

CHAPTER XLII.

THE WARNING.

THE French hunted throughout the Tyrol for the unfortunate men who had hitherto been the heroes of the fatherland, but who, since their cause had succumbed, were called rebels and traitors. The soldiers who were in search of this noble game, for which large rewards were offered to them, had already succeeded in arresting one of the heroes of the Tyrol; Peter Mayer had fallen into their hands, and, having been tried by a military commission at Botzen, was shot. But they had been unable as yet to discover the hiding-places of the other insurgent leaders, despite the large prices which the government had set upon their heads. Joseph Speckbacher, for whom the soldiers were hunting most eagerly, had disappeared. The French and Bavarians ransacked every house where they suspected he might be concealed; they inflicted the heaviest fines and most cruel tortures on the friends of the fugitive chief, because they would not betray the place where their beloved commander was concealed; but all was in vain. Joseph Speckbacher had disappeared, and so had Father Haspinger and Anthony Wallner.*

* Speckbacher had fled to the higher mountains, where, on one of the summits of the Eisgletscher, in a cavern discovered by him in former times when pursuing the chamois, he lay for several weeks in the depth of winter, supported by salt provisions, eaten raw, lest the smoke of a fire should betray his place of concealment to his pursuers. Happening one day, in the beginning of March, to walk to the entrance for a few minutes to enjoy the ascending sun, an avalanche, descending from the summit of the mountain above, swept him along with it, down to the distance of half a mile on the slope beneath, and dislocated his hip-bone in the fall. Unable now to stand, surrounded only by ice and snow, tracked on every side by ruthless pursuers, his situation was, to all appearance, desperate; but even then the unconquerable energy of his mind and the incorruptible fidelity of his friends saved him from destruction. Summoning up all his courage, he contrived to drag himself along the snow for several leagues, during the night, to the village of Volderberg, where, to avoid discovery, he crept into the stable. His faithful friend gave him a kind reception, and carried him on his back to Rinn, where his wife and children were, and where Zoppel, his devoted domestic, con-

General Broussier was especially exasperated at the last named, the valiant commander of Windisch-Matrey, and he had promised a reward of one thousand ducats to him who would arrest "that dangerous demagogue and bandit-chief, Anthony Aichberger-Wallner," and deliver him to the French authorities. But Wallner and his two sons, who, although hardly above the age of boyhood, had seemed to the French authorities so dangerous that they had set prices upon their heads, were not to be found anywhere. Schröpfel, Wallner's faithful servant, had taken the boys into the mountains, where he stayed with them; after nightfall he went down to Matrey to fetch provisions for the lonely fugitives.

Anthony Wallner's fine house was silent and deserted now. Only his wife and his daughter Eliza lived in it, and they passed their days in dreary loneliness and incessant fear and anguish. Eliza Wallner was alone, all alone and joyless. She had not seen her beloved Elza since the day when she was married. She herself had started the same night with Haspinger for her father's headquarters. Elza had remained with her young husband in Innsbruck, where her father died on the following day; and after the old Baron had been buried, Elza had accompanied her husband to Munich. From thence she wrote from time to time letters overflowing with fervent

cealed him in a hole in the cowhouse, beneath where the cattle stood, though beyond the reach of their feet, where he was covered up with cow-dung and fodder, and remained for two months, till his leg was set and he was able to walk. The town was full of Bavarian troops; but this extraordinary place of concealment was never discovered, even when the Bavarian dragoons, as was frequently the case, were in the stable looking after their horses. Zoppel did not even inform Speckbacher's wife of her husband's return, lest her emotions or visits to the place might betray his place of concealment. At length, in the beginning of May, the Bavarian soldiers having left the house, Speckbacher was lifted from his living grave and restored to his wife and children. As soon as he was able to walk, he set out, and, journeying chiefly in the night, through the wildest and most secluded Alps, by Dux and the sources of the Salza, he passed the Styrian Alps, where he crossed the frontier and reached Vienna in safety. There he was soon after joined by his family and liberally provided for.

Haspinger succeeded in escaping into Switzerland, whence he travelled by cross-paths through Friuli and Carinthia to Vienna, where he received protection from the emperor.

tenderness to her beloved friend, and these letters were the only sunbeams which illuminated Eliza's cheerless life; these letters told her of her friend's happiness, of her attachment to her young husband, who treated her with the utmost kindness and tenderness.

Eliza had received this afternoon another letter from her friend; with a melancholy smile she read Elza's description of her domestic happiness, and her eyes had unconsciously filled with tears which rolled slowly down her pale cheeks. She dried them quickly, but her mother, who sat opposite her near the lamp and seemed to be busily sewing, had already seen them.

"Why do you weep, Lizzie?" she asked. "Have you got bad news from Elza?"

Eliza shook her head with a mournful smile. "No, dear mother," she said; "thank God, my Elza is happy and well, and that is my only joy."

"And yet you weep, Eliza?"

"Did I weep, then?" she asked. "It was probably a tear of joy at my Elza's happiness."

"No, Lizzie, it was no tear of joy," cried her mother, mournfully. "I see you often in tears, when you think that I do not notice it. You are grieving, Lizzie, do not deny it; you are grieving. You sacrificed your love and happiness to Elza, and she does not even know it; she does not thank you, and you will pine away. I see very well how sad you are; and you become paler and more emaciated from day to day. Yes, yes, you will die of grief, for you still love Ulrich von Hohenberg."

"No," cried Eliza, vehemently, blushing deeply, "I do not love him. I have buried my love in my heart, and it reposes there as in a shrine. It is true I think of it very often, I pray to it, but I have no unholy thoughts and feel no sinful desires. I am glad that my Elza is so happy; yes, I am glad of it and thank God for it. But how can I be merry and laugh, mother, so long as my dear, dear father has not returned to us? He must hide like a criminal; they are chasing him like a wild beast; he is always in danger, and we must constantly tremble for his safety. And I cannot do any thing for him, I cannot

share his dangers, I cannot be with him in the dreadful solitude on the Alp above. I must look on in idleness, and cannot be useful to any one, neither to my father, nor to my brothers, nor to you, dear mother. I cannot help my father and brothers, and cannot comfort you, mother; for I myself am in despair, and would—what was that, mother? Did not some one knock at the window-shutter?"

"Hush, hush!" whispered her mother; "let us listen."

They listened with bated breath. Eliza had not been mistaken; some one knocked a second time at the window-shutter, and the voice of a man whispered, "Mrs. Wallner, are you in the room? Open the door to me!"

"It must be a good friend of ours, for the dogs do not bark," said Eliza; "we will let him come in."

She took the lamp and went out courageously to draw the bolt from the street-door and open it.

Yes, she had not been mistaken, it was really a good friend of theirs; the man who entered the house was one of the few friends who had not denied Anthony Wallner, and who had not turned their backs upon his family since it was outlawed and in distress.

"You bring us bad news, Peter Siebermeier?" asked Eliza, anxiously, gazing into the mountaineer's pale and dismayed face.

"Unfortunately I do," sighed Siebermeier, stepping hastily into the sitting-room and shaking hands with Eliza's mother. "Mrs. Wallner," he said, in breathless hurry, "your husband is in the greatest danger, and only speedy flight can save him."

Mrs. Wallner uttered a piercing cry, sank back into her chair, wrung her hands, and wept aloud. Eliza did not weep; she was calm and courageous. "Tell me, Siebermeier, what can we do for father? What danger threatens him?"

"A bad man, I believe, the clerk of the court, has informed the French that Anthony Wallner is still on one of the heights in this neighborhood. General Broussier intends to have him arrested. A whole battalion of soldiers will march to-morrow morning to the mountain of Ober-Peischlag and occupy it."

"Great God! my husband is lost, then!" cried Eliza's mother, despairing; "nothing can save him now."

"Hush, mother, hush!" said Eliza, almost imperatively; "we must not weep now, we must think only of saving him. Tell me, friend Siebermeier, is there no way of saving him?"

"There is one," said Siebermeier, "but how shall we get up to him? A friend of mine, who is acquainted with the members of the court, informed me quite stealthily that, if Aichberger could be saved yet, it should be done this very night. Now listen to the plan I have devised. I intended to set out to-morrow morning to peddle carpets and blankets, for money is very scarce in these hard times. I procured, therefore, a passport for myself and my boy, who is to carry my bundle. Here is the passport—and look! the description corresponds nearly to Wallner's appearance. He is of my stature and age, has hair and whiskers like mine, and might be passed off for myself. I am quite willing to let him have my passport, and conceal myself meanwhile at home and feign sickness. The passport would enable him to escape safely; of course he would have to journey through the Alps, for every one knows him in the plain. However, the passport cannot do him any good, for there is no one to take it up to him. I would do so, but the wound which I received in our last skirmish with the Bavarians, in my side here, prevents me from ascending the mountain-paths; and, even though I could go up to him, it would be useless, for we two could not travel together, the passport being issued to two persons, Siebermeier, the carpet-dealer, and the boy carrying his bundle. The boy is not described in the passport; therefore, I thought, if one of your sons were in the neighborhood, he might go up to his father, warn him of his danger, and accompany him on his trip through the mountains."

"But neither of the boys is here," said Mrs. Wallner, despairingly; "Schröpfel took them to the Alpine hut near Upper Lindeau, and is with them. We two are all alone, and there is, therefore, no way of saving my dear husband."

"Yes, mother, there is," cried Eliza, flushed with excitement. "I will go up to father. I will warn him of his danger, carry him the passport, and flee with him."

"You!" cried her mother, in dismay. "It is impossible! You cannot ascend the road, which is almost impassable even for men. How should a girl, then, be able to get over it, particularly in the night, and in so heavy a snow-storm?"

"You will be unable to reach your father, Lizzie," said Siebermeier; "the road is precipitous and very long; you will sink into the snow; your shoes will stick in it, and the storm will catch your dress."

"No road is too precipitous for me if I can save my father," exclaimed Eliza, enthusiastically. "I must reach him, and God will enable me to do so. Wait here a moment, I will be back immediately. I will prepare myself for the trip, and then give me the passport."

"She will lose her life in the attempt," said Mrs. Wallner, mournfully, after she had hastened out of the room. "Alas! alas! I shall lose my husband, my sons, and my daughter too! And all has been in vain, for the Tyrol is ruined, and we have to suffer these dreadful misfortunes without having accomplished anything!"

"And the enemy acts with merciless cruelty in the country," said Siebermeier, furiously; "he sets whole villages on fire if he thinks that one of the fugitives is concealed here; he imposes on the people heavy war-taxes, which we are unable to pay; and if we say we have no money, he takes our cattle and other property from us. Wails and lamentations are to be heard throughout the valley; that is all we have gained by our bloody struggle!"

At this moment the door opened, and Eliza came in, not however in her own dress, but in the costume of a Tyrolese peasant-lad.

"Heavens! she has put on her brother William's Sunday clothes," cried her mother, with a mournful smile; "and they sit as well on her as if they had been made for her."

"Now, Siebermeier," said Eliza, holding out her hand to him, "give me the passport. The moon is rising now, and I must go."

"But listen, my daughter, how the wind howls!" cried her mother, in deep anguish. "It beats against the windows as if to warn us not to go out. Oh, Lizzie, my last joy, do not leave

me ! I have no one left but you ; stay with me, my Lizzie, do not leave your poor mother ! You will die in the attempt, Lizzie ! Stay here ; have mercy upon me, and stay here !”

“I must go to father,” replied Eliza, disengaging herself gently from her mother’s arms. “Give me the passport, friend Siebermeier.”

“You are a brave girl,” said Siebermeier, profoundly moved ; “the good God and the Holy Virgin will protect you. There, take the passport ; you are worthy to carry it to your father.”

“And I shall carry it to him or die on the road,” cried Eliza, enthusiastically, waving the paper. “Now, dear mother, do not weep, but give me your blessing !”

She knelt down before her mother, who had laid her hand on her head.

“Lord, my God,” she exclaimed, solemnly, “protect her graciously in her pious effort to save her father. Take your mother’s blessing, my Lizzie, and think that her heart and love accompany you.”

She bent over her, and imprinted a long kiss on her daughter’s forehead.

“I must go now, it is high time,” said Eliza, making a violent effort to restrain her tears. “Farewell, friend Siebermeier ; God and the saints will reward you for the service you have rendered us.”

“My best reward will be to learn that Wallner is safe,” said Siebermeier, shaking hands with her.

“Now, a last kiss, dearest mother,” said Eliza. She encircled her mother’s neck with both her arms, and kissed her tenderly. “Pray for me and love me,” she whispered ; “and if I should not come back, if I should lose my life, mother, write it to Elza and to *him*, and write that I died with love and fidelity in my heart. Farewell !”

She disengaged herself quickly and hastened out of the room, regardless of the despairing cries of her mother, and not even looking back to her. It was high time for her to set out.

She was in the street now. The snow rushed furiously into her face ; the howling storm dashed madly against her cheeks until they became very sore, but the moon was in the heavens

and lighted her path. It was the same path which she had ascended with Ulrich when saving him. She was alone now, but her courage and her trust in God were with her ; strengthened and refreshed by her love for her father, she ascended the steep mountain path. At times the piercing wind rendered her breathless and seized her with such violence that she had to cling to a projecting rock in order not to fall from the narrow path into the abyss yawning at her feet. At times avalanches rolled close to her with thundering noise into the depth and enveloped her in a cloud of snow ; but the moon shed her silver light on her path, and Eliza looked up courageously. Forgetful of her own danger, she prayed in her heart only, “God grant that I may save my father ! Let me not die before reaching him !”

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE FLIGHT.

ANTHONY WALLNER sat in his lonely Alpine hut on the height near the village of Ober-Peischlag, and listened to the storm, which howled so loudly to-night that the hut shook and he was unable to sleep on his couch of straw. He had lighted his lamp, and sat musingly at the pine table, leaning his head on his hand, and brooding mournfully over his dreary future. How long would he have to remain here in his open grave ? How long would he be chased yet, like a wild beast, from mountain to mountain ? How long would he be obliged yet to lead an idle and unprofitable life in this frozen solitude, exposed to the fury of the elements, and in constant dread of losing this miserable life ? These were the questions that he asked himself ; intense rage seized his heart, tears of bitter grief filled his eyes—not, however, at his own misfortunes, but at the miseries of his fatherland.

“What am I suffering for ? What did I fight and risk my life for ? What did we all shed our blood for ? What did our brethren die for on the field of battle ? The fatherland