
THE STORY OF WILLIAM TELL

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and no amount of talking will ever persuade the public that the number is large.

My opinion of English schools is, that, in the study of the Classics, they are far in advance of ours ; but that, in orderly government, general arrangements, and in effectiveness, they are not equal to our own. I shall have occasion to dwell more upon them at some future time.

W. L. G.

THE STORY OF WILLIAM TELL.

[From Zschokke's *History of Switzerland*.]

KING ALBERT informed the Confederates in the Waldstatten, that he wished to have them as dear children of his royal house, and that they would do well to place themselves under the protection of Austria, as faithful subjects ; that he would make them rich by fiefs, knighthoods, and booty. But when the mountaineers replied that they much preferred to remain in the ancient rights of their fathers, and in immediate dependence on the empire, he sent to them, as imperial bailiffs, severe and wicked men from his own territory, to oppress and harass them, that they might be desirous to detach themselves from the empire, and put themselves under the sovereignty of the house of Austria. He sent Hermann Gessler of Brunegg and the knight Beringer of Landenberg. They did as imperial bailiffs had never before done, and took up their abode in the land. Landenberg went to the king's castle, near Sarnen in Obwalden, and Gessler built for himself a tower in the country of Uri. The taxes were increased, the smallest offences punished by imprisonment and heavy fines, the country-people treated with haughtiness and contempt. Gessler, passing on horseback before Stauffacher's new house, in the village of Steinen, cried out insultingly, "Shall peasants be allowed to build so finely ?" And when Arnold Anderhalden, of Melchthal, in Unterwalden, was condemned for some slight offence to lose a yoke of fine oxen, Landenberg's servant took the oxen from the plough and said, "Peasants may draw the plough themselves." But young Arnold, irritated by this insult, struck the servant and broke two of his fingers. Then he fled into the mountains. In revenge, Landenberg put out both the eyes of Arnold's old father.

Whoever, on the contrary, adhered to the bailiff and did his will, was treated with indulgence and was always in the right. But all did not escape, who, trusting in the protection of the bailiff, thought themselves entitled to do evil ; and, as there was no longer any justice to be had in the land, each man helped himself, and this occasioned many disorders. But the

bailiffs laughed and persisted in their tyranny; they not only trod under foot the chartered franchises of the people, sanctioned by emperors and kings, but disregarded the everlasting right to life which God has given to every man.

While the oppressors laughed, and the oppressed groaned in the valley of the Waldstatten, the wife of Werner Stauffacher, in the village of Steinen, said to her husband: "How long shall the oppressors laugh and the oppressed groan? Shall foreigners be masters of this soil, and heirs of our property? What are the men of the mountains good for? Must we mothers nurse beggars at our bosoms, and bring up maid-servants for foreigners? Let there be an end to this!"

Thereupon Warner Stauffacher, without a word, went down to Brunnen on the lake, and over the water to Uri, to Walter Furst, in Attinghausen. With him he found concealed Arnold of Melchthal, who had fled across the mountain from the wrath of Landenberg.

They talked of the misery of their country, and of the cruelty of the foreign bailiffs whom the king had sent to them, in contempt of their hereditary franchises and liberties. They also called to mind that they had in vain appealed against the tyranny of the bailiffs before the king, and that the latter had threatened to compel them, in spite of the seals and charters of former emperors and kings, to separate from the empire and submit to Austria; that God had given to no king the right to commit injustice; that they had no hope but in God and their own courage, and that death was much more desirable than so shameful a yoke. They therefore resolved that each should talk with trustworthy and courageous men in his own district, to ascertain the disposition of the people, and what they would undertake for security and liberty.

Subsequently, as they had agreed, they met frequently by night, at a secret place on the lake. It lay about midway between Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, in a small bushy meadow at the foot of the rocks of Seelisberg, opposite the little village of Brunnen. It is called Rutli, from the clearing of bushes; there they were far from all human habitations. Soon each brought the joyful news that death was more desirable to all the people than so shameful a yoke.

When, on the night of 17th of November, 1307, they came together, and each of the Three had brought with him to the meadow of the Rutli, ten true and honorable men, determined to hold the ancient liberty of their fatherland before all, and life as nothing, the pious Three raised their hands to the starry heavens, and swore to God the Lord, before whom kings and peasants are equal, faithfully to live and to die for the rights of the innocent people; to undertake and carry through every thing in unision and not separately; to permit no injustice, but

also to commit no injustice ; to respect the rights and property of the counts of Habsburg, and do no harm to the imperial bailiffs, but also to prevent the bailiffs from ruining the country. And the thirty others raised their hands and took the oath, like the Three, to God and all the saints, manfully to assert liberty ; and they appointed New Year's night for the work. Then they separated ; each returned to his valley and to his cabin, and tended his cattle.

The bailiff, Hermann Gessler, was not easy, because he had an evil conscience. It seemed to him that the people began to raise their heads, and to show more boldness. Therefore he set the ducal hat of Austria upon a pole in Uri, and ordered that every one who passed before it should do it reverence. By this means he wished to discover who was opposed to Austria.

And William Tell, the archer of Burglen, one of the men of Rutli, passed before it, but he did not bow. He was immediately carried to the bailiff, who angrily said, "Insolent archer ! I will punish thee by means of thine own craft ; I will place an apple on the head of thy little son ; shoot it off and fail not !" And they bound the child and placed an apple on his head, and led the archer far away. He took aim. The bowstring twanged. The arrow pierced the apple. All the people shouted for joy. But Gessler said to the archer, "Why didst thou take a second arrow ?" Tell answered, "If the first had not pierced the apple, the second would assuredly have pierced thy heart."

This terrified the bailiff, and he ordered the archer to be seized and carried to a boat in which he was himself about to embark for Kussnacht. He did not think it prudent to imprison Tell in Uri, on account of the people ; but to drag him into foreign captivity was contrary to the privileges of the country. Therefore the bailiff feared an assemblage of the people, and hastily departed, in spite of a strong head wind. The sea rose, and the waves dashed foaming over the boat, so that all were alarmed, and the boatmen disheartened. The further they went on the lake, the greater was the danger of death ; for the steep mountains rose from the abyss of waters like walls to heaven. In great anxiety, Gessler ordered the fetters to be removed from Tell, that he, an experienced steersman, might take the helm. But Tell steered towards the bare flank of the Axenberg, where a naked rock projects, like a small shelf, into the lake. There was a shock, a spring. Tell was on the rock, the boat out about the lake.

The freed man climbed the mountain, and fled across the land of Schwyz ; and he thought in his troubled heart, " Whither can I fly from the wrath of the tyrant ? Even if I escape from his pursuit, he has my wife and child in my house as hostages. What may not Gessler do to my family, when Landenberg put

out the eyes of the old man of Melchthal on account of a servant's broken fingers? Where is the judgment-seat before which I can cite Gessler, when the king himself no longer listens to the complaints of the people? As law has no authority, and there is no one to judge between thee and me, thou and I, Gessler, are both without law, and self-preservation is our only judge. Either my innocent wife and child and fatherland must fall, or, bailiff Gessler, thou! Fall thou, therefore, and let liberty reign!"

So thought Tell, and, with bow and arrow, fled towards Kussnacht, and hid in the hollow way near the village. Thither came the bailiff; there the bowstring twanged; there the free arrow pierced the tyrant's heart.

The whole people shouted for joy when they learnt the death of their oppressor. Tell's deed increased their courage; but the night of the New Year had not yet come.

A SCOTTISH SCHOOL FIFTY YEARS SINCE.

[From Hugh Miller's Autobiography.]

I QUITTED the dame's school at the end of the first twelve-month, after mastering that grand acquirement of my life,—the art of holding converse with books; and was transferred straightforth to the grammar school of the parish, at which there attended at the time about a hundred and twenty boys, with a class of about thirty individuals more, much looked down upon by the others, and not deemed greatly worth the counting, seeing that it consisted of only *lassies*. And here, too, the early individual development seems nicely correspondent with an early national one. In his depreciatory estimate of contemporary woman, the boy is always a true savage. The old parish school of the place had been nobly situated in a snug corner, between the parish churchyard and a thick wood; and from the interesting centre which it formed, the boys, when tired of making dragon-horses of the erect head-stones, or of leaping along the flat-laid memorials, from end to end of the graveyard, "without touching grass," could repair to the taller trees, and rise in the world by climbing among them. As, however, they used to encroach, on these latter occasions, upon the laird's pleasure grounds, the school had been removed ere my time to the sea-shore; where, though there were neither tombstones nor trees, there were some balancing advantages, of a kind which, perhaps, only boys of the old school could have adequately appreciated. As the school-windows fronted the opening of the Frith, not a vessel could enter the harbor that we did not see; and, improving through our opportunities,