

peii." Browning's poem, "Mr. Sludge, the Medium," is understood to be a study of the once celebrated Scotch-American spiritualist, Daniel D. Home, who resided at various times in Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts.

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But one becomes wearied rambling even among pleasant by-paths; and I will rest after noticing a member of the Dickens family. It is pretty well understood by those who have read

"Sketches by Boz" that "Boz" was a pet name. I am informed that it was given to the novelist's brother, Augustus N. Dickens. "Boz" became a citizen of the United States, purchasing land at Amboy on the Illinois Central Railway. He engaged in mercantile pursuits, but failed, and subsequently removed with his family to Chicago, became a corresponding clerk in the land office of the Illinois Central, and died while holding that position, in 1886.

The Music of Miguel

By Frank Neilson

THERE are many who remember the entrance into the musical circles of Spain some twenty years ago of Veraldi, the violinist. His marvelous mastery of the king of instruments, his preternatural power of improvisation, his magnetic presence, his abrupt advent, the mystery of his antecedents, all combined to compel his recognition as the peer of Paganini, and to render his success certain, his popularity permanent. The name of Antonio Veraldi was on every tongue. Men sought his society; fair women fell at his feet.

Suddenly, before his fame had fairly passed the Pyrennees, he disappeared, no one knew why, no one knew where. His genesis and his exodus were alike mysterious. Like a strange and shining star he had arisen from the realm of the unknown; like a flaming meteor

he had vanished into the depths of the unknowable.

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Little Leon was hungry, was cold, was afraid. Hungry, because he had not eaten since morning; cold, because he was scantily clad against the winter wind; afraid, because his day's receipts had been light and Miguel's libations heavy. Reasons enough.

Slowly and sadly he climbed the desolate stairs and entered the dingy room that he and Miguel called home. Happily, Miguel, present in the flesh, was absent in the spirit, strolling with Bacchus in Elysian fields. Jetsam and flotsam of the morning meal Leon could therefore gather undisturbed. He laid down his violin, lighted the flickering lamp, drew the little table nearer the feeble fire, and, while he ate, he studied the sleeping man upon the shabby bed.

Miguel was a perennial puzzle, a

profound problem, that Leon had often studied but had never solved. He could not remember a time when they had not been together, journeyed together, played together, he the violin, Miguel the great harp; and yet he did not know Miguel.

Two tastes they had in common, only two — the love of music and the love of books. Books were Leon's only playthings; through them he roamed the world. Miguel had taught him. When Miguel rewarded, it was with a book; when he punished, it was by a beating. Leon never knew which to expect until Miguel promised. Miguel never broke a promise. Books and beatings were alike awarded without apparent cause. Once, after a book, Leon had asked why, and Miguel had answered, softly, "Because you resemble — her." Once, after a beating, Leon had asked the reason, and Miguel had answered, savagely, "Because you resemble — him." Leon could not understand.

Master of the violin, Miguel never played except to teach Leon. Handsome in person, courtly in speech and manner when he chose, Miguel shunned mankind. Sober at all other seasons, Miguel was always drunk at this. The stages of his intoxication were always three. In the first he was cynically kind, in the second moodily morose, in the third somnolent. Recovering from the third he immediately re-entered the first, following the circle without intermission. From the morning of the twenty-fourth to the morning of the twenty-sixth day of each December he was continuously drunk. From the morning of the twenty-sixth to the morning of the twenty-fourth he was continuously sober. A strange creature, this Miguel.

Being now in the third stage, he would enter the first as soon as he awoke. The gin-bottle on the shelf was yet half full. That meant several hours of the dreaded second stage before morning. Leon sighed, pillowed his head on his arms, and patiently awaited the awakening.

From the crowded streets arose the laughter of happy children, the chatter of gift-laden shoppers, the merry music of the jingling bells, and all the roar and bustle of the Christmas-tide. Flashed up from the depths of child-memory for one tremulous instant a fleeting vision of a happier time, a home, kind faces, treasures of toys, and then the vision vanished, leaving in its stead — Miguel and the garret. Often before had Leon dreamed such dreams. Sometimes there came a misty memory of a woman's face, of fond encircling arms, a soft, sweet voice calling him, not Leon, but another name his ear strained eagerly to catch, his heart leaped lovingly to answer.

The Christmas chimes of distant churches lulled and soothed him to drowsiness. Gradually the faint, melodious medley of the bells melted into a symmetrical melody, a soothing symphony of surpassing sweetness, rousing again those misty memories of a perished past. Surely, somewhere, sometime, he had heard that melody — somewhere amid a concourse of people — sometime before there had been a Miguel in his life. Oh, could he but fix it in his mind, remember it, play it, perhaps some portion of the past would be revealed. Eagerly he grasped the violin. His skillful fingers searched among the strings and slowly seized the weird, unwilling notes. His bow, obedient to its master's will, dragged from their hiding

place responsive chords. Fragment by fragment, broken but distinct, the mystic music of his fancy flowed and waked the echoes of the lonely room. The sleeper stirred uneasily, and Leon paused.

"Were you playing, Leon?"

"Yes, Miguel."

"What?"

"Nothing—a fancy—I do not know."

Miguel arose. When he sat down the bottle on the shelf was empty. "Beggars' champagne," he cried, gayly, wiping his beard. Leon smiled. This was the first stage.

"I dreamed some one was playing—playing—something none but I can play; something never played but once; something that shall never be played again. What day is this, Leon?"

"This is Christmas Eve."

Miguel started.

"True," he murmured. "A time to be remembered. I had forgotten. When I am drunk I do not think. When I do not think I do not remember. Blessed be Bacchus!"

He staggered to the window and looked out. From a brilliantly lighted church in the distance came the swelling tones of a great organ. Miguel laughed derisively.

"'On earth peace, good-will toward men.' Beautiful words. Twelve years this night since I last heard them; one year before your birth; three years before you and I became companions. Truly, Leon, Christmas Eve is a time to be remembered by us—aye, and by others."

Again he laughed bitterly, triumphantly. Leon listened eagerly; never before had Miguel spoken of the past. But Miguel only said: "Play for me, Leon, while I forget."

With bow poised in air, the boy hesitated, glanced at his companion timidly, and then boldly struck the chords of the dim, dreamy melody caught from the Christmas chimes. With a cry of rage Miguel tore the violin from his hands and hurled him to the floor.

"Perdition!" he shrieked; "not that! What demon taught you that?"

Leon, rising to his knees, cried out: "O, Miguel, tell me—tell me or kill me. I will not—cannot—live this miserable life."

In the uplifted, pleading face, in the great tearful eyes, Miguel, looking down, saw that which caused him to stoop, to lift the child, to clasp him to his breast.

"For love of her whose face you bear this night," he cried, "I, myself, dead for these many years, will tell you, will play for you, though you cannot understand. Listen, Leon. You are about to hear a tragedy. It began in—Spain. It will end here."

Then Miguel played, and lo, it was the music of the memories of Leon, such music as is heard but once in centuries, such music as enthalls the minds of men and wields them at its will. Slowly, softly, sweetly, at first, it rippled and glided and throbbed and trilled, telling of brooks and birds, of flowers and sunny climes, laughter and love, and hope and happiness. Suddenly it sank to troubled tones of darkness and despair, madness and misery and revengeful rage; changing again to run the gamut of all earthly grief with sobs and sighs, terror and tears, the wails of women and a mother's moans.

Leon's slight form was quivering, his eyes were closed, his breath fluttered between parted lips. Transported by the magical music, fascinat-

ed by the fiery orbs of the musician, for a time there was no Leon; he had become in mind a part of Miguel, their memories mingled, the stronger had absorbed the weaker will.

The last impassioned chord vibrated, diminished, sobbed, and died away. The player, exhausted, withdrew his magnetic gaze from the child's face. With one long, quivering sigh, Leon opened his eyes; returned from ecstasy to earth.

"Again, Miguel, again. Let me see her again."

"See — whom, Leon?"

"The lady of my dreams. She was with you, Miguel, with you, in a grove — and, again, in a great church — music — many people. She was at the altar — with a man, not you — you are outside — in the snow. Then an immense hall, bright uniforms, beautiful ladies — and you, Miguel, you are playing — the same music. She leads me away — she is veiled — she weeps. O, Miguel, it is not a dream; it is real——"

"A miracle!" gasped Miguel. "Go on! My God! Go on!"

"A magnificent house — fountains — statues. You are outside — in the darkness — watching. A great, glittering Christmas tree — the beautiful lady again — she is playing with a little boy, with me, Miguel, with me! O, Miguel, she is my mother! I know it now! Where is she — tell me, Miguel, where is she?"

"Stop! stop!" moaned Miguel, white, trembling. "But — yes — it is a command from above. Go on! Go on!"

"A ship — waves all around us — I am crying. Now we are in a great city; it is snowing; you carry me along the streets; you take something from about my neck——"

Miguel had fallen upon the bed, writhing, clutching at his side. Leon ran to him, but Miguel, with a mighty effort, sat up.

"It is nothing," he said, after a moment, "nothing but — my heart. That was broken long ago. Leon, Leon, Death has touched me with his finger, and tonight the good God has spoken to me through your lips — has commanded me to speak before it is too late. Sit here, by me, Leon — I must still call you Leon, for I cannot speak the name that was — his. He never saw you, Leon. I swore that he should never behold the child that would have been mine had he not foully slandered me. Because of his rank he refused to meet me; he laughed at the poor musician until I revealed to him what I had kept from the world, even from — her. Then, daring no longer to refuse, he faced me and found my hand as cunning with the sword as with the bow.

"Now you will despise me, Leon; will leave me; will return to your own. But stay with me tonight, Leon, for I love you because of her — who broke her solemn promise. You will tell her that.

"Tomorrow I will give you rich gifts. See, Leon, I am a magician — I, who have nothing, will give much — home, mother, fortune. Many times have your hands grasped these gifts and you knew it not.

"Tomorrow we will, sell the great harp and you shall take the money and leave me. A joyous Christmas for you, Leon; a sad one for me. But God has ordered it so — and I shall not stay long. Listen, Leon, to the chimes. They are calling to me — and I must go. Yes, this night, after so many years, I will ask pardon for the great sin I have committed — yea, I

will even beg that she be forgiven the great wrong she wrought me. Once more, this night, I will bow before Him whose mission was mercy. Come, Leon."

He led the bewildered child down the dark stairway and along the white streets to the distant church. Together they entered, and kneeling near the door, received the benediction. Then, as the grand organ filled the church with solemn music, Miguel, still on his knees with bowed head and clasped hands, sank slowly down, a gasping, quivering heap. With a cry of grief and terror, Leon bent over him to see him smile, a wan, pitiful smile; to hear him whisper, "Farewell, Leon—Francisco—the violin—the violin;" and then, with a long shudder, a convulsive clenching of the slender hands over the failing heart, Miguel's dark, passionate eyes closed on this world forever.

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Leon in the garret; Miguel in the morgue. Christmas night, the first night in many years that had not found them together.

Leon had sold the great harp that Miguel might not be buried as a pauper, that a little stone might mark the spot where he would lie nameless and unknown; a stone upon which the one word, "Miguel," would tell all that Leon had ever learned. The child had refused the home offered him by sympathizing strangers, for somewhere in the great wide world a home and a mother awaited him. Miguel had said so, and Miguel, with all his faults, had never deceived. Earning his way with the old violin, he would wander from country to country, from city to city, until he should find the lady of his dream. A weary, weary quest for one who knew not even his own name.

Ah, if Miguel had only told; if Death had delayed but one more day. And yet—Miguel had promised that he should know today—and Miguel had never broken a promise. Perhaps—perhaps—*could* the dead return? The lonely child glanced fearfully about the dim garret and shuddered at the thought. If Miguel could he would—to keep his promise—that was certain.

A shape leaped up from a dark corner and moved toward him; something rattled over the bare floor. The child moaned in terror. Only a shadow cast through the little window by the street lamp swinging in the wind; only a gaunt gray rat searching for food. No, Miguel would not, could not come. He had spoken for the last time. But why had his last words been of the violin? Perhaps—Leon sprang up and bore the battered instrument to the dim lamp, shook it, peered into it, sought some inscription, some word, that might lead to light, and found—nothing.

He laid the violin upon the table and cast himself upon the bed, crying, "No hope! No hope!" The wailing wind without echoed his words. The rattling window, the swinging, squeaking street-signs mocked him. The gaunt gray rat, emboldened by hunger, entered the faint circle of light cast by the flickering lamp and sniffed and grinned ominously.

A fierce blast of wind screamed up the narrow stairway, the flimsy door flew open, the rat squeaked and scampered away, the flame of the lamp leaped, quivered, and expired; the room grew suddenly icy cold. The child, rising to close the door, halted, terror-stricken, paralyzed by fear, for someone, something—he could not see—was playing upon the violin, softly, but surely, skillfully.

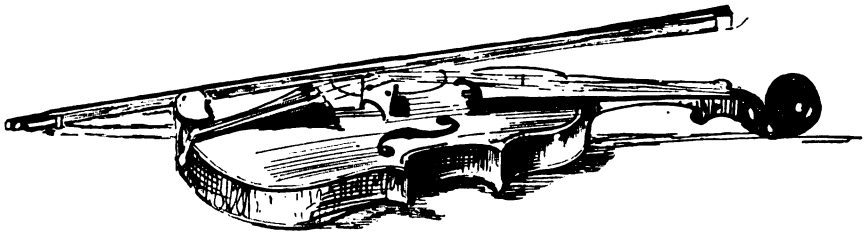
Stronger and louder swelled the notes, the marvelous music of Miguel, the chorus of the Christmas chimes, drowning the wailing of the wind, throbbing, pulsating, filling the wretched room with wondrous waves of heavenly harmony, and then — a snapping of strings, a splintering crash — silence and utter darkness.

Cowering in the corner, the child waited to hear the voice of the dead, to feel the touch of a ghostly hand, to see a shadowy shape bend over him; crouched there, fearing to move, hearing only the throbbing of his leaping heart, feeling only the piercing cold of the searching wind, seeing only the shadows of the night that finally fled

before the blessed sunlight that stole slowly in, illumining the garret with the promise of a glorious day and revealing on the floor the shattered wreck of the old violin.

Emboldened by the light, the child arose upon his cold, cramped limbs, and turned to flee the fearful spot forever. At the door, glancing back nervously, he saw gleaming from beneath the splintered finger-board, in the cunningly hollowed neck, a locket of gold.

With a cry of joy he forced it open and beheld on one side a miniature of himself and the name "Francisco." On the other, the lady of his dreams, a woman's name and the name of a city across the sea. Miguel had kept his promise.



John A. Adams.