

BOOKS VIEWED AND REVIEWED

ONCE more, in "At Fame's Gateway,"* by Jennie Irene Mix, have we with us the beautiful girl who comes to the Big City to win fame in the domain of art. This time she aspires to be a great pianist, thus running a little outside of form. Usually she has the Voice of the Century and troubles to match. The ending of this would-be Carreño's effort is a little "different"; but not so very. We have met him before, too, this millionaire with the great unselfish love—that is, we have met him in some other books; notably in the secondary theme of "Robert Elsmere," where also he patiently waits until the poor and struggling young girl gets through with having her heart properly broken by the villain, who is as full of temperament as he is short of manners and feelings. However, there is nothing new under the sun in musical stories, apparently; and there may be several such altruistic aristocrats, even in New York.

But there is absolutely no reason why a love affair with a great violinist should make a girl perceive in the last chapter that "Brahms was the last of the great classicists and the greatest of the romanticists"; unless to start something in the argument line. Also, we would like to suggest to the chronicler of the girl who had "nothing but talent and temperament" (and at that, she was in luck) that reports of

*"At Fame's Gateway." By Jennie Irene Mix. New York: Henry Holt & Co. Pp. 307.

Carnegie Hall concerts, however accurately that auditorium be described as located at Fifty-seventh Street and Seventh Avenue, do not make musical "local color"; and finally that in 1896, when Josef Hofmann was twenty and Nordica was singing *Isolde* to Jean de Reszke's *Tristan*, neither tea-wagons nor telephones were part of the everyday furniture of inexpensive New York apartments, tenanted by bachelor girls.

When the author writes of Parksburg and the Ladies' Aid she writes naturally and well; and both the Bohemian house-keeper of the old teacher Brandt, and the teacher himself are well characterized. C. P.

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A volume tiny in size but of much substance in its worthy suggestions for teachers is that recently issued by Carolyn Alden Alchin, on "Tone Thinking and Ear Testing."* The greater part of her book Mrs. Alchin has devoted to well-chosen examples, limiting her text to the essentials, written in the clear and concise manner of the successful pedagogue, one well-versed, and inspired by the subject itself. Her musical numbers she has culled from the best works, and her methods she has built up on the authoritative foundation supplied in the works of the masters. It is a volume which should be of much worth for the teacher and pupil. F. G.

*"Tone Thinking and Ear Testing." by Carolyn Alden Alchin. Cloth, Pp. 179. California: C. A. Alchin.

Saint-Saëns' "Musical Memories"

In his "Musical Memories,"* just issued by Small, Maynard & Co., in an English version of which Edwin Gile Rich is the translator, Camille Saint-Saëns takes us back over eighty-two years of music-life and music-love. For, while the dean of French musicians is now in his eighty-fifth year, he was not quite three when he was displaying both his knowledge of musical notation and his "absolute pitch" in naming correctly the notes that a piano tuner struck in the next room. (It is said of him, too, though he does not quote the incident, that when, at four, he heard a lame man in the next apartment, he said: "That man walks in dotted-eighth notes.") He tells in his book how his great-aunt taught him in those baby days to hold his hands properly in playing; how he refused to learn children's music because "the left hand doesn't sing," i. e., the bass was uninterestingly written. At five he was playing the smaller Haydn and Mozart sonatas as well as writing little waltzes of his own; and at seven he was put under the tuition of Stamaty. But for Segher's dislike of Stamaty and Segher's power at the Conservatoire, the child of ten would have given his first concert at the famous hall of that famous society. Someone rebuked his mother for letting the little boy play Beethoven's sonatas. "What music will he play when he is twenty?" she was asked. "He will play his own," was her answer; one truly, as her son characterizes it, "worthy of Cornelia," mother of the Gracchii.

We get a few glimpses in the "Memories" of his studies of harmony at fifteen with Halévy; of his organ work at fourteen with Benoist; of the difficulties that the young composer later experienced in putting on his first opera, "La Princesse Jaune." But on the whole the book strikes a remarkably impersonal note. Totally unlike Massenet in his "My Recollections," also just translated, where the author literally takes us a step at a time through his studies, friendships, strivings and successes, Saint-Saëns prefers to write of other figures of his own generation rather than of himself. To Victor Hugo he gives a chapter-writing of him with enthusiasm and reverence. For Hugo was one of the artistic idols of Saint-Saëns's youth, and became one of the friends of his riper years.

Of Louis Gallet, author of the libretto of "Thaïs," as well as most of Saint-Saëns's operas, "my friend and collaborator, the diligent and chosen companion of my best years, whose support was dear and precious to me," he speaks with

actual tenderness in the chapter on Gallet and their work together. "His death," says Saint-Saëns, "left a void which it is impossible to fill." Very seldom does he speak with as much personal feeling. Of his own unhappy private life, the story of which is the property of the Paris gossips, the aged musician naturally tells us nothing; but we are vouchsafed scarcely a word even of his twenty years as organist of the famous Church of the Madeleine in Paris, when he held the hearts of the fashionable music-devotees in his hand. One delicious anecdote he tells of his youth; when, already known as a writer of symphonies, an organist and a pianist, he aspired to become a successful opera-composer. "They tried," he says, "to interest a certain princess, a patron of the arts, in my behalf." "What," she replied, "isn't he satisfied with his position? He plays the organ at the Madeleine and the piano at my house. Isn't that enough for him?"

Again, at the travels that took him as a celebrated pianist all over the world, he only hints in the chapter on "Their Majesties," or, as *The Ladies' Home Journal* would write it, on "Queens I Have Known." These included Victoria and Alexandra of England; the old queen of Denmark, Christine of Spain, Amélie of Portugal, Margharita and Helena of Italy, Elizabeth of Belgium, and, as he says, the story would become interminable if he were also to include the majesties of the sterner sex; the emperor of Germany, the kings of Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, what not.

That versatility which in his music became an eclecticism that has prevented Saint-Saëns from leaving any marked impress on the music of his generation, extended his interests to other forms of art than music. His mother's paintings, by the way, may still be seen in the museum at Dieppe, and the son inherited a love for painting and painters. Of Ingres, Doré, Hébert and Henri Regnault, all of whom were his friends, he writes most interestingly, in his chapter on "Musical Painters."

He wields a trenchant pen; and those who have not read some of his brilliant works, such as the "Melodie et Harmonie," in the original can find a sample of its sharpness in, for example, the paragraph in which he scathingly that system of baffling the young native composer obtaining in the Opéra and Opéra Comique of his time, as it has been occasionally noticed in the opera houses of other countries than France. Delibes, Bizet, Massenet and Saint-Saëns all suffered from it in their youth. He remarks: "As everyone knows, the way to become a blacksmith is by working at a forge. Sitting in the shade does not give the experience which develops talent. We should never have known the great days

of the Italian theater if Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and Verdi had had to undergo our régime. If Mozart had had to wait until he was forty to produce his first opera we should never have had 'Don Giovanni' or 'Le Nozze di Figaro,' for Mozart died at thirty-five." Apropos of the question as to whether history or mythology subjects make the best opera librettos, he says: "History is made up of what probably happened; mythology of what probably did not happen. . . . Musicians should, as a matter of fact, be allowed to choose both the subject and motives for their operas according to their temperament and their feelings.

All great artists, the illustrious Richard more than any other, defied the critics." (There is no reference, by the way, in this book, to the war, or its effect on Saint-Saëns's erstwhile adoration of Wagner.) The chapter on "Art for Art's Sake" ends with the words: "Art has nothing to do with morality. Both have their functions and each is useful in its own way." And at the end of the chapter on "Anarchy in Music," he describes the man who nowadays is considered to have a developed taste as one "who abandons all keys and piles up dissonances which he neither introduces nor concludes, and who, as a result, grunts his way through music as a pig through a flower garden." "The boundless empire of sound," he says of the new school, "is at their disposal and let them profit by it. That is what dogs do when they bay at the moon, cats when they meow, and the birds when they sing."

One wishes he had written more about his compositions and about himself; it would have been interesting to hear his story of the long fight for French music that he and César Franck headed, and then of the day when the fighters divided into two schools; but it is nevertheless difficult, in so far as interest goes, to choose among his chapters on Haydn; on the old Conservatoire; on the Liszt Centenary; the Berlioz Requiem; "Orphée"; Delsarte; on Seghers, the founder of the St. Cecilia Society; on Rossini, Offenbach, Meyerbeer; most of piquant of all, on Massenet.

Between him and Massenet, indeed, there was a great gulf fixed of irreconcilable character-differences. Each respected and admired the other—for publication only; but while Massenet, in his book of "Recollections" has adhered, when speaking of Saint-Saëns, to his never-failing principle of saying the amiable thing, Saint-Saëns, in his memoirs, first

devotes an entire chapter to lauding Massenet in the highest terms of praise for his artistic achievements, and then plainly exposes the personal dislike and distrust that existed between the two musicians. "He might have had my friendship if he had wanted it," says Saint-Saëns, "but he did not want it." One doubts at least the first of these two statements; the easy-going, popularity-loving, perhaps not invariably sincere Massenet could hardly have been the friend of Saint-Saëns, who was a lover of outspokenness for outspokenness's sake, a cynic in his outlook, and a fighter from his cradle.

A certain quality of cold suspicion crops out often in this book; just as a certain lack of humanness in his music cannot be disguised either by his comprehensive knowledge or his highly-developed technique in its use. C. P.

*"Musical Memories." By Camille Saint-Saëns. Translated by Edwin Gile Rich. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co. Pp. 282.

SCHLISKY AND GEGNA
GIVE JOINT RECITAL

Tenor and 'Cellist Appear in Program Before a Large Throng in Carnegie Hall

Josef Schlisky, tenor, and Max Gegna, 'cellist, appeared on Tuesday evening, April 6, at Carnegie Hall, in a joint recital before a large number of their compatriots, who accorded the performers a welcome characterized by unbounded enthusiasm.

Mr. Schlisky, who was heard in recital at Aeolian Hall last season, displayed a quite remarkable vocal organ and delighted the audience through his effective singing of Jewish folk-songs and traditional airs, "Koil Edno Vishua," "Birchas Kohanim" and "Meloich."

Max Gegna is the possessor of an excellent technique and tone rich in hue. His readings are sympathetic and he gave a stirring performance of Boellmann's "Symphoniques Variations." Two numbers, a Hebrew Melody and a Russian folk-song arrangement, proved him as gifted also in the art of composition. Others of Mr. Schlisky's offerings were operatic excerpts by Mozart, and a Puccini aria, from "La Bohème," in which he was assisted by Mr. Gegna. Augustus Hardeman delivered a lengthy address in behalf of the Jewish people. J. A. S.

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