

The Rockwood Review.

From a recent number of the "Mail and Empire" we clip the following:—

There was a select reunion of the "knowing" in fiddle matters at noon yesterday, at the rooms of Messrs. A. & S. Nordheimer. The central figures were Mr. Gregorowitsch, the Russian solo violinist, and Dr. Otto Hahn. For many years Dr. Hahn, who is now a resident of this city, has been engaged in a research as to the process of making the Cremona varnish, his belief being that the varnish has much to do with the beautiful tone which distinguishes the old Italian instruments. The reunion was for the purpose of hearing Mr. Gregorowitsch play upon a number of cheap fiddles, which had been varnished with a preparation discovered by Dr. Hahn. For purposes of comparison several violins of the same grade, with the ordinary tradespirit varnish, were also tested by the distinguished soloist. Mr. Gregorowitsch does not speak a word of English, but after playing for half an hour on the various instruments submitted to him, in which he delighted his hearers with all kinds of improvisations in plain melody, as well as in brilliant passages in arpeggio, harmonics, double and triple stopping, etc., he said in German that he was delighted with the preparation of Dr. Hahn, and believed that it would prove a most valuable discovery. Dr. Hahn's varnish is prepared in oil, and the opinion of the experts was that it has a wonderful effect in mellowing the tone. Every violinist will wish success to Dr. Hahn in his praiseworthy effort to rediscover the long lost art of making the Italian varnish. En passant, I might state that Mr. Gregorowitsch uses for concert purposes a violin by Joseph Guarnerius, valued at \$5,000.

As a matter of fact there have been a thousand and one wonderful varnishes discovered, and probably

more nonsense has been written on this subject than any other, in connection with violins. Good varnishes were made in the past, and very excellent varnishes are made to-day. Cheap shop fiddles are nearly always varnished with quick drying spirit varnish, which ruins the tone of any violin. What is required is a slow drying article, containing oil in sufficient quantity to make it elastic, though hard. Few makers have patience to wait long enough to varnish a violin properly, and in their haste frequently impair the tone of their instruments. There are "tricks in the trade" of putting on varnish, and it is here the genius steps in and produces unique results.

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