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## TIMELINE

As there are no historical references for the dates of the scenes in the life of William Tell, as told in these pages, a chronological statement of the historical events of the period in which he is assumed to have lived is appended.

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1291    | The men of Uri, Schwyz, and Nidwald form the "Everlasting League," the foundation of the Swiss Confederacy.              |
| 1292    | Adolph of Nassau elected German Emperor.   |
| 1297    | Adolph confirms the charters of Schwyz and Uri.  |
| 1298    | Albrecht of Hapsburg elected Emperor.  |
| 1308    | Albrecht murdered, and Henry of Luxemburg elected Emperor.   |
| 1309    | Henry confirms the charters of 1297.   |
| 1313    | Death of Henry. Quarrel between Frederick of Hapsburg and Louis of Bavaria over the succession.                          |
| 1315    | Austrians defeated by the Swiss at Morgarten pass; the Everlasting League of 1291 renewed.                               |
| 1320    | The name "Swiss," derived from Schwyz, applied to the Confederation.   |
| 1332-52 | Lucerne, Zurich, and Zug join the League.  |
| 1386    | The Austrians defeated by the Swiss in the decisive battle of Sempach, and the Hapsburg power broken in the Confederacy. |

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Iconoclasts may deny the existence of William Tell, historians and critics may assign him to the shadowy realm of legend, but all Switzerland, even after six centuries have passed, still cherishes his memory. He typifies patriotic purpose and incorruptibility of character. The work of the critics is in vain, for the people everywhere still cling to the hero of Burglen, who defied Gessler and was leader in the uprising which resulted in throwing off the Hapsburg yoke, and no child can be convinced that the boy William, brave son of a brave father, did not stand under the lime-tree in Altdorf, with the apple on his curly head, and call: "Shoot, father! I am not afraid. I am standing still."

It is hard to imagine anything sweeter or more charming than the opening chapters of this beautiful life-story, which describes the sports of the people, the home life of Tell, the driving of the herd to the mountain meadows, the sad adventures of William and Hifeli (the favorite cow in the herd) with the vulture, and the hunting scene, in which Tell despatches the fierce bird of prey and its brood. It is a veritable idyl of Swiss life, reflecting the wonderful impressiveness of alpine color, glow, and scenery. The subsequent chapters relate the killing of Wolfshot, the first blow struck for freedom, the midnight meeting of the patriots on the Rutli meadow, at which the Swiss confederation was organized, the famous incident of the shooting of the apple, the death of Gessler, and the uprising and final victory of the Confederates. It is the story of a fearless, sturdy, liberty-loving, God-fearing people, their resistance to tyranny, their defence of the freedom handed down to them by their fathers. There is no nobler, higher example for youth, in legend or in history, than that set forth in the life-story of William Tell, and no child will question the reality of the scenes in these stirring pages.

G. P. U.

CHICAGO, 1904.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FESTIVAL AT THE MEADOW

In the very centre of Switzerland lies the beautiful and world-famous Lake of the Four Forest Cantons. Upon an eminence on its southern shore, between the villages of Attinghausen and Seedorf, may still be seen the lofty, massive ruins of the ancestral seat of the barons of Attinghausen, and near by it the ruins of a large farmhouse, which, tradition relates, was once the home of Walter Furst, who played so important a part in securing the freedom of Switzerland.

Our story takes us back into the gray past,—the year 1296. It was a beautiful May morning. The sun shed its golden rays over mountain and valley, and the bells of Seedorf summoned the willing herdsmen and peasants, with their magical music, to celebrate the consecration festival in God's house. The service over, the long procession of church-goers dispersed in various directions. They walked along seriously and quietly, and it was easy to read in their faces that the sermon and song had inspired in their souls sacred feelings.

Two venerable men were conspicuous among them,—Walter Furst and the Baron von Attinghausen. Their heads were silvered by age, but the fire in their eyes and their resolute mien betokened the energy which still animated them to heroic purpose. Hedwig, Furst's daughter, a noble girl, famous through the whole country for her beauty and her virtue, walked beside them.

They parted at Furst's door after exchanging a few words about the games which were to take place the next afternoon. Furst and Hedwig entered the house, and the Baron took the mountain road which led to his castle. These two men were held in the highest respect, not only in their own canton, Uri, but also in the cantons Schwyz and Unterwalden. So far as material circumstances are concerned, both were fortunate, but it would have been difficult to decide which stood the

higher in nobility of soul. The virtues of their fathers were sacred legacies, which kept them true in word and deed. They were the living statute books of their people, and their authority was never questioned.

An hour after dinner there was an exciting time under the lofty maple-trees in front of Furst's house. It was the day of the spring shooting festival. Furst heard the sounds of flutes and alpine horns, and, going to the window with his daughter, beheld a stirring spectacle on the mountain-side. A crowd of peasants had fetched the Baron from his castle, and the jubilant procession was winding its way down the mountain road. The musicians, their instruments and hats tied with gayly colored fluttering ribbons, led the way. A tall young herdsman, carrying the Uri banner, followed them, and after him came Baron von Attinghausen in glistening armor; for carrying a weapon at that period was the distinctive mark of a freeman on all public occasions. Some carried swords, some crossbows, and others iron-spiked clubs. Furst took down his sword from the wall and buckled it on, and his daughter handed him his hat with its decoration of gay feathers.

As the procession stopped before the house, Furst went out, and a general shout of welcome greeted him. He advanced to pay his respects to the Baron, and the two shook hands, after which the procession resumed its march, reinforced at short intervals by others, who waited for it in groups or singly among the trees and at their house doors. Near Attinghausen there is a large meadow bordered with high maples and nut trees, under which tables and benches had been placed. The procession wended its way to this spot, followed by a crowd of rosy-cheeked girls and boys. How all eyes glistened in expectation of the coming events of the day! Gradually the meadow assumed the appearance of a living flower-bed. Picturesque groups engaged in eager conversation were scattered here and there. The archers, stone-throwers, runners, and wrestlers were the subject of general criticism, and many were the surmises as to which of them would win the prizes.

Here and there boys were practising sports in which some day they hoped to distinguish themselves. Furst and the Baron measured off the ground for the various games, and then selected judges from among the older men. The musicians, who went away immediately after the arrival of the procession, now returned at the head of a second procession, made up of women and girls from the villages of Attinghausen and Seedorf. Many had also joined them who lived among the mountains. Hedwig, Furst's daughter, was selected to distribute the prizes,—silver medals adorned with gay ribbons, which she carried on a red cushion.

An alpine horn sounded the signal for the beginning of the sports, and Furst and Baron von Attinghausen took the seats of honor reserved for them. Hedwig, "the Rose of Uri," as she was often called, modestly accepting the honor which had been bestowed upon her, sat near her father. Some of the judges took their places at his right, and the others seated themselves by the side of the Baron.

Six youths, some of them shepherds, the others huntsmen, entered for the race. The Baron pointed to a spring, sparkling like silver as it gushed from a gray rock about a thousand paces distant, to which they must run three times and back, and one of the judges was stationed at the spring to see that every one fairly reached it. The signal was given by raising a staff, and the youths flew over the sunlit meadow, closely watched by the spectators. Three of them reached the spring almost at the same instant, and when the other three had covered only a part of the distance, the runners returned to the trees in about the same positions. In the second dash for the spring many of the onlookers gave up all hope for one of the contestants who was farthest in the rear. All over the ground the exclamation was heard, "Who would have believed that Seppi would be the slowest?" There were some, however, who still had faith in Seppi, because they had noticed his steady, even running from the very outset. The runners now came back the second time amid applause on all sides. The crowd

welcomed the leader, and urged him not to let the prize get away from him, while Seppi's friends appealed to him to brace up, and at least not be the last one at the finish. Seppi smiled so roguishly that his friends again took courage, and were strengthened in the confidence they had reposed in him. In the third run to the spring the order was changed, and Seppi was the third to reach it. Then he summoned all his strength, and when half-way back to the starting point, passed the two in advance of him. With a smile on his face, and greeted with music and acclamations, he reached the goal ahead of them all. The two nearest him also finished the race, but the other three suddenly stopped, and, withdrawing to one side, threw themselves down upon the grass exhausted. Furst greeted the victor and complimented the two who had also reached the goal. Then, at his signal, his daughter advanced, and fastened a medal upon Seppi's breast.

Five strong men next came forward. They were to throw a perfectly round stone of a hundred pounds' weight as far as they could. The first one seized the stone with one hand, raised it to his shoulder with a powerful swing of his arm, and hurled it a long distance with a peculiar motion of the body, assisted by the shoulder and hand. It was not necessary to mark the spot where the stone fell, for it made a deep hole in the turf. The others threw in the same way, and the last one was acclaimed victor, and awarded the prize.

Wrestling was the next sport on the programme. Quite a number had intended to participate in the ring contest, but the most of them gave up all hope when they saw Reding, the strong mountaineer and chamois hunter of Schwyz, who was famous far and near for his strength and dexterity, come forward. Only three men from the Urner Alps ventured to contest with him. To win the match it was necessary that the victor should throw his opponent to the ground three times. The first two were speedily vanquished by the alpine hunter. Uli, a herdsman, next engaged him. What strength and skill Reding displayed as he tried to throw his opponent! It was in



vain, however. For a time they stood clinched and facing each other, as if they were made of iron. The heaving of their chests was the only sign of life. Then they strove to disable each other; but at last, by a tremendous effort, the hunter lifted Uli from the ground. In vain the herdsman strove to regain his footing. The next instant he was lying on his back in the grass. The hunter's strength, however, was so far exhausted that he continued the struggle with the utmost caution, and manifestly was rather bent upon saving himself from being thrown, than upon beating his opponent. After the fruitless struggle had been continued for some time in this manner, the judges stepped forward, and notified the wrestlers to give up the contest. The hunter was awarded the prize, though he had not completed his task according to the conditions, and the herdsman was praised for his effort.

"Make way for the archers," was the judges' order, and the crowd drew back on both sides so that the target could be seen from the stand. Twelve archers entered for the competition, and the order of shooting was determined by lot. Reding, the alpine hunter and strong wrestler, stood back of them, wiping the sweat from his forehead. He drew twelfth place. Behind the target was a clown cut out of wood and painted in gay colors, with a bell on its pointed cap. It was so arranged that when the bull's-eye, which was about the size of a groschen, was hit, the figure would jump up, and the bell would ring, to the great delight of the youngsters.

Just as the first archer was about to bend his bow, a slender, handsome youth appeared upon the mountain path to the right of the meadow, waving his beribboned hat in the air and singing a loud and joyous yodel, which was instantly repeated by many voices.

"It is Tell, a gallant youth and a good archer," said Furst to the Baron.

"Yes, it is Tell, it is Tell," shouted the crowd. "Now," said one, "watch the bull's eye closely and you will soon see who will take the prize." Some of the archers sniffed at the

speaker, but Reding growled to himself: "The unlucky thirteen is now full."

William Tell, for it was really he, came up to the stand and greeted the archers, and then paid his special respects to the Baron, Furst, and Hedwig. When asked why he was so late, he replied: "I came by a footpath over the mountains from Burglen. When near the lake I met a woman and two children in a pitiful plight. They had lost their way in the woods, and spent the whole night in a cave. It was my duty, first of all, to conduct them to the right road." He did not mention, however, that he had carried the children in his arms over the mountains to Burglen, his native place, and brought food and drink to the woman (who had remained behind), and a servant as her guide.

"If you were thus detained," said the Baron, "it is no more than right that you should enter the contest, if you so desire."

"With your permission, worthy gentlemen," replied Tell, "I will."

Furst watched with pleasure the handsome youth, whose large, dark-blue eyes shone with more than ordinary brilliancy because of the generous deed he had performed.

Now the first archer raises his bow. The string twangs, the arrow flies through the air, and strikes the target, but it does not hit the bull's-eye. It sticks in the fifth of the twelve red rings. The image does not move. The archers come to the stand in regular order. A moment of eager expectation, then follow the twanging of the strings, the sharp hissing of the arrows, and the blows upon the target; for not one missed it. Eleven archers had shot, and two arrows were in the first ring, close to the bull's-eye. Then the hunter Reding came to the stand. Every one watched the target with increased eagerness, for he had been famous for years as a skilful marksman. He shot, and the next instant the figure behind the target jumped,

so that its bell rang clearly. Music and shouts of applause rent the air.

"Do that if you can," said Reding, elated with his success, and turning to Tell, who was standing behind him. "I will try," said Tell, in a quiet and modest manner. With considerable exertion a judge pulled the arrow out of the bull's-eye, and amid the joyous outcry of the children put the image back in place, to remain there until some skilful hand should again release it.

Tell stepped up to the stand, stretched his bow, and fixed the arrow, but he did not raise the bow nor look at the target. His gaze was directed upward. The trees to the right and left of the meadow were filled with nuthatches, and some of them were flying across with much noisy chattering. Suddenly Tell raised his bow, the string twanged, and a nuthatch, flying above him, fluttered its shining blue wings together, and plunged down into the soft grass, which it dyed red with its blood. A universal outcry of astonishment followed this feat. Doubtless if any one in that crowd had been called upon to designate a crowning feat in archery, he would have said this or that hunter must shoot a bird on the wing; but no one had ever seen it done before. Tell looked around to Reding, who was standing behind him as motionless as a statue, and laughingly said, "Do that if you can." There was no lack of birds flying across, but there was decided lack of confidence upon the part of Reding, as well as of the other archers, that he could hit one, and all freely acknowledged Tell's skill.

"Tell, you are our master to-day" said Reding, at the same time extending his hand.

"Yes, that you are," said the other archers.

At Furst's signal the musicians played, and the people applauded, while Hedwig joyously fastened the medal upon the breast of the skilful archer, whom she was regarding with genuine admiration.

The match games were now finished, and as evening was coming on supper was served under the trees and out on the meadow, and Tell was Furst's guest. There were picturesque groups on all sides. Here, old men told of the sports which took place in their youthful days, or of the adventures which they had had in war and the chase in the mountains; there, youths and maidens danced to the strains of music, or went singing about the meadow in happy groups.

When the dark veil of evening shut down upon the scene, the festival closed with some fitting addresses to the crowd by Furst and the Baron. They reminded their hearers of the virtues of their fathers, and urged them to recognize right living and the fear of God as the highest duties of life, without which no people ever could prosper. They also appealed to them to continue their exercises and drills, so that they might be ready to defend themselves when the time came to maintain the freedom of their country.

The larger number of those who had participated in the festival made their way to the villages of Attinghausen and Seedorf. Some went up the mountains to the right and left, and their yodels were heard far up the heights.

Tell was the guest of Furst that night.

## CHAPTER II

### TELL'S HOME IN BURGLEN

The Lake of the Four Cantons is shaped like a cross with a curved stem. Its entire length is about twenty-three miles, and its width from half a mile to two miles. No other Swiss lake can compare with it in the beauty, grandeur, and diversity of the scenery along its shores. It is enclosed by mountain ranges whose peaks rise in marvellously impressive shapes from a thousand to ten thousand feet. The landscape is wonderfully varied. It enchants by its loveliness, arouses devout emotions in the soul, and again inspires it with awe.

The southern part of the lake, which lies wholly in Uri, is called the "Urner," and is about two and one-fourth miles in length. Upon its eastern side, a mile from the shore, is Burglen, the home of William Tell. It is there our story takes us. Ten years have passed since the festival on the Seedorf meadow, and the young Tell has grown to vigorous manhood. During the same year in which Furst's daughter, Hedwig, decorated him as victor, he sued for her hand, and she became his wife, and soon thereafter he led her to his home, followed by hearty congratulations and good wishes. These were ten happy years for both, and it added to their joy that heaven sent them two sons, whom they named William and Walter.

Tell's house stood upon a pleasant eminence in Burglen, and was built in the Swiss style, with a very flat, overhanging roof, and a porch. The roof was loaded in various places with stones, to protect it against the fury of the Fohn. At one side of this fine, comfortable house were stables, with ample room for cows, sheep, goats, and horses, opening upon a large yard, at the back of which, beneath a high walnut tree, was a spring. Not far from the gate was a dove-cote, the inmates of which already had sought their nests. The men and maid servants had cleaned up the premises and put everything

in order, for it was Saturday evening, and on Sunday the house and grounds, as well as themselves, must appear in their finest attire. The house faced the west. A stout bench, of Tell's handiwork, stood beneath the windows, and on it sat the mother and her two sons. They were awaiting the return of the father, who had been hunting chamois since early morning. It was a charming picture, this of the blooming wife and her handsome boys, sitting before the house, its front covered with climbing ivies and wild vines, and illuminated with the red evening glow. Tall walnut trees shaded the outbuildings, behind which were trimly kept fields, luxuriant with waving grain.

The mother and children frequently waited for the father in this spot at evening time. As soon as they caught a glimpse of him in the distance the boys would run to meet him, and the mother would go in and prepare the supper. A lovely valley stretched out before them, through which ran a silver gleaming brook, back of which the mountain ridges rose in terraces. Here and there houses were visible in the glow from the distant mountains, but they hardly seemed larger than little card houses. Still farther away rose the giant peaks of higher mountain ranges, some of which, even in the warm summer days, wore glistening robes of snow.

"Mother," said William, "won't you tell us another story?" Walter also added his entreaties, saying: "Mother, I would rather have a good story than bread and honey."

Their mother replied: "Why, I hardly know another story, you rogues. I have about exhausted my stock."

"Oh, mother," replied William, "you certainly can find one more! I can see it in your eyes. Why, when I look away down into your dark eyes, I can see many things glistening there that I have never seen before, and I know they must be very beautiful stories "

His words touched the mother's heart, but she concealed her emotions, and said: "Well, would you believe it?"



I have just thought of two stories at once. Tell me which you would rather hear, the one that is pleasant or the one that is frightful."

"The one that is pleasant," cried Walter; but William, the older boy, said, "The one that is frightful." There was a little contention over the matter, but finally they agreed that their mother should first tell the frightful and then the pleasant one.

"Oh, you rogues," said their mother, smiling. "I will do the best I can for to-day. Now, listen.

"Many centuries ago there was a dragon in our country. No one knew whence it came. Its aspect was so terrible that many who saw it were transfixed to the spot with fright, and easily became its prey. There was great distress in the mountains and among the valleys, for the horrible dragon devoured both men and beasts, and there was no safety from it anywhere. No huntsman ventured among the mountains, no herdsman drove his flocks to the fields. The people crowded into the valleys, but even there they were not safe, for the monster followed them. Every day new and frightful stories were told about its ravages, and soon the whole country became wellnigh panic-stricken. Some proposed going to another land, but the people could not make up their minds to leave their homes. 'How can we live in another country?' they would say. 'The longing for the mountains would be fatal to us, as it has been to others who have left their homes and gone into strange lands, only to die wretched and broken-hearted. Our God gave us this country, and there is no other more beautiful in the wide world. Here will we live, and here will we die. Better die here at once than spend a long lifetime in a foreign land, even if such a thing were possible. We must try to avert this calamity, and overcome the dragon.' Then the question arose who would be so roused by the universal misery as to attack the monster and save them from its ravages. Soon the hero appeared. He armed himself, left his kindred, and having received priestly blessing, scaled the

rocks among which the dragon made its lair. He never was seen again, however. One after another several brave, strong men encountered the same fate, and the people began utterly to despair. The country was like a churchyard filled with ghosts. People passed each other with mournful faces, and fled in alarm at every sound on the mountains or in the forests. Only little children in their cradles laughed and played; but the mothers wept when they saw their babies laughing, and all the joy of their lives was darkened.

"Now, it happened that in a solitary spot there lived a man of the famous race of Winkelried, and his name was Struth. He was not only brave, but had great presence of mind, without which, strength alone cannot accomplish heroic deeds. He resolved to risk a fight with the dragon."

Walter clung close to his mother. She watched him, and saw that his eyes were fixed upon the mists down in the valley.

"Is he going to be afraid, mother?" asked William.

Walter smiled uneasily and said, pointing downward, "I was just thinking what if the dragon were down there."

Gradually the dark cliffs also were enveloped in the vapory veil. The mother quieted her son whose fancy had pictured the figure of the monster in the waving mist. "You know," said she, "the mist always follows the setting sun. But look at the summits of the distant mountains. See how God's bright sun has beautified them as with a garment of light, while it is growing dark down here."

What a sublime spectacle it was! Enveloped in golden glory, the mountains raised their heads to the azure heavens.

"Thou hast erected Thy columns  
And laid the foundations of Thy temple."

Neither mother nor children knew the poem from which these lines are taken, but the sentiment they express filled her heart. She folded her hands and gently said, "Oh, my

children, how beautiful God has made this world! How many times I have seen the mountains in this evening light, and yet it always seems as if the last were the most beautiful of all. And so it seems now. But I must tell you the story of Struth, the hero.

"With much skill and trouble he made a figure of a dragon in a cavern, gave it great glittering eyes, and painted it in hideous colors. He fastened long claws on its toes, and fixed six sharp teeth in its strong jaws. When the figure was completed he took with him his two powerful dogs, which had not seen it, and led them into the cavern. As soon as they saw the figure their hair bristled up, and they ran back howling, and slunk into their kennels. Another day Struth fastened straps about their necks and forcibly dragged them to the mouth of the cavern, where he tied them securely. They howled and tried to break loose, but the straps held them. As no harm came to them, they gradually recovered from their fright. On the next day they offered no resistance when taken to the cavern, and even followed their master of their own accord. His next step was to set them on the beast, at the same time attacking it himself with his sharp sword. With loud yelps they circled about the figure, keeping well behind their master; but when they saw him turn to attack it, they sprang forward to help him. Little by little they grew bolder, and began to sink their sharp teeth here and there into the long scaly body. After repeating this on several successive days, Struth accomplished his purpose. Every time he set his dogs on they would fly at the figure and bite it in places which he indicated by word or sign. Now the hero was ready for the terrible combat with the real dragon. With resolute courage he took his dogs and went next day to the rocks among which his grim enemy was concealed. Deep in a dark cavern lay the cruel monster, and Struth could hear its heavy breathing. He boldly threw a stone into the cavern, and instantly a horrible roar issued from its mouth, sounding like the bellowing of a wild bull, and accompanied by a peculiar rattling, grinding sound, as if heavy tree trunks were being dragged over the rocks. The dragon

quickly emerged, not from the main entrance, as Struth had expected, but from a somewhat distant opening. When the dogs saw the frightful animal, its eyes rolling wildly around in its head and hot steam issuing from its nostrils, they crouched down under the overhanging rocks of the cliff and whined when their master called them. Struth commended his soul to God and boldly advanced upon his enemy. 'Gladly will I die,' thought he, 'if only I can succeed in giving the monster its death wound and make an end of it.' He shot an arrow, but it glanced harmless from the scaly breast and fell to the ground. When the dogs saw their master advance with drawn sword, they recovered courage. They leaped about, furiously yelping, and circled around the dragon, which, finding itself menaced now by three enemies, snapped first at this one and then at that, shutting its teeth together with a loud clash. A blow upon its head made the sparks fly from Struth's sword. Its scaly coat was not broken through, but the sword had pierced one eye, and the monster's blood ran down its slimy green neck. Furious with pain, it struck at Struth with its paw. He evaded the blow, and slashed the paw so that it hung only by the skin. Thereupon it emitted a hollow, dreadful roar, and its long tail writhed convulsively. If you had seen the hero now as he boldly advanced upon the monster, you would have thought its doom was sealed; but as he struck at it, his sword broke with a loud clang exactly at the hilt, and at the same instant the dragon struck him down with the other paw, and lowered its head to rend him with its teeth. When the faithful dogs saw their master fall, they hurled themselves savagely upon the dragon and sank their teeth into its body. In the meantime the monster raised its head painfully. Struth drew his long knife from his girdle, deftly inserted its point between the scales, and ran it into the dragon to the hilt. The brute made one quick, convulsive movement, and then fell dead upon him.

"The people, who had watched the combat from a distance, found him in this position. They quickly restored him, and then examined him to see if he had any wounds. As they found none upon his body they were overjoyed, and were

confident he would recover. But he was doomed, for he had inhaled the dragon's poisonous breath too long. When he saw the monster lying dead, a wonderful smile lit up his pale face. He folded his hands, his lips moved a little—then he was dead. All the people mourned for their hero, and old men and children called him their liberator."

By this time it was growing dark. A violet gray haze enveloped the distant mountains, whose highest peaks were transfused with a dim purple lustre, and tipped with a golden cloud. The glimmer gradually died away. Once again the peaks were illuminated and seemed suspended in the dome of heaven; then the glory departed for that day.

The mother was thinking of the joyous face of the dying Struth. An alpine horn rang in the distance, and a loud yodel was heard on the mountain-side which was answered from another direction.

Mother," said William, "what if that were a dragon!"

Would you fight it?" said Walter to him.

"Yes, if I were big enough," replied William. "But I know who would kill the dragon, and not die either, if it should appear in our country."

"Oh, so do I," said Walter. "Father would kill it."

"Don't you remember, mother," continued William, "how father tamed the wild bull when it tossed poor Gratli in the air? He seized it by the horns, and threw it down. There it lay, trembling in every limb, as father put his foot on its neck."

"Look, mother, Spitzzi is bounding down the road; perhaps he scents father. Ah, no! he is coming back again."

"Mother, do you know what I have heard?" said William, rising excitedly. "When I was with the servants on the meadow the other day, and they were sitting down to eat their bread, a huntsman, whom I had never seen before, came and sat with them. They offered him bread and cheese, and he

ate with them, and they talked about one thing and another. The huntsman said three governors had been sent into the country, and that they would bind us with chains. They were not men, but monsters. I laughed, and supposed the servants would laugh also, but they looked serious, and winked at the huntsman, whereupon he began talking about other things. Tell me, mother, are these governors monsters, and have they brought chains for us? If they have, we will tell father."

"My son," replied the mother in alarm, "you must not talk of such things. These governors have been sent by our royal protector to rule in his stead. If you should say anything about it to your father he would be angry with you. He already has rebuked the servants for talking about this matter. He told them that if the governors do wrong God will punish them; that they must attend to their duties, and beware of disrespect to their rulers. God expects this of every Christian person, and that means you also, children."

"Now tell us the pleasant story, mother," implored Walter; but it was too late, for they heard in the distance the welcome bark of Spitzzi, who had disappeared while they were talking.

"Father, father!" shouted the children, as they ran forward to meet him while their mother went into the house. A hundred paces away the boys saw the tall figure of their father approaching through the darkness. They gave him a hearty welcome, and begged him to let them carry something. William, being the strongest, took the heavy crossbow and quiver, and Walter the curved alpenstock. Their father carried the two chamois he had killed.

A bright, cheerful fire was burning when Tell entered the room. Hedwig was delighted to see her husband again, for she was often anxious about him, although he was unequalled as a strong and skilful huntsman. She could not overcome her fears when in fancy she saw him among the treacherous rocks or on the deceitful snow-fields. She would think to herself, "Now perhaps he is jumping over a chasm in pursuit of a

chamois. A stone which he thought was secure loosens and hurls him into the black depths, where a horrible death is his certain fate." Many a prayer she sent to heaven in his behalf, though she never alluded to it nor to her anxiety. Her joyous countenance attested her happiness at seeing her dear husband safely back at home, and he understood her love without the necessity of expression in words.

When supper was over, Tell related to them the story of his adventures through the day, and mother and children listened eagerly. Then, as it was growing late, all retired to rest in the best of spirits.

## CHAPTER III

### BAUMGARTEN'S ESCAPE

No one has characterized freedom and the fatherland more beautifully than the German writer, Ernst Moritz Arndt. I quote his words, and devoutly hope they will make a deep impression upon every young reader's heart. He says:

"Where God's sun and the stars of heaven first shine upon thee, O man, where His lightnings first reveal His omnipotence and His storm-winds fill thy soul with awe, there is thy beloved fatherland. Where a human face first bends lovingly over thy cradle, where thy mother first caresses thee upon her lap and thy father first impresses upon thee the lessons of wisdom, there is thy beloved fatherland. It may be a barren mountain-side or a desert island, and toil and wretchedness may be thy only companions, yet thou must ever love that land, cherish it, and never forget it. Freedom also is no empty dream, no vain delusion. It is the inspiring element in thy courage, and thy pride, and in the consciousness that thy origin is divine. It exists only where thou canst follow the manners and customs and live according to the precepts of thy fathers; where thou art happy in the enjoyment of those things that made thy forbears happy; and where no foreign oppressor tyrannizes over thee and no foreign taskmaster drives thee like a beast. Such a fatherland and such freedom as this are the synonyms of love and loyalty, and are the noblest possessions which a good man can cherish or aspire to, outside of religion, which brings with it still higher freedom."

He who reads these words and fully appreciates their meaning will understand me when I tell him that the souls of the men of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden were saddened because their rights and privileges had been wantonly invaded by strangers. How it occurred will be explained in the progress of this narrative.

There was one person who cared nothing for the wrongs of the brave men of his country, a young man of good family in Unterwalden, Wolfshot by name. Freedom and fatherland were meaningless words to him. He attached himself to the Austrian court, and had his reward in a title and gold. Shortly thereafter he offered his services to the Governor of Unterwalden, and was appointed castle governor by him. In this position he occupied the castle of Rossburg, and ruled his people in the most tyrannical manner. He punished their slightest offences with the severest penalties, and gave such license to his base passions that he even made vile attacks upon their honor and virtue. He dragged wives and daughters to his castle by force and released them only at his own pleasure.

A brave man named Baumgarten, who had a wife as beautiful as she was virtuous, lived at a charming spot in the vicinity of the castle. One day Wolfshot attempted to force her to go with him to the castle, but she evaded him upon some pretext, flew to the rear door of the house, and called her husband. Baumgarten, beside himself with rage, rushed into the room where Wolfshot was, and killed him with his axe. The dead man's horse was standing at the door, and several horsemen were also waiting there. Baumgarten fled, and, following a footpath, sought to reach the ferryman's house on the shore of the lake. Unluckily the Fohn, that dangerous wind which at times stirs the lake to its very depths,—a spectacle as impressive as it is fearful,—began to blow furiously. Wolfshot remained in the house so long that at last the horsemen grew uneasy, and one of them entered. He was astounded when he saw him lying on the floor with his skull cleft. The horsemen, with drawn swords, searched the house and grounds, but found only a maid in the garden, whom they threatened to kill on the spot unless she told the name of the murderer and where he was concealed. Knowing nothing about the matter, the maid fell upon her knees and protested she had not heard until then that a murder had been committed. Owing to her terror, however, she acknowledged she had seen Baumgarten enter

the house with his axe in his hand and come out again shortly afterwards. Fresh tracks were found in a field back of the house, which aroused their suspicion that he had fled to the ferry.



BAUMGARTEN FLED, AND SOUGHT TO REACH THE FERRYMAN'S HOUSE.

In the meantime Tell, who had gone to the ferry to be taken across the lake, was sitting with the ferryman in his



house. Seeing that the storm was dangerous and the waves were rolling high, he decided to wait until it subsided. Suddenly he heard a loud cry outside.

"I am a doomed man," said the voice, "unless you take me across the lake."

"I would not do it in this storm if you should offer me all the treasures of the earth," replied the ferryman.

Tell went out and found Baumgarten, whom he knew, standing there with a pale face and piteously wringing his hands. "Save me, Tell," he implored; "make the ferryman take me across. Wolfshot's horsemen are close on my track."

"What have you done? Why are they chasing you?"

"You know Wolfshot, Tell, the bold despoiler of the honor and virtue of our women? He even invaded my house, and I slew him with my axe."

"Ha! you did well," said Tell. Then he laid hands upon the ferryman and said, "You must take Baumgarten across immediately."

The man was paralyzed with fear. "For Heaven's sake, Tell," he answered, "do me no violence. I would not venture out on the lake to save my own brother from death." The ferryman's wife cried out, "By all the saints, Tell, just see the waves." The children also came and clung to their father, crying loudly.

Tell released the ferryman, saying, "No, I will compel no man. But the man—"

"Merciful Heavens!" cried Baumgarten, "look! There come the horsemen."

"Let them come," said Tell. "They shall not catch you. With God's help I will try to save you."

"Oh, Tell, Oh, Tell!" said Baumgarten, as they rushed to the boat.

Tell unloosed it, jumped in, and pushed off. The ferryman raised his hands and shouted, "May the Heavenly Father protect you!" Tell strove powerfully against the raging waters, which pitched the little craft about as if it had been a nutshell.

The horsemen by this time had come up. One of them sprang from his horse, and angrily exclaimed to the ferryman: "Baumgarten is here. Give him up or you shall lose your life."

"I have not concealed him," said the ferryman in mortal terror. "Look! there he is, on the lake."

"Curse him," said the horseman; "the murderer has escaped us. But why did you let him have the boat?"

"You are a pack of traitors, all of you," said another horseman.

"Why did you let him have the boat?" repeated the first speaker, brandishing his sword.

"How could I stop the men from taking it?" replied the ferryman.

Curses followed the fugitives as the boat disappeared round a rocky point. The enraged horsemen decided to take the ferryman back with them to Rossburg. "You should have resisted them, even at the cost of your life, rather than let the murderer of your master escape across the lake," they said. "Now you shall expiate your offence as an accessory by imprisonment, and you shall also forfeit your right for all time to be a ferryman." They tied his hands behind him, and forced him to precede them. His wife and children appealed to Heaven for help.



## CHAPTER IV

### HIFELI AND THE VULTURE

One not familiar with mountainous regions would hardly believe it possible that the mountains are ten and sometimes twenty times as high as the spires of his native place, and yet there are meadows and even lakes among them. There are many of these high-lying meadows in the Swiss Alps. As they are usually so far distant from the villages that it takes the larger part of a day to drive the herds back and forth, and as the roads generally are very rough, it has been customary from the earliest times to leave them on the mountains all summer, driving them up in the spring and back in the autumn. Those who attend to this business pass their summers on the Alps, and are called the master herdsman, and their droves, whether large or small, are called herds. There is a wooden building called the herdsman's hut upon every mountain where the herd is driven. The master herdsman is expected not only to be faithful and experienced in this duty, but also to understand the art of making good cheese, which has always been an important staple of Swiss food.

Tell owned one of these meadows, high in the range, and Joggeli, his herdsman, had driven up eleven cows on the first of May. The latter, as well as Hedwig and the children, was greatly disappointed because Hifeli, the favorite cow, who wore the finest bell and usually led the herd, could not go with it. She had to remain behind to give birth to her calf. The day when the herdsman drove the herd to the mountains was always observed as a festival, and upon this occasion Joggeli proudly led the procession. His yellow trousers were held up by red suspenders crossing his white shirt. He also wore a new hat, decorated with flowers, and carried a beautifully carved milk-bowl at his side. Hifeli should have followed him, but she remained in her stall, lowing piteously. Next came three handsome goats, and after them the two bell cows, so called

because each wore a bell nearly equal in value to Hifeli's. The other cows followed in pairs, and the bull brought up the rear, carrying the milking-stool upon his stout horns. The herdsman enthusiastically advanced, singing the Ranz des Vaches, and Tell, Hedwig, and the boys watched their departure. Joggeli did not begin his song in the yard as usual, but waited until he had gone quite a distance, out of consideration for the feelings of Hifeli.

There are no relations between men and animals so intimate as those between the Swiss herdsman and his cows. He carries neither whip nor stick. His word is sufficient to lead and govern the herd. He guides it and calls it together with song. He cares for his animals with such scrupulous nicety that they are as sleek from head to foot as the best groomed horses.

Hifeli's calf was born not long after the departure of the herd. It was the image of its mother. Like her, it was glossy and black, and had a star on its snow-white forehead as well as white marks on its feet. Hifeli was no longer lonesome, for she was now kept busy with her calf, at one time licking it, at another scolding it in a motherly way, and often following it with solicitous eyes when it came frisking into the stall with awkward jumps.

It would be hard to say which of the two, Hifeli or the calf, was the favorite of Hedwig and the boys.

The day came at last for William to drive Hifeli and her calf to the mountains. He had never been so happy before. His parents had shown unusual confidence in his ability by intrusting their most valuable animal to his care. To drive one cow on the mountain roads is a more difficult task than driving a whole herd on level meadows. On the previous day William had told Hifeli at least ten times that she and her calf were going to leave their dark stall in the morning and that he was to drive them to the mountains. He dreamed of it all night long.

The next day he appeared in his little herdsman's attire, but without a milk-bowl at his side. In its place he carried a herdsman's bag, which his mother had filled abundantly with bread, cheese, and dried fruits. After breakfast his parents went with him to the yard, and his father led Hifeli out of her stall. Then he hung the bell of honor to her neck, which she had worn for two years, signifying that she was the most beautiful cow in the herd. The bell was nearly a foot in length, with an inward and outward curve and thin edges, and various figures were stitched on the leather strap which held it.

The custom of decorating handsome cows with costly bells, where the owners can afford it, is an old one in Switzerland. Even nowadays considerable business is done in buying and selling them. It seems incredible that from 130 to 140 gulden have been asked for these bells, but it is true. It often happens that a herdsman's wife and daughters begrudge the cost of these neck ornaments. How much Hifeli's bell cost cannot be stated, but it was a fine one and had a beautiful tone. When it was hung to her neck she turned her head toward the mountains, lowing with delight. William smiled when his father said: "She knows well enough where you are going to take her. She also knows she wears the bell of honor at her neck. Now go, my son, and do your work like a man."

"I will, father," said William, shaking his parents' hands and kissing them good-bye. Then he took his staff, and singing with a loud, clear voice, started on. Hifeli promptly followed him with measured step, looking round now and then at her calf, which was frisking about in youthful delight. As Hedwig watched her dear boy there were tears in her eyes.

"He is a brave little fellow," said his father. "Now wake up Walter. He must go to the field with me."

William meanwhile climbed the sunny heights, and his song was ever strong and clear. He was as happy as the lark, which sings as it soars into the crystalline sky. He stopped a little while at a place which his father had designated, and Hifeli improved the opportunity to try the fresh grass, and the

calf refreshed itself with its mother's milk. After it was satisfied, William resumed his song, and the cow at once followed him. Sometimes he would make pauses in his singing, but they were short. After a time, he came to a place in the road which skirted a precipice. He had been warned about it by his father, who told him to go cautiously and keep as close as possible to the side of the rocks, which he did. He was just leaving the dangerous way behind him, when he heard a peculiar rushing sound. Looking around, he was astonished to behold a vulture, which was driving the calf to the edge of the precipice by flapping its huge wings furiously. William raised his staff, which had a stout point, and struck at the vulture with all his strength. He hit it on the under side of one of its wings, but the staff glanced off without doing the bird any harm. The boy probably would have been more successful if Hifeli had not thrust at the bird with her horns, thus making his blow uncertain. Distressed and enraged, he raised his staff a second time,—when the calf plunged downward, and the vulture shot after it.

William stood speechless, deadly pale, and trembling in every limb. Then he heard a heavy thud below. Hifeli looked down into the abyss and called piteously. For the first time William broke down, and cried bitterly, as he tried to find some way of descending. It appeared impossible; but there is no telling what he would have done had he not seen his last hope of rescuing the calf disappear. The vulture was bearing away its prey through the air. It had struck its talons into the back of the dead calf, whose head and legs were dangling.

William wrung his hands in utter wretchedness. Now he would call to the calf, and now to the cow—"Hifeli, poor Hifeli," while Hifeli lowed mournfully, and her bell tolled as if in sympathy. Soon, however, he began to consider what he must do. He could not remain there with Hifeli, who was so near the edge of the precipice that he was afraid she would plunge over. Suddenly she began doing what he already had done. She went here and there along the edge, trying to find

some way of going down. His chief concern now was to get her away from that dangerous spot. He went up to her, stroked her neck, talked to her coaxingly, and went on a few steps; but it was all in vain. She would not follow him. It was hard for him under such circumstances to sing and yodel, but it was a case of necessity. Yodeling, with the tears running down his cheeks, he went some distance, hoping he could induce Hifeli to follow; but it was useless. She would look after him, turn round and low, and then go back to the rocky edge. She did this fully ten times, and all the time the boy sang all the more loudly and beautifully. If you had heard him in the distance, you would have thought his soul was inspired with the raptures of the May; but there was no joy in his heart. His anxiety for the finest cow in the herd was even greater than his sorrow over the loss of the calf. Then he remembered his father had put a long rope in the bag, which he was to take to the herdsman. He formed a plan at once. He returned to the cow, and led her to a stout fir-tree near by. There he tied the rope about her horns in a hard knot, and fastened her securely to the tree, after which he hurried back to Burglen as fast as he could. He saw his father at a distance in the field, ran up to him, and told him a tearful story of the tragedy. Tell started for the mountains at once with William, and soon they heard the lowing of the cow. He sent his son to the range with an order to the herdsman to bring down the whole herd. When they reached the spot where Tell was waiting it was long past noon.

At sight of the herd, Hifeli seemed to forget her loss. She strove to get to the cows who were grazing on an open spot near by. As soon as she was unfastened, she took her place at the head of the herd, and went forward without any delay. Tell and William followed them until the former was sure she would not come back again. William went home as sad as he had been joyful in the morning, when he started for the mountains; but he was much consoled when his father promised that they would go together and hunt this vulture, whose nesting-place he well knew.

Tell related for the first time that day the adventures of Baumgarten, and told his wife that he took him across the lake. Hedwig grew pale when she heard the story. The thought pierced her soul like a sword, "O God, how could Tell undertake such a dangerous deed? Had he no consideration for his wife and children?" Any other woman under similar circumstances would have had the same thought, but few would have kept silent as she did, and some would have sulked and even harbored ill-will. But the expression of Hedwig's face and tearful eyes only mutely said, "Dear one, how could you do so?" Tell understood his wife, and taking her hand, said: "Hedwig, when Baumgarten raised his hands to heaven, and I saw the horsemen furiously approaching, it seemed as if the voice of God said to me, 'Have pity.' I obeyed His voice, and soon we were on the lake. Death threatened us for a long time, and I cried to God above for help."

"Tell," said his wife, "you acted bravely before God and man. You did what your conscience approved, but oh, suppose you had not come back to us!"

"You would have lost the housefather, but not your Heavenly Father, who protected me so that I am still with those who are the dearest ones to me on earth."

Tell was greatly agitated, but he controlled his emotions, and in reply to a question from Hedwig said that he had taken Baumgarten to the brave Stauffacher in Schwyz.

"Tell," said his wife, "I have long noticed that the cruelty of the Governor, who rules over us in violation of all right and precedent, has greatly troubled you. Tell me, how will it all end?"

"Justice overtook Wolfshot," replied Tell. "God grant that it may be a warning to the Governor and induce him to cease his injustice. We must all avoid whatever may provoke that injustice; but if worst comes to the worst—"

Tell abruptly stopped. Perhaps he remembered that his boys were sitting by his side.

## CHAPTER V

### STAUFFACHER AND HIS HEROIC WIFE

Baumgarten, who was saved by Tell's bold deed, was kept in concealment in Steinen, in the canton of Schwyz, by the highly esteemed and wealthy Werner Stauffacher, who had built a large and beautiful house there, glistening with many windows and having many wise proverbs and mottoes painted on it.

The day was nearly spent, and Stauffacher, his wife Margaretha, and her nephew, who was visiting them, were sitting before the door of this beautiful house. The nephew, a handsome youth, who had arrived that day by boat from Unterwalden, told them that Landenberg, the Governor, had sent another castle governor to Rossburg, in place of the slain Wolfshot, but had not abandoned his efforts to find Baumgarten.

"Well, they evidently have no intention of searching every defile and cavern," said Stauffacher. "If they had, they would have done so already. It is more likely they have decided he will risk going home, if only for a single night. Doubtless they are laying traps for him there."

The young man also told them much about the newly appointed Governor, Landenberg, and of the growing discontent among the people of Unterwalden. At last he said that he had been longing for some time to ask his uncle to explain by what right these governors were in the country. He had heard something about it, but he knew his uncle could make it clear to him.

"Well, listen," replied Stauffacher. "I will briefly tell you what you are so anxious to know. Our three cantons have been leagued together for a long time. Now it happened that the Count of Hapsburg was chosen Emperor by the German

princes and cities. As Count, we had found him a noble, judicious, and courageous man. His imperial elevation made no change in him, and when we found that as Emperor he was neither arrogant nor tyrannical, our confidence in him increased. In those days we were under the protection of the German Empire; consequently, as he wore the Emperor's crown, he was our protector. But, mark this—we had given up none of our rights. The reigning Emperor is our protector, and in return we give him assistance in any wars in which he may be engaged. So long as Rudolph lived, all went well, but when he died, and his son Albrecht succeeded him, the evil days began. His intention at the outset was to gain complete control of the country; but we would not consent. For that reason he sends these governors to humble us and force us to yield. He hopes—"

Stauffacher paused, for he saw a troop of horsemen approaching from a neighboring forest. "That is always the way," said he. "Speak of the wolf and he is sure to be close by. There comes Gessler, the Governor. I wish I were elsewhere; but I must not go inside, as that would offend him."

Gessler was scarcely thirty years of age. He was a man of powerful physique, with a heavy, bearded face, upon which shamelessness had left its unmistakable imprint—one who was marked by nature as likely to harm any one who crossed his path. He wore armor, and over it a rich coat of arms, which was bordered and lined with miniver. A large medal attached to a gold chain hung upon his breast as an emblem of his rank. He glanced fiercely about him, as if he were eager to intimidate the people and extinguish their inborn love of liberty. His efforts, however, had not met with success, and this made him so angry that he was continually racking his brains to find some way of accomplishing his purpose.

As he approached the house, Stauffacher arose and greeted him, but Gessler did not return the civility. Turning to the nearest attendant, he pointed to the handsome house and insolently said: "How much longer shall we suffer these

peasants to build so finely?" Thereupon he rode away chuckling, because he fancied he had humiliated this distinguished man by wounding him in his most sensitive spot. The foolish man was mistaken, however. His vile words had only roused still higher pride in the breast of the nobleman whom he had sought to insult. Many of Stauffacher's ancestors had been renowned men,—knights and abbot princes. He had fought bravely himself, and, had he desired it, would not have been refused knighthood; but he preferred to hasten home at the close of the war. To live as a free man in a free country was more to him than the honors of knighthood or the cloister.

He sat for some time silently considering Gessler's insolence. At last his wife Margaretha broke the silence. "Were I a man," said she, "I would no longer endure such insolence."

"Should I have offended him here?" replied Stauffacher.

"Oh, no, not that, Werner," replied his wife; "but you men of the three cantons, Schwyz, Unterwalden, and Uri, should take counsel with one another and decide what is to be done to save the country from such tyranny."

"Margaretha, what feelings you have aroused in my breast!" replied Stauffacher. "But have you considered how strong the castles of these governors are, and how many armed men are at their call? Have you considered that opposition to the governors means opposition to the powerful Albrecht?"

"Werner," replied his wife, "when I was in my father's house you often came there, and sat in the evening upon the bench before the door. You often talked with my father. Once you told of a battle which the patriots, though few in number, undertook against a powerful force. I expressed my astonishment. Then you looked at me. I can see even now how your eyes flashed as you said, 'Who ever heard of the Swiss caring for the number of their enemies?' From that hour I loved you, and I gladly gave you my hand when you asked me

to be your wife, and now, Werner, you are counting your enemies."

"Listen, dear wife," said Stauffacher. "At that time only my own life was at stake. Now, I am father of a family. We men can gladly die in freedom's battles, but what will become of you? The enemy's hirelings would overrun the country, and commit shameless outrages upon those left helpless at the firesides."

"You are mistaken, Werner," said Margaretha. "Do not the ancients tell how the mothers and daughters fought with the men when it was necessary to protect freedom and the fatherland? But should all be lost on the fatal field, should our banners go down in defeat and our heroes lose their lives, and should the destroying angel spare me, oh, Werner, I would rather hurl myself into the deepest abyss than live in a dishonored fatherland trampled underfoot by a haughty conqueror."

"Noble wife," exclaimed Stauffacher, his eyes glowing with enthusiasm. "My future is now clear, and may it bring to you all that you desire." The two spoke of many things, and at last Stauffacher decided to visit Walter Furst and confer with him as to the wrongs and the welfare of the fatherland.

## CHAPTER VI

### A BLOW FOR FREEDOM

On the same day that Stauffacher conferred with Furst, an event occurred in Unterwalden which, though slight in itself, was fraught with significance to the welfare of Switzerland. There is a fertile valley between high mountains in the northern part of the canton called the Melchthal. A man dwelt there in the quiet enjoyment of his own possessions. He rarely visited the lower country, and up to that time was hardly aware of the Governor's despotic acts. A tax of five shillings had been levied upon this man,—Henry of the Halden was his name,—which he had agreed to pay on a certain day. It happened that a pair of Landenberg's oxen were injured at Sarnen, and he needed a new team. He asked his treasurer who was yet in arrears for taxes, and upon being informed it was this man in Melchthal, he ordered a servant to go up there and take a pair of oxen from his stable in the name of the Governor, as a penalty for delay in settlement. As he was talking to him, a lad came from Melchthal with the five shillings. The treasurer notified the Governor, but the boy was told it was too late, and was sent off with his money. The lad had hardly returned and related his experience to his master, and his master's son, Arnold von Melchthal, a powerful youth, before the Governor's servant arrived and demanded the oxen in the name of the Governor.

Henry of the Halden could scarcely believe he heard aright. He insisted there must be a mistake, and that some other person must have been designated for penalty. The servant replied in a surly manner that he knew what he was about, and thereupon went across the yard to the stable. Young Arnold's blood was up in an instant. "Father," he cried, "he is going to take them."

Be quiet, Arnold," replied his father. "Do nothing hasty. I will speak to him again, and if it does no good, I will go down and see the Governor."

The servant opened the stable door. "Let me say a word," said the father, hoping to pacify him. "Stay here and I will go down at once to the Governor and settle this matter. We shall need the oxen for the ploughing."

The servant replied: I am going to take them. If you peasants wish to do any ploughing, you can hitch yourselves up." With this he went to the crib, and took a chain which was hanging from a peg; but in an instant Arnold was at his side, and told him not to touch the oxen. The servant said he was acting in the name of the Governor, and he ought to know it.

"And if you were acting in the name of the evil one, still I would tell you not to touch the oxen."

The servant, who was used to this kind of robbery, paid no attention to him, whereupon Arnold struck him across the hand with his stick, and broke one of his fingers. The servant made no sign of pain, and merely said as he started to go: "You will find out now what the Governor will do to you peasants." The father tried to pacify him, but he left the yard with curses and threats, saying, "To strike a servant of the Governor entails the penalty of blood, and you will have to settle the account."

By degrees Arnold realized what he had done, and reflected upon the consequences. Without doubt they would immediately arrest him and confine him, how long no one could say, in the subterranean dungeons of the castle, unless he sought refuge in flight. His parents advised him to go, and provided him with all he needed, and that very hour he fled into the mountains.



## CHAPTER VII

### IN GESSLER'S CASTLE

They were in high glee at Gessler's castle at Kussnacht, for he was giving a splendid dinner to his fellow-tyrant, Landenberg, the Governor. Their confederates sat with them at table, and assisted in suggesting plans for the destruction of the liberty of the three cantons as they emptied many silver beakers of wine.

"Which of the three cantons shall first be humbled?" said a young Austrian nobleman, who had arrived in Switzerland a few days before to visit Gessler. "They are greatly surprised at court that the peasants did not send messengers long ago to tell you that their goods and their lives were at your disposal if you would only be gracious to them."

"Yes, but the court does not know the obstinate peasants of these mountains," replied Landenberg. "I have systematically loaded them down with taxes and penalties, and when they complained I have told them: 'I am ruling you in the name of the Empire. It would be better for each and all of you to annex yourselves to Austria;' but it has been of no avail. There was a case in point here only a few days ago. A peasant over in Melchthal was five shillings in arrears. At that time I needed oxen, so I thought I would take a yoke of his and let him keep his money."

"Well, you know how to get cattle cheap," said a guest, laughing.

"Listen!" answered Landenberg. "I sent a servant to this peasant and, what do you think? He came back with a broken finger, and said the peasant's son had assaulted him."

"It is to be hoped you ordered the insolent fellow to be strung up," said Gessler with icy coolness.

"He is not in my power," replied Landenberg. "He has escaped. I have seized his father and put him in prison, but he will not tell where his son is hidden. I have threatened him with the loss of all his possessions, but he remains silent. Enraged at his obstinacy, I told him I would put out his eyes if he did not answer me correctly, but he only replied that with the help of God he would bear the worst tortures rather than reveal his son's whereabouts or deliver him into the hands of a hangman. I said to him, 'Why do you call me, the supreme authority in this canton, ruling here as the representative of the Emperor, a hangman?' To this he replied: 'He who rules in the name of the Emperor should also rule in the name and in the spirit of God. But you do not. You rule in the name of the evil one, and treat us shamefully and unjustly. That is why I call you hangman.'"

"There you have a slight illustration of the obstinacy of the peasants with whom we have to contend," said Gessler to the Austrian nobleman. "But this is the case of only one family. I tell you, however, I will yet curb this wild steed, and make it as tame as a child's playhorse. We are dealing with a race of men such as you will find nowhere else in the world. On his own soil every peasant imagines he is a prince. It seems as if these lofty mountains fostered the idea of liberty. How haughtily they carry their heads! But just wait! I will load their proud necks so that they will either bend or break."

"I have not failed in my duty," said Landenberg.

"Doubtless you have not coddled the people," interrupted Gessler, "but—do not be offended—I must find fault with you. You have let your Wolfshot be killed, and no one seems to care much about it."

"Some one would have cared about it," replied Landenberg, "if my men had caught Baumgarten."

"But why did you not seize his own people? The fugitive should have known that those he left behind would suffer. Had you taken your revenge upon Baumgarten's wife,

that affair at Melchthal would not have been likely to happen. Of course, they will say to themselves: 'What does it matter? I will execute my purpose and then fly to the mountains.' The 'hangman ' should look after those at home. Under similar circumstances I would have inflicted the severest penalties, not only upon the family, but upon the whole village."

"You are right, Gessler," replied Landenberg. "I propose to proceed in this matter with the utmost severity, and you will have a sample of it in the case of this old peasant at Melchthal. He has richly deserved the worst."

"Spare not," said Gessler. "Examples must be made. The most important part of the castle I propose to have built in Uri is the prison. I have an idea. These men of Uri are the toughest of the lot, therefore they shall build it themselves. I will call it 'Zwing-Uri' and once in there, I will take the obstinacy out of many of these fellows. I thought of a scheme to-day to test their allegiance. As soon as I get back to Altdorf I shall raise a pole with a royal cap on it and order the people to take off their hats to the emblem. You will see how quickly I will catch a lot of these obstinate ones. I will punish the man who refuses to salute as my anger at the moment may suggest; but you can imagine the penalty will not be light. I expect to catch the worst of them by winter. Perhaps William Tell of Burglen may find himself in the trap."

"He has long deserved the severest punishment," said Landenberg, for he took the fugitive Baumgarten across the lake. He must be a courageous man, but they also say that he is cunning, so I am afraid you will not catch him with the cap."

"I will outwit him," replied Gessler. "I will raise the cap when he is in Altdorf and on the very spot which he must pass. Much depends upon catching him and making him harmless. He is a powerful man. You should see his face. I met him not long ago upon the edge of a precipice in the Oberalp, where I was hunting, and I confess I did not feel comfortable in passing him. I have often wished since that I could have pitched him over."

The party lingered long over their cups, devising schemes to extinguish the freedom of the three cantons.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CONFERENCE AT FURST'S HOUSE

Shortly after this episode Stauffacher said to his wife one day: "God protect you, Margaretha. I am going across the lake to Attinghausen to confer with Walter Furst." He did as he said, and reached Furst's house toward evening. He at once told his old friend that he had come to talk about the Governor's outrages, and that he considered it not alone the right but the duty of those who wished to live as their fathers had lived to band themselves together and break the tyrant's chains. There was no other way to accomplish it.

Furst's eyes flashed as he heard these words. He took his old friend by the hand and said: "Thank God that I hear such a noble utterance from Schwyz. I have cheering reports also from Uri and Unterwalden. Both here and there they think as you do."

Then he told Werner that he had concealed young Arnold von Melchthal, who had broken Landenberg's servant's finger. "Come with me," he said. But just as they were leaving the room Arnold rushed in and, overcome with distress and anger, exclaimed, "By all the saints. they have blinded my father."

"Who? what?" cried Furst in great excitement.

"Landenberg, the Governor, has pierced both my father's eyes because he will not reveal my hiding-place. I have the news on the best authority. Oh, my God, why did I flee! I would rather have suffered a hundred deaths than have my old father lose his eyes."

He wrung his hands and cried out so piteously that it pierced the souls of the two men. They were deeply excited themselves by this unprecedented cruelty. At last Arnold controlled himself, and said: "Look you! It has come to this.

No one's eyes are longer safe." He broke down again and wept aloud. When he recovered composure he continued: "Tell me, you whose word and example have so much influence in the three cantons, how much longer shall we stand looking idly on while such infamous outrages are committed? Oh, they cry aloud to heaven!"

Then Stauffacher told him why he had come. The young man seized his hand and said: "Thank God! Fling out our banner. Let us march through the cantons. All the people will join us. We will hurl ourselves upon the tyrants like an avalanche and crush them."

Furst and Stauffacher sought to allay his excitement. They told him it was absolutely essential that the conferences in the three cantons should be held in secret. When Arnold heard this he was in despair. "Men," he exclaimed, "you still have your eyes. Will you wait until you too are blinded? But even if nothing of the kind should happen, how many more noble men must lose their property and their lives? No, pardon me, I cannot wait. I have young friends in the mountains who will join me, and before eight days have passed you will hear that Landenberg is no more. Noble and excellent sirs, farewell."

"A word before you go," said Furst. "Are you really sure that you can take the strong castle at Sarnen with a band of rash youth? And even if you should do so and should kill Landenberg, what would you gain for the cause of liberty? Did not Wolfshot fall? Has his successor dealt any more leniently with the people of Unterwalden? You will only have committed an act of vengeance. What will happen when Gessler, infuriated by such an act, overruns the country with his soldiers and seizes the leaders of the people? Our liberties will be irretrievably lost."

"Pardon me if I doubt what you have said," replied Arnold. "The invading hordes would kindle the smouldering embers of liberty all over the three cantons."

Stauffacher interposed and said: "Arnold, brave youth, hear my words before you act. He who would achieve victory must have courage, but he must not forget that foresight is also necessary. Remember that our people are not yet ready for the struggle. A single act such as you propose might do great harm to us all. Do not waste your strength upon a rash undertaking, but save it for the hour when the three cantons shall rise."

"Noble sirs," replied Arnold, "you ask something very difficult."

"Not more difficult," replied Furst, "than the necessities of the country demand. Consider my advice, both of you. You, Arnold, remain in concealment. Stauffacher and I will summon our intimate friends and have an interview at some retired spot upon which we shall agree."

"Listen to me," said Arnold. "In deference to your wishes I recall my decision to raise a force of those in sympathy with me and storm the castle at Sarnen, but you will never persuade me to remain here in idleness awaiting the day of uprising. The little boat in which I came shall take me back this night to Unterwalden. There I will work secretly among my friends, as you will be doing in Schwyz and Uri."

"You are taking a great risk," said Furst, "but God be with you. Now let us arrange when and where we shall meet."

The three sat until midnight making their plans. Then Furst accompanied the two to the lake, where they separated, Arnold going to Unterwalden, and Stauffacher to Schwyz. Furst went back to his house with a heart full of anxiety and solicitude for the future.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FIGHT WITH THE VULTURES

It was still dark when William Tell and his son left the house. His father had said to him the day before: "William, we are going in the morning to find the vulture which stole the calf," and Hedwig had wished them good luck.

They followed a route well known to them, but one upon which a stranger at that hour would surely have missed his way, and perhaps have fallen into dangerous abysses. Gradually the sky grew brighter and the stars paled,—even the resplendent morning star, which shone with lustrous brightness. William suddenly was aware of a glow, which came as vividly and suddenly as the lightning's flash. He stood transfixed with admiration. He saw a distant mountain-peak which had caught the rays of the morning sun standing out in the darkness suffused with purple light. The larger part of the mountain, as well as of the distant ranges, was still hidden by the veil of night, but each moment the veil dropped lower and lower, and the parts of the mountains illuminated by the golden light became larger. On the lower side of these illuminated parts there appeared as if by magic a waving veil of mist, its edges tipped with silvery, golden, and purple lustre. This lasted but a short time, for the vaporous mass was soon broken up and floated in cloud shapes through the crystalline sea of ether.

William had never known such a morning before. He walked quietly along by his father's side, now and then uttering an exclamation of admiration or surprise. Their way led steadily upwards, and each instant fresh millions of shafts of light shot through the dusky veil, resting upon the region below, until at last mountains and valley lay clearly spread out before them in the beautiful morning light. What a beautiful picture it was! The leaves of the trees, the moss, the tips of the

grass-blades glistened like pearls. Finches and thrushes sang in the trees. Water wagtails hopped along the fir-clad margin of a little brook, and in the woods they heard the cooing of the ring-dove and the bell-like call of the wood-hen. On the fresh green meadows little silvery herons stalked about in the high grass, now watching for skipping frogs, now gazing sedately at the two travellers.

Had William been alone, he would have sung for very joy, but he was a little afraid of his father. At last, when they had reached an unusually sightly spot, Tell, evidently out of consideration for his son, said, "Let us rest here a little while." A moss-covered rock made a nice seat for them. The father took out bread and cheese from his hunting bag, gave some to his son, and they ate. The outlook from the spot was magnificent. A silvery clear stream leaped from the gray rocks below them, gayly splashing, and sprinkling the deep green grass with its bright drops.

"Do you see in the distance that rocky mountain with such a rugged summit?" his father asked. "That is Pilatus. In one of its abysses is a pool called Lake Pilatus. Have you ever heard anything about it?"

"Oh, yes, father. Pontius Pilate, who suffered our Saviour to die, after restlessly wandering about the world, now lives in that lake."

"That is right, my son; and if any one throws a stone into that pool Pilate arises and makes bad weather. Look, there is something going on there now. Thin gray cloud-streaks are hanging across the mountain-side. Do you see them? It means that by night, and perhaps by early evening, the Fan' will overtake us. So let us proceed, my son, for we have some distance yet to go before we reach our destination." Tell led his son higher up the mountain. After about an hour's climbing they came to a deep rocky chasm, bridged by a stout fir which had been bent over by the winds until it nearly touched the opposite side.

"William, do you think you can go across? You do not yet dare to risk it? Well, come with me."

He took the boy's arm and led him close to the edge, so that he might become accustomed to looking down into the abyss. William was almost suspended over it, and heard the sound of running water in its depths. The thought which came to him was, how many firs could stand one upon another before they reached the bottom. Ten? Twenty? Thirty? Then suddenly he was overcome by fear, and clung to his father's neck.

"Oh! oh!" said Tell, "I did not think that of you!"

The boy recovered himself, looked into his father's kindly face, and answered, "I will not be afraid any more."

Tell stepped upon the fir, which trembled under his weight. William would have cried out, but a look into his father's quiet face restored his confidence. When the latter, however, took another step forward, and the tree bent still more, William looked down. In an instant the walls of rock, the trees standing on the edge, as well as the fir upon which they were crossing, whirled round about him. An exclamation of distress escaped from him, and he fainted.

When at last he opened his eyes, he gazed fixedly at his father. Though he was lying flat on the grass, it seemed to him that the rocks and the trees were still whirling around, and he with them. Little by little his cheeks regained their rosy color, and then he sat up and began to cry.

"You need not be ashamed," said his father, who well knew why he was crying. "Dizziness

overcomes stronger and bigger people than you in such places, but I am certain you will get over it in time."

His father poured a little wine into his wooden cup and gave his son to drink, and after a short rest they went on. After a second rest, and an advance of considerable distance, they reached the foot of two rocky heights adjoining each other. His

father pointed to the one on the right and said, "Do you see anything alive there, on the southern side of the mountain?"

"Yes, father, an animal. Is it not a chamois? No, it cannot be, for its horns are almost as long as its whole body. It is a wild goat."

"Yes, the goat stands at that spot, watching the far distance, at least half of the time."

"What is he thinking about as he overlooks the wide, wide world?" said William.

"Who can tell?" answered his father. "Now look at the other height. Do you see that dark cliff rising on the left? In one of its recesses is the vulture's nest."

"Oh, father, then we have had all our trouble for nothing, for who can climb that smooth rock wall?"

"I will see what can be done. You must stay here while I search for a way up there." Saying this, his father at once disappeared behind the nearest of the rocks, which seemed to be an impassable barrier. William was now free to look about him. He was on an elevation many thousand feet high, and could see the larger part of the Lake of the Four Cantons, which was set among the mountains and the dark wooded heights like a glistening emerald. Here and there he saw villages along its shores. How small the houses appeared to him! It seemed to him as if he could cover a village, church and all, with his cap.

Then he looked up in the direction his father had taken, but he could see nothing of him. A half-hour might have passed, when at some distance from the point his father had designated he saw a man's head, and then half of his body. He looked again. Yes, it was his father. How deceptive the heights are! It seemed to the boy that his father, standing on the edge of the cliff, resembled the sharp and clearly defined outline of a shadow-picture. Suddenly and quickly Tell raised his crossbow. Above the mountain, and to the right, William saw

a dark object, perceptibly growing larger and approaching the mountain peak with great swiftness. Of course he imagined the vulture was going to attack his father. It seemed to him he could hear its rush through the air. With undiminished swiftness the fierce bird shot down. It was soon near his father, who was standing motionless on the rock with uplifted bow. Suddenly the bird flapped its wings violently, struggled upwards, then wheeled about and flew in a straight line with rapid strokes of its wings as if it were in trouble. Tell had shot an arrow into its breast. Many a larger animal would have succumbed to such a wound, but the vulture was tenacious of life, and flew a considerable distance. All at once its strength gave out, and William saw it plunging straight down. He calculated it would fall in the lake, but he was wrong. The bird fell in the woods not far from the lake. He carefully noted the place, so that he could show it to his father. Then he looked up again. Tell had reached a level rock where he could move about without danger. Then William saw his father pick something up and throw it down. He did this twice, and he concluded it must be the young vultures. "Now both the old vulture and the young ones are dead," he said to himself. Once more he saw his father standing with his bow raised. Another vulture, the female, was shot at as its mate had been, but the arrow, which flew a considerable distance, appeared to have missed, for Tell seized his alpenstock, sprang to one side, and struck at the vulture as it came rushing at him. The blow must have been a powerful one, for the feathers flew and the bird circled about, continually dropping lower and lower. At last it clutched at a rock, one wing hanging down. Then it fell, rather than flew, down to the place where William was, and dropped scarcely ten paces from him. William now had an opportunity to realize the great strength of the bird. He held the vulture down with his iron-pointed stick, the bird watching him with its yellow-ringed eyes and making no effort to move. Thus they remained for some time, when William thought what his father would say to find him there doing nothing but waiting helplessly. With uplifted stick he rushed at the vulture. The



bird, evidently scared by the suddenness of his onset, jumped to the edge of the nearest hollow and scrambled down, but not without getting a hard blow upon its neck and back from William. When he saw how near it was to him, he was eager to follow it and continue the battle, but he felt that he ought not to leave the place where his father had told him to remain.

After a little Tell returned, and his son showed him the vulture. Both went to a spot where they could get a close view of the wounded bird. After fitting an arrow in the groove, the father handed the crossbow to his son, saying, It is too heavy for you to manage easily. Rest it upon this stone and aim at the vulture's breast."

With beating heart William took the bow, aimed, and shot the bird in the neck. In its death struggle it beat its wings so furiously that no one could have approached it without danger. When its struggles became less furious, Tell went down and killed it with a strong blow of his stick.

"Father," cried William, "cut off the claws for me and bring me some of its feathers. I would like to keep them to remember the fight with the vulture."

His father gratified his wish, and then said, "Now that our work is done, let us have dinner, though it is long past noon." While they were eating, he told his son that he had thrown the young vultures into a deep rocky fissure, and also described the nest. William then showed his father where the first vulture fell. Tell said: "It would not be worth the trouble to search for it. Let us be satisfied with having exterminated the robber."

Having finished their meal, they set out upon the road by which they had come. Tell carried the boy over the chasm again, but this time he was not overcome with dizziness. After about an hour's progress his father suddenly stopped, and said: "Do you see that gray vapor in the distance? That is the storm-wind, my son, which Pilatus promised us this morning. It will

overtake us soon in all its fury. Lie down here, and cling tightly to these two saplings."

William did as he was told, and his father also threw himself down and held on in the same way. Soon a furious wind burst upon them, which certainly would have swept them away if they had not taken this precaution, and perhaps might have blown them into one of the abysses near by. Shrubs and bushes bent to the ground, and several strong trees fell with a crash in their vicinity. The storm was of short duration, and after it had passed the atmosphere was quiet. Father and son went on until sundown, when a second time they had to protect themselves in a similar way. Late in the evening they reached home.

## CHAPTER X

### THE COMPACT ON THE RUTLI MEADOW

There is a secluded meadow, surrounded by a forest, not far from the boundary line between Unterwalden and Uri, and near the Lake of the Four Cantons, called the Rutli.' The spot was used by the people of the three cantons for their secret gatherings.

"On the lake's left bank,  
As we sail hence to Brunnen, right against  
The Mytenstein, deep-hidden in the wood,  
A meadow lies, by shepherds called the Rutli,  
Because the wood has been uprooted there."  
Schiller's *William Tell*.

It was night, but a night almost as light as day, so brightly shone the moon. There was a stir of life on the Rutli, and here and there figures emerged from the dark forest. A little boat came sailing across the lake. It conveyed Walter Furst, Werner Stauffacher, and Arnold von Melchthal, each of whom, in accordance with a previous agreement, brought ten trusty friends, men strong in soul and body, with whom they purposed to discuss the preliminary steps which should be taken to promote the welfare of the fatherland. The solemn beauty of the night aroused a feeling of sacred earnestness in the hearts of these men as they shook hands with one another and proceeded to the centre of the meadow.

Walter Furst was the first to speak. "God be with you all," he said. Friends, it is no ordinary matter that has called us here. We are come to discuss the welfare of the fatherland, and to adopt measures for the preservation of that freedom which we received from our fathers as a sacred legacy, so that we in turn may hand it down unimpaired to our children. We three—Stauffacher, Melchthal, and I—have invited you here; but before we did so, we went to the noble Baron von

Attinghausen, who is with us to-night, and counselled with him. He is the oldest and most experienced of us all, and can tell you better than we why we have the right on our side. Therefore he will speak for us."

The white-haired hero advanced and said: "Friends and comrades, we owe our freedom to the bravery of our fathers, who many times defended it with their lives when it was assailed. For a long time we lived in peace and quiet. The Emperor Rudolph respected our rights, and was faithful to his pledges even unto death. But when Albrecht became his successor, his lust for power, and his sinister designs, brought bitter sorrow upon our land. We had lived quietly until the princes and cities elected him Emperor. We sent messengers to him at Strasburg, beseeching him to maintain our rights and liberties. He replied that he was considering the possibility of making some changes in our political relations.

"It was one of our ancient rights that each head of a family should have a voice in the Diet, in all matters pertaining to the country's welfare, and that the Landamman elected by each of the three cantons should execute the decrees of the majority. It was only in cases of extraordinary emergency that the Emperor sent a viceroy to preside over the deliberations of the Diet, but even then he was bound to act in accordance with our laws. The Emperor's intention to deprive us of these rights became more and more apparent. During the first seven years he sent two of his privy councillors, the barons Ochsenstein and Lichtenberg. They called together a number of our men who had much influence with the people, and notified them it would be better for them and their successors if they persuaded their countrymen to submit to the imperial power in everything. 'Do not all the neighboring cities and provinces, as well as the jurisdiction of nearly all the monasteries, belong to the Emperor?' they said. 'He wishes to consider you as the dear children of his family. He has the best of intentions toward you. His only desire is to give you the complete protection of the royal house, not that he may be

master of your homes, or to extort money from you, but because his father told him that you are a brave and upright people. The Emperor loves such a people, and it will be his delight to lead you to victories and glory, and to distribute the spoils of war, dignities, and feudal rights among you.'

"That is the way these councillors talked, and I was there and heard them. We answered: 'We shall never forget what a good ruler the Emperor Rudolph was, but our liberty and the usages of our fathers are so dear to us that we cannot abandon the direct protection of the German Empire and submit to the domination of the princes and their families. He who is appointed by the Emperor from among the princes and will respect our rights shall always be our governor.'"

Thus spoke the aged baron. Many were astonished when they heard his words, for the people in general were not yet fully aware of the plans of their leaders. The baron resumed:

"You will recall that the markets of Lucerne and Zug were suddenly closed, shortly after the departure of the councillors. Our reply did not please them, and they closed them, hoping to force us to submit by injuring our trade. From that time to the time of the blood penalty nothing was said of a governor ruling in the name of the Empire; it was always in the name of Austria. These measures induced the people to select three messengers and send them to Strasburg, where the Emperor was residing at that time. Schwyz chose Conrad Hum, Unterwalden chose Winkelried, and I was chosen by Uri. We waited upon the Emperor, and begged him to protect us in the enjoyment of our ancient rights and privileges. We were dismissed in disgrace, however, the Emperor saying afterwards that he would have granted our requests if the men of our country, in whom he had trusted, had respected his orders.

"There was general consternation when we brought back this reply. You know that a few years after this our stubborn refusal to surrender our freedom and absolutely

submit to the Emperor led to the sending of the two governors, Landenberg and Gessler, here. They live among us now in violation of our rights, not in the name of the German Empire, but in the name of Austria. Vainly we have asserted our ancient right that a governor from abroad can only be sent here in case of emergency, and even then that he must rule according to our laws. These men, Gessler and Landenberg, who have been placed in authority over us, do not rule in accordance with our laws, but in accordance with their own cruel caprices. We are treated not as freemen, but as a band of robbers. He who has escaped harsh treatment thus far is fortunate. My head is bowed and my days are few. I could endure the wretched conditions under which our country suffers, for I have but little time to stay, but you are mostly in the prime of manly vigor. Will you endure this tyranny longer? Or, will you devote your lives to the maintenance of the freedom of the fatherland, the noblest and most sacred of all earthly achievements?"

Thus spoke the venerable Baron von Attinghausen, and his words met with an enthusiastic response. Furst, Stauffacher, and Melchthal, the three who were the first to associate themselves together, bared their heads, raised their hands to heaven, and swore to devote their lives to the holy cause of their country. The others took a similar oath. They agreed that no one should act upon his own judgment alone; that no one should forsake the others, but that they would live and die in true friendship; that they would hand down the freedom they had inherited from their fathers unimpaired to their descendants; that they would respect the rights and possessions of the Count of Hapsburg and of all foreign lords; and that they would do nothing wilfully to injure the governors. But they would resist to the end any attempt to assert or destroy their liberty.

Thus originated the Swiss Confederacy.

They next conferred together as to the time when they should begin their great work. Those for Schwyz and Uri

avored fixing a definite time for the uprising, but those from Unterwalden were opposed to overhasty action. Finally New Year's Day of 1308 was fixed as the time for attacking the castles of Sarnen, Roszburg, and Kussnacht. They arranged to have frequent consultations as to the details of the assault. Then, for the morning was already dawning, the assemblage dispersed, each one going his own way, with the heartfelt trust that God would bless their righteous purpose.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SHOT AT THE APPLE

Tell was not at the conference on the Rutli meadow. When they invited him he said: "I know the necessities of the fatherland. When there is something to be done, call upon me. I shall not fail you."

Some weeks after this Tell and his son William went one day to the market-place at Altdorf, where there was a scene of unusual activity. Gessler had also arrived, to see how the work on his castle was progressing. As soon as he heard that Tell was there, he determined to carry out his long-cherished scheme of the cap. The people in the market-place were astonished at sight of an advancing troop of soldiers, the first of whom carried a pole upon which was a cap with the royal insignia. They halted in the centre of the place, and a soldier, heavily armed, read in a harsh tone of voice an order, stating in effect that the Governor had noticed more and more that there still were men among them full of defiance and stubbornness; that the pole was to be set up, and that the Governor commanded that the same honor should be paid to the cap as was paid to the Emperor,—that is, every one must uncover his head and bow before it; and it would go hard with any one who refused.

The people were astonished at this despotic order. They had endured much since the conference on the Rutli, and endured it patiently because they knew the day was approaching when the banner of freedom would be unfurled and lead them to victory, of which they had confident hopes. Such an order as this was a severe strain upon their patience. They looked on indignantly as the soldiers filed through the market-place. The air was filled with muttered execrations, eyes flashed with anger, and many a fist was clenched.

Tell had intended to remain in Altdorf until evening, but now he decided to finish up his necessary business and leave as soon as possible, so that he should not see the uplifted emblem of ignominy. Having transacted his business, he took his son's hand, and they walked along a street leading toward Burglen, which turned to the right. As they reached the turn, he suddenly saw the pole and cap with two guards near them. For an instant he paused. He had supposed they would set the pole up in the market-place, but here it was right before him! What should he do? Should he turn back, or should he steal through the gardens on either hand? Whatever course he might pursue would be of little use, for he was so near the cap that he could not go back or turn aside without giving offence. The guards watched him with contemptuous smiles. At last William said: "Look, father; there are soldiers behind us, and Gessler is coming from the market-place." Tell quietly walked along, and passed the cap as if he did not see it. At this the guards sprang forward, presented halberds, and ordered him to halt, for he had incurred a penalty by not showing respect to the emblem of royal supremacy, as had been commanded.

"What is the penalty?" asked Tell.

"The Governor will inform you," replied one of the guards. "There he comes."

A number of armed attendants followed the Governor, also many men and women of the place, eager to see what would come of the matter. Gessler rode slowly up, his pale face betraying an expression of malicious delight. Tell watched him unmoved.

"Why are you detaining Tell?" he asked the guards.

One of them answered: "Herr Governor, this man passed the royal emblem without uncovering his head."

Gessler knew that Tell had listened to the reading of the order in the market-place, for he had been told so, but he cunningly suggested: "He may not have heard the order. Am I right, Tell?"

"I heard it, Herr Governor," replied Tell.

"So you also are stubborn, Tell," replied Gessler. "You are aware that you owe respect to the emblem of royal sovereignty, and also to me as the representative of that sovereignty. Therefore you need not think it strange if I impose a severe penalty upon you."

"Tell me how much fine I must pay," said Tell.

"Who told you that you would be let off for money?" replied Gessler. "Am I not master here, and have I not sole authority to fix penalties?"

Pointing to Tell's crossbow, he asked, "Why do you carry weapons? The game in this country belongs to the Emperor, and when the land is threatened by hostile forces, it can be protected by the Emperor's soldiers."

Tell answered that he carried weapons because it was one of the ancient privileges of his countrymen. Hunting in the woods and among the mountains was also an ancient right, of which no one, whoever he might be, had yet dared to despoil the Swiss. This bold language from a freeman infuriated the Governor. "No one?" said he. "We will see about that. If you peasants will carry weapons, you must be prepared for the consequences."

Many were alarmed by these words and the significant manner in which they were spoken. Gessler was silent for a time, but he showed by his manner that he was devising a cruel penalty. Suddenly he asked, "Is that your son?"

"Yes, my lord."

Gessler continued: "You are famous as the best shot in the mountains. So your penalty shall be to shoot an apple from your son's head." Turning to a soldier, he said: "Pick an apple from the branch of that tree and then lead the boy to yonder lime-tree. Tell shall shoot from where he is standing, and I warn you, keep this in mind: if you do not hit the apple, you shall die."

Had the earth suddenly opened under them and a dragon appeared, the crowd would not have been more terrified than they were by these words. Even the faces of the soldiers around Tell grew pale. Tell stood motionless for a minute, and then looked at his son, who was regarding him appealingly, as if he were not sure he had heard aright.

"How long do you propose to wait?" said Gessler. "It did not take you long to decide when you met the fugitive Baumgarten."

The soldier returned with an apple, which he had knocked off with his halberd. "My lord," said Tell, you cannot be in earnest in demanding such a monstrous thing of a father! Take half, take all my property, as a penalty, but save me from aiming an arrow at the head of my own child."

Several women standing near by raised their hands, and begged him to show mercy to Tell; the men stood pale and motionless. A priest in his robes, who chanced to be passing that way, attended by two boys, advanced and said: "Oh, my lord, have pity upon this poor man. If he deserves punishment, he has already been punished a hundredfold by your words. My lord, do not cruelly sport with a father's feelings any longer."

"Who says I am making sport?" answered Gessler, laying his hand upon his sword hilt. "My order shall be executed without delay. Drive the people to one side with your halberds, and lead the boy to the lime-tree."

The soldier who was holding the apple took the boy by the hand, but Tell sprang forward and tore him away, whereupon Gessler said: "If you will not bow your neck I will crush your head. Now hear my last words, Tell. If you do not shoot, both you and your son shall die."

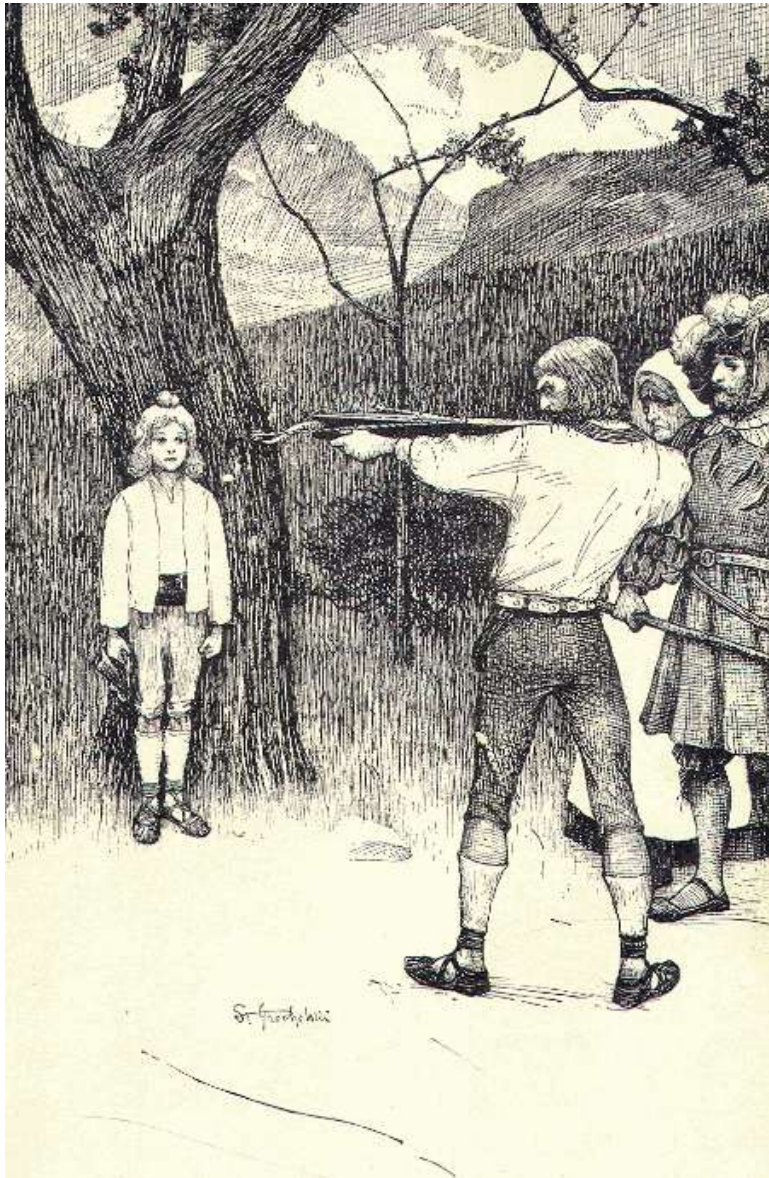
Tell closely embraced his son, who looked up with innocent eyes and said to his father, as soon as he heard his life was in danger: "Shoot, father. I will stand still, and you will not miss the apple." With that he released himself from

his father's arms, took the apple from the soldier's hand, ran to the lime-tree, placed himself in position, and put the apple on his curly head himself. His father stood leaning on his crossbow, more agitated than he had ever been before. Women wept and wrung their hands. The men, apparently, were thinking of the possible results which might follow an attack upon the soldiers. Tell suddenly recovered his composure, and selected two arrows from his quiver. He placed one in the groove of the bow and the other in his belt. "Shoot, father," cried William, in a loud, firm voice; "I am not afraid. I am standing still." At this the women lamented still more, and many covered their faces, that they might not witness the cruel sight. One even exclaimed, "Merciful Heavens! he has hit the boy!"

Tell raised his eyes for a moment toward heaven, and then placed his bow in position. Almost in an instant the string twanged, the arrow flew and pierced the apple, which dropped to the ground. A joyful exclamation arose when the boy picked up the apple and the arrow. Tell stood pale and silent as his son joyfully ran to him. He embraced the boy, uttered a piteous exclamation, and then fell fainting. William knelt over him, crying out: "My father, my father! My father dead." Men and women, with tears in their eyes, came forward and consoled him. "He has only fainted" said a man to him. "Your father is not dead."

At last Tell opened his eyes, saw his weeping son, and the apple and arrow in his hands. He arose, folded his hands, and looked upward, then he said: "Take the apple to the Governor, that he may be satisfied the task he assigned me has been accomplished." William went to Gessler and gave him the apple. The Governor took it with an angry expression on his face. He would have liked to destroy Tell on the spot, but he realized that that would glorify his achievement still more. "He must not get away unpunished," he thought to himself, "but how can it be done? there must at least be some appearance of justification."





TELL RAISED HIS EYES FOR A MOMENT TOWARD HEAVEN, AND THEN PLACED HIS BOW IN POSITION.

Tell took his son by the hand, and they started away. Then a pretext occurred to Gessler for inflicting a fresh

penalty. He called, and Tell turned round. "Tell, why did you take two arrows from your quiver and hide one in your belt?"

Tell could no longer control himself. Fixing a piercing glance upon the "Governor, he answered:

"The second arrow was for you if I had hit my son with the first."

His reply delighted the Governor. "Now, Tell," he said, "for doing that I will hide you where I shall be safe in the future from your arrows. Arrest him, and bind him."

Tell's first inclination was to seize the halberd of the soldier nearest him, and defend himself at the peril of his life. Then he thought of the day when the uprising would occur, and let them bind him without making any resistance. William clung to him, crying, but a soldier tore him away, and pushed him to one side. A countryman took him by the hand and tried to comfort him.

## CHAPTER XII

### DEATH OF THE TYRANT

There was a law at that time which forbade the imprisonment of any Switzer outside the section of country to which he belonged, but Gessler paid no attention to it. He decided to go to Kussnacht by boat, and take Tell with him. Half an hour later the tyrant and his prisoner were on the lake. They had not sailed far before the "Fan" arose. The waves rolled high, and the boat was tossed about like a nutshell. Those who were sailing it lost courage, for they never before had experienced such a blow as this on the lake. Each instant the waves threatened to sink them. What a difference there was in the demeanor of the two men!

Many a thought disturbed Gessler, which under ordinary circumstances he easily would have dismissed. Tell, fettered and lying in the stern, regarded the storm with the utmost composure.

The wind meanwhile continually increased in fury. Gessler asked the helmsman if there was any possibility of escape. He shrugged his shoulders, and after a pause replied: "If any one can save us it is Tell."

When Gessler heard this he quickly unbound Tell, and bade him take charge of the boat. Without a word Tell went to the helm and skilfully handled the boat. After a little they approached the Axenberg, a much-dreaded shelving crag jutting into the lake, with jagged edges concealed below the surface. Tell steered the boat straight for the spot, and when near enough, seized his bow, which was lying near him, jumped out on the rocks, and thrust the boat back into the lake with all his strength. He made his escape into the canton of Schwyz, and concealed himself in a defile near Kussnacht. Gessler escaped the storm, but as he was riding through this defile Tell's arrow pierced him, and he fell dead from his

horse. Thus were the people released by the hand of a hero from the most cruel of their tyrants.



TELL SEIZED HIS BOW AND JUMPED OUT ON THE ROCKS.

"Hermann Gessler [says Johann von Muller] met his fate before the time appointed for the deliverance of the country, not at the hands of an outraged people, but because of the righteous anger of a freeman. No one will disapprove of



the deed who considers how unendurable Gessler's contempt for the usages of the people and his invasions of their liberty had become to the feelings of these brave men, especially at a time when courageous men always acted upon the spur of the moment, and when the laws were powerless to protect them even in the ordinary affairs of life. Tell's act, to be sure, was a violation of established laws. It was like those deeds related in the old historic and sacred books, which made many of the liberators of Athens and Rome and many of the Hebrew heroes famous, and like those deeds performed in more modern times when the ancient rights of a peaceful people were endangered by absolute and overwhelming force, and men ordained by Providence rose up and removed these scourges of mankind. Lawful rulers are sacred; but that a tyrant should be left free to carry out his infamous schemes is neither needful nor proper. The act of William Tell gave all his countrymen more courage, for they had begun to fear that Landenberg and the other castle governors were vigilantly watching them and increasing their own power. Those who had taken the oath on the Rutli meadow were still silent, but the year 1307 was drawing to its close."

Schiller says:

"Yes, there 's a limit to the despot's power!  
When the oppressed looks round in vain for justice,  
When his sore burden may no more be borne,  
With fearless heart he makes appeal to Heaven  
And thence brings down his everlasting rights,  
Which then abide inalienably his  
And indestructible as are the stars."

Schiller's *William Tell*,  
Dr. Hempel's version.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FREEDOM'S NEW YEAR

Everything needful had been decided and provided by the men who took the oath to liberate their country from the hands of its oppressors. On New Year's night of 1308 a young man with twenty of his trustiest comrades went to the castle of Rossburg. They found a girl there who was in sympathy with their undertaking. At their signal she let down a rope from the wall, by which the young man ascended, followed by his comrades. When all were together they seized the warder and his family, surprised the sleeping guards, and confined them securely, so that the affair should be kept quiet until the fate of Sarnen was decided. Then they sent a messenger by a secret route to Stanz, carrying the news of their success to the Confederates.

Morning broke. Landenberg, the Governor, left the castle of Sarnen to attend matins at a church near by. On the way, twenty men from Oberwalden met him, bringing calves, goats, lambs, cheeses, and other gifts, which they begged him to accept as New Year's presents. Landenberg was greatly pleased with such fine gifts, and invited them to go to the castle and await his return. They were scarcely in the castle yard before one of them gave a signal on his horn to thirty companions, who were hidden in the bushes near by. At the same time those in the castle drew their spear tips, which had been concealed in their garments, and fastened them to their sticks. The little garrison attempted to defend itself, but was quickly overpowered, and the gates were opened to the comrades outside. A messenger was also despatched with news of this victory.

Landenberg trembled when he heard the news at church that he had lost his castle, and hastily fled with his retinue, intending to cross the mountains; but as he was

prevented by a heavy snowfall, he went across the fields from Sarnen to Alznacht and thence by boat to Lucerne, As they had let the Governor escape unharmed, they allowed the castle guards to go honorably and without violence. They were permitted also to take their personal effects, but they were obliged to swear they would never return to the country. There were great rejoicings over the capture of these two castles. High soared the flames in air as a signal to light the fires of freedom on the mountains.

There was great activity at the same time also in Schwyz and Uri. Werner Stauffacher and William Tell led an armed force against Schwanan and Kussnacht, both of which castles were assailed and destroyed. The nearly finished castle of Zwing-Uri was demolished. The messengers of victory passed each other on the roads, and saw freedom's fires burning on many mountains.

It was a joyous New Year's festival, for the patriots had secured their freedom without shedding a drop of blood or injuring any one—an achievement which seems almost incredible when it is remembered how intensely the people had suffered and how long they had been deprived of their rights.

Eight days later deputies from the three cantons assembled at Brunnen, and with joyful hearts thanked God in church for the victory which He had granted them, and renewed the League which they had organized on the Rutli meadow. The nobility also joined with the people, for it seemed to them nobler to share their honors with the people than to accept empty honors from a foreign court.

The commemoration of the rescue of the fatherland has been observed from generation to generation, and the exploits of Tell, who lived until 1355, have been celebrated in addresses and poems, and many times have been depicted upon canvas. Schiller, one of the noblest poets of all times and peoples, has glorified him in his last great art-creation—the drama of "William Tell."

Even to this day the heart of every Switzer beats more exultantly when he shows a stranger the places which have been immortalized by the deeds of Tell and his heroic associates.