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WILLIAM TELL

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*SIR JOHN LUBBOCK'S HUNDRED BOOKS*

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# WILLIAM TELL

*G. 2*

BY

JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

*TRANSLATED BY SAMUEL ROBINSON*

LONDON  
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# INTRODUCTION

BY

THE RIGHT HON. SIR JOHN LUBBOCK, BART., M.P.,  
F.R.S., D.C.L., LL.D.,

CHAIRMAN OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

IN the year 1886 I gave an address on 'Books and Reading' at the Working Men's College, which in the following year was printed as one of the chapters in my 'Pleasures of Life.'

In it I mentioned about one hundred names, and the list has been frequently referred to since as my list of 'the hundred best books.' That, however, is not quite a correct statement. If I were really to make a list of what are in my judgment the hundred greatest books, it would contain several—Newton's 'Principia,' for instance—which I did not include, and it would exclude several—the 'Koran,' for instance—which I inserted in deference to the judgment of others. Again, I excluded living authors, from some of whom—Ruskin and Tennyson, Huxley and Tyndall, for instance, to mention no others—I have myself derived the keenest enjoyment; and especially I expressly stated that I did not select the books on my own authority, but as being those most frequently mentioned with approval by those writers who have referred directly or indirectly to the pleasure of reading, rather than as suggestions of my own.

I have no doubt that on reading the list, many names of books which might well be added would occur to almost anyone. Indeed, various criticisms on the list have appeared, and many books have been mentioned which it is said ought to have been included. On the other hand, no corresponding omissions have been suggested. I have referred to several of the criticisms, and find that, while 300 or 400 names have been proposed for addition, only half a dozen are suggested for omission. Moreover, it is remarkable that not a single book appears in all the lists, or even in half of them, and only about half a dozen in more than one.

But while, perhaps, no two persons would entirely concur as to all the books to be included in such a list, I believe no one would deny that those suggested are not only good, but among the best.

I am, however, ready, and indeed glad, to consider any suggestions, and very willing to make any changes which can be shown to be improvements. I have, indeed, made two changes in the list as it originally



appeared, having inserted Kalidasa's 'Sakoontala, or The Ring,' and Schiller's 'William Tell'; omitting Lucretius, which is perhaps rather too difficult, and Miss Austen, as English novelists were somewhat over-represented.

Another objection made has been that the books mentioned are known to everyone, at any rate by name; that they are as household words. Everyone, it has been said, knows about Herodotus and Homer, Shakespeare and Milton. There is, no doubt, some truth in this. But even Lord Iddesleigh, as Mr. Lang has pointed out in his 'Life,' had never read Marcus Aurelius, and I may add that he afterwards thanked me warmly for having suggested the 'Meditations' to him.\* If, then, even Lord Iddesleigh, 'probably one of the last of English statesmen who knew the literature of Greece and Rome widely and well,' had not read Marcus Aurelius, we may well suppose that others also may be in the same position. It is also a curious commentary on what was no doubt an unusually wide knowledge of classical literature that Mr. Lang should ascribe—and probably quite correctly—Lord Iddesleigh's never having had his attention called to one of the most beautiful and improving books in classical, or indeed in any other literature, to the fact that the emperor wrote in 'crabbed and corrupt Greek.'

Again, a popular writer in a recent work has observed that 'why anyone should select the best hundred, more than the best eleven, or the best thirty books, it is hard to conjecture.' But this remark entirely misses the point. Eleven books, or even thirty, would be very few; but no doubt I might just as well have given 90, or 110. Indeed, if our arithmetical notation had been duodecimal instead of decimal, I should no doubt have made up the number to 120. I only chose 100 as being a round number.

Another objection has been that everyone should be left to choose for himself. And so he must. No list can be more than a suggestion. But a great literary authority can hardly perhaps realize the difficulty of selection. An ordinary person turned into a library and sarcastically told to choose for himself, has to do so almost at haphazard. He may perhaps light upon a book with an attractive title, and after wasting on it much valuable time and patience, find that, instead of either pleasure or profit, he has weakened, or perhaps lost, his love of reading.

Messrs. George Routledge and Sons have conceived the idea of publishing the books contained in my list in a handy and cheap form, selecting themselves the editions which they prefer; and I believe that in doing so they will confer a benefit on many who have not funds or space to collect a large library.

JOHN LUBBOCK.

HIGH ELMS,  
DOWN, KENT,  
30 March, 1891.

\* I have since had many other letters to the same effect.

## Dramatis Personæ.

HERMAN GESLER, *Lord High Bailiff, and Imperial Governor  
in Schwitz and Uri.*

WERNER BARON VON ATTINGHAUSEN.

ULRICH VON RUDENZ, *his Nephew.*

WERNER STAUFFACHER

CONRAD HUNN

ITEL REDING

HANS AUF DER MAUER      } *Inhabitants of Schwitz.*

JORG IM HOFF

ULRICH, *the Smith*

JOST VON WEILER

WALTER FURST

WILLIAM TELL

ROSSELMAN, *the Priest*

PETERMAN, *the Sacristan*      } *Inhabitants of Uri.*

KUONI, *the Shepherd*

WERNI, *the Hunter*

RUODI, *the Fisherman*

ARNOLD VON MELCHTAL.

CONRAD BAUMGARTEN

MEIER VON SARNEN

STRUTH VON WINKELRIED      } *Inhabitants of Unterwalden.*

KLAUS VON DER FLUE

BURKHARDT AM BUHEL

ARNOLD VON SEWA

PFEIFFER, *of Lucern.*

KUNZ VON GERSAU.

YENNI, *the Fisherman's Boy.*

SEPPI, *the Herdsman's Boy.*

GERTRUDE, STAUFFACHER'S *Wife.*

HEDWIG, TELL'S *Wife, and FURST'S Daughter.*

BERTHA VON BRUNEK, *a rich Heiress.*

ARMGART	}	<i>Peasant Women.</i>
MATILDA		
ELIZABETH		
HILDEGARD		
WALTER	}	<i>TELL'S Children.</i>
WILLIAM		
FRIESSHARDT		
LEUTHOLD	}	<i>Soldiers.</i>
RUDOLPH DER HARRAS, GESLER'S <i>Master of the Horse.</i>		
JOHN, <i>Duke of Swabia.</i>		
STUSSI.		
MESSENGER OF THE EMPIRE.		
SUPERINTENDENT.		
STONEMASON, WORKMEN, <i>and</i> LABOURERS.		
PUBLIC CRIER.		
BROTHERS OF MERCY.		
GESLER'S <i>and</i> LANDENBERGER'S TROOPERS.		
PEASANTS, WOMEN, <i>and</i> CHILDREN.		

*ACT I.*



# WILLIAM TELL.

## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A high rocky shore on the lake of the four Cantons, opposite Schwitz. The lake forms a bay in the land: a cottage near the shore: a FISHER-BOY conducting a boat. Over the lake are seen the green meadows, villages, and farm-houses of Schwitz, illuminated by the sun. On the left of the spectator appear the peaks of the Haken surrounded with clouds: on the right, in the distance, the snow-mountains. Before the curtain rises are heard the Ranz-des-vaches, and the harmonious tinkling of the cow-bells, which are prolonged for some time into the opening act.*

FISHER-BOY [*in the boat, sings*].

The lake's smiling waters to bathing invite:  
On the green shore the boy slumbers lost in delight

For the music he hears  
Is of lutes soft and sweet,  
Or the voices of angels  
Who in paradise meet ;  
And as he awakes to the joys of the blest,  
The waters are murmuring over his breast,  
From the deep cries a voice,  
Thou art mine, lovely boy,  
I entice the fond dreamer,  
I lure to destroy !

SHEPHERD [*on the mountain*].

Ye meadows, farewell !  
Ye green sunny pastures !  
The shepherd must leave you,  
The summer is gone.  
We shall hither return the mountains among,  
When the cockoo calls, with the bird's early song,  
When the vales their fresh vesture of flowers display,  
And the fountains burst forth in the sunshine of May.  
Ye meadows, farewell !  
Ye green sunny pastures !  
The shepherd must leave you,  
The summer is gone.

HUNTER OF THE ALPS [*appears opposite on the top of  
the cliffs*].

The heights are thundering, and trembles the bridge,  
But nought scares the hunter on yon dizzy ridge :

O'er mountains of ice  
 Undaunted he goes,  
 Where spring never blossoms,  
 And flower never blows.

Below him an ocean of mist from his ken,  
 Conceals in its darkness the dwellings of men ;  
 Through the rents of clouds only  
 The dim world is seen,  
 Deep under the vapour  
 The valleys of green.

*The landscape changes : a hollow crackling is heard from the mountains : shadows of the clouds pass over the ground. RUODI, the fisherman, comes out of his hut ; WERNI, the hunter, descends from the rocks ; KUONI, the shepherd, enters with a milk-pail on his shoulders, followed by SEPPI, his assistant.*

RUO. Yenni, make haste ! Draw in the nets ; be quick !

The gray lord-bailiff of the valley comes,  
 A hollow crackling runs along the glacier,  
 The Mytenstein draws on his cap, and cold  
 Blows from the Wetterloch the rising blast.  
 The storm be sure will reach us ere we think it.

KUO. Boatman, there will be rain : my sheep the grass

Crop greedily, and Watcher snuffs the ground.

WER. • The fish spring from the lake, the water-fowl



Dive down ! Be sure a tempest is at hand.

KUO. [*to the boy*]. Seppi, see that the kine go not astray.

SEP. I'm sure brown Lisel's there—I hear her bell.

KUO. Then all are there—she ever strays the farthest.

RUO. You have a noble ring of bells, my master.

WER. And handsome kine ! Are they your own, countryman ?

KUO. I'm not so rich. They are my worthy master's,

Count Attinghausen—I am but his servant.

RUO. How prettily the riband decks yon cow !

KUO. And well she knows too that she leads the herd,

And should I take it off would cease to feed.

RUO. You are a fool ! A beast deprived of reason——

WER. That is soon said—but brutes have reason too :

That we know well who have to hunt the chamois :  
They wisely station, when they seek the pasture,  
A sentinel who pricks his ears and warns  
With a shrill whistle when the hunter nears them.

RUO. [*to the SHEPHERD*]. Go ye now home ?

KUO. The Alp is pastured down.

WER. A happy journey home !

KUO. The same to you !

Journeys like yours conduct not always back.

RUO. Here comes a man running as though he flew.

WER. I know him well—'tis Baumgart of Alstellen.

*Enter CONRAD BAUMGARTEN, breathless.*

CON. For God's sake, boatman, loose your boat!

RUO. Well! well!

But why in such a hurry?

CON. Quick! unloose it!

Put me but over, and you save my life.

KUO. But what's the matter, countryman?

WER. Who pursues you?

CON. Quick! quick! they are already at my heels.  
The bailiff's troopers ride hard after me:

If they but take me, I am a dead man!

RUO. But wherefore do the troopers follow you?

CON. First save my life, then will I talk with you!

WER. You are bestained with blood! What is  
the matter?

CON. The Emperor's bailiff who upon the Ross-  
berg——

KUO. What, Wolfenschiessen! does he follow you?

CON. He will do harm no more, for—I have slain  
him.

ALL [*stepping back*]. Now, God be gracious! where-  
fore did you so?

CON. What every freeman in my place had done,  
I've done—avenged the insult of my house  
On the base wronger of my wife and honour,

Kuo. Did he then venture aught against your honour?

CON. That he did not fulfil his bad intent,  
Have righteous heaven and this good axe prevented.

WER. What! with the hatchet then you clove his head?

Kuo. Oh, let us hear it all! you still have time,  
Whilst he the boat is loosing from the shore.

CON. Whilst I was felling wood within the forest,  
My wife came running in the greatest anguish;  
The governor was lying at our house,  
And had commanded to prepare a bath,  
Then more, and unbecoming, had attempted;  
She had sprung forth to seek me: home I ran,  
And with my axe in hand have blessed his bath.

WER. And you did well! no man can blame you for it.

Kuo. The tyrant! he has met at last the fate  
He long has merited from Unterwalden!

CON. The deed was public—they are after me:  
Whilst we are speaking, God! the time runs on.

*[It begins to thunder.]*

Kuo. Quick! boatman, quick! and put the brave man over.

Ruo. It cannot be—a fearful storm is coming!  
You must wait here a little.

CON. Holy God!  
I cannot wait: each moment may be death.

KUO. [*to the FISHERMAN*]. Rely on God, and try it,  
fisherman !

Man ought to help his neighbour in distress ;  
The same to any one of us might happen.

[*Thunder and roaring of the wind.*]

RUO. The storm is loose—you see how high the  
lake goes,

I cannot steer against the wind and waves.

CON. [*embracing his knees*]. So help you God, as  
you do pity me !

WER. 'Tis for his life ! boatman, be merciful !

KUO. He is a father ! he has wife and children !

[*Repeated claps of thunder.*]

RUO. And have not I a life to lose ? At home  
Have I not wife and child like him ? Look there !  
See ! how the billows roll, the whirlpool rages,  
And lifts up all the waters of the deep.  
With pleasure would I save the poor brave man,  
But 'tis impossible—you see it is.

CON. [*still on his knees*]. Must I then fall into the  
enemy's hand,  
Whilst the protecting shore is full in sight ?  
Yonder it lies ! The eye can reach it clearly,  
A powerful voice be well-nigh heard across ;  
There is the boat, could bear me from destruction,  
And here must I remain forlorn and helpless !

KUO. See ! who comes here ?

WER. ' It is brave Tell of Burglen.

*Enter TELL, with his crossbow.*

TELL. Who is the man that here entreats assistance ?

KUO. 'Tis an Alzeller man, who to defend  
His honour has the Wolfenschiessen slain,  
The bailiff who upon the Rossberg dwelt.  
The bailiff's troopers are upon his heels :  
The boatman he implores to bear him over,  
Who trembles at the storm, and will not venture.

RUO. Here is the Tell—he too can steer the bark,  
And he shall tell us if 'tis possible.

*[Repeated thunder : the lake roars loudly.]*

It were to plunge into the jaws of hell,  
A thing no man would do who had his senses.

TELL. The truly brave thinks last of his own  
safety ;

Trust thou in God, and succour the distressed.

RUO. From the safe port 'tis easy to advise !  
There is the boat, and there the water !—try !

TELL. The water may—the bailiff will not pity :  
Attempt it, boatman !

ALL. Save him ! save him ! save him !

RUO. Were it my brother, or my only child,  
It could not be ! 'Tis Simon and Jude's feast,  
The lake is raging, and will have its victim.

TELL. With idle talking nothing can be done,  
Time presses on, the man must be assisted !  
Speak, boatman ! will you venture ?

RUO. No ! not I !

TELL. In God's name then, give me the boat—  
I will

With my poor skill and feeble arm attempt it.

KUO. Ah ! noble Tell !

WER. 'Tis like the gallant hunter !

CON. You are my saviour and my angel, Tell.

TELL. Well may I save you from the bailiff's  
power,

But from the tempest's rage another must ;

Yet better 'tis you fall into God's hands

Than into those of men ! [To the SHEPHERD.

Countryman ! thou

Comfort my wife if aught of evil happen !

I have but done what I could not leave undone.

[He springs into the boat.

KUO. [to the FISHERMAN]. You are a master  
steersman—what the Tell

Has bravely dared might you not, too, have ventured ?

RUO. Far better men than I would never dare

What Tell has dared—there live not two like  
him

In the whole circuit of the mountains round.

WER. [who has climbed the rocks]. He pushes off !

God help thee now, brave seaman !

See how the little bark is sorely tossed !

KUO. [on the shore]. The billows sweep clean over  
it ! 'tis gone !

But hold ! 'tis there again ! How gallantly

The adventurous boatman labours through the breakers !

SEP. The bailiff's troopers at full speed are coming.

KUO. By Heaven, they are so ! here was help at need !

*Enter some of LANDENBERGER'S TROOPERS.*

1ST TROOPER. Give up the murderer, whom ye here conceal !

2ND TROOPER. He came this way ; in vain ye try to hide him !

KUO. *and* RUO. Whom mean ye, troopers ?

1ST TROOPER [*discovering the boat*]. Ah ! what see I ? Hell !

WER. [*above*]. Is't he in yonder boat ye seek ?  
Ride on,

And if ye follow hard ye yet may take him !

2ND TROOPER. Curse him ! escaped !

1ST TROOPER [*to the PEASANT*].

You have assisted him,  
And you shall pay for it ! Fall on their cattle,  
Destroy their cottage—burn and beat it down !

*[They push forward.]*

SEP. [*hurrying after*]. O my poor lambs !

KUO. [*following*]. Alas for me ! my herds !

WER. Oh ! murderous tyranny !

RUO. [*wringing his hands*]. Justice of heaven !  
When will a saviour come to this poor land !

[*He follows them.*]

SCENE II.—*At Steinen, in Schwitz. A lime-tree before STAUFFACHER'S house, on the high road near the bridge. Enter WERNER STAUFFACHER and PFEIFFER of Lucern in conversation.*

PFE. Once more, my friend, remember what I've told you :

Swear not to Austria, if you can avoid it :  
Hold to the Empire firm as hitherto,  
And God preserve you in your ancient freedom !

STA. Yet wait the coming of my wife—you are  
My guest at Schwitz, as I at Lucern yours.

PFE. I thank you much, but must to-day to Gersau.  
Whatever you may have to suffer still  
From the harsh rule and avarice of your bailiff,  
Bear it in patience ! Other days may come,  
Another Emperor may direct the Empire :  
But Austria's once, you're Austria's for ever.

[*He goes out. STAUFFACHER sits down gloomily on the bench under the lime-tree, where he is found by GERTRUDE, who observes him for some time in silence.*]

GER. So serious, my friend ! I scarcely know thee.  
For many a day I have remarked in silence  
How dark reflection furrows o'er thy brow.



Some silent sorrow presses on thy heart :  
Trust it to me—I am thy faithful wife,  
And well may claim my portion of thy sorrows.

*[He gives her his hand, but is silent.]*

What can afflict thy bosom ? Let me know it !  
Blessed is thy labour, prosperous are thy fortunes,  
Full are thy stores, complete the herds of cattle,  
Of strong and well-fed horses a sleek train  
Is from the mountains happily returned  
To winter in their warm and convenient stalls.  
There stands thy house, rich as a nobleman's,  
Of handsome and substantial timber built,  
Newly repaired, and artfully disposed :  
Its glancing windows speak of inward comfort,  
With various coats-of-arms 'tis painted o'er,  
And with wise proverbs, which the wanderer  
Remains to ponder, and admires their sense.

STA. Well is the house adorned, and firmly built ;  
But, ah ! the ground on which it stands is hollow.

GER. Tell me, my Werner, what it is you mean.

STA. Lately I sat beneath this very lime,  
As here I sat to-day, and, pleased, reviewed  
My favourite schemes so happily accomplished ;  
When by there came from Kusnacht, his proud castle,  
The governor and his men. Before this house  
He paused, and seemed to wonder. I arose,  
And with submission due the lord approached,  
Chosen within this land to represent  
The Emperor's rightful power. 'Whose is this house?'

Asked he maliciously, for he knew well !  
With wary caution therefore I replied,  
' This house, sir, is my fief, held of the Emperor,  
Your feudal lord and mine.' Whereon he answered,  
' The Emperor's vicegerent here I stand,  
And will not that the boor should build his house  
In surly independence, and live free,  
As though he were the master in the land :  
It shall be my care to prevent such doings.'  
So saying, he rode off with ominous mien,  
And I remained revolving anxiously  
The threatening of his dark malignant mind.

GER. My honoured lord and husband ! mightest  
thou  
Receive an honest counsel from thy wife ?  
I boast myself the noble Iberg's daughter,  
The much experienced man. We sisters sat  
Spinning the wool through the long winter nights,  
When at our father's house assembled oft  
The leaders of the people to peruse  
The ancient charters which the Emperors gave,  
And the best interests of the land discuss.  
I marked attentive many a prudent word,  
The wise man's counsel, and the good man's wish,  
Which in my bosom carefully I stored.  
Refuse not then to hear me—long I've known  
The secret care that presses on thy soul.  
The bailiff hates—would gladly ruin thee,  
For that thou art a hindrance to his views,

And wouldst not that the Swiss should be subjected

To the new princely house, but firm and true  
Hold to the Empire, as their fathers did.

Is't not so, Werner? Is not this the truth?

STA. It is: this is the reason Gesler hates me.

GER. Yes! he is envious of thee, that thou dwell'st  
A free man on thine own inheritance:  
For he has none. From the Emperor himself  
And Empire holdest thou immediately  
This house in fief, on independent terms,  
As e'er the proudest noble held his lands.  
Over thee thou acknowledgest no master,  
Save him—the mightiest in Christendom.  
But he, a younger brother of his house,  
Can boast of nothing, nothing call his own,  
Save the insignia of his knightly rank.  
Therefore he looks on every happier lot  
With jaundiced eye of poisonous suspicion.  
Long has he sworn thy ruin—yet thou stand'st  
Uninjured! Wilt thou wait till, quite prepared,  
The wretch shall heap his vengeance on thy head?  
The prudent man prevents.

STA. What's to be done?

GER. Hear my advice. Thou know'st how here  
at Schwitz

All honest men lament the tyranny  
And avarice of this bailiff. So, doubt not,  
That they in Uri and in Unterwalden

Are sick of like oppression, and the yoke  
Would fling off gladly. For, as Gesler here,  
So Landenberger with like insolence  
Bears himself yonder. Not a fishing-boat  
Comes o'er the lake which brings not to our ears  
Intelligence of some fresh cruelty,  
Some lawless stretch of power. Therefore 'twere well  
That some of you who mean it honestly  
Should secretly assemble, and advise  
How best this sore oppression to remove :  
And sure I am that God would not forsake you,  
But to the righteous cause would gracious prove.  
In Uri hast thou not some friend to whom  
Thou freely mayst unbosom all thy soul ?

STA. Yes, I know yonder many a gallant heart,  
Many respected noble gentlemen,  
Who well deserve my closest confidence. [Rises.  
Wife ! what a storm of wild and dangerous thoughts  
Hast thou awakened in my quiet breast !  
Thy inmost soul thou hast arrayed against me,  
Bringing it outward to the light of day ;  
And what I scarce durst whisper to myself,  
With fluent tongue hast lightly spoken out !  
But hast thou well bethought thee what thou dost ?  
The wild confusion and the din of arms  
Wouldst thou recall into these peaceful valleys ?  
Shall we, a timid race of shepherds, dare  
To meet in fight the masters of the world ?  
A fair pretence is all they seek to pour

Their savage hordes on this unhappy land,  
To exercise therein the rights of conquerors,  
And, under colour of fit retribution,  
Destroy the ancient charters of our freedom.

GER. Ye too are men, and know to wield the axe,  
Essay your fortune: God assists the just.

STA. O wife! a fearful, raging fiend is war,  
It slays alike the shepherd and the sheep!

GER. Man must endure what Heaven is pleased to  
send,  
No noble heart can learn to bear injustice.

STA. This house delights thee, which we just have  
finished;  
The monster war will burn it to the ground.

GER. Thought I this heart were fixed on earthly  
goods,  
This hand should be the first to fling the brand.

STA. Thou think'st of soft humanity! but war  
Spare not the smiling infant in its cradle.

GER. Innocence ever has a friend in Heaven!  
Look forwards, dearest Werner, not behind you.

STA. We men may perish bravely on the field;  
But you, my Gertrude, what would be your fate?

GER. Even to the weakest the last choice is open.  
A spring from yonder bridge should set me free.

STA. [*rushing into her arms*]. Who to his bosom  
presses such a heart  
Will fight with transport for his house and home,  
And fear the armies of no earthly king.

To Uri will I go immediately :  
There lives a friend I value, Walter Furst,  
Who on these weighty matters thinks as I do.  
There shall I find the noble baron too,  
Von Attinghaus, who, though of lofty rank,  
The people loves, and honours the old customs.  
With both of these will I consult how best  
To drive the proud oppressor from the land.  
Farewell, dear wife ! and whilst I am afar,  
Thy house conduct with prudent management.  
To the poor pilgrim journeying to God's house,  
The pious monk who gathers for his convent,  
Give liberally, and dismiss him well provided.  
Stauffacher's house shuns not the sight—it stands  
By the wayside, a hospitable roof  
For every traveller who desires its shelter.

*[They retire towards the background.]*

*Enter WILLIAM TELL, with BAUMGARTEN.*

TELL *[to BAUMGARTEN]*. You have no further need  
of my assistance.

Enter but yonder house—there will you find  
The Stauffacher, a father of the oppressed.  
But see ! he's here himself. Follow me ! Come.

*[They retire.]*

SCENE III.—*An open place at Altorf. On an eminence in the background is seen a fort in the act of being built, and which has proceeded so far that the form of the whole is visible. Scaffolding : various WORKPEOPLE going up and down. All is in agitation and motion.*

SUPERINTENDENT, MASTER STONEMASON, WORKMEN, and LABOURERS.

SUP. [*urging on the WORKPEOPLE with a stick*].

Methinks you've rested long enough ! Come, quick !

Bring up the lime, the mortar, and the stone,  
That when the governor comes, he may perceive  
Something is done. These people creep like snails !

[*To LABOURERS, who are carrying.*

Call you that carrying ? Quick, let it be doubled :  
How these vile thieves contrive to rob their masters !

1ST WOR. 'Tis very hard that we the stones should  
drag

That are ourselves to awe and be our dungeon !

SUP. What ! are you grumbling ? 'Tis a worthless race,

And fit for nothing, save their kine to milk,  
And idly lounge about upon their mountains.

OLD MAN [*rests*]. I can no more !

SUP. [*shaking him*]. Up, old man, to your labour !

1ST WOR. Have you no bowels, that the hoary head

Which scarce can bear itself, you thus compel  
To such hard service?

SEVERAL. It cries out to Heaven!

SUP. Mind your own business—I but do my duty.

2ND WOR. Superintendent, how will it be named,  
This fort which we are building here?

SUP. Keep Uri—  
And with this keep we'll bow you to the yoke.

WOR. Keep Uri?

SUP. Why do you laugh?

2ND WOR. Think you  
With such a thing as this to keep down Uri?

1ST WOR. How many of such molehills must you pile

One on the other but the least to equal  
Of all the mountains that are found in Uri?

[SUPERINTENDENT goes towards the background.]

MAS. STONE. Into the deepest lake I'll cast the  
hammer  
Which served to forward this accursed work!

*Enter TELL and STAUFFACHER.*

STA. Oh! that I ne'er had lived to see this day!

TELL. 'Tis not good to be here! Let us go  
further.

STA. Am I in Uri—in the land of freedom?



STONE. Oh, sir ! if you had only seen the dungeon  
Beneath these towers ! Yes ! yes ! he who dwells  
there

Will never hear the cock crow more.

STA.

O God !

STONE. Look at these buttresses, these bastions,  
Which stand intended for eternity.

TELL. What hands have built, hands also may  
destroy :

That house of freedom God Himself has founded.

[*Pointing to the mountains.*]

*A drum is heard. PEOPLE enter, carrying a hat upon  
a stick, followed by a PUBLIC CRIER : WOMEN  
and CHILDREN rush in tumultuously.*

1ST WOR. What is that drum ? Give your atten-  
tion ! listen !

STONE. What means this strange procession, and  
that hat ?

CRIER. In the Emperor's name ! hear !

WOR.

Be still, and listen !

CRIER. Ye see this hat, inhabitants of Uri :

It will be hung upon the lofty pillar

Which crowns the highest eminence in Altorf.

And this is the lord bailiff's will and pleasure :

This hat shall be respected as himself,

And you shall honour it with bended knee,

And with uncovered head : so shall the king

Know those who proffer him willing obedience.  
Whoso despises and neglects this order  
Shall forfeit goods and person to the king.

*[A loud laugh ; the drum beats, and the procession  
passes on.]*

1ST WOR. What new unheard-of folly has the  
bailiff

Invented now? What! we respect a hat?  
What man could ever dream of such a thing!

STONE. We to a hat bow down the knee!  
Absurd!

Trifles he thus with honest worthy people?

1ST WOR. If it were but the imperial crown!  
But 'tis

The hat of Austria! I've seen it hang  
Over the throne where vassals do their homage.

STONE. The hat of Austria! Mark! 'tis some  
device

To place us in the power of Austria!

WOR. No honest man would stoop to such disgrace.

STONE. Come! let us go, and counsel with the  
rest.

*[They retire.]*

TELL *[to STAUFFACHER]*. You now know all, and  
so, good sir, farewell!

STA. But wherefore in such haste? yet stay  
awhile.

TELL. My house requires the father. Fare ye well !

STA. Full is my heart, and yearns to speak with you.

TELL. The heavy heart is not made light by words.

STA. Words may perchance conduct us on to deeds.

TELL. The only deeds are now—patience and silence.

STA. Shall we then bear what is intolerable ?

TELL. Who govern rashly, govern shortly too.  
When the storm rises from the dark abyss,  
Men quench their fires, in haste the vessel seeks  
The sheltering haven ; and the mighty spirit  
Walks scarce observed and harmless o'er the earth.  
Let each but tarry quietly at home—  
The peaceful man is gladly left in peace.

STA. Think you so ?

TELL. Unprovoked, the serpent stings not—  
They will at last grow weary of themselves,  
So they but see the land continue tranquil.

STA. We could do much did we but stand together.

TELL. Yet when the shipwrecked vessel goes to pieces  
Each individual better helps himself.

STA. So coldly do you leave the common cause ?

TELL. Each one may safest count on his own strength.



We were a happy people, but with you  
Despair has entered the abodes of peace.

BER. [*to the SUPERINTENDENT, who returns*]. Lives  
he?

[*He makes a sign to the contrary.*]

Unhappy castle, built with curses,  
With curses doomed to be inhabited!

SCENE IV. — WALTER FURST'S house. WALTER  
FURST and ARNOLD VON MELCHTAL enter at the  
same time on opposite sides.

MEL. Sir! Walter Furst?

FUR. What if they should surprise us!  
Stay where you are! We are hemmed round by  
spies.

MEL. Bring you no news from Unterwalden?  
none

Of my poor father? I will brook no longer  
My time to waste an idle prisoner here.  
What have I done that bears so deep a dye  
That I should hide me like a murderer?  
Have I done aught but broken with my staff  
The finger of a saucy forward boy,  
Who at the bailiff's bidding would have gladly  
My lovely team of oxen driven away  
Before my very eyes?

FUR. You are too quick. •  
That boy was the lord bailiff's, and was sent,

A messenger of justice, to collect  
The fine you had incurred, and which, though hard,  
You should have borne in silence.

MEL.

Borne in silence !

What ! and the sneering message which the lad  
Brought from his shameless master ? ‘ Tell the  
boor,

If he loves bread, that he may learn himself  
To drag the plough.’ It cut me to the heart  
To see the oxen loosened from the yoke.  
The noble beasts lowed dismally, and their horns  
Brandished, as though themselves felt the injustice.  
Then, with excusable resentment fired,  
No longer master of myself, I struck him.

FUR. Oh ! scarcely can we govern our own hearts !  
How then shall hasty youth subdue its passions !

MEL. I grieve for nothing save my father—he  
Needs such attention, and his son so far !  
Besides the bailiff hates him, that he ever  
Has pleaded honestly our rights and freedom.  
Now, therefore, will they crush the poor old man,  
While none is near to save him from oppression.  
Happen what will to me, I must away !

FUR. Yet stay awhile—collect yourself, be patient,  
Until some news arrive from Unterwalden.  
I hear a knocking ! Go ! perchance it is  
A message from the bailiff. Go !—in Uri  
You are not safe from Landenberger’s arm,  
For tyrants hold the hand to one another.

MEL. They teach us what we ought to do.

FUR.

Go in!

If all is safe, I will recall you. Go! [*He goes in.*

Unhappy boy! I dare not tell him all

My heart forebodes of evil! Who knocks there?

Oft as the door opes I expect to see

Enter misfortune. Treachery and suspicion

In every corner lurk. The slaves of power

Invade the deep recesses of each house,

And soon I fear will force us bolts to seek,

And barriers to protect our very doors.

[*He opens the door, and steps back astonished as*

STAUFFACHER enters.

What see I? Werner! you! Now by my soul

A worthy and dear guest! No better man

Has ever placed his foot across this threshold:

Welcome to-day, as ever, to my roof!

What brings you here? What seek you here in

Uri?

STA. [*giving him his hand*]. The good old times,  
and good old Switzerland!

FUR. These bring you with you! See! at sight  
of you

High leaps my heart, and seems to enjoy new life.

Seat yourself, Werner! Tell me, how is Gertrude,

Your excellent wife, the sage and prudent daughter

Of the wise Iberg? Not a traveller comes

From Germany by Meinrad's Zell to Italy;

Who speaks not of your hospitable house.

But did you come too quickly from Fluellen,  
Or had you time aught that deserved attention  
To note, e'er you set foot upon this threshold ?

STA. [*seating himself*]. Yes ! yes ! I saw astonished  
a new work,  
Which gave me little pleasure to behold.

FUR. O friend ! a single glance has told you all !

STA. In Uri such a thing was never heard of !  
Within the memory of man has been  
No fortress here—no dungeon but the grave.

FUR. You name it well—it is the grave of freedom !

STA. I will keep nothing from you, friend ! I  
come,  
Not led by idle curiosity,  
For anxious cares oppress me. I have left  
Sorrow at home, and sorrow find I here.  
No longer is it possible to bear  
What we have borne ; nor, could we still endure it,  
Can we perceive a limit to our woes.  
Free was the Swiss from ancient times till now :  
They called us happy—scarcely had been heard  
The voice of mourning in the land since first  
The herdsman drove his herds upon these mountains.

FUR. 'Tis quite without example how they drive  
us !

Even the noble Attinghausen, who  
The former times has seen, avows himself



This misery is no longer to be borne.

STA. In Unterwalden yonder 'tis the same,  
And bloody has the retribution been !  
The Emperor's bailiff, Wolfenschiessen, who  
Upon the Rossberg dwelt, has wantonly  
Longed for forbidden fruit, Baumgarten's wife  
Sought to mislead, and with resentment fired  
The indignant husband slew him with his axe.

FUR. Heaven's judgments still are righteous ! Who  
did this ?

Baumgarten, say you ? Excellent young man !  
But is he safe, and is he well concealed ?

STA. Tell bore him o'er the lake, and now at  
Steinen

He lies concealed with me : but full report  
Has the same messenger from Sarnen brought  
Of an event more dreadful, which the heart  
Of every generous man must cause to bleed.

FUR. [*attentive*]. What is it ? say !

STA. In Melchtal, where at Kerns  
The traveller enters, dwells an upright man,  
Known by the name of Henry von der Halden,  
His lineage in those parts not quite unknown.

FUR. Who knows not that ! But what of him ?  
Proceed.

STA. The son for some slight error had incurred  
A penalty, and Landenberger sent  
The fine to levy, but when he who came  
To execute the order would have seized

His oxen, the best pair of all the yoke,  
The youth, impelled by anger, struck the knave  
And fled.

FUR. The father! What became of him?

STA. The father was commanded to appear  
In Landenberger's presence, and instantly  
Produce the son: and when the poor old man  
Swore that in truth he knew not where he was,  
The tyrant bade his executioners  
Enter—

FUR. [*springs up and would lead him to the other side*].  
Oh, silence!

STA. [*with increasing animation*]. "He may have  
escaped,  
But I have thee. Quick! fling him to the ground,  
And with the pointed steel bore out his eyes."

FUR. Merciful heaven!

MEL. [*rushing out*]. Bore out his eyes, said you?

STA. [*astonished, to WALTER FURST*]. Who is that  
youth?

MEL. [*grasping him with convulsive agitation*]. Oh!  
answer me! His eyes?

FUR. Oh! the unhappy boy!

STA. Who is the youth?

[FURST makes him a sign.]

It is the son? All-righteous God!

MEL. And I

Must be away so far! What! both his eyes?

FUR. Compose yourself, and bear it like a man!

MEL. And on account of me—my fault alone !  
Blind too ! What ! really and completely blind ?

STA. Too true ! 'tis drained—the fountain of his  
sight !

The light of day he never will see more !

FUR. Spare, spare his sorrow !

MEL. Never—never again !

*[He presses his hand upon his eyes and is silent  
some moments, then continues in a softer  
voice, interrupted with tears.]*

Oh ! 'tis a noble, noble gift of Heaven,  
The gift of light. Each being lives on light,  
And all creation feels its gladdening power !  
The plants themselves turn joyful to the light :  
And he amidst the night must groping sit  
Of an eternal darkness. Him revives  
No longer the warm meadow's vivid green ;  
No more can he the floweret's melting dyes,  
The roseate-tinted glacier more behold.  
To die—is nothing—nothing ! but to live,  
And not to see—is misery indeed !  
Why do you look at me so piteously !  
I have two glistening eyes, and cannot give  
One to my poor blind father—not a ray—  
The faintest glimmering of that flood of light  
Which bursts upon my eyes in dazzling splendour.

STA. Still more, alas ! I must increase your grief,  
In place of healing it. There needed more :  
The tyrant has seized all that he possessed,

And nothing left him, save the staff with which,  
Naked and blind, from door to door he wanders.

MEL. Nought but a staff left to the dark old man !  
Deprived of all, even of the sun's fair light,  
The common blessing of the meanest beggar !  
Tell me no more of tarrying and concealment !  
Why, what a miserable wretch was I,  
Meanly for my own safety to provide,  
And not for thine—thy valued head to leave  
A pledge within the tyrant's hands ! Farewell,  
Cowardly prudence ! Henceforth I will think  
Of nothing, save of bloody retribution.  
I will away—none here shall keep me longer  
From the inhuman bailiff to demand  
My father's eyes. Encompassed by his guards,  
I'll find him out—my life I count at nothing,  
So I but cool my intolerable anguish  
In his life's blood. [*Going.*

FUR. Be counselled ! stay awhile !  
What could you do 'gainst him ? He sits at Sarnen  
In his proud castle Herrenburg, and laughs  
From his safe fortress at your powerless anger.

MEL. And did he dwell amidst the icy ramparts  
Which crown the Shreckhorn—or where higher still,  
Veiled since eternity, the Jungfrau stands,  
Thither I'd force my way—with twenty comrades,  
Minded like me, would storm his fastnesses.  
And should no mortal follow—should you all,  
Trembling to lose your houses and your herds,

Bow to the tyrant's yoke—the herdsmen then  
Will I assemble from their mountain dwellings,  
'Neath the free roof of heaven—and where the  
soul

Still keeps its freshness, and the heart is sound,  
Loudly proclaim these foul enormities.

STA. [*to FURST*]. 'Tis at the height—why should  
we longer wait,  
Till to extremity——

MEL.                   What extremity?  
What is there more to dread, when thus the eye  
Within its socket is no longer safe?  
Are we defenceless? Wherefore did we learn  
To bend the crossbow, and the weight to urge  
Of the stern battle-axe? To every creature  
Is given a hold of hope, to which it clings  
In the dark hour of anguish and despair!  
The timid hart, exhausted, turns to bay,  
And with its fearful antlers scares the hounds;  
The chamois tears the hunter down the abyss;  
The very ox—the sharer of man's cares,  
The gentle inmate of his house, who bows  
His powerful neck in patience to the yoke—  
Springs up, provoked, sharpens his dreadful horn,  
And tosses to the sky his helpless foe.

FUR. If the three lands but thought as we three  
think,  
Something, perchance, might happily be accom-  
plished.

STA. When Uri calls, and Unterwalden helps,  
The Schwitzer still the ancient league will honour.

MEL. Not few the friends I count in Unterwalden,  
And each his dearest life-blood would not spare,  
If back to back supported by the rest.

O venerable fathers of this land,  
I stand between you here, the old in wisdom,  
Only a youth ; amidst the assembled people  
My voice must modestly be silent. Yet,  
Although I be but young, though many years  
Have not matured my prudence, scorn not, there-  
fore,

My counsel or my speech. For not the heat  
Of young and hasty blood urges me on,  
But deep, heart-piercing anguish, that might move  
The flinty rocks themselves to pity me.  
Yourselves are fathers—heads of families,  
And would not you a virtuous son desire,  
To honour your gray hairs, and piously  
Your aged sight protect ? Oh ! do not then,  
Because the oppressor's hand has not yet touched  
Your fortunes or yourselves—because your eyes  
Still move uninjured in their glistening spheres,  
Look strangely on my sorrows. Over you  
Hangs the same sword of tyranny—the land  
You too have sought to turn away from Austria :  
This was my father's only fault—and you  
Have shared like guilt—must share like condem-  
nation.

STA. [*to* WALTER FURST]. Do you resolve, I am prepared to follow.

FUR. Yet let us hear what say the noble barons,  
Von Sillinen and Attinghaus—their names  
Will win us friends, and strongly back our cause.

MEL. Where are the names within our mountain  
vales  
Worthier than yours, and yours? To names like  
these

The people bow their faith, and in the land  
They are of good report. You have received  
A rich inheritance of paternal virtue,  
Which has lost nothing in your hands. Why then  
Need we the nobles? Let us do ourselves  
The work we have to do; nor will I doubt  
That, even alone, we could defend ourselves.

STA. The nobles are by like necessity  
Urged not. The stream which rages in the valleys  
Has not yet reached the heights. But when the land  
Is once in arms their aid will not be wanting.

FUR. Were there an umpire between us and  
Austria,  
Then law and justice might decide the cause:  
But our oppressor is our Emperor too,  
And judge supreme—and, therefore, God must help  
us

Through our own arm. Do you the men of Schwitz  
Attempt to rouse—I will find friends in Uri:  
But whom to send to Unterwalden?

MEL.

Me !

That be my care : to whom can it be nearer ?

FUR. I cannot yield to that—you are my guest,  
And I, your host, must answer for your safety !

MEL. I know each secret path—each mountain  
pass,  
And shall not want for friends, who from the foe  
Will guard my steps, and find me food and shelter.

STA. God will protect him ! Yonder is no traitor !  
The tyranny is so utterly detested,  
That it can find no instrument. Baumgarten  
Will in the lower country friends procure,  
And raise the land.

MEL. But how impart the news  
Of what we do, and not excite suspicion ?

STA. At Brunnen, or at Treib, we might assemble,  
Where meet the merchants to discharge their vessels.

FUR. We may not push the affair too openly.  
Hear my suggestion. Left of the lake to him  
Who sails towards Brunnen, and directly opposite  
The Mytenstein, lies a secluded meadow,  
Bosomed in wood—the shepherds call it Rutli,  
Because the forest thence is rooted out.

There meet the boundaries of your land and ours,

[To MELCHTAL.

There stands the landmark, and an easy passage

[To STAUFFACHER.

Thither from Schwitz conducts the light canoe.  
By paths but rarely trod we may repair



Thither by night, and spend the solemn hour  
In secret council ; thither too may bring  
Each man ten others, minded like himself,  
Whom he can safely trust, and there in common  
Advise what most is proper to be done.

STA. So let it be determined. Now, your hand—  
Now give me yours ! As we three honestly,  
Free from all guile and falsehood, here join hands,  
So the three lands shall firmly stand together,  
For freedom or destruction—life or death.

FUR. *and* MEL. For life or death !

*[They stand for some time hand in hand, and are  
silent.]*

MEL. Alas ! my poor blind father !  
Thou wilt no longer see the day of freedom,  
But thou shalt hear it ! When from Alp to Alp  
The blazing beacons toss their flames on high,  
And the proud castles of the tyrants fall,  
The joyful Swiss shall seek thy humble dwelling,  
Thine ear shall drink the tidings of our freedom,  
And day once more arise upon thy darkness.

*ACT II.*



## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Gothic Hall, ornamented with coats-of-arms, in the Castle of the BARON VON ATTINGHAUSEN. The BARON, a gray-headed old man, of lofty and commanding stature, leaning on a stick tipped with the horn of a chamois and dressed in fur garments. KUONI and six other SERVANTS stand around him with rakes and scythes. Enter ULRICH VON RUDENZ, in the garb of a knight.*

RUD. What is your pleasure, uncle ?

ATT.

First permit

That, following the old custom of my house,  
I take the morning draught amidst my servants.

*[He drinks out of a goblet, which he passes to the rest in succession.]*

Once I was wont myself in field and wood  
To lead them forth, myself to share their labours,  
As when my banner led them to the field.  
But now I can but play the overlooker,  
And if the genial sun comes not to me  
I can no longer seek it on the mountains.

And so in narrower and still narrower circle,  
With feeble steps I journey onwards, towards  
The narrowest and last, where life stands still—  
Scarcely the shade of what I was—and soon  
Only to be a name.

KUO. [*offering the cup to RUDENZ*]. Young man, I  
pledge you. [*As he hesitates to take it.*]  
Come, cheerily! 'Tis from one cup, one heart.

ATT. Go, children! When the festive evening  
calls  
From finished labour, once again assembled,  
Will we the interests of the land discuss.  
[SERVANTS *retire*.]

ATtinghausen and RUDENZ.

ATT. I see thee on the alert, and well appointed!  
Wilt thou to Altorf—to the Herrenburg?

RUD. Yea, uncle, and I tarry here too long.

ATT. [*seating himself*]. Art thou in such a hurry?  
Has thy youth  
So sparingly been measured out to thee,  
That thou must save it from thy poor old uncle?

RUD. I see you have no longer need of me.  
I am become a stranger in this house.

ATT. [*regarding him steadfastly for some time*]. Alas!  
'tis but too true! Alas! that home  
To thee is a strange place! O Uly! Uly!  
I know thee now no more. I see thee deck  
In costly silk thy limbs, across thy shoulder

The purple mantle fling, and vauntingly  
Bear the proud peacock's feather in thy cap :  
The peasant thou regardest with disdain,  
And sham'st thee of his honest manly greeting.

RUD. I yield him willingly all honour due.  
What he would claim of right I shall refuse him.

ATT. Thou know'st how the whole land feels  
grievously

The anger of the king. Each honest heart  
Is filled with anguish for the dreadful woes  
We are compelled to suffer. Thee alone  
Moves not the general sorrow—thee we see,  
Renouncing friends and kindred, range thyself  
Upon the stranger's side ; our wretched state  
Deriding, carelessly the chase pursue  
Of airy joys, and meanly stoop to court  
A prince's favours, whilst thy native land  
Bleeds from the heavy scourge of his oppression.

RUD. The land is sore oppressed—and why, my  
uncle ?

Who has reduced it to this sore distress ?  
One little word is all that is required  
To free us from the oppression, and to win us  
A gracious master ! Woe then !—woe to those  
Who blind the people that they may not see  
Their own best interests—who, for private ends,  
Strive to mislead the country, and prevent it  
From swearing to acknowledge Austria's power,  
As all the countries round about have done.

Yes, yes; it suits them well — these haughty  
peasants,

To sit with nobles in the rank of lords!

These men desire the Emperor for their master,  
That they may have no master but themselves.

ATT. Must I hear this, and hear it from thy  
mouth?

RUD. Let me proceed in answer to your question.

What kind of part is it which you, my uncle,  
Yourself play here? Have you no higher pride,  
Than as Landamman, or as Banneret,  
To rule a small and pitiful tribe of shepherds?  
How! Were it not a far more splendid choice  
Homage to render to a kingly master,  
And court fair honour in his glorious camp;  
Than here to sit, the peer of your own servants,  
And share the seat of justice with the peasant?

ATT. Ah, Ulrich! Ulrich! Well I recognise  
Seduction's flattering voice. Thine open ear  
Has it usurped—has poisoned thy free soul.

RUD. Yes! I will not deny—the stranger's scorn,  
Who calls us tauntingly the peasant-nobles,  
Sinks deep into my heart. I cannot brook  
That while the generous youth who thither throng  
Gather proud laurels under Hapsburg's banners,  
I must pine idly on my own estate,  
And in the dull routine of common duties  
My spring of life consume. While splendid deeds

Are elsewhere doing, and a world of glory  
Opens its dazzling scenes beyond these moun-  
tains,

My helm and shield hang rusting in the hall ;  
The inspiring music of the martial clarion,  
The herald's voice inviting to the tourney,  
Break not the stillness of these peaceful valleys—  
Nought but the shepherd-songs, and shepherd-  
bells,

Which tire me with their dull monotony.

ATT. O blinded and seduced by idle pomp,  
Despise the land that bore thee, laugh to scorn  
The ancient pious manners of thy fathers !  
The time will come when thou with burning tears  
Shalt fondly sigh for these thy native mountains ;  
This rude untutored shepherd minstrelsy,  
Which now thy foolish pride disdains to admire,  
Shall press upon thy soul with painful yearnings,  
If once in foreign land it meet thine ear.  
Resistless is the impulse which impels us  
Back to our native soil. The strange false world  
Was never made for thee : with thy true heart  
Wilt thou in yon imperial Court remain  
A stranger ever, for the world demands  
Far other virtues than thou couldst acquire  
In these secluded valleys. Go, then !—go !  
Sell thy free soul, do homage for thy land,  
Become the slave of princes, when thou might'st  
Be thy own master, and thyself a prince,



On thy own land, and free inheritance.  
O Uly!—Uly! Leave not thus thy kindred!  
Go not to Altorf! Oh! desert not thus  
The cause of justice, and thy native land!  
I am the latest of my race—with me  
The name must end. There hang my helm and  
shield;


They fought my battles, and shall share my grave.  
But must the thought my parting breath disturb  
That thou but watchest for my closing eye  
To hie thee to this new, this feudal Court,  
And these my fair possessions, which I free  
From God received, receive from Austria?

RUD. In vain do we attempt to oppose the  
king!

To him belongs the empire of the world.  
Shall we alone, self-willed and obstinate,  
Struggle with power resistless—strive to break  
The chain of lands his power has flung around us?  
His are the marts, the courts of justice his,  
His the highways—and even the very horse  
Which draws upon the Gothard pays him toll.  
We are hemmed in—circled as with a net,  
By lands on him dependent. Will the empire  
Protect us, think you? Can it save itself  
Against the increasing power of Austria?  
If God protect us not, no Emperor can!  
And what reliance can we further place  
Upon an Emperor's words, when they have dared,

As the necessities of war have urged,  
Or want of gold, the cities which have sought  
Beneath the eagle's wings a place of refuge  
To pledge away and sever from the empire?  
No, uncle! no! Some powerful head to seek,  
In these disastrous times of party-feud,  
Is but the dictate of reflecting prudence.  
The imperial crown changes from branch to branch,  
And faithful service claims no more remembrance;  
But to serve well him, who transmits his power  
To a long line of princes, is to sow  
Seed for futurity.

ATT.                      Art thou so wise?  
Wouldst thou see clearer than thy noble fathers,  
Who bravely struggled in the glorious cause,  
Nor counted goods, or life itself, at aught,  
So they might win the precious pearl of freedom?  
Quick! ship thee down to Lucern! There inquire  
How Austria's harsh dominion grinds the land!  
Yes!—they will come to count our sheep and  
cattle,  
Mow down our Alps, prescribe to their own use  
The game that cleaves the air or roams the waste  
In our free forests; place their barriers  
Upon our bridges—at our very doors;  
Pay with our poverty their purchased lands,  
Their battles with our blood. No! if our blood  
We are compelled to shed, let it at least  
Be for ourselves—nor will I ever doubt



That we may buy at a far cheaper rate  
Freedom than slavery !

RUD.                               What can we do,  
A shepherd people, against Albrecht's armies ?

ATT. Learn thou to know this shepherd people,  
boy !

I know it—I have led it into battle,  
Have seen it fighting at Faventium.  
They come to force on us a yoke which we  
Are equally determined not to bear.  
Oh ! learn to feel of what a race thou art,  
Cast not away, for tinsel and vain pomp,  
The jewel of thy worth. Thyself to boast  
The head of a free people, which from love  
Devotes itself to thee—will by thee stand,  
True in the hour of danger and of death—  
This be thy pride—this thy nobility.  
Knit closer still the dear, the early ties,  
Which bind thee to thy country ; hold it fast  
With all thy heart. These are the vigorous roots  
Which will the shock' resist when tempests rage :  
In yonder foreign land thou stand'st alone,  
A feeble reed, and bruised by every storm.  
Oh ! come ! Too long thou art a stranger here !  
Stay with us but one day, one single day !  
Go not to Altorf ! hear'st thou ? Not to-day !  
This single day refuse not to thy friends !

*[Taking his hand.]*

RUD. I gave my word. Excuse me : I am bound.

ATT. [*letting go his hand*]. What sayst thou ? Thou  
art bound ! Unhappy boy,  
I know thou art—but not by word or oath :  
A captive art thou in the bonds of love.

[*RUDENZ turns away.*]

Conceal it as thou wilt—it is the Lady  
Bertha von Brunek, who to Herrenburg  
Draws thee, and chains thee to the Emperor's ser-  
vice.

Thou fondly hop'st to win the noble maiden  
By thy defection from the land. But, Ulrich,  
Do not deceive thyself ! They show the bride  
To lure thee to their purpose—but that bride  
Is not reserved for innocence.

RUD.

Enough !

I've heard enough ! Farewell !

ATT.

Stay, frenzied youth !

He goes ! I cannot hold him—cannot save him !  
So Wolfenschiessen fell from the allegiance  
He owed his country—others soon will follow.  
A strange enchantment hurries forth our youth,  
And spreads with power resistless through our moun-  
tains.

Unhappy day, when first the stranger's foot  
The quiet of our happy vales disturbed,  
And broke upon our holy innocence !  
The new with mighty strides is pressing on ;  
The old—with all that age has sanctified—  
Is fast departing. Other times are coming,

Another race with different thoughts and feelings.  
What do I here? They all are in the grave  
With whom I loved to live and hold sweet converse :

Buried in earth already lies my age.  
Oh ! well for him who parts without regret  
From this new state of things—new race of men !

SCENE II.—*A Meadow, surrounded with rocks and woods.*

*Upon the rocks are ladders and steps, by which the PEASANTS, as they arrive, are seen descending. In the background appears the lake, over which, at times, is observed a rainbow, formed by the reflection of the moon. The view is closed by lofty mountains, and behind them still higher ones, covered with snow. The lake and the white glaciers are gleaming in the moonlight.*

*Enter* MELCHTAL, BAUMGARTEN, WINKELRIED,  
MEIER VON SARNEN, BURKHARDT AM BUHEL,  
ARNOLD VON SEWA, KLAUS VON DER FLUE,  
*and four others, all armed.*

MEL. [*still behind the scenes*]. The mountain-pass  
opens—follow me, quick !  
I know the little cross which crowns that rock ;  
We've reached the goal—we are at Rutli.

WIN.

Hark !

SEWA. It is quite empty.

MEIER.                               None arrived ! We are  
The first upon the ground—we Unterwaldners.

MEL. How goes the night ?

BAU.                               The watch has just cried two  
Upon the Selisberg. [*A sound of bells in the distance.*]

MEIER.                           Be still, and listen !

BUH. The matin-bell of the lone forest chapel  
Sounds sweetly over from the shore of Schwitz.

FLUE. The air is clear, and bears the sound so  
far.

MEL. Go some, and gather wood, that we may  
have  
A cheerful fire when our companions come.

[*Two PEASANTS go out.*]

SEWA. It is a lovely night. The tranquil lake  
Lies like a polished mirror.

BUH.                               They will have  
An easy passage over.

WIN. [*pointing to the lake*]. Ah ! see there !  
See you nought yonder ?

MEIER.                           Yes, indeed ! 'Tis strange—  
A rainbow in the middle of the night !

MEL. 'Tis formed by the reflection of the moon.

FLUE. It is a wondrous sign, and seldom known ;  
Many have lived who ne'er have seen the like.

SEWA. Look !—now 'tis doubled ! There's a paler  
one.

BAU. What boat is that which glides so smoothly  
under ?

MEL. It is the bark of Stauffacher : the brave man  
Makes not his comrades wait.

[*Goes with BAUMGARTEN to the shore.*]

MEIER.                               The men of Uri  
Are slowest to arrive.

BUH.                               A tedious circuit  
Are they compelled to travel through the mountains;  
To elude their bailiff's vigilant suspicion.

[*Two PEASANTS light a fire.*]

MEL. [*on the shore*]. Who goes there? Give the  
word!

STA. [*from below*].               Friends of the land!

[*All advance to meet the new comers.*]

*From the boat ascend STAUFFACHER, REDING, HANS  
AUF DER MAUER, JORG IM HOFE, CONRAD  
HUNN, ULRICH the smith, JOST VON WEILER,  
and three other PEASANTS, all armed.*

ALL [*exclaim*]. Welcome!

[*While they are greeting, MELCHTAL and STAUFFACHER come forwards.*]

MEL.                               O worthy Stauffacher, I've seen  
Him who will never look upon me more!  
My trembling hands upon his eyes have laid,  
And as I dwelt upon their darkened orbs,  
Drunk in the deep and glowing thoughts of vengeance.

STA. Speak not of vengeance; not to avenge the  
past,  
But to ward off the future, meet we here.

But say, how have you sped in Unterwalden ?  
What have you done to advance the common  
cause—

How think the peasantry, and how did you  
Contrive to avoid the snares of treachery ?

MEL. Through the tremendous mountains of  
Surenne,  
Over wide-spreading fields of desert ice,  
Where only hungry vultures scream around,  
I reached the Alpine pastures, where the herdsmen  
From Engelberg and Uri hail their meeting  
With friendly voice, and feed their herds in common.  
Instead of milk, I slaked my parching thirst  
With the cold water, which, in foaming rills,  
Through every crevice pours the glacier forth.  
At night I sheltered in the lonely hut,  
Myself the host and guest, until I stood  
Amidst the dwellings of a social race.  
Even to these sequestered vales had spread  
A rumour of the recent deed of horror,  
And pious reverence received my griefs  
At every door, where in my wanderings  
Awhile I paused. I found these worthy souls  
Deeply enraged at such harsh acts of power :  
For as the Alps nourish from year to year  
The self-same plants, their rushing streamlets flow  
O'er the same beds, the clouds themselves and winds  
Follow the same unalterable course,  
So have from sire to son their ancient forms



Descended down unaltered, nor in truth  
Can they endure to change or turn aside  
The old-accustomed even march of life.  
They gave me their hard hands, and from the wall  
Reached down their rusty swords, while from their  
eyes

Flashed forth glad consciousness of manly daring,  
As I the names recalled, which in the mountains  
Are deemed the holiest—yours and Walter Furst's.  
What you thought right they swore to execute ;  
They swore to follow you even to the death.  
Thus journeying on, protected by the rights  
Of sacred hospitality, at length  
I reached my native vale, where lie, widespread,  
The dwellings of my kindred. There I found  
My poor old father, blind and destitute,  
Lying on strangers' straw, and by the alms  
Of generous men supported.

STA.

Merciful heaven !

MEL. I did not weep ! Not in weak, womanish  
tears

Quenched I the strength of my hot-burning anguish ;  
In my deep breast, even as a precious treasure,  
I locked it up, and thought only of deeds.  
I crept through every crevice of the mountains,  
No glen so lonely but I searched it through,  
Till, even at the very foot arrived  
Of mountains covered with eternal snow,  
I sought and found shealings inhabited,

And wheresoe'er my venturous steps I pushed  
I found like hatred of the tyranny.  
For even on these last and desolate bounds  
Of living nature, where the frozen earth  
Refuses aught to yield that succours man,  
The avarice of our bailiffs seeks for plunder.  
The stinging words I uttered stirred the minds  
Of these bold mountaineers, and all are ours  
With their whole heart and soul.

STA. You have done much,  
And done it in short time.

MEL. I did still more.  
There are two forts which most the peasant dreads,  
Rossberg and Sarnen ; safe behind their walls  
Of solid rock the enemy with ease  
Protects himself, and devastates the land.  
With my own eyes I wished to examine them :  
I went to Sarnen, and explored the castle.

STA. You ventured even to the tiger's den !

MEL. Disguised in pilgrim's garb I went : I saw  
The haughty bailiff revelling at the banquet.  
Judge if I know how to compel my feelings :  
I saw the tyrant—and I slew him not.

STA. Fortune has smiled indeed upon your boldness. *[The rest come forwards.*

But say, who are the friends that follow you ?  
Make me with each respected name acquainted,  
That we in generous confidence may meet,  
And open all our hearts.

MEIER. In the three lands  
Who knows not you, sir! Meier of Sarnen I—  
This Struth von Winkelried, my sister's son.

STA. You name to me names not unknown to  
fame.

A Winkelried it was who slew the dragon  
Beside the Weiler marsh, and left his life  
In the encounter.

WIN. Sir, my ancestor.

MEL. [*pointing to two PEASANTS*]. These dwell  
behind the forest, and are peasants  
Who till the abbey-lands of Engelberg.  
You will not, surely, scorn these simple men,  
Because they're bond, and sit not free like us  
On their inheritance: they love the land,  
And are of good report.

STA. Give me your hands. .  
Let him who owns no master upon earth  
Esteem his fortune blest; but honesty  
Prosper in every station.

HUNN. This is Reding,  
Our former Landamman.

MEIER. I know him well.  
He is my old opponent in the courts  
For an inheritance, the claim of both.  
Reding, before the judges we are foes,  
Here we are friends. [*Shakes his hand.*]

STA. 'Tis bravely spoken.

WIN. Hark !  
At length they come ! That is the horn of Uri.  
[*Armed men are seen descending the rocks,  
right and left, with dark lanterns.*]

MAU. See ! is not that the pious man of God,  
The worthy priest ? The dangers of the way  
Deter not him, nor horrors of the night,  
A faithful shepherd watching o'er his flock.

BAU. Next come the sacristan and Walter Furst,  
But Tell I see not yet amongst the rest.

*Enter WALTER FURST ; ROSSELMAN, the priest ; PETER-  
MAN, the sacristan ; KUONI, the herdsman ; WERNI,  
the hunter ; RUODI, the fisherman, and five others.  
All assembled, in number three-and-thirty, come  
forwards, and form a circle round the fire.*

FUR. And must we, then, upon our native soil,  
And own inheritance, thus covertly  
Steal from our dwellings, and together creep,  
As though we meant to do a deed of murder ;  
And in the night, which over guilt alone,  
And foul conspiracy that hates the light,  
Flings its dark mantle, this our righteous cause  
Discuss in secret, which is fair and spotless,  
As is the pure resplendent fount of day ?

MEL. Let that pass ! What in gloomy night is  
done  
Shall freely forth to meet the searching light.

ROS. Hear the suggestion now, my friends, which  
God  
Has put into my heart. We represent  
A general council of the land, and stand  
For a whole people. Let us, then, observe  
The ancient forms which we in tranquil times  
Are wont to use. If aught irregular  
Appear in this assembly, let necessity  
Plead our excuse: but God is everywhere,  
Where man but seeks the right; and here we stand  
Under His heaven.

STA. Well, let us counsel then  
According to old usage, and the light  
Of our good cause our darkness shall illumine.

MEL. And though the number be not full, the  
hearts  
Of the whole people and the best are present.

HUNN. And if the ancient books are not at hand,  
Yet their contents are written in our hearts.

ROS. Well! form the circle then, and let the  
swords  
Of rightful power be placed within the ring.

MAU. And let the Landamman assume his state,  
The assistants take their station at his side.

SAC. We are three tribes convened! To which  
belongs  
The right to give a president to the meeting?

MEIER. This honour Uri may dispute with Schwitz,  
We Unterwaldners freely yield it up.

MEL. We give it up—we are the suppliants  
Who ask assistance from our stronger friends.

STA. Let Uri take the sword : the solemn march  
To crown the King at Rome her banner leads.

FUR. To Schwitz belongs the honour of the sword,  
From Schwitz we all may boast to be descended.

ROS. Let me this generous friendly quarrel end,  
Schwitz lead in council, Uri in the field.

FUR. [*reaching the sword to STAUFFACHER*]. Take it.

STA. Not I ! To age belongs that honour.

HOFE. Ulrich the smith, of those who here are  
present,  
Counts the most years.

MAU. The man is good and brave,  
But not of free condition, and in Schwitz  
No bondsman can be judge.

STA. Have we not here  
Our old Landamman Reding ? Wherefore seek we  
A worthier name ?

FUR. Let him be president !  
Whoso assents to this hold up his hand.

[*All hold up the right hand.*]

RED. [*stepping into the midst*]. I cannot lay my hand  
upon the books,  
Therefore by the eternal stars I swear  
That I will not forsake the cause of justice.

[*They set up two swords before him, and form the  
circle : SCHWITZ is in the centre, URI on  
the right, and UNTERWALDEN on the left.  
He stands leaning on his sword.*]



Battling their way through Germany, arrived  
At this high mountain-chain, then covered o'er  
With pathless woods. Nor from their weary march  
Did they repose until in that wild vale  
At length they stood, where now the Muotta flows  
Through verdant meadows. But no trace was there  
Of human footsteps—save that on the shore  
Stood a lone hut, where sat a man, and watched  
If aught might seek a passage—but the lake  
Ran high with waves, and was not to be passed.  
So they observed the land more closely—saw  
That it was richly spread with beautiful wood,  
Discovered lovely streams, and almost thought  
That they had found again their much-loved  
home.

Here they resolved to abide, and here they built  
The ancient village Schwitz; and many a day  
Of painful toil endured ere they could clear  
The far-spread forest's wild entangled roots.  
But when the ground sufficed not to contain  
Their growing numbers, on they forced their way  
To the black mountains—even to Italy,  
Where, by eternal walls of ice concealed,  
A different people speaks a different tongue.  
In Kernwald then they built the village Stanz,  
And in the valley of the Reus they built  
The village Altorf. But remembering still  
Their common origin, from all the tribes  
Which since that time have settled in their bounds,



The Swiss are yet distinguished—know themselves :  
For heart and blood proclaim their lineage ever.

*[Gives his hands right and left.*

MAU. Yes, truly are we of one heart, one blood.

ALL. *[joining hands]*. One people, and will act in  
unison.

STA. The other nations bear a foreign yoke,  
They have submitted to the conqueror :  
Nay, even within the limits of our land  
Are many to be found who, strangers born,  
Owe duty to the stranger, and entail  
A heritage of servitude on their children.  
But we, the genuine race of good old Swiss,  
Have ever known how to maintain our freedom.  
Not unto princes have we bowed the knee,  
Freely we sought protection of the Empire.

Ros. Freely we sought the Emperor's protection,  
A voluntary league of mutual succour :  
So is it marked in the Emperor Frederick's brief.

STA. Yes! masterless is not even the free'st :  
A sovereign head must be a judge supreme,  
With whom in case of last extremity  
The appeal may lie. And, therefore, when this soil  
From the old wilderness our fathers won,  
That honour gave they to the Emperor,  
Who of the German and Italian lands  
Styles himself lord, and when his service called,  
As did the other freemen of the realm,  
Gladly stepped forth to meet his foes in arms :

For this is the sole duty of the free,  
The country to defend which shelters them.

MEL. Aught more than this is mark of servitude.

STA. They followed, when arose the cry of war,  
The banner of the Empire, fought its battles,  
And graced the imperial march to Italy,  
The Roman crown upon his brows to place.  
At home, they free and happy ruled themselves  
By their own laws and customs—no reserve  
Made in the Emperor's favour, save the right  
Judgment upon the murderer to pronounce ;  
And thereto was ordained a noble count,  
Who no possession held within the land.  
Whenever blood was shed, they called him forth,  
Under the open heaven, and plain and clear  
Spake he the doom, and without fear of man.  
Where are the traces here that we are slaves ?  
If any think there be, now let him speak.

HOFE. No ! all you say is true—the tyrant's law,  
The law of force, we never have endured.

STA. No ! to the Emperor we refused obedience,  
When in the Church's favour he attempted  
To strain even the law. For when our Alps  
The abbey of Einsiedlen claimed, which we  
E'er since our father's times had freely pastured,  
An ancient charter brought the abbot forth,  
Which the unclaimed domain conferred on him,  
Making no mention of our name or race.  
Then thus we spake, ' Nought is the charter worth,

That which is ours no Emperor can bestow;  
And if the Empire should refuse us justice,  
Little need we the Empire in our mountains.'  
So spake our fathers: and shall we endure  
The shame of this new yoke—from foreign slave  
Bear what no Emperor has dared to impose?  
This soil have we created to ourselves  
By labour of our hands; this ancient forest,  
Once only the wild haunt of prowling bears,  
Have changed into a dwelling fit for man!  
The dragon's poisonous brood, which from the marsh  
Spread desolation through the land, have slain;  
The veil of mist, which in eternal gray  
Hung o'er the wilderness, have torn aside;  
Have sprung the solid rock, and o'er the abyss  
Thrown for the traveller a steady bridge;  
By the possession of a thousand years  
The ground is ours—and shall the stranger now,  
The slave of princes, come to forge us chains,  
And on our own inheritance do us shame?  
Is there no help for tyranny like this?

[*A great agitation among the PEOPLE.*]

Yes! tyrant-power has limits! When the oppressed  
No longer can find justice, when the load  
No longer can be borne—with trusting spirit  
He springs from earth to heaven, and downward  
brings

Those rights which hang above, inalienable  
And indestructible as are the stars.  
Nature's primeval law returns again,

Where man stands in his native strength alone  
Opposed to man, and as a last resort,  
When other means have failed, within his hand  
Is placed the sword. Against the arm of power  
We stand our dearest treasures to defend—  
Our wives, our children, and our native land.

ALL [*clashing their swords*]. Our wives, our children  
and our native land.

ROS. [*steps into the ring*]. Yet, ere the sword ye  
grasp, bethink you well,  
Ye might the Emperor's kindness yet retain!  
It costs you but a word, and the proud tyrants  
Who now so harshly treat you, smile upon you.  
Seize the proposal which so oft before  
Has courted your acceptance: leave the Empire  
And recognise the power of Austria.

MAU. What says the priest? We swear to  
Austria!

BUH. Hear him not!

WIN. 'Tis the counsel of a traitor,  
An enemy of the land!

RED. Be tranquil, friends!

SEWA. We after such affronts pay Austria homage!

FLUE. We yield at last to force what formerly  
We did refuse to kindness!

MEIER. Then indeed  
We were the slaves we merited to be!

MAU. Let him be put out of the law's protection,  
Who of concession speaks to Austria!

Landamman, I do beseech you, let this be  
The first law that we pass.

MEL.

So let it be.

Who of concession speaks to Austria  
Shall outlawed be, forfeit his rights and honours,  
And no man more receive him at his hearth.

ALL [*lifting up the right hand*]. We will it: this be  
law!

RED. [*after a pause*].

The law has passed.

ROS. Now ye are free—ye are so by this law,  
And Austria shall not extort by force  
What friendly words could not obtain from you.

WEIL. Let us proceed with business.

RED.

Yet, my friends,

Has every gentle means been tried? The King  
Knows not, perchance—it cannot be his will—  
The sufferings we endure. Let us at least  
Be certain our complaints have reached his ear  
Ere we unsheath the sword: for fearful ever,  
Even in the righteous cause, is violence:  
God helps them only when man helps no longer.

STA. [*to CONRAD HUNN*]. 'Tis now your turn—  
deliver your report.

HUNN. I went to Rheinfeld to the Emperor's  
court,

To lay before the throne our grievances,  
And claim the ancient charter of our freedom,  
Which each new king is wont to ratify.  
The envoys there of many a town I found—

From Swabia, and the countries on the Rhine,  
Who all received their parchments, and well pleased  
Returned once more to seek their native land.

Me, your ambassador, they gave indeed  
An audience, but dismissed with empty comfort.

‘The Emperor had then no time, but would  
At a convenient season think about us.’

And as I slowly from the hall withdrew,  
With steps reluctant, in the gallery  
Duke John I saw, weeping, and near him stood  
The noble Lords von Wart and Taegerfeld,  
Who called to me, and said, ‘Redress your-  
selves,

Expect no longer justice from the King!  
Has he not robbed even his brother’s son,  
And kept from him his rightful heritage?  
The duke besought him to resign the lands  
His mother had bequeathed; he had arrived  
At years of manhood, and the time was come  
He well might rule his own estates and people.  
What was the answer given? Upon his brows  
A garland placed the Emperor, and observed,  
That was the ornament befitting youth.’

MAU. Have ye not heard? Mercy and justice  
longer

Expect not from the Emperor! •Help yourselves!

RED. There’s no alternative. Now, therefore,  
counsel

How best we may accomplish our design.

FUR. [*stepping into the circle*]. We wish but to fling  
off a hateful yoke,  
Our ancient rights, which from our ancestors  
We have derived, preserve inviolate—  
Not after novelty run unbridled.  
To the Emperor remain what is the Emperor's,  
He who owes service, pay it faithfully.

MEIER. I hold my land in fief from Austria.

FUR. To Austria then continue to do homage.

WEIL. I to the Lord of Rappersweil pay dues.

FUR. Continue to discharge his lawful claims.

ROS. I to the Lady of Zurich service owe.

FUR. Give to the convent still the convent's due.

STA. I hold no fief save from the Empire.

FUR. Well !

Let all justice demands be done—no more.  
The bailiffs and their followers from the land  
We will expel—break down their fastnesses,  
But—if that may be—without stain of blood.  
And let the Emperor feel, that urged alone  
By hard necessity, we the bonds abjure  
Of dutiful obedience. When he sees  
We quietly remain within our bounds,  
With prudent care he may, perchance, repress  
His swelling anger, for a just respect  
Awakes that people which, with sword in hand,  
And in the full career of victory,  
Is master of itself.

RED. Yet let us hear

How you propose the scheme so boldly planned  
To execute. An armed and powerful foe  
Will surely not depart without a struggle.

STA. They will when they perceive the land in  
arms :

We must surprise them ere they arm themselves.

MEIER. That is far easier to be said than done.  
Two formidable castles 'midst our vales  
Rear their proud towers, and awe the country round.  
These may prove dangerous should the wrathful  
King

His armies pour on our devoted soil.

Rosberg and Sarnen must be first subdued,  
Or ere a sword be raised in the three lands.

STA. If we delay too long, the foe is warned ;  
Too many are there now who share the secret.

MEIER. In all the land there will be found no  
traitor.

ROS. The well-intended zeal of friends may harm  
us.

FUR. Defer it longer, and the fort in Altorf  
Will be completed, and the foe secure.

MEIER. 'Tis of yourselves ye think !

SAC. Ye are unjust—

MEIER. [*impetuously*]. We, we unjust ! Dares Uri  
tell us this ?

RED. Be calm—I charge you by your oaths.

MEIER. If Schwitz  
With Uri join, we must perforce be silent.



RED. Before this general council I accuse you,  
That with your hot blood you do break the peace.  
Stand we not all in the same cause engaged?

WIN. Did we defer till the lord's festival  
The attempt, it is the custom on that day  
That each proprietor to the castle bring  
Some present for the bailiff. So might ten  
Or twelve picked men assemble unobserved  
Within the place; and since the order is  
That none should enter armed, some sharpened  
spikes

Might secretly take with them, which to staves  
Could quickly be adjusted: near at hand,  
Concealed within the wood, the rest must wait,  
And, when the horn gives note that those within  
Are happily in possession of the gates,  
Leap from their hiding-place, and storm the fort,  
Which thus, with small resistance, proves our own.

MEL. Rossberg I undertake myself to scale:  
A maiden in the place is kind to me,  
And small persuasion heeds to let me down  
The hempen ladder for the nightly visit.  
Once in, I readily admit my friends.

RED. Is it the will of all it be deferred?

*[The majority hold up their hands.]*

STA. The hands are raised of twenty against  
twelve.

FUR. When on the appointed day the castles fall,  
Mountain to mountain shall the news proclaim

STA.    A heavy stand,  
I fear, will Gesler make. Fenced as he is  
By bold determined troopers—a fierce band,  
Not without blood will he forsake the field :  
Nay, even expelled he still is terrible :  
'Tis hard—'tis almost dangerous to spare him.

To Tell I owe my rescued life, and now,  
My honour guarded and my heart at rest,  
That life would gladly give to save my country.

We must leave something to the moment. See!  
While we the night consume in solemn counsel  
Already on the purpling mountain peaks  
The ruddy morn her lofty station takes,  
And heralds in the day. Let us begone  
Ere the bright sun surprise us.

FUR. Be not anxious!  
Darkness withdraws but slowly from these valleys.

[All involuntarily take off their hats, and reverently watch the dawning of the day.]

Ros. Yet, by this light, which greets us with its  
ray  
Long before those who far beneath us dwell, .  
And, slumbering deep, breathe heavily the smoke  
Of noisome cities—let us here repeat  
The oath of this our new confederacy.  
A faithful band of brothers will we be,  
United still in danger and distress.

ALL [*repeat with three fingers raised*]. A faithful  
band of brothers will we be,  
United still in danger and distress.

Ros. We will live free as did our fathers—swear  
Rather to die than live in slavery.

ALL. We will live free as did our fathers—swear  
Rather to die than live in slavery.

Ros. In the great God we put our trust—and  
swear  
Never to tremble at the power of man.

ALL. In the great God we put our trust—and  
swear  
Never to tremble at the power of man.

[*They all embrace one another.*]

STA. Each one now quietly pursue the way  
That leads to friends and kindred. Let the herds-  
man  
Winter his herds in peace, and silently  
Labour to gain associates to the cause.  
What we have still to endure must be endured!  
And let the long account of tyranny

Run on, till one great day discharge at once  
The public debt, and private. His just rage  
Must each strive to subdue, and for the whole  
His vengeance spare—for to the common cause  
No less than robbery is it, should but one  
In his own private wrongs forget his friends.

*[As they depart quietly on three different sides, the orchestra plays solemn music, and the stage, remaining some time open, presents the spectacle of the sun rising above the snow-mountains.]*



*ACT III.*



### ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A court before TELL's house. TELL is seen occupied with a carpenter's axe ; HEDWIG in household affairs ; WALTER and WILLIAM are busy in the background, playing with a small cross-bow.*

WAL. [*singing*]. Over hill and valley

Girt to chase his prey,  
Springs the hunter forth  
To hail the opening day.

As the imperial eagle  
King in heaven we see,  
Lord of glen and mountain,  
Roves the hunter free.

His the widest circuit,  
Where his arrows fly ;  
All that bounds before him,  
All that cleaves the sky.

[*Comes running up.*]

The string is broken ! father, mend it me !



TELL. Not I ! a proper hunter helps himself.

[*The Boys go back*]

HED. The boys begin, methinks, to shoot betime.

TELL. Who would a master be must practise early.

HED. Oh ! would to God they never learned that art !

TELL. They shall learn everything. Whoe'er through life

Would fight his way with vigour, must be armed  
Alike to help himself and daunt his foe.

HED. Yes, you are all the same : not one repose  
Will seek at home.

TELL. Mother, I cannot do it :  
Me nature never formed to be a shepherd ;  
Restless must I pursue a flying goal,  
And only then right well enjoy my life  
When every day I chase it down anew.

HED. Yes ! but you never think upon her pain,  
Who sits meanwhile at home, expecting you  
With sickening anguish. What the servants tell  
Of your rash exploits fills my soul with horror,  
With every absence bodes my trembling heart,  
Thou wilt return to glad my eyes no more.  
I see thee 'wildered 'midst rough fields of ice,  
From rock to rock hazard the slippery leap,  
See the despairing chamois, urged to bay,  
Spring back, and tear thee down the abrupt abyss,  
The avalanche sweep o'er, or under thee

The treacherous glacier burst—and down thou  
sink'st

Into a dreadful grave, entombed alive :

Death in a hundred changing shapes pursues

The adventurous hunter : 'tis an unblest trade,

Which on the giddy brink of danger lies.

TELL. Who cheerily looks around him with sound  
mind,

Trusting in God and his own active powers,

May lightly wrestle with distress and danger :

The mountains fright not who was born upon them.

*[Having finished his labour, he lays aside his  
tools, and comes forward.]*

And now, methinks, the door will hold awhile :

The axe at home oft spares the carpenter.

*[Takes his hat.]*

HED. Whither goest thou ?

TELL. To Altorf, to thy father.

HED. Something thou schemest dangerous ! Con-  
fess it !

TELL. How com'st thou, wife, by that ?

HED. Something is planned  
Against the bailiffs. There has been at Rutli  
A council, and thou, too, art in the plot.

TELL. I was not there—but when my country calls  
Will surely not refuse the aid she seeks.

HED. They will place thee where is most risk—  
thy post

Will then, as ever, be the post of danger.

TELL. Each will be taxed according to his powers.

HED. The Unterwaldner hast thou in the storm  
Shipped o'er the lake—it was a miracle  
That you escaped! Of children and of wife  
Didst thou not think?

TELL. Dear wife, I thought of you,  
And therefore saved the father for his children.

HED. To dare the raging lake! that is, me-  
thinks,  
Rather to tempt God than to trust in Him.

TELL. The man who thinks too long will do but  
little.

HED. Yes! thou art good and kind, and servest  
all;  
In thy own need not one will succour thee.

TELL. May God forbid that I should want their  
succour! [*He takes his crossbow and arrows.*]

HED. What wouldst thou with the crossbow?  
Leave it here!

TELL. My arm is nerveless when my bow is  
wanting. [*The Boys return.*]

WAL. Father, whither goest thou?

TELL. To Altorf, boy,  
To Ehni—wilt thou with me?

WAL. Yes, right gladly.

HED. The bailiff is now there: go not to Altorf!

TELL. He leaves to-day.

HED. Then let him first depart:  
Remind him not of thee! thou know'st he hates us!

TELL. Me will his evil wishes scarcely harm ;  
I do but what is right, and shun no foe.

HED. Who do but right, even those he hates the  
most.

TELL. Because he cannot touch them. Me, at  
least,  
He will not willingly, I think, disturb.

HED. How know'st thou that ?

TELL. It is not long ago  
I went amidst the savage wastes to range,  
Which skirt the Schachental, where not a trace  
Of human footsteps meets the searching eye,  
And as I slowly climbed the rugged path,  
Where 'twas not possible to avoid a meeting,  
For high above me hung a wall of rock,  
And fearfully the Schachen roared below,

*[The Boys approach and listen with intense  
curiosity.]*

Sudden the bailiff stood before my sight,  
He quite alone like me—only we two,  
Man against man, and close the precipice.  
When of my presence he became aware,  
And recognised the man whom recently  
He had for some slight fault severely punished,  
And saw me towards him with my good cross-bow  
Come striding on—the colour fled his cheeks,  
His knees refused their office, and he sank,  
Supported only by the cliff's steep side.  
Then pity touched my soul, and modestly

I drew towards him, and spake : ‘ ’Tis I, lord bailiff.’  
But powerless quite to falter from his tongue  
A single word, he only with his hand  
Motioned me silently to take my way :  
So I passed on, and sent his train to help him.

HED. Before thee he has trembled ! Woe to thee.  
Thou saw’st his weakness, and he’ll ne’er forgive !

TELL. Therefore I seek not him, he seeks not me.

HED. Only go not to-day ! Rather go hunt !

TELL. What moves thee so ?

HED. My heart bodes evil. Stay !

TELL. How canst thou thus afflict thee without  
reason ?

HED. Because there is no reason. Tell, stay here !

TELL. But I have promised, dearest wife, to go.

HED. Must thou ? Then go ! But leave the boys  
with me.

WAL. No, dearest mother ! I go with my father.

HED. Walter, wilt thou abandon thy poor mother ?

WAL. I’ll bring thee back some pretty things from  
Ehni.

WILL. Mother, I stay with thee !

HED. [*embracing him*]. Yes, my loved child,  
Thou art my only solace that remains !

[*She goes to the court-door, and follows them a  
long time with her eyes.*]

SCENE II.—*A Wild Forest surrounded with hills—  
Waterfalls are seen tumbling from the rocks.*

*Enter BERTHA in a hunting-habit, and immediately after,*  
RUDENZ.

BER. He follows me! Now shall I clear my doubts!

RUD. [*entering hastily*]. Lady, at length I find you then alone!

Guarded by rocks and woods, in this wild spot  
I fear the intrusion of no wandering footstep,  
And from my heart fling off this irksome silence.

BER. Are you quite sure the chase follows us not?

RUD. The chase is far off yonder! Now or never!  
This precious moment must I seize—this hour,  
This very hour must seal my destiny,  
Though it should tear me from thy sight for ever.  
Oh! do not arm those gracious eyes with looks  
Of such severity! Who indeed am I  
That I should raise my aspiring thoughts to you?  
Me has the voice of glory never named;  
I dare not place me in the rank of those  
Who, crowned with laurels, grace your splendid  
circle:

Nought have I but a heart of truth and love.

BER. And dare you speak of truth and love—the  
man

Who would prove faithless to his nearest duties ?

[RUDENZ *steps back*.

The slave of Austria, who has sold himself  
To strangers—to the oppressors of his people ?

RUD. Lady, and is it you who taunt me thus ?  
Whom did I seek then on that side but you ?

BER. And thought you on the side of treachery  
To find me ? Rather my reluctant hand  
Would I to Gesler give—the tyrant Gesler—  
Than to the unnatural son of Switzerland  
Who stoops to make himself his instrument.

RUD. O God ! must I hear this !

BER. To the good man  
Can aught be nearer than his friends and kindred ?  
What sweeter duties for a noble heart  
Than to stand forth the friend of innocence,  
And vindicate the rights of the oppressed ?  
My heart bleeds for your people ! When it suffers,  
I too must share its sufferings—for I love it,  
That it so patient is, although so strong.  
It wins my deepest reverence, and each day  
I learn to love and honour it still more.  
But you, whom Nature gave its born defender,  
Who yet desert it in its hour of need,  
Join with the foe, and faithlessly assist  
To forge the chains that bind your native land—  
You 'tis who grieve and anger me : my heart  
Must I compel that I detest you not.

RUD. And seek I not the advantage of my people,  
When under Austria's powerful sceptre peace——

BER. Say rather, slavery—you prepare for it !  
You would hunt Freedom from the last asylum  
That still remains to her on earth. Far better  
Perceives the people its true happiness ;  
And no illusive splendour can mislead  
Its safer feelings. You the entangling net  
They have contrived to fling around, till——

RUD.

Bertha !

You hate me, you despise me !

BER.

If I did,

Perchance 'twere better for me ! But to see  
Contemned, and—worse, deserving of contempt,  
Whom one would gladly love——

RUD.

O Bertha ! Bertha !

You raise me to the highest pinnacle  
Of heavenly happiness, only in a moment  
To plunge me to the abyss of dark despair !

BER. No ! no ! the generous feelings in that breast  
Are not yet quite extinct ! They slumber only—  
I will awaken them. Alas ! what pains  
Must you have taken to destroy the old,  
Almost instinctive, virtues of your race !  
But, well for you ; they mightier are than you,  
And you, despite yourself, are good and noble !

RUD. You still have confidence in me. O Bertha !  
Your love would make me everything !

BER.

Be then



What liberal Nature destined you to be ;  
The station take she meant you to assume ;  
Stand for your people forth, and native land :  
And combat for your holy rights !

RUD. But you—  
How shall I ever hope to call you mine  
If once the Emperor's will I dare to thwart ?  
And will not tyrant kinsmen interpose,  
And force obedience to their stern command ?

BER. Here lie my lands, and is the Schwitzer free,  
So am I also.

RUD.        Bertha! all at once  
You open me a vista into heaven!

BER. Hope not through Austria's favour to possess  
me!

On my inheritance they lay their hands  
Only to add it to one greater still.  
The same insatiable cupidity  
Which country joins to country, and your freedom  
At length will swallow, threatens also mine.  
A destined sacrifice you see me stand,  
The recompense perchance of some Court minion :  
Thither, where falsehood and its votaries dwell,  
To the imperial Court—away they bear me ;  
There hated nuptials force me to contract,  
And love—only your love—can save me longer.

RUD. And could you then determine here to dwell,  
Here in my native country mine to be?  
O Bertha, all my yearnings in the distance,

What were they but a striving after you?  
You only sought I in the path of glory,  
And my ambition only was my love!  
Can you indeed in this still vale with me  
Shut yourself up, renouncing earthly splendour?  
Oh! then the goal at which I strained is won,  
Then may the billows of the storm-tossed world  
Unheeded beat on these protected mountains!  
No restless wishes have I more to send  
Into the cold and dreary void of life!  
Then may these lofty rocks, which fence us round,  
A firm insuperable barrier prove:  
And this secluded blissful vale alone  
Open to heaven, and feel its holy light!

BER. Now art thou all my fond, my trusting heart  
Has dreamed—my confidence has not deceived me!

RUD. Vain phantom, hence! thou who so long  
hast fooled me!  
Here shall I find my happiness—at home!  
Here, where my boyhood bloomed in careless freedom,

A thousand joyful traces meet my view,  
Where every tree and every fountain lives,  
In my own native land wilt thou be mine!  
Ah! I have ever loved it—ever felt,  
As eagerly I chased each fleeting pleasure,  
Something was wanting still to make me happy.

BER. Where shall we seek the islands of the blest,  
If not here, in the land of innocence?

Here, where old faith domesticated dwells,  
And falsehood never yet has found an entrance ;  
No envy troubles the pure fount of bliss,  
And lightly pass the hours on gladsome wing !  
There see I thee, rich in thy manly worth,  
First of the free, as of thy equals first,  
A prouder far, more heartfelt homage win  
Than e'er received a monarch from his people !

RUD. There see I thee, the first of womankind,  
In the calm duties of domestic life,  
Build me a heaven within my happy home :  
And, as the spring her flowers with liberal hand,  
So o'er my path strew pleasantness and peace,  
And waken all around to life and gladness !

BER. See now, dear friend, wherefore I mourned  
that thou  
With thine own hand shouldst spoil thy happiness !  
Alas ! alas ! what had become of me,  
Compelled some haughty knight, perchance, to  
follow,  
Some proud oppressor, to his gloomy fortress !  
Here is no fortress ! Here no walls divide  
Me and the people I would render happy.

RUD. But how regain my freedom ? How the  
folds  
Unloose my thoughtless folly has entwined  
About myself ?

BER. With manly resolution  
Burst them asunder, and let what will happen,

Stand forth to save thy people. 'Tis the post  
Where Heaven itself has placed thee!

[*Bugles sound in the distance.*

Hark! the chase  
Draws nearer. We must separate. Away!  
Fight for thy friends, thou fightest for thy love!  
One is the enemy whom alike all dread,  
And one the freedom that will make all free!

[*They go off.*

SCENE III.—*A Meadow in Altorf: in the foreground  
are trees, in the background a hat hung upon a pole.  
The prospect is closed by the Banberg, towering  
above which are seen the snow-mountains.*

FRIESSHARDT and LEUTHOLD on the watch.

FRI. In vain we watch! No man will venture  
near,

Or to a hat pay reverence. Yesterday  
'Twas crowded like a mart here, but to-day  
The meadow is become almost a desert,  
Since yonder bugbear hung upon the pole.

LEU. Nought to be seen except a rabble rout,  
Who toss into the air their tattered caps  
Only to vex us. Honest people rather  
Will make a tedious round through half the village  
Than stoop to bow the knee before a hat.

FRI. When from the council-house about mid-day  
They come, this place all are obliged to pass.

A goodly number then I surely thought  
To have surprised—for none thought of the hat.  
But Rosselman, the priest, my purpose saw,  
And as he came from visiting the sick,  
Went with the sacrament, and placed himself  
Right opposite the pole: the sacristan  
Must ring, forsooth, his bell; so falling down,  
Myself amongst the rest, all on their knees  
Paid homage to the host, not to the hat.

LEU. I tell you, comrade, I begin to think  
We stand here placed as in the pillory  
Before this hat; and 'tis, methinks, disgraceful  
For a bold trooper sentinel to stand  
Before an empty hat. All honest people  
Will sure despise us. What, respect a hat!  
'Tis certainly the order of a fool!

FRI. And wherefore not respect an empty hat!  
You have to many an empty skull bowed down!

*Enter HILDEGARD, MATILDA, and ELIZABETH, who  
approach with their CHILDREN, and place themselves  
about the pole.*

LEU. Yes! thou art such an officious rogue, and  
gladly  
Would honest people bring to trouble. I,  
Let who will pass the hat, will see it not:  
I close my eyes.

MAT.                There hangs the bailiff, children;

Kneel quickly down, and pay him due respect !

ELIZ. Oh ! would to God he went, and nought behind

Left but his hat ! 'Twere better for the land !

FRI. [*driving them away*]. Go ! get you hence !  
you cursed tribe of women !

Who sent for you ? Go, send your husbands hither,  
If to transgress the order they have spirit !

[WOMEN *go away*.]

*Enter TELL with his crossbow, leading his son by the hand ; they advance, and pass by the hat without paying any attention to it.*

WAL. [*pointing to the Banberg*]. Father, is it true  
that on the mountain yonder

The trees, if smitten with an axe, will bleed ?

TELL. Who told you that, my boy ?

WAL. The master herdsman.

He says, the trees enchanted are—his hand

Who injures them will rest not in the grave.

TELL. The trees enchanted are, that is the truth.  
Seest thou those snow-peaks—those white horns  
Which seem to lose themselves above the sky ?

WAL. The glaciers those, which thunder so by  
night,  
And down the avalanches send upon us.

TELL. Yes ! and those avalanches long ago  
Had Altorf overwhelmed beneath their load,



WAL. Who is the king, then, whom all seem to fear?

TELL. The mighty one, who feeds them, and defends.

WAL. Have they not courage to defend themselves?

TELL. There dares not neighbour trust his nearest neighbour.

WAL. Father, in that wide land I should want room:

Better live here under the avalanche!

TELL. Ay, boy! far better our protection owe  
To these ice-mountains than to wicked men!

*[They move onwards.]*

WAL. See, father! see that hat upon the pole!

TELL. What is the hat to us? Come! let us go!

*[As he is about to depart, FRIESSHARDT steps up,  
and places his pike before him.]*

FRI. Hold—in the Emperor's name, I charge you,  
stand!

TELL *[pushing aside the pike]* What would you?  
Wherefore stop you me?

FRI. You have  
Transgressed the mandate, and must follow us.

LEU. You have not paid due reverence to the hat.

TELL. Friend, let me go.

FRI. Away with him to prison!

WAL. My father go to prison! Help, there!  
help!



Men, men, come hither ! Help ! good people, help !  
Free him—they lead him prisoner !

*Enter ROSSELMAN the priest, and PETERMAN the  
sacristan, with three others.*

PET. What's the matter ?

ROS. Why layest thou thy hand upon that man ?

FRI. He is the Emperor's enemy, and a traitor !

TELL. A traitor ! I !

ROS. Thou errest, friend—'tis Tell,  
A worthy man and a good citizen.

WAL. [*seeing WALTER FURST, and running to him*].

Grandfather, help ! They force away my  
father !

FRI. Away, to prison !

FUR. [*hurrying up*]. Hold ! I offer bail !  
For God's sake, Tell, do tell me what has happened !

*Enter MELCHTAL and STAUFFACHER.*

FRI. The bailiff's sovereign authority  
Has he despised, and will not recognise.

STA. Could Tell do this ?

MEL. Thou liest, caitiff knave !

LEU. He has not paid due reverence to the hat.

FUR. And must he, therefore, go to prison ?  
Friend,

Accept my bail, and let him go in peace !

FRI. Offer for thee and thy own person bail!  
We do what is our duty. Off with him!

MEL. [*to the PEASANTS*]. No! this is horrible!  
Shall we endure  
To see him impudently torn away  
Before our very eyes?

PET. We are the strongest.  
Friends, bear it not; we will support each other.

FRI. Who sets himself to oppose the bailiff's  
orders?

[*Three other PEASANTS rush in.*]

PEAS. We'll help! What is it? Beat them to  
the ground.

[*HILDEGARD and the other WOMEN return.*]

TELL. I yet can help myself. Good people, go!  
Think you that if I would resort to force  
Their pikes would frighten me?

MEL. [*to FRIESSHARDT*]. Wilt thou still dare  
The attempt to tear him from the midst of us?

FUR. and STA. Gently! Be tranquil!

FRI. [*crying out*]. Riot and sedition!  
[*A sound of bugles is heard.*]

WOMEN. Here comes the bailiff.

FRI. [*raising his voice*]. Mutiny! Revolt!

STA. Cry till thou burstest, knave!

ROS. and MEL. Wilt thou be silent?

FRI. [*still louder*]. Help! help here, to the servants  
of the law!

FUR. Here is the bailiff! What will come of this?

*Enter GESLER, on horseback, his falcon on his wrist ;  
RUDOLPH DER HARRAS, BERTHA, and RUDENZ,  
and a great number of armed SOLDIERS, who form  
a circle of pikes round the stage.*

HAR. Room for the bailiff there !

GES. Drive them asunder !

Why run they thus together ? Who cries help ?

*[A general silence ensues.*

Who was it ? I will know. Come forward, thou !

Who art thou, and why holdest thou this man ?

*[Gives his falcon to an ATTENDANT.*

FRI. Most mighty sir, one of your guards am I,  
Appointed to keep watch beside this hat.  
This man I seized as, contrary to order,  
He would have passed without saluting it,  
Intending to detain him, but the people  
Assembling would have rescued him by force.

GES. *[after a pause]*. Despisest thou so much thy  
Emperor, Tell,

And me, who here his presence represent,  
That thou the hat refusest to respect,  
Suspended there to prove your loyalty ?  
Thou hast betrayed thine evil disposition !

TELL. Excuse me, gracious sir ! from thoughtless-  
ness,  
Not from contempt, proceeded this neglect.  
Were I so prudent I were not called Tell :  
I ask your pardon, and will not repeat it.

GES. [*after some moments, silence*]. Thou art a master of the crossbow, Tell ;  
They say with every bolt thou hit'st the mark.

WAL. And that is true, sir ! At a hundred paces My father strikes an apple from the tree.

GES. That boy, Tell—is he thine ?

TELL. Yes, gracious sir !

GES. Hast thou no other children ?

TELL. Sir, two boys.

GES. Which of the two is dearest to thee ?

TELL. Sir,

Both are alike my children !

GES. Well then, Tell !  
Since from the tree an apple thou canst strike  
Even at a hundred paces—of thy art  
Thou shalt give me a sample. Take thy bow—  
Thou hast it there at hand—and make thee ready  
From thy boy's head to shoot an apple. But,  
I counsel thee, beware thou take good aim,  
That thou the apple hit at the first shot,  
For shouldst thou miss thy head shall answer it.

[*All show signs of horror.*]

TELL. Oh, sir ! What monstrous deed do you command !

Shall I at my child's head— But no, sir, no—  
That never could be your intention ! Never !  
Forbid it, gracious God ! That could not you  
Require in earnest from a father !

GES. Tell,

The apple shalt thou shoot from the boy's head ;  
I do require it, and will have it so.

TELL. I with the crossbow at the head take aim  
Of my own child ! No ! rather will I perish !

GES. Draw—or thy child shall perish with thee  
too.

TELL. What ! I become the murderer of my  
child ?

You have no children, sir ! You do not know  
What swells a father's bosom !

GES. What ! so cautious  
Art thou become at once ! They told me, Tell,  
Thou wert a dreamer—that from common men,  
And from their ways, thou dost estrange thyself.  
Thou lov'st the extraordinary—and therefore have I  
Something to suit thy daring soul discovered.  
Others might think and hesitate—but thou  
Closest thine eyes and dashest at it boldly !

BER. Oh ! sport no longer, sir, with these poor  
people !  
See you, how pale they stand, and how they tremble !  
They understand not pleantry from you.

GES. Who told you that I sport ?

*[Catches at an apple which overhangs his head.*

Here is the apple !  
Let them make room there. Let him take his  
distance—

What usual is. I give him eighty paces—  
Nor more, nor less. He boasted at a hundred

His man to hit. Now, archer, take thy aim,  
And see the appointed mark thou miss not.

HAR. God !

This becomes serious ! Down upon thy knees, boy,  
And supplicate the bailiff for thy life.

FUR. [*aside to MELCHTAL, who can hardly restrain his impatience*]. Restrain yourself—be tranquil, I implore you !

BER. Let this suffice you, sir ! It were inhuman  
Longer to trifle with a father's anguish.  
If this poor man, for such a slight offence,  
His life to lose had merited—by heavens !  
Ten times already has he suffered death.  
Dismiss him, then, uninjured to his hut ;  
He now has learned to know you, and this hour  
He and his children's children will remember.

GES. Open a way there ! Quick ! Why lingerest thou ?

Thy life is forfeited—I might despatch thee ;  
And see ! thy fate I mercifully place  
In thy own practised hand. We cannot, sure,  
Complain of his hard sentence, who himself  
Is made the master of his destiny.  
Thou boastest thine unerring sight ! Well, then !  
Here it concerns thee much to show thy skill :  
The mark is worthy, and the prize is great.  
Within the target hit the black, that might  
A common archer do ; but, in my mind,  
He is the only master of his art

Who in each essay of severest proof  
Is certain of his aim—whose hand and eye  
Tremble not to the emotions of his heart.

FUR. [*throwing himself on his knees before him*]. My  
lord, we bow to your authority,  
But still let mercy temper justice : take  
The half of my possessions—take them all—  
Only urge not this horror on a father !

WAL. Grandfather, kneel not to the false man !  
Say,  
Where shall I place myself ? I fear me not :  
My father strikes the bird upon the wing ;  
He will not pierce the bosom of his child.

STA. Sir, moves you not his boyish innocence ?

ROS. Oh ! recollect there is a God in heaven,  
To whom you must account for all your deeds.

GES. [*pointing to the Boy*]. Quick ! bind him to  
the linden yonder !

WAL. Bind me !  
No ! I will not be bound—I will stand still  
And gentle as a lamb, nor even breathe ;  
But if you bind me then must I, perforce,  
Struggle against my bonds.

HAR. Let them at least  
Bandage thine eyes, boy.

WAL. Why the eyes ? Think you  
The arrow from my father's hand I fear ?  
You shall behold me wait for it unmoved,  
Nor even the twinkling of an eye perceive.

Up, father ! show thyself indeed an archer !  
He thinks thou art not—thinks to ruin us :  
If but to vex the tyrant, shoot, and hit.

*[He goes to the tree, and the apple is placed upon his head.]*

MEL. *[to the PEASANTS]*. What ! shall the atrocious  
act be perpetrated

Before our very eyes ! Why have we sworn ?

STA. It is in vain ! we are unarmed—you see  
A wood of lances circles us around.

MEL. Oh ! that we sooner had resolved on deeds !  
God pardon those who counselled to delay !

GES. *[to TELL]*. To work !—men wear not arms  
for nothing :

Yet dangerous 'tis to bear the murderer's weapons,  
And on the archer springs the arrow back.

This saucy privilege which the boor assumes,  
The sovereign master of the land offends.

None should go armed but those who claim com-  
mand.

Yet if it please you thus the bow to carry—  
Why, be it so—but I will set the mark.

TELL *[bending the crossbow, and laying on the arrow]*. Room there !

STA. What, Tell ? You would — never !—you  
tremble.

See ! your hand shakes ; your knees refuse their  
office.



TELL [*dropping the crossbow*]. It swims before my sight!

WOMEN.

Merciful heaven!

TELL. Excuse me, sir, this shot. Here is my heart!

Call to your troopers—bid them ride me down.

GES. I do not want thy life—I want the shot.

Thou canst do everything—despair'st of nothing,

Thou know'st the helm to manage like the bow;

Thee frights no storm when it behoves to save:

Now, saviour, help thyself—thou savest all!

[TELL *in a fearful struggle casts his eyes now towards heaven, now towards the BAILIFF; suddenly he snatches a second arrow from his quiver, and places it in his bosom.*

WAL. [*under the tree*]. Draw, father, draw—I fear not.

TELL [*making a violent effort*]. It must be!

RUD. [*who has stood in great agitation the whole time, hardly able to restrain himself*]. My lord, you will not urge this business further.

You will not! 'Twas but meant to prove your power

You have attained your purpose. Pushed too far,

Severity fails of its wise design,

And, overstrained, to shivers flies the bow.

GES. Young man, be silent till we condescend  
To ask your counsel.

RUD.

Speak I must and will.

The honour of the King is dear to me,

But such harsh measures must procure him hatred  
This is not the King's will—I dare maintain—  
It could not be. Such cruelty deserves  
My people not, and you exceed your powers.

GES. Ah! are you grown so bold?

RUD. I have been silent  
Through all the heavy deeds that I have witnessed;  
My seeing eyes have closed against the light:  
My swelling and indignant heart repressed  
Within my bosom: to be silent longer,  
Alike were treachery to the Emperor  
And to my native land.

BER. [*throwing herself between them*]. O God! still  
more  
Would you a madman irritate?

RUD. My people  
Have I forsaken, all the claims of blood  
Have I renounced, the dearest ties of nature  
Asunder torn, to join myself to you.  
I thought, indeed, of all the greatest good  
To further, strengthening thus the Emperor's power.  
The blind falls from my eyes—shuddering I view  
My steps lead to the brink of the abyss:  
My honest judgment have you led astray,  
My open heart seduced, and almost had I,  
Even with the best intent, my people ruined.

GES. Audacious vassal! this to your liege lord!

RUD. The Emperor is my lord, not you. Free-  
born

Even as yourself, in every knightly virtue  
 I mate myself with you. And stood you not  
 Here in the Emperor's name, whom I respect,  
 Even when they shame his office, here my glove  
 Would I fling down before me, and demand  
 In knightly guise an answer to my challenge.  
 Yes! beckon to your guards! I stand not here  
 Defenceless, as these are ;

[*Pointing to the PEASANTS.*

I wear a sword,

And who dares first approach—

STA. [*calling out*]. The apple's fallen !

[*While the attention of all is called to the  
 quarrel of GESLER and RUDENZ, TELL  
 has shot down the apple.*

ROS. And the boy lives !

MANY VOICES. The apple is knocked down !

[*WALTER FURST, almost fainting, is sup-  
 ported by BERTHA.*

GES. How ! has he shot ? The madman !

BER. The boy lives !

Come to yourself, good father ! See ! your child !

WAL. [*comes bounding along with the apple*]. Father,  
 here is the apple—well I knew

Thou wouldst not hurt thy boy.

[*TELL stands with his body bent forward as  
 though he would follow the arrow ; the  
 crossbow falls from his hand. As he sees the  
 BOY coming, he springs to meet him with*

*outstretched arms, presses him to his bosom with passionate violence, and sinks down motionless. All are moved.*

BER. Oh ! gracious heavens !

FUR. My children !

STA. God be praised !

LEU. That was a shot  
Which men shall speak of to the latest times.

HAR. They shall tell stories of the archer Tell  
Long as the mountains stand upon their base.

*[Hands the apple to the BAILIFF.*

GES. By heavens ! the apple is shot through the  
midst !

It was a master-shot—I needs must praise it.

ROS. The shot was good, but woe to him, the  
man

Who urged him to it ! He has tempted God.

STA. Rise, Tell—be cheered—for manfully yourself  
Have you redeemed, and free may seek your home.

ROS. Come, come, and to the mother bring her son !

*[They prepare to lead him away.*

GES. Hark, Tell !

TELL *[coming back]*. What are your orders, sir ?

GES. Thou didst

A second arrow in thy bosom place.

Yes ! yes ! I marked it well ! Wherefore was that ?

TELL *[confused]*. Sir, 'tis a customary thing with  
archers.

GES. No, Tell, that answer satisfies me not ;

Another hadst thou, and a deeper meaning.  
 Tell me the truth, Tell, free and openly :  
 Be what it will, thy life shall be secure.  
 Wherefore the second arrow ?

TELL. Well, then, sir !  
 Since you my life have promised me, the truth  
 I will discover honestly.

*[He draws from his breast the second arrow, and  
 regards GESLER with a terrible look.]*

With this—  
 This second arrow had I shot through—you,  
 If my beloved child the first had murdered,  
 And you at least had certainly not missed.

GES. Well, Tell ! thy life I have secured to  
 thee ;  
 I gave my knightly word, and I will keep it ;  
 But since thou hast thine evil thoughts betrayed  
 I will conduct thee where the light no more  
 Of sun or moon shall shine upon thy darkness,  
 That from thy arrows I may feel secure.

Guards ! seize him ! bind him ! *[TELL is bound.]*

STA. How, sir ? Can you,  
 indeed,  
 So treat a man, towards whom the hand of God  
 Has visibly been extended ?

GES. Let us see  
 Whether that hand a second time will save !  
 Conduct him to my vessel, I will follow  
 Immediately—<sup>a talk</sup> *—JOY coming,* Kussnacht lead him.

ROS. That dare you, not—that durst the Emperor  
not,  
That violates the charters of our freedom.

GES. Where are they? Has the Emperor ratified  
them?

He has not ratified them. No! that favour  
Must by obedience first be merited.  
Ay, rebels are ye all—ye all reject  
The Emperor's rights, and nourish bold revolt.  
I know you all! I have seen through you all!  
This man I bear out of the midst of you;  
But all alike are sharers in his guilt.  
If wise—learn to be silent, and obey.

*[He goes off, followed by BERTHA, RUDENZ,  
HARRAS, and GUARDS. . FRIESSHARDT  
and LEUTHOLD remain behind.]*

FUR. *[in great anguish]*. It is all over, he is quite  
resolved  
Me to destroy and my whole family.

STA. *[to TELL]*. Oh! wherefore goad the tyrant  
so?

TELL. Let him  
Who has endured my anguish rule himself.

STA. Now everything is lost! yes, all! With  
you  
We all are chained and bound!

PEAS. With you depart  
Our last remaining hope and consolation!

LEU. [*approaching*]. Tell, I grieve for you—but must do my duty.

TELL. Farewell!

WAL. [*clinging passionately to him*]. O father! father! dearest father!

TELL [*raising his hands to heaven*]. Above, there is thy Father! Call on Him!

STA. Tell, shall I not say something to your wife?

TELL [*pressing the BOY to his breast with violent emotion*]. The child escapes unhurt! Me God will succour.

[*He tears himself away, and follows the*  
TROOPERS.

*ACT IV.*





## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The eastern shore of the Lake of the Four Cantons : abrupt and rudely formed rocks close the prospect in the west. The lake is in agitation—a continual murmuring and roaring, with thunder and lightning at intervals.*

KUNST VON GERSAU, RUODI, and FISHERMAN'S BOY.

KUN. I saw with my own eyes, and all has happened,  
You may believe me, just as I have told you.

RUO. Tell taken, and a prisoner led to Kussnacht,  
The best man in the land, the bravest arm,  
If e'er a blow is to be struck for freedom !

KUN. The bailiff brings him up the lake himself.  
I left them at Fluellen, quite prepared  
To go on board their vessel ; but the storm  
Which has been some time brooding in the distance,  
And here has driven me hastily to land,  
May well, perchance, have hindered their departure.

RUO. The Tell in chains, and in the bailiff's  
power !

He will entomb him deep enough, be sure,  
Never again to see the light of day ;  
For fear he must the free man's righteous vengeance,  
Whom he has often and so deeply wronged.

KUN. Our old Landamman, too, the noble Lord  
Von Attinghaus, lies at the point of death.

RUO. So breaks then the last anchor of our  
hopes!

He was the only friend who durst his voice  
Still raise to vindicate the people's rights.

KUN. The storm increases. Fare ye well—I seek  
The shelter of the village, for to-day  
We may no longer think of venturing hence

[*He goes out.*]

RUO. The Tell a prisoner, and the baron dead !  
Then tyranny exalt thy daring front,  
And cast all shame away ! The mouth of truth  
Is dumb—the seeing eye is blind—the arm  
Which should be raised to save in chains is bound.

BOY. See ! it hails hard : come, father, to the  
hut,  
To brave the angry sky is scarcely safe.

RUO. Rage, rage, ye winds ! Flash fiercer still, ye  
lightnings !  
Burst, clouds ! Ye reservoirs of heaven, pour down,  
And inundate the earth ! Even in the germ  
A generation yet unborn destroy !  
Be masters, ye wild elements ! Ye bears,  
Ye ancient wolves, return, and rage again

The extended waste—to you belongs the land,  
For who would live where freedom is unknown!

Boy. Hear how the whirlpool roars, the deep  
resounds;

Never has tempest swelled the lake like this!

Ruo. To aim at his child's head! Never before  
Was such an act enjoined upon a father!  
And shall not nature, with wild horror pale,  
Revolt against it? Oh! I should not wonder  
To see the rocks bow themselves to the lake!  
Each pinnacle to see, each tower of ice,  
Which ne'er were thawed since first they were  
created,

Down from their lofty summits melt like snow!  
The mountains splinter, and the ancient cliffs  
Fall in; a second deluge drown the earth,  
And sweep away the abodes of living men!

Boy. Hark! listen to that bell upon the moun-  
tains!

They have perceived a skiff in sore distress,  
And ring that men may pray for those in danger!

[*He ascends an eminence.*]

Ruo. Woe to the vessel which now on its way  
Is rocked in this terrific cradle! Here  
The helmsman and the helm alike are useless!  
The storm is master. Wind and water play  
At ball with man. Distant or near, no bay  
Offers its friendly shelter, and the rocks,  
Precipitous and rugged, frown upon him,

Inhospitably rude, nor to his view  
Aught show, except their bare and flinty breasts.

Boy. Father, a bark comes from Fluellen hither!

Ruo. God help the unhappy people! When the  
storm

Is once entangled in this glen of waters  
It rages like some savage beast of prey,  
Which 'gainst its prison's iron grating beats,  
And howling strives in vain to find an outlet;  
For all around the rocks a barrier form,  
Which, high as heaven, walls in the narrow pass.

*[He ascends the eminence.]*

Boy. It is the governor's ship from Uri, father!  
I know it by its pendants and red deck.

Ruo. Justice of God! Yes! it is he himself—  
The bailiff, who goes yonder. There he drives,  
Bearing his crime along with him. How quick  
Has the just arm of the avenger reached him!  
Now knows he there's a mightier Lord than he!  
These waves will not obey his voice—these rocks  
Will not before his hat bow down their heads.  
Boy! do not pray! Stay not the Judge's arm!

Boy. I pray not for the bailiff—not for him,  
But Tell, who lies a prisoner in his ship.

Ruo. Blind, indiscriminating element!  
Must thou, one guilty head to strike, the bark  
With all that it contains destroy?

Boy. See, see!  
They had already happily passed by

Ruo.                                There lifts its head  
The Hakmesser, where many a gallant bark  
Before has suffered shipwreck. Dexterously  
If there the point they do not round, the ship  
Will surely on the reef be dashed to pieces,  
Which rough and dangerous runs into the breakers.  
They have an able steersman at the helm :  
If anyone could save them it were Tell,  
But he, alas ! lies crippled, hand and foot.

Boy [*remarking him*]. See, father, who kneels there?

Boy [*coming forwards*]. What see I! Father!  
father, come and see!

Ruo. Who is it? God in heaven! What, Tell!  
'Tis you!  
Oh! speak! How came you hither?

- Boy. Were you not  
In yonder ship, a prisoner and in chains ?
- RUO. And on your way to Kussnacht ?
- TELL. I am free.
- RUO. *and the Boy.* What miracle is this ?
- Boy. Whence came you hither ?
- TELL. From yonder vessel.
- RUO. How !
- Boy. Where is the bailiff ?
- TELL. Driving upon the waves.
- RUO. Is it possible ?  
But you ? How are you here ? What have you done  
To escape at once from bondage and the storm ?
- TELL. 'Twas God's protecting providence. Attend !
- RUO. *and the Boy.* Oh ! tell us all !
- TELL. What has at Altorf happened  
You know !
- RUO. We know it all.
- TELL. Know that the bailiff  
Ordered me to be seized, and sent in chains  
To Kussnacht—to his castle ?
- RUO. And himself  
Embarked in the same vessel at Fluellen.  
We know it all ! Say ! how have you escaped ?
- TELL. I lay on board the ship fast bound with  
cords,  
A helpless man, abandoned to despair ;  
Nor hoped I more the sun's glad light to view,

Nor the beloved face of wife or child,  
But gazed desponding on the waste of waters.

Ruo. Unhappy man !

TELL.                         So bore we swift along,  
The bailiff, Rudolph Harras, and the rest.  
My quiver with my crossbow lay apart,  
And near the stern. But when the point we gained,  
Formed by the little Axen, it pleased God  
That such a heavy, desolating storm  
Should from the depths of the St. Gothard burst,  
That the hearts sank of all that were on board,  
And all expected miserably to perish.  
Then one of the attendants, gathering courage,  
Stepped forth, and to the bailiff spoke these words :  
' You see, sir, your extremity and ours,  
And that we all upon the verge of death  
Are hovering, for the mariners through terror  
Have lost all self-possession, nor, indeed,  
Are certain of their course. But there is Tell,  
An active man, who knows the ship to steer ;  
What if we should, in this our sore distress,  
Make use of him ?' Then spoke the bailiff thus :  
' Tell, so I loosed thy bonds, wouldst thou engage  
To save us from the fury of this storm ?'  
And I replied : ' Yes, sir, with God's assistance,  
Engage I would to help you safely hence.'  
So was I loosened from my bonds, and stood  
Beside the helm, and did my duty well.  
But still from time to time a glance I stole



Where lay my arms, and ever, and anon,  
With keen and searching eye the shore I marked,  
If chance an opportunity might offer  
Of springing from the vessel, and at last  
A rock observed, which, flattened on the top,  
Juts out into the lake.

RUO. I know it well :  
'Tis at the foot of the great Axenberg,  
But ne'er had deemed it possible—so steep—  
So very steep—it rises from the waves,  
To reach it, springing from so far below.

TELL. I shouted to the rowers to put forth  
Their utmost strength, until the ledge we neared,  
For then, I cried, the worst is passed. And when,  
Rowing with all our might, at length we reached it,  
God I besought His gracious aid to lend,  
And, straining every nerve, the stern pressed in,  
Close to the wall of rock : then, in a moment,  
Seizing my arms, the desperate spring I ventured,  
And the frail bark, rebounding from the stroke,  
Drove distant far into the abyss of waters,  
There at God's will to drive upon the billows !  
So am I here, saved from the tempest's power  
And from the far worse power of wicked men.

RUO. Tell, Tell, a palpable miracle hath the Lord  
Wrought in your favour ! Hardly yet my senses  
Can I believe ! But whither go you now ?  
For safety there is none for you, if once  
The bailiff living from this storm escape !

TELL. I heard, as bound within the ship I lay,  
He meant to land at Brunnen, and by Schwitz  
Conduct me to his castle.

RUO. Means he then  
To journey home by land ?

TELL. Such was his purpose.

RUO. Haste, then, to hide yourself—make no  
delay—

Not twice will God release you from his hand.

TELL. Tell me the nearest way to Arth and  
Kussnacht.

RUO. The open way by Steinen lies, but one,  
More private and still shorter, can my boy  
Conduct you over Lowertz.

TELL [*giving him his hand*]. Fare ye well !  
May God reward your goodness !

[*As he is going he turns again.*]

Were not you  
With the confederates who met at Rütli ?  
Methinks I heard your name there !

RUO. I was there,  
And took the oath of the confederacy.

TELL. Haste, then, to Burglen—do me yet this  
kindness !

My wife is left despairing and forlorn :  
Tell her that I am safe and well concealed.

RUO. And whither fled ?

TELL. There will you find her father,  
And others of the men who swore at Rütli.

Bid them be active, bold, and of good courage,  
For Tell is free, and master of his arm :  
Soon shall they further tidings hear of me.

RUO. But what is your purport? Tell me  
freely.

TELL. Let it be done—then will we talk of it.

[*He goes off.*]

RUO. Boy, guide him on his way, and God be  
with him!

The plan he has designed he goes to perfect!

SCENE II.—*Castle of Attinghausen. The BARON reclining in an armchair, in a dying state; WALTER FURST, STAUFFACHER, MELCHTAL, and BAUMGARTEN occupied about him; WALTER TELL kneeling before him.*

FUR. 'Tis passed! it is all over! He is gone.

STA. Yet this is not like death. See! on his lip  
Still moves the feather. Tranquil is his sleep,  
Serenely smiles his peaceful countenance.

[*BAUMGARTEN goes to the door.*]

FUR. Who is it?

BAU. 'Tis your daughter. She insists  
That she must speak with you—must see her boy.

FUR. [*rising*]. Can I give comfort who myself  
have none?

On my own head is heaped all earthly woe!

HED. [*rushing in*]. Where is my child ! I must—  
I will behold him !

STA. Compose yourself ! Bethink you that you  
here

Are in the house of death.

HED. My Walter ! oh, my child !  
And liv'st thou still to me ?

WAL. My poor, poor mother !

HED. Can it be true ? Art thou escaped unhurt ?

[*Looking at him with anxious solicitude.*]

But is it possible ? Point the shaft at thee ?

How could he do so ? Oh ! he has no heart

Who could the arrow aim at his own child.

FUR. With anguish did he so—heart-bursting  
anguish ;

Compelled he did it—it was for their lives.

HED. Had he a father's heart, rather by far  
A thousand times would he have died than done so.

STA. God's gracious mercy should you praise who  
brought it

To such a happy issue.

HED. Can I forget  
What might have been that issue ? Merciful heavens !  
Lived I a thousand years—still see I ever  
The boy stand bound—the father take his aim,  
And ever flies the arrow to my heart.

MEL. Did you but know how he was goaded to it !

HED. Oh ! the rough heart of man ! If but his  
pride

Be once offended, then he stops at nothing,  
But stakes, in the blind passion of the game,  
The child's existence and the mother's heart.

BAU. What! is your husband's fate not hard  
enough,  
That you thus add reproaches to his griefs?  
And for his sufferings have you no compassion?

HED. [*turning round, and regarding him with an  
expressive look*]. Hast thou tears only for a friend's  
misfortunes?

Where were you, when the noble, generous one  
In chains they laid? Where then was your assist-  
ance?

You could look coolly on—the monstrous act  
Behold unmoved, and patiently submit  
To see your friend torn from the midst of you!  
So did not Tell with you! Him did you see  
Stand hesitating, when behind you pressed  
The bailiff's troopers, and the roaring lake  
Swelled high before you? Not with idle tears  
Lamented he your fate; into the boat  
He sprang, children forgot and wife—and saved you.

FUR. And what could we have done for his assist-  
ance,  
So few in number, and all quite unarmed?

HED. [*throwing herself on his breast*]. Oh! father,  
thou hast lost him too! The land—  
We all have lost him! All have need of him!  
Alas! he needs us also! God preserve

His soul from dark despair! No friendly voice  
 The dull oblivion of his prison-house  
 Descends to cheer. What if he should be ill!  
 Alas! in the damp darkness of his dungeon  
 He must be ill! For as the Alpine rose  
 Pales and decays amidst the baneful fumes  
 Of marshy exhalations—so for him  
 Is there no life, save in the sun's glad light,  
 And the free current of the balmy air.  
 A prisoner! He! His very breath is freedom,  
 And in the gloom of caverns must he die.

STA. Be patient! All of us will do our utmost  
 To burst his prison-doors.

HED. What can you do,  
 Deprived of him? So long as Tell was free,  
 So long there was a hope, and innocence  
 Had still a friend—a helper, the oppressed.  
 Tell was the saviour of you all—you all,  
 Together joined, could not his fetters break.

[*The BARON awakes.*]

BAU. Be silent! See! he moves!

ATT. Where is he?

STA. Who?

ATT. He leaves—abandons me in my last moments!

STA. His nephew 'tis he means. Let him be sent  
 for!

FUR. We have already sent. Be comforted!  
 His heart has he recovered—he is ours!

ATT. Has he then spoken for his native land?

STA. And with heroic courage.

Wherefore then

ATT.  
Comes he not my last blessing to receive?  
I feel that all will soon be over with me.

STA. Oh ! not so, noble sir ! This short repose  
Has quite revived you, and your eye is brighter.

ATT. Life is but sorrow! it is fast departing:  
Suffering like hope is now almost extinct!

[*Remarking the Boy.*

Who is the boy?

FUR. Give him your blessing, sir ;  
He is my grandchild, and is fatherless.

[HEDWIG kneels down with the BOY before him.

ATT. And fatherless I leave you all behind me—  
All. Woe to me that my last looks have seen  
The downfall of my country! Have I reached  
The utmost term of life, with all my hopes  
To perish thus?

STA. [*to FURST*]. In this dark state of trouble  
Must he depart, nor on his dying hour  
One lovely beam of hope its radiance shed?  
Cheer up your sinking spirit, noble sir!  
We are not quite forsaken—are not yet  
Without redemption lost.

ATT. Who is to save you?

FUR. Ourselves! Listen! The three united lands  
Have pledged their word the tyrants to expel.  
Concluded is the league: a sacred oath  
Has bound us. Ere the year commence anew

Its circle will the destined blow be struck.  
Your dust shall rest in a free soil.

ATT. Oh! tell me,  
Concluded is the league?

MEL. On the same day  
Will all the three lands rise. All is prepared:  
The secret well preserved, though shared by hundreds.

Beneath the tyrants' feet the ground is hollow,  
The days of their dominion are determined,  
And soon will leave no trace that they have been.

ATT. But the strong fortresses within the land?

MEL. All fall on the same day.

ATT. And are the nobles  
Associates in this league?

MEL. We do not doubt,  
If we should want it, to obtain their help;  
But none, save peasants, hitherto have sworn.

ATT. [*raising himself up, astonished*]. And has the  
peasant dared so bold a deed  
From his own means—without the noble's aid?  
Has he in his own strength such confidence?  
Nay, then, they have no further need of us!  
Then may we sink consoled into the grave!  
Another race steps on, and other powers  
Shall guard the lofty majesty of man.

[*Laying his hand on the CHILD's head.*]

This head, where lay the apple, is become  
The assurance of a new and better freedom.



Time strikes—the old falls with a mighty crash,  
And a new life springs blooming from its ruins.

STA. [*to FURST*]. See, what a lustre kindles in his  
eye!

Not the last rallying of expiring nature  
Is this—it is the gleam of a new life.

ATT. The noble from his ancient seat descends,  
And to the cantons swears his civic oath.  
In Uchtland—Thurgau—has the strife begun,  
Imperial Bern lifts up her lordly head,  
Freiberg becomes the asylum of the free.  
Awakened Zurich arms her peaceful bands,  
And joins the martial host—the might of kings  
'Neath her eternal walls is broke to pieces,

*[He continues with the tone of inspiration.]*

Princes I see, and noble barons come,  
In armour clad, and banded for the war,  
A harmless race of shepherds to destroy.  
For life and death the struggle—many a pass  
Ennobled is through bloody resolution!  
The peasant flings himself with naked breast,  
A willing offering on the band of lances;  
He breaks them, and the flower of knighthood falls,  
And Freedom raises her victorious banners.

*[Taking FURST's and STAUFFACHER's hands.]*

But be ye firm and faithful—faithful ever—  
No place of freedom stranger to the rest.  
Place signals on your mountains, that each band,

When danger calls, may quickly join the other.

Be one—one—one——

*[He falls back on the cushion, still holding their hands. FURST and STAUFFACHER regard him for some time in silence, and then step aside to conceal their grief. Meanwhile the ATTENDANTS enter silently and express their sorrow, and some of them kneel down beside him, weeping. During this mute scene the castle-bell tolls.]*

*Enter RUDENZ, hastily.*

RUD. Oh! tell me, does he live? Can he yet hear me?

FUR. You now are our protector and liege lord;  
This ancient house has now another name.

RUD. Good God! comes my repentance then too late?

Might he not stay a few short moments longer  
To see my altered heart? His faithful voice,  
Whilst he enjoyed the light, have I despised!  
Now he is gone—for ever gone—and left me  
A heavy debt of kindness to repay.

Oh, say! did he depart in anger with me?

STA. He heard what you had done, and dying  
blessed

The boldness of your speech.

RUD. *[kneeling beside the body]*. Thou lifeless corse!

Sacred remains of one so dearly loved !  
Here on thy hand I swear, now cold in death,  
That I have severed every foreign tie,  
And to my people rendered back my heart.  
Henceforth a Schwitzer am I—and for ever.

[*Rising.*

Mourn for the friend—the father of you all,  
But be ye not dismayed ! For not alone  
Have I inherited his earthly portion,  
His heart descends, his spirit down upon me,  
And what his hoary head remained indebted  
My active youth shall yet repay to you.  
Give me your hand, my honoured sir, and yours,  
And Melchtal, yours. Nay, do not hesitate,  
Turn not away ! Believe my promises !  
Believe my oath !

FUR. Give him your hand ; his heart,  
To better feelings won, claims confidence.

MEL. The peasant are you wont to treat with  
scorn :  
Say ! in what light shall we henceforth regard  
you ?

RUD. Oh ! look not on the error of my youth !

STA. ' Be one '—were the last words our father  
spoke ;

Bethink you well of that !

MEL. Here is my hand !  
And, noble sir, the peasant's grasp is worth  
The word of a true man. Deprived of us,

What could the noble do? And older far  
Our order is than yours.

RUD. I honour it,  
Will guard it with my sword.

MEL. The arm, Sir Baron,  
Which the hard earth knows how to subjugate,  
And waters its deep bosom, also knows  
How to defend the breast of the free man.

RUD. You shall my breast, and I will yours  
defend,  
So shall we each be stronger in the other.  
But wherefore talk we whilst our native land  
Is still a prey to foreign tyranny?  
Let but the soil be wrested from our foes,  
In peace will we compose all differences.

*[He pauses some moments.]*

Are you still silent? Have you nought to tell me?  
How! do I not deserve that you should trust  
me?

Nay, then, against your will must I intrude  
Into the secret of your union. •  
You have a council held—conspired at Rutli;  
I know—know all—know what you there deter-  
mined,  
And have preserved it as a sacred pledge.  
Never—believe me—never have I been  
The enemy of my country! Never would I  
Aught have attempted 'gainst your liberties!  
But ye did wrong to put it off so long,



FUR. What would you undertake ?

RUD.

Alas ! I know not !

In this obscurity which veils her fate,  
This horrible anguish of uncertainty,  
One only ray of comfort gleams upon me !  
Amidst the ruins of tyrannic power  
Alone can she be rescued from the grave ;  
The forts must all be levelled with the ground,  
So may we pierce, perchance, into her dungeon.

MEL. Come, lead us on ! We follow ! Why till  
morning

Put off what may as well be done to-day ?  
Free was the Tell when we at Rutli swore,  
Nor had the deed of horror yet been done.  
The altered times impose a different law :  
Who is the dastard that would tremble now ?

RUD. Meanwhile take arms, and, for the work prepared,

Watch ye the beacon-lights upon the mountains ;  
For swifter than the sail that bears a message  
Shall the glad tidings of our victory reach you.  
See then ye kindle high the welcome flames,  
Burst like a thunder-bolt upon the foe,  
And break the bow of tyranny asunder.

*[They go off.]*

SCENE III.—*A hollow way near Kussnacht, over which TRAVELLERS are passing. The whole scene is surrounded by rocks, one of which is seen jutting forwards, and covered with bushes.*

*Enter TELL, with his crossbow.*

TELL. Through this deep narrow passage must he come,

There leads no other way to Kussnacht. Here  
I do it! The opportunity is lucky :  
Yon elder-brushwood forms a shady covert,  
Whence the avenging arrow well may reach him :  
The narrow way must hinder all pursuit.  
With heaven make up thy reckoning quickly, bailiff,  
Thou must away—thine hour is well-nigh run.

I lived quiet and innocent. My bow  
Was never bent save 'gainst the animals  
That roam the waste : my thoughts were free from  
murder.

Out of my peace hast thou affrighted me,  
And into poisonous gall the milk hast changed  
Of pious thoughtfulness. To monstrous deeds  
Hast thou accustomed me—and he who could  
At a beloved child take steady aim  
Will scarcely miss the bosom of his foe.

The innocent children—the defenceless ones,  
The good and faithful wife, must I protect

Against thy fury, bailiff. When the bow  
I raised, and drew the string with trembling hand ;  
When thou with devilish joy didst urge me on  
To aim the murderous weapon at my child,  
And I with earnest supplication strove  
To win thee from thy purpose—and thou wouldst  
not ;

Then did I swear within my bursting heart  
A fearful oath, and heard by none save God,  
When the next arrow parted from my bow,  
Its mark should be thy heart. What then I swore  
In the deep anguish of that horrible moment—  
It is a sacred debt—and I will pay it.

Thou art my liege lord, and my Emperor's servant,  
But never would the Emperor have permitted  
Himself, what thou—— He sent thee to this land  
To deal out justice—harsh—for he loves us not,  
But not to indulge, unpunished, each bad wish,  
Each guilty impulse of a cruel heart.  
There lives a God to punish and avenge !  
Come thou then forth, bringer of bitter sorrows,  
My dearest jewel now, my greatest treasure !  
An object will I give thee, which till now  
Was never pierced by pity's gentle prayer,  
But shall not stand 'gainst thee. And oh ! do thou,  
My trusty bowstring, who so oft before  
Hast served me truly in the games of skill,  
Do not forsake me in this fearful earnest !



Hold but now fast, my trusty cord, who oft  
Hast winged the bitter arrow to its mark,  
For if this parts all powerless from my hand,  
I have no second to send after it.

[TRAVELLERS *go over the stage.*

Here on this bench of stone I sit me down,  
Hewn to afford the wearied traveller  
A short repose—for here there is no home.  
Each presses forward, hurrying on his way,  
A passing glance of strange inquiry casts  
On each he meets, but asks not of his woes.  
Here goes the merchant, pondering on his cares,  
The light-accoutred pilgrim, pious monk,  
The gloomy robber, and the cheerful player,  
The carrier with his heavy-laden horse  
Who comes from distant lands—for every way  
Leads to the ends of earth. They all go forth,  
Each on his separate errand : mine is murder !

[*He sits down.*

Once, when your father left his cot, dear children,  
It was a joy to see him home return ;  
For ne'er did he forget to bring you something,  
Perchance a lovely Alpine flower, perchance  
A rarer bird, or curious ammon's horn,  
Such as the wanderer finds upon the mountains.  
But now he goes on different sport intent,  
On the wild way he sits with murderous thoughts,  
And watches for the life-blood of his foe.

And yet, even now, on you he thinks, dear children,  
Even now—and 'tis your holy innocence  
From the fell tyrant's vengeance to protect,  
That now he stands, and bends the bow for murder.

[*He rises.*]

I watch for noble game ! Why the poor hunter  
Would never hesitate, for whole days long  
To strive with winter's stern severity,  
From rock to rock to make the daring spring,  
To climb the glassy walls of solid ice,  
To which he glues himself with his own blood,  
And all to ensnare a poor ignoble chamois !  
I seek a costlier prize to win—his heart—  
The deadly enemy's who would destroy me.

[*Lively music is heard approaching from a distance.*]

Handled have I my whole life long the bow,  
And made familiar every rule of art ;  
Oft have I fixed my arrow in the black,  
And many a lovely prize have homeward borne,  
Won in the games of skill : but here to-day  
Will I achieve my master-shot—myself  
Prove the best archer in the mountains round.

*A Bridal Train passes over the stage, and along the road.*

*TELL stands leaning on his bow, observing it.*

*STUSSI leaves the procession, and joins him.*

STU. The convent-farmer 'tis from Morlischachen  
Whose wedding passes yonder. He is rich,

And full ten herds he pastures on the Alps.  
His wife he now brings home from Imisee :  
Brave doings shall we have to-night at Kussnacht !  
Come with us ! every honest man's invited.

TELL. A gloomy guest suits not the marriage  
feast.

STU. If care oppress thee, fling it briskly off.  
Take what presents itself: the times are heavy,  
And, therefore, lightly seize the passing joy.  
Here is a bridal, yonder is a burial.

TELL. And often one comes hard upon the other.

STU. So goes the world ! Well ! everywhere is  
found

Unhappiness enough. The land of Glaris  
Is now in great amaze, and of the Glarnisch  
They say that a whole side is fallen in.

TELL. What ! do the mountains totter ? On the  
earth  
Is nothing firm ?

STU. Elsewhere strange things have  
happened.

I spoke with one who came from Baden hither.  
A knight was spurring to the Emperor's Court,  
When on the road he met a swarm of hornets,  
Which fell upon his horse, and stung it so,  
That, mad with pain, it downward dropped, and  
died,

And he before the King on foot arrived.

TELL. Even to the weak is given a sting.

*Enter ARMGART with several CHILDREN, and places herself at the entrance of the pass.*

STU. Men think  
It bodes some dire disaster to the land,  
Some heavy deed 'gainst nature.

TELL. Every day  
Brings forth such deeds—they need no prodigies.

STU. Yes, well for him who tills his field in peace,  
And dwells at home securely with his friends!

TELL. Yet cannot the most pious live in peace,  
If wicked neighbours seek to hinder it.

*[He keeps looking anxiously up the pass.]*

STU. Farewell! You wait for some one here?

TELL. I do.

STU. A happy meeting with your family  
From Uri, are you not? Our gracious lord,  
The bailiff, is expected thence to-day.

TRAVELLER. The bailiff here to-day expect no  
longer :

The waters with the heavy rains are out,  
And all the bridges broke down by the torrents.

ARM. The bailiff comes not?

STU. Would you aught with him?

ARM. Indeed I would!

STU. Then wherefore place yourself  
Right in his passage in this narrow way?

ARM. Here he cannot avoid me! He must hear  
me!

*Enter FRIESSHARDT, hastily*

FRI. Clear the road there ! Our gracious lord,  
the bailiff,

Rides hard upon my heels. [TELL goes out.

ARM. [*quickly*]. The bailiff comes !

[GESLER and RUDOLPH DER HARRAS *appear*  
*on horseback towards the head of the pass.*

STU. [*to FRIESSHARDT*]. How came you through  
the waters when the stream

Has swept away the bridges ?

FRI. With the lake

Have we fought, friend, and fear no mountain-  
torrent.

STU. What ! in the storm were you on board the  
ship ?

FRI. Indeed we were ! I shall not soon forget it.

STU. Oh ! let us hear——

FRI. I cannot ! I must on,

To announce the bailiff's coming at the castle.

[*Goes on.*

STU. Had honest people been on board the vessel  
Down had she gone with every living soul ;  
But fire nor water touches such as these !

[*Looking round him.*  
Where is the hunter gone with whom I spoke ?

*Enter GESLER and RUDOLPH DER HARRAS.*

GES. Say what you will, I am the Emperor's servant,

And my first care must be to do his pleasure.

He sent me not into this land the people

To flatter and caress : obedience

Is what he looks for ; and the struggle is

Whether the boor be master here or we.

ARM. Now is the moment ! Now will I prefer it !

*[Approaches timidly.]*

GES. Neither did I the hat set up at Altorf

For idle sport to try the people's hearts.

These have I known long since. I set it up

That they might learn to bow their stubborn necks,

Which they have borne too stiffly : in their way

An inconvenient obstacle have planted,

Which they must pass, and when it meets their eyes,

Recall to mind their lord, whom they forget.

HAR. Yet do the people certain rights possess——

GES. Which 'tis no time to weigh. Important measures

Are now in action. The imperial house

Would stretch its power and influence. What the father

Has gloriously begun the son would finish.

This little people is our stumbling-block,

And must—this way or that—be flung aside.

ARM. [*throwing herself before him*]. Show pity on me, sir! Oh, mercy, mercy!

GES. What makes you on the public road obstruct My passage? Back!

ARM. My husband lies in prison,  
My wretched orphans cry for bread. Have pity,  
Dread sir, on our great misery!

HAR. Who are you?  
Who is your husband?

ARM. A poor mower, sir,  
Who dwells upon the Rigiberg, and crops,  
Upon the very brink of the abyss,  
The unowned grass that tufts its craggy walls,  
Where scarce the cattle dare to trust themselves.

HAR. [*to the BAILIFF*]. By heavens! a sad and pitiable life!  
I do beseech you set the poor man free.  
Whate'er has been his crime, this dreadful trade  
Is surely, sir, quite punishment enough.

[*To the WOMAN*.]  
You will have justice done you. To the castle  
With your petition! This is not the place.

ARM. No! from this spot I move not till the bailiff  
Has promised me my husband to restore.  
Already now six months he lies in prison,  
And waits the sentence of the judge in vain.

GES. Woman, dost think to force me to thy purpose?

ARM. Justice, lord bailiff! In the Emperor's place

Here art thou judge, and in the place of God.  
Perform thy duty therefore. As from heaven  
Thou hop'st for justice, justice show to us.

GES. On! Drive these saucy beggars from my sight!

ARM. [*seizing the bridle of the horse*]. No! no! I  
now have nothing more to lose.

Bailiff, thou shalt not from this spot depart  
Till thou hast given thine answer. Knit thy brow;  
Roll as thou wilt thine eye! We are become  
So desperately unhappy that we care  
No longer for thine anger.

GES. Woman! Room!

Or else my horse shall go right over thee.

ARM. Let it go over me. There——

[*She flings down her children, and throws herself  
with them in his way.*]

Here I lie,

With my poor children. Let the wretched orphans  
Beneath thy horse's feet be trod to pieces;  
It will not be the worst that thou hast done.

HAR. What, woman, art thou mad?

ARM. The Emperor's land  
Hast thou long trampled under foot! I am  
Only a woman. Were I but a man,  
Soon would I better means employ than thus  
Here in the dust to lie.



GES. Where are my servants?

Let her be dragged away, or else I may  
Forget myself, and do what will repent me.

HAR. The servants cannot pierce the crowd, my  
lord :

The narrow pass is stopped up by a wedding.

GES. Too mild a ruler have I hitherto  
Been to this people. Still their tongues are free.  
They have not, as they shall be, yet been curbed.  
It shall be otherwise, I promise you !  
I will yet break this stubborn feeling down,  
This saucy spirit of freedom will I bow,  
New and severer laws throughout the land  
Will promulgate—will——

*[He is transfixed with an arrow, puts his hand to  
his heart, and threatens to fall.]*

God be gracious to me !

HAR. Lord governor—what is that ? God !  
Whence came that ?

ARM. Murder ! murder ! He totters, sinks ! Is  
wounded !

HAR. *[springing from his horse]*. Oh ! horrible  
event ! My God ! Sir Knight,  
Implore God's gracious mercy on your soul !  
You're on the brink of death.

GES. That shot was Tell's !

*[He sinks from his horse into RUDOLPH'S arms,  
who places him on the bank.]*

TELL. [*on the rock*]. Thou know'st, indeed, the shooter! Seek no other!

Free are our huts, secure is innocence

From thee! The land thou wilt oppress no more!

[*He disappears. PEOPLE rush in.*]

STU. What is the matter! What has happened here?

ARM. The governor is shot through with an arrow.

PEOPLE. [*rushing in*]. Who is it that is shot?

HAR. He bleeds to death?

Off! Bring some help! Pursue the murderer!

Unhappy man, thus must it end with thee?

But thou wouldst never listen to my warning!

STU. By heavens! he lies there pale and void of life.

MANY VOICES. Who did the deed?

HAR. What! are these people mad,  
That murder is with them a time for music?  
Let it be silenced!

[*The music breaks suddenly off. More PEOPLE rush in.*]

Sir! if you can, oh! speak.

Have you nought further to entrust me with?

What would you? Whither would you go? To  
Kussnacht?

I understand you not! Be not impatient!

Oh! leave all earthly thoughts! Think only now  
How best to reconcile yourself with heaven!

STU. See, see, how pale he lies ! Death settles now  
Upon his heart ! His eyes are fixed and glassy.

ARM. See, children, see ! Behold how tyrants die !

HAR. Light-minded women, have you lost all  
feeling

That on such horrors you can feed your looks !  
Help ! Lend me here a hand. Will none assist  
The painful arrow from his breast to draw ?

WOMEN. Him shall we touch whom God himself  
has stricken ?

HAR. Death and damnation seize you !

*[Draws his sword.]*

STU. *[stopping his arm]*. Dare it, sir !  
Your insolent dominion's at an end.  
The tyrant of the land is fallen. We  
Endure your power no more. We are free men.

ALL. *[tumultuously]*. The land is free !

HAR. What ! is it come to this ?  
Ends fear so speedily, and obedience ?

*[To the GUARDS, who hurry in.]*

The dreadful deed of murder ye behold,  
Which has been done ! Help is impossible !  
The murderer to pursue were all in vain !  
More pressing cares claim our attention. Quick !  
Let us away to Kussnacht, and preserve  
His fortress to the Emperor ! In a moment  
All order is dissolved, all bonds of duty,  
And no man's faith is to be trusted more.

*[They go off.]*

ARM. Room! room! • here comes the Brotherhood  
of Mercy!

STU. The victim lies—the ravens pounce upon  
him!

*Enter the BROTHERS OF MERCY, who place themselves round the body in a half-circle, and sing in a solemn tone.*

With hasty step death presses on,  
Nor grants to man a moment's stay;  
He falls ere half his race be run,  
In manhood's pride is swept away;  
Prepared, or unprepared, to die,  
He stands before his Judge on high.

*[Whilst they are repeating the last lines the curtain falls.]*



*ACT V.*



## ACT V.

SCENE I.—*An open place near Altorf. In the background, to the right, the fortress with the scaffolding still standing; to the left, a view towards the mountains, on all of which beacons are blazing. The time is about daybreak. Bells are heard in the distance.*

RUODI, KUONI, WERNI, *the STONEMASON, and many other* PEASANTS, WOMEN *and* CHILDREN.

RUO. See ye the beacon-flames upon the mountains?

STONE. Hear ye the bells sound over from the forest?

RUO. The enemy is expelled!

STONE. The castle's fallen!

RUO. And we of Uri still endure to see  
Within our land a hold of tyranny!  
Are we the last, then, to assert our freedom?

STONE. Shall the yoke stand that was to bow our  
necks?



Down with it to the ground !

ALL.

Down with it ! down !

RUO. Is Stier of Uri here ?

STIER.

I'm here ! What would

ye ?

RUO. Ascend the signal-post, blow loud your  
horn,

That it resound wide-spreading through the moun-  
tains,

And every echo in the rocky clefts

Awakening, instantly assemble all

Who dwell within their circuit. [STIER goes out.

*Enter* WALTER FURST.

FUR.

Gently, friends !

We know not yet what has been done in Schwitz

Or Unterwalden. Wait first to receive

A messenger.

RUO.

Why wait ? The tyrant's dead !

The day of freedom has already dawned !

STONE. Are not these flames sufficient messengers,  
Which kindle every summit round about ?

RUO. Come all ! Begin the work—both men and  
women !

Tear down the scaffolds ! Spring the arches !

Raze

The walls ! No stone be left upon the other !

STONE. Come, comrades, come ! We helped to  
build it up,  
We surely may destroy it !  
ALL [*rushing upon the building*]. Tear it down !  
FUR. It has the rein—I can no longer hold it !

*Enter MELCHTAL and BAUMGARTEN.*

MEL. What ! stands the castle yet—when Sarnen  
lies  
In ashes—Rossberg is a heap of ruins ?  
FUR. Is that you, Melchtal ? News of freedom  
bring you ?  
Say ! is the land cleared from our enemies ?  
MEL. The ground is clear. Rejoice ! Even  
whilst we speak  
Not one of all our tyrants can be found  
In Switzerland.

FUR. Oh ! tell us how you gained  
Possession of the forts ?

MEL. Rudenz it was,  
Who by an act of bold and manly daring  
The fort of Sarnen won. Rossberg had I  
The night preceding scaled. But hear what hap-  
pened !

Whilst we our foes were driving from the place,  
Now happily in flames, which crackling rose,  
And ruddied o'er the sky—out Diethelm rushed,



My fault it is not, that the light of day  
His eyes still gladdens, who my father blinded.  
Hotly I chased him—reached him in his flight,  
And dragged him to my father's feet. Already  
Over his head suspended was the sword,  
When from the pity of the blind old man,  
He sued for, and obtained, the gift of life.  
The Urphed oath he swore not to return :  
And he will keep it—he has felt our arm.

FUR. Oh ! well for you that your pure victory  
You have not stained with blood !

CHILDREN [*hurrying over the stage with fragments of  
scaffolding*]. Freedom ! freedom !

[*The horn of Uri is loudly blown.*]

FUR. See ! what a festive scene ! This day will  
children  
To the last day of hoary age remember.

*Enter a troop of GIRLS, bearing the hat on a pole, and  
accompanied by a crowd of persons.*

RUO. Here is the hat to which we were to bow !

BAU. Direct us how we shall dispose of it.

FUR. God ! under this very hat my grandchild  
stood.

MANY VOICES. Blot out the memory of tyrant-  
power !

Into the flames with it !

FUR.

No ! no ! preserve it !



ROS. We live in awful times !

FUR. Proceed ! What is it ?

Ah ! Werner, are you there ? What brings you hither ?

• PEAS. What is the matter ?

ROS. Hear, and be astonished !

STA. From a great cause of dread are we delivered !

ROS. The Emperor is murdered.

FUR. Gracious God !

ALL [*crowding round* STAUFFACHER]. Murdered ?

The Emperor murdered ? Hear ! The Emperor

MEL. It is not possible ! How came the news ?

STA. It is all true : King Albrecht fell at Bruck,  
And by a murderer's hand. A man of credit,  
Johannes Muller, brought it from Schaffhausen.

FUR. Who dared commit so horrible a crime ?

STA. A crime more horrible in the doer of it !  
It was his nephew, his own brother's child,  
Duke John of Swabia, who did the deed.

MEL. What urged him to this act of parricide ?

STA. The Emperor his paternal heritage  
Kept from the impatient suitor back. 'Tis said  
He thought to pay him with a bishop's hat.  
Be this or not—the youth his ear inclined  
To evil counsel from his friends in arms ;  
And with the noble Lords von Eschenbach,  
Von Tagerfelden, von der Wart, and Palm,  
Hopeless by other means his rights to win,  
Resolved by his own hand to avenge himself.

FUR. Oh! say, how was the dreadful act accomplished?

STA. The King was riding down from Stein to Baden,  
To visit Rheinfeld, where his Court he held,  
Followed by noble lords of high degree,  
Amongst the rest Prince John and Leopold.  
But when they reached the passage of the Reuss,  
The murderers seized the opportunity  
To spring into the bark which bore the King,  
And part him from his train. And as the King  
Pushed on his horse across a fresh-ploughed field,  
Where 'neath the soil have lain for many an age  
The extended ruins of a once proud city,  
The ancient tower of Hapsburg full in sight,  
Where first the glories of his race began;  
His dagger plunged Duke John into his throat,  
Von Palm ran through his body with a spear,  
And Eschenbach his skull severed in twain,  
So that he fell all weltering in his blood,  
Murdered in his own home, by his own kindred.  
His followers, standing on the further bank,  
Witnessed the deed, but, hindered by the stream,  
Could only raise a powerless cry of terror;  
But a poor woman sat by the roadside,  
And in her lap the Emperor bled to death.

MEL. So has he dug his own untimely grave,  
Who would insatiably have grasped at all.

STA. A dread amazement has possessed the land:

Secured are all the passes of the mountains ;  
Each place upon its boundaries sets a guard :  
Even ancient Zurich barricades her gates,  
Which now for thirty years have open stood,  
The murderers fearing—and still more the avenger.  
For, with the ban of interdiction armed,  
Comes the Hungarian Queen, the cruel Agnes,  
Who of the mildness of her gentle sex  
Knows nothing, and her father's kingly blood  
On their whole race determined to avenge,  
Upon their servants, children, children's children,  
Yea, on the very stones that wall their castles.  
Sworn has she all who bear the hated name  
Down to despatch into her father's grave,  
And bathe herself in blood as in May-dew.

MEL. Whither the murderers have fled, know  
you?

STA. Soon as the act was perpetrated all  
Fled, each a different way, to meet no more.  
Duke John is said to wander in the mountains.

FUR. So no advantage yields their crime to  
them !

Revenge yields no advantage ! To itself  
'Tis its own deadly nourishment : its taste  
Brings with it murder, and its fulness horror.

STA. The crime yields to the murderers no advantage,  
But we with stainless hands the happy fruits  
Of this most bloody deed may freely gather.



Removed is now our greatest cause of dread,  
For fallen is freedom's greatest enemy ;  
And, as is current, will the sceptre pass  
From Hapsburg's house into another line.  
The Empire cannot fail to reassert  
Its liberty of choice.

SEVERAL VOICES. Have you heard aught ?

STA. The Count of Luxemburg is named already  
By a majority.

FUR. 'Tis well for us  
That by the Empire we have firmly stood :  
Now may we hope some justice to experience.

STA. And steady friends will our new master  
need :  
He will protect us against Austria's vengeance.

*Enter SACRISTAN, with a MESSENGER.*

SAC. Here are our worthy magistrates ?

ROS. What is the matter ?

SAC. A messenger of the Empire brings this  
writing.

ALL. Break it, and read !

FUR. To the deserving men  
Of Uri, Schwitz, and Unterwalden, sends  
The Queen Elizabeth favour and all good.

MANY VOICES. What would the Queen ? Her  
empire is concluded.

FUR. In the great sorrow, and forlorn condition,



Has he sown in these valleys. • He was raised  
Upon a lofty place, and might have been  
The father of his people, but he chose  
Rather to seek the advantage of his own :  
Let those who reaped the harvest weep for him ! •

FUR. We will not dance in triumph o'er his fall,  
The evil he hath done remember now :  
Far be such thoughts from us ! But that we  
should

His death avenge who never did us good,  
Those persecute who never injured us,  
Becomes us not—belongs not to our duty.  
Love must be a free offering. Death absolves  
From all forced obligations : and to him  
Now have we nothing further to discharge.

MEL. And does the Queen in her lone chamber  
weep ?

And do her wild reproaches Heaven accuse ?  
Here may you see a people, freed from sorrow,  
To that same Heaven send up its grateful prayers.  
Who tears would reap the seeds of love must  
scatter. [MESSENGER *departs*.

STA. Where is brave Tell ? Shall he alone be  
wanting,

Who of our freedom is the founder ? He  
The greatest has achieved—the hardest suffered.  
Come ! hasten to his dwelling, and invoke  
Blessings on him, the saviour of us all !

SCENE II.—*An outer room in TELL'S house, with the door standing open ; a fire burning on the hearth.*

HEDWIG, WALTER, and WILLIAM.

HED. To-day returns your father. Dear, dear children !

He lives, is free ! and we are free, and all !  
And 'tis your father who the land has saved.

WAL. And I, dear mother, have assisted also ;  
Me must they name with him ! My father's arrow  
In peril placed my life, and I did not  
So much as tremble.

HED. Yes, a second time  
Thou'rt given to me ! Twice have I given thee  
birth,  
Twice have I borne for thee a mother's pangs !  
But it is passed—I have you both again !  
And your dear father home returns to-day !

[*A MONK appears at the door.*]

WILL. See, mother, see ! there stands a pious  
Brother,  
Who doubtless asks an alms.

HED. Conduct him in,  
And give him some refreshment ! Let him feel  
That he is come into the house of gladness.

[*She goes, and returns with a cup.*]

WILL. Enter, good man ! my mother brings re-  
freshment !

WAL. Come, rest yourself, and go recruited hence !

MONK [*gazing wildly around him*]. Where am I ?

Tell me in what land I am !

WAL. Are you bewildered, that you know not that ?

You are at Burglen, in the land of Uri,

Through which the traveller seeks the Schachenthal.

MONK. Are you alone ? Is not your husband with you ?

HED. I look for him even now. But what's the matter ?

You seem not like a messenger of good !

Whoe'er you be, you need assistance ! Take it !

[*Giving him the cup.*]

MONK. Although my fainting soul thirsts for refreshment,

I will not touch it till you promise me——

HED. Touch not my garments—come not nearer to me ;

Remain aloof if you would have me hear you !

MONK. Here by this fire which hospitably blazes,  
By the beloved heads of these your children,  
Which I embrace——

HED. Man ! what is it you mean ?

Back ! from my children back ! You are no monk !

No ! no ! Under these garments peace should dwell,

But in your troubled features peace dwells not.

MONK. I am of all mankind the most unhappy !

HED. Unhappiness speaks strongly to the heart,  
But your looks cause my inmost soul to shudder.

WAL. [*springing up*]. Mother!—my father!

[*He hurries out.*]

HED. [*attempting to follow*]. O my God!

WILL.

Our father!

WAL. And thou art here again!

WILL.

. My dear, dear father!

TELL. Yes! here I am again! Where is your  
mother?

WAL. There at the door she stands, and cannot  
further,

So trembles she for terror and for joy!

TELL. Oh! Hedwig! Hedwig! mother of my  
children!

God has preserved; no tyrant parts us more.

HED. Oh, Tell! what have I not endured for  
thee!

[*The MONK becomes attentive.*]

TELL. Forget it now, and live only for joy!

See, here I am again! This is my hut!

And here I stand once more in my own home!

WILL. But, father, where hast thou thy crossbow  
left?

I see that not.

TELL. And never more wilt see it!

Within a holy place it is preserved,

Never to serve the hunter's purpose more.

HED. Oh, Tell! oh, Tell!

TELL. What frights thee, dearest wife?

HED. How—how—dost thou return to me! This hand—

May I dare press it? Gracious God! This hand——

TELL. Has you protected, and my country saved,  
And freely up to Heaven I dare to raise it.

*[The MONK makes a sudden motion.]*

Who is the brother here?

HED. I had forgot him!  
Speak thou with him—his presence frightens me.

MONK. Are you that Tell by whom the bailiff fell?

TELL. I am, and from no mortal seek to hide it.

MONK. You are that Tell! Then is it God's own hand

Which has beneath your roof conducted me.

TELL. You are no monk! Who are you?

MONK. You have slain  
The bailiff who had injured you. I also  
Have slain an enemy who refused me justice.  
Your enemy he was as well as mine,  
And I have rid the land of him.

TELL. *[stepping back]*. You are—  
Horrible! Children, children! go—get hence!  
Go, dearest wife! Go, go! Unhappy man!  
Could you be——

HED. Heavens, who is it?

TELL. Do not ask !  
Away, away ! The children must not hear !  
The house abandon ! Under the same roof  
Thou shouldst not dwell a moment with this  
man.

HED. Alas ! who is it ? Come !

[*Goes out with the CHILDREN.*]

TELL. You are the Duke  
Of Austria ! You are ! and you have slain  
The Emperor—your uncle and liege-lord !

DUKE. He had despoiled me of my heritage.

TELL. Your uncle slain—your Emperor ! And  
the earth

Yet bears you ! And the sun yet looks upon you !

DUKE. Tell, hear me, ere you——

TELL. Dropping with the blood  
Of one so near to thee, and so exalted,  
Dar'st thou my unpolluted dwelling enter !  
Dar'st thou to a good man thy face present,  
And claim the rights of hospitality ?

DUKE. From you I hoped to find compassion !  
—you  
Took vengeance on your foe !

TELL. Unhappy man !  
Wouldst thou ambition's bloody crime confound  
With the stern duty urged upon a father ?  
Hast thou a child's beloved head protected,  
Guarded the holy sanctuary of thy home,  
The last—the fearfullest extremity,



From all thou most art bound to warded off?  
To Heaven I lift my spotless hands, and curse  
Thee and thy deed. I only have avenged  
That holy nature thou hast dared to shame.  
Nought do I share with thee: murdered hast thou;  
I but defended what was dearest to me.

DUKE. And will you from your presence drive me  
thus,  
Forlorn—despairing?

TELL. Horror fills my soul,  
Whilst I discourse with thee! Away! pursue  
Thy fearful path, and unpolluted leave  
The happy cot where dwell the innocent.

DUKE. Then longer live I cannot, and I will not!

TELL. And yet I pity thee! Great God in  
heaven!  
So young, from such a noble stem derived,  
Grandson of Rudolph, my liege-lord and Emperor,  
An outlawed murderer, on my threshold here,  
Mine, the poor man's—entreating and despairing!

*[Concealing his face.]*

DUKE. If you can weep, oh! let my destiny  
Move pity! It is terrible! A prince—  
I was—might have lived happily,  
Had I controlled the impatience of my wishes.  
But envy gnawed my bosom, when I saw  
My cousin Leopold, although so young,  
With land rewarded and with glory crowned;

Whilst I, of equal age, was doomed my youth •  
To pine away in slavish pupilage.

TELL. Unhappy man! well did thy uncle know  
thee,

When he denied thee land and people. Thou,  
By this rash, frenzied act, hast fearfully  
Thyself his wise precaution justified.

Where are the bloody partners of thy guilt?

DUKE. Where the avenging spirit drives them! I  
Have never seen them since that fatal day.

TELL. Know'st thou that thou art outlawed—art  
alike

Dead to each friend, abandoned to each foe?

DUKE. Therefore avoid I every beaten track,  
No cottage dare approach to beg for shelter,  
Turn to the wilderness my fainting steps,  
A terror to myself roam through the mountains,  
And shuddering back from my own shadow start  
If but a brook reflect my unblest image.  
Oh! if you feel humanity and pity——

*[Falling down before him.]*

TELL. Stand up! stand up!

DUKE. Not till your hand you reach,  
To promise me assistance.

TELL. Can I help you?  
Can I, a sinful mortal? But stand up!  
Though horrible your crime, you are a man:  
I also am a man, and none from Tell

Shall e'er depart without receiving comfort.  
All that is possible, that will I do.

DUKE. O Tell,  
You save me from despair!

TELL. Let go my hand!  
You must away! Here could you not remain  
Without discovery; and, discovered, could not  
Count on protection. Whither will you turn?  
Where hope you peace to find?

DUKE. Alas! I know not!

TELL. Hear then what Heaven suggests! You  
must away

To Italy, and seek St. Peter's city;  
There fall before the footstool of the Pope,  
Confess your crime, and purify your soul.

DUKE. Will he not to the avenger give me  
over?

TELL. Whate'er he wills receive as God's decree.

DUKE. How shall I come into the unknown  
land?

I have no knowledge of the way, and dare not  
Follow the steps of those who journey thither.

TELL. The way will I describe to you: mark  
well!

Hence you ascend beside the impetuous Reuss,  
Which, a wild torrent, rushes from the mountains.

DUKE. See I the Reuss? The bloody deed it  
witnessed!

TELL. Close on the precipice ascends the road,

By many a cross distinguished, raised to those,  
Who buried lie beneath the avalanche.

DUKE. Not Nature's wildest terrors would appal  
me

Could I but quell the torments of the heart.

TELL. Before each cross fall down, and expiate  
With hot repentant tears your heavy guilt ;  
And should you safely pass this glen of terrors,  
Sends not the mountain from its icy summit  
Down on your head the avenging avalanche,  
You reach the fearful bridge, which the wild  
torrent,

Foaming impetuous down, half hides in spray.  
And if it break not in beneath your guilt,  
Have you that danger happily escaped,  
The yawning cliff presents a gloomy chasm  
Which day has never visited—this passed  
Conducts you to a cheerful vale of gladness,  
But hurrying steps must bear you swift across  
it,

You may not linger near the abodes of peace.

DUKE. O Rudolph ! Rudolph ! kingly ancestor ! .  
Enters thy grandson thus on thy domains ?

TELL. Ascending ever thus, the heights you  
reach  
Of the St. Gothard, where the eternal lakes  
Are filled from heaven's own reservoirs. You there  
Take leave of this our German land ; and thence  
Another stream with gentler current down

Conducts you to the promised<sup>c</sup> Italy.

[*The sound of many horns is heard, playing the Ranz-des-vaches.*

Voices I hear ! Away !

HED. [*hurrying in*]. Where art thou, Tell ?  
Thy father comes, and the confederates  
Approach in glad procession.

DUKE. Woe is me !  
I dare not tarry where the happy dwell.

TELL. Go, dearest wife ! procure this man refresh-  
ment :

With gifts provide him largely—for his way  
Lies distant far, and he will find no shelter.  
Be quick ! they come !

HED. Who is it ?

TELL. Do not ask ;  
And when he leaves thee, turn away thine eyes,  
That they perceive not towards what point he  
journeys.

[*The DUKE makes a sudden motion, as if about to approach TELL, who warns him off with his hand, and they leave the cottage, on different sides.*

SCENE III.—*Opens and discovers the whole of the valley before TELL'S cottage, with the eminences which surround it, covered with PEASANTS, who collect themselves towards one spot. Others are seen descending a steep path which leads over the Schachen. WALTER FURST, with the two BOYS, MELCHTAL, and STAUFFACHER, come forwards; others press after them. As soon as TELL steps out of the house, all receive him with the greatest demonstrations of gladness.*

ALL. Long live our archer, and our saviour,  
Tell!

*While those who are the nearest press round TELL, and embrace him, RUDENZ and BERTHA enter, and warmly congratulate HEDWIG and the PEASANTS. The music from the mountains accompanies this mute scene. As soon as it is ended, BERTHA steps forward into the midst of the PEOPLE, and speaks.*

BER. Confederates! countrymen! Me also take  
Into your league—the first, the happiest,  
Who has found safety in the land of freedom.  
In your brave hands I place my fortunes! Say!  
Will you defend me as a citizen?

PEAS. With goods and life will we.

BER.

To this young man

My hand with all my rights, then, here I give—  
The free Swiss heiress to the free Swiss man.

RUD. And here declare I all my vassals free.

*[As the music suddenly recommences, the  
curtain falls.]*

THE END.

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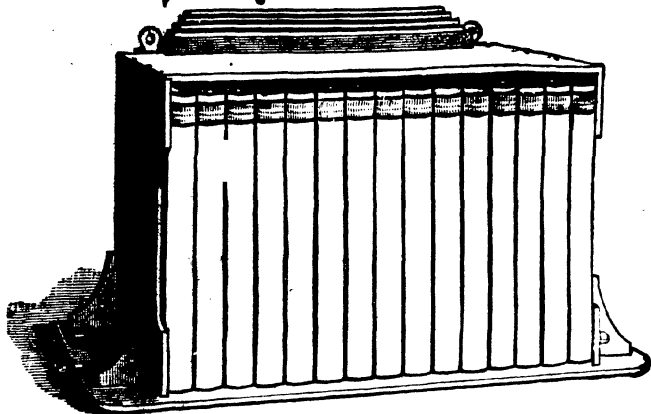
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