



## apple and arrow

IN the 1300s, in one of the high forest villages of Switzerland, lived a mountaineer named William Tell. He was very strong and able, and could shoot an arrow from his bow with great accuracy.

Tell's village of Altorf was in a parish – known as a *canton* – governed by a vindictive and cruel Austrian called Hermann Gessler.

Legend has it that Gessler placed his hat on a high pole in Altorf's market-place and demanded that all villagers bow to it as they walked past. One day, with his small son, Walter, at his side, William Tell was in the market but refused to bow to the hat on the pole. He was arrested by the governor's militia.

Gessler said he would only release William if he could shoot an apple from young Walter's head. He secretly hoped that William would tremble as he released the arrow from his bow and kill the child. But William took careful aim and split the apple on his son's head with a single shot.

William became a hero, and in the battle that followed Gessler and his henchmen were defeated.

Thanks to an apple and a bowman's skill, this legend gave rise to the fierce independence for which modern Switzerland is known.