

BY HARRIET LEWIS BRADLEY.

ONE Oc-
tober day,
in the last
October that
ever was, I
stood in the
lower, right-
hand corner-room
of a wonderful old
German house; and
the baker's wife—this
same lower, right-hand
corner-room being now used as a bake-shop—
brought out the family photograph-album, and
opened it upon the counter. Among the pictures
there was one showing a young man in a fanciful
dress, with a plume in his hat and a fife raised
to his lips.

"That is my husband's cousin, Wilhelm," said

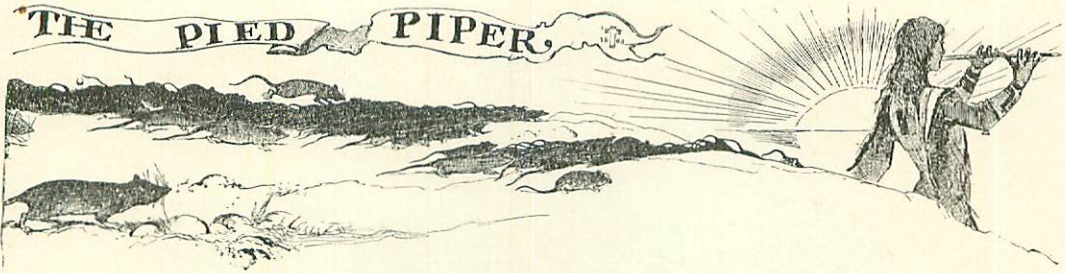
the baker's wife. "He was the Piper on the six
hundredth Anniversary. The first day, he wore
a black mantle, and went through the town piping;
and all the little children dressed in gray, to rep-
resent rats and mice, danced after him, down to
the river. And the second day," continued the
baker's wife, "my husband's cousin Wilhelm wore
a many-colored dress; and then the little children
followed him out of the town over to the Koppen
mountain. It was exactly as it happened in Ham-
elin six hundred years ago."

"And do you think it really happened, then?"
I asked.

"They *say* it happened," answered the baker's
wife wisely. "Of course there is no one to ask."

In the bake-shop were boxes of bonbons for sale,
each box holding six sugar mice and a diminutive
tin fife; and when, later, I wandered through the
streets of Hamelin, I noticed that every shop-win-





dow contained rats and mice and merry-looking pipers, made in porcelain, paper, bread, or chocolate.

The narrow by-way, on one corner of which stands the wonderful old house, is called the "Drumless Street"; for (so the baker's wife told me) since that day of misfortune, six hundred years ago, when the children danced down this by-way to the music of their loved piper, neither the sound of drum nor fife nor any other instrument is allowed within its limits.

The old tradition of the Pied Piper has become widely famous through two well-known poems, one by an English, the other by a German poet.

How much of it is true one can not exactly say,

and, as the baker's wife remarked, there is no one to ask. But certain it is, that something curious must have happened once in "Hamelin town," for every traveler who strays to-day through the Drumless Street, and looks up at the old house on the corner, can read this inscription :

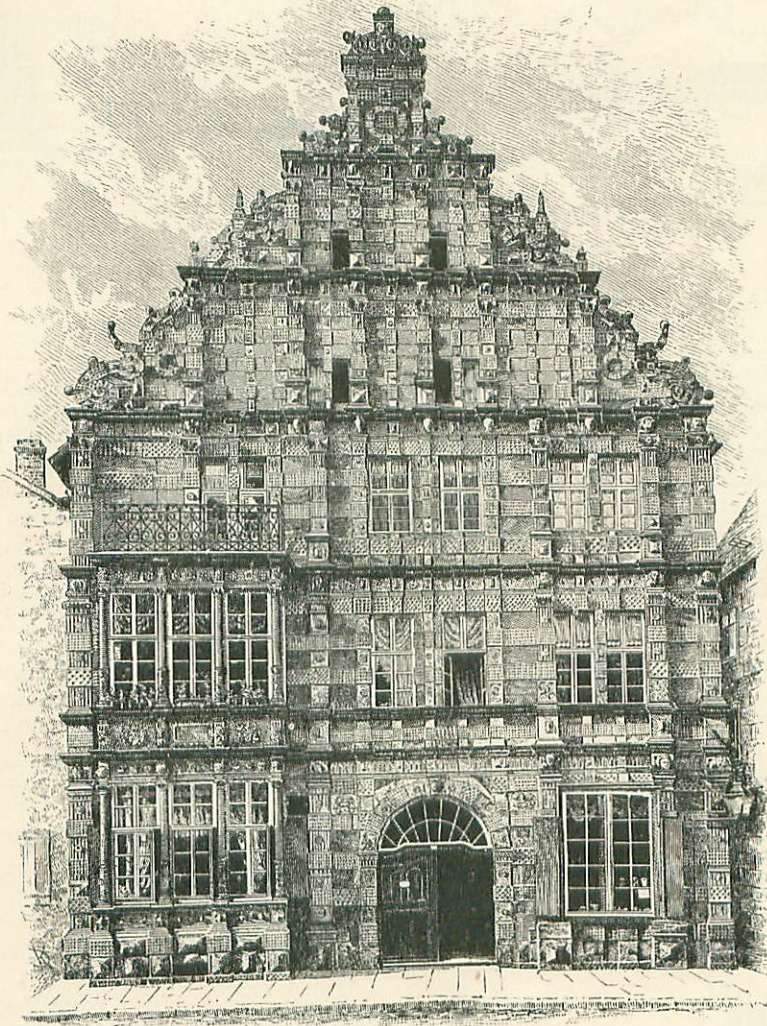
ANNO 1284.

On the day of St. John and St. Paul, on the 26 of June, 130 children born in Hamelin were led away by a piper dressed in divirs colors, and lost on the Koppen.

Upon an old house in the market-place, called the Wedding-house, from being used formerly for wedding festivities, are these words :

After the birth of Christ, in 1284, 130 children born in Hamelin were led away by a piper and lost on the Koppen.





THE RAT-CATCHER'S HOUSE, HAMELIN.

Thus run the inscriptions, printed in old-fashioned German, above the second-story windows of these two curious houses.

Every school-child, except the exceptional one, knows the story of the "Pied Piper," and that

"Hamelin town 's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city."

For the exceptional one, who has yet to read these familiar lines, here is the story told in prose. It is a story of too many rats and mice. The pastor could not preach his sermon. The teacher could not hear his classes. The old dames could not enjoy even a comfortable gossip at their spinning-

wheels without being unpleasantly interrupted. There were rats who had a habit of rambling through the church during the service; there were mice who daily danced across the school-room floor; there were rats and mice who met together every evening, and held noisy festivities in the walls, and under the floor, and over the ceiling of the spinning-room. At this time of great need, when the Bürgermeister was worn thin with perplexity, a tall and handsome stranger appeared in Hamelin. No one knew whence he came, but the little children loved him at once, because of the sweet music he used to play to them upon his fife, and the older people were never tired of hear-

ing the songs he was always ready to sing. This stranger came to the Bürgermeister and promised that for a certain sum of money he would free the town of its plague, to which condition the Bürgermeister gave a joyful assent. When the next full moon shone upon Hamelin, the piper went through the streets playing a wonderful melody, and forth from every corner came all the old rats and young rats and middle-aged rats, and pretty gray mice, and the piper led them to their end in the River Weser. One rat alone remained in the town, a sad old creature, who, being deaf and blind and stiff with years, could not follow the piper's music. There was great rejoicing among the people as this deliverance became known. The preacher was able to preach his Sunday sermon, the school-children to repeat their week-day multiplication-tables, and the old dames to finish their evening gossip without a single interruption. Such a peaceful state of affairs had long been unknown in "Hamelin town." The City Council, however, having debated during several sittings the possibility of paying the piper a less sum than they had promised, finally decided not to pay him anything, and the piper, in his indignation, resolved to bring as much dismay among the people as he had already brought delight. So, on a bright, pleasant morning, when all the fathers and mothers were safely locked in the church (it being the custom to lock the church doors that no belated worshiper should disturb the devotions of those assembled in proper season), the Pied Piper went from house to house playing softly, and the little children ran out to meet him, crying, "Here is our dear piper again." And they followed him, dancing through the streets and out of the town to the Koppen mountain.

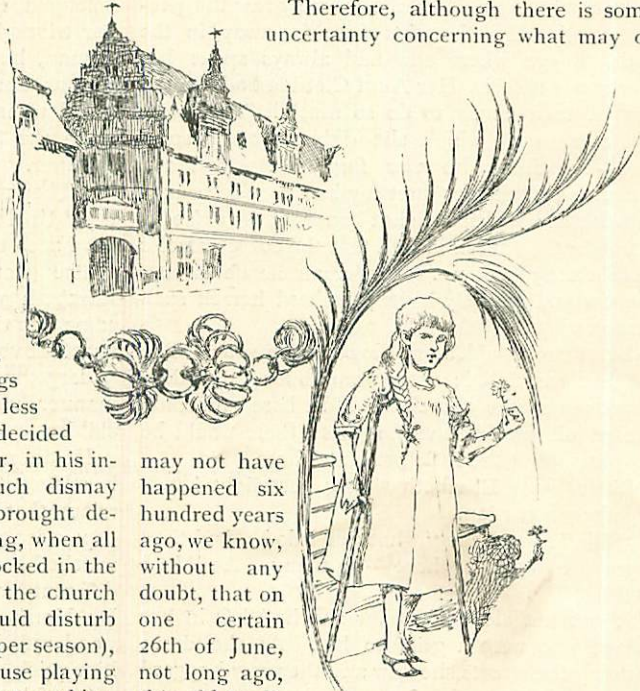
Of all that merry crowd, the only child who came back was a poor lame girl, left behind be-

cause she was unable by reason of her infirmity to keep up with the others.

—As I lingered in "Hamelin town," on this October afternoon in the last October that ever was, I met a bare-headed little girl with a band of flowers fastened sash-fashion over her shoulder, and from this wreath hung six heart-shaped cakes. I asked whether she knew the story of the Pied Piper.

"Ach, ja!" said the little girl, smiling. "I was a mouse. I was the smallest mouse. To-day I am six years old!"

Therefore, although there is some uncertainty concerning what may or



may not have happened six hundred years ago, we know, without any doubt, that on one certain 26th of June, not long ago, this old tradition became a living thing — for did not the baker's wife say that her husband's cousin Wilhelm was the Pied Piper, and has not the birthday-child also told us that she herself, as the smallest among the mice, danced after him down to the river on that very day?

