

POWER POLITICS AND AN OPERA

The Legend Behind Switzerland

THE Swiss are not a rich people. There are four million of them living in a country whose 16,000-odd square miles of area is one-quarter totally unproductive. Although their worldly riches are comparatively well distributed—there are 200,000 peasant proprietors—their individual incomes are not large and depend almost entirely on their own hard work. In spite of their industry in making textiles, dairy products, machinery, and clocks for export, their foreign financial transactions are those of a debtor nation, and much of their overseas exchange depends on the fluctuating tourist industry.

But in other matters the Swiss are better endowed than almost any other people in the world. Their freedom, their independence, their national spirit, their communal political organisations, make—or until a month ago made—Switzerland a stronghold of democracy; stubbornly, almost miraculously, surviving, although quite surrounded by totalitarianism.

Germany locks it in to the north and east, France to the west and south, Italy to the south. And yet Switzerland survives as the home of the International Red Cross, as the sanctuary of refugees, as the home of the late League of Nations, and as a world example of people with different languages and diverse racial origins living in co-operation without futile talk of minorities or the quackery of schoolboy ethnology.

How does it come about that all these people, speaking four main different languages, are able to live with the motto "each for all and all for each"?

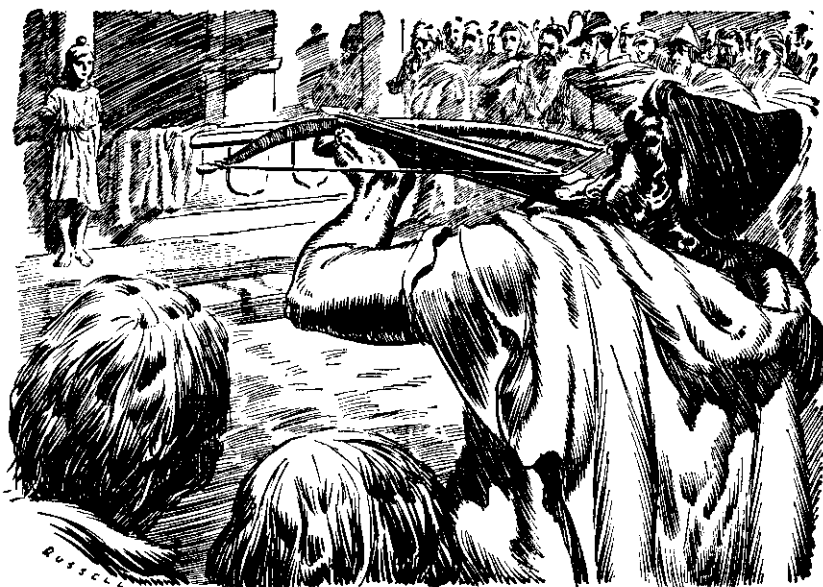
One of the answers will be heard from 4YA Dunedin on Sunday, October 20, in the "Music from the Theatre" series which features Rossini's opera "William Tell."

Fight for Independence

Before the Birth of Christ the country that later became Switzerland was populated by the Celtic Helvetians and by the Rhaetii. In 15 B.C. their lands were incorporated in the Roman Empire under Augustus. By the seventh century they had been conquered again by Burgundians and Germans and were under the domination of the Frank kings. As part of the Holy Roman Empire, Switzerland came under Rudolph of Habsburg, and it was after his death in 1291 that the first bases of the Swiss confederacy were established. The inhabitants of three districts took advantage of disorder in the Empire to unite for independence. Their efforts were directed mainly against the Habsburg bailiffs and their success paved the way for a series of uprisings, and internal dissensions, which ended finally in 1874, with the acceptance of the constitution in existence at present, whereby local government is performed by communes which work under a system of federated cantons.

Legend of William Tell

It was in the thirteenth century that the risings took place which produced



THE ARROW AND THE APPLE: Our artist illustrates the central situation of the William Tell legend. Rossini's opera based on the story is featured in 4YA's programme for Sunday, October 20

the legend of William Tell. Schiller's "William Tell" is founded on the legend. Rossini's opera relates the story too.

Tell is such a popular figure that we have almost adopted his story into our own mythology, in the fine company of Robin Hood, Sir Launcelot, and King Arthur.

The story of Tell's arrow and the apple on his son's head is as well known to us as the tale of the cakes that Alfred burned, and that unforgettable date, 1066. But probably few know that the actual incident when Tell shoots the arrow to win freedom for himself and his son from the tyrant bailiff, Gesler, is incorporated in Rossini's opera.

Tell is recognised as a man of revolutionary spirit. Gesler takes him captive but promises him freedom if he hits the apple. Tell succeeds in a test of skill which every man and boy who has ever pulled a bow recognises as just about as severe as anything Gesler could have devised. It is then discovered that Tell had another arrow ready for Gesler in case the first killed his son. He is imprisoned, but escapes and wins freedom for his people by shooting Gesler.

Listeners will find that Rossini's music suits his theme, whether it is the spirit of the independent Swiss he is describing or the beauty of their country. He provides a sort of theme song for our own times.



TRUMPETER T. W. BROWN
As he was in 1899

First Shots In South Africa

IT was remarked the other day that the first New Zealander to be killed in action in the war of 1914-18 fell on the banks of the Suez Canal in defending it against a raid on Egypt by Turkish forces, and that the first member of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to be killed in action in the present war fell in the same theatre of war, defending Egypt from an Italian attack. But there was still another war in Africa in which New Zealanders fought and fell for the Empire.

The South African War was a good many years ago, and the years since then have been filled with the clamour and tragedy of greater events, but it is worth recalling that the first New Zealand Expeditionary Force to be sent abroad did not sail in 1914, but went away on October 21, 1899. Perhaps public knowledge of the South African war would be greater than it is if there were a fairly full official history of it. Journalists and historians know, however, that it is sometimes not easy to come by even simple facts about New Zealand's part in that struggle. New Zealand sent away more than six thousand men to the South African War in ten contingents.

The fighting in South Africa was on a much smaller scale than in the war of 1914-18, but New Zealand's participation in it was part of our history, and we have still with us many men of that first contingent who sailed away 41 years ago. These men saw the first shots fired by New Zealanders in an overseas campaign. Moreover, one of them, Arthur Wiffen of Wellington, carried the first order ever issued to New Zealand troops overseas sending them into action.

T. W. Brown of Wellington, who has worked so hard in the interests of South African veterans, was trumpeter to the officer commanding No. 1 Company of the First Contingent, and saw the first engagement in which New Zealanders took part. Mr. Brown has recorded his memories of this first engagement and the subsequent fighting in which the first New Zealander, Trooper Bradford, fell. And he has brought Mr. Wiffen to the microphone to describe how he carried that first order. Then we also have a description from Mr. Brown of the fighting on New Zealand Hill where Captain Madocks, as he was then, behaved so gallantly in rallying the Yorkshires and leading the New Zealanders in a charge. This charge was really a very small affair, but it was notable as showing the moral effect of the bayonet, and it was widely noted



CAPT. W. R. N. MADOCKS
(Now Brig-General Madocks)

among military men for that reason. Lieutenant J. G. Hughes, now Colonel Hughes, C.M.G., D.S.O., known to a very wide circle as "Jackie," took part in that bayonet charge on New Zealand Hill, and he is to tell the story of that day.

These two talks will be heard from 2YA under the title of "First Shots in South Africa," on Friday, October 25, and the following Friday, November 1,