

"It's high time we did better," said he. "Stradivari, tucked away in his Italian province, had only about forty to fifty woods to select from, while here in New Zealand we've more timbers than he ever had in Italy. And when you think of the whole world at our disposal, why, any man could get hold of four hundred timbers without much trouble. We've spent millions on forestry, timber, and research work. We've delved deeply into science and found out a lot about sound. Yet with all our knowledge and resources, we're prepared to admit ourselves licked by a comparatively — *comparatively*, mark you — ignorant man.

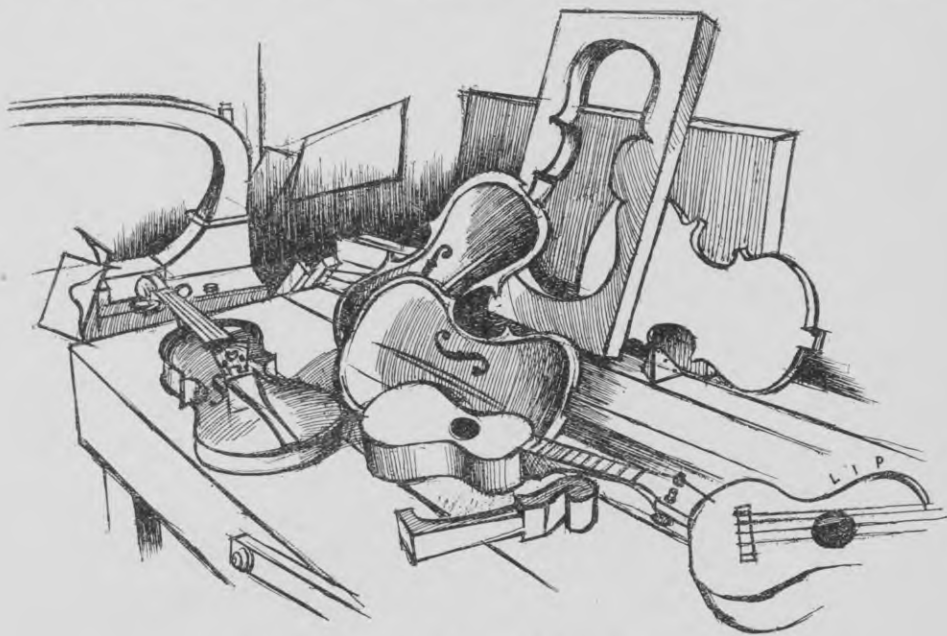
"No," said the violin-maker, "the perfect violin has never been made, my friend. The tone of the perfect violin must be a far closer approach to the human voice than that of any Strad."

This craftsman doesn't imagine for a moment that he will make as good a fiddle as Stradivari, but he's a man who won't take anything for granted. ("I'm never afraid to tackle something new.") Born in Edinburgh, and a soldier in the

1914-18 war, he cleared out from Scotland in disgust after his war pension was reduced. Off to Australia he went, but when a drought ruined his soldier-settlement farm he came across the Tasman to New Zealand. Now, aged fifty, he lives behind his workshop, in Wellington.

A visiting violinist, in heated debate, declared it was utterly impossible to make good violins from woods grown in New Zealand. "Nonsense," said our friend, and set about then and there to make a fiddle. In the past eighteen months he's made seventeen violins from matai, rimu, Southland beech, and honeysuckle. The violinist tried them all. When he came to the one made from honeysuckle he fell in love with its mellow tone. Now he wants to exchange his 200-year-old Parisian violin for the New Zealand fiddle fashioned out of honeysuckle.

This craftsman believes the secret of violin-making is not in the varnish, but in the wood. He has found short-grained timbers with short fibres give out short vibrations, which always re-



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