

Stories of William Tell

CLASSIC LIT FOR YOUNG READERS

TOLD BY H.E. MARSHALL

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William Tell

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Stories of William Tell
Classic Literature for Young Readers

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Stories of William Tell and His Friend

Told to the Children by
HENRIETTA E. MARSHALL

With Pictures by
I.L. GLOAG

About This Book

The stories in this book are stories of brave men and women who lived many hundreds of years ago. They lived in a country which is far from ours and spoke a language very different from ours. But they struggled with tyrants as we and all people who love their freedom and their country have had to do, and we can read their story and be glad and sorry with them, just as if they were our own people and spoke our own language. For whether the story is of Arthur against the Saxons, of Alfred against the Danes, of Wallace and Bruce against the English, or of Tell and his friends against the Austrians, it is all the same, we love the men who fought for their freedom and

their Fatherland. And it is very interesting to know that at the time when Bruce and Wallace were fighting for Scottish freedom, Tell and his friends were fighting for Swiss freedom, and that the battle of Morgarten, the great battle of Swiss independence, which you will read about in this book, happened little more than one year after the battle of Bannockburn, which was the great battle of Scottish independence. It seems wonderful that these two mountain peoples should at the same time have been fighting for freedom against two powerful and strong nations, and not only fighting for it, but winning it.

Yet some people say that William Tell never lived. Let them visit the Rütli, Tell's Platte, the Hollow Way, and let them ask themselves whether Tell lives in the hearts of his countrymen or not. At any rate I hope that these brave Swiss

people will always have a place in your hearts, and I hope that you will remember that the women were brave like the men, and that they, too, helped to save their country.

H. E. MARSHALL.

How Gessler and Landenberg Came to Rule in Switzerland

Far away in the heart of Europe there lies a little country called Switzerland. Instead of being surrounded by the blue sea as our island is, it is surrounded and shut in on all sides by other lands. It seems wonderful that in the fierce old days, when might was right, and when great and powerful Kings and Princes swept over the world, fighting and conquering, that little Switzerland should not have been conquered and swallowed up by one or other of the great countries which lay around. But the Swiss have always been a brave and fearless people; in the very heart of Europe their country has lain for hundreds of years as safe and

free as our island on the ocean waves.

Many, many years ago, however, one of the great Princes of Europe did try to conquer Switzerland and take away the freedom of its people. But the people fought so bravely, that instead of being conquered, they conquered the tyrants and drove them away.

In those far-off times the countries of Europe were divided quite differently from now. The greatest ruler in Europe was the Emperor, and his empire was called the Holy Roman Empire. This Empire was divided into many states, over each of which ruled a Prince or King who owned the Emperor as 'over-lord.' When an Emperor died, his son did not succeed to the throne, but the Kings and Princes met together and chose another Emperor from among their number.

Switzerland was one of the countries which owned the Emperor as over-lord.

But the Swiss were a free people. They had no King or Prince over them, but a Governor only, who was appointed by the Emperor.

Austria was another of the states of the great empire, and at one time a Duke of Austria was made ruler of Switzerland. Switzerland is a beautiful country, full of mountains, lakes, and valleys, and this Duke cast greedy eyes upon it, and longed to possess it for his very own.

But the Swiss would not give up their freedom; and three cantons, as the states into which Switzerland is divided are called, joined together, and swore to stand by each other, and never to submit to Austria.

Uri, Schwytz, and Unterwalden were the names of these three cantons. They were called the Forest Cantons because of the beautiful woods with which the mountainsides were covered. A little

later another canton joined the three. These four cantons lie round a lake which, from that, is called the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons.

At last it happened that Albrecht, Duke of Austria, was chosen to be Emperor. He was the son of that Duke who had already been ruler of Switzerland, and he was greatly rejoiced, for he said to himself that now truly he would be lord and master of Switzerland. For although the Swiss had resisted the Duke of Austria, they would not dare to resist the Emperor, he thought. So he sent two nobles to the Swiss to talk to them, and persuade them to own him as their King.

'Promise that your country shall belong to the Duke for ever,' said these nobles, 'and he will care for you and love you as his children. You are not strong enough to stand against a great enemy, but he will protect you. He does not ask

this of you because he wants to take your flocks and herds, but because he has heard from his father and has read in old histories what a brave people you are. Duke Albrecht loves brave men. He will lead you to battle and victory, and make you rich with spoil, and will give you great rewards, and when you do brave deeds, he will make you knights.'

Some of the people of Switzerland were persuaded to belong to Austria, but the freemen and nobles, and all the people of the three cantons replied, 'Say to your master, as Duke, that we will never forget what a brave leader and good Governor his father was, and we will love and respect his house for ever, but we wish to remain free. Say to him, as Emperor, that we will be true to the Empire as we have ever been. As Emperor he must content himself with that.'

So the messengers went back to

Albrecht and told him what the people said. When he heard the message he was very angry. He looked darkly at the nobles, biting his fingers and grinding his heel into the ground as he listened. 'The proud peasants,' he cried at last, 'they will not yield. Then I will bend and break them. They will be soft and yielding enough when I have done with them.'

But Albrecht was already quarrelling with the Princes of his Empire, who, although they had chosen him to be Emperor, now hated and despised him. So for some time Albrecht had little thought to spare for Switzerland, but he did not forgive the people, and from time to time he still tried to make them own him as their King.

Months went past and the Emperor appointed no ruler over Switzerland. At last the people, feeling that they must have a Governor, sent messengers to the

Emperor, begging him to appoint a ruler, as all the Emperors before him had done.

'You desire a Governor,' growled Albrecht, as the messengers stood respectfully before him. 'A Governor you shall have. Go home and await his coming. Whom I send to you, him you must obey in all things.'

'We have ever been a law-abiding people, your Majesty,' said the messengers.

'Think you so?' said Albrecht sternly, 'see to it that you are, or you shall pay for it with your lives and your goods, and your freedom will I utterly destroy.'

Then, very sad at heart, the messengers turned home again.

When they had gone, Albrecht smiled grimly to himself. 'They will not yield,' he said, 'but I will oppress them and ill-treat them until I force them to rebel. Then I will fight against them and



'You desire a governor,'
growled Albrecht.

conquer them, and at last Switzerland will be mine.'

A few days later Albrecht sent for two of his friends. These friends were called Hermann Gessler and Beringer of Landenberg.

Now the Emperor Albrecht knew that these men were grim, rough, and pitiless, and therefore he chose them as rulers of Switzerland. He chose them, too, because they were Austrians, and he knew they would be hated by the Swiss.

'My lords,' he said when they came, 'I have long watched you and have marked the zeal and love which you have for my throne and person. I am resolved to reward you. You, Hermann Gessler, I make ruler over the Forest Cantons of Uriand Schwytz, and you, Beringer of Landenberg, I make ruler over Unterwalden.'

'I have no words wherewith to thank

your Majesty,' said Gessler, bowing low.

'Your Majesty honours me too much,' said Landenberg, bowing still lower.

'They are a wild and rebellious people to whom I send you,' went on the Emperor, 'they are so fierce and unruly that you must take soldiers with you to help you to enforce the laws. You will tax the people in order to pay for these soldiers. You will punish all wrongdoers severely. I will endure no rebels within my empire.'

'We understand, your Majesty,' said Gessler.

'Your Majesty shall be obeyed,' said Landenberg. And once more bowing low, they took leave of the Emperor and, gathering together their men and horses, set out for Switzerland.

Hard and bitter days began when Gessler and Landenberg settled there. They delighted in oppressing the people.

They loaded them with taxes; nothing could be either bought or sold, but the Governors claimed a great part of the money; the slightest fault was punished with long imprisonment and heavy fines. The people became sad and downcast, but still they would not yield to Austria.

'God gave us the Emperor to stand between us and our enemies,' they said. 'Now the Emperor has become our greatest enemy. But if we keep true to the Empire, this Emperor may die, and another, who will be kinder to us, may be chosen. If we yield to Austria, our freedom is lost for ever. Let us pray God for patience. The Emperor may soon die. Then, with a new Emperor, Austria will have no power over us.'

The Story of Arnold of Melchthal

In Unterwalden there lived a good old man, called Henri of Melchthal. He was known and loved by all around, and he lived happily with his son in their little farmhouse. Henri of Melchthal was rich. Flocks of sheep and goats fed upon the hillside above the farm; herds of cattle browsed upon the meadowland which sloped from the door of the house; in the farm-yard, among the stacks of corn, were cocks and hens and geese and ducks.

Henri was old and grave and his son Arnold was young and gay, but they loved each other dearly and were always together. All day long Arnold worked

hard on the farm, feeding the cattle, ploughing and reaping. In the evening, when work was over, the two would sit together by the fire, while Henri told stories of bygone days, or Arnold played wild mountain tunes upon his bagpipes.

When Landenberg came to rule over Unterwalden, he noticed the neat farmhouse, and he envied the flocks and herds. He soon found out that Henri was a rich man, and he made up his mind to take his riches from him. But Henri was so quiet and orderly that even Landenberg found it difficult to find any cause for which he might be punished.

Arnold, however, was young and careless. He hated the Austrian ruler, and he took no pains to hide his hatred. At last one day Landenberg, hearing of some boyish nickname which Arnold had used in speaking of him, resolved to punish him.

Landenberg knew that Henri of Melchthal possessed the best yoke of oxen in all the countryside. He had long envied them, and now he meant to have them. So, calling his servant Rudolph, he ordered him to go to Henri of Melchthal's house and bring away the oxen.

Rudolph, taking some soldiers with him, set out for the farm. When he arrived there he found Arnold in the field ploughing. In Switzerland, at this time, oxen were used to draw the ploughs instead of horses. Rudolph saw that Arnold was using the very oxen which he had been sent to take, so he and the soldiers rode across the field to where Arnold was.

Arnold checked his oxen and looked up in astonishment as they came. What could they want? he asked himself. It made him angry to see the fresh-turned furrows being trampled by horses' hoofs.

'The Austrian peacocks,' he growled to himself, 'could they not keep to the road?'

'Men,' said Rudolph, when he was quite near to Arnold, 'unyoke these oxen.'

Arnold sprang forward. 'Do not dare,' he said, 'do not dare to lay a finger upon them. They are mine.'

'Yours!' said Rudolph, 'yours! Nay, they belong to my lord of Landenberg. You will perhaps think twice in the future ere you call my lord an "Austrian peacock."'

'Master Rudolph,' said Arnold, trying to keep down his anger and to speak calmly, 'I may have been foolish, but I meant no ill, and surely a yoke of oxen is too great a fine to pay for a few idle words.'

'Who made you a judge?' asked Rudolph. 'How shall an ignorant peasant

say what punishments are just?'

'Nay,' said Arnold, 'I do not make myself a judge. I do but ask justice. If I have done wrong let me be taken before the court, and I will cheerfully pay what fine is lawful—but to take my oxen—ah, good Master Rudolph, how can I plough if you take my oxen?'

'I care not how you plough,' said Rudolph. 'I have been sent to take your oxen and take them I shall. If peasants will plough, let them yoke themselves to the shafts. It is all they are fit for. Come, men,' he added, laying his hand upon the wooden collar to which the oxen were yoked, 'unbind the beasts.'

Then Arnold's rage burst out. 'Hands off!' he cried, and with the stick which he carried he aimed a blow at Rudolph's hand, as it lay upon the wooden collar.

Rudolph uttered a howl of pain and anger. Two of his fingers were broken.

'At him, men, and seize him,' he cried. 'He shall smart for this.'

The men sprang forward, but Arnold was too quick for them. He turned and fled away over the field, for he had no weapon except his stick.

Arnold was one of the fastest runners in the country, and the soldiers were weighted with their heavy armour. They could not run fast, and they stumbled and fell in the newly-ploughed field. So Arnold got safely away to the shelter of the pine forest on the mountain beyond.

'Fools and idiots,' yelled Rudolph, as the soldiers returned. 'Why could you not catch him? Fools, unyoke the oxen and let us be going.'

The men did as they were told, and the gentle, patient beasts, which had stood quietly all the time, now lowed piteously, as if they knew that they were leaving their kind master for ever.

That night it was known far and wide that Arnold of Melchthal had struck the Governor's servant and that he had fled away. And Henri sat alone by his fireside, sadly wondering what would happen, and if he would ever again see his dear son.

Rudolph went straight to the Governor and told him all that had happened. Landenberg was furiously angry, and he sent soldiers through all the country to search for Arnold. But no trace of him could be found, for Arnold was already far away, and was safely hidden by his friends.

'Bring the father here to me,' said Landenberg at last. 'He must know where his son is hiding.'

So the soldiers went to the pretty farmhouse, where Henri now lived all by himself, and, seizing him, brought him before the Governor.

'What is your name?' asked Landenberg.

'I am called Henri of Melchthal.'

'Ah! then tell me, where is your rebellious son?'

'I know not, my lord.'

'Do not tell me that,' said Landenberg fiercely. 'I do not believe you. You must know. You are in league together. Tell me at once.'

'I know not, my lord,' said Henri again. 'My son has not come near the house since the day on which he fled.'

'Ah,' said Landenberg again, 'I do not believe you. But I will soon make you tell. Ho! headsman, without there.'

The headsman entered.

'Take him away,' said Landenberg, pointing to Henri, 'and if he will not speak, put out his eyes.'

'My lord, my lord, I know not, I know not!' cried Henri in agony. But the

heads-man led him away and put out his eyes.

'Now,' said Landenberg to Rudolph, with a cruel laugh, 'he has paid with his two eyes for your two fingers.'

'That makes me no richer,' grumbled Rudolph.

'True,' said Landenberg, 'but there is much money in his house, and he has herds and flocks enough. You shall have a share of them, for you serve me well.'

So Landenberg took Henri of Melchthal's house and lands and cattle, and all that he had. And the old man, who only a few days before had been rich and happy, was left to wander away alone, a poor, blind beggar.

But kind people had pity on Henri of Melchthal. They remembered how good and generous he had been when he was rich and happy, so, now that he was poor and in trouble, they took him to their

homes and tried to comfort him and make him forget all that he had lost.

The Story of Gessler and Stauffacher

Meanwhile, in Schwytz and Uri, Hermann Gessler was making himself as much hated as was Berenger of Landenberg in Unterwalden.

Gessler lived in a great castle at Küssnacht in Schwytz. It was a strong and gloomy castle, and in it were dreadful dungeons where he imprisoned the people and tortured them according to his own wicked will. But he was not pleased to have only one castle, and he made up his mind to build another in Uri. So he began to build one near the little town of Altorf, which lay at the other end of the Lake of the Four Forest Cantons.

Gessler forced the men of Uri to build this castle, and he meant to use it not only as a house for himself, but as a prison for the people.

The men of Uri worked unwillingly. Their hearts sank within them as they hewed the stones and laid them one on another, for they knew that they were building a prison for themselves.

As the walls rose and the dark and gloomy prison cells took shape, the men grew more and more sullen. 'Who would be the first,' they asked themselves, 'to lie in these dark dungeons?'

Gessler often came to watch the building and to jeer and laugh at the unwilling workers. 'You do not want to build my castle,' he said. 'O you fierce lions! O you stiff-necked peasants! Wait a little, and I will make you tame and soft enough to wind around my finger.'

'What will you call your castle?'

asked a friend one day, as they stood to watch the building.

'I will call it the Curb of Uri,' said Gessler, with a cruel laugh, 'for with it I will curb the proud spirit of these peasants'; and the hearts of the men who heard him sank still further. Were they thus to be bridled and beaten like beasts of burden?

After watching the work for some time, Gessler and his friend rode away. They were gaily clad, they looked splendid and grand, but as they rode along they were followed by the silent curses of the men of Uri.

'My friend,' said Gessler, as he rode, 'we will go back to Küssnacht by another way. I have heard that an insolent peasant called Werner Stauffacher has built himself a new house. I wish to see it. There is no end to the impudence of these peasants.'

'But what will you do?' asked his friend.

'Do,' said Gessler, 'why, turn him out, to be sure. What need have these peasants of great houses?'

So they rode on, Gessler talking of the great things he would do, and of how he would grind these 'peasant nobles,' as he called them, to the earth.

At last they came to a bridge which crossed the little river by which they rode, and there, on the hillside opposite, stood the house which they had come to see.

It was far more beautiful than Gessler had expected, and he stood still gazing at it in wonder and anger.

The house was long and low, and built of wood. The roof was of red tiles, and the walls were painted white. The many windows glittered in the sunlight, and round their black frames, as was the

custom in those days, names and proverbs were painted in white letters.

'This house was built by Werner Stauffacher and Gertrude of Iberg, his wife, in the year of Grace 1307. Who labour well, rest well,' read Gessler. Pale with rage, he rode across the bridge and stopped before the house. It made him furious to think of the money which had been spent upon it.

Beside the door grew a tall lime-tree, and under it, on a wooden bench, sat Werner Stauffacher.

As Gessler rode up Stauffacher rose, and taking off his cap, greeted him politely. "Welcome, my lord,' he said.

Gessler took no notice of Stauffacher's greeting. 'Whose house is this?' he demanded, although he knew very well to whom it belonged. He wanted an excuse for robbing Stauffacher, and hoped to find it in his answer.

But Stauffacher, seeing how angry Gessler was, and being a wise man, answered quietly, 'My lord, the house belongs to His Majesty the Emperor, and is yours and mine in fief to hold and use for his service.'

'I rule this land,' said Gessler in a voice shaking with anger. 'I rule this land in the name of the Emperor, and I will not allow peasants to build houses as they please without asking leave. I will not permit them to live as lords and gentlemen. I will have you understand that.' And turning, he rode from the doorway, followed by his gay train of knights and soldiers.

Werner Stauffacher looked long after them as they clattered away. Then full of sad thoughts he sat down again on the wooden bench under the tall lime-tree.

As he sat there, leaning his head upon his hand, and looking with troubled

eyes across the valley to the snow-topped mountains beyond, Gertrude, his wife, came and sat beside him. For some time they sat in silence. Then laying her hand on his arm, 'Werner,' she said softly, 'what troubles you?'

'Dear wife, it is nothing,' he said, smiling at her.

'No, no,' replied Gertrude, 'do not treat me as if I were a child. Tell me what has happened. The Governor has been here I know, and that frightens me. What has he said or done to you?'

'He has done nothing yet,' said Werner, 'but he is very angry that we have built this house. He looked so fierce as he rode away that I am sure he means to take it from us. Yes, I am sure of it. He will take our house, and our goods and our money as well. Do you wonder that I am sad? Yet what can we do?'

As Werner spoke Gertrude grew

pale, then her cheeks flushed red and her eyes sparkled with anger. 'Oh,' she cried, 'it is shameful, shameful! How long are we to suffer the Austrian tyrants? Oh that I were a man!'

Gertrude rose and walked up and down in front of the house for a few minutes, thinking deeply. 'Werner,' she said at last, stopping before him, 'listen to me. Every day we hear cries of despair from our friends around us. Every day we hear some new tale of injustice and wrong. We know that the people of Schwytz are weary to death of the Governor's rule. Can you doubt that in Uri and Unterwalden the people are weary too? You know that they must be. Now listen to me. Go secretly to your friends, talk to them and discuss with them how best we can rid ourselves of Austria. Do you know any one in Uri and Unterwalden whom you could trust and who would

help you?'

'Yes,' said Werner, 'I know all the chief people. Many of them I could trust with my life. There is Walter Furst in Uri and Henri of Melchthal in Unterwalden. They, I am sure, would help us.'

'Then go to them,' said Gertrude throwing her head proudly back. 'Let us be free, free once more. What matter though we die, if we lose our lives fighting for freedom.'

'Gertrude,' said Werner rising, 'you have put heart into me. I will go this very night. God help me if I fail.'

'We will not fail,' said Gertrude, smiling at him bravely. And now her eyes, which had before sparkled with anger, were wet with tears.

How the Cap of Austria Was Set Up

Werner Stauffacher said good-bye to his wife Gertrude, and set out for the Canton of Uri. There he spent some days going from village to village, trying to find out how the peasants and common people felt. Everywhere that he went he heard bitter complaints and groans. Gessler was cruel to every one, high and low, and every one was full of hatred against him. One of the things which troubled the people most was the building of the castle near Altorf, which Gessler called the 'Curb of Uri.' The castle was still unfinished, but Gessler already used it as a prison.

Stauffacher was glad when he heard

how every one hated Gessler, and when he had found out what the common people thought, he resolved to visit his friend Walter Fürst. So he went to Altorf where Walter lived.

As Stauffacher crossed the market-place to go to Walter's house, he heard a great noise of shouting and trampling of feet. He stopped to see what it might mean.

Down the street a party of Austrian soldiers came marching. One of them carried a long pole, and another a red cap with a peacock's feather in it. Behind them followed a crowd of women and children, laughing and shouting.

The soldiers marched into the square, which was surrounded by houses and shaded by lime-trees. In the square they stopped and looked round.

'Where shall we put it?' said one.

'Here in the middle.'

'No, here at the cross-roads.'

'Yes, that is better, the folk must pass that way.'

The soldiers gathered round, and while some of them kept the people back, others dug a hole. Then the pole with the red cap on the top of it was firmly planted in the ground.

What could this mean, Stauffacher asked himself, as he stood looking on.

As soon as the pole was set up, a gaily-clad herald stepped out from the crowd and blew his trumpet.

'Silence!' he cried. 'All listen and attend, in the name of his most sacred Majesty the Emperor. See ye this cap here set up? It is His Majesty's will and commandment that ye do all bow the knee and bend the head as ye do pass it by. Ye shall do all reverence to it as to His Majesty the Emperor himself. Whoso disobeys shall be punished by imprison-

ment and death.'

Then, with another flourish of trumpets, the herald and the soldiers marched off, followed by a loud laugh of scorn from the crowd which had gathered.

'What new folly of the Governor's is this?' they cried.

'Who ever heard of such nonsense?'

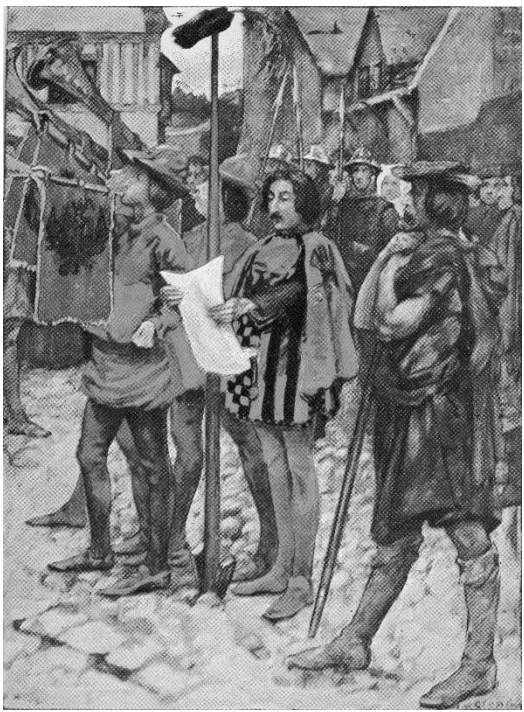
'Bow to a cap—an empty cap!'

'If it were even the Emperor's crown! But Gessler's cap!'

'Shame on him!'

'What freeborn man will so dishonour himself?'

This was a new insult to a free people. They had never refused homage to the Emperor, nor obedience to any of the great nobles who had been sent to rule over them. But to bare the head and bend the knee before a cap! It was not to be borne. But what could they do? Who was there to help them?



A gaily-clad herald stepped out
from the crowd.

So, with many murmurs and heavy hearts, the people went slowly away, and the market-place was left empty, except for the hat upon the pole and the soldier who watched beside it.

Full of thoughts both sad and angry Stauffacher went on to the house of Walter Fürst.

The Meeting of the Three Patriots

When Werner Stauffacher knocked at his friend's door, Walter Fürst came out to greet him. 'Ah, dear friend,' he said, 'it is good to see your face in these evil days. Many times have I longed to talk with you of late.'

'I, too, have longed to talk and ask advice,' said Stauffacher, as he went indoors.

Soon they were seated together, talking earnestly. Werner told how, day by day, he had been saddened by tales of cruelty and injustice, and how, at last, after Gessler's visit, his wife, Gertrude, had persuaded him that the time had come when something must be done.

And so he had set out from home and had gone among the people, trying to find out how they felt, and what they would be willing to do. 'Everywhere,' he said, 'I find hatred of the Governors, hatred of the Austrians. We should be doing right to set ourselves against the tyrants. The people are ready to follow us, they need but leaders. Let us bind ourselves secretly together, then when we are strong enough we will rise and drive the Austrians out of the land.'

'Mistress Gertrude is a wise woman,' said Walter, 'she is quite right. We cannot sit still and be crushed to death by tyrants. If we must die, it is better, as she says, to die fighting. I will do what I can among the people of Uri, and you, Werner, go among the people of Schwytz, and find out who will fight with us.'

'That will I,' replied Werner, 'and Henri of Melchthal, I am sure, will help

us in Unterwalden. He is a great man—'

'Alas, have you not heard?' said Walter.

'He is not dead?'

'He is not dead, but he is blind and poor. Landenberg, the Governor, has taken all his money and put out his eyes.'

'Walter, Walter,' cried Stauffacher, 'how can you sit still and calmly tell me this?'

'I sit still because I must,' said Walter, 'because there seems no help, because Austria is powerful and we are weak. But, oh! I do not sit calmly, Werner. My blood boils when I think of it. The good old man, the good old man!'

There was silence between them for a few minutes. Then Walter spoke again and told Werner all that had happened to Henri of Melchthal. 'Arnold,' he added, 'is hiding here. He often goes secretly to Unterwalden to see his father

and his friends, but he is now in the house.'

'Then he will join us,' cried Stauffacher. 'He is young, but for his father's sake he will join us, and he has many friends and relatives in Unterwalden. They will join us too. Call him in, Walter.'

So Arnold was called in, and when he heard what Werner and Walter had to say, he was very glad. 'You want to fight the tyrants,' he cried, 'oh, who would help you more gladly than I? I will do all in my power. I will work night and day. If only we can drive them from the land, I shall die happy.'

Then calling upon God and His Saints to help them, these three men, Walter Furst from Uri, Werner Stauffacher from Schwytz, and Arnold of Melchthal from Unterwalden, swore a solemn oath together. They swore to

protect each other; never to betray each other; to be true even to death. They swore, too, to be true to the Empire, for the fight they meant to fight was against Austria only, not against the Empire. They had no wish to rob the Emperor of his just right over them. Their one desire was to be free from Austrian tyranny.

The three agreed that each should go back to his own land, and there secretly speak to the people and persuade them to join in fighting for their old freedom.

'We must meet again,' said Stauffacher, 'but it will not be safe for us to meet in any house.'

'That is true,' said Walter Fürst, 'but I know of a little meadow called the Ruth. It lies just above the lake here. It is shut in by trees on every side. There we could safely meet by night.'

'I know it,' said Arnold, 'it is the very place.'

'I shall find it,' said Stauffacher.

'Cross the lake in your boat,' said Arnold, 'and we will meet you on the shore and show you the way.'

'Then let us fix a night on which to meet again,' said Stauffacher.

'This is Wednesday,' said Furst, 'in three weeks' time at midnight; will that do?'

'Yes,' replied Stauffacher, 'that is the Wednesday before Martinmas. That will do. In three weeks we have time to find out who will help us.'

'Farewell, then.'

'Farewell till then.'

'Farewell.' Stauffacher and Arnold went quietly out into the dark night, and Walter Fürst stood long at the door looking after them.

What would the end be? he asked himself.

What if they should fail?

The Gathering on the Rütli

Three weeks passed, and the Wednesday before Martinmas arrived. The short winter's day was over. The lights in the cottages went out. All seemed at rest.

It was then, in the starlight and the quiet, that Walter, Werner, and Arnold crept out from their darkened houses.

The air was clear and crisp, and the ground was covered with frost, although no snow had yet fallen, as through the dim forest by secret ways the three came silently stealing.

Each of them had worked well. But they had worked in fear, for Austrian spies were everywhere. It was hard to know at times who was friend and who was foe. Since the night they had talked

together in Walter Fürst's house, they had not dared to meet again, and each of the three wondered how the others had succeeded.

The moon shone brightly, as the dark figures stole silently through the forest. Arnold came from Unterwalden bringing with him ten men. He knew every path and byway in the forest or mountain-side, and hardly a word was spoken till they arrived at the place of meeting.

'We are the first,' said Arnold, as he stepped from the shadow of the trees into the moonlit space and found no one there. As he spoke a bell rang out clear and sharp across the lake. All listened. 'It is the great bell of Altorf ringing twelve,' said Arnold; 'how well one hears it in the frosty air. The others will not be long.'

As the men stood around waiting they talked in low voices, and presently the distant splash of oars was heard.

'That must be Werner Stauffacher,' said Arnold, looking across the moonlit water. 'I can see his boat. Wait here, I will meet him on the shore and bring him to you.'

Arnold disappeared in the bushes, and the men could hear him scrambling down the rocky pathway to the shore.

Then all was silence again until the boat was quite near. 'Who goes there?' called Arnold sharply.

'Friends of Freedom,' replied Stauffacher's voice.

'Welcome,' said Arnold as the boat touched the shore, 'you do not come alone, I see.'

'No,' replied Werner, 'I have brought ten trusty men with me. And you?'

'I too have brought ten men,' replied Arnold, as he turned to lead the way upward.

'And what of Walter Fürst?' said

Werner, as they reached the open space.

'He cannot now be long,' said Arnold. 'Ah, here he comes,' and as he spoke Walter Fürst came into the ring of moonlight. Several men followed him, and beside him walked a young man. He was straight and tall, his eyes were clear and honest. He looked strong and brave, yet gentle and kind.

'William Tell,' said Arnold, springing forward and seizing his hand. 'God be thanked you are with us.'

'So that is William Tell,' said one of the men from Schwytz. 'He is Walter Fürst's son-in-law, is he note I have often heard of him. They say he is the best shot in all Switzerland.'

'And so he is,' replied another. 'I have seen him shoot an apple from a tree a hundred paces off.'

Then in the moonlight the men gathered together, Walter, Werner, and

Arnold in the middle, the others around them.

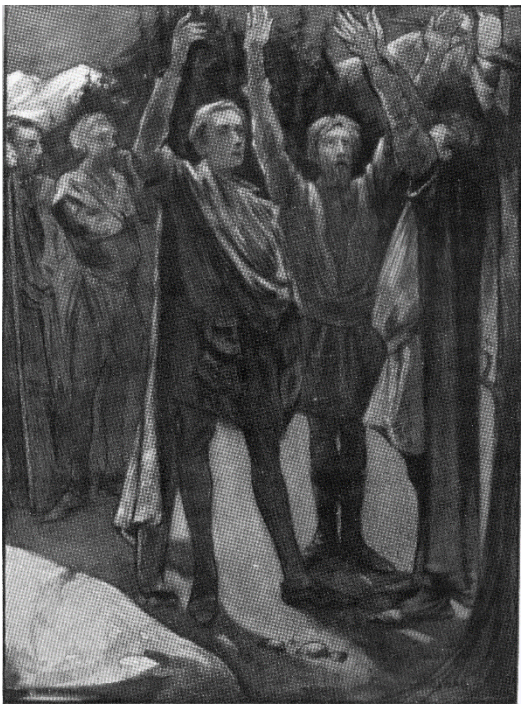
'You know well, good friends,' said Walter, 'why we are here. It is our own free country in which we meet, yet we have to creep together at midnight and in fear. Much cruelty and injustice we have patiently borne, but now we can bear no more, and we have sworn, we three, to free our land from the power of Austria. Are you willing to join us?'

'That we are,' cried every one.

'Then hear the oath which we swear,' said Walter. And while the others stood silently around them, the three raised their hands to heaven and solemnly spoke. 'We hereby promise never to betray or forsake each other; never to think of ourselves, but in everything to think only of our country; we promise not to try to take away from the Austrians any lands which by right belong to

them, but only to free our own land from them. We will keep true to the Emperor, but the Austrian Governor, his friends, his servants, and his soldiers, we will utterly drive out of the land. If it may be, we will do this without fighting or shedding of blood. But if that may not be, we are ready to die, so that we free our country and hand on to our sons the freedom which our fathers left us. God and His holy ones helping us, in this bond we will live and die. Amen.'

Grandly and solemnly the words rang out on the still night air. No other sound was heard; above was the deep blue sky glittering with stars; around, the dark and silent pine forest. These three-and-thirty men seemed alone in all the world. When the voices of the three ceased, a shout rose from the others. 'Amen, amen,' they cried, 'we too would take the oath.' And each of the thirty, raising his



The three raised their hands to heaven and solemnly spoke.

hand to heaven, repeated the solemn words.

Long they talked, for what they meant to do was difficult and dangerous, and needed much thought and careful planning. But at last everything was settled. The stars began to fade, the first light of dawn streaked the sky, and the snow-topped mountains were reddened by the rising sun before these three-and-thirty men parted. 'Look,' said Tell, pointing to the glowing hill-tops, 'it is the dawn of a new day.'

Then they parted, each man going back to his home resolved to be patient but a little longer, for on New Year's Day the Austrian tyranny was to end.

William Tell and His Great Shot

William Tell did not live in Altorf, but in another village some way off, called Bürglen. His wife, who was called Hedwig, was Walter Fürst's daughter. Tell and Hedwig had two sons, William and Walter. Walter, the younger, was about six years old.

William Tell loved his wife and his children very much, and they all lived happily together in a pretty little cottage at Bürglen.

'Hedwig,' said Tell one morning, some days after the meeting on the Rütli, 'I am going into Altorf to see your father.'

Hedwig looked troubled. 'Do be careful, William,' she said. 'Must you really go? You know the Governor is

there just now, and he hates you.'

'Oh, I am quite safe,' said Tell; 'I have done nothing for which he could punish me. But I will keep out of his way,' and he lifted his cross-bow and prepared to go.

'Do not take your bow,' said Hedwig, still feeling uneasy. 'Leave it here.'

'Why, Hedwig, how you trouble yourself for nothing,' said Tell, smiling at her. 'Why should I leave my bow behind? I feel lost without it.'

'O father, where are you going?' said Walter, running into the room at this minute.

'I am going to Altorf to see grandfather. Would you like to come?'

'Oh, may I? May I, mother?'

'Yes, dear, if you like,' said Hedwig. 'And you will be careful, won't you?' she added, turning to Tell.

'Yes, I will,' he replied, and Walter,

throwing his arms round her neck, said, 'It's all right, mother, I will take care of father.' Then they set off merrily together.

It was a great thing to go to Altorf with father, and Walter was so happy that he chattered all the way, asking questions about everything.

'How far can you shoot, father?'

'Oh, a good long way.'

'As high as the sun?' asked Walter, looking up at it.

'Oh dear no, not nearly so high as that.'

'Well, how high? As high as the snow mountains?'

'Oh no.'

'Why is it always snow on the mountains, father?' asked Walter, thinking of something else. And so he went on, asking questions about one thing after another, until his father was quite tired

of answering.

Walter was chattering so much that Tell forgot all about the hat upon the pole, and, instead of going round by another way to avoid it, as he had meant to do, he went straight through the market-place to reach Walter Fürst's house.

'Father, look,' said Walter, 'look, how funny! there is a hat stuck up on a pole. What is it for?'

'Don't look, Walter,' said Tell, 'the hat has nothing to do with us, don't look at it.' And taking Walter by the hand, he led him hurriedly away.

But it was too late. The soldier, who stood beside the pole to guard it and see that people bowed in passing, pointed his spear at Tell and bade him stop. 'Stand, in the Emperor's name,' he cried.

'Let be, friend,' said Tell, 'let me past.'

'Not till you obey the Emperor's command. Not till you bow to the hat.'

'It is no command of the Emperor,' said Tell. 'It is Gessler's folly and tyranny. Let me go.'

'Nay, but you must not speak of my lord the Governor in such terms. And past you shall not go until you bow to the cap. And, if you bow not, to prison I will lead you. Such is my lord's command.'

'Why should I bow to a cap?' said Tell, his voice shaking with rage. 'Were the Emperor himself here, then would I bend the knee and bow my head to him with all reverence. But to a hat! Never!' and he tried to force his way past Heinz the soldier. But Heinz would not let him pass, and kept his spear pointed at Tell.

Hearing loud and angry voices, many people gathered to see what the cause might be. Soon there was quite a crowd around the two. Every one talked at

once, and the noise and confusion were great. Heinz tried to take Tell prisoner, and the people tried to take him away. 'Help! help!' shouted Heinz, hoping that some of his fellow-soldiers would hear him and come to his aid—'Help, help! treason, treason!'

Then over all the noise of the shouting there sounded the tramp of horses' hoofs and the clang and jangle of swords and armour.

'Room for the Governor. Room, I say,' cried a herald.

The shouting ceased and the crowd silently parted, as Gessler, richly dressed, haughty and gloomy, rode through it, followed by a gay company of his friends and soldiers. He checked his horse and, gazing angrily round the crowd, 'What is this rioting?' he asked.

'My lord,' said Heinz, stepping forward, 'this scoundrel here will not bow to

the cap, according to your lordship's command.'

'Eh, what?' said Gessler, his dark face growing more dark and angry still. 'Who dares to disobey my orders?'

''Tis William Tell of Bürglen, my lord.'

'Tell,' said Gessler, turning in his saddle and looking at Tell as he stood among the people, holding little Walter by the hand.

There was silence for a few minutes while Gessler gazed at Tell in anger.

'I hear you are a great shot, Tell,' said Gessler at last, laughing scornfully, 'they say you never miss.'

'That is quite true,' said little Walter eagerly, for he was very proud of his father's shooting. 'He can hit an apple on a tree a hundred yards off.'

'Is that your boy?' said Gessler, looking at him with an ugly smile.

'Yes, my lord.'

'Have you other children?'

'Another boy, my lord.'

'You are very fond of your children, Tell?

'Yes, my lord.'

'Which of them do you love best?'

Tell hesitated. He looked down at little Walter with his rosy cheeks and curly hair.

Then he thought of William at home with his pretty loving ways. 'I love them both alike, my lord,' he said at last.

'Ah,' said Gessler, and thought a minute. 'Well, Tell,' he said after a pause. 'I have heard so much of this boast of yours about hitting apples, that I should like to see something of it. You shall shoot an apple off your boy's head at a hundred yards' distance. That will be easier than shooting off a tree.'

'My lord,' said Tell, turning pale, 'you

do not mean that? It is horrible. I will do anything rather than that.'

'You will shoot an apple off your boy's head,' repeated Gessler in a slow and scornful voice. 'I want to see your wonderful skill, and I command you to do it at once. You have your cross-bow there. Do it.'

'I will die first,' said Tell.

'Very well,' said Gessler, 'but you need not think in that way to save your boy. He shall die with you. Shoot, or die both of you. And, mark you, Tell, see that you aim well, for if you miss you will pay for it with your life.'

Tell turned pale. His voice trembled as he replied, 'My lord, it was but thoughtlessness. Forgive me this once, and I will always bow to the cap in future.' Proud and brave although he was, Tell could not bear the thought that he might kill his own child.

'Have done with this delay,' said Gessler, growing yet more angry. 'You break the laws, and when, instead of punishing you as you deserve, I give you a chance of escape, you grumble and think yourself hardly used. Were peasants ever more unruly and discontented? Have done, I say. Heinz, bring me an apple.'

The soldier hurried away.

'Bind the boy to that tree,' said Gessler, pointing to a tall lime-tree near by.

Two soldiers seized Walter and bound him fast to the tree. He was not in the least afraid, but stood up against the trunk straight and quiet. Then, when the apple was brought, Gessler rode up to him and, bending from the saddle, himself placed the apple upon his head.

All this time the people crowded round silent and wondering, and Tell

stood among them as if in a dream, watching everything with a look of horror in his eyes.

'Clear a path there,' shouted Gessler, and the soldiers charged among the people, scattering them right and left.

When a path had been cleared, two soldiers, starting from the tree to which Walter was bound, marched over the ground measuring one hundred paces, and halted. 'One hundred paces, my lord,' they said, turning to Gessler.

Gessler rode to the spot, calling out, 'Come, Tell, from here you shall shoot.'

Tell took his place. He drew an arrow from his quiver, examined it carefully, and then, instead of fitting it to his bow, he stuck it in his belt. Then, still carefully, he chose another arrow and fitted it to his bow.

A deep silence fell upon every one as Tell took one step forward. He raised his

bow. A mist was before his eyes, his arm trembled, his bow dropped from his hand. He could not shoot. The fear that he might kill his boy took away all his skill and courage.

A groan broke from the people as they watched. Then from far away under the lime-tree came Walter's voice, 'Shoot, father, I am not afraid. You cannot miss.'

Once more Tell raised his bow. The silence seemed deeper than ever. The people of Altorf knew and loved Tell, and Fürst, and little Walter. And so they watched and waited with heavy hearts and anxious faces.

'Ping!' went the bowstring. The arrow seemed to sing through the frosty air, and, a second later, the silence was broken by cheer after cheer. The apple lay upon the ground pierced right through the centre.

One man sprang forward and cut the rope with which Walter was bound to the tree; another picked up the apple and ran with it to Gessler. But Tell stood still, his bow clutched in his hand, his body bent forward, his eyes wild and staring, as if he were trying to follow the flight of the arrow. Yet he saw nothing, heard nothing.

'He has really done it!' exclaimed Gessler in astonishment, as he turned the apple round and round in his hand. 'Who would have thought it? Right in the centre, too.'

Little Walter, quite delighted, came running to his father. 'Father,' he cried, 'I knew you could do it. I knew you could, and I was not a bit afraid. Was it not splendid?' and he laughed and pressed his curly head against his father.

Then suddenly Tell seemed to wake out of his dream, and taking Walter in

his arms he held him close, kissing him again and again. 'You are safe, my boy. You are safe,' was all he said. But strong man though he was his eyes were full of tears, and he was saying to himself, 'I might have killed him. I might have killed my own boy.'

Meanwhile Gessler sat upon his horse watching them with a cruel smile upon his wicked face. 'Tell,' he said at last, 'that was a fine shot, but for what was the other arrow?'

Tell put Walter down and, holding his hand, turned to Gessler, 'It is always an archer's custom, my lord, to have a second arrow ready,' he said.

'Nay, nay,' said Gessler, 'that answer will not do, Tell. Speak the truth.'

Tell was silent.

'Speak, man,' said Gessler, 'and if you speak the truth, whatever it may be, I promise you your life.'

'Then,' said Tell, throwing his shoulders back and looking straight at Gessler, 'since you promise me my life, hear the truth. If that first arrow had struck my child, the second one was meant for you, and be sure I had not missed my mark a second time.'

Gessler's face grew dark with rage. For a moment or two he could not speak. When at last he did speak, his voice was low and terrible, 'You dare,' he said, 'you dare to tell me this. I promised you your life indeed. Your life you shall have, but you shall pass it in a dark and lonely prison, where neither sun nor moon shall send the least glimmer of light. There you shall lie, so that I may be safe from you. Ah, my fine archer, your bows and arrows will be of little use to you henceforth. Seize him, men, and bind him, lest he do murder even now.'

In a moment the soldiers sprang for-

ward, and Tell was seized and bound.

As Gessler sat watching them, he looked round at all the angry faces of the crowd. 'Tell has too many friends here,' he said to himself. 'If I imprison him in the Curb of Uri, they may find some way to help him to escape. I will take him with me in my boat to Küssnacht. There he can have no friends. There he will be quite safe.' Then aloud he said, 'Follow me, my men. Bring him to the boat.'

As he said these words, there was a loud murmur from the crowd. 'That is against the law,' cried many voices.

'Law, law?' growled Gessler. 'Who makes the law, you or I?'

Walter Fürst had been standing among the crowd silent and anxious. Now he stepped forward and spoke boldly. 'My lord,' he said, 'it has ever been a law among the Swiss that no one shall be imprisoned out of his own can-

ton. If my son-in-law, William Tell, has done wrong, let him be tried and imprisoned here, in Uri, in Altorf. If you do otherwise you wrong our ancient freedom and rights.'

'Your freedom! your rights!' said Gessler roughly. 'I tell you, you are here to obey the laws, not to teach me how I shall rule.' Then turning his horse and calling out, 'On, men, to the boat with him,' he rode towards the lake, where, at a little place called Fluelen, his boat was waiting for him.

But Walter clung to his father, crying bitterly. Tell could not take him in his arms to comfort him, for his hands were tied. But he bent over him to kiss him, saying, 'Little Walter, little Walter, be brave. Go with thy grandfather and comfort thy mother.'

So Tell was led to Gessler's boat, followed by the sorrowing people. Their

hearts were full of hot anger against the tyrant. Yet what could they do? He was too strong for them.

Tell was roughly pushed into the boat, where he sat closely guarded on either side by soldiers. His bow and arrows which had been taken from him were thrown upon a bench beside the steersman.

Gessler took his seat. The boat started, and was soon out on the blue water of the lake. As the people of Altorf watched Tell go, their hearts sank. They had not known, until they saw him bound and a prisoner, how much they had trusted and loved him.

The Escape of William Tell

On the lakes of Switzerland storms of wind arise very quickly. The Swiss used to dread these storms so much that they gave names to the winds as if they were people. The south wind, which is the fiercest, they called the Fohn. There used to be a law that when the Fohn arose, all fires were to be put out. For the wind whistled and blew down the wide chimneys like great bellows, till the fires flared up so fiercely that the houses, which were built of wood, were in danger of being burned to the ground. Now one of these fierce storms arose.

No one noticed when Gessler's boat pushed off from the shore how dark the sky had grown nor how keenly the wind

was blowing. But before the boat had gone very far the waves began to rise, and the wind to blow fiercer and fiercer.

Soon the little boat was tossing wildly on great white-crested waves. The rowers bent to the oars and rowed with all their might. But in spite of all they could do, the waves broke over the boat, filling it with water. They were tossed here and there, until it seemed every minute that they would sink.

Pale with fear, the captain stood at the helm. He was an Austrian who knew nothing of the Swiss lakes, and he had never before been in such a storm. He was helpless, and he knew that very soon the boat would be a wreck.

Wrapped in his mantle, Gessler sat silent and still, watching the storm. He, too, knew the danger.

As the waves dashed over him, one of Gessler's servants staggered to his

master's feet. 'My lord,' he said, 'you see our need and danger, yet methinks there is one man on board who could save us.'

'Who is that?' asked Gessler.

'William Tell, your prisoner,' replied the man. 'He is known to be one of the best sailors on this lake. He knows every inch of it. If any one can save the boat, he can.'

'Bring him here,' said Gessler.

'It seems you are a Sailor as well as an archer, Tell,' said Gessler, when his prisoner had been brought before him. 'Can you save the boat and bring us to land?'

'Yes,' said Tell.

'Unbind him, then,' said Gessler to the soldier, 'but mark you, Tell, you go not free. Even although you save us, you are still my prisoner. Do not think to have any reward.'

The rope which bound Tell's hands

was cut, and he took his place at the helm. The waves still dashed high, the wind still howled, but under Tell's firm hand the boat seemed to steady itself, and the rowers bent to their work with new courage and strength in answer to his commanding voice.

Tell, leaning forward, peered through the darkness and the spray. There was one place where he knew it would be possible to land—where a bold and desperate man at least might land. He was looking for that place. Nearer and nearer to the shore he steered. At last he was quite close to it. He glanced quickly round. His bow and arrows lay beside him. He bent and seized them. Then with one great leap he sprang ashore, and as he leaped he gave the boat a backward push with his foot, sending it out again into the stormy waters of the lake.

There was a wild outcry from the



As Tell leaped he gave the boat a backward push with his foot.

sailors, but Tell was free, for no one dared to follow him. Quickly clambering up the mountainside, he disappeared among the trees.

As Tell vanished, Gessler stood up and shouted in anger, but the little boat, rocking and tossing on the waves, drifted out into the lake, and the Austrian sailors, to whom the shore was unknown, dared not row near to it again, lest they should be dashed to pieces upon the rocks. Even as it was, they expected every moment that the boat would sink, and that all would be drowned. But despair seemed to give the sailors fresh strength, and soon the wind fell and the waves became quieter. A few hours later, wet, weary, but safe, Gessler and his company landed on the shore of Schwytz.

Tell's Second Shot

As soon as Gessler landed, he called for his horse, and silent and gloomy, his heart full of bitter hate against Tell and all the Swiss, he mounted and rode towards his castle at Küssnacht.

But Tell's heart, too, was full of hate and anger. That morning he had been a gentle, peace-loving man. Now all was changed. Gessler's cruel jest had made him hard and angry. He could not forget that he might have killed his own boy. He seemed to see always before him Walter bound to the tree with the apple on his head. Tell made up his mind that Gessler should never make any one else suffer so much. There was only one thing to do. That was to kill Gessler, and that

Tell meant to do.

If Gessler escaped from the storm, Tell was sure that he would go straight to his castle at Küssnacht. There was only one road which led from the lake to the castle, and at a place called the Hollow Way it became very narrow, and the banks rose steep and rugged on either side. There Tell made up his mind to wait for Gessler. There he meant to free his country from the cruel tyrant.

Without stopping for food or rest, Tell hurried through the woods until he came to the Hollow Way. There he waited and watched. Many people passed along the road. There were herds with their flocks, and travellers of all kinds, among them a poor woman whose husband had been put in prison by Gessler, so that now she had no home, and had to wander about with her children begging. She stopped and spoke to Tell, and the

story she told of Gessler's cruelty made Tell's heart burn with anger, and made him more sure than ever that the deed he meant to do was just and right.

The day went on, and still Gessler did not come, and still Tell waited. At last he heard the distant tramp of feet and the sound of voices. Surely he had come at last. But as the sounds came nearer, Tell knew that it could not be Gessler, for he heard music and laughter, and through the Hollow Way came a gaily dressed crowd. It was a wedding-party. Laughing and merry, the bride and bridegroom with their friends passed along. When they were out of sight the wind brought back the sound of their merry voices to Tell, as he waited upon the bank. They, at least, had for a time forgotten Gessler.

At last, as the sun was setting, Tell heard the tramp of horses, and a herald dashed along the road, shouting, 'Room

for the Governor. Room, I say.'

As Gessler came slowly on behind, Tell could hear him talking in a loud and angry voice to a friend. 'Obedience I will have,' he was saying. 'I have been far too mild a ruler over this people. They grow too proud. But I will break their pride. Let them prate of freedom, indeed. I will crush—.' The sentence was never finished. An arrow whizzed through the air, and with a groan Gessler fell, dead.

Tell's second arrow had found its mark.

Immediately everything was in confusion. Gessler's soldiers crowded round, trying to do something for their master. But it was useless. He was dead: Tell's aim had been true.

'Who has done this foul murder?' cried one of Gessler's friends, looking round.

'The shot was mine,' answered Tell,

from where he stood on the high bank. 'But no murder have I done. I have but freed an unoffending people from a base and cowardly tyrant. My cause is just, let God be the judge.'

At the sound of his voice every one turned to look at Tell, as he stood above them calm and unafraid.

'Seize him!' cried the man who had already spoken, as soon as he recovered from his astonishment. 'Seize him, it is Tell the archer.'

Five or six men scrambled up the steep bank as fast as they could. But Tell slipped quietly through the bushes, and when they reached the top he was nowhere to be found.

The short winter's day was closing in fast, and Tell found it easy to escape in the darkness from Gessler's soldiers. They soon gave up the chase, and, returning to the road, took up their

master's dead body and carried it to his castle at Küssnacht. There was little sorrow for him, for he had been a hard master. The Austrian soldiers did not grieve, and the Swiss, wherever they heard the news, rejoiced.

As soon as he was free of the soldiers, Tell turned and made for Stauffacher's house. All through the night he walked, until he came to the pretty house with its red roofs and many windows which had made Gessler so angry.

Now there was no light in any of the windows, and all was still and quiet. But Tell knew in which of the rooms Stauffacher slept, and he knocked softly upon the window until he had aroused his friend.

'William Tell!' said Stauffacher in astonishment. 'I heart from Walter Fürst that you were a prisoner. Thank Heaven that you are free again.'

'I am free,' said Tell; 'you, too, are free. Gessler is dead.'

'Gessler dead!' exclaimed Stauffacher. 'Now indeed have we cause for thankfulness. Tell me, how did it happen?' and he drew William Tell into the house.

Tell soon told all his story. Then Stauffacher, seeing how weary he was, gave him food and made him rest.

That night Tell slept well. All next day he remained hidden in Stauffacher's house. 'You must not go,' said his friend, 'Gessler's soldiers will be searching for you.' But when evening came Tell crept out into the dark again, and kind friends rowed him across the lake back to Fluelen. There, where a few days before he had been a prisoner, he landed, now free.

Tell went at once to Walter Fürst's house, and soon messengers were hurry-

ing all through the land to gather together again the Confederates, as those who had met on the Rütli were called.

This time they gathered with less fear and less secrecy, for was not the dreaded Governor dead? Not one but was glad, yet some of the Confederates blamed Tell, for they had all promised to wait until the first of January before doing anything. 'I know,' said Tell, 'but he drove me to it.' And every man there who had left a little boy at home felt that he too might have done the same thing.

Now that Tell had struck the first blow, some of the Confederates wished to rise at once. But others said, 'No, it is only a few weeks now until New Year's Day. Let us wait.'

So they waited, and everything seemed quiet and peaceful in the land, for the Emperor sent no Governor to take Gessler's place, as he was far away in

Austria, too busy fighting and quarrelling there to think of Switzerland in the meantime. 'When I have finished this war,' he said, 'it will be time enough to crush these Swiss rebels.'

How Castle Rossberg Was Taken

Day after day passed, and at last New Year's Eve arrived. Everything was arranged, every one was ready. The Swiss knew that if they were to succeed, they must get possession of all the castles which were in the hands of the Austrians. So their first plans were for the taking of these.

In Unterwalden there was a castle called Rossberg. The wags were thick and high, the gates heavy and strong. To take it by force seemed impossible.

Among the servants of the castle was a pretty girl called Anneli. She had laughing blue eyes, and golden hair which fell far below her waist in two long

plaits. In spite of the sad times, she always seemed merry and smiling as a sunbeam. Many people loved Anneli, but the person she loved best was a shepherd called Joggeli, and she had promised to marry him.

Joggeli was one of those who had met upon the Rütli and sworn to free Switzerland from the Austrians. He often came to see Anneli at the castle, and because he knew that she too loved her country he often talked to her of how they hoped to overthrow the tyrants. Then Anneli's blue eyes would flash, and she would say, 'Oh, if I were only a man, I would fight too. Joggeli, you don't know how I hate them—hate them!'

Then one night as they talked together Joggeli said, 'You can help, Anneli, if you will.'

'Oh, how? Tell me how,' cried Anneli, her eyes dancing with delight.

Joggeli bent and whispered to her, and as Anneli listened her eyes sparkled and her cheeks grew red. 'O Joggeli,' she cried, 'then I can really help?'

'Yes, you can help very much,' he replied, 'in fact, we could not do without you. You will be brave? You are not afraid?'

'No,' said Anneli, 'I am not afraid. I am very proud that you should trust me.'

After that day Anneli's eyes seemed merrier than ever, and she sang all day long, for was she not going to help to free her country?

One evening, when Joggeli came to the castle, he brought a long coil of rope hidden under his cloak. Anneli took it and hid it away carefully. Again and again Joggeli brought coils of rope, and Anneli knotted all the pieces together and hid them in a safe place.

On New Year's Eve Anneli sat alone

in her little room overlooking the castle wall, waiting and listening. She had no light. Everything in the little room was very still and quiet. One by one all the sounds in the castle ceased. Soon every one was fast asleep. Only Anneli and the sleepy sentinels who guarded the great gate were awake. Twelve o'clock struck. As the last stroke died away Anneli crept softly across the room and opened the window. She brought the heavy rope from its hiding-place, and with her strong little hands knotted one end firmly round the iron bar which divided the window in two. Then she waited and listened. At last she heard a faint sound from down below. 'Joggeli,' she whispered.

'Anneli,' came back the answer. 'All is clear.'

She lifted the rope then and let it drop gently over the castle wall.

Little Anneli was very brave, but she

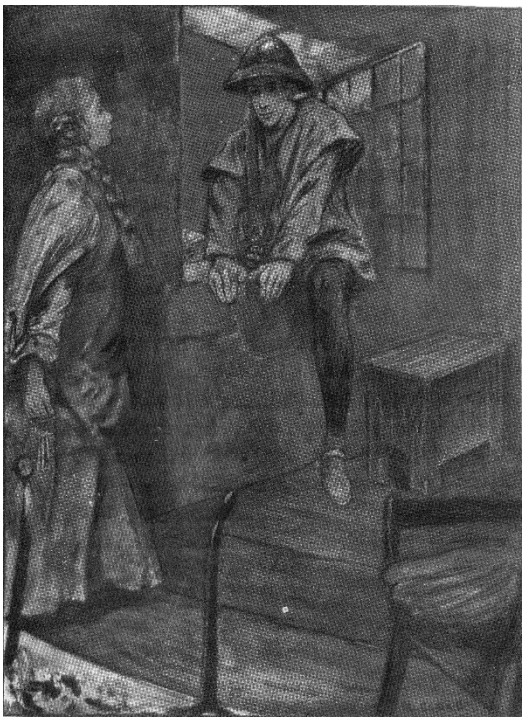
grew pale and trembled as she leaned against the window-sill, waiting. What if the rope broke? What if the iron bar gave way? she was asking herself.

But in a minute or two Joggeli's head appeared at the window; he put his hands on the ledge and leaped into the room. 'Brave little girl!' he said, feeling in the darkness for Anneli's hand. Then he turned again to the window, and in another minute a second man appeared, then another and another, till twenty men had climbed up the rope and were standing safely within the castle walls.

'Are you ready, men?' asked Joggeli in a low voice.

'Yes,' they whispered.

Then, at a sign from Joggeli, Anneli opened the door and ran down the long passage, followed by the twenty men. She led them straight to the great door which was guarded within by two sleepy



In a minute or two Jogelli's head appeared at the window.

Austrian soldiers.

The Swiss threw themselves upon the sentinels and bound and gagged them before they could utter a word.

Leaving one or two men to guard the door, they next went, guided by Anneli, to the room where the captain slept. Him, too, they seized and bound, and in a very short time, without even having drawn their swords, the castle was theirs.

The dark dungeons were unlocked and the prisoners set free. But the dungeons were not long left empty, for they were soon filled with the proud Austrian soldiers. The Swiss guarded the castle well, so that no Austrian, man or woman, could escape and carry the news to their friends and bring back help. But, upon the topmost tower, the Swiss lit a beacon fire which, seen far and wide, carried the news to Schwytz and Uri that castle Rossberg was taken.

How Castle Sarnen Was Taken

Landenberg was living at a castle called Sarnen. On New Year's morning he left the castle in great state, followed by soldiers and servants, to go to church. As he passed through the gates, he was met by a crowd of peasants coming in the direction of the castle. Some were driving goats and sheep before them, others carried bundles of corn, or baskets full of butter, cheese, and eggs.

'What is this crowd?' asked Landenberg, stopping to look at them.

'It is the people bringing their New Year's gifts to your lordship,' answered a soldier.

Landenberg looked sharply at the peasants to see if any of them were

armed, for it was forbidden for any one to take weapons into the castle. But seeing that they had only stout sticks in their hands, 'Let them carry their gifts to the castle,' he said. Then he passed on to church.

The peasants were allowed to go into the castle, as Landenberg had commanded. But no sooner were they well within the gates than each man drew from under his coat a sharp blade which he had hidden there, and fixed it upon his stick. Arnold of Melchthal, who led them, put his horn to his lips and blew a loud blast upon it. At the sound of it thirty men, who had been hiding near the castle walls, rushed in to join their comrades. Together they fell upon the Austrian soldiers, and a fierce struggle followed. But the Swiss soon had the best of it. All the Austrians were taken prisoner and the castle was set on fire.

Down in the valley in the little church Landenberg knelt in prayer. The church was very full of women—women who were praying for the success of their fathers and brothers. Suddenly in the quiet church the sound of a distant horn was heard. Landenberg stirred uneasily. The sound troubled him, he knew not why. The priest, too, had heard the horn. He paused a moment, then he went on reading the service, but in his calm and steady voice there was a ring of triumph. He knew why the horn blew.

A few minutes later the door of the church was burst wildly open, and pale, breathless, and bloodstained, an Austrian soldier rushed in. 'Fly, my lord, fly!' he cried. 'The Swiss have taken the castle, and it is in flames.'

'What nonsense is this?' said Landenberg, rising, and speaking in an angry tone. 'The Swiss have not the spirit to

rebel. Are you drunk, man, already so early in the morning, that you come to me with such a tale?'

'It is true, my lord,' gasped the man. 'It is true, I swear it. Listen, you can hear their shouts.'

As the man spoke, silence fell upon the church, and in the silence, through the wide open door, could indeed be heard the roar and crackle of flames, and the shouts of victory, borne upon the winter wind.

At the sound Landenberg grew pale. He turned as if he would flee.

'You cannot go back, my lord,' said the soldier who had brought the news. 'All ways are guarded. It were best to try and escape over the mountains. I know of a pass. It is difficult, but by it we may reach safety.'

'Lead, and I follow,' said Landenberg, and he and his servants and soldiers fled

from the church and took the way to the mountains.

But when they came to the pass, the snow was so deep that they could not cross that way, and, dangerous though it was, they were obliged to turn back. The proud tyrants of a few days before were now like hunted animals. Starving with cold and hunger, they hid by day and crept about fearfully by night. Yet they had really little to fear. The Swiss knew very well where Landenberg and his followers were hiding. Many times they might have been taken prisoner and put to death. But the Swiss did not do so. It was not revenge but freedom for which they were fighting.

But at last Landenberg was taken prisoner and led before Henri and Arnold Melchthal. Arnold hated Landenberg because of his cruelty to his father.

'You robbed my father of his eyesight,' he said. 'Now you shall pay for it.'

But Landenberg, who was a coward as well as a bully, threw himself upon his knees and begged Arnold to spare him. And Henri, who was a good old man, had pity upon the fallen tyrant and let him go. But first he made him swear to leave Switzerland, and never to return. This Landenberg promised. Then he and all his company, guarded by Swiss soldiers, were led to the borders of Switzerland and there set free. Glad to escape with their lives, they fled from the country and went back to their master, Albrecht of Austria.

On this New Year's Day, all the great castles which the Austrians had built were taken by the Swiss and laid in ruins. Even the Curb of Uri, which had never been quite finished, was destroyed. Whenever a castle was taken, beacon

fires were lit, and from Alp to Alp the good news was signalled.

The first great blow for freedom had been struck. But in their joy the Swiss were merciful. None of the Austrian captains and but few soldiers were killed. They were only made prisoner and then sent out of the country.

A week after the taking of the castles all the Confederates met again on the Rütli. This time there was no need to meet in secret nor at night, for there were no Austrians left in the land of whom they need be afraid. But the Swiss knew that although they had already done great things, the struggle was not over. They knew that when the Emperor heard of what had happened, he would be very angry, and would come against them with his soldiers. So they bound themselves together once more by a solemn oath, promising that for ten years to

come they would stand by each other and fight for each other.

The Emperor had meant to treat the Swiss so badly that they would at last rebel, and then he would have an excuse for fighting and conquering them. But when the news of what they had really done came to him, when he learned that they had not only killed one of his friends but banished all the rest, he was furiously angry. He was still, however, fighting in Austria, and he had no soldiers to spare to send to Switzerland.

So the Swiss were left in peace, and had time to prepare for the fight which they knew must come.

How the Emperor Albrecht Met His Death

The Emperor Albrecht was hated by many people besides the Swiss. He was so greedy and so cruel that it would have been strange indeed if many had loved him. Among those who hated the Emperor was his nephew, Duke John. Duke John's father had died when he was quite a little boy, and his uncle Albrecht had brought him up and had taken charge of his money and land. But now Duke John was twenty years old, and he wanted to rule his own land and take care of his own money. But the Emperor, who was greedy, and hoped to be able to keep Duke John's possessions, would not give them up. Again and again Duke John

asked for his land and his money. Again and again the Emperor refused. 'You are not old enough yet,' he said, 'you are not old enough.'

But this answer only made Duke John more angry and more determined, for the Emperor's own sons, who were no older, were given lands to rule and were treated as great princes.

At last the Emperor finished his war in Austria and returned to fight against the three Forest Cantons. While he was gathering his soldiers together, his friends came to his castle to advise him how best to conquer the Swiss. Among them came Duke John.

On the last day of April, Duke John and his uncle rode together through a wood. The sky was blue, the birds were singing, and all the world seemed gay and beautiful. 'Let me rule my own Duke-dom, uncle,' said Duke John. 'It is full

time that the crown was set upon my head.'

'You are only a boy,' returned his uncle scornfully, 'too young to rule.'

'I am no younger than my cousins,' replied John bitterly, 'and they have crowns and kingdoms given to them.'

'Oh,' said the Emperor, 'you must have a crown, must you?' He checked his horse, and leaning over, broke a twig from a willow-tree close by. He twisted the twig quickly into the form of a crown. Then with another scornful laugh he gave it to his nephew. 'There,' he said, 'is a crown good enough for you. To-morrow is May Day. Go make yourself a May Day king.'

Duke John dashed the willow crown to the ground. He was white and trembling with passion. 'You scorn and scoff at me,' he cried. 'But you shall do so no longer. From this day there is hatred

and war between you and me. I will ask no more for my crown and kingdom. I will take them.' Then he put spurs to his horse and rode away.

'Silly boy,' laughed the Emperor, 'what can he do against me?'

That night Duke John talked long with his friends. There was only one way in which he could win his own land. His uncle would not give it up, so his uncle must die.

Next day the Emperor rode out, followed by his train of soldiers and servants. It was May Day, and everywhere people were feasting and rejoicing. The Emperor with one friend rode on alone, far before his soldiers, who came slowly trotting behind. They came to a bridge over a river, and as they were crossing it Duke John was seen galloping towards them. In his hand he held a drawn sword which flashed in the sun-



‘There is a crown good
enough for you.’

light. 'Now will I well reward your scorn,' he cried, as he came dashing along; 'now must you yield up my land to me,' and before the Emperor was aware of what Duke John meant to do, he had been struck on the breast, so that he reeled in his saddle. The Duke's two friends then rushed upon the Emperor, one aiming a blow at his head, the other thrusting his sword through his body. Albrecht fell to the ground, and the knight who had been with him fled away in fear of his life.

Duke John and his friends, fearful now of the deed they had done, fled too, and the Emperor was left on the bridge alone. There a poor beggar woman found him lying in great pain, and having pity on him, she did what she could to ease him. But nothing could save his life. So this great Emperor died on the lonely roadside in the arms of a poor beggar woman.

When Duke John fled away, he fled to Switzerland. But the Swiss, when they heard of his deed, would not receive him.

'We had no quarrel with the Emperor,' they said. 'It was against Austria that we fought.'

So the gates of all the Swiss towns were closed against Duke John. The gates of one town called Zurich had not been shut for twenty years. Now the hinges were so rusty that at first they would not turn. But the men of Zurich were eager to show that they were true to the Empire, so they bent their backs to the task. When the great gates moved at last, they seemed to groan and cry aloud as they slowly closed. Then the bars were drawn against the murderer.

But although the Swiss would not shelter Duke John, neither would they punish him. 'We will not avenge the Emperor, who never did us any good,'

they said. 'We will not punish Duke John, who never did us any harm. We have no part in his deed. We only wish peace and freedom.'

For two years Duke John wandered about disguised as a monk, and at last he reached Italy, where it is said he died in loneliness and misery.

After the murder of Albrecht, the Princes chose another Emperor called Henri. He was not a Prince of Austria, and he was kind to the Swiss. He gave them letters saying that they were free as they had always been, that Austria had no power over them, and that they owed obedience only to the Emperor, and not to the Austrian Princes.

The Battle of Morgarten

For a few years the Swiss had peace, but when the Emperor Henri died the Duke of Austria, who was now called Leopold, tried to make the Princes choose him as the next Emperor. But Albrecht had been hated so much that the Princes would not choose an Austrian as Emperor. That made the Swiss very glad, for they greatly feared another Austrian ruler. The new Emperor was called Louis, and he was kind to the Swiss, as Henri had been, and gave them new letters saying that they were a free people. Duke Leopold of Austria was very angry that he had not been chosen Emperor, and his anger made him hate the Swiss more than ever. Like Duke

Albrecht, he resolved to fight against them and conquer them. 'The wretched peasants!' he said; 'I will yet tread them under foot.'

Duke Leopold gathered his army and set out for Schwytz, which he meant to conquer first. He was so sure of victory that he took with him a cartload of ropes with which to bind the prisoners.

But when the Swiss heard that Duke Leopold was coming, they made ready to fight, strengthening their towns as best they could, and keeping watch for him day and night.

Duke Leopold was a fierce and terrible man, but he was also tall and handsome. He looked very splendid and knightly as, dressed in glittering armour, he rode at the head of his troops. Behind him were the greatest of Austria's knights and nobles, followed by twenty thousand gallant soldiers in shining armour.

And this great host came marching against only six hundred mountain peasants. There seemed no doubt as to how the fight must end. But Duke Leopold little knew what wonderful deeds these peasants could do when fighting for their country and their freedom.

When the men of Schwytz heard that Leopold's great army was near, they sent to Uri and Unterwalden for help. They did not send in vain, and on the fourteenth of November, as the sun was setting, four hundred men of Uri arrived, led by Tell and Walter Fürst. At midnight, as they sat round the watchfires, Arnold Melchthal came from Unterwalden bringing with him three hundred more. The whole army numbered now thirteen hundred men.

Round the camp fires the leaders held a council of war. 'Brothers,' said Stauffacher, 'once more we are gathered

to protect our country against Austria. With God's help we will once more succeed. Even among the Austrians we are not without friends. Yesterday this arrow was shot into our camp,' he went on, holding up the arrow so that all might see it. 'Fastened to the shaft is a piece of parchment, and written upon it the words, "Beware of Morgarten," That is surely meant for a warning.'

'What does it mean?' asked some one.

'Are you sure it is a friend and no traitor who sends the message?'

'I know the writing. It certainly comes as a friendly warning.'

'Whose is it?'

'It is the writing of the Count Henri of Hunenberg. He is our friend although he is an Austrian.'

'Yes, yes,' said every one, 'we may trust him, he is just and good.'

Then a very old man rose and seemed about to speak, and every one was silent to listen to him. He was so weak and crippled that he could not fight, indeed he could hardly walk. But still he had come with the army, for although his body was bent and worn with age, his mind was bright and keen, and he was very wise. He loved his country, and the people were glad to listen to his counsels.

'The letter is the warning of a friend,' said this old man. 'It means that you must stay upon the heights of Morgarten. Duke Leopold will lead his army through the valley below. When his knights and horsemen are close packed in the narrow pass between the mountain and the lake they will be at our mercy. You can then rush down upon them from above, and they will not be able to escape.'

The leaders resolved to do as the old

man advised, and after everything was arranged for the coming battle, they lay down to rest till dawn. But scarcely had they done so than the camp was roused again. In the still night the sound of the tramp of feet could be heard.

'Who goes there?' called the sentinel.

'Friends,' came the answer, 'we would speak with the captains of the army.'

Dimly through the darkness could be seen the forms of a small company of men. They were soon surrounded, and their leaders were brought before Tell and the other captains.

'Who are you, and what do you want?' asked Tell.

'We are outlaws,' replied the men. 'For our misdeeds we have been banished from the land. But we are sorry for the evil that we have done, and we have come to beg you to give us a chance to

win again the place which we have lost. There are fifty of us. We come to offer our lives for our country. Let us fight with you against the Austrians. We ask nothing better than to die for our Fatherland.'

'Go away a little,' said Tell, 'until we talk of this matter. What think you?' he added, turning to his fellows as the outlaws moved away.

'They may not fight with us,' said the others. 'We cannot trust them.' So after a little more talk the outlaws were told that they could not be allowed to fight in the Swiss army, and that they must go away.

The fifty men were very sad because the Confederates would not let them help in the fighting. They went sorrowfully from the Swiss camp, but they did not go far. A little way off there was a ledge of rock above a steep precipice.

There they lay down to wait for the enemy, for, although they were not to be allowed to fight in the army, they had made up their minds to die for their country. They had no arms nor weapons of any kind, but somehow or other they meant to help.

Soon the first streaks of dawn turned the snow-topped mountains pink. The camp was all astir, and in the early morning light the Swiss were drawn up in fighting order. They wore little armour, and besides their bows and arrows their chief weapon was what was called a 'Morning Star.' This was a heavy club, the head of which was thickly covered with sharp iron points, so that it looked like a star. And although it had such a beautiful name, it was a very deadly weapon.

When the Swiss were ready for battle, they fell upon their knees, as their

old custom was, calling upon God, as their only Lord and Master, to help them that day. 'Lord God of heaven and earth, look upon their pride and our lowliness. Show that Thou forsakest not those who trust in Thee, but bring them low who trust in themselves and glory in their own strength.' Then they rose from their knees and stood waiting for the enemy.

They had not long to wait. The first beams of the winter sun fell upon helmet and breastplate, on glittering shield and spear. Soon, as far as the eye could reach, the valley was full of a slowly moving mass of men and horses, their banners fluttering in the wind, their weapons and armour gleaming in the sunlight.

Never before had the Swiss seen such an army. On they came, first the knights and men on horseback, behind the foot-soldiers, until the valley between the mountain and the lake was close packed.

And above them, on the mountain-side, the Swiss stood quietly watching and waiting.

Meanwhile the fifty outlaws had not been idle. They had gathered great heaps of huge stones and boulders and brought them to the edge of the precipice. Now they felt their time had come. The mountain road was slippery, and the Austrian horsemen moved slowly and carefully, but the foot-soldiers behind pressed on so quickly that the ranks were broken and thrown into disorder. At this moment the outlaws, uttering wild shouts, rolled the huge stones which they had gathered down upon the struggling mass of men and horses below. As the stones came crashing upon them, the Austrian soldiers, already in some disorder, were thrown into utter confusion. Riders were overthrown and trampled underfoot; horses wild with terror

galloped madly among the close-drawn ranks; and always the soldiers from behind, not knowing what was happening in front, kept pressing on.

The panic and rout seemed complete, when down the mountain-side came the Swiss, charging in perfect order. For although the slope was steep, their iron spiked shoes gave them firm hold upon the rocky crags. Swinging their morning stars about their heads, they fell upon the Austrian host.

In that narrow pass between the mountain and the lake there was great slaughter. Knight after knight fell dead under the blows of the terrible morning stars. Hundreds were crushed and trampled to death by their fellows. Hundreds more sprang into the lake, hoping to save themselves, and were drowned.

Fearless and foremost among the

Swiss fought Tell and his friends. As Tell with great blows clove a path through the Austrian ranks, two knights fell upon him. 'Die, traitor,' they cried, as their swords flashed in the sunlight. But Tell avoided the blows, and swinging his morning star, brought it crashing down upon the head of one of the knights, while with his dagger in his left hand he kept off the other.

The first knight fell, and as he fell his helmet rolled off, so that his face was seen. It was the face of Gessler's son Dietrich.

The second knight now attacked Tell fiercely. But very soon he too lay dead beside his brother. For he also was a son of Gessler. The two brothers had hoped to avenge their father's death.

Landenberg also, in spite of his promise never to return to Switzerland, was with the Austrian army. But he too

fell upon the field.

In less than an hour and a half, before nine o'clock in the morning, the Swiss had gained a complete victory. It is said that fifteen thousand men fell in this battle. All the pride and the glory of the Austrian army had perished. For many years chivalry was rare in the countries around, for all the bravest and best knights lay dead upon the field of Morgarten.

Duke Leopold himself hardly escaped with his life. He was led almost by force out of the battle by a soldier who knew the mountain passes, and pale as death, broken and sad, he arrived late that evening at a place of safety.

Duke Leopold tried no more to take away the freedom of the Swiss. After this battle a peace was signed, and year by year it was renewed.

Yet although by this battle a great

blow against Austria had been struck, the struggle was not at an end. It was not until nearly two hundred years after Tell's great shot that the Swiss were entirely free. But never again did such dark and terrible days come upon them; never again did they suffer as they suffered when Gessler and Landenberg ruled the land.

In gratitude for the victory of Morgarten, the Swiss built a chapel upon the battlefield. The walls of it are painted with pictures of the fight, and to this day, every year on the fifteenth of November, the day on which the battle was fought, a service of thanksgiving is held.

Tell lived quietly for many years in his house at Bürglen, happy with his wife and children. In the year 1354 there was a great flood which carried away many houses and did much harm. Many people were drowned, and William Tell, who

was now an old man, was among them.

But Tell still lives in the memory of the Swiss. They love him still and honour him as the saviour of their country. Where his house at Bürglen stood there is now a chapel. On its walls are written, in German, these lines—

'Here, where this holy church doth stand,
The saviour of his fatherland
Great William Tell erstwhile did live.
He made our freedom truly live,
And him to thank and God to praise,
This church upon the spot we raise.
Ah, comrades fess: think well thereon
What God and our fathers for us have done.'

There is also a chapel upon the spot where Tell sprang from Gessler's boat. The place is called Tell's Platte, and to this day, once a year, a solemn service is held there, and the people, dressed in their best, come from all sides in a gay

procession of decorated boats to do honour to the memory of their hero.

At Küssnacht too, on the spot where Gessler died, a chapel was built. After hundreds of years that chapel fell into ruins, but another was built which still stands.

Perhaps some day you may go to Switzerland and see all these interesting places.