

time, I should think, that one honest Silesian is a match for half a dozen such as you."

"Are you quite sure of that?" asked a deep voice behind him.

The new-comer picked up the little drummer-boy very tenderly, refilled his can from a bucket that stood near, and sent him away rejoicing. Then he came slowly up to the tall Silesian, and looked him full in the face.

Kratsch eyed the stranger, from head to foot, and did not altogether like the looks of him. His dress was nothing very grand, to be sure, being simply the plain green coat of a Russian private, so soiled and threadbare that an old-clothes man would scarcely have taken it as a gift. But he was as tall as Big Michael himself, while his huge limbs and brawny chest made such a show of strength that most people would have thought it much better to shake hands with him than to fight him.

"So," said the green-coated man, quietly, "one Silesian is a match for a half dozen Russians, eh? Well, I can see that he's their match at bragging, anyhow?"

The Russians chuckled at this unexpected hit, and one of them laughed outright. Kratsch's face flushed purple with rage, and for a moment he seemed just about to fly at the speaker's throat. But there was something in the stranger's bearing, and in the calm steadfast glance of his keen, black eye, which cowed the fierce soldier, who drew back with a sullen growl.

"Well," said the Greencoat, quietly, "the Russians have a saying that corn doesn't grow by talking. If you are a match, as you say, for any half-dozen of us, let us see what you can do?"

"Could you throw that stone further than I can?" asked the Silesian, pointing to a heavy stone at his feet.

"I can better answer that when I have seen you throw," said Greencoat, as coolly as ever.

Michael Kratsch threw off his coat, and baring an arm as thick as an ordinary man's knee, hurled the stone seven good yards away.

The unknown threw, in his turn, so carelessly that he seemed hardly to exert himself; yet the stone fell more than a foot beyond Kratsch's mark.

The Russians raised a shout of triumph, and Michael's face grew black as midnight.

"Are you as nimble with your feet as with your hands?" growled he, through his set teeth.

"Try," said Greencoat simply.

Kratsch pointed to a broad ditch a little way behind them, and, taking a short run, shot through the air like an arrow. The ditch was fully fifteen feet wide from bank to bank, yet he alighted several inches beyond it.

"Pretty fair," said the unknown, smiling; "but I think I can match it." And so he did, for his leap overpassed Kratsch's by six inches at least. At the sight of the heavy Russian facing grinning from ear to ear over his discomfiture, the Silesian's eyes flashed fire.

"You haven't done with me yet," he roared, "smart though you think yourself. Dare you wrestle a fall with me?"

Without a word, the stranger threw off his coat and stepped forward.

It was a grand and terrible sight to see the two giants strain their mighty limbs and seize each other with their iron arms, both faces growing suddenly hard and stern as they grappled. Every man among the lookers-on held his breath as that great struggle began.

Thrice did the Silesian make a tremendous effort to throw his enemy with a strength that seemed able to tear up an oak tree by the roots. But the Russian, though shaken, stubbornly kept by his feet, until Kratsch paused, breathless and utterly spent.

Then the watching eyes all around saw the stranger's arms tighten suddenly, and Big Michael's huge, broad back bend slowly in. Furiously, he struggled against the overmastering clutch, but he had no more chance than an ox in the coils of a boa. At last the unknown lifted him fairly off his feet, and hurled him backward with such force that he fell with a dull crash against a large stone behind him, and lay stunned and motionless.

Just then was heard a cry of "There he is! there he is!" and several richly dressed men, running up to the spot, bowed reverently to the green-coated soldier.

"We have been looking for your majesty," said one of them, "to give you these dispatches, which a courier has just brought from Moscow."

At the word "majesty," the Russian recruits all fell on their knees, considerably startled to find that this shabby-coated private was no other