

19090128. A Story by Michael Sohns. *Giddings Deutsches Volksblatt*, 28 January 1909. Image 112000282.

[Apparently there was a prelude and this serial was the ending. Unfortunately, the beginning, if there was one, was lost since no copy of the previous edition of the newspaper exists.]

The Red Peter
A story from Germany by
M. Sohns
(Final)

Peter had roamed about for days when he came upon a farmstead, it was around midday and the farmer's wife gave him something to eat which tasted very good. He then asked if he could stay and work and the farmer was agreeable to give him a trial but when the farmhands and workers noticed his red hair they commented: Look at how he's burning! Then everybody laughed and Peter quickly departed and wandering through hill and dale was unable to find a place to stay.

He was soon to regret his departure when he came upon an old man who was pushing a cart full of coal with great effort and Peter said: I will push your cart so that you may rest. The old man was overjoyed by this offer and Peter marched off bravely with the coal burner's cart towards town. When the coal was sold, the coal burner took Peter to a food establishment and ordered something to eat.

He questioned Peter about this and that and Peter now told his life's story by the topic and when it was said about his red hair, he's burning and, that he could not find any work. Come with me, the old man said, and help the coal burners, then your hair might turn black.

Peter accepted the offer. He pushed the cart and he went along into the forest to the coal burner's hut.

Now Peter became a coal burner. He pushed their carts throughout the area and sold coal and punctually delivered the money to the old man. The people called him the Black Peter. The old man was an honest man and a Christian and urged Peter to always do what is good .

And so, time passed and the old coal burner died and left all that he had to Peter and Peter continued the business on his own.

But now another black Peter, a member of the *Schinderhannes* band, came frequently into the forest with his fellow robbers and plundered the people on the road. The robbers had considerable respect for our Peter and dared not be in his vicinity.

A number of years passed again. A street was built through the forest not far from Peter's hut. Many hikers and touring cars traveled the street and the band fellows became evermore bolder. But Peter and his dog frequently chased the band fellows away. Peter beat upon them with his iron poker and the dog chased the dudes and the clothes from their bodies.

Again a number of years passed and robberies declined because the robber captain Schinderhannes was beheaded in Mainz by the /////. The Black Peter moved to the Odenwalde of Baden and the region where Peter had burned coal had become safer.

One evening a man walked the street to buy animals for slaughter in the area but could not find anything suitable and thus still carried on him a heavy money belt around his body. He settled down at an inn in the vicinity of the forest and ordered some food and drink. There were two miserable looking guys who were watching in sadness. The man said: Innkeeper, give those

two guys something to eat and also a small glass. He paid for everything and walked off towards the forest since he lived in a small town on the other side of the forest and thought to be home still at night. He was ambushed by two guys in the vicinity of Peter's coal hut and thrown to the ground and, a few cries for help sounded through the forest and then he was quiet because the band fellows squeezed his throat shut and choked him until he lost consciousness. But Peter had heard the cries for help, grabbed his poker and called for his dog Kats to go. With mighty strides, the dog ran towards the place. The guys took from the butcher but Kats followed and bit them so that they would cry out miserably, but with a whistle from Peter he returned, retrieving a piece of trouser material which he had torn off the tramp.

Peter immediately checked on the man who was still unconscious and loosened the cloth with which the tramps had closed off the throat of the butcher.

The same awoke from his unconsciousness and said: Take all that I have but let me live. Peter told him then that the scoundrels had left but that he could not move on today and to come to the coal burners quarters to stay overnight and then walk out on his street in the morning.

So, both went on to the coal burner's hut. Peter took care of the guest as best he could.

Incidentally, he turned out to be the father of Hannchen who had also moved away from Peter's homeland. The next morning, Peter sent the piece of cloth that Katz had torn from the scoundrel's trousers to the police. They searched the woods and surrounding areas and soon the two were brought in. They were the same ones for whom the butcher had ordered food and drink. They were sent for a number of years for safeguarding at *Rumer*.

Peter escorted the butcher home. After arriving, the father said to Hannchen: I have brought a guest along. Guess who it is. Hannchen looked at Peter thoughtfully. Finally, she said: That is – that is the red Peter and, offered him her hand in glee. Peter then told her that he was not a robber but one of the people who saved her father. Peter now produced her handkerchief to show it to her along with the coin her father had given him when he was bitten by the Mueller's dog, the two pieces he had cherished like a shrine. Hannchen had developed into a flowering damsel and her foot had healed. She was no more the limping Hanna.

Peter's hair was however still red: but not enough for one to be able to say: Look how he's burning! Thus Hannchen gladly gave her yes word when he asked for her hand and she has never regretted this, because Peter was brave and he had also earned and saved a good amount of money while working as a coal burner. He now gave up coal burning because Hannchen was his wife. Once Peter traveled back to his homeland and visited his siblings, his father had died already, and he told them that he had not become a robber about which they were heartily happy.

They both lived happily and satisfied and reached an advanced age. They raised children and built houses and if they had not died, they would be alive today. That would now be the end of the story.

M. Sohns.