

defence, was a subject which both suited the times when Germany was groaning under the crushing tyranny of Napoleon, and was especially congenial to a poet whose heart throbbed for liberty, and who always appeared as the enthusiastic apostle of "the rights of man." The subject offered, however, peculiar difficulties, some intrinsic on account of its rather epic than dramatic character, others more accidental, for while it was requisite that the poem should faithfully reflect the local coloring of Swiss scenery and life, the poet himself had no personal knowledge of Switzerland and its inhabitants. Preparatory studies on an extended scale and, above all the intensive power of a poet's genius have, however, so amply compensated for this want of direct knowledge on Schiller's part that he has produced in his work a picture of Swiss scenery, character, customs and language, the truthfulness of which has been universally recognized as perfect in its minutest details.

And, yet, notwithstanding its many and great beauties, the poem has, considered as a work of art, some very serious defects. Foremost among these is its want of dramatic unity, an almost necessary consequence of the combination within one dramatic frame of an individual's private acts, and of the national struggle of a whole people. Tell's deed of self-defence is but slightly connected with the deliverance of the Cantons, and is hardly justifiable from a moral point of view. However great the atrocity of which Gessler had been guilty, Tell should have met the tyrant face to face, and not have shot him from an ambush. Besides, the poet has kept the chief hero, Tell, too much isolated from the action of the drama; neither do the love scenes between Bertha and Rudenz add anything to the development of the dramatic action, though the introduction of the ambitious young nobleman, who in his attachment to the Austrian Court and interest, almost becomes a traitor to his native land, serves to set the simple, patriotic and patriarchal life of the Swiss in still stronger relief.

The scenes in which Tell is the hero, are not the best in the play; they can hardly be compared with the scene in which the gathering of the Swiss people at Rutli is represented. There Schiller makes the manly and sober orator, Stauffacher, assert the rights of the people on grounds that are truly religious. He preaches no new dreams about the "rights of Man," but asserts the ancient, lawful and constitutional freedom of the Swiss people in harmony with the welfare of the whole Empire, of which they form a part. In this scene the leaders of the Swiss people are assembled at night on a plot of meadow-land at Rutli, surrounded on all sides but one by rocks and trees. By steps cut among the crevices of the rocks, and by ladders suspended from the cliffs, the leaders of the people are hastening to join the national gathering. A lake shines in the background, and in the