IN "William Tell" Schiller dramatizes the national hero of Switzerland, and the Swiss have always been grateful to the German poet for having given a final shape to the saga of the liberty-loving archer. The drama is based upon a legend which was localized in Switzerland about two hundred years after the incidents with which it has become associated. The legend itself is an ancient myth, and folklorists have gathered evidences that prove it to be the last echo of a primitive practice in which a human sacrifice had to be offered to the gods, but was given a chance of being ransomed by the dexterity and courage of a deliverer, who at the risk of his own life would be allowed to liberate the victim out of the clutches of death by his prowess and his skill in archery. Among some savage tribes this custom is still represented in dramatic performances in which both the offering of the sacrifice and its liberation have been changed into a religious ritual or a popular feast.

We may add that critics have always admired the poet's imagination in picturing in his drama not only the character of the Swiss, but also the details of the scenery of Switzerland, which is the more remarkable since Schiller had never set foot on Swiss ground, and yet his ideas of the country are as perfect as if he had been a native son of the Swiss mountains.

The spirit of the mountaineers is well characterized in a poem sung by Walter, Tell's little son, hence called "Walter's Song," which reads in an English translation thus:* 

*The first and third stanzas are from Bowring's translation, and the second is the author's version.
"Bow and arrow bearing,
Over hills and streams
Moves the hunter daring,
Soon as daylight gleams.

"Like a king, the eagle
Realms of air surveys;
Hunter so with beagle,
Crag and mountain sways.

"Over space he reigneth,
And he makes his prize
All his bolt attaineth,
All that creeps or flies."

Facsimile of Schiller’s Handwriting.
Walther’s Lied.

The drama “William Tell” treats again the ideal of liberty and the struggle for independence against tyranny.

Switzerland is oppressed by Emperor Albrecht I, who wants to add the country of the free mountaineers to his own private dominion. The spirit of rebellion spreads from the hearts of a few men who have suffered wrong and pledge their honor by an oath of fidelity to the cause of freedom. Tell, however, keeps aloof; he can not be induced to join a conspiracy; though he is a ready deliverer of the oppressed in time of need. When others refuse assistance on account of the raging storm, Tell ferries a fugitive
over the lake through the foaming billows and rescues him from the wrath of Gessler, the imperial governor.

In the meantime Tell, himself, falls into the hands of the tyrant's mercenaries by heedlessly passing by the hat put up on a staff for salutation without bowing to this emblem of despotism. Gessler happens to pass by and promises the offender his life if he should shoot the apple from the head of his little son Walter. With great reluctance Tell yields to the request, but takes out two arrows.

Having accomplished the famous shot, he confesses that the second arrow was destined for the tyrant's heart, if the first one by accident should have hit his child. Thereupon the governor has Tell arrested and carried over the lake to the dungeon of his stronghold, Küssnacht. A storm comes up and the oarsmen despair. The man at the helm declares that Tell alone can save the ship. So the prisoner is unbound and steers the boat through the surge around the famous point of the rocky bank, now called Tell's Ledge. At the moment
when they pass the dangerous spot he quickly seizes his bow and quiver and leaps ashore, with his foot throwing the boat back into the lake. Now at last in self-defense he is forced to turn against the tyrant and he shoots him in the hollow road that leads to Küssnacht.
THE SHOT AT THE APPLE.
At the same time the Swiss peasants take the several castles of their usurpers, and the venerable Baron Attinghausen, too old to take part in the war for liberty, rejoices to hear the good tidings.

With his last breath he exhorts the people to unity, and his words: "Seid einig, einig, einig!" become to them a sacred heritage.
Schiller's drama "William Tell" has always been one of the favorite dramas of the German public although it has been officially prohibited at the Royal Theater of Berlin, because it might spread the spirit of rebellion among the people. But it may be confidently asserted that the old narrow-mindedness and the fear of Schiller's love for liberty has passed away, making room for a due (and let
us hope a lasting) appreciation of the great poet and his ideals. The
imputation that Schiller is an anarchist is wrong, for he is careful
to distinguish between the revolution for a righteous cause, and acts
of lawlessness done for paltry and selfish motives in rebellion against
established authority. A special scene is introduced in which Schil-
ler plainly indicates that he does not wish to encourage assassination
of sovereigns or representatives of authority, and so he contrasts

![Tell and John Parricida](image)

Tell with John Parricida, who assassinated his uncle, Emperor Al-
brechtl (May, 1308), for private and personal reasons.

The "Bride of Messina" is a play in which Schiller reproduces
the old classical drama with its choruses, where fate rules supreme
according to the irrefragable law of cause and effect, and men are
mere puppets of their destiny. The subject-matter of the drama is
the struggle between twin brothers, the princes of Messina, for the
possession of a maiden whom they both love and who finally is
recognized as their own sister. An oracle had foretold that she
would be the cause of their destruction, and the very methods employed by the parents to prevent the misfortune, the concealment of the princess in a nunnery, and the ignorance in which her two brothers are kept about the very existence of their sister, leads to the actualization of their doom. Both brothers find her, love her, fight for her possession and die in combat for her.
THE OPEN COURT.

THE DESPAIR OF THE FRATRICIDE.
Among the plans of new dramas which Schiller intended to elaborate is one entitled "Demetrios" that appears to have been of great promise. It was intended to represent a pretender to the throne of the Czar, who thinks he is the real heir, and who is successful in his fight so long as he is convinced of his right, but the catastrophe sets in when the assassin of the real Demetrios makes himself known to him as the person who had substituted another child for the dead prince and now he threateningly demands his reward of the successful pseudo-Demetrios. This new turn in his
destiny changes the character of the pretender. He quarrels with his benefactor and stabs him. This is the first deed that casts a shadow upon his career. Forthwith he is another man; he has lost faith in himself and others. His ideal, his veracity, his trust in the justice of his cause are gone, and falsehood, cunning, treachery and dark deeds of terrorism take their place preparing his final downfall.

Schiller as a dramatist differs from Shakespeare. While the English poet introduces on the stage characters such as they were or might be in actual life, Schiller superadds thereto his own personality, usually represented by one or two leading characters. Shakespeare is a realist. Schiller himself always speaks through the mouth of his hero or heroine. His dramas preach the gospel of the eternally beautiful, the true, and the good, and some character pronounces Schiller's message to the world in unmistakable language. Shakespeare, to be sure, always preaches moral lessons, but he does it by indirection; the spectator has to make his own application. Shakespeare paints life with all its shadows and bright sides, and rarely, if ever, introduces ideal characters such as Max Piccolomini, or Thecla; while Schiller feels always urged to introduce in some way or other his own ideals voiced by a personality like unto himself.

We will not criticize here, but allow each poet to apply his own method and to follow his own inclination. Either way is perfectly justified; but we wish to insist on the greatness of Schiller who, together with Shakespeare and Goethe, must be recognized as one of the greatest dramatists of the world.

**A SUGGESTION FOR THE AMERICAN STAGE.**

America does not yet possess a national drama. All productions which have so far passed over the American stage are mere business enterprises, being written for the purpose of making money. What we need is a drama of character written by a poet who will hold up to the nation the eternal ideals in a similar spirit and with the same seriousness as did the great dramatists of the past, Shakespeare, Goethe and Schiller.

The stage can become a religious institution; it ought to be (as Lessing wanted it) a pulpit from which the poet speaks to the people, proclaiming the gospel of art, the religion of truth, of goodness, of beauty. A true poet is a preacher, a teacher and an educator. Schiller has been such to the German nation, and let us hope that he will find a successor in the new world worthy of pursuing the same aim and accomplishing the same kind of work on a larger
scale for the people of the future destined to actualize the next higher stage in the evolution of mankind.

We will not finish this article without making a suggestion to our wealthy fellow-citizens, if happily there be one among them who might feel in his soul the noble aspiration to become a Maecenas of dramatic art. What is sorely needed in our national development is a stage supported by a sufficient donation so as to be absolutely independent of financial success, destined to serve the highest ideal of genuine art. Our public is willing to support that which is good, and would gladly lend a hand, but they are too easily misguided by the mercantile press reviews of theatrical affairs, and so the manager of a stage has to offer what is wanted, not what is needed. He has to heed the taste of the masses, not of the few worthy to judge, the few presenting a spiritual aristocracy. The result is that a great poet would not be encouraged while the frivolous trifler with showy attractions is always sure of success. Shakespeare still draws because he has the name and the fame. Our public are willing to see his dramas because they are convinced that they are good. But if a new Shakespeare would rise, still unknown and untried, he would have a hard time to find recognition and he would have to adapt himself to the requirements of the present age; he must cater to the taste of the masses. An endowed stage could bring before the public the products of a genius who would address himself to the elect few and having passed the ordeal of competent criticism would then easily find also the applause of the masses.

Germany would never have developed that unusual wealth of literature so brilliantly represented by Goethe and Schiller, had not geniuses been fostered and protected by German princes. If our civilization shall be worthy of the great hope that we have of its future, if it shall surpass the culture of the old world and rise superior to the great achievements of the past we must adopt the methods that have proved beneficial in former days. We must guide the people, educate the artistic judgment of the public, and give genius a chance to assert itself.