

## The Rockwood Review.

fellow too lengthy to be detailed here. Before long we were convinced that he was a London dealer, and suspected rightly, as it proved that he was bent on the same mission as ourselves. But he could not quite make us out, and I suppose an inquisitive nature prompted him to pump us.

"Going on to Plymouth I suppose gents?" Not quite so far as that, we told him. "Thought perhaps you were in the Navy; pardon me if I seem inquisitive." To ease his mind, as much as anything, we told him of our destination, and he with surprise admitted he was going there himself. He was on business, big sale at the Manor House, hoped to do something in the picture line, and hoped he should not be disappointed in the fiddles. Charley's eyes met mine, and then he said very carelessly that he had heard the old squire had some very fine fishing tackle and also a choice collection of whips. He was after the first and I wanted some of the latter.

To shorten my tale, in due time we arrived at Spinhay, a queer old village hidden away among the hills. There were a few scattered houses and a couple of fairish country inns, where it was possible to get beds and all needful accommodation—though the said accommodation was strictly limited. There was the Blue Swan and the Dog and Duck. Our travelling companion had secured himself a bed at the Swan, and so did we, after having tried at the Dog and Duck and found it already completely engaged by the auctioneer and his staff. The sale had been going on all the morning, but before it was over for the day we had an opportunity of seeing the fishing tackle, the whips,—and the fiddles. When we got to these we found our dealer friend examining them carefully and handling them in an affectionate

and gingerly manner indicative of the connoisseur.

"A very poor lot—mostly fakes, the Strad, German copy, rather good of its sort, but thin in tone, hardly worth a fiver—Amati, perhaps, worth two of the others, but not worth a trip from London. Do you know anything about fiddles, gentlemen? No! well I suppose not, very few people do," and so on. We saw through him at once, and after he had left the room Charlie took up the Stradivarius with an expression of respectful awe. It was wonderfully perfect and anyone might easily have been induced to think it was a modern copy, but it was fine all over and what little wear it had, was ornamental. It was practically unstrung, and we thought it would be impolitic to try its tone or shew in any way that we were interested in fiddles. Charley was a born diplomat, and he at once saw that if he was to have that fiddle he must play a deep game for it. Mr. Lovejoy (for such his card gave his name to be) was after that fiddle or nothing, and had no doubt come prepared to have it at any price. We lit our pipes, and sallying forth into the moonlight held sweet counsel together. The prospect was very dark for us, it seemed hopeless. Suddenly a light seemed to break upon my cousin—Hammersly and Downer—he knew Downer, slightly, it is true, but they had been boys together and had both been to the same grammar school.

"Let's go and see Downer," said he, "we shall find him at the Duck." And we did, and over sundry glasses of Irish (they called it "Irish," it should have been "Head-ache") laid before the auctioneer our trouble. It seemed a foolish thing to do, you may perhaps, mind I say PERHAPS, influence a British jury, or "get at" a British