

first reference to inherited factors, a reference we should like to have seen throughout the book.

The whole book forms a readable and at the same time a sound and comprehensive text for the more advanced student.

S. N. D.

POOR SCHOLAR: A Study of William Carleton. By Benedict Kiely. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

This book is a study of one whom W. B. Yeats called 'the greatest novelist of Ireland by reason of the most Celtic eyes that ever gazed under the brow of story-teller'. It is the study of an author, but it is a great deal more. It pictures the life of the Irish peasantry as Carleton saw them during the terrible first half of last century; Carleton who came of the peasantry, who knew them because he was one of themselves and who for that reason could feel as they felt.

After vile and prolonged onslaughts the Irish nation has risen from the dead, not once but repeatedly. Those who believe that there is an element of miracle in this will have their opinion strengthened as they read here of the nation's descent into hell after the rebellion of '98 and the famine years of the following century. 'The religious hates of the sixteenth century, the imperialism that came to life in the eighteenth, the cant of law, property and economic necessity that draped like a heavy cloak over the sins of the nineteenth, came together and festered on one small island. . . . Witnessing the unholy meeting, waiting and watching for every favourable moment were the black shadows of hunger, the red shadows of murder and sudden death'.

There were contradictions in Carleton's character. He tried to preach at his own people and when he did so he became tendentious. It may have been this attempted superiority of the moralist that finally lost him the Faith. He could write stories that were tedious, conventional, not seldom absurd. Yet Carleton was not insincere and when he wrote from the heart 'he interpreted Ireland in his own spasmodic, uneven way; sometimes faultlessly reflecting the sunshine, the green fields, echoing perfectly the birdsong, the voices of the little streams, the great unconquerable humour of the people; sometimes hearing the thunder and painting the sky darkening over acres black with decay; sometimes distributing abuse and praise with a sincere, unsteady sort of justice'. . . . He was the story-teller talking of fun and coloured amusement not in a contented house where all men are happy, but in a wake-house where all the noise and merriment was a mask or an antidote for mourning. Inevitably there would be at moments a lull in the fun, a break in the story, a silence with eyes turning to the door of the room where the body lay under-board, with waxen hands

and face, and the brown shroud, and soul gone out from suffering into unfathomable mystery.'

This book has to tell of frightful things as well as gay and happy things and it is salutary, for here too are tears for the lot of men and man's vicissitudes touch the human heart.

R. O. F. WYNNE

BACH. By Eva Mary and Sydney Grew. (Dent; 7s. 6d.)

RAVEL. By Norman Demuth. (Dent; 7s. 6d.)

St Thomas Aquinas reckons love as one of the sources of knowledge, and Oliver Cromwell, reversing the order, said of his Ironsides that they 'know what they fight for and love what they know'. Mr and Mrs Grew's book on Bach, the fruit of a lifetime's study and devotion, is a beautiful example of this mutual generation of love by knowledge and of knowledge by love.

Avoiding the normal division of such a book into biographical and critical sections, the authors have adopted the unusual and more difficult course of discussing Bach's life and works in conjunction; a course made doubly difficult in that (as revealed by the publisher's statement on the cover) Mrs Grew is mainly responsible for the biography, while her husband has devoted himself more particularly to the music. In Bach's case, the fact that, in general, each phase of his life coincides with the production of certain types of music makes the scheme possible; moreover, the need for illuminating discussion of these types with suitable illustrations, rather than the singling out of a multitude of individual works for brief mention, gives it great advantages. The authors have succeeded so finely in their task that their joint work has a wholeness and an integrity which many a single writer might envy.

There is one statement in the book which calls for a respectful question-mark: that in writing the Brandenburg Concertos Bach 'had to evolve a technique and an art of writing for instruments in the combination of *concertante* and *ripieno*'. Since the authors themselves record his faithful study of contemporary Italian composers (notably Vivaldi and Corelli), who had brought this art to a high pitch of accomplishment, it in no way detracts from Bach's glory to acknowledge that 'others had laboured, and he had entered into their labours'.

It would be pleasant to be able to give equal praise to the book which Mr Demuth in his preface describes as 'the first book on Ravel by an English author'. His love and his knowledge are alike incontestable; but the nearness of his subject to us in time, and perhaps the very extent of his familiarity with him, have inhibited Mr Demuth from giving more than a superficial account of Ravel's life and personality, while certain inconsistencies of judgment, together with an irritating style, mar the critical section of the book. This section, however, is a rewarding one despite its blemishes, for here the author brings the understanding of a fellow-composer to bear