Figs. 79 and 80.—Plan and Side Elevation of Japanese Violin.
CHAPTER VI.

JAPANESE ONE-STRING VIOLINS.

A one-string violin is a sweet-toned instrument at all times, even when made from a soap-box. One form of Japanese fiddle may be cheaply constructed by using for the body the half of a large cocoanut shell. The neck is of sycamore or similar straight-grained wood, and passes through the cocoanut shell, so protruding that it forms a button to take the tailpiece. The finger-board is a strip of ebony carefully glued to the neck. A thin piece of deal forms the top of the body, and has a sound-hole cut in it. Both the shell and the top must be carefully dressed to fit perfectly true when glued together. When a coat of the best varnish has been applied the instrument is ready for stringing.

The above form of fiddle is liable to slip when held between the knees, but the octagon or hexagon shape has been recommended as being free from this defect.

A one-string violin with a hexagonal body is shown in plan by Fig. 79, and in side elevation by Fig. 80, reproduced one-quarter size, and the instructions here given will enable anyone to make a very serviceable instrument. Glue only is used for the joints. The body of the violin is 9 in. in diameter inside, and yellow pine is used for both belly and back. The sides are 3\(\frac{3}{2}\) in. thick by 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) in. high, and are mitred at the corners.

The arm or handle is cut from good straight-grained pitch-pine. Those who are proficient in the use of woodworking tools will no doubt be able to lay a strip of ebony A about \(\frac{1}{2}\) in. thick along the top of the handle or arm, from the neck to a projection of 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) in. past the shoulder, which butts up against the fiddle body; but as an alternative a short piece may be fitted in and glued.
The handle is screwed to one of the sides, and has an extension which is glued down to the bottom half-way as shown in Figs. 80 and 81, the latter figure being a half-size detail of the body, showing the method of framing up. Sections at x, y, and z (Fig. 80) are given in Figs. 82 to 84.

The length of the neck of the violin should be about 3 in. to 3½ in., and the peg on the machine head should go through half-way between the beginning of the finger-board and the end of the neck. The top of the neck is expanded out square at the end to give a better finish, and a machine head, which can be obtained at any music-dealer's, is used. In fitting the machine head, all that is required to be done is to drill a small round hole for the barrel to project through, and to screw on the plate (see Figs. 85 and 86). An ordinary violin peg is suitable, with careful boring of the hole, so as not to split the head. To secure the string to the body a small button is screwed to the bottom side of the body (see Figs. 87 and 88), those sold for handles for fretwork cupboards being very suitable. A small square of wood is glued on the inner side to form a better hold for the screw. The handle is at an angle to the body, so as to keep the bridge a good height. The wire string should be about ¾ in. from the finger-board at the bridge end, and ½ in. at the neck end. All the wood must be well glass-papered. The glue used should be thin.

In putting the parts together, begin with the bottom of the violin, and lay all the sides on, having the handle already screwed on. Two small triangular brackets κ (Fig. 79) are glued each side of the arm where it comes in the body, to strengthen up the side and keep the handle or arm from bending when the string is being tightened. Then glue a small sound-post at a distance of one-third up the body from the bottom end, about ⅛ in. in diameter, and just high enough to keep the top from fitting down on the sides. The dotted lines under the sound-holes in Fig. 79 represent two small banking-up pieces for strengthening the face of the
Fig. 81.—Half Size Detail of Body. Figs. 82 to 84.—Sections of Japanese Violin Handle. Figs. 85 and 86.—Method of Fitting Machine Head.
violin body; they are \( \frac{1}{4} \) in. square wood strips, about 3\( \frac{1}{2} \) in. long, and are glued on. The strip of wood shown in Fig. 81 is one of the two banking-up pieces shown dotted in Fig. 79, lying close to the F holes or sound-holes. The top is fixed on by clamping all round, and then allowing it to set hard. Two knee-caps (Figs. 89 and 90) are then cut to shape to give a good hold of the violin when playing, and a small chequer-work cut in. Then rub down with glass-paper, and varnish with a good oil varnish; or finish off with water stain and French polish. The repeated applications of glass-paper and polish will make it look quite handsome if time is taken to do it. A wire G string, such as those sold for banjos, is the best kind to use, the open string being tuned to A. The correct position for the bridge is obtained by trying in various places till the tone seems purest.

It may be necessary to point out that this instrument is held between the knees, like an ordinary violoncello, and is played with a bow.