

The Rookwood Review.

THE STORY OF MOZART'S REQUIEM.

Not long before Mozart died he was visited by a tall and dignified stranger, who said he came from a person who did not want his name to be known, but who wished that Mozart should compose a requiem for the soul of a friend recently lost, and whose memory he was desirous of commemorating by this solemn service. Mozart undertook the task, and engaged to have it completed in a month. They arranged the price that was to be paid for the composition, and the stranger paid Mozart a hundred ducats in advance.

Mozart was at that time in ill health, and was affected frequently with a deep melancholy. The mystery of the visit seemed to produce a profound effect on his mind, and he brooded over it for some time, and then set to work earnestly at composition. So intense was the ardor of his application that he was taken with fainting spells, and was finally obliged to suspend his work. "I am writing this requiem for myself," he said one day to his wife; "it will serve for my own funeral service."

At the end of the month the stranger appeared and asked for requiem.

"I have found it impossible," said Mozart, "to keep my word; the work has interested me more than I expected, and I have extended it beyond my first design. I shall require another month to finish it." The mysterious stranger made no objection, but, saying that Mozart should be compensated for his extra work, he laid down fifty

ducats on the table and departed, promising to return at the end of another month. Mozart sent a servant to follow his visitor and, if possible, to find out who he was, but the servant lost sight of him.

More than ever persuaded that his visitor was a messenger from the other world sent to warn him that his end was approaching. Mozart applied himself with fresh zeal to his requiem, and, in spite of his exhaustion of body and mind, he completed it before the end of month.

At the appointed day the stranger came for the work and received it, but the composer's work on earth was finished.

Later investigation proved that the visitor was the servant of a certain nobleman, who wished in this manner to obtain a composition which he could pass off as his own work, written by himself, and dedicated to his wife's memory; and for many years the fraud remained undiscovered.
