

PIPO'S REWARD.

(From All The Year Round.)

"If I could but buy it!" He was only a little brown-faced, barefooted Italian lad, and he had his wistful eyes fixed on the window of a dingy shop in a still more dingy London street. Above his head the hot sun poured down its burning rays, but he did not mind that; it reminded him of his own land on some dim cloudless afternoon, when he had been nothing to do save to lie on the shade of the vine on the mountain side, or to listen to the music of some rill of water babbling under cool green leaves, with a stone image sculptured above, that gave due reverence to its patron saint. There were vines here, and no babbling fountains, and sculptured Madonnas; only hot streets and countless roofs, and but chance glimpses of blue sky far up above the house tops. Neither were there market days and feast days for innocent merry-making; nor any rest or peace for his limbs, and no good sleep, and black-browed patrons had brought him from across the sea to this country of want, and work, and endless misery.

"No, there was never any peace for him now; any peace of time when he might dream day-dreams of all things beautiful. All was pain and travail, and ceaseless clangor, and unending strife, and life was a sordid, pitiful thing that left him only too often sleepless, and hungry, and foot sore, and with a tired aching in his heart that he could not put into any words; that even if put into words would have won for him nothing but mockery and scorn, and perhaps blows.

"Blows—that was a blow now that fell on his shoulder from which the ragged little shirt had partly fallen? He started and shrank back with the timid, frightened gesture of a beaten dog. But it was no blow. It was the cool pressure of a strong hand on his little shivering form.

"What are you staring at so earnestly?" asked a kind hearty voice in the language which the child as yet only imperfectly understood. "Nothing, Signor Inglesse," he answered timidly, and shrank away with his little broken fiddle under his arm, as though he had done something to be ashamed of.

"Nothing? Why your eyes looked as if they would start out of your head. If it had been a blow, you would have looked as if you were dead. You look half starved. But this old rubbishing brick-bat place. What the deuce could you see there?" He was a young man who spoke, dressed in naval uniform, but his loud, hearty voice bewildered the little lad, whose only knowledge of English was a few words that he had picked up from the sailors who were his associates.

"I look but at this," he said shyly, pointing to an old violin lying among a heap of rubbish in the corner of the shop. "That! and what do you think of it?" asked the young man wonderingly. "It makes music," faltered the child. "Music!" laughed the young Lieutenant, and what of that? The little lad's eyes grew soft and dreamy.

"What!" he murmured in Italian, "only that I love it, only that in all this great city it is the one thing that speaks to me of the home I have lost." "Poor little chap," said his interrogator regretfully. "I don't understand your language, but I see you're a victim of one of those recently patronized notions of living by sending women and children into the streets to work for them. Would you like that fiddle?" he added slowly, pointing to the instrument as he spoke.

"I don't know," he said, looking at the instrument with a mixture of awe and admiration. "It's a fine old Italian violin, of the make, and of tone wonderful. Try it, sare."

"Try it!" exclaimed his customer, contemptuously. "You don't suppose I should play on a dirty blackened old thing like that? If I ever perpetrated anything in the musical line," he added, laughing, "I should take care to have a fine brand new instrument, at all events."

The Jew looked with unfeigned commiseration at this display of musical ignorance. "A new violin," he exclaimed, "play on a new violin, ah, sare, it is plain you know not much of music."

"You're right there," laughed the young sailor, "but I want to try that young star-dancer. I found him looking very covetously at that rubbishing old piece of wood and outstuck. Just hand it over here a minute."

"Let that dirty little brat touch my Italian violin?" Neve's "No!" exclaimed old Jacobs with indignation. "Do you take me for a fool?" "No, sare," he said, "I thought it was you that needed the instrument for yourself; but that street brat—"

"He turned away contemptuously, and thrust the violin once more into its old place among the cracked China, and dull brasses, and time-worn bronzes, and bits of gesso, as he called them, that were piled up in a perfectly understood dialogue, clasped his hands dispiringly together as he saw the coveted treasure put once more beyond his reach, but his new protector was not to be easily baffled, and he sternly ordered the Jew to give the instrument to him and tell him its price.

"Twenty pounds," was the cool response. "Twenty pounds!" exclaimed the sailor, indignantly. "Do you take me for a fool?" "No, sare, for a shentlemans," answered the Teutonic Hebrew with a grin, "but I know that a concertmaster can take me for one of these fine old Italian instruments, and worth every penny of that I ask you."

"Put some strings on it, and let me see what it's like," said his customer shortly. The old man obeyed, and presently handed the violin to the young man, who took it with its bridge fixed and its strings in playable condition.

"You want a bow too?" he asked with a grin. "Of course," answered the young man lightly, though when the violin and bow were in his hands he knew nothing of how to use them. "I need to see old Jack Barber play the thing on board ship often enough," he said ruefully; "but I'm blest if I know how to clap snail on myself. Here you," he added, unheeding the new remonstrance, "see what you can make of it."

The child took it with reverent tender hands, and without an instant's hesitation began to play. Something in the little wrapt face and earnest eyes, as well as in the instinctive grace with which he used the bow, had brought the old man's mind back out of that old time worn instrument, and the young sailor's laughing curiosity to a deep attention.

"By Jove! the little chap understands what he's about," he said in surprise. "Curious, how natural music seems to these Southern birds. What do you think of that, eh?" he asked old Jacobs suddenly.

"I think I shall hold you responsible," was the sarcastic professional reply. "The violin is a poor devil's toy." "The old man's words," he exclaimed indignantly. "That lad knows more about the instrument than you do. Spill it! Those clever little fingers? Gosh! I'll tell you what, though; I'll give you five pounds for

that old fiddle, and a good offer it is. Take it or leave it as you like. I can soon pick up another, but I can't get another like this, and I'm an old friend of mine."

"Levi is my cousin, and he is rich, and I am von ver poor dealer," screamed the old Hebrew excitedly; "but Levi has not in all his shop one single violin that is in the least degree so good as that. No, sare; you will give me for him ten pounds."

"Five, and not a halfpenny more," was the resolute answer, as the young man took the violin from the child's reluctant hands and placed it on the counter.

"Seven—five pound ten," persisted the Jew in a broken voice, as each statement was steadily ignored. "Vell, vell, if it must be, I make you great sacrifice, but it shall not be said that you've imposed on one of my cousin Levi's bad violines. No; sooner would I suffer myself than that, and you'd say again see a little in your account you like—also it shall be a bargain—if you go not to Levi. He is noting of a dealer, noting. I should not like to see a young gentleman like you imposed on by him."

The young man laughed heartily at this remark, and he said, "All right, I won't go to Levi," he said. "Now, put that fiddle in a case and hand it over, will you?" "Shall I not send him for you?" asked the dealer, persuasively. "It shall come to day, certain."

"Thanks," said the young sailor, and he went off with his little fiddle under his arm, and his new protector was not to be easily baffled, and he sternly ordered the Jew to give the instrument to him and tell him its price.

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"Twenty pounds," was the cool response. "Twenty pounds!" exclaimed the sailor, indignantly. "Do you take me for a fool?" "No, sare, for a shentlemans," answered the Teutonic Hebrew with a grin, "but I know that a concertmaster can take me for one of these fine old Italian instruments, and worth every penny of that I ask you."

"Put some strings on it, and let me see what it's like," said his customer shortly. The old man obeyed, and presently handed the violin to the young man, who took it with its bridge fixed and its strings in playable condition.

"You want a bow too?" he asked with a grin. "Of course," answered the young man lightly, though when the violin and bow were in his hands he knew nothing of how to use them. "I need to see old Jack Barber play the thing on board ship often enough," he said ruefully; "but I'm blest if I know how to clap snail on myself. Here you," he added, unheeding the new remonstrance, "see what you can make of it."

The child took it with reverent tender hands, and without an instant's hesitation began to play. Something in the little wrapt face and earnest eyes, as well as in the instinctive grace with which he used the bow, had brought the old man's mind back out of that old time worn instrument, and the young sailor's laughing curiosity to a deep attention.

"By Jove! the little chap understands what he's about," he said in surprise. "Curious, how natural music seems to these Southern birds. What do you think of that, eh?" he asked old Jacobs suddenly.

"I think I shall hold you responsible," was the sarcastic professional reply. "The violin is a poor devil's toy." "The old man's words," he exclaimed indignantly. "That lad knows more about the instrument than you do. Spill it! Those clever little fingers? Gosh! I'll tell you what, though; I'll give you five pounds for

that old fiddle, and a good offer it is. Take it or leave it as you like. I can soon pick up another, but I can't get another like this, and I'm an old friend of mine."

"Levi is my cousin, and he is rich, and I am von ver poor dealer," screamed the old Hebrew excitedly; "but Levi has not in all his shop one single violin that is in the least degree so good as that. No, sare; you will give me for him ten pounds."

"Five, and not a halfpenny more," was the resolute answer, as the young man took the violin from the child's reluctant hands and placed it on