

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS, HOBART TOWN.

WE have been favoured by a gentleman, recently arrived from Hobart Town, with a catalogue of paintings, water colour drawings, and engravings, exhibited in the Legislative Council Chamber, Hobart Town. The exhibition was opened at the beginning of the present year ; and when we look at the number, and glance over the names of the paintings and engravings, even if we had not the testimony of an eye witness to prove their general excellence, we are constrained to confess, that in our rail-road speed to become rich, we are allowing the provinces of the southern hemisphere to take the lead in the march of refinement, and extend that encouragement to the fine arts which is denied them in the metropolis. The works of art exhibited amounted to no fewer than 267, consisting of 92 oil-paintings, 100 water colour and crayon drawings, and 75 engravings.

The Tasmanians, like ourselves, were rather sceptical as to the success of such an undertaking, and many excellent paintings were for this reason kept back ; but when the exhibition was opened, the unbelieving came forward in crowds, with offers of pictures which could not be received ; and it is expected that the next exhibition will be double the size of the present.

The exhibition, we believe, owed its origin to Mr. Prout, an artist well known in Sydney. His enthusiasm in his profession induced him to labour long, but unsuccessfully, to establish a similar exhibition here ; and though he had to struggle with many obstacles in the sister colony, he was at length enabled, through the influence of the Colonial Secretary, and the Lord Bishop of Tasmania, who is himself an amateur artist of great ability, to enlist in the cause some of the leading Government Offices of Van Diemen's Land. A committee of management was formed, consisting of the following members :-J. E. Bicheno, Esq., Colonial Secretary, President ; W. P. Kay, Esq., Colonial Architect, Secretary ; P. Fraser, Esq., Colonial Treasurer ; G. T. W. Boyes, Esq., Auditor-General ; and Mr. Prout.

His Excellency the Governor kindly allowed the Committee the free use of a suite of rooms in the Council Chambers for the purpose of the exhibition ; and the Committee lost no time in sending circulars to all persons who were supposed to have pictures, or who had the ability to paint them, to forward them to the Council Chamber for exhibition.

Mr. Prout himself undertook to furnish twenty drawings, and the catalogue shows us that he redeemed his pledge. While matters were thus progressing, the Colonial Secretary, in his anxiety for the success of the undertaking, gave a series of *Reunions*, as we believe they are classically called ; or, in plain English, issued invitations to all the gentry in the neighbourhood to visit his delightful residence, and witness his private exhibition of paintings, which adorned the lofty walls of his large and elegantly furnished house.

In November last, a correspondent of ours, who was an eye-witness, favoured us with a very graphic description of these assemblies. The Secretary's paintings were beautiful, but the views obtained from the windows of the Secretary's house were more so. The Secretary's collation consisted of every delicacy that could be procured, and his champagne was bright and sparkling ; but neither the collation nor the champagne was to be compared with the bright sparkling looks of the ladies of Tasmania, who crowded and jostled one another to do honour to the Secretary's hospitality.

Truly the Tasmanians owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Bicheno for his unwearied exertions in thus inducing or forcing them to admire the beauties of art, and preparing them to appreciate the honour they were about to confer on the colony of their birth or adoption, by being the first in the southern hemisphere that had the spirit to establish an annual exhibition of paintings.

Great as was the number of pictures exhibited, when we consider the smallness of the place, and the difficulties attending all first attempts of the kind, it will be found, on an examination of the catalogue, that the number of proprietors was comparatively trifling.

The Bishop and the Working Committee alone exhibited 100. Thus, the Bishop sent 31, the Colonial Secretary 23, the Colonial Architect 2, the Colonial Treasurer 10, the Auditor-General 10, and Mr. Prout 21. Besides these, there were several large contributors to the collection. Thus, Mr. Burgess, police magistrate, sent 17, and Mr. Maning, merchant, 16; so that exactly one half of the whole number of pictures was furnished by eight individuals. Surely this simple fact should be sufficient to satisfy the people of Sydney that the fault is not in their stars, but in themselves, if they are underlings ; and from what we know of this city, we have no hesitation in saying, that under the management of an active committee, we might get up an exhibition here in the course of a few weeks that could not be equalled by any of the sister colonies.

To the Bishop of Tasmania the exhibition was indebted for some of its choicest productions. His Lordship exhibited originals by Guido, Boxall, Hamilton, Nixon, and Turner. One of Turner's, "A view of Snowdon, North Wales," is believed to be the first production in oil of that distinguished artist. But the gem of the collection was the "St. Sebastian," by Guido.

micat inter omnes Julium sidus, velut inter ignes Luna minores

(Julius, of all the images, the star shines, as it were, the fires of the moon among the lesser)

A note is appended in the catalogue to explain that this picture was brought from France about forty years ago, by M. La Fontain, and sold by him to H. B. Brookes, Esq., from whose possession it passed into that of the Bishop of Tasmania.

The Right Reverend Dr Wilson had also some fine paintings in the exhibition, the most admired of which was No. 83 in the catalogue -ahead-described as the "Christian Philosopher."

Besides the artists abovenamed, the exhibition was enriched by the names and some of the works of Morland, Vandyke, S. Prout, Müller, Chalón, and Cox ; as well as by the paintings of several colonial artists, of whom the best known in Sydney are, J. S. Prout, C. Martens, and W. Nicholas. Several amateurs also contributed their share to the general collection, among whom we may mention the names of the Bishop of Tasmania, G. W. Evans, Esq., lately of this place ; P. Fraser, Esq., Colonial Treasurer ; W. P. Kay, Esq., Colonial Architect; Mrs. Allport, and Miss Burgess.

We have no wish to make comparisons, and we could not write a critique on the individual works, without greatly exceeding our prescribed limits. Of subjects more belonging to our own side of the water, we observed two oil paintings of landscapes in New South Wales, by Mr. Martens ; four in water colours, by Mr. Prout ; a sketch of the Bishop of Australia, by his Rev. Brother the Bishop of Tasmania, and a portrait of our Town Clerk, by Air. Nicholas.

The Engravings in the middle room formed a pleasing contrast to the oil and water colour paintings in the two remaining rooms of the Exhibition. Many of them were by first-rate artists

and engravers. Among the artists, we find the names of Raffaello, Rembrandt, Guercino, Correggio, Domenichino, Leonardo da Vinci, Rubens, Teniers, Reynolds, Lawrence, Parris, Landseer, Wilkie, Kneller, Shee, West, Stanfield, Hayter, Phillips, Saunders, and others.

Upon the whole, in whichever way we view the exhibition, it is highly creditable to the spirit and taste of the Tasmanians. Few provincial towns of the same size, in our fatherland, could have excelled it ; and we trust that the spirited example thus set by Hobart Town, will not be lost on Sydney, her elder sister. We have abundance of materiel among us, and plenty of talent. We are just beginning to recover from the commercial epidemic that has afflicted us so long. The crisis is over. The cry of the croaker is hushed. Brighter faces meet us in the streets. Business has received a fresh impetus from the cheering accounts from home; and confidence is partially restored.

Let us enter on our new existence with a determination to turn over a new leaf; to give part of the incense which was formerly offered to Mammon, to the worship of the fine arts ; and to aid and support every institution which has for its object the intellectual advancement of the land in which we live. Let us Struggle to give the lie to our calumniators, and show to the world that even at Botany Bay may be found a people of intelligence, taste, and refinement ; and schools for the study and exhibition of the fine arts, which, even more than her commerce or her victories, have raised the mother country to the high station which she holds among the nations.

Let our men of talent and property come forward; let His Excellency the Governor offer a helping hand; let the press exert its influence, and the battle will be won. Give us a fair start ; we ask no more. There is nothing so difficult as the beginning. Lay but the foundation stone, and trust to the people to rear the edifice. Let not another year pass over us without establishing an annual exhibition for the promotion of the fine arts in this colony. Australia should be true to her motto; she should advance and lead; she ought never to retrograde or follow.