

The Rockwood Review.

FORTUNES IN FIDDLES.

The prices set on their instruments by the makers of them, the appreciation in value, and the immense sums now demanded for the works of the old masters, forms a most interesting topic, to which, however, we can give but short space.

Stradivarius received for each violin four LOUIS D'OR, and these same instruments would to-day mount into the thousands of dollars in value. His violoncellos he sold for a larger sum. Stradivarius' instruments were not appreciated in their early days in England, for it is related that a merchant named Cervetto took some "Strad" 'cellos to England and put them on sale, but not being able to get five pounds apiece for them he sent them back to Italy as a bad investment. They would now bring several thousands of dollars each. While his 'cellos were thus lightly valued in England in those days, we find a Cremona violin selling in 1662 for \$100. A "Strad" 'cello which had been played by three generations of the Servais family, brought \$25,000 when placed on sale a few years ago in Vienna.

The phrase, "worth its weight in gold," may well be applied to such transactions. On weighing a Stradivarius violin sold in 1856, it was found to have brought \$200 an ounce. The great bass player, Dragonetti, had a celebrated Stradivarius double-bass which he valued at \$5,000. It would now probably bring three times that amount.

In 1716 Stradivarius made a violin, which in 1860 he sold to a

Count Salabue, after whose death in 1824 it was purchased by Tarisio, the peripatetic violin collector. He kept the treasure hidden, but after his death it was ferreted out by Vuillaume who, in turn, on his death, left it to his son-in-law, Alard, the violinist. A few years ago it was sold to a Scotch violin collector for \$10,000. Madame Norman-Neruda gave \$10,000 for one "Strad" which had belonged to Ernst, and Wilhelmji, paid \$15,000 for another, for which he was afterwards offered \$25,000.

Stradivarius' is not alone in bringing high sums. Amati's and Guarnerius' instruments have had a similar appreciation in value. In 1790 Foster, the English instrument dealer, sold a Nicolas Amati for \$85, and in 1804 another for \$150. These would now bring from \$1000 to \$1500 each. In 1827 one of his 'cellos sold for \$1400, and in 1859 a violin by the brothers Amati brought \$700. It may be imagined that some of the fiddles of Guarnerius "del Jesu" brought him originally but a pittance; but in 1826 we hear of one of his 'cellos bringing \$800. Wieniawski's Guarnerius was sold to Hubey, of Brussels, for \$15,000, and Ferdinand David's favorite instrument, a Guarnerius, was bought by Zajic, of the Strasburg Conservatory, for \$20,000.

General Morgan Melville, of Cincinnati, related that his father, who, by the way, was an AIDE-DE-CAMP to La Fayette, gave 1500 acres of land, then valued at a dollar per acre, for a Stainer violin that took his fancy. This was quite a fair price in those days, but the value of the payment would be somewhat enhanced now by the fact that this land is at present covered by the city of Pittsburg. As Stainer rarely received large sums for his violins, that one would have been a good investment could the original purchaser have waited two hundred and twenty-five years to realize on his investment.