


I.

Stringed Instruments

*b.* Bowed.

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HE Violin—a word which may be taken to comprehend those Violins of a larger growth, the Viola and Violoncello, and to exclude the Contra basso, which stubbornly retains some of the characteristics of the viol tribe—was not the least of the precious possessions inherited from the workers of that most glorious of centuries—the sixteenth. It was not precisely an invention; it did not spring into existence fully equipped, like Minerva from the head of Jove. It was an evolution from instruments which already approached it in character.

A century and a half ago there was a deadlock in Violin making, for which various reasons have been adduced. Fortunately for those who lived at that time the supply of good Violins had outstripped the demand—there was a plethora of them—and the artistically-minded craftsman found other fields of work more remunerative. So this noble craft, or, as Longfellow calls it, 'the lutist's art,' fell into desuetude. Evolution gave way to devolution, and there is cause to fear that future generations of violinists and violoncellists will lack instruments to play upon capable of producing tone of the peculiar quality we associate with the word 'Italian,' a tone which is at once an education to the ear, an incentive to work,