The boots of buffalo-leather

A soldier who is afraid of nothing, troubles himself about nothing. One of this kind had received his discharge, and as he had learnt no trade and could earn nothing, he travelled about and begged alms of kind people. He had an old waterproof on his back, and a pair of riding-boots of buffalo-leather which were still left to him. One day he was walking he knew not where, straight out into the open country, and at length came to a forest. He did not know where he was, but saw sitting on the trunk of a tree, which had been cut down, a man who was well dressed and wore a green shooting-coat. The soldier shook hands with him, sat down on the grass by his side, and stretched out his legs. "I see thou hast good boots on, which are well blacked," said he to the huntsman; "but if thou hadst to travel about as I have, they would not last long. Look at mine, they are of buffalo-leather, and have been worn for a long time, but in them I can go through thick and thin." After a while the soldier got up and said, "I can stay no longer, hunger drives me onwards; but, Brother Bright-boots, where does this road lead to?" - "I don't know that myself," answered the huntsman, "I have lost my way in the forest." - "Then thou art in the same plight as I," said the soldier; "birds of a feather flock together, let us remain together, and seek our way." The huntsman smiled a little, and they walked on further and further, until night fell. "We do not get out of the forest," said the soldier, "but there in the distance I see a light shining, which will help us to something to eat." They found a stone house, knocked at the door, and an old woman opened it. "We are looking for quarters for the night," said the soldier, "and some lining for our stomachs, for mine is as empty as an old knapsack." - "You cannot stay here," answered the old woman; "this is a robber's house, and you would do wisely to get away before they come home, or you will be lost." - "It won't be so bad as that," answered the soldier, "I have not had a mouthful for two days, and whether I am murdered here or die of hunger in the forest is all the same to me. I shall go in." The huntsman would not follow, but the soldier drew him in with him by the sleeve. "Come, my dear brother, we shall not come to an end so quickly as that!" The old woman had pity on them and said, "Creep in here behind the stove, and if they leave anything, I will give it to you on the sly when they are asleep." Scarcely were they in the corner before twelve robbers came bursting in, seated themselves at the table which was already laid, and vehemently demanded some food. The old woman brought in some great dishes of roast meat, and the robbers enjoyed that thoroughly. When the smell of the food ascended the nostrils of the soldier, he said to the huntsman, "I cannot hold out any longer, I shall seat myself at the table, and eat with them." thou wilt bring us to destruction," said the huntsman, and held him back by the arm. But the soldier began to cough loudly. When the robbers heard that, they threw away their knives and forks, leapt up, and discovered the two who were behind the stove. "Aha, gentlemen, are you in the corner?" cried they, "What are you doing here? Have you been sent as spies? Wait a while, and you shall learn how to fly on a dry bough." - "But do be civil," said the soldier, "I am hungry, give me something to eat, and then you can do what you like with me." The robbers were astonished, and the captain said, "I see that thou hast no fear; well, thou shalt have some food, but after that thou must die." - "We shall see," said the soldier, and seated himself at the table, and began to cut away valiantly at the roast meat. "Brother Brightboots, come and eat," cried he to the huntsman; "thou must be as hungry as I am, and cannot have better roast meat at home," but the huntsman would not eat. The robbers looked at the soldier in astonishment, and said, "The rascal uses no ceremony." After a while he said, "I have had enough food, now get me something good to drink." The captain was in the mood to humour him in this also, and called to the old woman, "Bring a bottle out of the cellar, and mind it be of the best." The soldier drew the cork out with a loud noise, and then went with the bottle to the huntsman and said, "Pay attention, brother, and thou shalt see something that will surprise thee; I am now going to drink the health of the whole clan." Then he brandished the bottle over the heads of the robbers, and cried, "Long life to you all, but with your mouths open and your right hands lifted up," and then he drank a hearty draught. Scarcely were the words said than they all sat motionless as if made of stone, and their mouths were open and their right

hands stretched up in the air. The huntsman said to the soldier, "I see that thou art acquainted with tricks of another kind, but now come and let us go home." - "Oho, my dear brother, but that would be marching away far too soon; we have conquered the enemy, and must first take the booty. Those men there are sitting fast, and are opening their mouths with astonishment, but they will not be allowed to move until I permit them. Come, eat and drink." The old woman had to bring another bottle of the best wine, and the soldier would not stir until he had eaten enough to last for three days. At last when day came, he said, "Now it is time to strike our tents, and that our march may be a short one, the old woman shall show us the nearest way to the town." When they had arrived there, he went to his old comrades, and said, "Out in the forest I have found a nest full of gallows' birds, come with me and we will take it." The soldier led them, and said to the huntsman, "Thou must go back again with me to see how they shake when we seize them by the feet." He placed the men round about the robbers, and then he took the bottle, drank a mouthful, brandished it above them, and cried, "Live again." Instantly they all regained the power of movement, but were thrown down and bound hand and foot with cords. Then the soldier ordered them to be thrown into a cart as if they had been so many sacks, and said, "Now drive them straight to prison." The huntsman, however, took one of the men aside and gave him another commission besides. "Brother Bright-boots," said the soldier, "we have safely routed the enemy and been well fed, now we will quietly walk behind them as if we were stragglers!" When they approached the town, the soldier saw a crowd of people pouring through the gate of the town who were raising loud cries of joy, and waving green boughs in the air. Then he saw that the entire body-guard was coming up. "What can this mean?" said he to the huntsman. "Dost thou not know?" he replied, "that the King has for a long time been absent from his kingdom, and that to-day he is returning, and every one is going to meet him." - "But where is the King?" said the soldier, "I do not see him." - "Here he is," answered the huntsman, "I am the King, and have announced my arrival." Then he opened his hunting-coat, and his royal garments were visible. The soldier was alarmed, and fell on his knees and begged him to forgive him for having in his ignorance treated him as an equal, and spoken to him by such a name. But the King shook hands with him, and said, "Thou art a brave soldier, and hast saved my life. Thou shalt never again be in want, I will take care of thee. And if ever thou wouldst like to eat a piece of roast meat, as good as that in the robber's house, come to the royal kitchen. But if thou wouldst drink a health, thou must first ask my permission."

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