

## The Rockwood Review.

took out his callipers and rule, and bit by bit went over both fiddles. They correspond to a hair's breadth!

"I want two hundred and fifty pounds for thi' one (this was nearly forty years ago remember), and when yours can show wear like this, it will fetch as much. That is if you can show its pedigree."

"I can do that." And I showed him the invoice. This made him laugh.

"Don't you think that is genuine!" I was rather ruffled.

"Of course I do, but I was thinking you might have some fun with our friends with your fiddle. Take it round to the experts, as they call themselves, and ask them what they think of it. You'll have a good afternoon's amusement over it, and when it's over come and tell me what they say."

The idea tickle<sup>d</sup> me, and I at once set forth. Before I went he assured me that not only was he positively convinced of the violin's originality, but would swear there was not another one like it in Europe.

I first took it to Huffkins, who was then looked upon as the great authority. His shop was small and dusty, and broken fiddles littered in it all directions. He took the violin from me abruptly, looked it up and down hastily, shook it, twanged the strings with his fat thumb, and said, "Garming!"

"Charming?"

"No, Garming; make 'em, and bake 'em like 'apenny cakes in Garmingy. Wuth about five-an'-twenty, bob; 'as 'em brought 'ere by the cart load at about fifteen apiece on taking a dozen. Bought 'im?"

"No."

"Going to?"

"No."

"Wanter sell 'im?"

"No."

"Ah! 'ad 'im a present. Oh, I see! Been in family a century, 'as 'e. Who told yer that—a reg'lar old Marine yarn! I'll give yer a

quid for 'im if you throw in the case. No, don't get angry! Yer ast my erpinion, and get riled 'cos I give you one."

"You are mistaken, I am not angry, but I thought you might know—look at that—that is the invoice my great grandfather had with it."

This made him roar with laughter.

"Oh, yes, of course, that's part of the game wouldn't go down without a dockment."

As I felt I was losing temper, I recased the poor fiddle, and with a hasty "Good morning," stepped into the street.

Now, this man knew as well as he knew anything that the instrument was what it professed to be, and those who knew him have told me since, that his method was always to run down genuine violins when shown to him, and that the better they were the more violent his abuse became.

I then went to Flipnap. His shop was as neat and bright as a new pin, and he himself as trim and prim as anyone could wish.

"Yas! a very well-made instrument. French, quite one of Vuillaume's best. Very new in tone—quite raw. The finish is excellent, the varnish the best imitation of the old Italian that has been brought to me yet. Just purchased it? Dear me, you don't say so. Over a century in your family. A specious tale. Curious old case—yas—but you see the case and the violin are two different things, you cannot judge one by the other," and so on. I began to feel quite ill. I moved on to another expert. He had much the same to say about it, but it was in a bantering style, and very good humoured. I left him feeling like a silly little school boy. A fourth judge remained. I had some difficulty in finding him. He was a jolly little fat man, and had a shop turning out of the Strand.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)