

Wilhelm Tell

Friedrich Von Schiller

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Wilhelm Tell

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- ACT I

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- * SCENE II. At Steinen in Schwyz.
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- * SCENE IV. Walter Furst's house.

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- * SCENE III. The hollow lane near Kussnacht.

- ACT V

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- * SCENE II. Entrance to TELL'S house.
- * SCENE III. The Final Scene

A Drama by Friedrich Von Schiller
New Year's Gift for 1805.

Translated by William F. Wertz, Jr.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

HERMANN GESSLER, Imperial Governor in Schwyz and Uri

WERNER, BARON VON ATTINGHAUSEN, Standard-bearer

ULRICH VON RUDENZ, his nephew From Uri

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WALTER FURST

WILHELM TELL

ROSSELMANN, the priest

PETERMANN, the sacristan

KUONI, the herdsman

WERNI, the hunter

RUODI, the fisherman

From Unterwalden:

ARNOLD VOM MELCHTAL

KONRAD BAUMGARTEN

MEIER VON SARNEN

STRUTH VON WINKELRIED

KLAUS VON DER FLUE

BURKHARDT AM BUHEL

ARNOLD VON SEWA

PFEIFER VON LUZERN

KUNZ VON GERSAU

JENNI, fisher boy

SEPPI, herdsman boy

GERTRUD, Stauffacher's wife

HEDWIG, Tell's wife, Furst's daughter

BERTA VON BRUNECK, a rich heiress

Countrymen from Schwyz:

WERNER STAUFFACHER

KONRAD HUNN

ITEL REDING

HANS AUF DER MAUER

JORG IM HOFE

ULRICH DER SCHMIED

JOST VON WEILER

Peasant women:

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ARMGARD

MECHTHILD

ELSBETH

HILDEGARD

ACT I

* SCENE I. High rocky shore of the Vierwaldstattersee, opposite Schwyz.

The lake makes a cove in the land, a hut is not far from the shore, fisherboy conveys himself in a boat. Across the lake one sees the green meadows, villages and farms lie in the bright sunshine. To the left of the spectator the peaks of the Haken show themselves, surrounded by clouds; to the right in the distant hinterground one sees the ice-covered mountains. Even before the curtain rises, one hears the cowherd's dance and the harmonious chime of the cattle bells, which continues for some time even during the opening scene.

FISHERBOY (sings in the boat):

(Melody of the cowherd's dance.)

The lake it doth smile, to hathing it calleth, The boy asleep on the verdant shore falleth, There hears he a ringing, Like flute-tones so nice, Like voices of angels In Paradise. And as he awakens in happiness blest There waters are washing him round the breast, And it calls from the bottom: Th'art mine, laddy dear! Entice I the sleeper, I pull him in here.

HERDSMAN (upon the mountain):

(Variation of the cowherd's dance.)

Ye pastures farewell! Ye meadows aglowing! The herdsman is going, The summer is hence. We go to the mount, return we'll be making, When the cuckoo calls, when the songs are awaking, When with flowers the earth itself new doth array, When the fountains flow in the loveliest May. Ye pastures farewell, Ye meadows aglowing! The herdsman is going, The summer is hence.

ALPINE HUNTER (appears opposite upon the top of the rock):

(Second Variation.)

The heights are athund'ring, now trembles the bridge, Nor feareth the archer on dizzying ridge, He strideth undaunted O'er ice-covered fields, No spring there is flaunted, No shoot there green yields; And under the footsteps a mist-covered sea, No longer the cities of man doth he see, Through the rift of clouds only He glimpses the world, Deep under the water Green fields are unfurl'd.

(The landscape is altered, one hears a muffled crack from the mountains, shadows of clouds move across the region. RUODI the fisherman comes out of the hut WERNI the hunter climbs from the rocks. KUONI the herdsman comes, with the milkpail on his shoulder. SEPPI his handyman, follows him.)

RUODI: Be speedy, Jenni. Haul the boat ashore. The grizzled Vale-Lord comes, dull roars the glacier, The Mythenstein is drawing on his cap, And from the weather cleft a cold wind blows, The storm, I think, will be

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here, ere we know't.

KUONI: Rain's coming, Ferryman. My sheep are eating The grass with greed, and Watcher paws the earth.

WERNI: The fish are springing, and the waterfowl Dives down below. A storm is now approaching.

KUONI (to his boy): Look, Seppi, that the cattle have not strayed.

SEPPI: I recognize brown Liesel by her bell.

KUONI: So we are missing none, she goes the farthest.

RUODI: A pretty peal of bells there, Master Herdsman.

WERNI: And handsome cows They're yours, compatriot?

KUONI: I'm not so rich they are my gracious Lord's, Of Attinghausen's, and to me entrusted.

RUODI: How fair the band appears on that cow's neck.

KUONI: That knows she too, that she doth lead the herd, And took I it from her, she'd cease to feed.

ROUDI: That makes no sense! A cow devoid of reason

WERNI: That's easy said. The beast hath reason too, That's known to us, we men who hunt the Chamois, Who shrewdly post, when they to pasture go, A sentinel, who pricks his ears and warns With piercing whistle, when the hunter nears.

RUODI (to the herdsman): You drive them home?

KUONI: The Alp is grazed quite bare.

WERNI: Safe journey home, my friend!

KUONI: That wish I you, Not all your trips are ended in return.

ROUDI: There comes a man who rushes with great haste.

WERNI: I know him, it is Baumgart of Alzellen.

(KONRAD BAUMGARTEN rushing in breathless.)

BAUMGARTEN: May God be willing, Ferryman, your boat!

RUODI: Now, now, what is the hurry?

BAUMGARTEN: Cast off now! You must save me from death! Set me across!

KUONI: Compatriot, what's wrong?

WERNI: Who follows you?

ACT I

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BAUMGARTEN (to the fisherman): Haste, haste, e'en now they're close upon my heels! The Gov'rnor's troopers are in hot pursuit, I am a man of death, if I am seized.

RUODI: Why are the troopers in pursuit of you?

BAUMGARTEN: First rescue me, and then I'll talk to you.

WERNI: You are defiled with blood, what hath occurred?

BAUMGARTEN: The Emperor's cast'llan, who at Rossberg sat

KUONI: The Wolfenschiesen? He's pursuing you? He'll harm no man again, I've vet him dead.

ALL (fall back):

May God forgive you! What is it you've done?

BAUMGARTEN: What any free man in my place had done! I've exercised my household right against Him who'd defile mine honor and my

KUONI: The Castilian hath your honor then impaired?

BAUMGARTEN: That he did not his evil lust fulfill, Hast God and my good axe alone prevented.

WERNI: You've split his head in two then with your axe?

KUONI: O, let us hear, you've time enough, before He hath the boat unfastened from the shore.

BAUMGARTEN: I had been felling timber in the woods, When ran my wife toward me in mortal fear. The Cast'llan quartered in my house, he had Commanded her, to get a bath prepared. And when he had indecencies of her Demanded, she escaped, to search for me. Then ran I brisk thereto, just as I was, And with the axe I've blessed his bath for him.

WERNI: You've acted well, no man can blame you for it.

KUONI: The maniac! Now hath he his reward! 'Twas long deserved from Unterwalden's people.

BAUMGARTEN: The deed was noised about, I am pursued

And while we're speaking God the time is flying

(It begins to thunder.)

KUONI: Quick, Ferryman convey this man across.

RUODI: It can't be done. A violent storm is now Approaching. You must wait.

BAUMGARTEN: Oh, Holy God! I can not wait. The least delay is death

KUONI (to the fisherman): Set out with God, one must assist his neighbor, The like can happen to each one of us.

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(Roaring and thundering.)

RUODI: The Fohn is loose, see how the waters rise, I can not steer against the storm and waves.

BAUMGARTEN (embraces his knees): So must I fall into the tyrants hands,

WERNI: His life's at stake, have mercy Ferryman.

KUONI: He is a father, and hath wife and children!

(Repeated peals of thunder.)

RUODI: So what? I have a life as well to lose, Have wife and child at home, like he Look how It surges, how it heaves and whirlpools draw, And all the water rouses from the depths. I would be glad to save this worthy man, Yet it's impossible, you see yourself.

BAUMGARTEN (still on his knees): So must I fall into the tyrant's hands, The shore of rescue now so near to sight! Lies yonder ! I can reach it with mine eyes, My voice's sound can make its way across, Here is the boat, that would convey me thence, And must I lie here, helpless, and forlorn!

KUONI: Look, who is now come here!

WERNI: Tis Tell from Burglen.

(TELL with crossbow.)

TELL: Who is the man, who here implores for help?

KUONI: It's an Alzeller man, he hath his honor Defended, and the Wolfenschiessen slain, The Cast'llan of the King, who sat at Rossberg The Governor's troopers are upon his heels, He begs the boatman carry him across, But he's afraid o'th' storm and will not go.

RUODI: Now here is Tell, he steers the rudder too He'll be my witness, should the trip be dared.

TELL: If need be, Ferryman, all may be ventured.

(Violent peals of thunder, the lake surges up.)

RUODI: Am I to plunge into the jaws of hell? That none would do, who did possess his senses.

TELL: The valiant man thinks of himself the last, Put trust in God and rescue the distressed.

RUODI: Secure in port tis easy to advise, Here is the boat and there the lake! Attempt it!

TELL: The lake can pity, but the Governor will not, Attempt it, Boatman!

HERDSMAN AND HUNTER: Save him! Save him! Save him!

RUODI: And 'twere my brother and my very child, It can not be, 'tis Simon–Juda day, Here raves the lake and wants to have its victim.

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TELL: With idle talk will nothing here be done, The hour insists, the man must now be helped. Speak, Boatman, wilt thou take him?

RUODI: No, not I!

TELL: I' th' name of God then! Give the boat to me, I will attempt it, with my feeble strength.

KUONI: Ha, valiant Tell!

WERNI: That is the hunter's way!

BAUMGARTEN: You are my savior and mine angel, Tell!

TELL: I'll save you from the pow'r o' th Governor From per'l of storm another must give aid. Yet better is't, you fall into God's hands, Than into men's! (to the herdsman) Compatriot, console My wife, if something human falls to me, I've done, but what I could not leave undone.

(He springs into the boat.)

KUONI (to fisherman): You are a master of the helm. What Tell Hath dared to do, that could not you have ventured?

RUODI: Far better men do not take Tell's example, There are not two, like he is, in the mountains.

WERNI (hath climbed upon the rock): He pushes off. God help thee, valiant swimmer! See, how the bark is reeling on the waves!

KUONI (on the bank): The surge is passing thence I see't no more. Yet wait, here it appears again! Robustly The valiant man is working through the breakers.

SEPPI: The Governor's troopers come now at full gallop.

KUONI: God knows, they are! And that was help in need.

(A troupe of Landenberg troopers.)

FIRST TROOPER: Give up the murderer, you have concealed.

SECOND: This way he came, in vain you're hiding him.

KUONI AND RUODI: Whom mean you, trooper?

FIRST TROOPER (discovers the boat): Ha, what see I! Devil!

WERNI (above): Is't he in yonder boat, you seek? Ride on! If you lay quickly to, you'll haul him in.

SECOND: Accurs'd! He hath escaped.

FIRST (to herdsman and fisherman): You've helped him to escape, You'll pay us for it Fall upon their herds! Tear down the cottage, burn and strike it down!

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(Rush off.)

SEPPI (Rushes after them.): O my poor lambs!

KUONI (follows): O woe is me! My herds!

WERNI: O these berserkers!

RUODI (Wrings his hands.): Righteousness of Heaven, When will the savior come into this land?

(Follows them.)

*** SCENE II. At Steinen in Schwyz.**

A linden tree in front of STAUFFACHER's house on the country road, near the bridge. WERNER STAUFFACHER, PFEIFER VAN LUCERNE enter in conversation.

PFEIFER: Yes, yes, Lord as I told you. Swear not to Austria, if you can help it. Hold firmly to the Empire as before, God shield you in your ancient freedom!

(Presses his hand cordially and wants to go.)

STAUFFACHER: Yet stay, until my wife returns are My guest in Schwas, I in Lucerne am yours.

PFEIFER: Much thanks! I must reach Jersey yet today. What difficulties you may have to suffer From arrogance and greed of governors, Bear it with patience! It can alter, quickly, Another Emperor can gain the throne. Are you once Austria's, you're hers forever .

(He exits.)

(STAUFFACHER sits down sorrowfully upon a bench under the linden tree. Thus is he found by GERTRUDE, his wife, who places herself along side him and observes him for a long time silently.)

GERTRUD: So grave, my friend? No longer do I know thee. For many days in silence I observe, How gloomy spirits furrow in thy brow. Upon thine heart a silent grief is weighing, Confide in me, I am thy faithful wife, And I demand my half of all thy sorrow.

(STAUFFACHER extends his hand to her and is silent.)

What can oppress thine heart, tell it to me. Thine industry is blest, thy fortunes bloom, Full are the barns, and now the herd of oxen, The breed of horses sleek and fully fed Is safely from the mountain brought back home To winter in their comfortable stalls. Here stands thy house, rich, like a nobleman's, From beauteous timber is it newly built And fit together with the standard gauge, From many windows shines it pleasant, bright, With colored coats of arms is it adorned, And proverbs sage, the which the wanderer Delaying reads and at their meaning wonders.

STAUFFACHER: The house stands well constructed and well joined, But ah the ground, on which we built it, rocks.

GERTRUD: My Werner, tell me, what thou mean'st by that?

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STAUFFACHER: Of late I sat as now beneath this linden, With joy reflecting on what's fairly done, When came from Kussnacht, from his citadel, The Gov'nor riding with his mercenaries. Before this house he halted in surprise, Though I rose quickly, and submissively, As is becoming, I approached the Lord, Who represents the Emperor's judicial Power i'th' land. To whom belongs this house? He asked maliciously, for well he knew't. But thinking quickly thus I answered him: This house, Lord Gov'nor, is my Lord's the Emp'ror's And yours and mine in fief then he replies:

"I'm regent in the land i'th' Emp'ror's stead And will not, that the farmer's house be built With his own hand, and he thus freely live, As if he were the master in the land. I shall make bold, to hinder you in this."

This saying rode he thence defiantly. But I remained behind with doleful soul, Considering the evil man's remarks.

GERTRUD: My dearest Lord and husband! Wouldst thou take An honest word of counsel from thy wife? I boast to be the noble Iberg's daughter, A much-experienced man. We sisters sat, There spinning wool, throughout the lengthy nights, When round our father leaders of the people Convened themselves, and there the parchments read Of ancient emp'rors, and the country's weal Considered in judicious conversation. Heedful I heard there many prudent words, What intellectuals think, what good men wish, And silently I've kept them in my heart. So listen to me then and heed my speech, For what thee pressed, behold, I long have known. The Governor resents thee, would thee harm, Because thou art an hindrance to him, that The men of Schwyz will not subject themselves To th' upstart prince's house, but true and firm Adhere unto the realm, just as their worthy Forefathers have resolved and have performed. Is't not so, Werner? Tell me, if I lie!

STAUFFACHER: So is it, that is Gessler's grudge against me.

GERTRUD: He envies thee, since thou dost dwell in bliss, A free man on thine own inheritance, For he hath none. From Emperor and realm Thou hold'st this house in fief, thou may'st it show, So well as any prince displays his land, For over thee thou recognize no lord Except the highest in all Christendom He merely is his house's younger son, Naught calls he his except his knightly cloak, He therefore sees each honest man's good fortune With squinting eyes of poisonous disfavor, Thee hath he long ago destruction sworn As yet thou art uninjured Wilt thou wait, Until he wreaks his evil will on thee? The smart man thinks ahead.

STAUFFACHER: What's to be done!

GERTRUD (steps nearer): So hear what I advise! Thou know'st, how here In Schwyz all honest men do now complain About this Gov'nor's greed and tyranny. So have no doubt, that they there yonder too In Unterwalden and in Uri land Are weary of oppression and the yoke For just as Gessler here, there yonder o'er The lake the Landenberger is as brazen There comes no fishing boat across to us, Which doth not tell of some new mischief and Beginning-violence from the governors. Therefore it would be wise, if some of you, Of sound intent, did quietly confer, How we might free ourselves of this oppression, So know I well, that God would not desert you And would be gracious to a righteous cause Dost thou not have a friend in Uri, speak, To whom thou may'st thine heart sincerely open?

STAUFFACHER: I know of many men of courage there And men of high repute and eminence, Who are my trusted friends and confidants.

(He stands up.)

Wife, what a storm of dangerous ideas Awak'st thou in my quiet breast! My innermost Thou bring'st from me into the light of day, And what I secretly forbade myself To think, thou boldly speak'st with easy tongue. Hast thou considered well, what thou advisest? The savage discord and the clang of arms Thou callest forth into this

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peaceful vale Dared we, a feeble folk of herdsmen, go To battle with the master of the world? 'Tis only for some pretext, that they wait, In order to unleash on this poor land Their savage hordes of military might, Therein to govern with the victor's rights And 'neath the show of righteous punishment To extirpate our ancient freedom's charter.

GERTRUD: You too are men, know how to wield your axe, And God gives help unto courageous men!

STAUFFACHER: Oh wife! A fearful raging scourge is war, It strikes at once the shepherd and his herd.

GERTRUD: One must endure, whatever heaven sends, Inequity endures no noble heart.

STAUFFACHER: This house delights thee, that we newly built. But war, the monster, burns it to the ground.

GERTRUD: Thought I my heart to temp'ral goods enslaved, I'd throw the torch with mine own hand thereto.

STAUFFACHER: Thou dost believe in human kind! But war Spares not the tender infant in its cradle.

GERTRUD: The innocent in heaven have a friend! Look forward, Werner, not behind thee now!

STAUFFACHER: We men can perish bravely sword in hand, And yet what destiny will fall to you?

GERTRUD: The final choice is left e'en to the weakest, A spring from yonder bridge doth make me free.

STAUFFACHER (falls into her arms): Who presses such a heart unto his bosom, He joyfully can fight for hearth and home, And fears he not the hosts of any king To Uri shall I post without delay, There lives a friend of mine, Lord Walter Furst, Who thinks the same as I about these times. There too I find the noble Banneret Of Attinghaus although of lofty stock He loves the people, honors ancient customs. With both of these I shall confer, how one May bravely fight against the country's foes Farewell and while I am away, bear thou With prudent sense the regiment o' th' house To th' pilgrim, wand'ring to the House of God, To th' pious monk, collecting for his cloister, Give richly and dispatch him well cared for. Stauffacher's house is not concealed. It stands Out by the public way, a welcome roof For all the wanderers, who take this road.

(While they exit toward the hinterground, WILHELM TELL enters downstage with BAUMGARTEN.)

TELL (to BAUMGARTEN): Now you will have no further need of me, Go into yonder house, wherein resides Stauffacher, who's a father to th' oppressed. Yet see, there's he himself Come, follow me!

(Walks toward him, the scene changes.)

* SCENE III. Public place near Altorf .

On an eminence in the hinterground one sees a fortress being constructed, which is already so far advanced, that the form of the whole is evident. The back side is finished, the front is being built even now, the scaffolding is still standing, on which the workmen are climbing up and down, upon the highest part of the roof hangs the slater. Everything is in motion and work. TASKMASTER. MASTER– STONEMASON. JOURNEYMEN and Laborers.

TASKMASTER (with stick, drives the workers): Not long be idle, brisk! The building stones This way, the lime, the mortar bring up here! If the Lord Governor comes, that he may see The work's advanced It saunters just like snails.

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(To two laborers, who bear loads)

Call that a load? At once go double it! O how these laggards shirk their very duty!

FIRST JOURNEYMAN: Yet it is hard, that we should bear the stones To build a keep and dungeon for ourselves!

TASKMASTER: What's that you murmur? That's a wretched people, To naught adroit except to milk their cows, And saunter idly all around the mountains.

OLD MAN (takes a rest): I can no more.

TASKMASTER (shakes him): Get up, old man, to work!

FIRST JOURNEYMAN: Have you no viscera at all, that you Would drive the aged man to hard forced labor, Who scarce can haul himself?

MASTER STONEMASON AND JOURNEYMEN: It cries to heaven!

TASKMASTER: Look to yourselves, I do, what is my office.

SECOND JOURNEYMAN: Taskmaster, how's the fortress to be named, That we build here?

TASKMASTER: Keep Uri it is called, For underneath this yoke you will be bowed.

JOURNEYMEN: Keep Uri!

TASKMASTER: Well, what's there to laugh about?

SECOND JOURNEYMAN: With this small hut you want to humble Uri?

FIRST JOURNEYMAN: Let's see, how many of such molehills one Must place upon another, ere a mountain Is made therefrom, that's like the least in Uri!

(Taskmaster goes toward the hinterground.)

MASTER STONEMASON: I cast the hammer in the deepest lake, That served in building this accursed structure!

(TELL and STAUFFACHER enter.)

STAUFFACHER: O had I never lived, to look at this!

TELL: Here 'tis not good to be. Let us proceed.

STAUFFACHER: Am I in Uri, in the land of freedom?

MASTER STONEMASON: O Lord, if you at first had seen the cellars Beneath the towers! Yes, who lives in there, Will never hear the rooster crow again!

STAUFFACHER: O God!

* SCENE III. Public place near Altorf .

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STONEMASON: Behold these flanks, these buttresses, They stand, as built for all eternity!

TELL: Whatever hands have built, hands can destroy.

(Pointing, toward the mountains.)

That house of freedom God hath built for us.

(One hears a drum, people enter, who carry a hat upon a pole, a crier follows them, women and children press tumultuously thereafter .)

FIRST JOURNEYMAN: What means the drum? Give your attention!

MASTER STONEMASON: Why A carnival parade and why the hat?

CRIER: I' th' Emperor's name! Hear ye!

JOURNEYMEN: Be quiet! Hear ye!

CRIER: You see this hat before you, men of Uri! It will be placed upon a lofty column, I' th' midst of Altorf, in the highest place, And this is both the Governor's will and purpose: The hat should have like honor as himself, One should show reverence for him with bent knee And with uncovered head Thus will the King Distinguish who are the obedient. His limb and goods are forfeit to the King, Whoe'er distains to follow this command.

(The people burst out loudly laughing, the drums are beat, they pass on.)

FIRST JOURNEYMAN: What new outrageous thing the Governor Hath now devised! We must revere a hat! Say! Hath one ever heard of such a thing?

MASTER STONEMASON: We are to bend our knees before a hat! He plays his game with earnest worthy people?

FIRST JOURNEYMAN: If it were but the imperial crown! So is't The hat of Austria; I saw it hang Above the throne, where one assigns the fiefs!

MASTER STONEMASON: The hat of Austria! Pay heed, it is A trick, to sell us out to Austria!

JOURNEYMEN: No worthy man will yield to this disgrace.

MASTER STONEMASON: Come, let us reach agreement with the others.

(They go to the rear.)

TELL (to STAUFFACHER): You know now what occurs. Fare well, Lord Werner!

STAUFFACHER: Where will you go? O haste not so from hence.

TELL: My home's without its father. Fare ye well.

STAUFFACHER: My heart is now so full, to speak with you.

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TELL: The heavy heart doth not grow light through words.

STAUFFACHER: However words could lead us unto deeds.

TELL: The only deed is now be still and patient.

STAUFFACHER: Should one endure, what's unendurable?

TELL: 'Tis hasty rulers, who but briefly rule. When out of its abyss the Fohn arises, One puts the fires out, the ships make haste To seek the harbor, and the mighty spirit Walks harmless, without trace, across the earth. Let every one live quietly at home, The peaceful man is gladly granted peace.

STAUFFACHER: You think?

TELL: The snake bites not if unprovoked. They'll finally grow weary of themselves, If they see that the provinces stay calm.

STAUFFACHER: We could do much, if we but stood together.

TELL: In shipwreck one more eas'ly helps himself.

STAUFFACHER: So coldly do you quit the common cause?

TELL: A man counts safely only on himself.

STAUFFACHER: In unity the weak are mighty too.

TELL: The strong man is most mighty when alone.

STAUFFACHER: So can the fatherland not count on you, When desperately it acts in self-defense?

TELL (gives him his hand): Tell fetches a lost sheep from the abyss, And would he then be one to quit his friends? Whate'er you do, excuse me from your counsel, I can't consider or select for long. If you have need of me for certain deeds, Then call on Tell, I shall not fail to act.

(Depart to different sides. A sudden riot ensues around the scaffolding.)

MASTER STONEMASON (runs in): What is't?

FIRST JOURNEYMAN (comes forward, shouting): The slater is now fallen from the roof.

(BERTA with retinue.)

BERTA (rushes in): Hath he been shattered? Run now, save him, help If help is possible, save him, here is gold

(Throws her jewelry among the people.)

MASTER STONEMASON: Hence with your gold You think all can be bought With gold, when you have torn the father from The children and the husband from his wife, And have brought misery upon the world, You think to make amends with gold Be gone! We were a happy people, ere you came, With you hath desperation entered

in.

BERTA (to the TASKMASTER, who returns): Is he alive? (TASKMASTER gives a sign to the contrary.) O ill-begotten castle, built With curses, curses shall inhabit thee! (Exit.)

*** SCENE IV. Walter Furst's house.**

WALTER FURST and ARNOLD VON MELCHTAL enter simultaneously from different sides.

MELCHTAL: Lord Walter Furst

WALTER FURST: If we should be surprised! Stay, where you are . We are beset by spies.

MELCHTAL: You bring me naught from Unterwalden? Naught From my dear father? I can bear't no longer, To lie here idly like a prisoner . What have I done then that's so criminal, That I should hide just like a murderer? O' th' brazen rascal, who would drive away From me the oxen, my most excellent team, Before mine eyes on orders from the Governor, I have but with my staff the finger broken.

WALTER FURST: You are too rash. The rascal was the Gov'nor's, He was dispatched by your superiors, You had received a penalty, you should, As harsh it was, have paid it silently.

MELCHTAL: Should I have countenanced the flippant talk Of one so unashamed: "If peasants want Their bread, then, let them pull the plow themselves!" It cut me to the soul, to see the knave Unyoke the oxen, beauteous creatures, from the plow, They bellowed low, as though they had the sense Of some abuse, and struck out with their horns, Here I was overwhelmed by righteous anger, And of myself not lord, I struck the mess'nger.

WALTER FURST: O scarcely do we master our own hearts, How should the hasty youth restrain himself!

MELCHTAL: I pity but the father He demands So much attention, and his son's away. The gov'nor's hateful to him, since he e'er Hath striven honestly for right and freedom. So therefore they will harry the old man, And there is none, who shields him from affront . Come what may come with me, I must go over.

WALTER FURST: Just wait and patiently compose yourself, Until reports come to us from yon forest. I hear a knocking, go Perhaps a message From th' Gov'nor Go in there You are not safe In Uri 'fore the Landenberger's arm, Since tyrants give a hand to one another.

MELCHTAL: They're teaching us, what we should do.

WALTER FURST: Now go! I'll call you back, when it is safe out here.

(MELCHTAL goes therein.)

The wretched man, I may not now confess To him, what evil I suspect Who knocks? So oft the door doth creak, I fear disaster. Mistrust and treason lurk in every corner, Into the house's inmost rooms the bearers Of power penetrate, soon we shall need, To place a lock and key upon our doors.

(He opens and steps back astounded, as WERNER STAUFFACHER enters .)

What see I? You, Lord Werner! Now, by God! A worthy, cherished guest No better man Hath ever walked across this threshold yet. You're highly welcome underneath my roof! What brings you here? What seek you here

Wilhelm Tell

in Uri?

STAUFFACHER (extending him his hand): The olden times and olden Switzerland.

WALTER FURST: You bring them with you Look, how I rejoice, My heart grows warm upon the sight of you, Sit down, Lord Werner How did you depart From Lady Gertrud, your most pleasant wife, Sagacious Iberg's highly prudent daughter? By all the wand'ers from the German lands, Who cross the Meinrad's Cell to Italy, Your hospitality is praised But say, Have you just come direct from Fluelen hence, And did you look in any other place, Before you placed your foot upon this threshold?

STAUFFACHER (sits down): Yes, an astonishing new work I've seen In preparation, with which I'm not pleased.

WALTER FURST: O friend, you have it then with but one glance !

STAUFFACHER: A thing like that hath never been in Uri In human mem'ry was no prison here, Nor dwelling fortified except the grave .

WALTER FURST: A grave of freedom is't. You name its name.

STAUFFACHER: Lord Walter Furst, I won't hold back with you, No idle curiosity conducts Me here, I'm pressed by heavy cares Oppression I've left at home, oppression find I here. For 'tis insufferable, what we endure, And there's no end in sight to this distress. Free hath the Schweizer been from ancient times, We are accustomed, to be treated well, The like of this was in the land ne'er known, So long a herdsman drove upon these mountains.

WALTER FURST: Yes, tis unparalleled, how they are acting! Even our noble Lord of Attinghausen, Who hath the ancient times still seen himself, Believes, it is no longer to be borne.

STAUFFACHER: Below yon forest goes it poorly too, And bloody is the penance Wolfenschiessen, The Emp'ror's Governor, who dwelt at Rossberg, He had a longing for forbidden fruit, Baumgarten's wife, that keeps house in Alzellen, He wished to misuse her to bold excess, And with his axe the man hath struck him dead.

WALTER FURST: O righteous are the judgments of the Lord! Baumgarten, do you say? A modest man. He's rescued surely and is well concealed?

STAUFFACHER: Your son-in-law took him across the lake, I keep him hidden at my house in Steinen Yet more atrocious things hath this same man Conveyed to me, of what's been done in Sarnen. The heart of every honest man must bleed.

WALTER FURST (attentively): Say on, what is't?

STAUFFACHER: In Melchtal, then, where one Goes into Kerns, there lives an upright man, They call him Heinrich von der Halden, and His voice is of some weight in the Assembly.

WALTER FURST: Who knows him not! What is't with him? Proceed !

STAUFFACHER: The Landenberger penalized his son For some small misdeed, ordered his best pair Of oxen, be unharnessed from the plow, The boy then struck the knave and took to flight.

WALTER FURST (in highest excitement): And yet the father say, how's it with him?

* SCENE IV. Walter Furst's house.

Wilhelm Tell

STAUFFACHER: The Landenberger had the father summoned. He should produce his son upon the spot, And as the old man swore with truthfulness, That he knew nothing of the fugitive, The Gov'rnor ordered torturers to come

WALTER FURST (Springs up and wants to lead him to the other side.): O hush, no more!

STAUFFACHER (with climbing sound): "E'en hath the son escaped me, Yet have I thee!" Has him thrown to the ground, The pointed steel has plunged into his eyes

WALTER FURST: Merciful Heaven!

MELCHTAL (rushes out): In his eyes, you say?

STAUFFACHER (astonished, to **WALTER FURST**): Who is the youth?

MELCHTAL (grasps him with convulsive vehemence): Into his eyes? Speak on!

WALTER FURST: O the lamentable old man!

STAUFFACHER: Who is't?

(As **WALTER FURST** gives him a sign.)

This is the son? All righteous God!

MELCHTAL: And I Had to be hence! Into both of his eyes?

WALTER FURST: Restrain yourself, endure it like a man!

MELCHTAL: Because of my offense, of my misdeed! He's blind then! Really blind and fully blinded?

STAUFFACHER: I say't. The fountain of his sight's run out,

The sunlight he will ne'er behold again.

WALTER FURST: O spare his anguish!

MELCHTAL: Never! Never more!

(He presses his hand upon his eyes and is silent a few moments, then he turns from the one to the other and speaks with a gentle voice, choked by tears.)

O, what a noble gift of heaven is The light o' th' eye For every being lives From light, and each and every happy creature The plants themselves turn joyously toward light. And he must sit there, feeling, in the night, In constant darkness he's refreshed no more By meadows of warm green, the flower's glaze, The reddish glaciers he can see no more To die is naught to live and not to see, That's misery Why do you look at me So grievously? I have two lively eyes, And can give neither to my blinded father, Nor any shimmer from the sea of light, That splendid, dazzling, breaks upon mine eyes.

STAUFFACHER: Alas, I must enlarge your sorrow further, Instead of healing it He wants still more! The Governor hath stolen all from him, Naught hath he left to him except his staff, To wander bare and blind from

* SCENE IV. Walter Furst's house.

Wilhelm Tell

door to door.

MELCHTAL: Naught but his staff to th' sightless aged man! Everything robbed, and e'en the light o' th' sun, The common good o' th' poorest wretch Now speak To me no more of staying or of hiding! What kind of wretched coward have I been, That of mine own security I thought, And not of thine thy precious head left as Security within the tyrant's hands! Faint-hearted caution, travel hence On naught But bloody retribution shall I think I will go over there No one shall stop me And from the Governor claim my father's eyes I'll find him even in the midst of all His mounted men Life is but naught to me, If I can only quench this feverish, Enormous pain in his life's blood!

(He wants to leave.)

WALTER FURST: Remain! What could you do to him? He sits in Sarnen Upon his lofty lordly keep and scoffs At unavailing wrath in his safe fortress.

MELCHTAL: And lived he yonder in the icy palace Of Schreckhorn or much higher, where the Jungfrau Sits veiled eternally I still would make MY way to him, with only twenty youths, Disposed like I, then I would break his fortress. And if none follows me, and if you all So frightened for your huts and for your herds, Bow down before the tyrant's yoke I'll call The herdsmen all together in the mountains, There underneath the open roof of heaven, Where still the mind is fresh and heart is sound Relate the story of this monstrous horror.

STAUFFACHER (to **WALTER FURST**): It hath now reached its height Are we to wait, Until the last extreme

MELCHTAL: What last extreme Is to be feared yet, if the star o' th' eye Is safe no longer in its cavity? Are we defenseless? Wherefore did we learn To bend the bow and swing the heavy weight Of battle axes? Every creature hath Been granted a defense in its despair, Th' exhausted stag will take a stand and show His dreaded antlers to the pack of hounds, The chamois drags the hunter in th' abyss The ox itself, the gentle fellow lodger Of man, who bends th' enormous power of His neck with patience underneath the yoke, Springs up, provoked, whets his gigantic horns And slings his enemy up to the clouds.

WALTER FURST: If the three cantons thought as we three men, So then might we perhaps accomplish something.

STAUFFACHER: If Uri calls, if Unterwalden helps, The Schweizer will revere the ancient bond.

MELCHTAL: In Unterwalden I have many friends, And each would risk his life and limb with joy, If he hath back up from the others and A shield O pious fathers of this land! I'm standing here now but a youth between you, The much experienced my voice must be Discreetly silent in the land's Assembly. Because I'm young and know not much of life, Do not disdain my counsel and my speech, Not lustful youthful blood impels me, but The painful violence o' th' greatest woe, Which e'en the stone o' th' rock must move to pity. You both are fathers, heads of both your houses, And you desire to have a virtuous son, Who will revere your head's most sacred locks, And piously protect your eyesight's star. O since you both have suffered nothing yet In limb and property, your eyes still move Themselves alert and bright within their spheres, So therefore be not distant to our need. The tyrant's sword hangs over you as well, You've turned away the land of Austria, MY father's crime was nothing more than that, You share an equal guilt and condemnation.

STAUFFACHER (to **WALTER FURST**): Do you decide, I am prepared to follow.

WALTER FURST: We wish to hear, what do the noble lords Of Sillinen, and Attinghaus advise Their names, I think, will win us over friends.

* SCENE IV. Walter Furst's house.

Wilhelm Tell

MELCHTAL: Where's there a name within the forest mountains That's worthier than yours or that of yours? The people do believe i' th' genuine worth Of names like these, their ring is good i' th' country . Rich was your heritage in father's virtue And richly you've enlarged on it What need of noblemen? Let's finish it alone. Were we indeed alone i' th' land! I think, We'd know already how to shield ourselves.

STAUFFACHER: The noble's plight is not the same as ours, The stream, which rages in the lower grounds, Til now hath not yet reached unto the heights But they will not refuse us their support When they once see the country up in arms.

WALTER FURST: Were there 'tween us and Austria an umpire, So then would justice and the law decide But he who doth oppress us, is our Emp'ror And highest judge so therefore God must help us Through our own arm Now you seek out the men Of Schwyz, and I'll win over friends in Uri. But whom are we to send to Unterwalden

MELCHTAL: Send me o'er there Whom should it more concern

WALTER FURST: I won't allow it, you're my guest, I have To guarantee your safety!

MELCHTAL: Let me go! I know the byways and the rocky paths, Friends too I find enough, who'll hide me from The enemy and gladly give me shelter.

STAUFFACHER: Let him with God go over there. O'er there There are no traitors so detested is This tyranny, that it can find no tool. Below the forest too should the Alzellen Recruit confederates and rouse the land.

MELCHTAL: How shall we safely then communicate, That we deceive suspicions of the tyrants?

STAUFFACHER: We could perhaps arrange to meet at Treib Or Brunnen, Where the merchant vessels land.

WALTER FURST: So openly we may not go to work. Hear my idea. To th' left o' th' lake, on th' way To Brunnen, opposite the Mythenstein, A meadow lies concealed within the woods, It's called the Rutli by the shepherd folk, Because the timber there was all uprooted. That's where our canton's boundary and yours

(to MELCHTAL)

Adjoin each other, and a little trip

(to STAUFFACHER)

In your light boat bears you across from Schwyz.

Upon deserted paths can we go thence At night and quietly deliberate. Let each bring there with him ten trusted men, Who are at one with us within their hearts, So then may we discuss the common cause In common and with God resolve afresh.

STAUFFACHER: So be't. Now give your staunch right hand to me, And give me yours as well and thus, as we Three men have now, among ourselves, entwined Our hands, in honesty, without deception, So too shall we three cantons stand together In defense and in offense, death and life.

WALTER FURST AND MELCHTAL: In death and life!

(They hold their hands clasped together for a few moments longer and are silent.)

* SCENE IV. Walter Furst's house.

Wilhelm Tell

MELCHTAL: O blinded, aged father! Thou can'st no longer see the day of freedom, But thou shalt hear it
When from Alp to Alp The fiery signals rise aloft in flame, The sturdy castles of the tyrants fall, Unto thy cottage
shall the Schweizer travel, To carry to thine ear the joyous news, And in thy night shall it be day to thee.

(They part from one another.)

ACT II

*** SCENE I. Manor of the BARON VON ATTINGHAUSEN. A Gothic hall
adorned with escutcheons and helmets.**

**The BARON, an old man of eighty–five years, of tall and noble stature, on a staff, on which there is a
chamois horn, and clothed in a pelisse.** KUONI and another six farm hands stand around him with rakes and
scythes. ULRICH VON RUDENZ enters in knight's apparel.

RUDENZ: Here am I, Uncle Now what is your will?

ATTINGHAUSEN: Permit, that I by ancient fam'ly custom First share the morning drink with these my
workmen.

(He drinks from a beaker, which then is passed around.)

**In former times I was with them in field and forest Directing all their work with mine own eye, Just as my
banner led them into battle, Now I can not be more than but the steward, And if the genial sun come not to
me, I can no longer seek it on the mountains.** And so in closer still and closer circles, I move on slowly to the
closest and The last, where every life comes to a stop I'm but my shadow, soon I'm but my name.

KUONI (to RUDENZ with the beaker): I bring it to you, squire .

(Here RUDENZ hesitates, to take the beaker.)

Drink up! It is From out one beaker and from out one heart.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Go, children, and when closing time is come, Then we shall talk about the country's
business.

(Farm hands exit.)

(ATTINGHAUSEN and RUDENZ.)

ATTINGHAUSEN: I see that you are girded and prepared. Thou wilt to Altorf and the master's castle?

RUDENZ: Yes, Uncle, and I may not tarry longer

ATTINGHAUSEN: (sits down): Art thou so hurried? How? Are th' hours of Thy youth so meanly measured, that
thou must Be sparing of them to thine aged uncle?

RUDENZ: I see, that you are not in need of me, I am now but a stranger in this house.

Wilhelm Tell

ATTINGHAUSEN: (Hath scrutinized him with his eyes for some time.): Yes sadly art thou. Sadly hath this home To thee become so strange! Oh, Uly! Uly! No longer know I thee. In silks thou struttest, The peacock feather thou displayest proudly, And fling'st the purple mantle round thy shoulders, Thou look'st with scorn upon the countryman, And art ashamed of his familiar greeting.

RUDENZ: The honor, which is due him, give I gladly, The rights, that he usurps, I must deny him.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Th' entire land lies neath the heavy wrath O' th' King And every man of honor's heart Is deeply troubled by the tyrant's force, Which we must suffer Thee alone moves not The universal pain One sees thee stand Apostate from thine own upon the side O' th' country's enemies, defying our. Distress to follow after easy joys, And court for princely favor, all the while Thy fatherland bleeds from the heavy scourge.

RUDENZ: The land is sore oppressed Wherefore, mine uncle? Who is't, who plunged it into this distress? It would cost but a single easy word, To instantly be free of this oppression, And win a favorable Emperor. Woe unto those, who seal the people's eyes, That they resist what truly is the best. For their own selfish gain they would prevent The cantons taking oath to Austria, As every country all around hath done. It suits them well, to take their seats upon The master's bench with noblemen they wish The Emperor lord, to have no lord at all.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Must I hear that and from thy very mouth!

RUDENZ: 'Twas you who summoned me, now let me finish. What person is it, Uncle, you yourself Play here? Have you no higher pride than to Be canton magistrate or standard bearer And govern here alongside of these herdsmen? How? Is it not a far more glorious choice, To pay one's homage to our royal lord, Attach oneself unto his splendid camp, Than yours to be the peer of one's own servants, And share the judgment seat with countrymen?

ATTINGHAUSEN: Ah, Uly! Uly! I discern them now, The voices of seduction! They have seized Thine open ear, they've filled thine heart with poison.

RUDENZ: Yes, I conceal it not deep in my soul I'm pained by scorn of strangers, who call us The peasant noblemen Nor can I bear't, Whilst all the noble youth from everywhere Are reaping honor under Hapsburg's banner, To sit here idly on my heritage, And see the springtime of my life depart In ordinary daily labor Elsewhere Great deeds are happening, a world of fame Is brilliantly astir beyond these mountains My helm and shield are rusting in the hall, The martial trumpeting of valiant tones, The herald's call, which summons to the tourney, It doth not penetrate into these valleys, Naught but the cowherd dance and cattle bells Do I hear here in one unchanging peal.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Deluded man, seduced by idle glow! Despise thy land of birth! Thou art ashamed Of ancient pious customs of thy fathers ! With burning tears thou wilt some day be sick With longing for your own paternal mountains, And for that melody i' th' cowherd's dance, Which now in proud disgust thou dost disdain, With painful longing will it capture thee, When it awakes thee in the foreign land. Oh, mighty is the urge o' th' fatherland! The false and alien world is not for thee, There in the haughty Emperor's court thou wilt Remain forever strange with thy true heart! The world, it doth require other virtues, Than those thou hast acquired in these valleys. Go hither then, dispose of thy free soul, Take land in fief, become a prince's servant, There thou canst be lord of thyself and prince Of thine own heritage and thy free soil. Ah, Uly! Uly! Stay among thine own! Go not to Altorf O, do not forsake, The sacred cause of thine own fatherland! I am the last one of my line. My name will end with me. There hang my helm and shield, These will they bury with me in the grave. And must I think with my last dying breath, That thou but wait'st the closing of mine eyes, To take thyself 'fore this new feudal court, And all my noble goods, which freely I received from God, receive from Austria!

Wilhelm Tell

RUDENZ: It is in vain that we resist the King, The world belongs to him, wish we alone To stiffen selfishly and to withdraw, To interrupt the chain of territories, Which he hath mightily drawn up around us? His are the markets, and the courts, his are The merchant roads, and e'en the horse of burden, That passes on the Gotthard, pays him toll. By his dominions, as within a net, Are we enmeshed and circled round about. And will the Empire fend for us? Can it Defend itself 'gainst Austria's growing power? Helps God us not, no Emperor can help us. What good can be assigned the Emperor's word, When they to meet both war and money needs, May pawn the cities, which have fled beneath The eagle's shield, and sell them to the Empire? No, Uncle! 'Tis a blessing and wise caution, In grievous times like these of party strife, To join oneself unto some mighty chief. The Emperor's crown proceeds from line to line, It hath no memory for faithful service, To serve hereditary masters well, Means strewing seeds i'th' future.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Thou art so wise? Wilt see more clearly, than thy noble father, Who battled for the precious gem of freedom With property and blood and hero's strength? Sail down unto Lucerne, inquire there, How Austria's rule doth weigh upon the land! Soon they will come up here to count our sheep And cows, to measure off our Alpine lands, To ban the fowl and large game animals In our free forest lands, to set up tolls At all our bridges, and at all our gates, Out of our poverty to pay for lands They purchase, with our blood to fund their wars
No, if we have to risk our blood thereon, So be't for us we purchase liberty More cheaply than enslavement!

RUDENZ: What can we, A shepherd folk, i' th' face of Albrecht's armies!

ATTINGHAUSEN: O learn to know this shepherd people, boy! I know them, I have led them into battle, I have observed them fighting at Favenz. Let them come here, to force a yoke on us, That we are resolute, we shall not bear! O learn to feel, the stock from which thou art! Cast not away the genuine pearl of thine Own worth for idle show and hollow pomp To be known as the head of a free people, That but from love devotes itself to thee, That's loyal to thee both in strife and death That be thy pride, of this nobility Make boast the native bonds knit firmly to The fatherland, to th' cherished, join thyself, Hold fast to it with thine entire heart. Here are the sturdy roots of all thy strength, There in the alien world thou stand'st alone, A slender weed, that every storm may snap. O come, thou hast not seen us for some time, Try it with us for but one day today Go not to Altorf Hear'st thou? Not today, But this one day bestow thee on thine own!

(He takes his hand.)

RUDENZ: I gave my word Let go of me I'm bound.

ATTINGHAUSEN (Lets go of his hand, with earnestness.): Th'art bound O yes indeed, unhappy one! Thou art, though not by word and oath, 'Tis through the ropes of love that thou art bound!

(Rudenz turns away.)

Conceal it, as thou wilt. It is the lady, Berta von Bruneck, who draws thee unto The castle, fetters thee to th' Emperor's service. The knightly lady thou hast hopes to win By thy defection from thy land Be not deceived! They show the bride to thee but as a lure, Yet she's not granted to thine innocence.

RUDENZ: Enough have I now heard. Fare well to you.

(He exits.)

ATTINGHAUSEN: Deluded youth, stay here! He's gone away! I can not hold him back, not rescue him So hath the Wolfenschiessen turned away From his own country so will others follow, The alien magic tears the youth away, By force aspiring far beyond our mountains. O ill-begotten hour, when what is strange Came here into these tranquil blessed valleys, To ruin the pious innocence of custom! The new is pressing on with might,

Wilhelm Tell

the old, The worthy is now leaving, other times are coming, A different-thinking generation lives! What do I here? All those are buried now, With whom I shared my work and passed my life. Beneath the earth my time already lies; He's blest, who with the new no longer needs to live!

(Exit.)

*** SCENE II. A meadow surrounded by high rocks and woods.**

Upon the rocks are tracks, with rails, also ladders, by which one later sees the countrymen descend. In the hinterground the lake shows itself, above which at first a lunar rainbow is to be seen. The prospect is closed by high mountains, behind which still higher glaciers tower. It is completely night upon the stage, only the lake and the white glacier shine in the moonlight. MELCHTAL, BAUMGARTEN, WINKELRIED, MEIER VON SARNEN, BURKHARDT AM BUHEL, ARNOLD VON SEWA, KLAUS VON DER FLUE and yet four other countrymen, all armed.

MELCHTAL (still backstage): The mountain pass is op'ning, follow me, I know the rock and little cross thereon, We're at our goal, here is the Rutli.

(Enter with storm-lanterns.)

WINKELRIED: Hark!

SEWA: Deserted.

MEIER: There's no countryman here yet. We are the first to come, we Unterwaldners.

MELCHTAL: How far is't in the night?

BAUMGARTEN: The fire watch In Selisberg hath only just called two.

(One hears ringing in the distance.)

MEIER: Hush! Hark!

AM BUHEL: The matin bell i' th' forest chapel Rings clearly over here from Schwyzerland.

VON DER FLUE: The air is pure and bears the sound so far.

MELCHTAL: Go some of you and light some fire wood, That it burn brightly, when the men arrive.

(Two countrymen exit.)

SEWA: It is a beauteous lunar night. The lake Lies calmly here just like a level mirror.

AM BUHEL: They have an easy voyage.

WINKELRIED (points toward the lake): Ha, behold! Look yonder ! See you naught?

MEIER: What then? Yes, truly! A rainbow in the middle of the night!

Wilhelm Tell

MELCHTAL: It is the light o' th' moon, that causes it.

VON DER FLUE: That is a passing strange and wondrous sign! There live full many, who've not seen the like.

SEWA: 'Tis doubled, see, a paler one's above.

BAUMGARTEN: A boat is passing underneath it now.

MELCHTAL: That's Stauffacher who crosses in his boat, The worthy man would not delay for long.

(Goes with BAUMGARTEN toward the shore.)

MEIER: It is the Uri, who delay the longest.

AM BUHEL: They have to detour widely through the mountains, So that they may deceive the Governor's spies.

(In the meantime the two countrymen have set a fire in the middle of the place.)

MELCHTAL (on the shore): Who is it? Give the word!

STAUFFACHER (from below): Friends of the land.

(All go to the rear, toward those arriving. Out of the boat climbs STAUFFACHER, ITEL REDING, HANS AUF DER MAUER, JORG IM HOFE, KONRAD HUNN, ULRICH DER SCHMIED, JOST VON WEILER and yet three other countrymen, likewise armed.)

ALL (shout): Be welcome!

(Whilst the rest linger in the rear, MELCHTAL comes forward with STAUFFACHER.)

MELCHTAL: O Lord Stauffacher! I've him Beheld, who never could see me again! I've placed my hands upon his very eyes, I've drawn the burning feeling of revenge From the extinguished sunlight of his glance.

STAUFFACHER: Speak not of vengeance. We desire to meet The threatened evil, not avenge the past. Now say, what you in Unterwalden have Achieved and 'listed for the common cause, How think the countrymen, how you yourself Have managed to escape the snares of treason.

MELCHTAL: Through the Surenen's fearsome mountain range, Upon the widespread empty fields of ice, Where but the croaking lammergeyer caws, I reached the Alpine meadow, where the herdsmen From Uri and from Engelberg extend Their greetings and in common tend their flocks, My thirst relieving with the glacier's milk, Which in the Runsen foams and gushes down. I stayed in isolated Alpine huts, Both mine own host and guest, until I came Unto the homes of social living men. Already through these valleys word rang out Of new atrocities, which had occurred, And pious awe I found for my misfortune 'Fore every gate, where wandering I knocked. Indignant did I find these upright souls About the violence of the new regime, For as their Alpine meadows ceaselessly Give nourishment to the same plants, their springs Flow uniformly, even clouds and winds Pursue unchangeably the self-same course, So hath the ancient customs here from grandsire To grandson persevered just as before, Nor do they bear audacious innovation I' th' old accustomed even way of life. Their hardened hands to me they did extend, From the walls they lifted down their rusty swords, And from their eyes there flashed a joyous feeling Of courage, as I spake the names to them, Which to the mountain countryman are holy, Your name and that of Walter Furst What you Would deem is right, they swore an oath to do, They swore to follow you e'en unto death. So sped I safely 'neath the holy shield Of hospitality from farm to farm And as

* SCENE II. A meadow surrounded by high rocks and woods.

Wilhelm Tell

I came into my native vale, Where widely scattered round my cousins dwell As I beheld my father, robbed and blind, On stranger's straw, sustained by charity Of tender-hearted people

STAUFFACHER: Lord in Heaven!

MELCHTAL: Then wept I not! No not in helpless tears Did I pour out the force of my hot grief, Deep in my bosom like a precious treasure I locked it up and thought of action only. I crept through every winding of the mountain, No vale was so concealed, I spied it out, Unto the glacier's ice-attired foot Expected I and found inhabited huts, And everywhere, my footsteps carried me, Found I the self-same hate of tyranny For even at this final boundary Of living nature, where the rigid earth No longer gives, the governor's greed doth rob The very hearts of all those honest people Aroused I with the goading of my words, And all of them are ours with heart and mouth.

STAUFFACHER: Great things have you achieved in little time.

MELCHTAL: I did still more. Tis those two fortresses Rossberg and Sarnen, the countryman doth fear For from behind their walls of stone the foe Defends himself with ease and harms the land. With mine own eyes I wished to study it, I went to Sarnen and beheld the castle.

STAUFFACHER: You risked yourself e'en in the tiger's den?

MELCHTAL: I was disguised there in a pilgrim's dress I saw the Governor feasting at the table Now judge, if I can master mine own heart I saw the enemy and slew him not.

STAUFFACHER: Forsooth, good fortune smiled upon your boldness .

(In the meantime the other countrymen are come forward and are approaching both of them.)

Yet tell me right away, who are the friends And upright men, who followed after you? Make me acquainted with them, that we may Draw near in trust and open up our hearts.

MEIER: Who knows not you, my Lord, in these three lands? My name is Meier von Sarnen, this one here Is Struth von Winkelried, my sister's son.

STAUFFACHER: You do not name me any unknown names. A Winkelried it was, who slew the dragon I' th' swamp at Weiler and his life relinquished In this affray.

WINKELRIED: That was my sire, Lord Werner.

MELCHTAL (points to two countrymen): These dwell behind the woods, are cloister monks From Engelberg You will not look upon Them with disdain, because they're serfs, and sit Not free like we upon our heritage They love the land, are else of good repute.

STAUFFACHER (to both of them): Give me your hand. He's fortunate, whose body Is duty-bound to no one on this earth, But honesty doth thrive in every class.

KONRAD HUNN: This is Lord Reding, our old Magistrate.

MEIER: I know him well. He is my adversary, Who o'er a piece of land disputes with me. Lord Reding, we are enemies at court, Here we are one.

Wilhelm Tell

(Shakes his hand.)

STAUFFACHER: Now that is bravely spoken.

WINKELRIED: You hear? They're coming. Hear the horn of Uri!

(To the right and left one sees armed men climb down from the rocks with storm lanterns.)

AUF DER MAUER: Look! Is that not God's pious servant there, The worthy pastor climbing down? Nor shuns He toils o' th' way and terrors of the night, A faithful shepherd caring for his people.

BAUMGARTEN: The Sacrist trails him and Lord Walter Furst, But Tell I do not see among the number.

(WALTER FURST, ROSSELMANN the pastor, PETERMANN the Sacristan, KUONI the shepherd, WERNI the hunter, RUODI the fisherman and yet five other countrymen, all together, thirty-three in number, step forward and take their places around the fire.)

WALTER FURST: So must we now upon our native soil And our paternal lands in secrecy Creep forth to meet, like murderers must do, And by the night, which lends its sable cloak But to the crime and to conspiracies That shun the sunlight, we must seize upon Our goodly right, the which is pure and clear, Just as the splendid open womb of day.

MELCHTAL: Leave it at that. What darksome night hath spun, Is free and joyous in the light o' th' sun.

ROSSELMANN: Confederates, hear what God bids my heart! We're meeting here in place of an Assembly And can be deemed to represent the people, So let us meet by ancient usages O' th' land, as we were wont in tranquil times, Whatever is unlawful in this meeting, Be pardoned by the need o' th' time. Yet God Is everywhere, where justice is dispensed, And underneath his Heaven do we stand.

STAUFFACHER: Tis well, let's meet in line with ancient custom, Though it is night, so shines our justice forth.

MELCHTAL: Though not in number full, the heart is here Of all the people, here the best attend.

KONRAD HUNN: Are not the ancient books as well at hand, Yet they are written down within our hearts.

ROSSELMANN: Now then, so let the ring be formed at once. Set up the swords of power in the ground.

AUF DER MAUER: Now let the Magistrate assume his place, And let his bailiffs stand at either side!

SACRISTAN: There are three peoples here, to which belongs The right, to give a head to the Assembly?

MEIER: Schwyz may contest with Uri for this honor We Unterwaldners freely stand aside.

MELCHTAL: We stand aside, we are the suppliants, Who ask assistance from their mighty friends.

STAUFFACHER: Let Uri then assume the sword, its flag Takes precedence upon our march to Rome.

WALTER FURST: The honor of the sword should fall to Schwyz, For we all pride ourselves upon its stock.

ROSSELMANN: Let me resolve this noble competition, Schwyz leads in council, Uri in the field.

Wilhelm Tell

WALTER FURST (hands STAUFFACHER the swords): So take!

STAUFFACHER: Not I, to th' eldest be the honor.

IM HOFE: Ulrich der Schmied is most advanced in years.

AUF DER MAUER: The man is brave, but not of free estate, No bondman can become a judge in Schwyz.

STAUFFACHER: Is not Lord Reding here, the Magistrate? Why should we seek for one yet worthier?

WALTER FURST: Let him be Magistrate and chief o' th' day! Who doth agree thereto, lift up his hand.

(All lift up their right hand.)

REDING (steps into the middle): I can not place my hand upon the books, So swear I by th' eternal stars above, That I will never deviate from justice.

(The two swords are placed upright before him, the ring is formed around him, SCHWYZ holds the center, URI places itself to the right, and UNTERWALDEN to the left. He stands leaning on his battle sword.)

What is it, that hath brought together here Three mountain people at this ghostly hour Upon the barren shoreline of this lake? What should the content be of this new league, Which we here found beneath the heaven's stars?

STAUFFACHER (steps into the ring): No new alliance do we found, it is An old alliance from our fathers' time, That we renew! Know well, confederates! Though lake, though mountain range may us divide, And every people govern for itself, So are we yet of but one stock and blood, And but one homeland is't, from which we come.

WINKELRIED: So is it true, as it is said in song, That we've come from afar into this land? O, tell us now, whatever's known to you, That this new league be strengthened by the old.

STAUFFACHER: Hear, what the aged herdsmen do relate. There was a mighty people, in the land Back to the north, that suffer'd from harsh famine. In this distress th' Assembly did resolve, That every tenth man as the lot might fall Should leave his fatherland that did occur! And forth, lamenting, men and women went, A giant army, toward the midday sun, With sword in hand they struck through German lands, Unto the highlands of these mountain forests. And never did the host become fatigued, Until they came upon the savage vale, Where now the Muotta runs between the meads No trace of human beings was here seen, But one lone shelter stood upon the shore, Here sat a man and waited for the ferry Yet violently the lake did rage and was Not passable; so they beheld the land More closely and perceived the beauteous wealth Of timber and discovered goodly springs And thought, they were in their dear fatherland Then they at once determined to remain, Erected there the ancient town of Schwyz, And many bitter days they had, to clear The forest with its widely spreading roots Then later, as the soil no more sufficed The people's number, they proceeded hither To the black mountain, yes to Weissland hence, Where, hidden by eternal walls of ice Another people speak another tongue. The village Stanz they built beside the Kernwald, The village Altorf by the valley of the Reuss Yet stayed they ever mindful of their source, From all the foreign races, that since then Have settled in the middle of their land, The men of Schwyz each other recognize, There is the heart, the blood by which they're known.

(Extends his hand to the right and left.)

AUF DER MAUER: Yes, we are of one heart and of one blood!

Wilhelm Tell

ALL (extending their hands): We are one people and will act as one.

STAUFFACHER: The other people bear a foreign yoke, They have submitted to the conqueror. Even within our country's bounds there live Some settlers, who are bound by foreign duties, And pass their servitude on to their children. Yet we, the genuine race of ancient Schwyz, We have forever kept our liberty. Never to princes have we bowed the knee, Freely we chose the Emperor's protection.

ROSSELMANN: We freely chose the Empire's shield and refuge, So doth it read in Emp'ror Friedrich's charter.

STAUFFACHER: For masterless is also not the freest. There has to be a chief, a highest judge, Where one may turn for justice in disputes. Hence for the ground, which they have salvaged from The ancient wilderness, our fathers granted The honor to the Emperor, who's called The Lord of German and Italian soil, And like the other freemen of his realm Pledged him the noble service of their arms, For this alone is every freeman's duty, To shield the Empire, which gives him protection.

MELCHTAL: What is beyond that, hath the mark of serfdom.

STAUFFACHER: Whene'er the call to arms went forth they follow'd The Empire's banner and they fought its battles. To Italy they marched with arms in hand, To place the Roman crown upon his head. At home they ruled themselves most cheerfully By ancient usages and their own law Blood sentences alone were th' Emp'ror's right. And thereto was assigned a noble count, Who had his domicile not in the land When blood guilt came to pass, they summon'd him, And 'neath the open heavens, plain and clear, Spake he the law and with no fear of men. Where are the traces here, that we are slaves? Is there one, who knows otherwise, speak out!

IM HOFE: NO, everything stands thus, just as you state We've never tolerated despotism.

STAUFFACHER: E'en to th' Emperor we refused obedience, When he once bent the law to favor parsons. For as the clerics from the Abbey of Einsiedeln laid a claim upon the Alp Which we have grazed on since our fathers' time, The Abbot yielded up an ancient charter, Which granted him the unowned wilderness For our existence there had been concealed And then we spake: "The charter is a fraud. No Emperor can bestow, that which is ours. And does the Realm deny our rights, we can Amidst our mountains do without the Realm." In such a way our fathers spake! Should we Endure the infamy of this new yoke, And suffer from the foreign vassal, what No Emp'ror in his might would do to us? This soil we have created for ourselves By labor of our hands, the ancient wood, Which else was but the savage home of bears, We've changed into a domicile for men, The brood of dragons have we extirpated, Which poison-swollen climbed out of the swamps, The misty cover have we torn away, Which always grey hung o'er this wilderness, The solid rocks blown up, o'er the abyss The wanderer conducted on safe paths, By the possession of a thousand years The soil is ours and now the foreign vassal Should dare to come and forge his chains on us, And bring disgrace upon our very soil? Is there no help against such great distress?

(A great motion among the countrymen.)

No, there's a limit to the tyrant's power, When the oppressed can find no justice, when The burden grows unbearable he reaches With hopeful courage up unto the heavens And seizes hither his eternal rights, Which hang above, inalienable And indestructible as stars themselves The primal state of nature reappears, Where man stands opposite his fellow man As last resort, when not another means Is of avail, the sword is given him The highest of all goods we may defend From violence. Thus stand we 'fore our country, Thus stand we 'fore our wives, and 'fore our children!

ALL (striking their swords): Thus stand we 'fore our wives and 'fore our children!

Wilhelm Tell

ROSSELMANN (steps into the ring): Before you seize the swords, bethink it well. You could resolve it calmly with the Emperor. It costs you but a word and those same tyrants, Who now oppress you harshly, flatter you. Accept, what often hath been offered you, Renounce the Empire, yield to Austria's power

AUF DER MAUER: What says the priest? We swear to Austria!

AM BUHEL: Hark not to him!

WINKELRIED: It is a traitor's counsel, A foe o' th' country!

REDING: Calm, confederates!

SEWA: We swear to Austria, after such disgrace!

VON DER FLUE: We let ourselves be cowed by force to do, What we refused to kindness!

MEIER: Then were We slaves and would deserve to be the same!

AUF DER MAUER: Let him be stripped of all a Schweizer's rights Whoever speaks of giving up to Austria! Magistrate, I insist thereon, this be The first law of the land, that we here give.

MELCHTAL: So be't. Who speaks of giving up to Austria, Shall be an outlaw and all honor lack, No countryman receive him at his hearth .

ALL (raise their right hands): We're all agreed, that this be law!

REDING (after a pause): It is't.

ROSSELMANN: Now be you free, you are so through the law, Never shall Austria extort by force, What it could not obtain by friendly suit

JOST VON WEILER: To the agenda, now.

REDING: Confederates! Have all the gentle means as well been tried? Perhaps the King is not aware, it is Not by his will at all, that we must suffer. This final means we should as well attempt, First bring our grievances before his ear, Before we seize the sword. For force is still Atrocious, even in a righteous cause, God only helps, when men no longer help.

STAUFFACHER (to KONRAD HUNN): Now is't for you, to give report. Speak forth.

KONRAD HUNN: I was at Rheinfeld at the Emperor's palace, To plead against the Governor's harsh oppression, To claim the charter of our ancient freedom, Which each new King hath formerly confirmed. I found the envoys there of many cities, From Swabia and from the path o' th' Rhine, Who each and all received their documents, And joyously returned unto their lands. Your envoy, I was shown to councillors, And they sent me away with empty comfort: "The Emperor at present had no time, He would attend to us some other time." And as I tearfully passed through the halls Of the King's castle, I beheld Duke Hansen Stand weeping in a window bay, 'round him The noble Lords of Wart and Tegerfeld. They called to me and stated: "Help your selves, And do not wait for justice from the King. Did he not rob his very brother's child, And keep from him his just inheritance? The Duke implored him for his mother's land, He had now fully come of age, it were Now time, for him to rule both land and people. How did he answer him? The Emperor placed A wreath on him: that be the jewel of youth."

Wilhelm Tell

AUF DER MAUER: You have now heard it. Do not wait for right And justice from the Emperor! Help your selves.

REDING: Naught else is left to us. Now give advice, How we shall guide it to a happy end.

WALTER FURST: (steps into the ring): We want to drive away the hated force, The ancient rights, as we inherit them From our own fathers, we want to preserve Not unrestrain'd to reach for what is new. The Emperor retain, what is the Emperor's Who hath a master, serve him dutifully.

MEIER: I hold my land in fief from Austria.

WALTER FURST: Continue then, to give its due to Austria.

JOST VON WEILER: The Lords of Rappersweil receive my tax.

WALTER FURST: Continue then, to pay your rent and tax.

ROSSELMANN: To Zurich's noble Lady am I sworn.

WALTER FURST: Give to the cloister, that which is the cloister's.

STAUFFACHER: I hold no fief except those of the Empire.

WALTER FURST: What needs be, that be done, but not beyond. The gov'rnors with their vassals would we drive Away and all their fortress castles raze, Yet, if it might be, bloodlessly. Thus let The Emperor see, that only under force We've shed the pious duties of respect. And sees he us remain within our bounds, Perhaps he'll statesmanlike o'ercome his wrath, For a just fear is wakened by a people, That moderates itself with sword in hand.

REDING: Yet let us hear! How can it be achieved? The enemy hath weapons in his hands, And verily he will not yield in peace.

STAUFFACHER: He will, when he beholds us under arms, We shall surprise him, ere he is prepared.

MEIER: 'Tis quickly said, but difficult to do. Two fortress castles tower in the land, Which shield the enemy and would be fearsome, If e'er the King should fall upon our land. Rossberg and Sarnen must be overcome, Before a sword is raised in these three lands.

STAUFFACHER: Delay so long, so will the foe be warned. There are too many, who now share the secret.

MEIER: There are no traitors in the forest states.

ROSSELMANN: Zeal also, though 'tis good, can still betray.

WALTER FURST: Delay it longer, so the keep in Altorf Is finished, and the Governor secured.

MEIER: You think but of yourselves.

SACRISTAN: And you're unjust.

MEIER (jumping up): Unjust! That Uri dares to say to us!

* SCENE II. A meadow surrounded by high rocks and woods.

Wilhelm Tell

REDING: Upon your oath, be calm!

MEIER: Indeed, if Schwyz Be leagued with Uri, then must we be silent.

REDING: I must point out to you before th' Assembly, That you disturb the peace with vehement mind! Stand we not all of us for the same cause?

WINKELRIED: If we delay until it's Feast o' th' Lord, Then custom brings with it, that all the serfs Bring presents to the castle for the Governor, And thus ten men or twelve are able to Assemble unobserved inside the palace, Who secretly bear sharpened blades with them, Which one can swiftly mount upon a staff, For none can come with weapons in the castle. Close by i' th' woods the larger number waits, And if the others have successfully Secured the gate, so will a horn be blown, And those will burst forth from their ambush place, Thus is the castle ours with little work.

MELCHTAL: The Rossberg I will undertake to scale, A wench i' th' castle is disposed to me, And I'll delude her easily, to pass A ladder to me for a nightly visit, Am I once up, my friends will follow me.

REDING: Are all agreed, that it shall be postponed?

(The majority raise their hands.)

STAUFFACHER (counts the votes): It is a twenty to twelve majority!

WALTER FURST: If on a certain day the castles fall, So from one mountain to another we Shall give the sign with smoke, th' militia will Be summoned, quickly, in each capital, Then when the governors see our armed resolve, Believe me, they will soon give up the fight And willingly accept a peaceful escort, To flee beyond the borders of our land.

STAUFFACHER: From Gessler only fear I fierce resistance, Surrounded by his cavalry he's dreadful, Not without blood quits he the field, yes though Repelled he still is dreadful to the land, Hard is't and almost dangerous to spare him.

BAUMGARTEN: Where it is dang'rous to the neck, place me. To Tell I owe the saving of my life. With pleasure I shall stake it for the land, My honor I've secured, my heart contented.

REDING: Time brings advice. Await it patiently. One must as well entrust some things to th' moment. Yet see, while we still meet here in the night, Upon the highest mount the morn already Displays her glowing beacon Come, let's part, Before the light of day surprises us .

WALTER FURST: Fear not, the night yields slowly from the valleys.

(All have involuntarily removed their hats and contemplate the sunrise with silent concentration.)

ROSSELMANN: Upon this light, that gives us greeting first Of all the people, who far under us With heavy breathing dwell in smoke-filled cities, Now let us take the oath of this new league.

We will become a single land of brothers, Nor shall we part in danger and distress.

(All repeat the words with three fingers raised.)

We will be free, just as our fathers were, And sooner die, than live in slavery.

* SCENE II. A meadow surrounded by high rocks and woods.

Wilhelm Tell

(As above.)

We will rely upon the highest God And we shall never fear the might of men.

(As above. The countrymen embrace one another.)

STAUFFACHER: Now each one go in silence on his way Unto his friendships and community, Who's herdsman, winter up his herd in peace And quietly 'list friends into the league, What still must be endured until that time, Endure it! Let the tyrant's reckoning Increase, until one day the universal And th' individual debt at once are paid. Let every one restrain his righteous rage, And save his vengeance only for the whole, For he despoils the universal good, Who only helps himself in his own cause.

(Whilst they exit in greatest calm to three different sides, the orchestra breaks in with a magnificent flourish, the empty stage remains open for a time and displays the spectacle of the rising sun over the ice-capped mountains.)

ACT III

* SCENE I. Court before TELL's house.

He is busy with the carpenter's axe, HEDWIG with some domestic work. WALTER and WILHELM play at the rear with a small crossbow.

WALTER (sings): With the shaft, the crossbow, Over mounts and streams Doth the archer follow Soon as morning beams. As in realms of breezes Kites soar regally, Over mounts and gorges Rules the archer free. He commands the yonder, That his shaft achieves, That is his own plunder, What there creeps and flees.

(Comes springing.)

My string is snapped in two. Please mend it, Father.

TELL: I not. A genuine archer helps himself.

(Boys move away.)

HEDWIG: The boys commence betimes to shoot the bow.

TELL: Tis only early practice, makes a master.

HEDWIG: Ah would to God, they never learnt!

TELL: They should learn everything. Whoever wants To pass through life alert, must be prepared For defense and for offense.

HEDWIG: Ah, he'll find No peace at home.

TELL: I can not either, Mother, I was not formed by nature for a herdsman, Restless I must pursue a fleeting goal, And only then do I enjoy my life, If every day I seize anew some quarry.

HEDWIG: And think'st thou not about the fear o' th' housewife, Who in the time, while thee awaiting, grieves, For I am overwhelmed with dread, at what The servants tell about your daring trips. With each farewell my heart

Wilhelm Tell

begins to quake, That thou wilt never more return to me. I see thee on the savage icy mountain, Astray, from one cliff to the other make A leap that's false, and see, how leaping back The chamois drags thee with him in th' abyss, How avalanches bury thee alive, How underneath thy foot the treach'rous snow Gives way and then thou sinkest down, into A living tomb, within the gruesome vault Ah, in a hundred alternating forms Doth death pursue the daring Alpine hunter, That is an ill-begotten way of life, That leads with breakneck speed to the abyss!

TELL: Who freshly looks around with healthy senses, Who trusts in God and his own agile strength, Will easily escape each need and danger, The mountain frights not him, who's born thereon.

(He hath finished his work, lays his tools aside.)

And now, methinks, the door will hold for years. The axe at home doth save the carpenter.

(Takes his hat.)

HEDWIG: Where art thou bound?

TELL: To Altorf, to thy father.

HEDWIG: Hast thou naught dangerous in mind? Confess.

TELL: What mak'st thou think so, wife?

HEDWIG: There is some plot Against the gov'rnors On the Rutli they Conferred, I know, and thou art in the league.

TELL: I was not there with them however I Will not foresake my country, when it calls.

HEDWIG: They'll put thee in a place, where there is danger, The heaviest will be thy share, as always.

TELL: Each man is taxed according to his means.

HEDWIG: The Unterwaldner hast thou brought across The lake i' th' storm It was a miracle, That you escaped Didst thou think then at all Of child and wife?

TELL: Dear wife, I thought of you Therefore I saved the father for his children.

HEDWIG: To sail upon that raging lake! That is Not putting trust in God! That's tempting God.

TELL: Who ponders far too much, will little do.

HEDWIG: Yes, thou art good and helpful, servest all And when thou com'st in need, no one helps thee.

TELL: Forbid it God, that ever I need help.

(He takes the crossbow and arrows.)

HEDWIG: What wilt thou with the crossbow? Leave it here.

TELL: I lack my arm, when I'm without my weapon.

Wilhelm Tell

(The boys come back.)

WALTER: Father, where art thou bound?

TELL: To Altorf, boy To Grand-dad Wilt thou come?

WALTER: Yes sure I will.

HEDWIG: The Gov'nor is now there. Stay out of Altorf.

TELL: He leaves, today.

HEDWIG: Then let him first be gone Remind him not of thee, thou know'st, he hates us.

TELL: His ill-will shall not greatly injure me I do what's right and shrink before no foe.

HEDWIG: 'Tis those who do what's right, he hates the most.

TELL: Because he cannot come at them The knight Will probably leave me in peace, methinks.

HEDWIG: So, know'st thou that?

TELL: It was not long ago, That I went hunting through the wild ravines Of Schachental on a deserted trail, And there I did proceed alone upon A rocky trail, where 'twas no room to yield, For over me the wall of rock hung sheer, And under thundered frightfully the Schachen,

(The boys press toward him to the right and left and look at him with anxious curiosity.)

Then came the Governor in my direction, He was alone with me, I too alone, Just man to man, and next to us the chasm. And when the gentleman caught sight of me And knew 'twas me, whom he not long before Had punished harshly for some minor cause, And saw me with my stately arms in hand Come striding hitherward, then turned he pale, His knees began to fail, I saw it coming, That he would sink against the wall of rock. Then feeling sorry for him, I advanced Respectfully and said: 'Tis I, Lord Governor. But he could not bring forth a sound Out of his mouth He beckoned silently To me with but his hand, to go my way, Then went I forth and sent his train to him.

HEDWIG: He hath before thee trembled Woe to thee! That thou hast seen him weak, he'll ne'er forgive.

TELL: Thus shun I him, and he'll not seek for me.

HEDWIG: Just stay away today. Go hunting rather.

TELL: What mean'st thou?

HEDWIG: I'm uneasy. Stay away.

TELL: How can'st thou worry so without a reason?

HEDWIG: Because there is no reason Tell, stay here.

TELL: I gave my promise, my dear wife, to come.

Wilhelm Tell

HEDWIG: Must thou, then go But leave the boy with me!

WALTER: No, Mother dear. I m going with my father.

HEDWIG: Walty, dost thou intend to leave thy mother?

WALTER: I'll bring thee something pretty back from Grand-dad .

(Leaves with his father.)

WILHELM: Mother, I'll stay with thee!

HEDWIG (embraces him): Oh yes, thou art Mine own dear child, th'art left alone to me.

(She goes to the courtyard gate and follows the departing ones with her eyes for some time.)

*** SCENE II. An enclosed wild region of the forest, waterfalls plunge in spray from the rocks.**

BERTA in hunting dress. Directly thereafter RUDENZ.

BERTA: He follows me. At last I can explain.

RUDENZ (enters rashly): My lady, now at last alone I find you, Abysses close us in on every side, I fear no witness in this wilderness I throw this lengthy silence from my heart

BERTA: You're sure, the huntsmen do not follow us?

RUDENZ: The huntsmen are out there 'Tis now or never! I have to seize upon this precious moment I have to see my destiny decided, And should it sever me from you forever. O, do not arm your gracious glances with This dark severity For who am I, That I would raise this daring wish to you? Fame hath not named me yet, nor may I take My place along the side of all those knights, Who woo you with their glory and their glitter. Naught have I but my faithful loving heart

BERTA (solemnly and sternly): How can you talk of love and faithfulness Who is not faithful to his nearest duties?

(RUDENZ steps back.)

The slave of Austria, who sells himself To th' stranger, to th' oppressor of his people?

RUDENZ: From you, my lady, hear I this reproach? Whom seek I then, but you upon that side?

BERTA: You think to find me then upon the side Of traitors? Rather would I give my hand To Gessler himself, to th' oppressor, than To th' nature-forgetting son of Schweiz, Who can transform himself into his tool!

RUDENZ: O God, what must I hear?

BERTA: And how? What can Lie nearer to a good man than his own? Can any noble heart have fairer duties, Than to defend those who are innocent, And to protect the rights of the oppressed? My very soul bleeds for your

* SCENE II. An enclosed wild region of the forest, waterfalls plunge in spray from the rocks.

Wilhelm Tell

countrymen, I suffer with them, for I have to love them, Who are so modest and yet full of strength, They draw all of my heart unto them hence, Each day I learn to honor them the more. But you, whom nature and your knightly duty Have given them as natural protector, And who desert them, faithlessly go over To th' foe, and place his countrymen in chains, You are the one, who hurts and injures me, I must constrain my heart, that I not hate you.

RUDENZ: Do I not want the best then for my people? Not peace for them beneath the mighty scepter Of Austria

BERTA: You want to give them bondage! You want to banish freedom from the last Castle, that still remains to her on earth, The people understand their fortune better, Vain show will not seduce their certain feelings, They have now cast the net about your head

RUDENZ: Berta! You hate me, you have scorn for me!

BERTA: Did I, 'twere better for me But to see Him who's despised and is contemptible, Whom one would rather love

RUDENZ: O Berta! Berta! You show to me the highest heav'nly bliss, And hurl me down at one and the same moment.

BERTA: No, no, the noble is not all suppressed Within you! It but slumbers, I'll awake it, You must use violence against yourself, To deaden your hereditary virtue, Yet well for you, 'tis mightier than you, Despite yourself you are both good and noble!

RUDENZ: You trust in me! O Berta, with your love I can become and be all things!

BERTA: Then be, That for which glorious nature fashioned you ! Fulfill the place, where she hath stationed you, Stand by your people and your native land, And battle for your holy right.

RUDENZ: Woe's me! How can I hope to win you, to possess you, If I resist the power of the Emperor? And is it not your kinsmen's mighty will, That like a tyrant dictates to your hand.

BERTA: All my estates lie in the forest cantons, And is the Schweizer free, so am I too.

RUDENZ: Berta! O what a view you ope to me!

BERTA: Hope not, to win my hand through Austria's favor, They stretch their hand out for my heritage, Which they would add to their great heritage. This self-same greed for land, which would devour Your liberty, endangers mine as well! O friend, I'm destined to be sacrificed, Perhaps to be rewarded to some minion Yonder where falsehood and intrigue reside, They'll drag me hence to the Imperial court, 'Tis there my hated chains of wedlock wait, And love alone your love can rescue me!

RUDENZ: You could resolve yourself, to living here, In mine own fatherland to be mine own? O Berta, all my yearning in the distance, What was it, but a striving after you? I sought you only on the path of fame, And all my greed for honor was my love. Could you enclose yourself with me in this Still valley and renounce all earthly show O then I've found the goal of all my striving, Then may the stream of the ferocious world Strike on the certain shore of this great mountain I have no further fugitive desires To cast forth yonder in life's distances Then may these rocky heights around us here Spread an impenetrable solid wall, And this sequestered blessed vale alone Be open to the heavens and be lit!

BERTA: Now art thou fully, as my prescient heart Hath dreamt thee, my belief hath not deceived me!

* SCENE II. An enclosed wild region of the forest, waterfalls plunge in spray from the rocks.

Wilhelm Tell

RUDENZ: Be gone, thou vain illusion, that deludes me! I should find happiness in mine own home. Here where the boy grew up so merrily, Where traces of a thousand joys surround me, Where every spring and tree hath life for me, In mine own fatherland thou wilt be mine! Ah, I have always loved it well! I feel, Without it I lacked every earthy joy.

BERTA: Where were the blessed island to be found, If it's not here in th' land of innocence? Here, where the old fidelity's at home, Where falsehood hath not found a way in yet, No envy clouds the fountain of our bliss, And ever bright the hours escape from us. There see I thee in genuine manly worth, The foremost of the free and of thy peers, Revered with homage that is pure and free, Great as a king would act within his realm.

RUDENZ: There see I thee, the crown of womanhood, In charming womanly activity, Erect the heaven for me in my house And, as the springtime scatters forth its flowers Adorn my path of life with beauteous grace And all around bring life and happiness!

BERTA: See, my dear friend, the reason why I grieved, As I saw thee this highest bliss of life Destroy thyself Woe's me! What were my fate, If I were forced to follow the proud knight, The land's oppressor to his gloomy castle! There is no castle here. No walls divide Me from a people, whom I can make happy!

RUDENZ: Yet how to save myself how 'scape the snare, That I have placed around my head in folly?

BERTA: Tear it apart with manly resolution! Whate'er therefrom occurs Stand by thy people, It is thy place by birth.

(Hunting horns in the distance.)

The hunting party Comes nearer Go, we must now part Fight for The fatherland, thou fightest for thy love! It is one foe, before whom we all quake, And 'tis one freedom that shall free us all!

(Exeunt.)

* SCENE III. Meadow near Altorf.

In the foreground trees, to the rear the hat upon a pole. The prospect is bound by the Bannberg, over which a snowcovered mountain towers. FRIESSHART and LEUTHOLD keep watch.

FRIESSHART: We keep our watch in vain. There's no one who Will pass this way and render his obeisance to The hat. Yet here it was just like a fair, Now is th' entire meadow as deserted, E'er since the bugbear hung upon the pole.

LEUTHOLD: But common rabble show themselves and swing Their scruffy caps at us in peevishness. The decent people, all would rather make The lengthy detour. half way round the town, Before they bent their backs before the hat.

FRIESSHART: They have to pass across this place, when they Come from the town hall at the midday hour. Then was I sure, to make a goodly catch, For no one thought thereon, to greet the hat. Then it is seen by Rosselmann, the priest Came just then from an invalid and set Forth with the Rev'rend, right there 'fore the pole The Sacrist had to tinkle with the bell, Then all fell on their knees, myself with them, And greeted thus the monstrance, not the hat.

LEUTHOLD: Harken, companion, I begin to think, We stand here in the pillory 'fore this hat, 'Tis after all an

Wilhelm Tell

insult for a trooper, To stand on guard before an empty hat And every honest fellow must despise us.
Obeisance to perform unto a hat, This is in confidence! A foolish order!

FRIESSHART: Why not unto an empty, hollow hat? Bow'st thou indeed 'fore many hollow skulls.

(HILDEGARD, MECHTHILD and ELSBETH enter with children and place themselves around the pole.)

LEUTHOLD: And thou art also such an eager knave, And gladly brak'st misfortune to brave people. Let anyone that wants, pass by the hat, I'll close mine eyes and look not over there.

MECHTHILD: There hangs the Governor Have respect, you rogues.

ELSBETH: Would t' God, he went, and left his hat to us, The country would not be the worse therefor!

FRIESSHART (chases them away): Would you leave here? Accursed women folk! Who asks for you? Dispatch your husbands here If they've the courage, to defy the order.

(Wives go.)

(Tell enters with his crossbow, leading his boy by the hand. They pass by the hat to the front of the stage, without taking notice thereof.)

WALTER (points toward the Bannberg): Father, is't true, that on the mountain there The trees will bleed, if anyone should strike Upon them with his axe?

TELL: Who says that, boy?

WALTER: The master herdsman says The trees have been Bewitched, he says, and he who injures them, Will have his hand grow up from out the grave.

TELL: The trees have been bewitched, that is the truth. See'st thou the glaciers there, those icy horns, Which high up in the heavens disappear?

WALTER: Those are the glaciers, which at night so thunder, And send the avalanches down on us.

TELL: So is't, and long ago had avalanches Submerged the town of Altorf underneath Their weight, had not the forest over there Stood up against it as a kind of bulwark.

WALTER (after some reflection): Are there some countries, Father, with no mountains?

TELL: If one descends down under from our heights, And always deeper climbs, along the streams, Arrives one in a giant, level land, Where forest waters no more roaring foam, The rivers run in leisure and in peace, There sees one freely all of heaven's spaces, The grain grows there in lengthy, beauteous pastures, And like a garden is the land to see.

WALTER: Oh, father, why then do we not descend Below with speed into this beauteous land, Instead of worrying and toiling here?

TELL: The land is fair and goodly as the Heaven, Yet those who till it, they do not enjoy – The blessings, which they plant.

Wilhelm Tell

WALTER: Live they not free As thou upon their own inheritance?

TELL: The field belongs to th' Bishop and the King.

WALTER: So may they yet hunt freely in the woods?

TELL: To th' master doth belong the game and fowl.

WALTER: They may indeed fish freely in the streams?

TELL: The stream, the sea, the salt belong to th' King.

WALTER: Who is the King then, whom they all do fear?

TELL: He is the one, who fosters and protects them.

WALTER: They can't courageously defend themselves?

TELL: The neighbor there may not his neighbor trust.

WALTER: Father, for me 'tis cramp'd in that wide land, I'd rather live here 'neath the avalanches.

TELL: 'Tis better, child, to have these glacier peaks Behind one's back, than evil-minded men.

(They want to pass by.)

WALTER: Oh, Father, see the hat there on the pole.

TELL: What is this hat to us? Come, let us go.

(Whilst he wants to leave, Friesshart steps toward him with pike held out.)

FRIESSHART: – I th' name o' th' Emperor! Halt there and stand!

TELL (seizes the pike): What would ye? Wherefore do ye hold me up?

FRIESSHART: You've broke the mandate, you must follow us.

LEUTHOLD: You have not shown obeisance to the hat.

TELL: Friend, let me go.

FRIESSHART: Away, away to prison!

WALTER: My father into prison! Help! Oh help!

(Calling into the stage.)

This way, you men, you goodly people, help, By force, by force, they take him prisoner.

(ROSSELMANN the priest and PETERMANN the sacristan come hither, with three other men.)

* SCENE III. Meadow near Altorf.

Wilhelm Tell

SACRISTAN: What gives?

ROSSELMANN: Why layst thou hand upon this man?

FRIESSHART: He is a foe o' th' Emperor, a traitor!

TELL (seizes him violently): A traitor, I!

ROSSELMANN: Thou errest, friend, that's Tell, A man of honor and good citizen.

WALTER (catches sight of Walter Furst and hastens to him): Grandfather, help, violence is done to father.

FRIESSHART: To prison, away!

WALTER FURST (rushing hither): I offer surety, halt! For God's sake, Tell, what is occurring here?

(MELCHTAL and STAUFFACHER come.)

FRIESSHART: The Governor's sovereign authority He hath contemned, and will not recognize.

STAUFFACHER: That had been done by Tell?

MELCHTAL: Thou liest, rogue!

LEUTHOLD: He hath not shown obeisance to the hat.

WALTER FURST: And therefore he should go to prison? Friend, Accept my surety and let him free.

FRIESSHART: Stand surety for thyself and thine own life! We're doing, what we have to Hence with him!

MELCHTAL (to the country people): No, that is flagrant violence! Shall we endure, That one remove him, brashly, 'fore our eyes?

SACRISTAN: We are the stronger. Friends, allow it not, We have one back against the other here!

FRIESSHART: Who disobeys the order of the Governor?

THREE MORE COUNTRYMEN (rushing hither): We'll help. What's happ'ning? Strike them to the ground.

(HILDEGARD, MECHTHILD and ELSBETH return.)

TELL: I help myself indeed. Go, goodly people, Think you, if I had wanted to use strength, That I would be afraid before their pikes?

MELCHTAL (to FRIESSHART): Try, if you dare, to take him from our midst

WALTER FURST AND STAUFFACHER: Be calm! Be peaceful!

FRIESSHART (shouts): Riot and rebellion!

(One hears hunting horns.)

* SCENE III. Meadow near Altorf.

Wilhelm Tell

WIVES: Here comes the Governor!

FRIESSHART (raises his voice): Mutiny! Rebellion!

STAUFFACHER: Shout, 'til thou burstest, knave!

ROSSELMANN and MELCHTAL: Wilt thou be silent?

FRIESSHART (calls still louder): Come help, come help the servants of the law.

WALTER FURST: The Governor's here! Woe's us, what will occur !

(GESSLER on horseback, the falcon on his fist, RUDOLF DER HARRAS, BERTA and RUDENZ, a large retinue of armed servants, who form a circle of pikes around the entire stage.)

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: Room for the Governor!

GESSLER: Drive them from another! Why gather people here? Who calls for help?

(General silence.)

Who was't? I want to know it. (To FRIESSHART) Thou step forth ! Who art thou and why holdest thou this man?

(He gives the falcon to a servant.)

FRIESSHART: Severest Lord, I am thy man in arms And duly-appointed watchman of the hat. This man I seized while in the very act, As he refused obeisance to the hat. I wanted to arrest him, as thou bad'st, And forcibly the people want to free him.

GESSLER (after a pause): Despisest thou so much thine Emperor, Tell, And me, who have here acted in his stead, That thou denyst the honor to the hat, Which I've hung up to test obedience? Thine evil aims thou hast betrayed to me.

TELL: Excuse me, gracious Lord! From thoughtlessness, Not from contempt of you is it occurred, Were I discreet, then would I not be Tell, I beg for mercy, it shan't occur again.

GESSLER (after some silence): Thou art a master of the crossbow, Tell, One says, thou'd take it up with any archer?

WALTER TELL: That must be true, my Lord my father shot An apple from a tree at a hundred strides.

GESSLER: Is that thy boy there, Tell?

TELL: Yes, gracious Lord.

GESSLER: Hast thou yet other children?

TELL: Two boys, Lord.

GESSLER: And which one is't, whom thou dost love the most?

* SCENE III. Meadow near Altorf.

Wilhelm Tell

TELL: Lord, both alike are children dear to me.

GESSLER: Now, Tell! since at a hundred strides thou hitt'st An apple from a tree, So thou wilt have To prove thine art to me Now take the crossbow Thou hast it there at hand and make thee ready, To shoot an apple from the young boy's head Yet I would counsel, aim it well, that thou The apple hitt'st with the initial shot, For miss't thou it, so is thine own head lost.

(All give signs of terror.)

TELL: Lord what monstrosity do you demand Of me I'm from the head of mine own child No, no, my gracious Lord, that have you not In mind Forbid it merciful God that you Could not in earnest from a father ask!

GESSLER: Now thou shalt shoot the apple from the head O' th' stripling I desire and will it.

TELL: Should aim my crossbow at the darling head Of mine own child I'd rather perish first!

GESSLER: Thou shootest or thou die'st with thine own boy.

TELL: I should become the murd'rer of my child! Lord, you do not have children you know not, What is bestir'd within a father's heart.

GESSLER: Oh, Tell, thou art now suddenly discreet! They said to me, that thou wouldst be a dreamer, And wander'st from the ways of other men. Thou lov'st unusual things thus have I now Picked out a special daring task for thee. An other would consider well Thou shut'st thine eyes and seizest on it heartily.

BERTA: O do not jest, my Lord! with these poor people! You see them standing pale and trembling here They're little used to humor from your mouth.

GESSLER: Who tells you, that I jest?

(Reaches toward a branch of the tree, which hangs down over him .)

Here is the apple. Make room for him And let him take his distance, As custom is I give him eighty strides Not fewer, and not more It was his boast, That at a hundred he could hit his man Now, archer, hit, and do not miss the mark!

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: God, this grows earnest Fall, boy, on your knees, It counts, and beg the Governor for thy life.

WALTER FURST (aside to MELCHTAL, who scarcely controls his impatience): Constrain yourself, I beg of you, keep calm.

BERTA (to the GOVERNOR): Let this suffice, my Lord! It is inhuman, To play thus with a father's anxious fears. If this poor man as well hath forfeited Both life and limb through his slight guilt, by God! He had already suffered tenfold death. Release him now uninjured to his hut, He hath now come to know you, and this hour He and his children's children will remember.

GESSLER: Open a lane there Quickly Why waitest thou? Thy life is forfeit, thee I can destroy, And see, I mercifully place thy fate Upon the art of thine own practiced hand. He can't complain about the harsh decree, Whom one makes master of his destiny. Thou boastest of thy certain eye. Well then! 'Tis time then, Archer, to

Wilhelm Tell

display thine art, The aim is worthy and the prize is great! To hit the black within the target, that Can others do as well, to me he's master, Who's certain of his art at any time, Whose heart doth not disturb his hand nor eye.

WALTER FURST (throws himself down before him): Lord Governor, we recognize your highness, Yet now let mercy pass for justice, take The half of my possessions, take them all, But from this ghastly deed release a father!

WALTER TELL: Grandfather, do not kneel fore the false man! I Say, where I am to stand, I'm not afraid, My father hits the bird in midst of flight, He will not miss the heart of his own child.

STAUFFACHER: Lord Governor, doth his innocence not move you?

ROSSELMANN: Remember, that there is a God in Heaven, To whom you must account for all your deeds.

GESSLER (points to the boy): Bind him to yonder linden tree!

WALTER TELL: Bind me! No, I will not be bound. I will keep still, Just like a lamb, nor will I even breathe. But if you bind me, no, then I can not, Then I shall surely rage against my bonds.

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: Just let your eyes at least be covered, boy.

WALTER TELL: And why the eyes? Do you think, I'm afraid O' th' shaft from father's hand? I will await It firmly, nor so much as bat an eyelash. Quick, father, show them, that thou art an archer, He doubts thou art, he thinks to ruin us To spite the ruthless tyrant, shoot and hit.

(He goes to the linden, the apple is placed on his head.)

MELCHTAL (to the country people): What? Shall this outrage be performed before Our very eyes? Whereunto have we sworn?

STAUFFACHER: It is in vain. We have no weapons here, You see the wood of lances that surrounds us.

MELCHTAL: O would that we had acted with quick deeds, God pardon those, who counseled to delay!

GESSLER (to Tell): To work! One carries weapons not in vain. 'Tis dangerous, to bear a murder weapon, And on the archer may the shaft rebound. This haughty right, the peasant doth assume, Offends the highest master of the land. Let none be armed, except he who commands. It pleases you, to bear the shaft and bow, Well, then will I give you the mark thereto.

TELL (bends the crossbow and inserts the shaft): Open the lane! Make room!

STAUFFACHER: What, Tell? You mean to By no means You tremble, Your hand is shaking, and your knees give way

TELL (lets the crossbow sink): It swims before mine eyes!

WIVES: Oh God in Heaven!

TELL (to the GOVERNOR): Excuse me from this shot. Here is my heart!

(He tears open his breast.)

Wilhelm Tell

Call forth your mounted men and strike me down.

GESSLER: I do not want thy life, I want the shot. Thou canst do all things, Tell, at naught despair'st thou, The rudder thou directest as the bow, No storm frights thee, when there is need of rescue Now, savior, help thy self thou savest all!

(TELL stands in fearful battle, with his hands moving convulsively and his rolling eyes directed now at the GOVERNOR, now at the heaven. Suddenly he reaches into his quiver, takes out a second arrow and sticks it in his collar. The GOVERNOR observes all of these motions.)

WALTER TELL (beneath the linden): Father, take shot, I'm not afraid.

TELL: I must!

(He gathers himself together and takes aim.)

RUDENZ (who the entire time stood in the most violent excitement and restrained himself with force, steps forward): Lord Governor, further you will not proceed You will not It was surely but a test The end you have achieved But too far driven Severity will miss its own wise end, And much too tightly stretched the bow will split.

GESSLER: Be silent, till you're called on.

RUDENZ: I will speak I may, the King's esteem is holy to me, But such a rule as this must hatred earn. That's not the purpose of the King I may Maintain Such cruelty my people don't Deserve, thereto are you not authorized.

GESSLER: Ha, you are growing bold!

RUDENZ: I have been silent At every grievous action, which I saw, My seeing eyes have I kept tightly closed, My overswelling and indignant heart Have I pressed downwards deep within my bosom. Yet to be silent further were now treason Unto my fatherland and to the Emperor .

BERTA (throws herself between him and the GOVERNOR): O God, you rouse this maniac still more.

RUDENZ: My people I abandoned, I renounced The kindred of my blood, I broke all bonds Of nature, to attach myself to you The best for all I hoped thus to promote, When strengthened I the power of the Emperor The blind hath fallen from mine eyes With dread I see myself led up to the abyss My independent judgment you've misled, My honest heart seduced With best intent, I had well-nigh achieved my people's ruin.

GESSLER: Audacious man, this language to thy Lord?

RUDENZ: The Emperor is my Lord, not you I'm free as you are born and I compare myself With you in every virtue of a knight. And stood you not here in the Emperor's name, Which I esteem, e'en where it is disgraced, My glove I would throw down 'fore you, you should Give answer to me after knightly custom. Yes, beckon to your mounted men I'm not Defenseless here, as they (pointing to the people) I have a sword, And who comes near to me

STAUFFACHER (calls): The apple's fallen!

(Whilst everyone turned himself toward this side and BERTA threw herself between RUDENZ and the GOVERNOR, TELL hath discharged his arrow .)

* SCENE III. Meadow near Altorf.

Wilhelm Tell

ROSSELMANN: The boy's alive!

MANY VOICES: The apple hath been struck!

(WALTER FURST reels and threatens to sink, BERTA holds him.)

GESSLER (astonished): He hath then shot the arrow? How? the madman!

BERTA: The boy's alive! come to yourself, good father!

WALTER TELL (comes running with the apple): Father, here is the apple Knew I well, That thou would'st never injure thine own boy.

(TELL stood with body bent forward, as though he wanted to follow the arrow the crossbow drops from his hand as he sees the boy come, he hastens to meet him with open arms and lifts him with intense ardor to his heart, in this position he collapses exhausted . All stand moved.)

BERTA: O gracious Heaven!

WALTER FURST (to father and son): Children! my dear children !

STAUFFACHER: Oh God be praised!!

LEUTHOLD: That was a shot! Thereof Will they still speak unto the end of time.

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: They will relate the tale o' th' archer Tell, So long the mountains stand upon their ground.

(Hands the GOVERNOR the apple.)

GESSLER: By God, the apple's shot right through the middle! It was a master shot, I have to praise him.

ROSSELMANN: The shot was good, yet woe to him, who him Thereto hath driven, that he tempted God.

STAUFFACHER: Come to yourself, Tell, rise, you've like a man Redeemed yourself, and can go freely home.

ROSSELMANN: Come, come and bring the son unto his mother.

(They want to lead him away.)

GESSLER: Tell, listen!

TELL (comes back): What command you, Lord?

GESSLER: Thou stuck'st A second arrow on thyself Yes, yes, I saw it well What meantest thou therewith?

TELL (embarrassed): Lord, that is but a custom with all archers.

GESSLER: No, Tell, I will not let that answer pass, There must have been some other purpose to it. Say to me truthfully and gladly, Tell, Whate'er it be, thy life I promise thee. Whe'reto the second shaft?

Wilhelm Tell

TELL: Well then, O Lord, Since you have promised to ensure my life, So will I thoroughly report the truth.

(He pulls the shaft from his collar and looks at the GOVERNOR with a frightful glance.)

This second arrow I had shot through you, If with the first I'd struck my darling child, And you in truth! I would not then have missed.

GESSLER: Well, Tell! I've promised to ensure thy life, I gave my knightly word, that I will keep But since I have perceived thine evil mind, I'll have thee taken and put under guard, Where neither moon nor sun will shine on thee, Thereby I shall be safer 'fore thine arrows. Arrest him, servants! Bind him up!

(TELL is bound.)

STAUFFACHER: What, Lord? How could you treat a man in such a way, In whom God's hand is visibly proclaimed?

GESSLER: Now let us see, if it will save him twice. Bring him unto my ship, I'll follow straight Away, I'll pilot him myself to Kussnacht.

ROSSELMANN: You will imprison him outside the land?

COUNTRY PEOPLE: That you may not, that may the Emperor not, That violates the charters of our freedom!

GESSLER: Where are they? Hath the Emperor confirmed them? He hath them not as yet confirmed This favor Must needs be earned first through obedience. You are all rebels 'gainst the Emperor's court And foster here audacious mutiny. I know you all I see completely through you Him I am now removing from your midst, Yet all of you are sharers in his guilt. Who's smart, learn to be silent and obey.

(He departs, BERTA, RUDENZ, HARRAS and servants follow, FRIESSHART and LEUTHOLD remain behind.)

WALTER FURST (in violent pain): It is foreby, he hath resolved, to bring Destruction on myself with all my house!

STAUFFACHER (to TELL): O why had you to rouse the tyrant's rage!

TELL: Restrain himself, who felt my pangs of pain!

STAUFFACHER: Now everything, oh everything is lost! With you are we all fettered and enchained!

COUNTRY PEOPLE (ring around TELL): With you our final comfort goes away!

LEUTHOLD (approaches): Tell, I have pity yet I must obey.

TELL: Farewell!

WALTER TELL (clinging to him with intense pain): O Father! Father! Dearest Father!

TELL (lifts his arms toward the heaven): Up yonder is thy father! Call on him!

STAUFFACHER: Tell, shall I say naught of you to your wife?

* SCENE III. Meadow near Altorf.

Wilhelm Tell

TELL (lifts the boy with ardor to his breast): The boy's uninjured, God will give me help.

(Tears himself away quickly and follows the armed servants.)

ACT IV

* SCENE I. The eastern shore of the Vierwaldstattensee.

The unusually shaped rugged rocks in the West close the prospect. The lake is agitated, violently roaring and raging, between which lightning and peals of thunder. **KUNZ VON GERSAU**. Fisherman and Fisherboy.

KUNZ: I saw it with mine eyes, you can believe me, It all hath happened, as I said to you.

FISHERMAN: Tell led away a prisoner to Kussnacht, The best man in the land, the bravest arm, If it should once be meant for liberty .

KUNZ: The Gov'rnor bears him up the lake himself, They were just now about to board the ship, When I set off from Fluelen, yet the storm, That even now is on its way, and which Compelled me also, suddenly to land here, May very well have hindered their departure.

FISHERMAN: Tell now in fetters, in the Gov'rnor's power! O surely, he'll entomb him deep enough, That he'll not see the light of day again! For he must fear the righteous vengeance of The free man, whom he's grievously provoked!

KUNZ: The Magistrate as well, the noble Lord Of Attinghaus, 'tis said, lies near to death.

FISHERMAN: So breaks the final anchor of our hope! He was the only one, who still might raise His voice in favor of the people's rights!

KUNZ: The storm is growing worse. So fare ye well, I'll take some quarters in the town, for none Will give more thought today to a departure.

(Exits.)

FISHERMAN: Tell taken prisoner and the Baron dead! Lift up thy brazen forehead, tyranny, Cast all your shame away, the mouth of truth Is dumb, the seeing eye is blinded now, The arm, that should have saved us, is in fetters!

BOY: It's hailing hard, come in the cottage, Father, It is not good, to house here in the open.

FISHERMAN: Rage on, ye winds, descend in flames, ye Lightning, Ye clouds burst open, pour hereunder, streams O' th' heav'n and drown the land! Annihilate The unborn generations in their seed! Ye—savage elements become our lord, Ye bears come back, ye ancient wolves return To this great wilderness, the land is yours, Who wants to live here without liberty!

BOY: Hark, how the chasm roars, the whirlpool howls, So hath it never raged within this gorge!

FISHERMAN: To take aim at the head of his own child, Such had before been ordered of no father! And should not nature in ferocious wrath Rise in revolt O I'd not be surprised, If th' rocks were now to bow into the lake, If yonder jagged peaks, yon tow'rs of ice, Which since creation's day have never thawed, Were now to melt down from their lofty summits, If th' mountains break, if ancient crevices Collapse, that then a second flood would come

Wilhelm Tell

To swallow up all dwellings of the living!

(One hears ringing.)

BOY: Hark ye, they're ringing on the mountain yonder, They've surely seen a vessel in distress, And toll the bell, that we be called to prayer.

(Climbs upon a high ground.)

FISHERMAN: Woe to the vessel, that now underway, Within this dreadful cradle is now rocked! Here is the rudder useless and the helmsman, The storm is master, wind and waves play ball With human beings There is near and far No haven, which accords him friendly shelter! Sheer and ascending jaggedly the rocks Stare inhospitably across at him, And show him but their stony jagged breast.

BOY: (points left): Father, a ship, it comes from Fluelen hence.

FISHERMAN: God help the wretched people! If the storm is once entangled in this waterway, Then it will rage with th' anguish of a beast, That strikes against the cage's iron bars, Howling it seeks to find a door in vain, For it is on all sides confined by rocks, Which high as Heaven wall the narrow pass.

(He climbs upon the high ground.)

BOY: It is the master's ship from Uri, Father, I know't by its red roof and by its flag.

FISHERMAN: Judgments of God! Yes, he it is himself, The Gov'rnor, who here sails There ships he hence, And carries in the ship his own offense! Swift hath the arm of the avenger found him, Now over him he knows the stronger Lord, These waves will not pay heed unto his voice, These rocky cliffs will not bow down their heads Before his hat My boy, now do not pray, Do not attempt to stay the Judge's arm!

BOY: I pray not for the Governor I pray For Tell, who is upon the ship with him.

FISHERMAN: O mindlessness o' th' sightless elements! Must thou, to catch a single guilty man, Destroy the ship together with the helmsman!

BOY: Look, look, they were already safely by The Buggisgrat, but now the force o' th' storm, Which is rebounding from the Teafelmunster, Hurls them back unto the great Axenberg. I see them no more.

FISHERMAN: There is the Hakmesser, Where many ship already hath been broken. If they don't steer thereover prudently, So will the ship be shattered on the rocks, Which sink precipitously in the depths. They have a helmsman who is very good On board, if one could save them, it were Tell, Yet they have fettered both his arms and hands.

(WILHELM TELL with his crossbow. He comes with rapid strides, glances around in amazement and displays the most violent movement. When he is in the middle of the stage, he throws himself down, his hands to the earth and then stretching out to the heaven.)

BOY (notices him): Look, Father, who's the man, who's kneeling there?

FISHERMAN: He clutches at the earth with both his hands, And doth appear to be beside himself.

BOY (comes forward): What see I Father! Father, come and see !

Wilhelm Tell

FISHERMAN (approaches): Who is it? God in Heaven! What! Is't Tell? How come you hither? Speak!

BOY: But were you not In yonder ship imprisoned and bound up?

FISHERMAN: Were they not taking you away to Kussnacht?

TELL (stands up): I am set free.

FISHERMAN AND BOY: Set free! O miracle of God!

BOY: Whence come you here?

TELL: From yonder vessel.

FISHERMAN: What?

BOY (simultaneously): Where is the Gov'rnor?

TELL: Drifting on the waves.

FISHERMAN: Is't possible? But you? How are you here? How 'scaped you from your bonds and from the storm?

TELL: By God's most gracious providence Attend!

FISHERMAN AND BOY: O speak on, speak on!

TELL: Do you know, what's come To pass in Altorf?

FISHERMAN: I know all, speak on!

TELL: Of how the Gov'rnor had me seized and bound, And would convey me to his fort in Kussnacht.

FISHERMAN: And that with you at Fluelen he embarked! All this we know, say, how have you escaped?

TELL: I lay there in the ship, fast bound with cords, Defenseless, an abandoned man nor hope I, To see again the joyful light o' th' sun, The lovely countenance of wife and children, And cheerlessly I look i' th' waste of water

FISHERMAN: O wretched man!

TELL: So then we disembark, The Governor, Rudolf der Harras and the servants. And yet my quiver and my crossbow lay Upon the bow beside the pilot's rudder. And just as we now come around the bend Near little Axen, God ordained it so, That such an awful murd'rous thunderstorm Burst forth abruptly from the Gotthard gorges, That every rower's heart within him sank And all thought it their wretched fate to drown. Then heard I, how one of his servants turned To th' Governor and spake these words to him: You see your need and that of ours, my Lord, And that we all are near the edge of death And yet the helmsmen know not what to do Because of their great fear and are not well Apprised o' th' course to take But now here's Tell, A robust man and knows to steer a ship, What, if we were to use him in our need? Then spake the Governor to me: Tell, if Thou dar'st, to help us to escape this storm, So I've a mind to free thee from thy bonds. But I then spake: Yes, Lord, with help of God I'll venture it, and help us to escape. So from my bonds I was released and stood Up at the helm and steered uprightly

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forth. Yet glance I sideways, where my weapons lay, And on the shore I sharply look to see, Where there might be a chance for my escape. And when I did perceive a shelf of rocks, That sprang forth flattened out into the lake

FISHERMAN: I know't, 'tis at the foot of the great Axen, Yet I can't deem it possible – it rises So steep to reach it springing from a boat

TELL: I bade the men, to put forth handily, Until we came before the rocky ledge, There, cried I, shall the worst be overcome And as we briskly rowing soon arrived, I pray that God be merciful, and force, With all my body's power pressed together, The vessel's bow hence to the rocky wall Now quickly snatching up mine arms, I swing Myself upon the ledge by leaping high, And with a forceful footkick to my rear, I send the little craft i' th' gorge of water There let it, as God wills, drift on the waves! So am I here, delivered from the might O' th' storm and from the might far worse of man.

FISHERMAN: Tell, Tell, the Lord hath wrought a miracle Through you, I scarce can trust it to my senses But say on! Whence intend you now to go, For there's no safety for you, in so far The Gov'nor hath escaped this storm alive.

TELL: I hear him say, as I lay bound in chains Upon the ship, he fain would land at Brunnen, And crossing Schwyz bring me unto his castle.

FISHERMAN: Will he then make his way thence over land?

TELL: He plans to.

FISHERMAN: O so hide yourself without Delay, not twice God helps you from his hands.

TELL: Name me the nearest way to Arth and Kussnacht.

FISHERMAN: The open highway leads by way of Steinen, But yet a shorter way and more concealed My boy can take you on by way of Lowerz .

TELL (gives him his hand): May God reward your kindness. Fare ye well.

(Goes and comes back again.)

Have you not also sworn an oath at Rutli? Methinks, I heard your name

FISHERMAN: Yes, I was there, And I have sworn the oath unto the League.

TELL: So speed to Burglen, do me this one favor, My wife despairs of me, report to her, That I've escaped and am now well concealed.

FISHERMAN: Yet whither shall I tell her, that you've fled?

TELL: You'll find my father-in-law there by her side And others, who have sworn the oath in Rutli They should be resolute and of good courage, For Tell is free and master of his arm, And soon shall they hear further news from me.

FISHERMAN: What have you now in mind? Reveal it freely.

TELL: Is it once done, 'twill also be discussed.

ACT IV

Wilhelm Tell

(Exits.)

FISHERMAN: Show him the way, Jenni God be with him! He leads to th' goal, whate'er he's undertaken.

(Exits.)

*** SCENE II. The noble court at Attinghausen.**

The BARON, in an armchair, dying. WALTER FURST, STAUFFACHER, MELCHTAL and BAUMGARTEN busy around him. WALTER TELL kneeling before the dying man.

WALTER FURST: It is foreby with him, he's over there.

STAUFFACHER: He lies not as one dead Behold, the feather Doth move upon his lips! His sleep is now At rest, and peacefully his features smile.

(BAUMGARTEN goes to the door and speaks with someone.)

WALTER FURST (to BAUMGARTEN): Who is't?

BAUMGARTEN (comes back): It's Lady Hedwig, your own daughter, She'd like to speak with you, would see the boy.

(WALTER TELL stands up.)

WALTER FURST: Can I console her now? Am I consoled Myself? Is every pain heaped on my head?

HEDWIG (pushing her way in): Where is my child? Let me, I must see him

STAUFFACHER: Be calm, bethink, you're in the house of death

HEDWIG (falls upon her boy): My Walty! O he is alive.

WALTER TELL (clings to her): Poor Mother!

HEDWIG: Can it be truly so? Art thou unharmed?

(Examines him with anxious care)

Is't possible? Could he take aim at thee? How could he? O he hath no heart He could Dispatch the arrow at his very child!

WALTER FURST: He did with dread, with pain dismembered soul, Compelled he did it, since it meant his life.

HEDWIG: O if he had a father's heart, before He'd done it, he'd have died a thousand times!

STAUFFACHER: You should give praise to God's kind dispensation, Which guided it so well

HEDWIG: Can I forget, What could have been the issue God in Heaven! And live I eighty years I'll see the boy Forever bound, his father aim at him And ever flies the shaft into my heart.

* SCENE II. The noble court at Attinghausen.

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MELCHTAL: If you knew, how the Gov'nor taunted him!

HEDWIG: O brutal heart of men! If once their pride Hath been abused, then they heed nothing more, In the blind frenzy of the game he'll stake The child's existence and the mother's heart!

BAUMGARTEN: Is then your husband's lot not hard enough, That you insult him more with harsh rebuke? Have you no feelings for his sufferings?

HEDWIG (turns around toward him and looks upon him with a large view): Hast thou tears only for thy friend's distress? Where were you, when they put that excellent man In shackles? Where was your assistance then? You just looked on, you let the horrible occur, You bore it patiently, that they led off Your friend from out your midst Hath Tell e'er acted In such a way to you? Did he stand there Lamenting, When the Gov'nor's troopers were Pursuing thee, or when the raging lake Roared out before thee? Not with idle tears Bemoaned he thee, he sprang into the vessel, wife And child forgot he and delivered thee

WALTER FURST: What could we dare to do to rescue him, Since we were few in number and unarmed!

HEDWIG (throws herself upon his breast): O Father! And as well hast thou lost him! The country, we have all of us lost him! He misses all of us, ah! we miss him! God save his very soul before despair . To him down in the solitary dungeon Doth come no friendly comfort Fell he ill! Ah, in the prison's dank obscurity He must fall ill Just as the Alpine rose Turns pale and withers in the swampy air, So there's no life for him but in the light O' th' sun, and in the balsam stream of air. Imprisoned! He! His very breath is freedom, He can not live in the rank breath o' th' grave.

STAUFFACHER: Becalm yourself. For we all want to act, To open up his prison doors.

HEDWIG: What can you do without him? Just so long As Tell was free, yes, then there was still hope, Then innocence could always find a friend, Then did the persecuted have a helper, Tell rescued all of you But all of you Together could not free him from his chains!

(The BARON awakes.)

BAUMGARTEN: He's stirring, still!

ATTINGHAUSEN (sitting up): Where is he?

STAUFFACHER: Who?

ATTINGHAUSEN: I need him, In my last moment he abandons me!

STAUFFACHER: He means the squire Have they sent after him?

WALTER FURST: They have sent after him Be comforted! For he hath found his heart, he's one of ours.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Hath he then spoken for his fatherland?

STAUFFACHER: With hero's daring.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Wherefore comes he not, That he may now receive my final blessing? I feel, that soon my life will swiftly end.

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STAUFFACHER: Not so, my noble Lord! For this short sleep Hath quickened you, and now your look is bright.

ATTINGHAUSEN: The pain is life and even it hath left me, My suffering is, just like my hope, at end.

(He notices the boy.)

Who is the boy?

WALTER FURST: Give him your blessing, Lord! He is my grandson and is fatherless.

(HEDWIG sinks down with the boy before the dying man.)

ATTINGHAUSEN: And fatherless I leave you all, yes all Behind And woe is me, that my last sight Hath seen the ruin of the fatherland! Must I attain the utmost height of life, To perish utterly with all my hopes!

STAUFFACHER (to **WALTER FURST**): Shall he depart amid this dark affliction? Shall we not brighten up his final hours With beauteous beams of hope? O noble Baron! Raise up your spirit! We are not entirely Abandoned, are not lost beyond all rescue.

ATTINGHAUSEN: Who is to save you?

WALTER FURST: We ourselves. Now hear! The Cantons three have to each other pledged Their solemn word, to drive away the tyrants. The League has now been formed, a holy oath Binds us together. Action will be taken, Before the year begins anew its cycle, Your ashes shall repose in a free land.

ATTINGHAUSEN: O say to me! The League has now been formed?

MELCHTAL: On the same day the Forest Cantons will Rise up all three of one accord. All is prepared, and to this hour the secret is Well kept, though many hundreds share in it. The ground is hollow underneath the tyrants, The days of their continued rule are numbered, And soon no trace of them will e'er be found.

ATTINGHAUSEN: But what of all the fortresses i th' land?

MELCHTAL: On the same day they all shall fall to us.

ATTINGHAUSEN: And are the nobles party to this League?

STAUFFACHER: We hope for their assistance, when it counts, But now the peasant on his own hath sworn.

ATTINGHAUSEN (raises himself up slowly, with great astonishment) : And hath the peasant ventured such a deed, With his own means, with no help from the nobles, Hath he relied so much on his own strength Yes, then there is no further need of ours, We can descend in comfort to our graves, For after us the majesty of man Will live and be maintained by others' strengths.

(He lays his hand upon the head of the child, who lies before him on his knee.)

Upon this head, whereon the apple lay, Your new and better freedom shall grow green, The old is falling down, the times are changing, And from the ruins blossoms forth new life.

STAUFFACHER (to **WALTER FURST**): See, what a splendor pours forth round his eye! That is not the extinction of mere nature, That is the beam of renovated life.

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ATTINGHAUSEN: The noble climbs down from his ancient castle And swears his civic oath unto the cities, In Uchtland, and in Thurgau it's begun, The noble Bern lifts up her ruling head, And Freiburg is a stronghold of the free, The busy Zurich arms its guilds to form A host prepared for war it breaks the might Of kings against her everlasting walls

(He speaks the following in the tone of a seer his speech rises to inspiration.)

The princes see I and the noble lords Equipped in suits of armor coming forth, To war upon a harmless folk of herdsmen. 'Twill be a fight unto the death, and glorious Will many pass become by bloody decision. The peasant hurls himself with naked breast, A willing sacrifice, i' th' troop of lances, He breaks them, and the blood o' th' noble falls, And freedom lifts its winning banner high.

(Grasping WALTER FURST's and STAUFFACHER's hands.)

Therefore hold fast together fast and always No place of freedom be strange to another Set watches high upon your mountain tops, That League with League can quickly be assembled Be one be one be one

(He falls back on the cushion his hands now soulless still hold the others clasped. FURST and STAUFFACHER regard him for some time still in silence, then they step away, each one given over to his own grief. Meanwhile the servants have quickly forced themselves in, they approach with signs of a more silent or more agitated grief, some kneel down by him and shed tears on his hand, during this silent scene the castle bell tolls.)

(RUDENZ to former.)

RUDENZ (entering hastily): Lives he? O tell me, can he hear me still?

WALTER FURST (points hence with averted face): You are our feudal lord and our protector, And now this castle hath another name.

RUDENZ (beholds the corpse and stands seized by intense pain) : O gracious God! Comes my remorse too late? Could he not live a few more pulses longer, That he might see my altered heart? Oh, I have held his faithful voice in scorn, While he still wandered in the light He is Now gone, is gone eternally and leaves Me with this heavy unpaid debt ! O speak! Did he depart this life displeased with me?

STAUFFACHER: He heard while he was dying, what you've done, And blessed the courage, with which you have spoken!

RUDENZ (kneels down before the dead man): Yes, sacred vestige of a precious man! Thou soulless body! Here I pledge to thee Upon thy hand of death now cold I have forever broken all my foreign bonds, I am restored once more unto my people, I am a Schweizer and I wish to be With my entire soul

(Standing up.)

Mourn for our friend, The father of us all, yet don't despair ! 'Tis not his lands alone that fall to me, His heart his spirit hath devolved on me, And my fresh youth shall execute for you, Whate'er his great old age still owed to you. O venerable father, give your hand to me! And give me yours as well! Melchtal, you too! Bethink you not! O do not turn away! Receive my promise and my solemn oath.

WALTER FURST: Give him your hand. For his repentant heart Deserves our trust.

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MELCHTAL: You've held the countryman in disregard. Now speak, what is one to expect from you?

RUDENZ: O think not of the errors of my youth!

STAUFFACHER (to MELCHTAL): Be one! That was our father's final word, Be mindful now thereof!

MELCHTAL: Here is my hand! The farmer's handshake, noble Lord, is also A good man's word! What is the knight without us? And our estate is older far than yours.

RUDENZ: I honor it, and with my sword shall guard it.

MELCHTAL: The arm, Lord Baron, which subjects the hard Earth to itself and fructifies her womb, Can just as well protect the breast of man.

RUDENZ: You shall defend my breast, and I will yours, So are we each one through the other strong. Yet whereto talk we, while our fatherland Is still a prey of foreign tyranny? If first the soil is swept clean of the foe, Then we'll no doubt be reconciled in peace.

(After that, he pauses for a moment.)

You're silent? Have you naught to tell me? How? So must I force myself against your will Into the secret bus'ness of your League. You have convened you've sworn an oath at Rutli I know know all, that you transacted there, And what was not confided me by you, I've kept as if it were a sacred pledge. I never was my country's foe, trust me, And never had I acted there against you. Yet wrongly did you act, to put it off, The hour is pressing, and swift action's needed Tell was the sacrifice of your delay

STAUFFACHER: We swore an oath to wait 'til Christmas Day.

RUDENZ: I was not there, I have not sworn thereto. Wait if you will, I'm acting.

MELCHTAL: What? You would

RUDENZ: I count me now among the country's fathers, And it is my first duty, to protect you.

WALTER FURST: To give this precious dust unto the earth, Is now your nearest duty and most sacred.

RUDENZ: When we have freed the land, then we can lay The fresh-cut wreath of victory on his bier. O friends! I do not have your cause alone, I also have mine own which I must fight Out with these tyrants Hear and know! My Berta hath disappeared, abducted secretly, With brazen crime from out our very midst!

STAUFFACHER: And hath the tyrant dared commit an act So violent 'gainst a free and noble woman?

RUDENZ: Alas my friends! I promised help to you, And now must I implore it first from you. My loved one's stolen, torn away from me, Who knows, where the berserker's hidden her, What violence they may make bold to use, To force her heart into the hated bond! Forsake me not, O help me to her rescue She loves you, she deserves it of the land, That all should take up arms in her behalf

WALTER FURST : What would you do?

RUDENZ: How can I know? Alas! In this dark night, which veils her destiny, In monstrous dread of this uncertainty, Where I know nothing firm to seize upon, There's only this that's clear within my soul: Beneath the

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ruins of the tyrant's might Alone can she be brought forth from the grave, The fortresses must all we overcome, If we perhaps can penetrate her prison.

MELCHTAL: Come, lead us forth. We follow you. Why leave until tomorrow, what we can today? Tell was still free, when we at Rutli swore, The monstrous thing had not yet taken place. The times now bring about another law, Who is so cowardly, to waver now!

RUDENZ: Meanwhile well-armed and ready for the task Await the fiery signals on the hills, For swifter than an herald's canvas flies, Shall you have tidings of our victory, And you shall see the welcome flames shine forth, Then strike upon the foe, as lightning bolts, And smash the edifice of tyranny.

(Exits.)

* SCENE III. The hollow lane near Kussnacht.

One climbs hereunder from behind between rocks, and the travellers are seen already on the high ground, before they appear upon the stage. Rocks surround the entire stage, on one of the foremost there is a projection overgrown with bushes.

TELL (enters with his crossbow): He needs must come along this hollow lane, There is no other way to Kussnacht Here I'll do't The opportunity is good. I'm hidden from him by yon elder bush, And down from there my shaft can reach to him, The narrowness o' th' way prevents pursuit. Now settle thine account with Heaven, Gov'nor, Thou must be gone, thy time hath run its course. I lived a quiet, harmless life My shaft Was only aimed at forest animals, My thoughts were absolutely free of murder Thou hast aroused me from my peaceful state, Into a seething dragon's poison hast Thou turned the milk of my good disposition, Thou hast accustomed me to monstrous things Who took aim at the head of his own child, Can just as well strike at the heart o' th' foe. My wretched children, in their innocence, My faithful wife must I protect before Thy fury, Gov'nor Since, when I last drew My bowstring when my hand was quivering When thou with gruesome devilish delight Mad'st me, take aim at th' head of mine own child When I writhed begging helplessly before thee, 'Twas then I took within my inner self A fearful solemn oath, which only God Did hear, that my next arrow's foremost target Would be thine heart That which I pledged myself Amid the hellish torment of that moment, Is a most sacred debt, which I will pay. Thou art my lord, my Emp'ror's Governor, And yet the Emp'ror would have ne'er allowed, What thou He sent thee here unto this land, To render justice sternly, for he's wroth Yet not, to practice each atrocity With murd'rous joy and with impunity, There lives a God, to punish and avenge. Come thou here forth, thou bringer of bitter pain, My precious jewel now, my highest treasure A target I will give thee, that 'til now Hath been impenetrable to pious prayers And yet to thee it shall not give resistance And thou, my trusted bowstring, that so oft Hath served me faithfully i' th' joys of play, Desert me not in this dread earnestness. Only be firm this once, my faithful cord, Which hath so oft bewinged my bitter shaft Escaped it just now feebly from my hand, I do not have a second one to send.

(Travelers pass over the stage.)

Upon this bench of stone I'll sit me down, Afforded for the traveller's brief repose For here there is no home Each presses past The other hastily and distantly, And questions not about his pain Here goes The apprehensive merchant and the lightly Attired pilgrim the attentive monk, The somber robber and the cheerful player, The driver with his heavy laden horse, Who comes here from the distant lands of men, For every road leads to the end o' th' world. Each one of them goes forth upon his way Concerned with his affairs and mine is murder!

(Sits down.)

Wilhelm Tell

Before when father travelled forth, dear children, There was a joy, when he came back again, For ne'er returned he, 'less he brought you something, Was it a beauteous Alpine flower, Was It an unusual bird or ammonite, Such as the traveller finds upon the hills Now he pursues another venery, By th' savage path he sits with thoughts of murder, The life o' th' foe it is, for which he waits. And yet he thinks alone of you, dear children, E'en now to fend for you, your lovely innocence To shield before the vengeance of the tyrant, He now intends to bend his bow to murder!

(Stands up.)

I wait upon a noble beast Let not The hunter be discouraged, days on end To roam about amid the winter's harshness, To make the daring leap from rock to rock, To climb the jagged slippery mountain walls, To which his limbs are glued by his own blood, In order to hunt down the wretched chamois. A far more precious prize is here at stake, The heart o' th' deadly foe, who would destroy me.

(One hears cheerful music from a distance, which comes nearer .)

Through my entire life have I employed The bow been practiced in the rules of archery, I've often hit the target in the black And many beauteous prizes I've brought home From joyous shooting But today I mean To make the master shot and win the best Within the whole circumference of the mountains.

(A wedding procession passes over the stage and up the hollow lane. TELL observes it, leaning on his bow. STUSSI the game keeper joins him.)

STUSSI: That is the cloister stew'rd of Morlischachen, Who holds the wedding here A wealthy man, He hath ten herd of cattle on the Alps. He goes to get his bride at Imisee, Tonight there will be revelry in Kussnacht. Come with us! every honest man's invited.

TELL: An earnest guest fits not the wedding house.

STUSSI: If grief oppress you, cast it from thine heart, Bear with, what comes, the times are heavy now. Therefore the man must lightly seize his joy. Be married here and somewhere else be buried.

TELL: And oft the one comes close upon the other.

STUSSI: So goes the world now. Everywhere there is Enough distress A landslide hath occurred In Canton Glarn and one entire side O' th' Glarnish hath caved in.

TELL: Do even hills now totter too? There stands naught firm on earth.

STUSSI: And somewhere else one hears of wond'rous things. Here spake I to one man, who came from Baden. A knight would go by horse unto the King, And as he rode along a swarm of hornets Encountered him, they fell upon his horse, That it for martyr's death sinks to the ground, And he proceeds unto the King on foot.

TELL: His sting is also given to the weak.

(ARMGARD enters with several children and places herself at the entrance to the hollow way.)

STUSSI: 'Tis said it bodes a great disaster to The land, a heavy deed opposed to nature.

TELL: Yet every day brings forth such deeds as this No portent is required to make them known.

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STUSSI: Yes, happy's he, who tills his field in peace And unimpaired sits by his own at home.

TELL: The very meekest cannot rest in peace, If some malicious neighbor likes it not.

(TELL looks often with uneasy expectation toward the crest of the pass.)

STUSSI: So fare you well You wait for someone here?

TELL: I do.

STUSSI: A pleasant journey home to you! You are from Uri? Our most gracious lord The Gov'rnor we await today from there.

TRAVELER (comes): The Gov'rnor don't expect today. The waters Have overflowed their banks from heavy rains, And all the bridges hath the stream ripped up.

(TELL stands up.)

ARMGARD (comes forward.): The Governor comes not!

STUSSI: Do you seek him?

ARMGARD: Indeed I do!

STUSSI: Why are you standing then Upon this hollow alley in his way?

ARMGARD: He can't avoid me here, he must hear me.

FRIESSHART (Comes hastily down the hollow path and calls upon the stage.): Now move out of the way My gracious lord The Governor comes riding close behind me.

(TELL exits.)

ARMGARD (full of life): The Gov'rnor comes!

(ARMGARD goes with her children to the front of the stage. GESSLER and RUDOLF DER HARRAS appear on horseback on the crest of the way.)

STUSSI (to FRIESSHART): How came you through the waters, Now that the stream hath swept away the bridges?

FRIESSHART: We've been in battle with the lake, my friend, And we fear not before the Alpine water.

STUSSI: You were upon the ship in that ferocious storm?

FRIESSHART: Yes, that we were. I shall not soon forget it

STUSSI: O stay, and speak!

FRIESSHART: Let me, I must away, I must announce the Gov'rnor in the castle.

Wilhelm Tell

(Away.)

STUSSI: Had virtuous people been upon the ship, To th' bottom had it sunk with man and mouse, This crew can neither water kill nor fire.

(He looks around.)

Where hath the huntsman gone, with whom I spake?

(Exits.)

(GESSLER and RUDOLF DER HARRAS on horseback.)

GESSLER: Say, what you will, I am the Emp'ror's servant And must give thought, to how I best can please him. He hath not sent me to this land, to flatter The people and be soft to them He wants Obedience, the issue is, shall farmers Be master in the land or shall the Emp'ror.

ARMGARD: Now is the moment! Now I'll bring it up!

(Approaches timidly.)

GESSLER: I have not had the hat put up as jest In Altorf, nor was it to test the hearts O' th' people, these I've known for quite some time. I have had it put up, that they might learn To bend their necks to me, which they hold high I had the inconvenient thing set up Upon their path, where they would have to pass, That they would meet it with their eyes, and it Would bring to mind their lord, whom they forget.

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: And yet the people do have certain rights

GESSLER: To ponder these, there is just now no time! Far reaching projects are at work and growing, The Imperial house would grow, and what the father Hath gloriously begun, the son will end. This little people is to us a stone I' th' way this way or that, they must submit.

(They want to pass on. The woman throws herself down before the GOVERNOR.)

ARMGARD: Kind-heartedness, Lord Governor! Mercy! Mercy!

GESSLER: Why stand you on the public highway in My way Stand back!

ARMGARD: My husband lies in prison, The wretched orphans cry for bread Have pity, Severest Lord, on our great misery.

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: Who are you? And who is your man?

ARMGARD: A poor Wild hay man, gracious Lord, from Rigiberg, Who over the abyss mows down the grass Which freely grows from jagged rocky walls, To which the cattle do not dare to climb

RUDOLF DER HARRAS (to the GOVERNOR): By God, a miserable and wretched life! I beg you, set him free, the wretched man, However heavy his offense may be, His ghastly trade is punishment enough.

(To the woman.)

Wilhelm Tell

You shall have justice Yonder in the castle Bring your petition Here is not the place.

ARMGARD: No, no I will not budge from out this place, Until the Gov'rnor hath returned my husband! Six months already lies he in the tower And waits the sentence of the judge in vain.

GESSLER: Woman, would you use force with me, away.

ARMGARD: I ask for justice, Gov'rner! Thou art judge I' th' country in the Emp'ror's stead and God's. Perform thy duty! As thou hop'st for justice Yourself from Heaven, so show it to us.

GESSLER: Hence, drive this brazen people from mine eyes.

ARMGARD (Seizes the reins of his horse.): No, no, there's nothing more for me to lose. Thou com'st not, Gov'rnor from this place, 'til thou Hast rendered justice to me Knit thy brows, And roll thine eyes, just as thou wilt We are In such unbounded misery, that we Care not about thine anger

GESSLER: Woman, hence, Or else my horse will trample over thee.

ARMGARD: So let it trample over me there

(She pulls her children to the ground and throws herself with them in his way.)

Here I lie With all my children Let the wretched orphans Be trodden under by thy horses' hooves, It will not be the worst, that thou hast done

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: Woman, are you mad?

ARMGARD (vehemently continuing): Thou hast for some time Trampled the Emperor's land beneath thy feet! O I am but a woman! Were I man, I would know something better, than to lie Here in the dust

(He hears the previous music again upon the crest of the way, but muffled.)

GESSLER: Where are my servants? Have them carry her away from here, or I'll Forget myself and do what I will rue.

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: The servants can not pass therethrough, O Lord, The hollow way is blocked up by a marriage.

GESSLER: An all too gentle ruler am I to This people still their tongues are still. too free, They have not yet been tamed, as they should be Yet this shall all be changed, I promise it, I will yet break this stubborn mood of theirs, The brazen spirit of freedom I will bend. Throughout these canton lands I'll promulgate A new decree I will

(An arrow pierces through him, he puts his hand on his heart and starts to fall. With feeble voice.)

God grant me mercy!

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: Lord God what is this? Whither came it?

ARMGARD (starting up): Murder! Murder! He totters, sinks! He's hit!

Wilhelm Tell

The arrow's hit the center of his heart!

RUDOLF DER HARRAS (springs from his horse): What horrible occurrence God Lord knight Call on the mercy of your God For you Are now a man of death

GESSLER: That is Tell's shot

(Is slid down from his horse into the arms of RUDOLF DER HARRAS and is laid upon the bench.)

TELL (appears above on the top of the rocks): Thou ken'st the archer, seek not for another! Free are our huts, the innocent are safe Fore thee, thou wilt no longer harm the land.

(Disappears from the heights.)

(People rush in.)

STUSSI (in front): What is the matter? What hath happened here?

ARMGARD: The Gov'rnor hath been shot through by an arrow.

PEOPLE (rushing in): Who hath been shot?

(Meanwhile the foremost of the wedding train come on the stage, the hindmost are still on the heights, and the music continues.)

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: He's bleeding fast to death. Go forth, get help! Pursue the murderer! Unhappy man, so must it end with thee, And yet thou would'st not listen to my warning!

STUSSI: By God! here lies he pale and without life!

MANY VOICES: Who's done the deed?

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: Hath madness seized these people, That they make music for a murder? Silence.

(Music suddenly breaks off, still more people come in.)

Lord Gov'rnor, speak now, if you can Have you No more to trust to me?

(Gessler gives a sign with his hand, which he repeats with vehemence, when it is not understood at once.)

Where shall I go? To Kussnacht? I can't understand you O Be not impatient Leave all thought of earth, Think now, to reconcile yourself with Heaven.

(The whole marriage party stands around the dying man with an unfeeling horror.)

STUSSI: Behold, how pale he grows Now enters death Into his heart his eyes have now grown dim.

ARMGARD (lifts up a child): See, children, how a maniac expires!

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: O insane women, have you then no feeling, That you must feast your eyes upon his horror? Help Lend your hand Will no one stand by me, To draw the painful arrow from his breast?

* SCENE III. The hollow lane near Kussnacht.

Wilhelm Tell

WOMEN (step back): We touch the man, whom God himself hath struck!

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: Curse on you and damnation!

(Draws his sword.)

STUSSI (seizes him by the arm): Dare it, Lord! Your rule is at an end. The tyrant of The country is now fallen. We'll endure No further violence. We are free men.

ALL (tumultuously): The land is free.

RUDOLF DER HARRAS: And is it come to this? Fear and obedience so quickly end? (To the men in arms, who are thronging in.) You see the horrifying act of murder, The which hath happened here help is in vain 'Tis useless, to pursue the murderer. We're pressed by other worries On, to Kussnacht, That we may save the Emp'ror's fortresses! For in this moment are dissolved alike All bonds of order and all ties of duty, And no man's loyalty is to be trusted.

(Whilst he exits with the men in arms, six **BROTHERS OF MERCY** appear.)

ARMGARD: Make room! Make room! Here come the Brothers o' Mercy.

STUSSI: The victim lies The ravens now descend.

BROTHERS OF MERCY (form a half-circle around the dead man and sing in deep tones): With hasty step death comes to man, It hath no respite to him given, It strikes him midway in his span, Forth from life's fullness is he driven, If he's prepared or not, to die, He must stand 'fore his Judge on high!

(Whilst the last lines are repeated, the curtain falls.)

ACT V

* SCENE I. Public square near Altorf.

In the hinterground to the right the Fortress Keep of Uri with the scaffold still standing as in the third scene of the first act; to the left a view out into many mountains, upon all of which signal fires burn . It is just the break of day, bells resound from various distances. **RUODI**, **KUONI**, **WERNI**, **MASTER STONEMASON** and many other countrymen, also women and children.

RUODI: See you the fire signals on the mountains?

STONEMASON: Hear you the bells above the forest there?

RUODI: The foe is put to flight.

STONEMASON: The fortresses are captured.

RUODI: And we in Canton Uri still endure The tyrant's castle on our native soil? Are we the last, who do declare we're free?

STONEMASON: This yoke shall stand, which was to force us down? Up, tear it down!

Wilhelm Tell

ALL: Tear't down! Tear't down! Tear't down!

RUODI: Where is the Steer of Uri?

STEER OF URI: Here. What shall I?

RUODI: Climb up the tower, blow into your horn, That it resound afar among the mountains, And every echo in the rocky clefts Awakening, call all the mountain men Together quickly.

(STEER OF URI exits.)

(WALTER FURST enters.)

WALTER FURST: Hold! Friends! Hold! We still Lack information, as to what hath happened In Unterwald and Schwyz. Let's first await The messengers.

RUODI: Why should we wait? The tyrant Is dead, the day of freedom hath appeared.

STONEMASON: Are not these flaming messengers enough, Which burn on every mountain top around?

RUODI: Come all, come all, take hold, ye men and women! Break up the scaffold! Pull the arches down! Tear down the walls! No stone stand on another.

STONEMASON: Companions come! We have constructed it, We know how to destroy it.

ALL: Come! tear't down.

(They fall upon the structure from all sides.)

WALTER FURST: It's underway. I cannot stop them now.

(MELCHTAL and BAUMGARTEN enter.)

MELCHTAL: What? Stands the fortress still and Sarnen lies In ashes and the Rossberg's broken down?

WALTER FURST: Is that you, Melchtal? Do you bring us freedom? Speak! Have the Cantons all been cleansed o' th' foe?

MELCHTAL (embraces him): We've swept them from the soil. Rejoice, old father! Now at this very moment, as we talk, There is no tyrant left in Switzerland.

WALTER FURST: O speak, how came the forts into your power?

MELCHTAL: Rudenz it was, who took the fort at Sarnen with manly and courageous acts of daring, The Rossberg had I climbed the night before. But hear, what then occurred. As we the fort O' th' foe devoid, with joy now set on fire, The crackling flames already rose to th' heaven, When Diethelm, Gessler's boy, rushed out toward us And cried, the Bruneck woman burns to death.

WALTER FURST: O righteous God!

(One hears the beams of the scaffold fall.)

ACT V

Wilhelm Tell

MELCHTAL: Twas she herself, was locked Up here in secret on the Gov'rnor's bidding. In frenzy Rudenz rose for we already Had heard the beams, the stout supports collapse, And from the midst of smoke the piteous cry Of the unhappy woman.

WALTER FURST: She's been rescued?

MELCHTAL: What counted then was swiftness and resolve! Had he been nothing but our nobleman, We would indeed have cherished our own lives, But he was our confederate, and Berta Esteemed the people So we staked our lives In confidence, and rushed into the fire .

WALTER FURST: Hath she been rescued?

MELCHTAL: She hath. Rudenz and I, We carried her we two from out the flames, And timber fell behind us with a crash. And now, when she discerned that she'd been rescued, Her eyes rose up unto the heaven's light, The Baron threw himself upon my heart, And silently a compact was now sworn, That firmly hardened in the fire's glow Will persevere through every test of fate

WALTER FURST: Where is the Landenberg?

MELCHTAL: Across the Brunig. No fault of mine it was, that he who blinded My father should escape with his own sight. Pursued I him, o'ertook him in his flight, And dragged him then unto my father's feet. The sword was brandished over him already, From the compassion of the blind old man He won the gift of life for which he begged. An oath of truce he swore, to ne'er return, And he will keep it, he hath felt our arm.

WALTER FURST: 'Tis well, you have not put the stain of blood On this unsullied triumph!

CHILDREN (hasten across the stage with the wreckage of the scaffold): Freedom! Freedom!

(The horn of Uri is blown with might.)

WALTER FURST: See, what a festival! The children will Recall this day as late as in old age.

(Girls bring the hat carried on a pole, the whole stage is filled with people.)

RUODI: Here is the hat, to which we had to bow.

BAUMGARTEN: Instruct us, what we ought to do with it.

WALTER FURST: God! Underneath this hat my grandson stood!

SEVERAL VOICES: Destroy the emblem of the tyrant's power! Into the fire with it.

WALTER FURST: No, let it be preserved! It had to serve as tool of tyranny, 'Twill be the lasting symbol of our freedom!

(The country people, men, women and children stand and sit upon the beams of the shattered scaffold grouped around picturesquely in a large half-circle.)

MELCHTAL: So stand we happ'ly now upon the wreckage Of tyranny, and grandly is't fulfilled, What we at Rutli swore, confederates.

Wilhelm Tell

WALTER FURST: The work hath been begun, but not completed. We now need courage and firm unity, For be assured, the King will not delay, In taking vengeance for his Gov'rnor's death, And bringing back by force the one expelled.

MELCHTAL: Let him march up with all his army's might, If from within the enemy's dispelled, We will engage the enemy outside.

RUODI: There are but few approaches to the land, These we will cover with our very bodies.

BAUMGARTEN: We are united by eternal bonds, And never shall his armies frighten us!

(ROSSELMANN and STAUFFACHER come.)

ROSSELMANN (entering): These are the fearful judgments of the Heaven.

COUNTRYMEN: What is the matter?

ROSSELMANN: In what times we live!

WALTER FURST: Say on, what is it? Ha, is't you, Lord Werner? What bring you us?

COUNTRYMEN: What is it?

ROSSELMANN: Hear and marvel!

STAUFFACHER: From one great cause of fear are we set free

ROSSELMANN: The Emp'ror hath been murdered.

WALTER FURST: Gracious God!

(Countrymen become riotous and throng around STAUFFACHER.)

ALL: He's murdered! What! The Emp'ror! Hark! The Emp'ror!

MELCHTAL: Not possible! Whence came this news to you?

STAUFFACHER: 'Tis true indeed. Near Bruck King Albrecht fell By an assassin's hand a trusted man, Johannes Muller, brought it from Schaffhausen.

WALTER FURST: Who would have dared so horrible a deed?

STAUFFACHER: 'Tis made more horrible by him who did it. It was his nephew, his own brother's child, 'Twas Duke Johann of Schwabia, who did it.

MELCHTAL: What drove him to this deed of patricide?

STAUFFACHER: The Emp'ror kept his patrimony back Despite impatient importunities, 'Tis said, he never meant to grant it him, But with a bishop's hat to pay him off. However this may be the youth gave ear To th' evil counsel of his friends in arms, And with the noble Lord von Eschenbach, Von Tegernfelden, von der Wart and Palm He did resolve, since he could find no justice To take revenge on him with his own hands.

Wilhelm Tell

WALTER FURST: O speak, how was this monstrous deed achieved?

STAUFFACHER: The King was riding down from Stein to Baden, Toward Rheinfeld, where the court was held, to join, With him the princes, Hans and Leopold, And a large retinue of high-born lords. And when they came unto the Reuss, where one Can only cross upon a ferry boat, There the assassins forced themselves on board, That they detach the Emp'ror from his train. Thereafter, as the prince rode hence across A cultivated field 'neath which, 'tis said, An old large city stood in heathen times The ancient Hapsburg fortress now in sight, From whence the grandeur of his line proceeded Duke Hans then thrusts a dagger in his throat, Rudolf von Palm runs through him with his spear, And Eschenbach then splits his head in two, So that he sinks thereunder in his blood, He's slain by his own kin, on his own land. Upon the other shore they saw the deed, Yet cut off by the stream they could do naught But raise an unavailing cry of woe; Yet by the wayside a poor woman sat, And in her lap the Emp'ror bled to death.

MELCHTAL: So hath he only dug his early grave, Who would insatiably have everything!

STAUFFACHER: A monstrous horror is abroad i' th' land, All passes of the mountains are blockaded, And each estate doth fortify its borders, E'en ancient Zurich closes up its gates, The which stood open thirty years, in fear O' th' murderers and even more th' avengers. For armed now with the imperial ban, the Queen Of Hungary doth come, the stringent Agnes, Who doth not know the gentleness of her Frail sex, to venge her father's royal blood Upon the murderers' entire line, Upon their servants, children, children's children, Yes even on the stones of their great castles. She's sworn an oath, that she'll dispatch below Whole generations to her father's grave, To bathe herself in blood as in May dew.

MELCHTAL: Knows one, whereto the murderers have fled?

STAUFFACHER: They fled no sooner had the deed been done Their separate ways upon five different routes And parted, ne'er to see each other more 'Tis said Duke Johann wanders in the mountains.

WALTER FURST: And thus the crime hath yielded them no fruit! For vengeance yields no fruit! It is itself The dreadful food it feeds on, its delight Is murder, and its satisfaction horror.

STAUFFACHER: The murd'ers gain no profit from their crime, But we shall pluck with unpolluted hands The blessed fruit o' th' bloody wickedness. For we are now relieved of a great fear, The greatest foe of liberty is fallen, And as it's rumored, that the crown will pass From Hapsburg's house unto another line, The Empire will assert electoral freedom.

WALTER FURST AND SEVERAL OTHERS: What have you heard?

STAUFFACHER: The Count of Luxemburg Already hath been chosen by most votes.

WALTER FURST: 'Tis well, that we kept loyal to the Empire, For there is cause of hope for justice now!

STAUFFACHER: The new lord will have need of valiant friends, He'll be our shield 'gainst Austria's revenge.

(The countrymen embrace one another.)

(SACRISTAN with an imperial messenger.)

SACRISTAN: Here are the worthy leaders of the land.

ROSSELMANN AND MANY OTHERS: Sacrist, what is't?

Wilhelm Tell

SACRISTAN: A courier brings this letter.

ALL (to **WALTER FURST**): Open and read it.

WALTER FURST: "To the honest men Of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, Queen Elizabeth bids grace and all good wishes."

MANY VOICES: What would the Queen? Her reign is over now.

WALTER FURST: (reads): "In her great sorrow and her widowed grief, Wherein the bloody passing of her lord Hath left the Queen, she still remembers well The ancient faith and love of Switzerland."

MELCHTAL: In her prosperity she's ne'er done that.

ROESSELMAN: Be still! Let's listen!

WALTER FURST (reads): "And she doth look unto this loyal people, Assured that they will righteously abhor The cursed perpetrators of this deed. Therefore she doth expect from the three Cantons, That they will never help the murderers, But rather that they'll loyally assist, To give them up to the avenger's hand, Remembering the love and ancient favor, Which they received from Rudolfs princely house."

(Signs of resentment among the countrymen.)

MANY VOICES: The love and favor!

STAUFFACHER: We have received the favor of the father, But what have we to boast of from the son? Hath he confirmed the charter of our freedom, As 'fore him every Emperor had done? Hath he passed judgments based on righteous judgment, And lent to hard pressed innocence protection? Had he but listened to the messenger, That we had sent to him in our distress? Not one of all these things had e'er the King Performed for us, and had we not ourselves Obtained our rights with our own valiant hand, Our need would not have moved him Give him thanks? No thanks hath he sown here within these vales. He stood upon an eminence, he could Have been a father to his people, yet It pleased him, to provide but for his own, Those whom he hath enriched, may cry for him!

WALTER FURST: We will not shout for joy o'er his demise, Nor now recall to mind the suffered evil, Far be't from us! Yet, that we shall avenge The death o' th' King, who never did us good, And those pursue, who never made us grieve, That fits us not, and it will never suit us, As love's a freely given offering, So death absolves from all enforced duties, To him we have no further debt to pay.

MELCHTAL: And if the Queen laments within her chamber, And blames the Heaven for her savage pain, So see you here a people freed of fear, To this same Heaven send their thankful prayers He who will harvest tears, must first sow love.

(**IMPERIAL MESSENGER** exits.)

STAUFFACHER (to the people): But where is Tell? Shall he alone be absent, Who is the founder of our freedom? He Hath done the most, endured the most severe. Come all, now come, let's go unto his house, And there acclaim the savior of us all.

(All exit.)

*** SCENE II. Entrance to TELL'S house.**

A fire burns on the hearth. The door standing open shows into the outside. HEDWIG. WALTER and WILHELM.

HEDWIG: Today your father comes. Dear children, children! He lives, is free and we are free and all! And it's your father, who hath saved the land.

WALTER: And I have also been there with him, Mother! One must name me as well. My father's shaft Went closely by my life, and I have not So much as trembled.

HEDWIG (embraces him): Yes, thou art restored To me! Twice have I given birth to thee! It is foreby I have you both now, both! Twice suffered I the mother's grief for thee! And your dear father comes again today!

(A monk appears at the entrance to the house.)

WILHELM: Look, Mother, look There stands a pious brother, He surely will be asking us for alms.

HEDWIG: Lead him inside, that he may be refreshed, And feel, that he is come to th' house of joy!

(Goes inside and comes back soon with a beaker.)

WILHELM (to the monk): Come in, good man. My mother will refresh you.

WALTER: Come in, rest up and go from here the stronger.

MONK (timorously looking around, with shattered features): Where am I now? Pray tell me, in which land?

WALTER: Are you then lost, that you do not know that? You are at Burglen, Lord, i' th' land of Uri, Just where one enters in the Schachental.

MONK (to HEDWIG, who returns): Are you alone? Or is your Lord at home?

HEDWIG: Soon I expect him what's it to you, man? You do not look, as if you've brought aught good. Whoe'er you are, you are in want, take that!

(Hands him the beaker.)

MONK: E'en as my yearning heart pines for refreshment, I'll touch naught here, 'til you have promised me

HEDWIG: Touch not my garment, step not near to me, Stand far away; if I should listen to you.

MONK: Now by this fire, that flames hospitably, And by your children's precious head, which I Embrace

(Seizes the boy.)

HEDWIG: Man, what is your intent? Stand back From my dear children! You're no monk! You are Not one! For peace should dwell within this habit, But in your features peace doth not reside.

MONK: I am the most unfortunate of men.

Wilhelm Tell

HEDWIG: Unhappiness speaks forcefully to th' heart, And yet your look ties up my inner soul.

WALTER (springing up): Mother, here's father!

(Rushes out.)

HEDWIG: O my God!

(Wants to follow, trembles and stops.)

WILHELM (rushes after him): Here's Father!

WALTER (outside): Th'art here once more!

WILHELM (outside): O Father, my dear Father!

TELL (outside): Here am I once again Where is your Mother?

(Enters.)

WALTER: There at the door she stands and can no further, So trembles she with terror and with joy.

TELL: O Hedwig, Hedwig! Mother of my children! God's helped No tyrant shall divide us more.

HEDWIG (on his neck): O Tell! My Tell! For thee what fear I've suffered!

(MONK becomes attentive.)

TELL: Forget it now and live with joy alone! I am at home once more! This is my cottage! I stand again on that which is mine own!

WILHELM: And yet where hast thou left thy crossbow, Father? I see it not.

TELL: Thou wilt see it no more, It is preserved now in a sacred place, 'Twill henceforth never serve the hunt again.

HEDWIG: O Tell! Tell!

(Steps back, releases his hand.)

TELL: What hath frightened thee, dear wife?

HEDWIG: How how com'st thou to me again? This hand May I take hold of it? This hand O God!

TELL (heartily and courageously): Hath you defended and the land delivered, And I may raise it freely up to Heaven.

(Monk makes an hasty movement, he looks at him.)

Who is this brother here?

Wilhelm Tell

HEDWIG: Ah, I forgot him! Speak thou with him, I shudder in his presence.

MONK (steps nearer): Are you the Tell, by whom the Gov'rnor fell?

TELL: Yes I am he, I hide it from no man.

MONK: You are the Tell! Ah, it's the hand of God, The which hath led me underneath your roof.

TELL (measures him with his eyes): You are no monk! Who are you?

MONK: You have slain The Gov'rnor, who did you wrong I too Have slain an enemy, who had denied My rights He was your foe as well as mine And I have freed the land of him.

TELL (starting back): You are Oh horror! Children! Children, go inside. Go in, dear wife! Go! Go! Unhappy man, You would be

HEDWIG: God, who is it?

TELL: Do not ask! Away! Away! The children must not hear. Go from the house Go far away Thou must Not dwell beneath a single roof with him.

HEDWIG: Woe's me, what is this? Come!

(Goes with the children.)

TELL (to the monk): You are the Duke Of Austria You are! And you have slain The Emperor, your uncle and your lord.

JOHANNES PARRICIDA: He was the robber of my heritage.

TELL: Your uncle slain, your Emperor! And you The earth still bears! The sun still shines on you!

PARRICIDA: Tell, listen to me, ere you

TELL: Dripping with The blood of patricide and Emp'ror's murder, Dar'st thou to step into my stainless house, Thou dar'st, to show thy face to a good man And want the rights of hospitality?

PARRICIDA: From you I hoped that I would find compassion, You too took vengeance on your foe.

TELL: Unhappy man! Must thou confound ambition's bloody guilt With what a father did in self defense? Didst thou defend beloved heads of children? Protect the sanctity o' th' hearth? Ward off The most dreadful, the utmost from thine own? To th' Heaven lift I mine unsullied hands, And curse thee and thine act I have avenged The holiness of nature, which thou hast Disgraced I have no part with thee For thou Hast murdered, I've defended those most dear.

PARRICIDA: You cast me off, unsoled, in despair?

TELL: A horror grips me, when I speak with thee. Away! Pursue thy dreadful course, and leave My cottage pure, where innocence resides.

PARRICIDA (turns to go): So can I, and so will I live no more !

* SCENE II. Entrance to TELL'S house.

Wilhelm Tell

TELL: And yet I've pity for thee God i' th' Heavens! So young, of such a noble family, Grandson of Rudolf, of my Lord and Emp'ror, As fugitive from murder, at my threshold, O' th' wretched man, imploring and despairing

PARRICIDA: O, if you could but weep, then let my fate Move you, it is an hideous one I am A prince I was and I could have been happy, If I had mastered my desires' impatience. But envy gnawed upon my heart I saw The youth of mine own cousin Leopold Becrowned with honors and with land rewarded, And me, who was of equal age with him, Held down i' th' slavish status of a minor

TELL: Unhappy man, well knew thine uncle thee, When he refused to give thee lands and people! Thou with thine hasty, savage insane acts Hast horribly confirmed his wise resolve. Where are the bloody helpers in thy murder?

PARRICIDA: Wherever the avenging spirits led them, I have not seen them since the hapless deed.

TELL: Know'st thou, that thou art banned by law, that thou To friends forbidden and to foes allowed?

PARRICIDA: Therefore avoid I every public road, I venture not to knock at any cottage I turn my footsteps to the wilderness, A terror to myself, I roam the mountains, And shrink back shuddering before my self, A brook shows me mine own unhappy image. O felt you pity and humanity

(Falls down before him.)

TELL (turning away): Stand up! Stand up!

PARRICIDA: Not, 'til you give the hand to me in help.

TELL: Can I help you? Can any man of sin? Yet stand up now Whatever horror you've Committed You're a man I am one too From Tell no man should part uncomforted What I can do, that will I do.

PARRICIDA (springing up and grasping his hand with vehemence) : O Tell! You rescue my poor soul from desperation.

TELL: Let go my hand You must away. You could Not stay here undiscovered, could discovered Not count on refuge Whither will you go? Where hope you to find quiet?

PARRICIDA: Know I? Ah!

TELL: Hear, what God grants my heart You must away To Italy and to Saint Peter's city, There cast yourself at the Pope's feet, confess To him your guilt and thus redeem your soul.

PARRICIDA: Will he not give me up to the avengers?

TELL: What he may do, accept it as from God.

PARRICIDA: How shall I come into that unknown land? I'm unfamiliar with the way, dare not To join my steps to those of travellers.

TELL: The way I will describe to you, mark well! You must ascend, upstream along the Reuss, Which from the mountain plunges wildly down

PARRICIDA (terrified): See I the Reuss? It flows beside my deed.

* SCENE II. Entrance to TELL'S house.

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TELL: The road goes through the gorge, and many crosses Mark it, erected to the memory O' th' trav'lers, buried by the avalanche.

PARRICIDA: I have no fear of nature's terrors, if I tame the savage torments of my heart.

TELL: Before each cross fall down and expiate Your guilt with ardent tears of penitence And are you safely through the frightful pass, And if the mountain doth not send its snowdrifts, Down here upon you from the frozen ridge, So come you to the bridge, which hangs in spray. If it doth not cave in beneath your guilt, If you have left it safely to your rear, So will a gloomy rocky gate burst open, No day hath shone on it proceed therethrough, It leads you to a cheerful vale of joy Yet must you hurry on with rapid steps, You may not tarry, where'er peace resides.

PARRICIDA: O Rudolf! Rudolf! Royal ancestor! So comes thy grandson on thine Empire's soil!

TELL: So climbing always, come you to the heights O' th' Gotthards, where th' eternal lakes are found, Which from the streams of heaven fill themselves. There take departure from the German earth, Another stream with cheerful course leads you Down into Italy, your promised land

(One hears the cowherd's dance song blown from many Alpine horns .)

But I hear voices. Hence!

HEDWIG (hurries in): Where art thou, Tell? My father comes! All the confederates Approach in gay procession

PARRICIDA (covers himself): Woe is me! I may not tarry midst this happiness.

TELL: Go now, dear wife. And freshen up this man, Load presents richly on him, for his way Is far and he will not find any quarters. Hurry! They near.

HEDWIG: Who is it?

TELL: Ask me not! And when he leaves, so turn thine eyes away, That they see not, upon which road he travels!

* SCENE III. The Final Scene

PARRICIDA goes toward **TELL** with an hasty movement, but the latter beckons him with the hand and goes. When both have left to different sides, the scene changes and one sees in the whole valley bottom in front of **TELL'S** dwelling, along with the hills, which enclose it, occupied by countrymen, who are grouped as a whole. Others are coming over a high bridge, which leads over the Schachen. **WALTER FURST** with both boys, **MELCHTAL** and **STAUFFACHER** come forward, others press after them; as **TELL** steps out, all receive him with loud jubilation.

ALL: May Tell live long! the archer and the savior!

(Whilst the foremost press around **TELL** and embrace him, **RUDENZ** and **BERTA** also appear, the former embracing the countrymen, the latter **HEDWIG**. The music from the mountain accompanies this mute scene. When it ends, **BERTA** steps into the midst of the people.)

BERTA: My countrymen! Confederates! Take me Into your league, as the first happy woman, Who found

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protection in this land of freedom. Into your valiant hands I lay my rights, Will you protect me as your citizen?

COUNTRYMEN: That we will do with life and property.

BERTA: 'Tis well, so to this youth I give my hand, A free Swiss woman to this free Swiss man!

RUDENZ: And I proclaim that all my serfs are free.

(Whilst the music strikes up anew, the curtain falls.)

The End.