

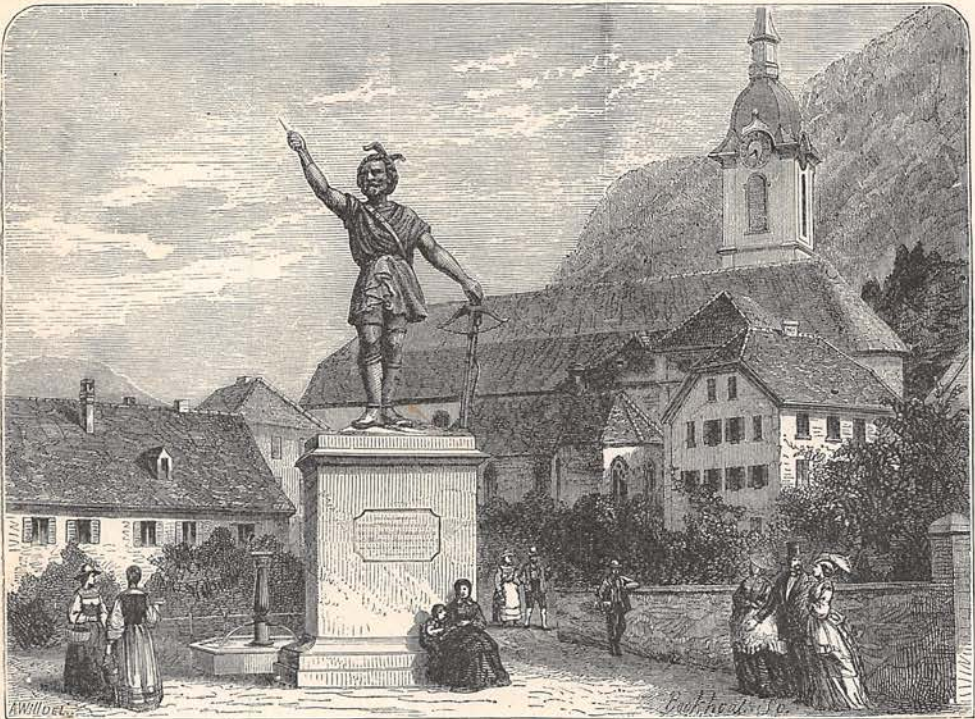
ALTORF AND WILLIAM TELL.

BY EMMA D. SOUTHWICK.

HAVE all the ST. NICHOLAS boys and girls heard of William Tell? And if they have, do they know where he lived when he shot the apple from his son's head? Perhaps some of you are ready to exclaim, "Oh yes! we know it was in Switzerland;" but yet you may not know much about it, after all.

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STATUE OF WILLIAM TELL AT ALTORF. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.)

Now if you will come with me to Lake Lucerne, we will visit the very place where he played, as a boy, over 500 years ago; and first, at Burglen, about two and a-half miles from the lower end of the lake, we find the spot where he was born. If we go into the little chapel there, known as Tell's Chapel, we shall see rude pictures of scenes in his career, which keep his memory alive among the people. When you are told that he was a farmer, and had charge of the lands connected with a rich abbey, you will no doubt wonder how it happened that one leading such a quiet life should become so famous that people to this day should read about him with interest. It is because he was a true pa-

triot, and loved his liberty and that of his country better than anything else. The Swiss were then under the rule of Austria; and Rudolph of Hapsburg, the German Emperor, aimed to bring all Europe under his own control. Through him and his sons, fighting was kept up for 200 years with Switzerland, in the hope to make it a part of Austria; but the Swiss had determined to become free; and as Tell had married a daughter of Walter Furst, who was a true patriot, he joined with others in opposing Gessler, a tyrant who was placed over them as a Governor, and who, knowing that the people hated Austria, caused poles to be raised in the principal towns, and the Ducal hat of Austria to be hung upon them, commanding that every person who passed should uncover the head, in token of respect for their Governor.

So it happened that one of these poles was planted in Altorf, only a short distance from Tell's home; and going into town one day to market, he passed

the hat without noticing it. This was enough. Tell was arrested and taken before Gessler, who, at first, condemned him to death, but on hearing that he was skillful with his bow, ordered that, to redeem his life, he should shoot an apple from his son's head in the public square of Altorf.

This was a dreadful thing for Tell to attempt, for he might kill his dear little boy; and he begged to be released from it; but there was no escape. Gessler would not change the form of punishment; so at the appointed time Tell stood on the very spot now occupied by the statue which you see in the picture, while, about forty rods from him, the boy was tied to a lime-tree, and the apple placed upon his head.

We are told that the little fellow was so brave and so confident of his father's skill that he inspired him with courage. Then, asking God to direct the arrow for his son's safety, Tell let it fly. Seeing that it pierced the apple, and that his boy was unhurt, he ran to him, caught him in his arms, and in his joy forgot a concealed arrow which he had taken with him, determined to shoot Gessler if the boy fell. When this arrow was seen, and Tell confessed what he had intended to do with it, he was placed in chains, and taken to Flulen (two miles from Altorf), where Gessler's boat lay on the lake. Into this boat the tyrant forced his prisoner, intending to shut him up in the prison-castle of Kusnacht, but they had not gone far when a sudden storm came on, which so startled Gessler that he ordered Tell's chains to be taken off, so that he might manage the boat and take them safely to the shore.

Tell seized the rudder; but for himself, not Gessler; for as the boat neared a projecting headland he sprang ashore and pushed it off into the surf again, then rushing on, he hid in a ravine through which Gessler had to pass on his way to Kusnacht, and shot him with the very arrow that he had set apart for the deed. The spot on the lake shore where he landed is marked by a small chapel, which was consecrated to his memory in 1388, thirty-four years after his death. It is said that one hundred and fourteen persons who knew him were present on the occasion, although some writers are trying to prove now that there never was such a person as William Tell, and that the story of the apple is all a fable. However that may be, the Swiss peasants love the name of Tell so much that they have many statues of him in many of their villages.

Not far from Tell's Chapel, and near the opposite shore, a grand pyramid of rock rises straight from the water. This natural monument has been dedi-

cated by the Swiss to the memory of the German poet Schiller, who wrote a play founded upon the life of William Tell. The rock bears this inscription, in large gilded letters:

DEM SÄNGER TELLS,
FRIEDRICH SCHILLER,
DIE URKANTONE,
1860.

and travelers who visit the spot are impressed with the beautiful thought of these people who grasped this everlasting outgrowth of nature and consecrated it to their hero and his poet.

Every year, the first Sunday after Ascension, the people from all the towns around come to Tell's Chapel in steamers gayly decorated and multitudes of small boats with all the Swiss flags flying. Their bright Swiss costumes and the gay music make it a lively scene indeed. The bishops and priests come too, and spend some time in services here.

Then they go on a little farther, and stop at Rütli, on the opposite shore—a pretty green meadow enclosed, except on the water side, by a steep mountain, which rises nearly seven hundred feet above the lake; for here, one dark night in November, 1307, thirty-three men, real patriots, met, and bound themselves by an oath to fight for the freedom of their native land. Three fountains now mark the places where they believe the leaders stood. Here the peasants gather and “drink healths” from the waters, and towards night go on to Altorf, where the people are ready to receive them with streamers and mottoes waving from their windows; arches and wreaths span the streets, and young people in groups sing songs of welcome. Ah! *such* crowds as fill this little ancient town on that day! Why, they really seem to bring the queer old houses and narrow streets to life. And around this great statue, which was presented to Altorf by the riflemen of Zurich, they hold their grand festivities, while in the church which you see near by, masses are said. Here the people attend in vast crowds. They do not forget, either, the spot where the boy stood. Although the lime-tree died long ago, a fountain stands in its place. An old tower near by bears on its sides paintings of the “Flight of the Arrow,” “Tell's Leap from the Boat,” and the “Death of Gessler.” Here fathers and mothers tell the old story again and again to their little ones. My story is growing long, but I think I hear some bright boy saying, “Please don't stop till you tell us if the Swiss patriots *did* make their country free.” And I answer, yes. Two hundred years after the meeting at Rütli the whole of Switzerland was independent of Germany, and free it has been ever since.