of the corridor in this wing of the palace, and through the high windows there one could look down upon the altar and the holy lamp.

The sentinel had just walked up the corridor once more slowly and dreamily, when he suddenly saw two men coming along. He stood still respectfully and presented arms. These two men were Andreas Hofer, the commander-in-chief, and Old Red-beard, Joachim Haspinger, who was walking by his side, in his brown cowl and his heavy leather shoes.

On approaching the sentinel, Andreas Hofer stood still and nodded kindly to him. "It is not necessary for you, Joe, to stand here all alone and present arms. I know you are one of the best dancers in the Passeyr valley, and as there is a ball at the palace, you had better go there and dance. I believe the good God Himself will watch over His chapel here."