

## AUCKLAND SOCIETY OF ARTS.

### SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION.

#### NOTES AND COMMENTS THEREON.

**F**ORTUNA vitrea est, tum cum splendet frangitur—'Fortune is like glass, even at the moment she shines she is shattered.' The bitter sigh of the Latin pessimist must find ready echo in the hearts of the hanging committee of the Auckland Society of Arts when they reflect on the exasperating mischance which decreed that the finest collection of pictures forwarded from the South for years should have arrived too late to be placed in the position its merits demanded. It is long—longer perhaps than some of us care to look back—since Southern artists favoured the Auckland Exhibition with so many fine works of art, and it is a thousand pities that these should unavoidably have been hung where they are seen under grave disadvantages of light and surroundings. Had there been time to re-hang the whole exhibition before the opening conversation, this course would have been adopted, but this being impossible, the only alternative was to place the Southern pictures in the annexe, and to make the best apology possible for the seeming discourtesy. And, perhaps the attention which was specially directed to them by the very circumstance of their misfortune, may, in some sort compensate the painters of the belated exhibits for their unfortune exclusion from the main hall. Public sym-

pathy and public interest were aroused from the moment the President (Mr Payton) made allusion to the matter in his inaugural address, and it is not impossible that these pictures have been even more carefully examined, and consequently warmly admired, than would have been the case had everything worked smoothly.

The most remarkable characteristic of Southern work as a whole is the large proportion of energy bestowed on portrait-painting, and the somewhat unusual measure of success which has attended the majority of the efforts in this direction. The instant one turns the corner into the room, the eye is caught by four portraits, for each of which there is much to be said in praise, and which seem to promise even better things in the future. Portraits are not the most interesting pictures to look at, but they are the results of valuable effort, and should not be too hastily passed by. At the same time there is little that can be said or written on the subject, unless, indeed, one were to quote Ruskin's remarks on truth in portraiture.

The portrait of Mr G. Henderson, by Miss M. E. Richardson, and the same lady's portrait of the Hon. E. Richardson, are both the work of an artist whose talents in the direction of portrait-painting only need development to enable her to reach a high level in this branch of the profession of painting. The lighting in the portrait of Mr G. Henderson is somewhat crude and arbitrary, but the pose of the figure is easy, and the drawing very commendable.

J. M. Nairn's portrait of Mr. Luckie seems to me a very

capable piece of work. The pose is natural and unstrained, and the drawing is excellent. In colour the artist has inclined somewhat to the Spanish school, the flesh tints being somewhat dark, and the whole tone of the colouring being sombre and severe. Far from this being a fault, I consider it a virtue. The 'beef and beer' type of portrait seems to me detestable.

Miss Mabel Hill has two large portraits in water-colour, both of which are in their degree clever paintings. That of Mr David McNicol is an ambitious piece of work, but the medium seems scarcely so suitable to the subject as oils would have been. In 'A Lady in White' the same remark does not apply. The delicate flesh tints of the young girl represented, and the soft drapery of the dress are very beautifully reproduced, and the portrait is in every way a success, making a very pretty and decorative picture.

Mr George E. Butler has two really excellent sea pictures, of which the best is perhaps 'A Bold Southerly,' where a green sea dashes shorewards under a cold, greyish sky. The rush and ceaseless motion of the wind-ridden waves is most spiritedly rendered, and in the pure cold green of the sea Mr Butler displays himself a colourist of no mean order. 'At Wellington Heads,' by the same artist, is almost equally successful, but surely the bright blue sea was painted on a day when there was a less opaque mass of stormy grey cloud overhead!

One of the very best things in the exhibition is the little study of a head (No. 113), 'Brown Eyes,' by F. M. Hodgkins. If this little head was painted from life,



A SUMMER MORNING.

By W. A. Bollard.

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A GLIMPSE OF PARADISE.

By C. Blomfield.

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