

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

*An Old Legend*

THERE is no other story in any country that tells so beautifully of the magic power of music as does the old legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Once, long, long ago, the old European town of Hamelin, which is built on the banks of a big river, was full of rats. There were so many rats in the town that the people who lived there said that if something was not done to get rid of them, they would not live there any longer.

So every one tried every way he knew to drive the rats from the town. But each day there were more rats in the streets and in the houses than there had been there the day before. A famous poet wrote about these rats in a fine poem:

"Rats!

They fought the dogs and killed the cats,  
And bit the babies in the cradles,  
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
And even spoiled the women's chats  
By drowning their speaking  
With shrieking and squeaking  
In fifty different sharps and flats."

About this time a strange Piper came to town. The Piper's coat was one-half yellow and one-half red; that is why he was called a pied piper. He carried a pipe, or flute, which he played as he walked the streets of Hamelin Town. The Piper went to the mayor of the town,

and to the other men who lived in Hamelin.

"I know a way to get rid of all those rats," he said to them.

The mayor and all the men were very glad to hear him say this.

"We will give you a large sum of money if you will get rid of the rats," they said. This was a very fine offer, for the sum of money they were going to give the Piper was equal to twenty thousand dollars.

The strange Piper went out into the streets of the town. He began to play sweet music on his flute as he walked along.

As soon as the rats heard the music, they ran out of their hiding places to follow after him. More and more rats kept coming. No

one ever before saw so many rats! There were thousands and thousands of them. Each rat tried to get ahead of all the other rats so as to be nearer the player and his sweet music.

"And out of the houses the rats came tumbling,  
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,  
Grave old plodders, gay young frisk-ers,  
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
Families by tens and dozens,



Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
Followed the Piper for their lives.”

The Piper walked on, playing his pipe all the while. When he came to the bank of the river on the south side of the town, he did not stop but walked right on. The rats followed him into the river, and were all drowned.

The mayor and the people of Hamelin were very happy because the rats were gone. They even went to the church and rang all the bells that hung in the steeple.

Then the Piper came back into the town, and went to see the mayor.

“I have got rid of the rats in Hamelin,” said the Piper. “Please give me the money you promised.”

But the mayor and people would not pay the Piper.

“You earned the money too easily,” they said to him.

“You will be sorry if you are not honest, and do not pay me,” said the Piper.

But they would not pay him.

Then the Piper went into the streets again. This time he played another tune and a much sweeter one than the one he played when the rats followed him. Such magic music had never before been heard in all the land! All the children of Hamelin ran out of the houses when they heard the sweet music, just as the rats had done.

The Piper did not speak a single word. But the boys and girls understood the soft sweet tones of the music, which told of a wonderful fairy land. In this fairy land, the music said, were beautiful flowers, and birds that sang from the trees day and night. All day long children could sail on the rivers and on the lakes in tiny fairy boats.

The Piper’s music told the children

that he would lead them right into that fairy land, and so they followed him.

After he had played for a short time on his flute and walked in the street,

“Small feet were pattering, little shoes clattering,

Tiny hands clapping, and happy voices chattering;

Out came the children running,

All the little boys and girls

With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,

And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,

Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after

The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.”

Down the street the Piper led the children. Mothers and fathers called to them, but they did not hear or answer.

When the Piper reached the river this time, he turned to the west, to the great mountains that stood there. Then,

“As they reached the mountain-side,

A wonderful doorway opened wide,

As if a cave were suddenly hollowed;

And the Piper advanced and the children followed.

And when all were in to the very last,

The door in the mountain-side shut fast.”

The old legend tells us that there were one hundred and thirty boys and girls who went into the mountain that day so long ago. Not one of them ever came back, and they could never be found, although their fathers and mothers tried and tried very hard to find them.

All this happened many long years ago. Yet the mothers and fathers in Hamelin still tell the story to their children. The street through which the Piper

*(Please turn to page 334.)*

## GREEDY HERON

*(Continued from page 315)*

"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.