

READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS**MOUSIE AND THE HIDDEN TREASURE***A Nonsensical Burlesque Playlet*

By ARTEMIO INTAL

THE PLAYERS

MOUSIE, a young, strong sailor-mouse.

MOUSIE'S DAD, a big mouse who owns a cabin.

PIRATES.

SCENE I

Place: In the cabin of Mousie's father. There is a table in the middle of the room, on top of which is a lighted lantern. On a wall hangs a picture of Mousie's grandfather in pirate's garb. (*Mousie's father is frantically searching the wooden chests that are scattered about the cabin. Suddenly he begins to shout and jump.*)

MOUSIE'S DAD: (*Excitedly*) I've found it! I've found it!

(*Mousie, who is outside, hears his father shouting; goes inside to see what the matter is.*)

MOUSIE: What's the matter, dad? What's happening to you? Why are you so excited?

MOUSIE'S DAD: I've found it! I've found the treasure-map your grandfather told me about.

MOUSIE: What did you say, dad? Did . . . did you say a treasure-map? Oh, oh! Show it to me, will you, dad?

MOUSIE'S DAD: Here it is, son. It's the map, the very map. We'll soon be rich—rich!

MOUSIE: Not so loud, dad. Somebody might hear you.

(*Together they lean on the table and study the map, which is yellow with age. Then Mousie's father speaks.*)

MOUSIE'S DAD: Yes, my son. Before your granddad died, he told me of the

loss of his treasure map. During his years of piracy he accumulated great riches which he buried on an island. Your grandfather was a pirate, you know. One day he discovered the loss of the treasure map, but he knew it was somewhere in his cabin. He searched the whole cabin but could find no trace of it. Now that we have the map, our first job is to locate the treasure. Then you and I will be rich.

MOUSIE: (*Sniffing*) I love the sea! It's good to be out on the ocean. I love to hear the waves pounding against the ship. You'll soon love the sea, dad. Sure, you will.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

(*Mousie and his father are aboard a small vessel which they have bought secretly. The ship is piled high with provisions. Mousie's father is walking on the deck toward Mousie looking at the water.*)

MOUSIE'S DAD: (*Tapping his son on the shoulder*) All this will be a dangerous undertaking. There are pirates that sail the seas.

MOUSIE: Maybe that's right, dad. By the way, where is the treasure buried?

MOUSIE'S DAD: I don't know. But according to this map, it lies far to the north. Let's direct our course straight to the north until we reach a gap between the mountains. We'll have to pass through it. In the course of our trip we'll reach an island . . .

(*At that same time a pirate's craft is*

sailing serenely on the waters not very far from the vessel of Mousie and his father. Aboard the pirates' captain is talking to his men.)

CAPTAIN: Men, be on the watch for passing vessels. Our provision is running low and our water is becoming scarce.

PIRATES: Aye, aye, sir.

(The lookouts scan the water with glasses. They shout when they see Mousie's craft.)

PIRATE: There's a vessel off the port bow, captain!

(The sails are put up and the pirates brandish their swords. Closer and closer comes the pirates' vessel to Mousie's ship. When they reach the craft they clamber aboard, shouting lustily.)

CAPTAIN: Take them alive.

(Mousie and father are too unnerved by the sudden attack to resist. Quickly Mousie's dad hides the treasure-map. Soon they are prisoners. Then the pirates take them to their captain.)

CAPTAIN: Ho, ho, ho! *(Turning to his crew)* Take them to the hold and load what they have on our vessel.

(Mousie and his father are taken to the hold. Night comes and they hear the plunderers on deck laughing and drinking wine. Busily the prisoners are planning a way to escape.)

MOUSIE: Dad, we'll rot in this ship if we don't escape.

MOUSIE'S DAD: That's right. Say! the guard is sleeping. We had better slip away before he wakes up.

(The two prisoners make their way to the deck with the arms they got from the sleeping guard. Exercising every precaution, they slip by the guards on deck and lower themselves off the ship's side. A moment later they are swimming to-

ward their ship which is not far away. They reach the ship without any difficulty.)

MOUSIE'S DAD: Hoist the sails, son, before they discover our escape.

(Mousie puts up the sails. The wind blows and carries their craft away from the plundering pirates' craft.)

MOUSIE'S DAD: That gang of pirates took everything with them. All I found was a jug of water and a couple of biscuits.

CURTAIN
SCENE III

(The two treasure seekers are on the island where the treasure is buried.)

MOUSIE'S DAD: Here is the stone all right. Pick up that shovel, son. *(Holding the map in one hand, a spade in the other.)* The map says walk one hundred paces north. *(They begin measuring till they count the hundred paces.)* Then fifty paces west. Yes, this the place. Dig over there, son, while I dig here.

MOUSIE: Nothing over here, dad.

MOUSIE'S DAD: Go on, son. Dig deeper. *(They dig and dig again. After working for quite a long time Mousie cries excitedly.)*

MOUSIE: Something hard in this part, dad. Can it be the treasure? Listen: Come here, dad. Here they are. There are two of them.

MOUSIE'S DAD: Didn't I tell you so, son? Now the treasure is ours. I can't believe it, but we are rich. Ha, ha, ha!

(They haul the heavy chests to the surface, open them and discover that they are full of gold. Suddenly Mousie looks toward the sea.)

MOUSIE: Daddy, daddy, look! It's the pirates' ship. What shall we do? What shall we do?

MOUSIE'S DAD: Put the treasure back!

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GREEDY HERON

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"Get out of my way, you!" ordered the Crab.

"No, sir," said the Heron proudly. "I have eaten the Frog; I have eaten the old Mudfish, and I have eaten the old Snake. What is to stop me from eating you?"

But before the Heron could finish what he was saying, the Crab raised up his two mighty pinchers and pinched the Heron's neck.

SOME QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the Heron was polite?
2. What did the Heron do to the Frog?

MOUSIE

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(They bury the treasure again; cover it with soil and run toward a clump of trees nearby. They climb a tall one).

MOUSIE: *(Excitedly)* Look, dad! They've changed their course. They aren't coming here.

MOUSIE'S DAD: Sure enough, son. I thought they would land and make us prisoners once more—with the treasure we found.

MOUSIE: Let's get down. It's safe now. Then we can get the treasure again and sail for home.

CURTAIN

PIED PIPER

(Continued from page 322)

and the children went on their way to the mountain is called the "Street of the Children." In this street there is set up a large stone. On its side is cut the date, "June 26, A.D. 1284." That is the day on which the Piper is said to have lead the boys and girls away. Up the street a little farther there is a statue of the Piper.

Every year, when the twenty-sixth of June comes around, all the people who live in Hamelin have a great holiday in memory of the children who followed the Piper.

On that day, the whole town is full of rats again. But these are not live rats. Instead, they are little cakes and cookies made into the shape of a rat. And all the stores in town have for sale little flutes, like the one the Piper played.

The boys and girls of Hamelin still love music, and they sing and play it all the year round. But no one is ever allowed to sing or play any music on the street through which the children followed the Piper, so long ago. That is to be a silent street forever.

JERUSALEM

(Continued from page 324)

One of the famous places of Jerusalem is known as the Wailing Place of the Jews. This is a wall of very ancient stones, once supposed to have been a part of the temple erected by Solomon but now known to belong to later times. Every Friday Jews gather at this wall, kiss the ancient stones, mourn the loss of Jerusalem, and pray. There are Hebrew carvings on these stones; these are the prayers of pilgrims.

Except for its memories of the past, Jerusalem is not an attractive city today. The streets are narrow and dirty, shut in by the high gloomy walls of the buildings, and often overarched, so that they seem almost like passages through caves. The houses are square and flat-topped, with few outside courts. The streets are crowded with traders, beggars, and pilgrims and travelers from all over the world.

Old Jerusalem is buried deep in the ground; modern Jerusalem is partly an old Crusaders' town with Mohammedan additions, and partly a uninteresting travel resort, but to the followers of two faiths Jerusalem will ever be a sacred city.