



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Queen Crane

Unknown writer

Once upon a time there was a poor, poor boy. He went to the king and begged to be taken into service as a shepherd, and all called him "Sheep-Peter." While he was herding his sheep, he used to amuse himself with his crossbow. One day he saw a crane sitting in an oak-tree, and wanted to shoot her. The crane, however, hopped down further and further, and at last settled in the lowest branches. Then she said: "If you promise not to shoot me, I will help you whenever you are in trouble. You need only to call out: 'God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!'" With that the bird flew away.

At length war broke out and the king had to take the field. Then Sheep-Peter came to the king and asked whether he might not be allowed to go along to war. They gave him an old nag to ride, and he rode into a swamp along the highway, and there the horse died. So he sat down and clicked with his tongue; but the horse would not move. And the people who rode by had their sport with him; while the youth pretended to feel sad.

When the people had all passed by, the youth went to the oak in which the Queen Crane dwelt. Here he was given a black steed, a suit of brazen armor, and a silver sword. Thus he rode to battle and got there as quickly as he could wish. Then he said: "God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!" With that he killed all the enemy and rode away again. But the king thought that an angel had come to help him, and wanted to hold him back. The youth, however, rode quickly back to the oak, took off his armor, went down to the swamp, and once more began to click to his horse. When the people rode by they laughed and said: "You were not along to-day, so you missed seeing how an angel came and killed all the enemy." And the youth pretended to feel sad, so sad.

The following day the king once more had to take the field. And Sheep-Peter came to him and said he wanted to go along. So they gave him an old nag to ride, and he rode into a swamp beside the highway. Then he sat down and clicked with his tongue; but the horse would not move. When the people rode by they had their sport with him; but the youth pretended to feel sad, so sad. When the people had gone by, he went to the oak in which the Queen Crane dwelt, and was given a white steed, a suit of silver armor, and a golden sword. Thus equipped he rode to battle. When he arrived he said: "God aid me, and Queen

Crane ... and I will succeed!" But he had forgotten to say "stay by me," and so he was shot in the leg. But the king took out his handkerchief, and tied up his leg. Then the youth said once more: "God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!" And he slew all of the enemy. Then the king thought he was an angel from heaven, and wanted to hold him. But the youth rode quickly to the oak, took off his armor, and then went down to his nag in the swamp and tried to get it to move, while the soldiers were passing. They laughed and said: "You were not along to-day, and did not see how an angel came from heaven and killed all of the enemy." The youth pretended to be very sad.

On the third day all happened as before. The king took the field. The youth was given a wretched nag and rode it into a swamp beside the highway. Then he began to click with his tongue but the nag would not go on, and the people who rode past laughed at him. He pretended to feel very sad; but when the people had passed, he went to the oak in which Queen Crane dwelt, and she gave him a red steed, a golden sword, and a golden suit of armor. Thus equipped he rode to war, and all happened as before. He said: "God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!" and slew all the enemy. The king thought he was an angel from heaven and wanted to hold him back by all means; but the youth rode quickly to the oak, took off his armor, and rode down to the swamp where he had his three nags. He hid the king's handkerchief, and when the people passed by he was clicking with his tongue as usual.

Now the king had three princesses, and they were to be carried off by three meer-women. So the king had it proclaimed that whoever could rescue them should receive one of them for a wife. When the day came on which the oldest princess was to be carried away, Sheep-Peter received a steed, a suit of armor and a sword from Queen Crane. With them he rode to the castle, fetched the princess, took her before him on his steed, and then lay down on the sea-shore to sleep. He had a dog with him as well. And while he slept the princess wove her hair-ribbon into his hair. Suddenly the meer-woman appeared, and she awakened him and bade him mount his steed. Many people had been standing there; but when the meer-woman appeared they all took fright, and climbed into tall trees. But the youth said: "God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!" And then he slew the meer-woman. Thereupon he rode quickly back to Queen Crane, took off his armor, and herded his sheep again. But among the on-lookers had been a nobleman, who threatened the princess, and forced her to say that he had rescued her. And from Sheep-Peter no one heard a word.

On the following day the second princess was to be carried off. So Sheep-Peter went to Queen Crane, who gave him a steed, a suit of armor and a sword, and with them he rode to the castle, and fetched the second princess. When they reached the sea-shore the meer-woman had not yet appeared. So the youth lay down to sleep and said to the princess: "Wake me when the meer-woman

comes, and if you cannot wake me, then tell my horse." With that he fell asleep, and meanwhile the princess wove a string of pearls into his hair. When the meer-woman came, the princess tried to wake him; but he would not wake up at all, and so she told the horse to waken him. And the horse did wake him. The great lords, however, who were standing about, climbed into the trees out of pure fright when the meer-woman appeared. The youth took the princess on his steed, cried: "God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!" and with that he slew the meer-woman. Then he rode quickly back to Queen Crane, took off his armor, and led his flock out to pasture. But among the on-lookers had been a count, who threatened the princess, and said he would thrust her through with his sword if she did not swear he had rescued her. The princess did so out of fear; but from Sheep-Peter no one heard a word.

On the third day the same thing happened. Sheep-Peter was given a suit of armor, a sword and a steed by Queen Crane, and fetched the youngest princess. When he lay down on the sea-shore to sleep, he said to her: "When the meer-woman comes, wake me, and if you cannot wake me, then tell the horse to wake me, and if the horse cannot wake me, then ask the dog to wake me." When the meer-woman came, neither the princess nor the horse was able to wake him, and they had to call the dog to help them. At last he woke up, took the princess on his horse, cried: "God aid me, and Queen Crane stay by me, and I will succeed!" and slew the meer-woman. Then he rode back again to Queen Crane, took off his armor and let his flock out to pasture.

Not long after, the deliverers of the princesses were to come to the castle and be married. But first the king asked his daughters which of the three each wanted to have. So the oldest said: "The gentleman from court," and the second said: "the count," but the third said "Sheep-Peter." Then the king was very angry with his youngest daughter; for he did not believe for a moment that Sheep-Peter had delivered her. But she insisted and said she would take no one else. The king then presented an apple of pure gold to the count and the court gentleman; but Sheep-Peter got nothing.



Now all three of them were to hold a three-days' shooting-match, in order to see which was the best shot; for the king hoped that Sheep-Peter would make a proper laughing-stock of himself, and drop far behind the others without any effort on their part. But Sheep-Peter was so good a marksman that he hit everything at which he aimed. And the very first day he shot a great deal, while

the others shot but little. Then they bought the game he had shot from him, and gave him a golden apple for it. The same thing happened the second day, and thus he got the other gold apple. But when Peter came home on the evening of the first and second day, he had only a crow dangling from his blunderbuss. And when he met the king, he threw the crow to the ground and cried: "There is my whole bag!"

On the third day all went as before. Sheep-Peter hit everything at which he aimed; but the others scored no hits. Then Sheep-Peter promised them all he had bagged, if they would let him write what he chose on their necks. They agreed to the bargain, and he wrote on the neck of each: "A thief and a rascal." Then all three went home, and again Peter had no more than a crow to show.

At night all three of them slept together in one room. When they woke in the morning, the king came in to them, said good-morning, and asked how they were. But he was much surprised to see that Sheep-Peter was keeping them company. Then the youth said: "I was in the war, and slew all of the enemy!" "Ah!" said the king, "you did not do that, it was an angel from heaven; for you were sitting in the swamp." Then Sheep-Peter drew out the king's handkerchief, and then the king recognized him. Then the herdsman said: "I also delivered the princesses!" But the king would not believe that, and laughed at him. And then the youngest princess came along and told how it all had happened.

And the youth took out the ribands of the other princesses, and the king had to believe that this, too, was true. Then, Peter continued: "I also shot all the game!" And again the king would not believe him and said: "Nonsense, why you never brought home anything of an evening but a wretched crow!" Then Peter produced the golden apples: "I was given this one for the first day, and the other for the second." "And what did you get for the third?" asked the king. Then the shepherd showed him what he had written on the necks of the other suitors. And when the king saw that, he had to believe him. And so he really got the youngest princess, and with her half of the kingdom, and after the king's death, all of it. But the two sham heroes got nothing at all, and had only their trouble for their pains.

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