

# The Piper eBook

## The Piper by Josephine Preston Peabody

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# Page 1

## CHARACTERS

THE PIPER ) MICHAEL-THE-SWORD-EATER ) Strolling Players CHEAT-THE-DEVIL )

*Jacobus* the Burgomeister )  
*Kurt* the Syndic )  
*Peter* the Cobbler )  
*Hans* the Butcher )  
*Axel* the Smith ) Men of Hamelin  
*Martin* the Watch )  
*Peter* the Sacristan )  
*Anselm*, a young priest )  
*old Claus*, a miser )  
*town Crier* )

*Jan* )  
*Hansel* )  
*Ilse* ) Children  
*Trude* )  
*Rudi* )

*Veronika*, the wife of Kurt  
*Barbara*, daughter of Jacobus  
*wife* of *Hans* the Butcher  
*wife* of *Axel* the Smith  
*wife* of *Martin* the Watch  
*old Ursula*

Burghers, nuns, priests, and children

## SCENE: HAMELIN ON THE WESER, 1284 A.D.

### SCENES

Act I. The market-place in Hamelin

Act II. *Scene* I. Inside the 'Hollow-Hill'  
*scene* II. The Cross-ways

Act III. The Cross-ways

Act IV. The market-place in Hamelin

One week is supposed to elapse between Acts I and II.

Acts II and III occupy one day.

Act IV concerns the following morning.

## The Piper

### ACT I

*Scene:* The market-place of Hamelin. Right, the Minster, with an open shrine (right centre) containing a large sculptured figure of the Christ. Right, farther front, the house of *Kurt*; and other narrow house-fronts. Left, the Rathaus, and (down) the home of *Jacobus*. Front, to left and right, are corner-houses with projecting stories and casement windows. At the centre rear, a narrow street leads away between houses whose gables all but meet overhead.

It is late summer afternoon, with a holiday crowd. In the open casements, front (right and left, opposite each other), sit *old Ursula* and *old Claus*, looking on at men and things. —In the centre of the place now stands a rude wooden Ark with a tented top: and out of the openings (right and left) appear the artificial heads of animals, worn by the players inside. One is a Bear (inhabited by *Michael-the-sword-eater*); one is a large Reynard-the-Fox, later apparent as the *piper*. Close by is the medieval piece of stage-property known as 'Hell-Mouth,' *i.e.* a red painted cave with a jaw-like opening into which a mountebank dressed in scarlet (*cheat-the-devil*) is poking 'Lost Souls' with a pitchfork.



## Page 2

*Barbara* loiters by the tent. *Veronika*, the sad young wife of *Kurt*, watches from the house steps, left, keeping her little lame boy, Jan, close beside her.

Shouts of delight greet the end of the show, a Noah's Ark miracle-play of the rudest; and the Children continue to scream with joy whenever an Animal looks out of the Ark.

Men and women pay scant attention either to *Jacobus*, when he speaks (himself none too sober)—from his doorstep, prompted by the frowning *Kurt*,—or yet to *Anselm*, the priest, who stands forth with lifted hands, at the close of the miracle-play.

*Anselm*

And you, who heed the colors of this show,  
Look to your laughter!—It doth body forth  
A Judgment that may take you unaware,—  
Sun-struck with mirth, like unto chattering leaves  
Some wind of wrath shall scourge to nothingness.

*Hans, Axel, and others*

Hurrah, Hurrah!

*Jacobus*

And now, good townsmen all,  
Seeing we stand delivered and secure  
As once yon chosen creatures of the Ark,  
For a similitude,—our famine gone,  
Our plague of rats and mice,—

*Crowd*

Hurrah—hurrah!

*Jacobus*

'Tis meet we render thanks more soberly—

*Hans the Butcher*

Soberly, soberly, ay!—

*Jacobus*

For our deliverance.  
And now, ye wit, it will be full three days  
Since we beheld—our late departed pest.—

*Old Ursula*

[putting out an ear-trumpet]

What does he say?



*Reynard*

[from the Ark]

—Oh, how felicitous!

*Hans' wife*

He's only saying there be no more rats.

*Jacobus*

[with oratorical endeavor]

Three days it is; and not one mouse,—one mouse,

One mouse, I say!—No-o-o! Quiet. . . as a mouse.

[Resuming] And now. . .

*Crowd*

Long live Jacobus!—

*Jacobus*

You have seen

Noah and the Ark, most aptly happening by

With these same play-folk. You have marked the Judgment.

You all have seen the lost souls sent to—Hell—

And, nothing more to do.—

[*Kurt* prompts him]

Yes, yes.—And now. . .

[*Hans* the Butcher steps out of his group.]

*Hans* the Butcher

Hath no man seen the Piper?—Please your worships.

*Others*

Ay, ay, so!

—Ay, where is he?

—Ho, the Piper!

*Jacobus*

Piper, my good man?

*Hans* the Butcher

—He that charmed the rats!

*Others*

Yes, yes,—that charmed the rats!

*Jacobus*

[piously]





Why, no man knows.—  
Which proves him such a random instrument  
As Heaven doth sometimes send us, to our use;  
Or, as I do conceive, no man at all,—  
A man of air; or, I would say—delusion.  
He'll come no more.



## Page 3

*Reynard*

[from the Ark]

Eh?—Oh, indeed, Meaow!

*Jacobus*

'Tis clearest providence. The rats are gone.  
The man is gone. And there is nought to pay,  
Save peaceful worship.  
[Pointing to the Minster.]

*Reynard*

[sarcastically]

Oh, indeed,—Meaow!

[Sudden chorus of derisive animal noises from the Ark,  
delighting *people* and *children*.]

*Kurt*

Silence,—you strollers there! Or I will have you  
Gaoled, one and all.

*People*

No, Kurt the Syndic, no!

*Barbara*

[to Jacobus]

No; no! Ah, father, bid them stay awhile  
And play it all again.—Or, if not all,  
Do let us see that same good youth again,  
Who swallowed swords—between the Ark Preserved  
And the Last Judgment!

*Reynard*

Michael-the-Sword-Eater,  
Laurels for thee!

[The *bear* disappears: *Michael* puts out his own head, and gazes fixedly at *Barbara*.]

*Children*

Oh, can't we see the animals in the Ark?  
Again? Oh, can't we see it all again?

*Ilse*

Oh, leave out Noah! And let's have only Bears  
And Dromedaries, and the other ones!—



[General confusion.]

*Kurt*

Silence!

*Jacobus*

Good people—you have had your shows;  
And it is meet, that having held due feast,  
Both with our market and this Miracle,  
We bring our holiday to close with prayer  
And public thanks unto Saint Willibald,—  
Upon whose day the rats departed thence.

*Reynard*

[loudly]

Saint Willibald!

*Bear*

—Saint Willibald!

*Other animals*

[looking out]

( Saint Willibald!

( Saint! Oh!

*Crowd*

Saint Willibald!—And what had he to do  
With ridding us o' rats?

*Hans the Butcher*

'T was the Piping Man  
Who came and stood here in the market-place,  
And swore to do it for one thousand guilders!

*Peter the Cobbler*

Ay, and he did it, too!—Saint Willibald!

[Renewed uproar round the tent.]

*Kurt*

[to Jacobus]

Drive out those mountebanks! 'T is ever so.  
Admit them to the town and you must pay  
Their single show with riotings a week.—  
Look yonder at your daughter.

[*Barbara* lingers by the Ark-Tent, gazing with girlish interest at *Michael*, who gazes at her, his bear-head in his band for the moment.]



*Jacobus*  
Barbara!

[She turns back, with an angry glance at *Kurt*.]

*Axel* the Smith  
[doggedly to them]  
By your leave. Masters! I would like to know,  
How did Saint Willibald prevail with the rats?—  
That would I like to know. I, who ha' made  
Of strong wrought traps, two hundred, thirty-nine,  
Two hundred, thirty-nine.



## Page 4

*Reynard*

[calling]

And so would I!

*Hans the Butcher*

So please your worships, may it please the Crier,  
Now we be here,—to cry the Piping Man—

*Peter the Cobbler*

A stranger-man, gay-clad,—in divers colors!  
Because he, with said piping—

*Hans the Butcher*

—Drave away  
The horde of rats!

*Peter the Cobbler*

[sagely]

To our great benefit;  
And we be all just men.

*Others*

Ay, ay!—Amen!

*Women*

Amen, Our Lady and the blessed Saints!

*Jacobus*

Why, faith, good souls, if ye will have him cried,  
So be it.—But the ways of Heaven are strange!  
Mark how our angel of deliverance came,—  
Or it may be. Saint Willibald himself,—  
Most piedly clothed, even as the vilest player!—  
And straight ascended from us, to the clouds!  
But cry him, if you will.—Peace to your lungs!—  
He will not come.

[*Kurt* wrathfully consults with *Jacobus*, then signals to Crier.]

*Crier*

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!  
Whereas, now three days gone, our Plague of Rats  
Was wholly driven hence, our City cleansed,  
Our peace restored after sore threat of famine,



By a Strange Man who came not back again,  
Now, therefore, if this Man have ears to hear,  
Let him stand forth.—Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[Trumpet.—*People* gaze up and down the little streets.—*Reynard* steps out of the Ark and comes down slowly, with a modest air.—*Kurt* points him out, threateningly, and the *crowd* bursts into derisive laughter.—He doffs his animal-head at leisure, showing a sparkling dark-eyed face.

*All*  
The Man! the Man!

*Kurt and Jacobus*  
The Devil!—'T is—

*All*  
—*the piper!*

[The *piper* regards them all with debonair satisfaction; then reverses his head-piece and holds it out upside-down, with a confident smile.

*Piper*  
Three days of rest, your worships, you have had.  
I see no signs of famine hereabout.  
The rats are gone, even to the nethermost tail:  
And I've fulfilled my bargain. Is it granted?

[Murmurs, then cheers of "Ay, Ay, *piper!*" from the crowd.

Thank 'ee.—My thousand guilders, an you please.

*Jacobus*  
One thou—Come, come! This was no sober bargain.—  
No man in reason could—

*Piper*  
One thousand guilders.

*Kurt*  
One thousand rogueries!

*Jacobus*  
[to *piper*]  
You jest too far.

*Axel*  
Lucky, if he get aught!—Two hundred traps,



And nine, and thirty! By Saint Willibald,  
When was I paid?

*AXEL'S wife*  
Say, now!

*Piper*  
. . . One thousand guilders.



## Page 5

*Peter the Cobbler*  
Give him an hundred.

*Hans the Butcher*  
Double!

*Hans' wife*  
You were fools  
To make agreement with him.—Ask old Claus.  
He has the guilders; and his house was full  
O' rats!

*Old Claus*  
[shaking his stick from the window]  
You Jade! And I that hoard, and save,  
And lay by all I have from year to year,  
To build my monument when I am gone,  
A fine new tomb there, in Saint Boniface!  
And I to pay for all your city rats!

*Old Ursula*  
[leaning out, opposite]  
Right, neighbor, right well said!—Piper, hark here.  
Piper, how did ye charm the rats away?

*Piper*  
[coming down]  
The rats were led—by Cu-ri-os-ity.  
'Tis so with many rats; and all old women;—  
Saving your health!

*Jacobus*  
No thought for public weal,  
In this base grasping on—

*Piper*  
One thousand guilders.

*Kurt*  
[contemptuously]  
For piping!

*Piper*  
Shall I pipe them back again?





*Women*

( Good Saint Boniface!  
Merciful heaven! ( Good Saint Willibald!  
( Peter and Paul defend us!

*Hans the Butcher*

No, no; no fear o' that. The rats be drowned.  
We saw them with our eyes.

*Piper*

Now who shall say  
There is no resurrection for a mouse?

*Kurt*

—Do you but crop this fellow's ears!—

*Veronika*

[from the steps]  
Ah, Kurt!

*Jacobus*

[to him, blandly]  
Deal patiently, good neighbor. All is well.  
[To the *piper*]  
Why do you name a price so laughable,  
My man? Call you to mind; you have no claim,—  
No scrip to show. You cling upon—

*Piper*

[sternly]  
Your word.

*Jacobus*

I, would say—just—

*Piper*

Your word.

*Jacobus*

Upon—

*Piper*

Your word.  
Sure, 't was a rotten parchment!

*Jacobus*

This is a base,  
Conniving miser!



*Piper*

[turning proudly]

Stand forth, Cheat-the-Devil!

[Up steps the *devil* in red. *People* shrink, and then come closer.

Be not afeard. He pleased you all, of late.

He hath no sting.—So, boy! Do off thy head.—

[*Cheat-the-devil* doffs his red head-dress and stands forth, a pale and timorous youth, gentle and half-witted.

Michael, stand forth!

[*Michael* comes down, bear-head in hand.

*Barbara*

[regarding him sadly]

That goodly sword-eater!

*Piper*

[defiantly]

So, Michael, so.—These be two friends of mine.

Pay now an even third to each of us.

Or, to content your doubts, to each of these

Do you pay here and now, five hundred guilders.

Who gets it matters little, for us friends.

But you will pay the sum, friend. You will pay!—



## Page 6

*Hans, Axel, and crowd*

Come, there's an honest fellow. Ay, now, pay!

—There's a good friend.—And would I had the same.

—One thousand guilders?

—No, too much.

—No, no.

*Kurt*

Pay jugglers?—With a rope apiece!

*Jacobus*

Why—so—

*Piper*

They are my friends; and they shall share with me.

'T is time that Hamelin reckoned us for men;

—Hath ever dealt with us as we were vermin.

Now have I rid you of the other sort—

Right you that score!—

*Kurt*

These outcasts!

*Piper*

[hotly]

Say you so?

Michael, my man! Which of you here will try

With glass or fire, with him?

*Michael*

[sullenly]

No, no more glass, to-day!

*Piper*

Then fire and sword!

[They back away.]

So!—And there's not one man

In Hamelin, here, so honest of his word.

Stroller! A pretty choice you leave us.—Quit

This strolling life, or stroll into a cage!

What do you offer him? A man eats fire—

Swords, glass, young April frogs—



*Children*

Do it again!  
Do it again!

*Piper*

You say to such a man,—  
'Come be a monk! A weaver!' Pretty choice.  
Here's Cheat-the-Devil, now.

*Peter the Cobbler*

But what's his name?

*Piper*

He doesn't know. What would you? Nor do I.  
But for the something he has seen of life,  
Making men merry, he 'd know something more!  
The gentlest devil ever spiked Lost Souls  
Into Hell-mouth,—for nothing-by-the-day!

*Old Ursula*

[with her ear-trumpet]  
Piper, why do you call him Cheat-the-Devil?

*Piper*

Because his deviltry is all a cheat:—  
He is no devil,—but a gentle heart!  
—Friend Michael here hath played the Devil, betimes,  
Because he can so bravely breathe out fire.  
He plied the pitchfork so we yelped for mercy,—  
He reckoned not the stoutness of his arm!—  
But Cheat-the-Devil here,—he would not hurt  
Why—Kurt the Syndic—thrusting him in hell.  
[Laughter.]

*Cheat-the-devil*

[unhappily]  
No, no—I will not hurt him!

*Piper*

[soothingly to him]  
Merry, boy!  
[To the townsfolk]  
And,—if ye will have reasons, good,—ye see,—  
I want—one thousand guilders.

*Jacobus*

In all surety,  
Payment you'll have, my man, But—



*Hans* the Butcher

As to 's friends,—  
An that yon Devil be as feat wi' his hands  
As he be slow o' tongue, why, I will take him  
For prentice. Wife,—now that would smack o' pride!

*Peter* the Cobbler

I'll take this fellow that can swallow fire,  
He's somewhat old for me. But he can learn  
My trade.—A pretty fellow!



## Page 7

*Piper*

And your trade?

*Peter the Cobbler*

Peter the cobbler.—

*Michael*

I? What, I? Make shoes?

[Proudly]

I swallow fire.

*Piper*

Enough.

*Barbara*

[aside, bitterly]

I'll not believe it.

*Piper*

[to *Hans*]

Your trade?

*Hans the Butcher*

I'm Hans the Butcher.

*Michael*

Butcher?

*Cheat-the-devil*

[unhappily]

Butcher!

Oh, no! I couldn't hurt them.

[Loud laughter.

*Butcher's wife*

'T is a fool!

[The *piper* motions to *Michael* and *cheat-the-devil*, who during the following join the other player-folk, strike their tent, pack their bundles, and wheel off the bar rows that have served them for an Ark, leaving the space clear before the Shrine. Exeunt Strollers, all but *Michael*, who hangs about, still gazing at *Barbara*.



*Jacobus*

Good people, we have wasted time enow.  
You see this fellow, that he has no writ—

*Piper*

Why not, then? 'T was a bargain. If your word  
Hold only when 't is writ—

*Kurt*

We cannot spend  
Clerkship on them that neither write nor read.  
What good would parchment do thee?

*Jacobus*

My good man—

*Piper*

Who says I cannot read?—Who says I cannot?

*Old Claus*

Piper, don't tell me you can read in books!

*Piper*

[at bay]

Books! Where's a book? Shew me a book, I say!

*Old Ursula*

The Holy Book! Bring that—or he'll bewitch you.

*Piper*

Oh, never fear. I charm but fools and children;  
Now that the rats are gone.—Bring me a Book:  
A big one!—

[Murmurs. The *piper* defiant. The crowd moves towards the Minster. Enter *Anselm* the priest, with a little acolyte,—the two bearing a large illuminated Gospel-book. *Anselm*, eyeing the *piper* gravely, opens the book, which the boy supports on his head and shoulders.

*Piper*

Ho, 't is too heavy! Come, you cherub-head,  
Here's too much laid upon one guardian angel!  
[Beckons another small boy, and sets the book on their two backs.  
Well?—well? What now?  
[He looks in frank bewilderment at the eager crowd.

*Crowd*

Read, read!



*Kurt*

He cannot read.

*Piper*

[to *Anselm*]

Turn—turn—there's nothing there.

[*Anselm* turns pages. *Piper* looks on blankly]

. . . Ah, turn again!

The red one!—

[He takes his fife from his belt]

No, the green! The green one. So.

[Starts to pipe, looking on the book.]

*Crowd*

( Sure 't is a mad-man!

( But hear him piping!

( What is he doing?





## Page 8

*Piper* [puzzled at their mirth]

What the green one says.—

[A burst of laughter from the crowd. *Jan*, the little lame boy on the steps, reaches his arms out suddenly and gives a cry of delight.

*Jan*

Oh, I love the Man!

[He goes, with his crutch, to the *piper*, who turns and gathers him close.

*Jacobus*

[to the People]

Leave off this argument.

*Kurt*

Go in to Mass.

*Jacobus*

Saint Willibald!

*Piper*

[in a rage]

That Saint!—

*Kurt*

Hence, wandering dog!

*Piper*

Oho!—Well, every Saint may have his day.

But there are dog-days coming.—Eh, your worship?

[To *Anselm*, suddenly]

You, there! You—Brother—Father—Uncle—You!

Speak! Will you let them in, to say their prayers

And mock me through their fingers?—Tell these men

To settle it, among their mouldy pockets,

Whether they keep their oath. Then will I go.

*Kurt*

[savagely]

Away with you!—

*Anselm*

The Piper should be heard;

Ye know it well. Render to Caesar, therefore,

That which is Caesar's.



*Piper*

—Give the Devil his due!

*Jacobus*

[warily]

We must take counsel over such a sum.

[Beckoning others, he and *Kurt* go into the Rathaus, followed by all the men. Exit *Anselm* with the Holy Book into the Minster.—The children play Mouse, to and fro, round about the *piper*.—The women, some of them, spin on the doorsteps, with little hand distaff's, or stand about, gossiping.

[The *piper* wipes his forehead and goes up slowly (centre) to drink from the fountain at the foot of the Shrine.—*Michael*, like one in a dream, comes down towards *Barbara*, who gazes back at him, fascinated, through her laughter.

*Barbara*

Is it for pay you loiter, Master Player?

Were you not paid enough?

*Michael*

No.—One more look.

*Barbara*

Here, then.—Still not enough?

## MICHAEL

No! One more smile.

*Barbara*

[agitated ]

Why would you have me smile?

*Michael* [passionately] Oh, when you smiled, It was—it was like sunlight coming through Some window there, [Pointing to the Minster] —some vision of Our Lady. [She drops her flowers.—He picks them up and gives them back slowly.

*Barbara*

Who are you? You are some one in disguise.

*Michael*

[bitterly]

A man—that passes for a mountebank.



*Barbara*  
[eagerly]  
I knew!

*Michael*  
What then?

*Barbara*  
Thou art of noble birth.  
'T is some disguise, this playing with the fire!



## Page 9

*Michael*

Yes.—For to-day, I lord it with the fire.

But it hath burned me, here.

[Touching his breast.]

[Overcome for the moment, she draws away.—

The *piper*, coming down, speaks stealthily to *Michael*, who is still gazing.

*Piper*

For all our sakes!

There is bad weather breeding.—Take to thy heels.

[*Barbara* turns back to see *Michael* withdrawing reluctantly, and throws a rose to him with sudden gayety.

*Barbara*

Farewell to you, Sword-Swallower!—farewell!

*Michael*

[looking back]

Farewell to you, my Lady, in-the-Moon.

[Exit.

[*Jan* clings once more to the *piper*, while the other children hang about. *Veronika* calls to her boy, from the steps.

*Veronika*

Darling.—

*Piper*

[drawing nearer]

Is this your Boy?

*Veronika*

Ay, he is mine;

My only one. He loved thy piping so.

*Piper*

And I loved his.

*Hans' wife*

[stridently]

Poor little boy! He's lame!

*Piper*

'T is all of us are lame! But he, he flies.



*Veronika*

Jan, stay here if you will, and hear the pipe,  
At Church-time.

*Piper*

[to him]

Wilt thou?

*Jan*

[softly]

Mother lets me stay  
Here with the Lonely Man.

*Piper*

The Lonely Man?

[*Jan* points to the Christ in the Shrine. *Veronika* crosses herself.  
The *piper* looks long at the little boy.

*Veronika*

He always calls Him so.

*Piper*

And so would I.

*Veronika*

It grieves him that the Head is always bowed,  
And stricken. But he loves more to be here  
Than yonder in the church.

*Piper*

And so do I.

*Veronika*

What would you, darling, with the Lonely Man?  
What do you wait to see?

*Jan*

[shyly]

To see Him smile.

[The women murmur. The *piper* comes down further to speak to *Veronika*.

*Piper*

You are some foreign woman. Are you not?  
Never from Hamelin!

*Veronika*

No.



*AXEL'S wife*

[to her child]

Then run along.

And ask the Piper if he'll play again

The tune that charmed the rats.

*Another*

They might come back!

*Old Ursula*

[calling from her window]

Piper! I want the tune that charmed the rats!

If they come back, I'll have my grandson play it.

*Piper*

I pipe but for the children.

*Ilse*

[dropping her doll and picking it up]

Oh, do pipe

Something for Fridolin!

*Hansel*

Oh, pipe at me!

Now I'm a mouse! I'll eat you up! Rr—rr!—



## Page 10

*Children*

Oh, pipe! Oh, play! Oh, play and make us dance!  
Oh, play, and make us run away from school!

*Piper*

Why, what are these?

*Children*

[scampering round him]

We're mice, we're mice, we're mice! . . .  
We're mice, we're mice! We'll eat up everything!

MARTIN'S *wife*

[calling]

'T is church-time. La, what will the neighbors say?

*Ilse*

[Waving her doll]

Oh, please do play something for Fridolin!

AXEL'S *wife*

Do hear the child. She's quite the little mother!

*Piper*

A little mother? Ugh! How horrible.  
That fairy thing, that princess,—no, that Child!  
A little mother?  
[To her]  
Drop the ugly thing!

MARTIN'S *wife*

Now, on my word! and what's amiss with mothers?  
Are mothers horrible?  
[The *piper* is struck with painful memories.]

*Piper*

No, no. But—care  
And want and pain and age. . .  
[Turns back to them with a bitter change of voice]  
And penny-wealth,—  
And penny-counting.—Penny prides and fears—  
Of what the neighbors say the neighbors say!—



MARTIN'S *wife*

And were you born without a mother, then?

*All*

Yes, you there! Ah, I told you! He's no man.

He's of the devil.

MARTIN'S *wife*

Who was your mother, then?

*Piper*

[fiercely]

Mine!—Nay, I do not know. For when I saw her,  
She was a thing so trodden, lost and sad,  
I cannot think that she was ever young,  
Save in the cherishing voice.—She was a stroller;  
My father was a stroller.—So, you have it!  
And since she claved to him, and hunger too,  
The Church's ban was on her.—Either live,  
Mewed up forever,—she! to be a nun;  
Or keep her life-long wandering with the wind;  
The very name of wife stript from her troth.  
That was my mother.—And she starved and sang;  
And like the wind, she roved and lurked and shuddered  
Outside your lighted windows, and fled by,  
Storm-hunted, trying to outstrip the snow,  
South, south, and homeless as a broken bird,—  
Limping and hiding!—And she fled, and laughed,  
And kept me warm; and died! To you, a Nothing;  
Nothing, forever, oh, you well-housed mothers!  
As always, always for the lighted windows  
Of all the world, the Dark outside is nothing;  
And all that limps and hides there in the dark;  
Famishing,—broken,—lost!

And I have sworn

For her sake and for all, that I will have  
Some justice, all so late, for wretched men,  
Out of these same smug towns that drive us forth  
After the show!—Or scheme to cage us up  
Out of the sunlight; like a squirrel's heart  
Torn out and drying in the market-place.  
My mother! Do you know what mothers are?—  
Your children! Do you know them? Ah, not you!  
There's not one here but it would follow me,  
For all your bleating!



## Page 11

AXEL'S *wife*

Kuno, come away!

[The children cling to him. He smiles down triumphantly.

*Piper* Oho, Oho! Look you?—You preach—I pipe! [Reenter the men, with *Kurt* and *Jacobus*, from the Rathaus, murmuring dubiously. [The *piper* sets down *Jan* and stands forth, smiling.

*Jacobus*

[smoothly]

H'm! My good man, we have faithfully debated  
Whether your vision of so great a sum  
Might be fulfilled,—as by some miracle.  
But no. The moneys we administer  
Will not allow it; nor the common weal.  
Therefore, for your late service, here you have  
Full fifteen guilders,  
[Holding forth a purse]  
and a pretty sum  
Indeed, for piping!

*Kurt*

[ominously]

Take them!

*Jacobus*

Either that,  
Or, to speak truly, nothing!  
[The *piper* is motionless]  
Come, come. Nay, count them, if you will.

*Kurt*

Time goes!

*Piper*

Ay. And your oath?

*Kurt*

No more; Enough.

[There is a sound of organ music from the Minster.]



*Veronika*

[beseechingly]

Ah, Kurt!

*Kurt*

[savagely to the crowd]

What do ye, mewling of this fellow's rights?

He hath none!—Wit ye well, he is a stroller,

A wastrel, and the shadow of a man!

Ye waste the day and dally with the law.

Such have no rights; not in their life nor body!

We are in no wise bound. Nothing is his.

He may not carry arms; nor have redress

For any harm that men should put on him,

Saving to strike a shadow on the wall!

He is a Nothing, by the statute-book;

And, by the book, so let him live or die,

Like to a masterless dog!

[The *piper* stands motionless with head up-raised, not looking at *Kurt*. The people, half-cowed, half-doubting, murmur and draw back. Lights appear in the Minster; the music continues. *Kurt* and *Jacobus* lead in the people. *Jacobus* picks up the money-purse and takes it with him.

*Voices* [laughing, drunkenly] One thousand guilders to a 'masterless dog'! [Others laugh too, pass by, with pity and derision for the *piper*, and echoes of 'masterless dog'! Exeunt *women* and *men* to the Minster. Only the children are left, dancing round the motionless figure of the *piper*.

*Children*

Oh, pipe again! Oh, pipe and make us dance!

Oh, pipe and make us run away from school!

Oh, pipe and make believe we are the mice!

[He looks down at them. He looks up at the houses. Then he signs to them, with his finger on his lips; and begins, very softly, to pipe the Kinder-spell. The old *Claus* and *Ursula* in the windows seem to doze.

The children stop first, and look at him, fascinated; then they laugh, drowsily, and creep closer,—*Jan* always near. They crowd around him. He pipes louder, moving backwards, slowly, with magical gestures, towards the little by-streets and the closed doors. The doors open, everywhere.



## Page 12

Out come the children: little ones in night gowns; bigger ones, with playthings, toy animals, dolls. He pipes, gayer and louder. They pour in, right and left. Motion and music fill the air. The *piper* lifts *Jan* to his shoulder (dropping the little crutch) and marches off, up the street at the rear, piping, in the midst of them all.

Last, out of the Minster come tumbling two little acolytes in red, and after them, *Peter* the Sacristan. He trips over them in his amazement and terror; and they are gone after the vanishing children before the church-people come out.

The old folks lean from their windows.

*Old Ursula*

The bell, the bell! the church bell! They're bewitched!

[Peter rushes to the bell-rope and pulls it. The bell sounds heavily. Reenter, from the church, the citizens by twos and threes and scores.

*Old Ursula*

I told ye all,—I told ye!—Devils' bargains!

[The bell]

[*Kurt*, *Jacobus*, and the others appear.]

*Kurt*

Peter the Sacristan! Give by the bell.

What means this clangor?

*Peter* the Sacristan

They're bewitched! bewitched!

[Still pulling and shouting.]

*Ursula*

They're gone!

*Kurt*

Thy wits!

*Old Claus*

They're gone—they're gone—they're gone!

*Peter* the Sacristan

The children!

*Ursula*

—With the Piper! They're bewitched!

I told ye so.



*Old Claus*

—I saw it with these eyes!  
He piped away the children.

[Horror in the crowd. They bring out lanterns and candles. *Veronika* holds up the forgotten crutch']

*Veronika*

Jan—my Jan!

*Kurt*

[to her]

Thy boy! But mine, my three, all fair and straight.—

*AXEL'S wife*

[furiously to him]

'T was thy false bargain, thine; who would not pay  
The Piper.—But we pay!

*Peter the Sacristan*

Bewitched, bewitched!

The boys ran out—and I ran after them,  
And something red did trip me—'t was the Devil.  
The Devil!

*Old Ursula*

Ah, ring on, and crack the bell:  
Ye'll never have them back.—I told ye so!

[The bell clangs incessantly]

## Curtain

### ACT II

*Scene I: Inside 'the Hollow Hill.'*

A great, dim-lighted, cavernous place, which shows signs of masonry. It is part cavern and part cellarage of a ruined, burned-down and forgotten old monastery in the hills.—The only entrance (at the centre rear), a ramshackle wooden door, closes against a flight of rocky steps.—Light comes from an opening in the roof, and from the right, where a faggot-fire glows under an iron pot.—The scene reaches (right and left) into dim corners, where sleeping children lie curled up together like kittens.



## Page 13

By the fire sits the *piper*, on a tree-stump seat, stitching at a bit of red leather. At his feet is a row of bright-colored small shoes, set two and two. He looks up now and then, to recount the children, and goes back to work, with quizzical despair.

Left, sits a group of three forlorn Strollers. One nurses a lame knee; one, evidently dumb, talks in signs to the others; one is munching bread and cheese out of a wallet. All have the look of hunted and hungry men. They speak only in whispers to each other throughout the scene; but their hoarse laughter breaks out now and then over the bird-like ignorance of the children.

A shaft of sunlight steals through the hole in the roof. *Jan*, who lies nearest the *piper*, wakes up.

*Jan*  
Oh!

[The *piper* turns] Oh, I thought. . . I had a dream!

*Piper* [softly] Ahe?

*Jan*  
I thought. . . I dreamed. . . somebody wanted me.

*Piper*  
Soho!

*Jan*  
[earnestly]  
I thought. . . Somebody Wanted me.

*Piper*  
How then?  
[With watchful tenderness.]

*Jan*  
I thought I heard Somebody crying.

*Piper*  
Pfui!—What a dream.—Don't make me cry again.

*Jan*  
Oh, was it you?—Oh, yes!



*Piper*

[apart, tensely]

No Michael yet!

[*Jan* begins to laugh softly, in a bewildered way; then grows quite happy and forgetful. While the other children waken, he reaches for the pipe and tries to blow upon it, to the *Piper's* amusement. *Ilse* and *Hansel*, the Butcher's children, wake.

*Ilse*

Oh!

*Hansel*

—Oh!

*Piper*

Ahe?

*Ilse*

I thought I had a dream.

*Piper*

Again?

*Ilse*

. . . It was some lady, calling me.

*Hansel*

Yes, and a fat man called us to come quick;

A fat man, he was crying—about me!

That same fat man I dreamt of, yesterday.

*Piper*

Come, did you ever see a fat man cry,

About a little Boy?

[The Strollers are convulsed with hoarse mirth.

*Hansel*

No,—Never.

*Ilse*

Never!

Oh, what a funny dream!

[They giggle together.] [The *piper* silences the Strollers, with a gesture of warning towards the rocky door.



*Piper*

[to himself]

'T is Hans the Butcher.

[To the Children]

Well, what did he say?

*Hansel*

'Come home, come home, come home!' But I didn't go.

I don't know where. . . Oh, what a funny dream!

*Ilse*

Mine was a bad dream!—Mine was a lovely lady

And she was by the river, staring in.



## Page 14

*Piper*

You were the little gold-fish, none could catch.

Oh, what a funny dream! . . .

[Apart, anxiously]

No Michael yet.

[Aloud]

Come, bread and broth! Here—not all, three at a time;

'T is simpler. Here, you kittens. Eat awhile;

Then—

[*Rudi* wakes.]

*Rudi*

Oh! I had a dream,—an awful dream!

[The *piper* takes *Jan* on his knee and feeds him, after ladling out a big bowl of broth from the kettle for the Children, and giving them bread.]

*Piper*

Oh! oh! I had a dream!

*Children*

Oh, tell it to us!

*Piper*

I dreamed. . . a Stork. . . had nested in my hat.

*Children*

Oh!

*Piper*

And when I woke—

*Children*

You had—

*Piper*

*One hundred children!*

*Children*

Oh, it came true! Oh, oh; it all came true!

*The strollers*

Ah, ho, ho, ho!

[The dumb one rises, stretches, and steals toward the entrance, stopping





to slip a blind-patch over one eye. The *piper* goes to him with one stride, seizing him by the shoulder.

*Piper*

[to him, and the others, apart]

Look you.—No Michael yet!—And he is gone  
Full three days now,—three days. If he be caught,  
Why then,—the little ravens shall be fed!

[Groans from the three]

Enough that Cheat-the-Devil leaked out too;—  
No foot but mine shall quit this fox-hole now!  
And you,—think praise for once, you have no tongue,  
And keep these magpies quiet. [Turns away.

[To himself]

Ah, that girl.

The Burgomeister's Barbara! But for her,  
And moon-struck Michael with his 'one more look'!  
Where is he now?—And where are we?  
[Turning back to the Children] So, so.

[The Strollers huddle together, with looks of renewed anxiety and wretchedness.—Their laughter at the Children breaks out forlornly now and then.—The *piper* shepherds the Children, but with watchful eyes and ears toward the entrance always. —His action grows more and more tense.

*Rudi*

[over his broth]

Oh, I remember now!—Before I woke. . .  
Oh, what an awful dream!

*Ilse*

Oh, tell us, Rudi,—  
Oh, scare us,—Rudi, scare us!—

*Rudi*

[bursting into tears]

. . . *Lump was dead!*

Lump, Lump!— [The Children wail.

*Piper*

[distracted]

Who's Lump?

*Rudi*

Our Dog!

*Piper*

[shocked and pained]



The Dog!—No, no.  
Heaven save us—I forgot about the dogs!

*Rudi*

He Wanted me;—and I always wasn't there!  
And people tied him up,—and other people  
Pretended that he bit.—He never bites!  
He Wanted me, until it broke his heart,  
And he was dead!



## Page 15

*Piper*

[struggling with his emotion]

And then he went to heaven,

To chase the happy cats up all the trees;—

Little white cats! . . . He wears a golden collar . . .

And sometimes—[Aside]—I'd forgot about the dogs!

Well, dogs must suffer, so that men grow wise.

'T was ever so.

[He turns to give *Jan* a piping lesson]

## CHILDREN

Oh, what a funny dream! [Suddenly he lifts his hand. They listen, and hear a dim sound of distant chanting, going by on some neighboring road. The *piper* is puzzled; the Strollers are plainly depressed.

*Jan*

What is it?

*Piper*

People; passing down below,

In the dark valley.

[He looks at the Children fixedly]

Do you want to see them?

*Children*

Don't let them find us! What an ugly noise.—

No, no—don't let them come!

*Piper*

Hark ye to me.

Some day I'll take you out with me to play;

High in the sun,—close to the water-fall . . .

And we will make believe—*We'll make believe*

*We're hiding!* . . .

[The Strollers rock with mirth.]

*Children*

Yes, yes! Oh, let us make believe!

*Strollers*

Oho, ho, ho!—A make-believe!—Ho, ho!



*Piper*

But, if you're good,—yes, very, very soon  
I'll take you, as I promised,—

*Children*

—Gypsies, oh!

*Piper*

Yes, with the gypsies. We shall go at night,  
With just a torch—  
[Watching them.]

*Children*

Oh!

*Piper*

Like fire-flies! Will-o'-the-wisps!  
And make believe we're hiding, all the way,  
Till we come out into a sunny land,—  
All vines and sunlight, yes, and men that sing!  
Far, far away—forever.  
[Gives *Ilse* a bowl to feed the other children]  
[*Jan* pipes a measure of the Kinder-spell, brokenly. The *piper* turns.  
So! Thou'lt be  
My master, some day. Thou shalt pipe for me.

*Jan*

[piping]  
Oh, wasn't that one beautiful?—Now you!

*Piper*

[taking the pipe]  
The rainbow-bridge by day;  
—And borrow a shepherd-crook!  
At night we take to the Milky Way;  
And then we follow the brook!

We'll follow the brook, whatever way  
The brook shall sing, or the sun shall say,  
Or the mothering wood-dove coos!  
And what do I care, what else I wear,  
If I keep my rainbow shoes!

[He points to the little row of bright shoes. The Children scream with joy. *Ilse* and *Hansel* run back.



*Children*

Oh dear! What lovely shoes! Oh, which are mine?  
Oh! Oh!—What lovely shoes! Oh, which are mine?

*Piper*

Try, till you see.

[Taking up a little red pair]

But these,—these are for Jan.

[*Jan* is perched on the tree-stump, shy and silent with pleasure.]



## Page 16

*Ilse*

Oh, those are best of all! And Jan—

*Piper*

And Jan

Is not to trudge, like you. Jan is to wear  
Beautiful shoes, and shoes made most of all,  
To look at!

[Takes up a pair of bird's wings.]

*Children*

[squealing]

Oh! Where did you find the wings?  
Bird's wings!

*Piper*

There was some hunter in the woods,  
Who killed more birds than he could carry home.  
He did not want these,—though the starling did,  
But could not use them more! And so,—

[Fastening one to each heel]

And so,—

They trim a little boy.

[Puts them on *Jan*. He is radiant. He stretches out his legs and pats  
the feathers.

*Children*

[trying on theirs and capering]

O Jan!—O Jan!  
Oh! see my shoes!

[The *piper* looks at *Jan*.]

*Piper*

Hey day, what now?

*Jan*

I wish. . .

*Piper*

What do you wish? Wish for it!—It shall come.

[*Jan* pulls him closer and speaks shyly.]



*Jan*

I wish—that I could show them—to the Man,  
The Lonely Man.

[The *piper* looks at him and backs away; sits down helplessly and looks  
at him again.

Oh, can I?—

*Piper*

Thou!—'T would make me a proud man.

*Jan*

Oh! it would make Him smile!

[The Children dance and caper. *Trude* wakes up and joins them. Sound of distant  
chanting again.

*Trude*

I had a dream!

*Piper*

A dream!

[Pretending to be amazed. Reflects, a moment]

I know!—Oh, what a funny dream!

[The Children all fall a-laughing when he does.—Noise without.  
*Cheat-the-Devil*'s voice crying, 'Cuckoo—Cuckoo!'

*Cheat-the-devil*

Quick, quick!—I've something here.

[The others roll away a big stone, and enter by the wooden door (rear), *cheat-the-devil*.  
He does not wear his red hood. He has a garland round his neck, and a basket on his  
arm.

*Piper*

[sharply to himself]

No Michael yet!

[To *cheat-the-devil*]

Michael!—Where's Michael?

*Cheat-the-devil*

Look you,—you must wait.

We must be cunning.—There's a squirrel, mark you,  
Hopped after me! He would have found us out.

I wanted him; I loved him. But I ran.

For once a squirrel falls a-talking.—Ah!

Look what I have.—Guess, guess!

[Showing his basket to the Children.]



*Children*

Cakes!

[He is sad]

Shoes!

[He is sadder]

Then—honey!

[He radiantly undoes his basket, and displays a honeycomb. The Strollers, too, rush upon him.

*Piper*

Ah, Cheat-the-Devil! They would crop your ears.

Where had you this?





## Page 17

*Cheat-the-devil*

Why, such a kind old farmer!  
He'd left his bee-hives; they were all alone;  
And the bees know me. So I brought this for you;  
I knew They 'd like it.—Oh, you're happy now!

*Piper*

But Michael,—have they caught him?

*Cheat-the-devil*

Oh, not they!  
I heard no word of Michael; Michael's safe!  
Once on the road I met a countryman,  
Asked me the way. And not a word I spoke!  
'Tis far the wisest. Twenty riddles he asked me.  
I smiled and wagged my head. Anon cries he,  
This Fool is deaf and dumb!—That made me angry,  
But still I spoke not.—And I would not hurt him!  
He was a bad man. But I liked the mule.—  
Now am I safe!—Now am I home at last!

*Piper*

'St.—Met you any people on the way,  
Singing?

*Cheat-the-devil*

No, growling,—growling dreary psalms  
All on a sunny day! Behind the hedges,  
I saw them go. They go from Hamelin, now;  
And I know why!—  
[The *piper* beckons him away from the Children.  
The mayor's Barbara  
Must go to Rudersheim, to be a Nun!

*Piper*

To be a Nun!

*Cheat-the-devil*

A penance for them all.  
She weeps; but she must go! All they, you see,  
Are wroth against him.—He must give *his* child—

*Piper*

A nun!



*Cheat-the-devil*

[nodding]

Forever!—She, who smiled at Michael.  
Look you, she weeps! They are bad people all;—  
Nothing like these. [Looking at the Children.  
These are all beautiful.

*Piper*

To lock her up! A maiden, shut away  
Out of the light. To cage her there for life,  
Cut off her hair; pretend that she is dead!—  
Horrible, horrible! No, I'll not endure it.  
I'll end this murder.—He shall give up his;  
But never so!—Not so!—While I do live  
To let things out of cages!—Tell me, quick!—  
When shall it happen?

*Cheat-the-devil*

Why, it falls to-day.  
I saw two herds of people going by,  
To be there well aforetime, for the sight.  
And she is going last of all, at noon;  
All sparkling, like a Bride.—I heard them tell.

*Piper*

No, never, never!—No, it shall not be!  
Hist!—

[Steps heard scrambling down the entrance-way. [Enter *Michael* in mad haste. They  
rush upon him with exultation and relief. He shakes them off, doggedly.

*Piper*

So!—You had like to have hanged us.

*Michael*

—What of that?

*Piper*

All for a lily maiden.

*Michael*

Ah,—thy pipe!  
How will it save her?—Save *her*! Tune thy pipe  
To compass that!—You do not know—

*Piper*

I know.  
Tell me no more.—I say it shall not be!



To heel, lad! No, I follow,—none but I!

Go,—go! [*Michael* rushes out again.

[To *cheat-the-devil*, pointing to the Children]

Do you bide here and shepherd these.



## Page 18

*Children*

Where are you going?—Take us too!—us too!—

Oh, take us with you?—Take us!

*Piper*

[distracted]

No, no, no!

You shall be kittens all. And chase your tails,

Till I come back!—So here!

[Catches *Hansel* and affixes to his little jacket a long strip of leather for a tail; then whirls him about.

*Children*

Me too!—Me too!

*Cheat-the-devil*

Let me make tails,—let me!

[Seizing shears and leather.]

*Piper*

[wildly]

Faith, and you shall.

A master tailor!—Come, here's food for thought.

Think all,—

[To the Strollers]

And hold your tongues, there!—

If a Cat—

If a Cat have—as all men say—Nine Lives,

And if Nine Tailors go to make a Man,

How long, then, shall it take one Man turned Tailor

To keep a Cat in Tails, until she die?

[*Cheat-the-devil* looks subdued; the children whirl about.

But here's no game for Jan.—Stay! Something else.—

[He runs to a wooden coffer, rear, and takes out a long crystal on the end of a string, with a glance at the shaft of sunlight from the roof.

The Children watch.

Be quiet, now.—Chase not your tails too far,

Till I come home again.

*Children*

Come home—come home!



*Piper*

And you shall see my—

*Children*

Something Beautiful!

Oh, oh, what is it?—Oh, and will it play?

Will it play music?

*Piper*

Yes.

[He hangs the crystal in the sun. A Rainbow strikes the wall.

—The best of all!

*Cheat-the-devil, Jan, children*

Oh, oh, how beautiful,—how beautiful!

*Piper*

And hear it pipe and call, and dance, and sing.

Heja!—And hark you all. You have to mind—

The Rainbow!

[He climbs out, pipe in hand. The Children whirl about after their tails.—*Cheat-the-devil*, and *Jan* on his tree-stump, open-mouthed with happiness, watch the Rainbow.

## Curtain

Scene II: The Cross-ways: on the Long Road to Rudersheim.

A wooded country: high hills at back. The place is wild and overgrown, like the haunted spot it is reputed to be. In the foreground, right, a ruined stone well appears, in a mass of weeds and vines. Opposite, left, tall trees and dense thickets. Where the roads cross (to left of centre), stands a large, neglected shrine, with a weather-worn figure of Christ,—again the 'Lonely Man'—facing towards Hamelin.—The stage is empty, at rise of the curtain; but the sound of chanting from burghers just gone by fades slowly, on the road to Rudersheim.

From the hillside at the rear comes the *piper*, wrapped in a long green cloak, his pipe in his hand. He looks after the procession, and back to Hamelin.—Enter, springing from the bushes to the right, *Michael*, who seizes him.



## Page 19

Their speech goes breathlessly.

### MICHAEL

*Quick!*—tell me—

*Piper*  
Patience.

*Michael*  
Patience?—Death and hell!  
Oh, save her—save her! Give the children back.

*Piper*  
Never. Have you betrayed us?

*Michael*  
I!—betrayed?

*Piper*  
So, so, lad.

*Michael*  
But to save her—

*Piper*  
There's a way,—  
Trust me! I save her, or we swing together  
Merrily, in a row.—How did you see her?

*Michael*  
By stealth: two days ago, at evening,  
Hard by the vine-hid wall of her own garden,  
I made a warbling like a nightingale;  
And she came out to hear.

*Piper*  
A serenade!  
Under the halter!

*Michael*  
Hush.—A death-black night,  
Until she came.—Oh, how to tell thee, lad!



She came,—she came, not for the nightingale,  
But even dreaming that it would be I!

*Piper*

She knew you?—We are trapped, then.

*Michael*

No, not so!

She smiled on me.—Dost thou remember how  
She smiled on me that day? Alas, poor maid,  
She took me for some noble in disguise!  
And all these days,—she told me,—she had dreamed  
That I would come to save her!

*Piper*

Said she this?

*Michael*

All this—all this, and more! . . .  
What could lies do?—I lied to her of thee;  
I swore I knew not of thy vanishment,  
Nor the lost children. But I told her true,  
I was a stroller and an outcast man  
That hid there, like a famished castaway,  
For one more word, without a hope,—a hope;  
Helpless to save her.

*Piper*

And she told thee then,  
She goes to be a nun?

*Michael*

Youth to the grave!  
And I—vile nothing—cannot go to save her,  
Only to look my last—

*Piper*

Who knows?

*Michael*

[bitterly]

Ah, thou!—

*Piper*

Poor Nightingale!  
[Fingers Us pipe, noiselessly.]



*Michael*

[rapt with grief]

Oh, but the scorn of her!

*Piper*

She smiled on thee.

*Michael*

Until she heard the truth:—

A juggler,—truly,—and no wandering knight!

Oh, and she wept.

[Wildly]

Let us all hang together.

*Piper*

Thanks. Kindly spoken.—Not this afternoon!

*Michael*

Thou knowest they are given up for dead?

*Piper*

Truly.

*Michael*

Bewitched?

*Piper*

So are they.

*Michael*

Sold to the Devil?





## Page 20

*Piper*

[Facing softly up and down, with the restless cunning  
of a squirrel at watch]

Pfui! But who else? Of course. This same old Devil!

This kind old Devil takes on him all we do!

Who else is such a refuge in this world?

Who could have burned the abbey in this place,

Where holy men did live? Why, 't was the Devil!

And who did guard us one secluded spot

By burying a wizard at this cross-ways?—

So none dare search the haunted, evil place!

The Devil for a landlord!—So say I!

And all we poor, we strollers, for his tenants;

We gypsies and we pipers in the world,

And a few hermits and sword-swallowers,

And all the cast-aways that Holy Church

Must put in cages—cages—to the end!

[To Michael, who is overcome]

Take heart! I swear,—by all the stars that chime!

I'll not have things in Cages!

*Michael*

Barbara!

So young,—so young and beautiful!

*Piper*

And fit

To marry with friend Michael!

*Michael*

Do not mock.

*Piper*

I mock not.—(Baa—Baa—Barbara!)

*Michael*

Ay, she laughed,

On that first day. But still she gazed.—I saw

Her, all the while! I swallowed—

*Piper*

Prodigies!

A thousand swallows, and no summer yet!



But now,—’t is late to ask,—why did you not  
Swallow her father?—That had saved us all.

*Michael*

They will be coming soon. They will cut off  
All her bright hair,—and wall her in forever.

*Piper*

Never. They shall not.

*Michael*

[dully]

Will you give them back,  
Now?

*Piper*

I will never give them back. Be sure.

*Michael*

And she is made an offering for the town!  
I heard it of the gossips.—They have sworn  
Jacobus shall not keep his one ewe-lamb  
While all the rest go childless.

*Piper*

And I swear  
That he shall give her up,—to none but thee!

*Michael*

You cannot do it!

*Piper*

Have I lived like Cain,  
But to make good one hour of Life and Sun?  
And have I got this Hamelin in my hands,  
To make it pay its thousand cruelties  
With such a fool’s one-more? . . .  
—You know right well,  
’T was not the thousand guilders that I wanted  
For thee, or me, or any!—Ten would serve.  
But there it ached; *there*, in the money-bag  
That serves the town of Hamelin for an heart!  
That stab was mortal! And I thrust it deep.  
Life, life, I wanted; safety,—sun and wind!—  
And but to show them how that daily fear  
They call their faith, is made of blasphemies  
That would put out the Sun and Moon and Stars,  
Early, for some last Judgment!



[He laughs, up to the tree-tops]

And the Lord,

Where will He get His harpers and singing-men

And them that laugh for joy?—From Hamelin guilds?—

Will you imagine Kurt the Councillor

Trying to sing?

[He looks at his pipe again; then listens intently.



## Page 21

*Michael*

His lean throat freeze!—But she—  
Barbara! Barbara!—

*Piper*

Patience. She will come,  
Dressed like a bride.

*Michael*

Ah, do not mock me so.

*Piper*

I mock not.

*Michael*

She will never look at me.

*Piper*

Rather than be a nun, I swear she will  
Look at thee twice,—and with a long, long look.  
[Chant approaches in the distance, coming from Hamelin.]

*Voices*

Dies irae, dies illa  
Solvat saeculum in favilla,  
Teste David cum Sibylla.

Quantus tremor est futurus,  
Quando iudex est venturus,  
Cuncta stricte discussurus!

*Piper*

Bah, how they whine! Why do they drag it so?

*Michael*

[overcome]

Oh, can it be the last of all? O Saints!—  
O blessed Francis, Ursula, Catherine!  
Hubert—and Crispin—Pantaleone—Paul!  
George o' the Dragon!—Michael the Archangel!

*Piper*

Michael Sword-eater, canst not swallow a chant?  
The well, the well!—Take care.



*Voices*

[nearer]

Inter oves locum praesta,  
Et ab hoedis me sequestra,  
Statuens in parte dextra.

Confutatis maledictis,  
Flammis acribus addictis:  
Voca me cum benedictis.

[*Michael* climbs down the ancient well, reaching his head up warily, to see.

The *piper* waves to him debonairly, points to the tree-tops, left, and stands a moment showing in his face his disapproval of the music. He fingers his pipe. As the hymn draws near, he scrambles among the bushes, left, and disappears.

Enter slowly, chanting, the company of burghers from Hamelin,—men together first, headed by priests; then the women.—*Anselm* and all the townsfolk appear (saving *Veronika*, the wife of *Kurt*); *Jacobus* is meek; *Kurt* very stern.—As they appear, the piping of the Dance-spell begins softly, high in air. The hymn wavers; when the first burghers reach the centre of the stage, it breaks down.

They look up, bewildered: then, with every sign of consternation, struggle, and vacant fear, they begin to dance, willy-nilly. Their faces work; they struggle to walk on; but it is useless. The music whirls them irresistibly into a rhythmic pace of 3/4 time, and jogs their words, when they try to speak, into the same dance-measure. One by one,—two and two they go,—round and round like corks at first, with every sign of struggle and protest, then off, on the long road to Rudersheim. Fat priests waltz together.—*Kurt* the fierce and *Jacobus* the sleek hug each other in frantic endeavor to be released. Their words jolt insanely.

## KURT, JACOBUS

( No, no.—No, no—No, no.—No, no!

( Yes, yes.—I, yes.—Yes, yes.—Yes, yes!

## Page 22

Some

( *La—crymos—a—Dies—ill—*  
( Bewitched—the Devil!—bewitched—bewitched!  
( I will not—will not—will—I will!  
( No, no—but where!—Help—help!—To arms!

Others

( *Suppli—canti—suppli—Oh!*  
( To Hamelln—back—to Hamelln—stay!  
( No, no!—No, no,—Away,—away!  
[They dance out, convulsively, towards Rudersheim.  
KURT and JACOBUS, still whirling, cry,—

JACOBUS, KURT

( Yes, yes!—yes, yes!—Let go—let go—  
( No, no!—I will not—No! . . . No

[Exeunt left, dancing.

OTHERS

( Keep time, keep time! Have mercy!—Time!  
( Oh, let me—go!—Let go—let go!  
( Yes, yes—Yes, yes—No, no—no—no!

[BARBARA appears, pale and beautiful;—richly dressed in white, with flowing locks. She is wan and exhausted.—The dance-mania, as it seizes her, makes her circle slowly and dazedly with a certain pitiful silliness. The nuns and monks accompanying her point in horror. But they, too, dance off with each other, willy-nilly,—like leaves in a tempest. BARBARA is left alone, still circling slowly. The piping sounds softer. She staggers against a tree, and keeps on waving her hands and turning her head, vaguely, in time.

MICHAEL looks forth from the well; then climbs out and approaches her.

## MICHAEL

She is so beautiful,—how dare, I tell her? My heart, how beautiful! The blessed saint! . . . Fear nothing, fairest Lady.—You are saved. [She looks at him unseeingly, and continues to dance.—He holds out his arms to stop her. Pray you, the danger's gone. Pray you, take breath! Poor, shining dove,—I would not hold thee here, Against thy wish.—'Tis Michael, the sword-eater. [The piping ceases.]

BARBARA

[murmuring]



Yes, yes—I must—I must—I must. . .  
[Reenter the PIPER from the thickets.]

MICHAEL  
Look, I will guard you like a princess, here;  
Yes, like Our Lady's rose-vine.

BARBARA [gasping]  
Ah, my heart!  
[The PIPER comes towards her. She sees him and holds out her arms, crying:— Oh, he has saved me!—I am thine—thine—thine! [Falls into his arms half-fainting. The PIPER stands amazed, alarmed, chagrined.

PIPER  
Mine?

MICHAEL  
[furiously]  
*Thine?*—So was it? All a trap? Cock's blood!  
Thine, thine!—And thou hast piped her wits away.  
Thine!

PIPER  
[holding her off]  
No, not mine!

BARBARA  
[to him]  
Why did you steal me hence?  
When did you love me?—Was it on first sight?

PIPER  
[confounded]  
I, love thee?

MICHAEL  
—Knave! thief! liar!

PIPER  
—Give me breath.  
[Holds off BARBARA gently.]

BARBARA  
Where are you taking me?

PIPER  
I? Taking thee?



## Page 23

MICHAEL

[to her]

He shall not steal thee!

BARBARA

[in a daze]

I must follow him.

PIPER

No! 'T is too much. You shall not follow me!

I'll not be followed.—Damsel, sit you down.

Here is too much! I love you not.

BARBARA

[wonderingly]

You do not?

Why did you pipe to me?

MICHAEL

—And steal her wits,

Stealer of all the children!

BARBARA

[vaguely]

Are they safe?

PIPER

[to MICHAEL]

Oh, your good faith!—

[To her]

They're safe.

BARBARA

I knew—I knew it!

PIPER

And so art thou. But never shall they go

To Hamelin more; and never shalt thou go

To be a nun.

BARBARA

To be a nun,—no, no! Ah me, I'm spent.

Sir, take me with you.





MICHAEL

[still enraged to the PIPES]

Rid her of the spell!

Is this thy pledge?

PIPER

[distracted]

I do but rub my wits—

To think—to think.

[To himself]

What shall I do with her,

Now that she's here!—Suppose her bound to stay!

[To them]

Hearken.—You, Michael, on to Rudersheim—

MICHAEL

And leave her here? No, no!

PIPER

Then take the girl.

BARBARA

To Rudersheim? No, never, never!

PIPER

Well . . .

Hearken.—There is the hermit, over the hill.

[Apart, wildly]

But how—suppose she will not marry him?

I will not take her where the children are.

And yet—

[An idea strikes him. To her]

Hark, now;—hark, now, and tell me truly;

Can you spin cloth?

BARBARA

[amazed]

I? Spin?

PIPER

[eagerly]

Can you make shoes?

BARBARA

I—I make shoes!—Fellow!

PIPER

So.



MICHAEL

Art thou mad!

PIPER

With me you may not go! But you'll be safe.  
Hearken:—you, Michael, go to Rudersheim;  
And tell the nuns—

BARBARA

No, no! I dare not have it!  
Oh, they would send and take me! No, no, no!

PIPER

Would you go back to Hamelin?

BARBARA

No—no—no!  
Ah, I am spent.  
[Droops towards the PIPER; falters and sinks down on the bank  
beside the well, in a swoon.—The PIPER is abashed and rueful  
for the moment.

MICHAEL

All this, your work!

PIPER

[looking at her closely]  
Not mine.  
This is no charm. It is all youth and grief,  
And weariness. And she shall follow you.—  
Tell the good nuns you found her sore bewitched,  
Here in this haunt of 'devils';—clean distraught.  
No Church could so receive a dancing nun!  
Tell them thou art an honest, piteous man  
Desires to marry her.

MICHAEL

Marry the Moon!



## Page 24

PIPER

No, no, the Moon for me!—She shall be yours;

And here she sleeps, until her wits be sound.

[He spreads his cloak over her, gently]

The sun's still high. 'T is barely afternoon.—

[Looks at the sunshine. A thought strikes him with sudden dismay]

'T is—no, the time is going!—On my life,

I had forgot Them!—And They will not stay

After the Rainbow fades.

MICHAEL

[confounded]

Art thou moon-mad?

PIPER

[madly]

No. Stir not! Keep her safe! I come anon.

But first I go.—They'll not mind Cheat-the-Devil!

They'll creep, to find out where the Rainbow went.

I know them! So would I!—They'll all leak out!

MICHAEL

Stay—stay!

PIPER

No; guard her, you!—Anon, anon!

MICHAEL

But you will pipe her up and after you!

PIPER

[flinging him the pipe from his belt]

Do you fear this? Then keep it till I come.

You bide!—The Other cannot.

MICHAEL

Who?

PIPER

The Rainbow,

The Rainbow!—

[He runs madly up the hillside, and away.]



## Curtain

### ACT III

SCENE: The same, later. BARBARA lies motionless, still sleeping.—MICHAEL, sitting on the bank opposite, fingers the pipe with awe and wistfulness. He blows softly upon it; then looks at the girl hopefully. She does not stir.

Enter the PIPER, from the hills at back. He carries a pair of water-jars slung over his shoulders, and seems to be in high feather.

PIPER

[singing]

Out of your cage,

Come out of your cage

And take your soul on a pilgrimage!

Pease in your shoes, an if you must!—

But out and away, before you're dust:

Scribe and Stay-at-home,

Saint and Sage,

Out of your cage,

Out of your cage!—

[He feigns to be terror-struck at sight of the pipe in Michael's hands]

Ho, help! Good Michael, Michael, loose the charm!

Michael, have mercy! I'm bewitched!—

MICHAEL

[giving him the pipe]

Cock's faith!

Still mocking!—Well ye know, it will not play

Such games for me.

PIPER

Be soothed,—'twas as I guessed,

[Unslings the jars]

All of them hungry,—and the Rainbow going;—

And Cheat-the-Devil pining in a corner.

'Twas well I went: they were for leaking out,

And then,—lopped ears for two!

MICHAEL

Oh, that will come.

PIPER

Never believe it! We have saved her, look you;



We save them all! No prison walls again,  
For anything so young, in Hamelin there.  
Wake her, and see.

MICHAEL

Ay, wake her. But for me,  
Her sleep is gentler.

PIPER

[comfortingly]

Nay, but wait.—Good faith,  
Wait. We have broke the bars of iron now;  
Still there are golden!—'Tis her very self  
Is caged within herself. Once coax her out,  
Once set her own heart free!—



## Page 25

MICHAEL

Wake her, and see!  
[The PIPER crosses, humming.]

PIPER

Mind your eyes, tune your tongue!  
Let it never be said, but sung, but sung,  
'Out of your cage, out of your cage!'  
Maiden, maiden,—  
[He wakes her gently. BARBARA sits up, plainly bewildered;  
then she sees the PIPER, and says happily:—

BARBARA

Oh!—you have come to save me. They are gone.  
All this, for love of me!

PIPER

[ruefully]  
No, no—I—No!

BARBARA

You—you are robbers?  
[Her hands go to the pearls about her neck.]

PIPER

[indignant]  
No! Blood on the Moon!  
This is the maddest world I ever blinked at.—  
Fear nothing, maiden. I will tell you all.  
Come, sit you down; and Michael shall keep watch  
From yonder hillock, lest that any pass.  
Fear nothing. None will pass: they are too sure  
The Devil hath this cross-ways!—Sit you down.

[MICHAEL watches, with jealous wistfulness, from the road (left rear).—BARBARA half  
fearfully sits up, on the bank by the well.

BARBARA

Not love? And yet . . . you do not want my pearls?  
Then why—

PIPER

For why should all be love or money?  
Money! Oho,—that mouldy thousand guilders



You think of!—But it was your Hamelin friends  
That loved the guilders, and not I.

BARBARA

Then why—  
Why did you steal me hence?

PIPER

Why did yourself  
Long to be stolen?

BARBARA

[shuddering]

Ah! to be shut up. . .  
Forever,—young—alive!

PIPER

Alive and singing;  
Young,—young;—and four thick walls and no more sun,  
No music, and no wandering, and no life!  
Think you, I would not steal all things alive  
Out of such doom?—How can I breathe and laugh  
While there are things in cages?—You are free;  
And you shall never more go back again.

BARBARA

And you, who are you then?

PIPER

How do I know?  
Moths in the Moon!—Ask me a thing in reason.

BARBARA

And 't was not . . . that you loved me.

PIPER

Loved thee? No!—  
Save but along with squirrels, and bright fish,  
And bubbling water.

BARBARA

Then where shall I go?

PIPER

Oh, little bird,—is that your only song?  
Go? Everywhere! Here be no walls, no hedges,  
No tolls, no taxes,—rats nor aldermen!  
Go, say you? Round the world, and round again!



[Apart]

—Ah, she was Hamelin-born.

[He watches her]

But there's a man,—

Sky-true, sword-strong, and brave to look upon;

One that would thrust his hand in dragon's mouth

For your bright sake; one that would face the Devil,

Would swallow fire—

BARBARA

You would?

PIPER

[desperately]

*I?*—No, not I!

Michael,—yon goodman Michael.





## Page 26

BARBARA

[bitterly]

A stroller!—oh, nought but a wandering man.

PIPER,

Well, would you have a man take root, I ask?

BARBARA

That swallows swords. . . .

PIPER

Is he a comely man?

BARBARA

That swallows swords!—

PIPER

What's manlier to swallow?

Did he but swallow pancakes, were that praise?

Pancakes and sausage, like your Hamelin yokels?

He swallows fire and swords, I say, and more.

And yet this man hath for a whole noon-hour

Guarded you while you slept;—still as a dove,

Distant and kind as shadow; giant-strong

For his enchanted princess,—even you.

BARBARA

So you bewitched me, then.

PIPER

[wildly]

How do I know?

BARBARA

Where are the children?

PIPER

I'll not tell you that.

You are too much of Hamelin.

BARBARA

You bewitched them!

PIPER

Yes, so it seems. But how?—Upon my life,



'T is more than I know,—yes, a little more.  
[Rapidly: half in earnest and half in whimsy]  
Sometimes it works, and sometimes no. There are  
Some things upon my soul, I cannot do.  
[Watching her.]

BARBARA  
[expectantly]  
Not even with thy pipe?

PIPER  
Not even so.  
Some are too hard.—Yet, yet, I love to try:  
And most, to try with all the hidden charms  
I have, that I have never counted through.

BARBARA  
[fascinated]  
Where are they?

PIPER  
[touching his heart]  
Here.

BARBARA  
What are they?

PIPER  
How do I know?  
If I knew all, why should I care to live?  
No, no! The game is What-Will-Happen-Next?

BARBARA  
And what will happen?

PIPER  
[tantalizingly]  
Ah! how do I know?  
It keeps me searching. 'T is so glad and sad  
And strange to find out, What-Will-Happen-Next!  
And mark you this: the strangest miracle. . .

BARBARA  
Yes!—

PIPER  
Stranger than the Devil or thy Judgment;



Stranger than piping,—even when / pipe!  
Stranger than charming mice—or even men—

BARBARA  
[with tense expectancy]  
What is it? What?

PIPER  
[watching her]  
Why,—what may come to pass  
Here in the heart. There is one very charm—

BARBARA  
Oh!

PIPER  
Are you brave?

BARBARA  
[awe-struck]  
Oh!

PIPER  
[slowly]  
Will you drink the philter?

BARBARA  
'Tis. . . some enchantment?

PIPER  
[mysteriously]  
'T is a love philter.

BARBARA  
Oh, tell me first—

PIPER  
Why, sooth, the only charm  
In it, is Love. It is clear well-water.

BARBARA  
[disappointed]  
Only well-water?



## Page 27

PIPER

Love is only Love.  
It must be philters, then?  
[He comes down smiling and beckons to MICHAEL, who draws near, bewildered.  
This lady thirsts  
For magic!  
[He ties a long green scarf that he has over his shoulder, to a  
water-jar, and lowers it down the old well; while BARBARA watches,  
awe-struck. He continues to sing softly.  
*Mind your eyes,  
Tune your tongue;  
Let it never he said,  
But sung,—but sung!—*

MICHAEL

[to BARBARA, timidly]  
I am glad at least, fair lady,  
To think how my poor show did give you pleasure  
That day—that day when—

BARBARA

Ah! that day of doom!

MICHAEL

What is your will?

BARBARA

[passionately]  
I know not; and I care not!  
[Apart]  
Oh, it is true.—And he a sword-eater!  
[The PIPER hauls up the jar, full of water.]

PIPER

Michael, your cup.

[MICHAEL gives him a drinking-horn from his belt. The PIPER fills it with water,  
solemnly, and turns to BARBARA, who is at first defiant, then fascinated.  
Maiden, your ears. So:—hearken.  
Before you drink of this, is it your will Forever to be gone from Hamelin?

BARBARA

I must,—I must.



PIPER

Your mother?

BARBARA

[piteously]

I have no mother;  
Nor any father, more. He gave me up.

PIPER

That did he!—For a round one thousand guilders!  
Weep not, I say. First, loose you, heart and shoes,  
From Hamelin. Put off now, the dust, the mould,  
The cobble-stones, the little prying windows;  
The streets that dream o' *What the Neighbors Say*.  
Think you were never born there. Think some Breath  
Wakened you early—early on one morning,  
Deep in a Garden (but you knew not whose),  
Where voices of wild waters bubbling ran,  
Shaking down music from glad mountain-tops,—  
Where the still peaks were burning in the dawn,  
Like fiery snow,—down into greenest valleys,  
That do off their blue mist only to show  
Some deeper blue, some haunt of violets.  
No voice you heard, nothing you felt or saw,  
Save in your heart, the tumult of young birds,  
A nestful of wet wings and morning-cries,  
Throbbing for flight! . . .  
Then,—for your Soul, new wakened, felt athirst,  
You turned to where that call of water led,  
Laughing for truth,—all truth and star-like laughter!  
Beautiful water, that will never stay,  
But runs and laughs and sparkles in the heart,  
And sends live laughter trickling everywhere,  
And knows the thousand longings of the Earth!  
And as you drank it then, so now, drink here;

[He reaches her the horn. She has listened, motionless, like a thing bewitched, her eyes fixed and wide, as if she were sleep-walking. She drinks. MICHAEL stands near, also motionless. When she speaks, it is in a younger voice, shy, sweet and full of wonder.



## Page 28

And tell me,—tell me, you,—what happened then?  
What do you see?

BARBARA

Ah!—

[She looks before her with wide, new eyes.]

PIPER

Do you see—a—

BARBARA

. . . Michael!

PIPER

So!—And a good one. And you call him?

BARBARA

. . . Michael.

PIPER

So.—'Tis a world of wonders, by my faith!—  
What is the fairest thing you see but—

BARBARA

Michael.

PIPER

And is he comely as a man should be?  
And strong?—And wears good promise in his eyes,  
And keeps it with his heart and with his hands?  
[She nods like a child]  
And would you fear to go with him?—

BARBARA

No, no!

PIPER

Then reach to him that little hand of yours.

[MICHAEL, wonder-struck, runs to the jar, pours water upon his hand, rubs it off with haste, and falls on his knees before her, taking her hand fearfully.

BARBARA

[timidly]

And can he talk?—



PIPER

Yes, yes.—The maid's bewildered.  
Fear nothing. Thou'rt so dumb, man!—Yes, yes, yes.  
Only he kneels; he cannot yet believe.  
Speak roundly to him.—Will you go with him?  
He will be gentler to you than a father:  
He would be brothers five, and dearest friend,  
And sweetheart,—ay, and knight and serving-man!

BARBARA

Yes, yes, I know he will. And can he talk, too?

PIPER

Lady, you have bewitched him.

MICHAEL

Oh! dear Lady,  
With you—with you, I dare not ope my mouth  
Saving to sing, or pray!

PIPER

Let it be singing!  
Lad, 't is a wildered maiden, with no home  
Save only thee; and she is more a child  
Than yesterday.

MICHAEL

Oh, lordly, wondrous world!—  
How is it, Sweet, you smile upon me now?

BARBARA

Sure I have ever smiled on thee. How not?  
Art thou not Michael?—*And thou lovest me.*  
*And I love thee!*—If I unloved thee ever,  
It was some spell.—  
[Rapturously]  
But this,—ah, *This is I!*  
[MICHAEL, on his knees, winds his arms about her.]

PIPER

[softly]  
It is all true,—all true. Lad, do not doubt;  
The golden cage is broken.

MICHAEL

Oh! more strange  
Than morning dreams! I am like one new-born;



I am a speechless babe.—And this is she,  
My Moon I cried for,—here,—

PIPER

It is thy bride.

MICHAEL

Thou wilt not fear to come with me?

BARBARA

With thee?

With thee! Ah, look! What have I more than thee?

And thou art mine, tall fellow! How comes it now

Right happily that I am pranked so fair!

[She touches her fineries, her long pearl-strings, joyously]

And all this came so near to burying;

This!

MICHAEL

And this dearer gold.

[Kissing her hair.]

BARBARA

All, all for thee!—

[She leans over in a playful rapture and  
binds her hair about him]

Look,—I will be thy garden that we lost,

Yea, everywhere,—in every wilderness.

There shall none fright us with a flaming sword!

But I will be thy garden!



## Page 29

[There is the sound of a herd-bell approaching.

PIPER

See,—how the sunlight soon shall pour red wine  
To make your marriage-feast!—And do you hear  
That faery bell?—No fear!—'T is some white creature,  
Seeking her whiter lamb.—Go; find our hermit;  
And he shall bless you,—as a hermit can!  
And be your pledge for shelter. There's the path.—  
[To MICHAEL]  
Follow each other, close!

MICHAEL

Beyond the Sun!

PIPER

A golden afternoon,—and all is well!

[He gives MICHAEL his cloak to wrap round BARBARA. They go, hand in hand, up into the hills, The herd-bell sounds softly.—The PIPER cocks his head like a squirrel, and listens with delight. He watches the two till they disappear; then comes down joyously.

PIPER

If you can only catch them while they're young!

[The herd-bell sounds nearer. He lets down a water-jar into the well again. The nearness of the hell startles him. He becomes watchful as a wild creature. It sounds nearer and nearer. A woman's voice calls like the wind: 'Jan! Jan!'— The PIPER, tense and cautious, moves softly down into the shrubbery by the well.

VERONIKA'S VOICE

Jan!

PIPER

Hist! Who dared?

VERONIKA'S VOICE

. . . Jan!—

PIPER

Who dared, I say?  
A woman.—'T is a woman!

[Enter VERONIKA, on the road from Hamelin. She is very pale and worn, and drags herself along, clutching in her hand a herd-bell. She looks about her, holds up the bell



and shakes it once softly, covering it with her fingers again; then she sits wearily down at the foot of the ruined shrine and covers her face, with a sharp breath.

VERONIKA

. . . Ah,—ah,—ah!

[The PIPER watches with breathless wonder and fascination. It seems to horrify him.]

PIPER

[under breath]

That woman!

[VERONIKA lifts her head suddenly and sees the motion of the bushes.]

VERONIKA

He is coming!—He is here!

[She darts towards the well.—The PIPER springs up.]

Oh, God of Mercy! . . . It is only you!

Where is he?—Where?—Where are you hiding him?

PIPER

[confusedly]

Woman . . . what do you, wandering, with that bell?

That herd-bell?

VERONIKA

Oh! are you man or cloud? . . . Where is my Jan?

Jan,—Jan,—the little lame one! He is mine.

He lives, I know he lives. I know—yes, yes,

You've hidden him. I will be patient.—Yes.

PIPER

Surely he lives!

VERONIKA

—Lives! will you swear it? Ah,—

I will believe! But he . . . is not so strong

As all the others.

PIPER

[apart]

Aie, how horrible!

[To her]

Sit you down here. You cannot go away

While you are yet so pale. Why are you thus?

[She looks at him distractedly.]



VERONIKA

You, who have torn the hearts out of our bodies  
And left the city like a place of graves,—  
Why am I spent?—Ah, ah!—But he's alive!  
Yes, yes, he's living.



## Page 30

PIPER

Oh, how horrible!  
Why should he not be living?—What am I?

VERONIKA

I do not know.

PIPER

Do you take me for the Devil?

VERONIKA

I do not know.

PIPER

Yet you were not afraid?

VERONIKA

What is there now to fear?

PIPER

[watching her]  
Where are the townsfolk?

VERONIKA

They are all gone to Rudersheim. . .

PIPER

[still watchful]  
How so?

VERONIKA

Where, for a penance, Barbara, Jacob's daughter,  
Will take the veil. His one, for all of ours!  
It will be over now.

PIPER

Have none returned?

VERONIKA

I know not; I am searching, since the dawn.

PIPER

To-day?



VERONIKA

And every day.

PIPER

That herd-bell, there

Why do you bring it?

VERONIKA

[sobbing]

Oh, he loves them so.

I knew, if he but heard it, he would follow—

PIPER

No more. I know!

VERONIKA

An if he could!

PIPER

[like a wounded animal]

You hurt me

Somewhere,—you hurt me!

VERONIKA

You!—A man of air?

PIPER

What, am I that?

VERONIKA

What are you?—Give them back!

Give them to me, I say. You have them hidden.

Are they all living?

PIPER

[struggling with pity]

Yes, yes.

VERONIKA

Give them back!

PIPER

No.

VERONIKA

But they live, they live?

PIPER

—Wilt thou believe me?



VERONIKA  
And are they safe?

PIPER  
Yes.

VERONIKA  
And you hide them?

PIPER  
Yes.

VERONIKA  
And are they . . . warm?

PIPER  
—Yes.

VERONIKA  
Are they happy?—Oh,  
That cannot be!—But do they laugh, sometimes?

PIPER  
Yes.

VERONIKA  
—Then you'll give them back again!

PIPER  
No, never.

VERONIKA  
[Half to herself, distraught between suspense and hope]  
I must be patient.

PIPER  
Woman, they all are mine.  
I hold them in my hands; they bide with me.  
What's breath and blood,—what are the hearts of children,  
To Hamelin,—while it heaps its money-bags?

VERONIKA  
You cared not for the money.

PIPER  
No?—You seem  
A foreign woman,—come from very far,  
That you should know.



VERONIKA

I know. I was not born  
There. But you wrong them. There were yet a few  
Who would have dealt with you more honestly  
Than this Jacobus, or—

PIPER

Or Kurt the Syndic!  
Believe It not. Those two be tongue and brain  
For the whole town! I know them. And that town  
Stands as the will of other towns, a score,  
That make us wandering poor the things we are!  
It stands for all, unto the end of time,

## Page 31

That turns this bright world black and the Sun cold,  
With hate, and hoarding;—all-triumphant Greed  
That spreads above the roots of all despair,  
And misery, and rotting of the soul!  
Now shall they learn—if money-bags can learn—  
What turns the bright world black, and the Sun cold;  
And what's that creature that they call a child!—  
And what this winged thing men name a heart  
Beating queer rhythms that they long to kill.—  
What is this hunger and this thirst to sing,  
To laugh, to fight,—to hope, to be believed?  
And what is truth? And who did make the stars?

\* \* \* \* \*

I have to pay for fifty thousand hates,  
Greeds, cruelties; such barbarous tortured days  
A tiger would disdain;—for all my kind!  
Not my one mother, not my own of kin,—  
All, all, who wear the motley in the heart  
Or on the body:—for all caged glories  
And trodden wings, and sorrows laughed to scorn.  
I,—I!—At last.

VERONIKA

Ah, me! How can I say:  
Yet make them happier than they let you be?

PIPER

Woman, you could!—They know not how to be  
Happy! They turn to darkness and to woe  
All that is made for joy. They deal with men  
As, far across the mountains, in the south,  
Men trap a singing thrush, put out his eyes,—  
And cage him up and bid him then to sing—  
Sing before God that made him,—yes, to sing!

\* \* \* \* \*





I save the children.—Yes, I save them, so,  
Save them forever, who shall save the world!—  
Yes, even Hamelin.—

But for only *you*,  
What do they know of Children?—Pfui, *their own*!  
Who knows a treasure, when it is his own?  
Do they not whine: '*Five mouths around the table;*  
*And a poor harvest. And now comes one more!*  
*God chastens us!*'—Pfui!—

VERONIKA

[apart, dully]

. . . But I must be patient.

PIPER

You know, you know, that not one dared, save you,—  
Dared all alone, to search this devil's haunt.

VERONIKA

They would have died—

PIPER

But never risked their *souls*!  
That knew I also.

VERONIKA

Ah!

PIPER

'Young faces,' sooth,  
The old ones prate of!—Bah, what is't they want?  
'Some one to work for me, when I am old;  
Some one to follow me unto my grave;  
Some one—for me!' Yes, yes. There is not one  
Old huddler-by-the-fire would shift his seat  
To a cold corner, if it might bring back  
All of the Children in one shower of light!

VERONIKA

The old, ah, yes! But not—

PIPER

The younger men?  
Aha! Their pride to keep the name alive;  
The name, the name, the little Hamelin name,  
Tied to the trade;—carved plain upon his gravestone!  
Wonderful! If your name must chain you, live,  
To your gaol of a house, your trade you love not,—why,

Best go without a name, like me!—How now?  
Woman,—you suffer?



## Page 32

VERONIKA

Ah, yet could I laugh,  
Piper, yet could I laugh, for one true word,—  
But not of all men.

PIPER

Then of whom?

VERONIKA

Of Kurt.

PIPER

Bah, Kurt the Councillor! a man to curse.

VERONIKA

He is my husband.

PIPER

[shortly]

Thine? I knew it not.  
Thine? But it cannot be. He could not father  
That little Jan,—that little shipwrecked Star.

VERONIKA

Oh, then you love him? You will give him back?

PIPER

The son of Kurt?

VERONIKA

No, not *his* son! No, no.  
He is all mine, all mine. Kurt's sons are straight,  
And ruddy, like Kurt's wife of Hamelin there,  
Who died before.

PIPER

And you were wed. . .

VERONIKA

So young,  
It is all like some dream before the sunrise,  
That left me but that little shipwrecked Star.

PIPER

Why did you marry Kurt the Councillor?



VERONIKA

[humbly]

He wanted me. Once I was beautiful.

PIPER

[wonderingly]

What, more than now?

VERONIKA

Mock if you will.

PIPER

I mock you;

O Woman, . . . you are very beautiful.

VERONIKA

I meant, with my poor self, to buy him house

And warmth, and softness for his little feet.

Oh, then I knew not,—when we sell our hearts,

We buy us nothing.

PIPER

Now you know.

VERONIKA

I know.

His dearest home it was, to keep my heart

Alone and beautiful, and clear and still;

And to keep all the gladness in my heart,

That bubbled from nowhere!—for him to drink;—

And to be houseless of all other things,

Even as the Lonely Man.

[The PIPER starts]

Where is the child?

PIPER

No; that I will not tell. Only thus much:

I love thy child. Trust me,—I love them, all.

They are the brightest miracle I know.

Wherever I go, I search the eyes of men

To find such clearness;—and it is not there.

Lies, greed and cruelty, and dreadful dark!

And all that makes Him sad these thousand years,

And keeps His forehead bleeding.—Ah, you know!

VERONIKA

Whom do you think on?



PIPER

Why, the Lonely Man,—  
But now I have the children safe with me;  
And men shall never teach them what men know;—  
Those radiant things that have no wish at all  
Save for what is all-beautiful!—the Rainbow,  
The running Water, and the Moon, the Moon!  
The only things worth having!

VERONIKA

—Oh, you will not  
Give him to me?

PIPER

How give you yours again,  
And not the others? What a life for him!  
[She hides her face]  
And Kurt the Syndic, left without his sons?  
Bah, do not dream of it! What would Kurt do?—  
And hearken here! Should any hunt me down,  
Take care. Who then could bring the children back?



## Page 33

VERONIKA

*Jan! Jan!*

PIPER

He loves me. He is happy.

VERONIKA

[passionately]

*No!*

Without me?—No.

PIPER

He has not even once  
Called you.

VERONIKA

[staggering]

Ah, ah! how cruel! 'Tis the spell,  
The spell.

PIPER

[touching his heart]

—You hurt me, here. What makes it, Woman?—  
Would you not have him happy?

VERONIKA

O my God!

PIPER

[offering her water]

Drink here. Take heart. O Woman, they must stay!  
'T is better so. No, no, I mock thee not.  
Thou foldest all about me like the Dark  
That holds the stars. I would I were thy child.]

VERONIKA

But I will find him. I will find him—

PIPER

No,

It must not be! Their life is bound with mine.  
If I be harmed, they perish. Keep that word,  
Go, go!



VERONIKA

[passionately]

My longing will bring back my Own.

PIPER

Ah, long not so.

VERONIKA

Yes, it will bring him back!

He breathes. And I will wish him home to me,

Till my heart break!

PIPER

Hearts never break in Hamelin.

Go, then; and teach those other ones to long;

Wake up those dead!

VERONIKA

Peace. I shall draw him home.

PIPER

Not till he cries for thee.

VERONIKA

Oh, that will be

Soon,—soon.

PIPER

[gently]

Remember,—if one word of thine

Set on the hounds to track me down and slay me,

They will be lost forever; they would die,—

They, who are in my keeping.

VERONIKA

Yea, I hear.

But he will come . . . oh, he will come to me,

Soon,—soon.

[She goes, haltingly, and disappears along the road to Hamelin.—The PIPER, alone, stands spell-bound, breathing hard, and looking after her. Then he turns his head and comes down, doggedly. Again he pauses. With a sudden sharp effort he turns, and crosses with passionate appeal to the shrine, his arm uplifted towards the carved Christ as if he warded off some accusation. His speech comes in a torrent.

PIPER

I will not, no, I will not, Lonely Man!

I have them in my hand. I have them all—



All—all! And I have lived unto this day.  
You understand . . .  
[He waits as if for some reply]  
You know what men they are.  
And what have they to do with such as these?  
Think of those old as death, in body and heart,  
Hugging their wretched hoardings, in cold fear  
Of moth and rust!—While these miraculous ones,  
Like golden creatures made of sunset-cloud,  
Go out forever,—every day, fade by  
With music and wild stars!—Ah, but You know.  
The hermit told me once. You loved them, too.  
But I know more than he, how You must love them:  
Their laughter, and their bubbling, skylark words  
To cool Your heart. Oh, listen, Lonely Man!—





## Page 34

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, let me keep them! I will bring them to You,  
Still nights, and breathless mornings; they shall touch  
Your hands and feet with all their swarming hands,  
Like showering petals warm on furrowed ground,—  
All sweetness! They will make Thee whole again,  
With love. Thou wilt lookup and smile on us!

\* \* \* \* \*

Why not? I know—the half—You will be saying.  
You will be thinking of Your Mother.—Ah,  
But she was different. She was not as they.  
She was more like . . . this one, the wife of Kurt!  
*Of Kurt!* No, no; ask me not this, not this!  
Here is some dawn of day for Hamelin,—now!  
-Tis hearts of men You want. Not mumbled prayers;  
Not greed and carven tombs, not misers' candles;  
No offerings, more, from men that feed on men;  
Eternal psalms and endless cruelties! . . .  
Even from now, there may be hearts in Hamelin,  
Once stabbed awake!  
[He pleads, defends, excuses passionately; before his will gives  
way, as the arrow flies from the bow-string.]  
—*I will not give them back!*  
And Jan,—for Jan, that little one, that dearest  
To Thee and me, hark,—he is wonderful.  
Ask it not of me. Thou dost know I cannot!

\* \* \* \* \*

Look, Lonely Man! You shall have all of us  
To wander the world over, where You stand  
At all the crossways, and on lonely hills,—  
Outside the churches, where the lost ones  
And the wayfaring men, and thieves and wolves  
And lonely creatures, and the ones that sing!  
We will show all men what we hear and see;  
And we will make Thee lift Thy head, and smile.

\* \* \* \* \*



No, no, I cannot give them all! No, no.—  
Why wilt Thou ask it?—Let me keep but one.  
No, no, I will not. . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . . *Have Thy way.--I will!*

## Curtain

### ACT IV

SCENE: Hamelin market-place.

It is early morning; so dark that only a bleak twilight glimmers in the square; the little streets are dim. Everywhere gloom and stillness. In the house of KURT, beside the Minster, there is one window-light behind a curtain in the second story. At the casements, down right and left, sit OLD CLAUS and OLD URSULA, wan and motionless as the dead.

The church-bell, which likewise seems to have aged, croaks softly, twice. PETER the Sacristan stands by the bell-rope.

OLD URSULA

No, no. They'll never come. I told ye so.  
They all are gone. There will be nothing young  
To follow us to the grave.

OLD CLAUS

No, no,—not one!

[The Minster-door opens, and out come certain of the townsfolk from early mass. They look unnaturally old and colorless. Their steps lag drearily.—HANS the Butcher and his wife; AXEL the Smith with his wife, and PETER the Cobbler, meet, on their way to the little street, left, and greet one another with painstaking, stricken kindness. They speak in broken voices.



## Page 35

HANS the Butcher  
Well, well—

AXEL the Smith  
God knows!  
[The bell sounds]

HANS the Butcher  
Neighbor, how fare your knees?  
[AXEL smooths his right leg and gives a jerk of pain. They all move stiffly.

AXEL the Smith  
I'm a changed man.

HANS the Butcher  
Peter the Sacristan,  
Give by the bell! It tolls like—Oh, well, well!

AXEL the Smith  
It does no good, it does no good at all.

PETER the Cobbler  
Rather, I do believe it mads the demons;  
And I have given much thought—

AXEL the Smith  
Over thy shoes!

PETER the Cobbler  
[modestly]  
To demons.

AXEL'S WIFE  
Let him chirp philosophy!  
He had no children.

PETER the Cobbler  
[wagging his head solemnly]  
I'm an altered man.  
Now were we not proceeding soberly,  
Singing a godly hymn, and all in tune,  
But yesterday, when we passed by—



HANS' WIFE

Don't say it!  
Don't name the curseful place.

HANS the Butcher

—And my poor head,  
It goes round yet;—around, around, around,  
As I were new ashore from the high seas;  
Still dancing—dancing—

AXEL the Smith

With 'Yes—yes!—Yes—yes!'

HANS the Butcher

Even as ye heard, the farmer's yokel found me  
Clasping a tree, and praying to stand still!

AXEL the Smith

Ay, ay,—but that is nought.

PETER the Cobbler

All nought beside.

HANS' WIFE

Better we had the rats and mice again,  
Though they did eat us homeless,—if we might  
All starve together!—Oh, my Hans, my Hans!

PETER the Cobbler

Hope not, good souls. Rest sure, they will not come.

AXEL'S WIFE

Who will say that?

PETER the Cobbler

[discreetly]

Not I; but the Inscription,

[He points to the Rathaus wall.]

AXEL the Smith

Of our own making?

PETER the Cobbler

On the Rathaus wall!

At our own bidding it was made and graved:—  
How,—on that day and down this very street,  
He led them,—he, the Wonderfully-clothed,  
The Strange Man, with his piping;



[They cross themselves]  
And they went,—  
And never came again.

HANS' WIFE  
But they may come!

PETER the Cobbler  
[pityingly]  
Marble is final, woman;—nay, poor soul!  
When once a man be buried, and over him  
The stone doth say *Hic Jacet*, or Here Lies,  
When did that man get up?—There is the stone.  
They come no more, for piping or for prayer;  
Until the trump of the Lord Gabriel.  
And if they came, 'tis not in Hamelin men  
To alter any stone, so graven.—Marble  
Is final. Marble has the last word, ever.  
[Groans from the burghers.]

HANS the Butcher  
O little Ilse!—Oh! and Lump—poor Lump!  
More than a dog could bear!—More than a dog—



## Page 36

[They all break down. The Shoemaker consoles them.

PETER the Cobbler

Bear up, sweet neighbors.—We are all but dust.  
No mice, no children.—Hem! And now Jacobus,—  
His child, not even safe with Holy Church,  
But lost and God knows where!

AXEL'S WIFE

Bewitched,—bewitched!  
[Hans and his wife, arm in arm, turn left, towards their house,  
peering ahead.

HANS' WIFE

Kind saints! Me out and gone to early mass,  
And all this mortal church-time, there's a candle,  
A candle burning in the casement there;—  
Thou wasteful man!

HANS the Butcher

[huskily]  
Come, come! Do not be chiding.  
Suppose they came and could not see their way.  
Suppose—O wife!—I thought they'd love the light!  
I thought—

PETER the Cobbler

Ay, now! And there's another light  
In Kurt the Syndic's house.

[They turn and look up. Other burghers join the group. All walk lamely and look the picture of wretchedness.

AXEL'S WIFE

His wife, poor thing,  
The priest is with her. Ay, for once, they say,  
Kurt's bark is broken.

OLD URSULA

There will be nothing young  
To follow us to the grave.

AXEL'S WIFE

They tell, she seems



Sore stricken since the day that she was lost,  
Lost, searching on the mountain. Since that time,  
She will be saying nought. She stares and smiles.

HANS' WIFE

And reaches out her arms,—poor soul!

ALL

Poor soul!

[Murmur in the distance. They do not heed it.]

AXEL the Smith

[To the Butcher]

That was no foolish thought of thine, yon candle.

I do remember now as I look back,

They always loved the lights. My Rudi there

Would aye be meddling with my tinder-box.

And once I—Oh!—

[Choking]

AXEL'S WIFE

[soothingly]

Now, now! thou didst not hurt him!

'T was I! Oh, once—I shut him in the dark!

AXEL the Smith

Come home . . . and light the candles.

PETER the Cobbler

In the day-time!

AXEL'S WIFE

Oh, it is dark enough!

AXEL the Smith

Lord knows, who made

Both night and day, one of 'em needs to shine!

But nothing does!—Nothing is daylight now.

Come, wife, we'll light the candles.

[Exit with his wife.]

PETER the Cobbler

He's a changed man.

PETER the Sacristan

God help us, what's to do?



[Tumult approaching. Shouts of 'Jacobus' and 'Barbara.'  
Hark!

HANS' WIFE  
Neighbors!

HANS the Butcher  
Hark! Hark!

[AXEL and his wife reenter hastily; AXEL rushes toward the noise.

AXEL'S WIFE  
Oh, I hear something! Can it be—

PETER the Cobbler  
They're shouting.

HANS the Butcher  
My lambs,—my lambs!

[AXEL reenters, crestfallen]





## Page 37

AXEL the Smith  
'Tis naught—but Barbara  
*His—his!*

[Shaking his fist at the house of Jacobus.

PETER the Cobbler  
[calling]  
Jacobus!

[The others are stricken with disappointment.

HANS the Butcher  
Wife,—’t is none of ours.

AXEL the Smith  
Let him snore on!—The only man would rather  
Sleep late than meet his only child again!

PETER the Cobbler  
[deprecatingly]  
No man may parley with the gifts of Fortune!  
[Knocking on the door]  
Jacobus!

[Enter, at the rear, with a straggling crowd, BARBARA and MICHAEL, both radiant and resolute. She wears the long green cloak over her bridal array.

JACOBUS appears in his doorway, night-capped and fur-gowned, shrinking from the hostile crowd. The people murmur.

CROWD  
( Barbara!—She that was bewitched!  
( And who’s the man? Is it the Piper? No!  
( No, no—some stranger. Barbara! Barbara’s home;—  
( He never gave her up!—Who is the man?

JACOBUS  
My daughter! ’Tis my daughter,—found—restored!  
Oh, heaven is with us!

ALL  
[sullenly]  
Ah!



JACOBUS

Child, where have you been?

ALL

Ay, where, Jacobus?

[He is dismayed.]

JACOBUS

Who is this man?—Come hither.

BARBARA

[without approaching him, lifting her face clearly]

Good-morning to you, father! We are wed.

Michael,—shall I go hither?

[The townsfolk are amazed.]

JACOBUS

She is mad!

She is quite mad,—my treasure.

PETER the Cobbler

Let her speak.

Maids sometimes marry, even in Hamelin.

ALL

( Ay, tell us!

( Who is he? Barbara?

( Art thou mad?—How came ye hither?

JACOBUS

Who is he?

BARBARA

Michael.

PETER the Cobbler

'Tis the Sword-Eater!

A friend o' the Piper's!—Hearken—

ALL

She's bewitched!

HANS' WIFE

This is the girl was vowed to Holy Church,

For us and for our children that are lost!



BARBARA

Ay, and did any have a mind to me,  
When I was lost? Left dancing, and distraught?

ALL

We could not. We were spell-bound. Nay, we could not.

JACOBUS

[sagely, after the others]  
We could not.

BARBARA

So!—But there was one who could.  
There was one man. And this is he.  
[turning to Michael]  
And I,  
I am no more your Barbara,—I am his.  
And I will go with him, over the world.  
I come to say farewell.

JACOBUS

He hath bewitched her!

MICHAEL

Why did we ever come? Poor darling one,  
Thy too-much duty hath us in a trap!

AXEL the Smith

No, no!—Fair play!

OTHERS

Don't let them go! We have them.

PETER the Cobbler

Hold what ye have. Be 't children, rats or mice!



## Page 38

[Hubbub without, and shouts. Some of the burghers hasten out after this fresh excitement. JACOBUS is cowed. BARBARA and MICHAEL are startled. The shouts turn savage. The uproar grows. Shouts of 'Ay, there be is! We have him! We have him! Help—help! Hold fast! Ah! Piper! Piper! Piper!'

How now? What all!—

[The crowd parts to admit the PIPER, haled hither with shouts and pelting, by MARTIN the Watch and other men, all breathless. His eyes burn.

MICHAEL

[apart]

Save us!—They have him.

MARTIN

[gaspingly]

Help!

Mark ye—I caught him!—Help,—and hold him fast!

PIPER

I came here,—frog!

MARTIN

Ay, he were coming on;  
And after him a squirrel, hopping close!

SECOND MAN

As no man ever saw a squirrel hop—  
Near any man from Hamelin! And I looked—

MARTIN

And it was he; and all we rush upon him—  
And take him!

PIPER

Loose thy claws, I tell thee I—

ALL

( 'Ware!

( Mercy!

( Let him go!

VOICE FROM CROWD

I have the squirrel!



PIPER

[savagely]

Let the squirrel go!

Or you shall rue it.—Loose him! He's not mine.

[He sees BARBARA and MICHAEL for the first time and recoils with amazement.

BARBARA steps towards him.

BARBARA

Oh, let him go,—let be. His heart is clear,

As water from the well!

[The PIPER gazes at her, open-mouthed.]

ALL

( She talks in her sleep!

( The maid's bewitched!

( Now, will ye hear?

AXEL'S WIFE

He piped and made thee dance!

PETER the Cobbler

'T was he bewitched us!

BARBARA

[serenely]

Whatever was,—it was for love of me.

PIPER

[thunderstruck]

So!

BARBARA

He piped;—and all ye danced and fled away!

He piped;—and brought me back my wandering wits,

And gave me safe unto my Love again,—

My Love I had forgotten. . . .

PIPER

So!

MICHAEL

[with conviction]

Truly said.

BARBARA

[proudly]

Michael.



JACOBUS

Who is he, pray?

BARBARA

My own true love.

PETER the Cobbler

Now, is that all his name?

BARBARA

It is enough.

JACOBUS

—She's mad. Shall these things be?

ALL

( The Children! The Children!

( Where are the Children?

( Piper! Pi-per! Piper!

PIPER

[sternly]

Quiet you. And hear me.

I came to bring good tidings. In good faith,

Of mine own will, I came.—And like a thief

You haled me hither.—

[They hang upon his words]

. . . Your children—live.

ALL

( Thank God! I knew, I knew!

( We could not think them lost.

( Bewitched! Oh, but they live!—

( Piper!—O Piper!



## Page 39

PETER the Cobbler  
They're spell-bound,—mark me!

PIPER  
Ay, they are,—spell-bound:  
Fast bound by all the hardness of your hearts;  
*Caged,—in the iron of your money-lust—*

ALL  
( No, no, not all! Not I! Not mine, not mine!  
( No, no,—it is not true.

PIPER  
Your blasphemies,—your cunning and your Fear.

ALL  
( No, no!—What can we do?  
( News, Piper, news!  
( Where are your ridings, Piper?

PIPER  
Now hear me. You did make Jacobus swear  
To give his child.—What recks it, how he lose her?—  
Either to Holy Church—*against her will!*—  
Or to this man,—so that he give her up!  
He swore to you. And she hath pledged her faith.  
She is fast wed.—Jacobus shall not have her.  
He breaks all bargains; and for such as he,  
You suffer.—Will you bear it?

ALL  
No, no, no!

PIPER  
Then she who was “Proud Barbara” doth wed  
Michael-the-Sword-Eater.—The pledge shall stand.  
Shall it?

ALL  
( It stands.  
( Ay, ay!

PIPER  
Your word!



ALL

( We swear. We answer for him.  
( So much for Jacobus!

AXEL the Smith

An' if yon fellow like an honest trade,  
I'll take him!—I'll make swords!  
[Cheers. Michael is happy.]

ALL

Quick, quick!—Our children.—Piper!—Tell us all!

PIPER

'T is well begun.—Now have I come to say:  
There is one child I may bring back to you,—  
The first.

ALL

[in an uproar]  
( Mine—mine! Let it be mine!  
( Ours'—All of them! Now!  
( *Mine—mine—mine!—mine!*

PIPER

[unmoved]  
—Oh, Hamelin to the end!  
Which of you longed the most, and dared the most?  
Which of you—

[He searches the crowd anxiously with his eyes.]

ALL

( !! !! !!  
( We searched the hills!  
( We prayed four days!  
( We fasted twenty hours—  
( Mine! Mine!  
( Mine—mine—mine—mine!

PIPER

Not yet.—They all do live  
Under a spell,—deep in a hollow hill.  
They sleep, and wake; and lead a charmed life.  
But first of all,—one child shall come again.  
[He scans the crowd still]  
Where is the wife—of Kurt, the Councillor?

ALL [savagely] *No, mine, mine, mine!*





MARTIN'S WIFE

What, that lame boy of hers?

PIPER

Where is the wife of Kurt?

PETER the Cobbler AND OTHERS

—Veronika?

The foreign woman? She is lying ill:

Sore-stricken yonder—

[Pointing to the house.]

PIPER

[gladly]

Bid her come, look out!

[The crowd moves confusedly towards KURT'S house. The PIPER too approaches, calling]

Ho,—ho, within there!

[ANSELM, the priest, appears in the doorway with uplifted hand, commanding silence. He is pale and stern. At sight of his face the PIPER, falters.



## Page 40

ANSELM

Silence here!—Good people  
What means this?

PIPER

I have tidings for—the wife  
Of Kurt—the Councillor.

ANSELM

You are too late.

PIPER

Bid her—look out!

ANSELM

[solemnly]

Her soul is passing, now.

[The PIPER falls back stricken and speechless.—The crowd, seeing him humanly  
overwhelmed, grows brave.

MARTIN'S WIFE

'Tis he has done it!

HANS the Butcher

—Nay, it is God's will.

Poor soul!

PETER the Sacristan

[fearfully]

Don't anger him! 'T was Kurt the Syndic  
With his bad bargain.

AXEL the Smith

Do not cross the Piper!

MARTIN

Nay, but he's spent. He's nought to fear.—

Look there.

Mark how he breathes! Upon him! Help, help, ho!—

Thou piping knave!

OTHERS

Tie—chain him!—Kill him!—Kill him!

[They surround him. He thrusts them off.]



PETER the Cobbler and OTHERS

( Bind him, but do not kill him!—Oh, beware!  
( What is he saying?—Peace.

PIPER

[brokenly]

The wife of Kurt!

Off! what can you do?—Oh! I came, I came  
Here, full of peace, and with a heart of love;—  
To give—but now that one live Soul of all  
Is gone!—No, no!

—*I say she shall not die!*

*She shall not!*

ANSELM

Hush!—She is in the hands of God.  
She is at peace.

PIPER

No, never! Let me by!

[ANSELM bars the threshold and steps out.]

ANSELM

Thou froward fool!—Wouldst rend with tears again  
That shriven breath? And drag her back to sorrow?  
It is the will of God.

PIPER

—And I say No!

ANSELM

Who dare dispute—

PIPER

I dare!

ANSELM

With death?—With God?

PIPER

I know His will, for once! She shall not die.  
She must come back, and live!—*Veronika!*

[He calls up to the lighted window. The people stand aghast: ANSELM bars the threshold.

I come, I come! I bring your Own to you!  
Listen, Veronika!



[He feels for his pipe. It is gone.—His face shows dismay, for a moment]

Where?—Where?

PEOPLE

( He's lost the pipe.—He's hiding it!

( He cannot pipe them back! 'tis gone—'tis gone.—

( No, 'tis to save his life.—It is for time.

PIPER

[to himself]

—'T is but a voice. What matter?—

CROWD

( Seize him—

( Bind him!

PIPER

[to them]

Hush!

[Passionately he stretches his arms towards the window.

ANSELM

Peace, for this parting Soul!



## Page 41

PIPER [with fixed eyes]

*It shall not go.*

[To the Window] Veronika!—Ah, listen!—wife of Kurt. *He comes . . . he comes! Open thine eyes a moment! Blow the faint fire within thy heart. He comes!* Thy longing brings him;—ay, *and mine,—and mine!* Heed not these grave-makers, Veronika. Live, live, and laugh once more!—*Oh! do you hear?* Look, how you have to waken all these dead, That walk about you!—Open their dim eyes; Sing to them with your heart, Veronika, As I am piping, far away, outside! Waken them,—change them! Show them how to long, To reach their arms as you do, for the stars, And fold them in. Stay but one moment;—stay, And thine own Child shall draw thee back again Down here, to mother him,—mother us all! *Oh, do you listen?—Do not try to answer,—* I hear!—I hear. . . .

[A faint sound of piping comes from the distance.—The PIPER is first watchful, then radiant.—The burghers are awe-struck, as it sounds nearer.

BARBARA

Listen!

MICHAEL

His very tune,

[The PIPER faces front with fixed, triumphant eyes above the crowd.

MARTIN'S WIFE

O Lord, have mercy!

The Pipe is coming to him, through the air!

ALL

'T is coming to the Piper ;—we are lost.—

The Pipe is coming, coming through the air!

[The PIPER, with a sudden gesture, commands silence. He bounds away (centre), and disappears. The people, spell-bound with terror, murmur and fray.

ANSELM

*Retro me, Sathanas!*

[KURT the Syndic appears on the threshold behind ANSELM, whose arm he touches, whispering.—Their faces are wonder-struck with hope and awe.

HANS the Butcher

[to the others, pointing]

'T is Kurt the Syndic.



AXEL the Smith  
Then she lives!—

HANS' WIFE  
Look there!

OTHERS  
Look, look! The casement! . . .

[The casement of the lighted window opens wide and slowly.—Reenter the PIPER with JAN in his arms. The little boy holds the Pipe, and smiles about with tranquil happiness. The PIPER, radiant with joy, lifts him high, looking toward VERONIKA'S window.—The awe-struck people point to the open casement.

VERONIKA'S two white bands reach out; then she herself appears, pale, shining with ecstasy.

JAN  
*'Tis Mother!*

[The PIPER lifts him still before the window, gazing up. Then he springs upon the bench (outside the lower window) and gives JAN into the arms of VERONIKA.—KURT and ANSELM how their heads. A hush. —Then JAN looks down from the window-seat.

PIPER  
[to him, smiling wisely]  
And all the others?

JAN  
They were all asleep.

PIPER  
I'll waken them!  
[He takes his pipe.—An uproar of joy among the burghers.]

AXEL the Smith, HANS the Butcher, ALL  
( Bring lights,—bring lights!  
( Oh, Piper—Oh, my lambs!  
( The children!—The children!

## Page 42

[Some rush out madly; others go into their houses for lights; some are left on their knees, weeping for joy.

The PIPER sounds a few notes; then lifts his hand and listens, smiling.—Uproar in the distance.—A great harking of dogs;—shouts and cheers; then the high, sweet voices of the Children.

The piping is drowned in cries of joy. The sun comes out, still rosy, in a flood of light. The crowd rushes in. Fat burghers hug each other, and laugh and cry. They are all younger, their faces bloom, as by a miracle.

The Children pour in. Some are carried, some run hand-in-hand. Everywhere women embrace their own. KURT has his sons.—CHEAT-THE-DEVIL comes, with a daisy-chain around his neck, all smiles.

An uproar of light and faces.

HANS the Butcher  
The treasure for the Piper!

ALL  
Ay, ay, Piper!

HANS the Butcher  
The thousand guilders!

PIPER  
Give them Michael there,  
For all us three. I hate to carry things;—  
Saving out one!  
[He waves his hand to JAN in the window.—VERONIKA appears behind him, shining with new life. JAN leans out and points to the ground.  
*Heja!* What now?—  
[Picking up one of JAN'S winged shoes.]

HANS' WIFE  
Look! Look!—  
And wings upon it! Mercy, what a shoe.—  
Don't give it back.—The child will fly away!

PIPER  
No, no!  
[Looking up at the window soothingly.]  
He only wanted one to show—



JAN

To Mother!—See.

[Showing her his other foot, joyously]

PIPER

[to him]

And this,—wilt leave it here?

Here—with—

JAN

The Lonely Man! Oh, make Him smile!

[The PIPER crosses to the Shrine, with the little shoe, and hangs it up there; then he turns towards the window, waving his hand.]

CHILDREN

Where are you going? . . .

[They run and cling.]

PIPER

Ah, the high-road now!

CHILDREN

Oh! why?

PIPER

I have to find somebody there.

Yes, now and every day, and everywhere

The wide world over.—So: good-night, good-morning,

Good-by! There's so much piping left to do,—

I must be off, and pipe.

CHILDREN

Oh! why?

PIPER

I promised,

Look you! . . .

CHILDREN

Who is it?

PIPER

Why,—the Lonely Man.

[He waves them farewells and goes. The Children dance and laugh and sparkle. Through the hundred sounds of joy, there comes a far-off piping.]



**THE END**