

second arrow was for thee, and be sure I would not have missed my mark a second time." Gessler, transported with rage and terror, ordered him to be bound and he himself would convey him across the lake to a prison. A frightful storm arising, Gessler was obliged to let Tell be loosened, that he by his skillful steering might save his own warders. Tell guided the vessel to the foot of the great Axemburg, where a ledge of rocks distinguished to-day as Tell's platform, presented itself as the only possible landing-place for barges around. Here seizing his crossbow, he escaped by a daring leap, leaving the skiff to wrestle its way in the billows. Gessler also escaped, but only to meet a fate more signal from Tell's bow in a narrow pass. Thus, Tell's brave resistance and the death of Gessler precipitated the contemplated popular uprising, and these Cantons were successful in recovering their freedom.

We must, however, distinguish between the legendary Wilhelm Tell of history and fable, and the hero of Schiller's immortal drama. The latter is to us the real character, the impersonation of the heroic soul that will not submit to arbitrary tyranny; the former, we fear must be retrograded to the legendary myths and fables, whose origin is lost in the unrecorded past. Was there then a Wilhelm Tell? Depressing as the fact may be to both students of history and lovers of romance, nevertheless it is but too probable that neither Tell the hero nor Gessler the tyrant ever existed. As far back as 1754 Voltaire had cast a characteristic sneer at the apple story, and later investigations have shown that the same legend of the shooting of an apple from the head of a child is, with trifling variations, found in the Danish history of Saxo Grammaticus in the Norwegian Saga, in an old English ballad, and in the mythologies of Iceland and Persia; all of which prove both its origin and derivation from one common source, and its essentially mythological character. That, however, not only the legends of Tell and his connection with the liberation of the Swiss Cantons, but, also the account of this deliverance from Austrian dominion is in a great measure legendary in its character, has been established beyond question within the last forty years, and is one of the achievements of that sound scientific criticism which in our age has begun to be applied to historical and philological researches. Nevertheless the Swiss even yet cling to the old apple story, and as late as 1890 a tumult was raised in Uri by the publication of a school history which did not mention Tell or the Rutli oath.

The idea of writing a historical drama on the subject of Wilhelm Tell and the revolt of the forest Cantons was first suggested to Schiller by Goethe who had himself conceived, but not carried out the project of treating the legend of Tell in an epic form. The liberation of the Swiss Cantons from a threatening foreign yoke, interwoven with Tell's famous deed of self-