

THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

THE OLD FIDDLER'S STORY.

TOLD AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN AFTER THE FIRST ACT OF THE OPERA.

When the curtain went down on the first act of the opera the old white-haired fiddler among the first violins, who had but recently joined the orchestra, turned to his companions and told the following remarkable story as he thrummed the strings of his own instrument:

"During a recent visit to the old country in search of health, I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to find a choice instrument. I travelled slowly through sunny Italy constantly on the alert for some sign that might lead to the finding of such a violin as I had always had in mind but which I had never seen. One day I came to a dusty-looking little shop with the sign, 'Violins Repaired and Old Violins for Sale,' staring through the little window. I entered, and found myself in a low-walled room redolent with the dusty smell of antiquity. Upon the shelves, which extended on either side of the room, were a number of violins, some labelled with the owner's name and some with the date of making. And such an array of old violins! There were violins two thousand years old!

"The proprietor came forward with a very pleasant make-yourself-at-home sort of air, and I at once made known the character of my visit. He said it would give him great pleasure to show me through his stock, and if I found anything that I wanted, all right, and if not it was all the same to him, as the pain at parting with one of his pets was so great that the money part of the transaction could not make up for it.

"He at once began to explain the history of some of the different instruments. At last coming to one

of the oldest-looking, and at the same time one that showed that it had always been well taken care of he began something in this vein: 'Here is a violin that is human. It has been in the same family for over five hundred years and readily recognizes any member of that family, although many generations have passed away since they came into possession of this wonderful instrument.' Of course, I was paralyzed with wonder and could not imagine what all this meant. I asked the price of it. 'The price of it?' he exclaimed in wild surprise. 'The price of it? Would a mother sell her child?

"I now began to understand what he had meant when he called it human, and told him that I intended no harm in asking the question: I really wished to buy the finest violin in the world. He smiled and replied: 'If you will come here at 9 o'clock you can see the most wonderful sight ever known to mortal man. At that hour every night since the violin has been here the little girl who now owns it comes to caress it. It is truly a wonderful sight!' I thanked him and promised to be there. I spent the intervening time soliloquizing and wondering what was in store for me, and if the mysterious violin were really human. 'A human violin! Whoever heard of such a thing? What does it mean?' I kept saying to myself over and over again.

"When night came I hastened to the little shop again, feverish with excitement. When I entered there was an oppressive stillness; not a sound of any kind was heard. I walked to the rear, and found the proprietor with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, apparently in deep thought. I spoke to him, and he looked up with a wild, imploring look, which changed to one of delight when he