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PAGANINI'S SHOE-FIDDLE.

In the autumn of 1832, Paganini was residing at a villa near Paris. He was an invalid, and took little notice of any of the other occupants of the villa. The only person for whom he sought to care much was Nicette, a young and pretty waitress, who was wont to attend upon him.

One morning Nicette, tray in hand, entered the apartment of the famous Maestro, who sat at a table carving a handle for a dagger out of a piece of ivory. Instead of her usual merry look, she was sad and dejected, and her blue eyes showed traces of recent weeping. Paganini, who had taken an honest liking for the poor girl, was not long in learning the cause of her grief. The conscription had just been drawn; a bad number had fallen to the lot of her lover; and, said she, "Poor Adolphe must go off for a soldier, and I shall never see him again."

"But why don't you find him a substitute?" inquired Paganini.

"Monsieur is joking," was the sobbing reply. "They say there is to be a war, and fifteen hundred francs is the lowest price for a substitute."

Fifteen hundred francs was really nothing to Paganini; but no man ever lived who loved money more than did the great Violinist, and to give away such a sum directly was an idea which never entered his mind. So he said nothing, but made his memorandum in his pocket-book; "See what I can do for poor Nicette."

A few weeks passed, and Christmas was at hand. In France it is the custom to place a wooden shoe on the hearth, just as we hang up a stocking. Late in the afternoon of the day before Christmas, Nicette entered the saloon, where the musician was seated in the centre of a large group. She said that a huge parcel had just arrived for the Signor Paganini. He declared that he could not imagine what it

was, but ordered it to be brought up. Wrapper after wrapper was opened before the curious spectators, and finally there appeared a huge wooden shoe, almost large enough for an infant's cradle.

The bystanders laughed. Some maliciously hinted that it was sent by some one who insinuated thereby, that the great Maestro was much more fond of receiving presents, than of bestowing them. Quite possibly this was the case, and more than probably there were those present who knew all about the sending of the odd gift. Paganini suspected as much, and a sudden idea seemed to strike him.

"Well, well, my friends, we shall see if this shoe is not worth something to somebody." And he left the saloon, carrying the shoe with him.

For three days little was seen of Paganini; and it was reported that he was busy in a little workshop which he had fitted up for himself, and which no one was allowed to enter. Then it was announced that on New-Year's Eve the great Maestro would give an unique concert, in the course of which he would execute five pieces on the Violin and five on a wooden shoe. The price of admission was to be twenty francs, and only one hundred tickets would be sold. Of course the tickets were disposed of at once.

When the evening came, Paganini made his appearance in most unusual good spirits. The Violin pieces came first on the programme, and everybody declared that the great Master fairly exceeded even himself, and there was no end of bravos. He retired for a moment, and then reappeared with the veritable wooden shoe under his arm. But in the three days of his seclusion he had cut and carved and shaped it into a rude imitation of a Violin, to which he had deftly fitted three strings. Upon this curious instrument he began to improvise one of these strange fantasias, which many say were