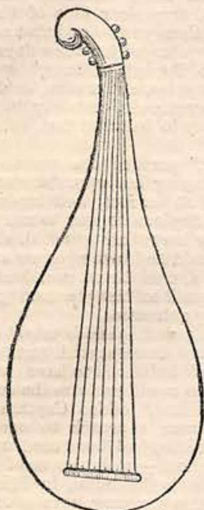
ORIGIN OF THE VIOLIN.

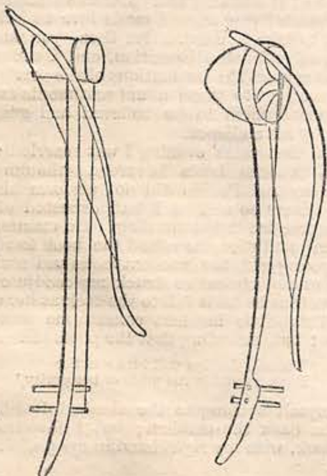
ONE of the most perfect and beautiful instruments ever invented since the days of Tubal, is the violin. The simplicity of its construction is, perhaps, its most striking peculiarity, for its four strings, under the



AN EGYPTIAN CHELYS.

wondrous power of the bow, are made to give forth such strains of harmony as are never produced by any other single instrument. In the open air "the spirit-stirring drum" and "ear-piercing fife" have their charms, and a brass band produces an exceedingly good effect, but in a building the full value of stringed instruments is universally acknowledged, and those who have listened to the enchanting strains of Mozart, Meyerbeer, Donizetti, or Auber at the Opera, or to the sublime music of Handel, Haydn, or Mendelssohn, in our Oratorios, must have noticed how marvellous is the effect of the violin. So important an instrument deserves some notice, and a few facts respecting its history may not be inappropriately introduced here.

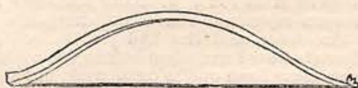
It is curious to observe the erroneous views which have prevailed on the manners and customs of the ancients. Statements have been again and again made on the authority of some learned man, and have been received as unquestionably true, which have turned out to be apocryphal. Modern research falsifies many an ancient dogma. Take, for example, the violin. Have we not been taught to believe that this instrument was known in very

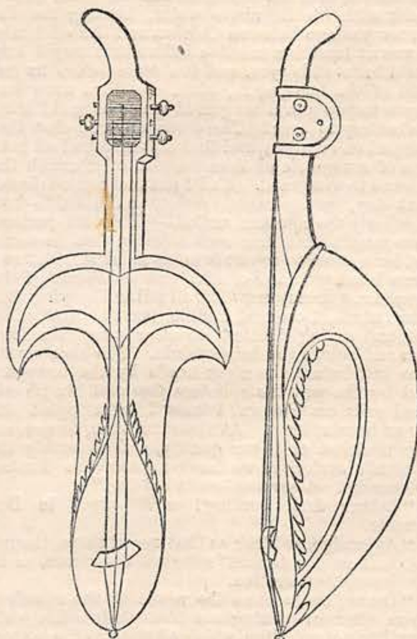


CHINESE VIOLINS.

ancient times? Have we not seen the Greek words *lyra*, *kithare*, *barbiton*, arbitrarily translated by men of education as "violin?" And yet it is a fact that the instruments alluded to were not violins at all, and might almost as reasonably be described as guitars or banjos. One of the most ancient forms of the instrument, said to be the original violin, is the Egyptian *chelys*, a representation of which is given in the accompanying engraving. It will be seen that it possesses none of those very distinctive features of a fiddle, the bow, and the apertures in the sounding-board.

In India and China, however, violins are said to have been used from a very remote period, much the same in form as they are found in those countries at the present day, and these possess that most essential part—the bow. When, however, we investigate the origin of these instruments, we find it traceable to European settlers; and that all which in reality resembles the violin, is a rude imitation of the modern European instrument. There are several varieties of the violin known in India: the *sarungie*, the *scrinda*, the *omerli*, and *urmi*, the last two are made from cocoa wood; and the *romastron*, played by the wandering devotees who beg from door to door. These mendicants pretend that the *romastron* was invented by a king of Ceylon at a very remote date; but the aversion of the Hindoos to pollute themselves by touching the intestines of an animal, renders it impossible for them to employ our ordinary fiddle-strings—and silken strings would baffle a Paganini.



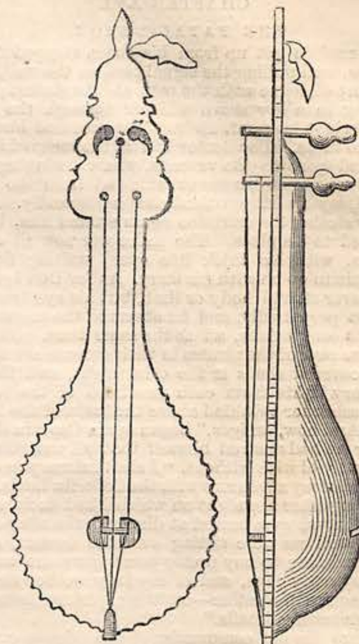


INDIAN VIOLINS.

The Chinese fiddle, or *d'jenn*, is directly ascribed by the Chinese themselves to the barbarians. All stringed instruments, they say, were introduced by foreigners, except the *lu-tchun*, the *che*, and the *kin*. The latter they profess to regard with peculiar veneration, and never allow it to be played without lighted consecrated tapers. Its sounds are said to assuage grief, allay the passions, and induce the most agreeable sensations. But the performer must be very skilful who could produce any pleasant sounds from these crude instruments. The bodies of the *kin* and *che* are of wood, the strings of silk. In religious ceremonies, however, the ordinary fiddle-string is employed.

A slight examination either of the Chinese or Indian violin is enough to convince us that all that really resembles our modern instrument has been borrowed from the moderns—that neither by these native instruments, nor by researches into the customs of the Egyptians and Greeks, can any great antiquity be established for the violin.

By whom, then, was the violin invented? Not by the Chinese, nor by the Singhalese, nor the Egyptians, nor the Greeks, but by the Druids. Such is the assertion made by some writers, and very boldly maintained; but, in our opinion, there is no satisfactory evidence of the real violin till the eleventh century. Then it is that, thanks to the illuminators of the missals, we are introduced to many uncomfortable-looking figures, in gaudy-coloured robes, scraping the fiddle-string in the legitimate fashion. We are, however, exposed to considerable embarrassment by the variety of names under which



ARAB VIOLIN.

the violin is mentioned; such, for example, as *viol*, *rebec*, *rubebbe*, *rote*, &c.

The discovery of a manuscript by Jerome of Moravia, a writer of the thirteenth century, throws some light upon the subject. He says: "The *rubebbe* is an instrument of music, which has only two strings, which are within a fifth of one another, and it is played like the viol, with a bow."

The *rebec* is a closer approach to our modern violin than the viol. It had three strings, and its introduction to Europe is ascribed to the Moors during their occupation of Spain, and to the Saracens at the time of the early Crusades. The *repab*, the *marabba*, and the *lyra*, are rude forms of the violin, specimens of which among the Arabs have given rise to this supposition. It is, however, to be questioned whether the contrary of the common statement is not the

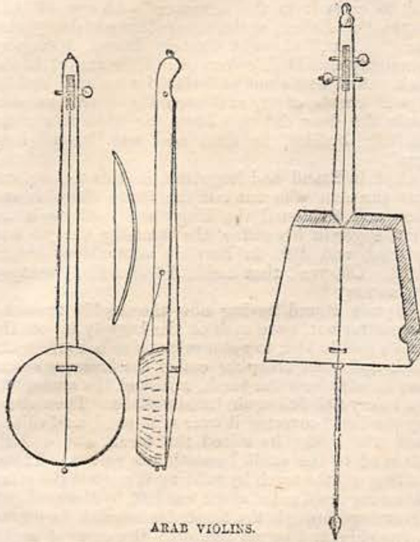
PLAYING THE REBEC.—FROM AN ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT.

fact, and that the Europeans introduced the violin to the Moors and Saracens.

The form of the rebec was simply that of an ordinary bat, its shape being gradually modified for the convenience of the player, and not definitively settled till the beginning of the sixteenth century.

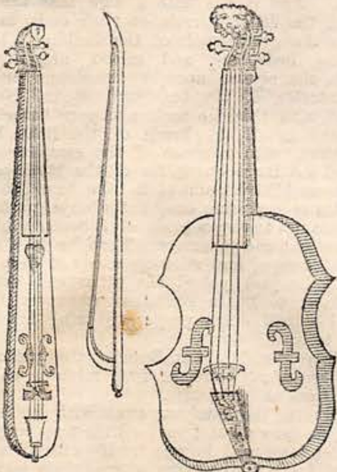
THE VIOLIN.

In continuing our notice of the violin (see page 109), we may remark that for a long period the words viol and violin appear to have been regarded as synonymous, but in the sixteenth century the difference between the two instruments began



ARAB VIOLINS.

to be distinctly marked. This distinction, however, was not in favour of the violin; it continued to occupy an inferior position for many years, being considered a vulgar instrument, inappropriate for concerts, and fit only for the dance. This was the principal, if not the sole occupation of the band of violinists at court, and "four and twenty fiddlers, all of a row," held no distinguished place as musicians. In a volume published in 1630, under the title of *Universal Harmony*, the claims of the violin were seriously put forward, and justice was demanded on its behalf. In Monteverde's opera *Orfeo*, the modest violin first began to take its rightful position, and those who had placed it only one step above the pipe and tabor were charmed out of their prejudices by its delightful strains. But this was only a temporary effect; the musicians insisted that the violin was unworthy the attention of people of cultivated taste, that its proper place was the village green or the ball-room, not, on any account, the orchestra; and the controversy was sustained until the public voice rose above the discord of the sons of harmony, and the good qualities of the violin were admitted. Once admitted, the violin rapidly rose in public estimation; it was discovered to unite "richness and simplicity," "grandeur and delicacy," "force and sweetness," and to excite joy, sympathy, or sorrow in the breasts of the listeners. It was described as "a second human voice."

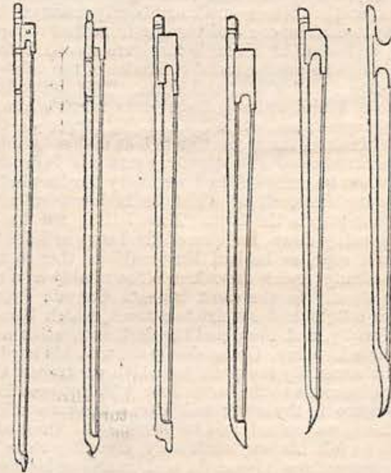


VIOLINS, 17TH CENTURY.

As the popularity of the violin increased, improvements were effected in its manufacture. The power and quality of the instrument being once admitted, nothing remained but to make the best possible use of acknowledged excellence. The best instrument-makers rivalled each other in violins, and some of these devoted themselves exclusively to bringing the new favourite to perfection. The proper qualities of a good violin were warmly contested, and treatises were written on this important subject. The authority of M. Otto on this point is worthy of attention.

"When complete," says M. Otto, in his treatise on the construction of the violin, "this instrument consists of fifty-eight different parts or pieces: but such small divisions are not indispensably necessary, and in many cheap instruments the parts are not so divided. The wood is generally of three sorts. The back, neck, sides, and circles are of sycamore; the belly, bass bar, sounding posts, and six blocks, of deal; the finger board and tail piece of ebony. The finest violins now in use were made in Cremona, and were called by that name: the proportions of these were generally as follows. The belly was thickest where the bridge rests; then it diminished about a third at that part where the *f* holes are cut; and where the belly rests on the sides, it was half as thick as in the middle. The same proportion is observed in the length. The thickness is equally maintained all along that part on which the bass bar is fixed; thence to the upper and under end blocks the thickness decreases to one-half, so that the cheeks are three-fourths the thickness of the breast, and the edges all round only one-half. These proportions are best adapted for imparting a full, powerful, sonorous tone. The back is worked out much in the same proportion as the belly."

On these proportions the best violins are constructed, some slight modifications being introduced, of course, by different makers. And of the varied



VARIOUS FORMS OF THE BOW

powers of the instrument, and the marvellous effects of which it is capable, Paganini and his successors have given the best proof.

CAPTAIN BRAND;

Or, The Pirate Schooner.

A TALE OF THE SEA.

CHAPTER XX.

BUSINESS.

The business which Captain Brand alluded to when he was about to partake of breakfast with his friend the padre, was, in the first instance, to arrange some matters in the way of payments of debts to his compadre, Don Ignacio Sanchez, Commander of the Colonial Guarda Costa felucca Panchita.

Accordingly, when he rose from table, and after a whispered dialogue and reports as to the state of affairs in and around the Den and Island from the men at the signal-stations, he summoned Pedillo. When that worthy appeared below the veranda—for be it remembered that Captain Brand never permitted the inferior officials of his band to pollute his apartments, without perhaps, as in the case of his deceased subordinate, Master Gibbs, it was on urgent business—Captain Brand ordered his gig manned.

Pedillo threw up his hand in token of assent, and walked down to the brink of the basin to execute the command. Then, after a few minutes, Captain Brand lit a cigar, dismissed the padre, put on his fine white Panama straw-hat, unlocked a strong cabinet with a secret drawer, glanced over a paper before him, and making a rapid calculation, he caught up a heavy bag of doubloons and left the house in charge of Babette. The captain always told his guests that his fellows had such love and respect for him that he rarely locked up his property, and never placed a guard at his door. The truth was, that his fellows—scoundrels, miscreants, and villains as they were—stood in such fear and dread of their leader that they were glad to keep out of his way. Moreover, he never boasted or made any display before them, living, on shipboard as on shore, by himself, but always ready and terrible when the moment came for action; treating his crew, too, with the most rigid impartiality, adhering strictly to his promises and compacts with them, and never overlooking an offence.

So Captain Brand left his dwelling in charge of his dumb housekeeper, Babette, and tripping down the rope ladder from the piazza, in a clean suit of brown linen and straw slippers, his beardless face shaded by his broad-rimmed hat from the sun, and the bag of gold on his arm, he jauntily walked toward the cove.

"Ah! good morning, my doctor! Glad to meet you! How are the sick? Doing well, I hope!"

"Quite well, sir; but I was about to call upon you in relation to the conversation we had last evening, and——"

"Pardon me, monsieur le Docteur, but I have been very busy this morning, and am now going to see Don Ignacio on matters of importance"—here the elegant pirate took the cigar from his thin lips and held it daintily between his thumb and forefinger in the air—"and really, monsieur, I am very sorry to miss your visit. But," he added with one of his usual smiles, "I shall be at leisure this afternoon, and in the cool of the evening we can take a stroll. What say you?"

The doctor nodded.

"Apropos, docteur, suppose we have a little game of monté afterwards at your quarters? I never permit gaming in mine, you know. The padre will not object; and I am confident that our compadre, the Tuerto, will be delighted."

"As you please, captain," replied the medico, with a cold, indifferent air and averted face. "I will join you in the promenade, and I shall be ready to receive you in the evening."

"*Hasta luego, amigo!*" said Captain Brand, as he again stuck his cigar between his teeth, waved his hand in adieu, and walked to his boat.

"You don't love me, doctor," thought the pirate; "I don't fear you, captain," thought the doctor.

It was a touch of high art the way this notorious pirate pitched the bag of gold towards his coxswain, crying, "Catch that, Pedillo!" and then the almost girlish manner in which he pattered about the beach and held up his trousers, so that he might not even get his slippers damp. Had that salt-water been red blood he would not have cared if his feet had been soaked in it. And then, too, the little exclamation of joy when he finally stepped into the stern-sheets and sat down beneath the awning, while he stretched his smooth brown-linen legs out on the cushions. Oh, it was certainly a touch of high piratical art!

"The old schooner is looking a little rusty after her late cruise, Pedillo!" throwing his head back to evade a curl of smoke, and casting his cold eyes like a rattle of icy hail at the coxswain. "But I am glad Pedro took your place"—puff, puff—"that knife-stab prevented you, of course"—puff—"and we shall have her all tight and trig again in a day or two."

"Si, Señor!" said Pedillo, respectfully. "And how goes Señor Gibbs, Capitano?"

The captain rolled his eyes again at the coxswain, and replied, carelessly, "Why, Pedillo, our friend Gibbs came to see me when the schooner anchored, but almost before"—puff—"he had given me an account of his unfortunate cruise he fell down in a fit. The fact is, however"—puff, puff—"that, what with hard drinking and inflammation which set in on the stump of his lost leg, he has been in a very bad way"—puff—"quite in a dangerous condition indeed, requiring all my old Babette's care and attention"—puff—"but this morning the good padre went to see him, and he told me a while ago that he left him without fever and altogether tranquil."

Pedillo's wiry moustaches twirled of themselves.

Meanwhile the boat skimmed lightly over the basin, and as the captain ceased speaking she ran alongside of the felucca. Don Ignacio, with his bright single eye in full burning power, and a cigar-