

"I do not understand you."

"I do not expect you to—or believe me—why should you? What have you, an unimaginative Anglo-Saxon, to do with marvels? How, in the centre of a great, cruel, material city, with the ceaseless sound of traffic outside our windows, should you expect anything supernatural? It may be only dreamtime. Perhaps you would not see it. And yet, one night when I feel strong enough, we will take the fiddle from its case, and I will play it to you—I who have not laid a finger on it for five years until to-night. And then, if its music moves you as it moved me, I dreamt no dream. If not, I will say it was a dream, and I may at last be able to use this masterpiece of Stradivarius."

I begged him to name an early day for the curious performance, but he would make no promise; so we parted for the night.

A month passed by: Luigi's London engagement terminated, and he was now going to win fresh laurels at Berlin. I had seen him two or three times every week, but he had never referred to the conversation which had taken place upon the night I drew the strange violin from its case; nor did he offer to redeem his promise on that occasion. I had ceased to think about it, or indeed only remember it in a jest, laughing at the idea of a superstitious man not being able to play on any particular fiddle. Two days before he left England he wrote me asking me to dine with him that night; so, ding, "I think that I may keep my promise of playing upon the Stradivarius."

We dined at a well known restaurant, and about ten o'clock went to Luigi's room to finish the night. The first thing I saw, upon entering, was the fiddle-case lying on the table,—Luigi's favorite bow and several coils of string beside it. We sat down and talked on various topics for about an hour, and then I said—

"I see you have made preparations for the performance. When do you intend to begin?"

Luigi drew a deep breath. "My friend," he said, "you will not blame me if my playing agitates you; and remember, when once I commence I must continue to the end. It is no pleasure to me—it is rather deadly pain. But I am curious, and would satisfy my doubts."

He was so much in earnest that I checked the laugh his solemn manner called up, and merely nodded acquiescence. He then rose, and saying, "We must not be interrupted," called his servant, and after giving him the necessary instructions looked the door, placing the key in his pocket. He then opened the mysterious case, and with tender hands drew forth the violin. His nimble fingers soon detached the several strings, knotted on the new ones, and in the course of about a quarter of an hour the instrument was ready, and tuned to his satisfaction. I felt, as I watched him, I should like to take the violin in my hands once more, to see if the strange desire I had before experienced would again come over me—but hardly liked to ask him to permit me to do so. And now all was ready—Luigi's critical ear satisfied with the sound of the strings, and he seemed about to strike his favorite attitude. Yet I noticed his pale face was paler than usual, and his hand holding the bow seemed tremulous; and I looked at him a sympathetic feeling of fear—a dread of something, I knew not what—crept over me. It seemed too absurd, however, to be disturbed by an excitable Italian playing a violin in a room with all the appliances of modern everyday life around me; so I laughed away the feeling, placed myself in my favorite attitude for listening to the master's performances—stiff length on the sofa—and was prepared to give my undivided attention to the music.

And yet for a while Luigi did not commence, although he saw I had resigned myself to my fate. He had placed the violin under his chin; his left-hand fingers were on the strings, but for some minutes he contented himself with beating a sort of time, or rhythmical measure, with the bow. One would have said he was endeavouring to recall something he had heard once, and only imperfectly remembered.

"What theme are you going to play to me?" I asked.

On hearing my voice he looked at me vacantly, and only upon my repeating the question did he seem aware of my presence. Then with an effort he said, ceasing not to beat time the while—

"Ah, that I do not know, I am no

longer my own master; I cannot choose. Let me beg of you not to interrupt me again, my friend."

I said no more, but watched him with anxious eyes. The left hand fingers slipped, slid, and danced in dumb show up and down the strings, the bow for ever beating time. A sort of shiver passed over him; then, drawing himself up, he swept the bow across the strings, and the fiddle, silent for so many years, found tongue at last.

A wild strain, commanding the listener's attention at once—a strain I knew I had never heard before. So curious the opening bars sounded, that, had I dared, I should have said several well established rules of harmony were outraged. And yet, in spite of its peculiarity, I knew that he who created that music was a master in the art. It was not Wagner, I was sure, although somewhat of his remarkable power of expression, and of moving the mind without the aid of melody, was present. The first thirty bars, or so, appeared to me to be of the nature of an overture, heralding the performance to follow. In snatches of mystic music the violin spoke of joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, love and hate, hope and fear—and as my own thoughts responded to the varied emotions, I lay and wondered who could have written the music affecting me so; and thought how fortunate the unknown composer was to have such an exponent of his ideas as Luigi. Yet, as I looked at the latter, it struck me his style of playing to night was different from usual. Fearless though the execution was—marvellous as were the strains those facile fingers drew forth—the whole manner of the man seemed to be mechanical, utterly at variance with the fire and dash that ever characterized his performances. The skill was there, but, for once, the soul was wanting. With the exception of his hands and arms, he stood so still he might have been a statue. He played as one in a trance, and his eyes with a fixed look were ever directed towards the end of the apartment. Swifter and swifter his arm flew backwards and forwards—more strange, eccentric, and wild the music became—stronger in its expression, plainer in its eloquence, more thrilling in its intensity, and ever exercising its powerful spell on the hearer. At last, with a sort of impulse, I turned my eyes from the player and looked in the direction he looked. Suddenly the music changed. There was no lack of melody now. A soft, soothing, haunting measure began—a sort of dreamy far away tune; and as its gentle cadences fell on my ear, hitherto kept in a state of irritation, if not unpleasant, expectation, my thoughts began to wander to old and half-forgotten scenes—distant events came to my mind—recollections of vanished faces, once familiar, looked around me—all things seemed growing misty and indistinct, and I felt as one sinking into sleep—the sort of sleep that one can almost realize and enjoy.

It was not to be, however. A few harsh notes from the fiddle, sounding like a warning or admonition, recalled me to wakefulness; and as my straying thoughts collected themselves, that lulling song began again.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### The Champion Spanker.

We have heard of pie-eating, egg-eating, rat-catching, and in fact nearly all kinds of contests, but the very last comes from Tiffin, Ohio. Miss Lizette Horbit, teacher of German in the High School of that city, succeeded in soundly thrashing thirty-five boys in exactly thirty minutes, without getting out of breath. There is a bright future in store for that young lady, and if she don't make her mark in the world, it won't be because of a lack of "git up and git."

### Cremation.

A lady customer and a clerk in a store were discussing cremation, the clerk thinking it a most repulsive and inhuman way of disposing of the dead, the lady approving of the practice.

"Well!" exclaimed the lady, "I expect to be burned when I die."

The clerk replied, thoughtfully: "I presume that all depends on where you go to."

The only American statesmen whose names are familiar to the majority of English people are Washington, Lincoln, Garfield, and Grant. Very few, comparatively, know who Gen. Lee was, and, speaking generally, American history is never read.

### The Use of Opium by Women.

A New York paper says: Women are more largely addicted to the use of opium than men are. This is true in the country as well as in the city. I have inquired of the apothecary on this subject, and he has told me that he keeps opium ready in little packets for his women customers, who take it "on the sly." They use it for the same reason that poor men get drunk on spirituous liquors. Trouble, care, the burdens of a hard lot in life lead or drive to drink; it first gives them a pleasing exhilaration, and then it drowns their thoughts in the stupor of intoxication. Women have their full share of the troubles of life. Some years ago I saw the report of an asylum for the deranged which gave the occupations of the patients in confinement. More of them were farmer's wives than any other one class of persons. They were young wives too. Burdened with the cares of the household, keeping no hired help, anxious and ambitious, they succumbed to the load. Before losing their reason how much suffering they must have endured! Poor, weak, tired, working when hardly able to drag themselves about, complaining of a sense of gloominess that words will not describe they sink beneath the weight and go deranged or they die. Stimulants are sought in the midst of the struggle. Now it is opium, and now it is strong drink, anything to keep up the spirits or drive away the spectres of harrowing care. The country store supplies them with either the solid or the liquid medicine for their disease, and they take it with a good conscience because it seems to afford at least a temporary relief. This is among farmers in the country. And ladies in the city have even stronger temptations to this vice. When all sorts of parties are going on, parties the very names of which are unintelligible to the innocent ruralist, the exhaustion of life in town is immense. To get dressed for company is a draught on the system. A draught of something is often needed to supply the drain. The round of fashionable visiting, late hours, hot rooms, rich suppers, thin dress and great exposure, reaction following excitement in theatre, opera and balls, all these furnish as strong an inducement to take artificial stimulants as the man of business ever has. Thus women in the city are led into the habit of drinking, sometimes very privately, often without any concealment from the family.

The usual number of new railroads are announced. When a Dakotaian hasn't anything else to do he goes out in the woodshed and takes a shingle and maps out a proposed railroad with a piece of chalk.

### Canadian Trout Waters.

The new Lake St. John Railway, which runs north from Quebec, gives easy access to a large number of most excellent trout waters. A correspondent of the Quebec Chronicle says: "Not only has the road been completed some 80 miles beyond St. Raymond, but that it is rapidly extending, and in a couple of years the whole road to Lake St. John will be an accomplished fact. The line taken over by the company now extends to Riviere a Pierre, 53 miles from Quebec, and where a year ago nothing but a dense forest existed may be heard the busy hum of scores of mechanics engaged in the workshops of the contractor, where every thing in the shape of repairs, etc., are performed in a workmanlike manner. From this point to the end of the road at Batiscan River, a distance of thirty miles, the line is operated by the contractor and is already in excellent order. A train leaves Riviere a Pierre daily and reaches the present terminus about midday, where the traveler can be accommodated with first-class fare at the Windsor. Just imagine, where a howling wilderness existed a few months ago almost every luxury can now be obtained, and every attention paid to the traveler who may fortunately be induced to visit these parts on business or pleasure. We talk about the land and scenery on the Saguenay River, but nothing can surpass the beauties all along the route of the Lake St. John railway. Gigantic mountains, nearly equalling in height capes Trinity and Eternity, of the far-famed Saguenay, lovely valleys, meandering streams and magnificent lakes are to be seen in succession as we travel through this interesting country. The railway skirts the borders of the beautiful Batiscan River for some forty miles, which is perfectly enchanting, being a succession of rapids, bays, etc., and studded with islands. An iron bridge is now being thrown across the Batiscan River, and it is expected the road will reach Lake Edward, a distance of 110 miles from Quebec, about the 1st of July next. If financial arrangements are completed, this splendid sheet of water is twenty miles long, about two miles broad, and abounds with the finest trout. From the end of the line to the second crossing on the Batiscan River, a perfect string of magnificent lakes are to be found teeming with fish, offering to the sportsman a chance scarcely known elsewhere, they being within a few hours' ride from the city."

An article in a newspaper is headed: "Whaling is not what is used to be." Well, it's a pity it isn't. There's an awful crop of bad boys growing into manhood.



Near-sighted Old Gentleman (entering Store): HAVE YOU ANY LINEN DUSTERS?  
Young Snobson (with his most sarcastic manner). I AM NOT A CLERK IN THIS ESTABLISHMENT YET, SIR.  
N. S. O. G.: NOT YET A CLERK, EH? ERRAND BOY, I PRESUME? WELL, LEGS ARE AS GOOD AS BRAINS IN SOME DEPARTMENTS.