

Young Folks.

The Three Horse Shoes: OR MARSHAL DE SAXE AND THE DUTCH BLACKSMITH.

Maurice de Saxe was a son of the King of Saxony, and a fine lad he was—tall and strong and handsome, and as brave as a lion.

Now, at that time there was always a war going on somewhere or other, and the French armies were fighting in every part of Europe; and the king cared very little who his officers were, or where they came from, if they were only brave men and clever fighters.

Curiously enough, the one thing that this great general specially prized himself upon was neither his skill in warfare nor his favor at court, but simply his strength.

Now, it happened that, one day, while the French and German armies were laying pretty close to each other, Marshal de Saxe sent a message to the enemy's camp, asking some of the German officers to dine with him.

"Can your Honor unroll that dish again?" asked he, handing it to the German, and although the general was a strong man, and tried his best, he found the task too hard for him, and was forced to own himself beaten.

"Your Excellency's strength is very great," said he, "but, nevertheless, I venture to think that there is one man in Flanders who can match it."

"And who may he be?" asked Saxe, frowning.

"A blacksmith in the village of Scheveningen, Dirk Hogan by name. All the country around knows of his exploits; and when I met with him myself, I saw such things as I should have thought impossible, had my own eyes witnessed them."

"The moment he heard this, he looked blacker than ever; and the first thing he did next morning was to send off messengers in every direction to inquire for a village called Scheveningen, and a man named Dirk Hogan. And, sure enough, some of them came back with news that there was such a village, and that Dirk Hogan, the smith, had been living there quite lately; but that he had sold his forge and gone away, and nobody knew what had become of him."

"This was a decided disappointment to our friend Saxe; but he had something else to think of just then. The enemy's army had recently received strong reinforcements, and seemed inclined to attack him; and he was riding out one morning to reconnoiter their position, when suddenly his horse stumbled and cast a shoe.

"There's a villain just ahead of us, your Excellency," said one of the officers. "Shall I ride on and see if I can find a blacksmith?"

"Do so," answered Saxe; and the officer came back presently to say that he had found what he wanted. So the horse was led up to the door of the smithy, and the smith himself came out to have a look at it.

"The moment he appeared, the marshal fastened his eyes upon him as if he would look him right through. And well he might; for this smith was such a man as one does not see every day—very nearly as tall as Saxe himself, and even broader across the shoulders, while upon his bare arms the huge muscles stood out under the tanned skin like coils of rope. The marshal felt at once that he could never be defeated till he had had a trial of strength with this sturdy-looking fellow; so he bade him bring out one of his best horse shoes.

"The smith did so, and Saxe, looking at it said quietly: "This was your horse's shoe, was it not?"

"Yes, your Honor," said the smith, and he took it up and examined it with a look at once that he could never be defeated till he had had a trial of strength with this sturdy-looking fellow; so he bade him bring out one of his best horse shoes.

"Come," said he, "I see it's no use picking and choosing among such a trashy lot; give me the first shoe that comes to hand, and we'll cry quits."

"The smith produced a fourth shoe, and fitted it on; and Saxe tossed him a French dollar—a coin about the size of a silver dollar. The Dutchman held it up to the light, and shook his head.

"This coin of yours, is it not my metal, my dear?" said he, saying the words just as the marshal had spoken his. "It won't stand work. Look here!"

"He took the coin between his finger and thumb, and with one pinch cracked it in two like a wafer.

"It was your horse's shoe that I meant; and the officers exchanged winks behind his back, as much as to say their champion had been broken by the smith. Saxe brought out another crown, and then a third; but the smith served them in like manner.

"Come," said he, imitating the marshal's voice to perfection, "I see it's no use picking and choosing among such a trashy lot. Give me the first crown that comes to hand, and we'll cry quits."

"The Frenchman looked at the Dutchman—and then both burst into a roar of laughter, so loud and hearty that the officers who stood by could not help joining in.

"Fairly quizzed!" cried the marshal, suddenly, and added, "What's your name, my fine fellow?"

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