

sky, all in roughly horizontal bands with the red funnel of a ship central enough to be interestingly off-centre. There was another picture by this artist, an oil of some romantic imaginary castle, chocolate-boxy in the extreme, though I hadn't learnt then to use that critical description. I think he was an RA too, and for that sort of rubbish rather than the watercolour I liked. If so, his fame didn't survive strongly enough for his name to be included in the encyclopedic dictionary I have just looked up.

My favourite picture in the gallery was by a Dutchman who came to New Zealand and painted here. It was painted thinly in oils, 'Head of a Cello Player', by Petrus van der Velden. Its subtle greyish sea-green background, the old man's parchment-coloured complexion and his white hair—white like a waterfall—made a beautiful colour harmony. It was so good that I never tired of looking at it. Possibly the cello playing had little to do with the painting, beyond that an impoverished old musician may have sat for the artist. For me, that picture easily won all the respect, if not worship, that was asked for for the watercolours of John Gully, which the gallery had in plentiful supply. He was an Englishman resident in New Zealand, a surveyor-cum-artist. His subjects were panoramic views with mountains. He had shared the nineteenth-century watercolourists' addiction to fleeting colours, and it was already recognised that his pictures were fading. In front of each major one was a brown curtain that you might draw aside to look, and then replace to prevent further fading. This act, so like uncovering a shrine, failed to produce in me the sense of awe I felt was expected. Somehow, in spite of the wonders of nature they depicted, the pictures themselves remained uninspiring. Very different was my response, years later, to the work of another surveyor-artist, Charles Heaphy, when I saw a print of his view of Mount Egmont from the South. The mountain soared as it never could have done if the surveyor with his instruments of measurement had sat as heavily on the imagination of the artist as he had in Gully.

Gully and van der Velden: they were poles apart in the same gallery. Gully had numerous pictures, van der Velden only two. Gully had no figures (unless some minute, incidental ones escaped my notice); van der Velden's pictures were both figure subjects. Gully worked only in watercolour; van der Velden's pictures were both in oil, even though I long thought one of them was a watercolour.

The other one, called 'The Storyteller', was a picture Hugh Scott recommended us to study. Its background, possibly of bitumen, was a fault in van der Velden. Pictures painted with it had been known to slide off their canvases on to the floor because bitumen