

never dried. But the colours glowed richly against it. The storyteller's ruddy complexion, his blue eye, and the just perceptible blue of his sou'wester and sailor's jacket, were good. He was painted more roughly than his hearers, two young people whose bemused expressions were helped by the suave smoothness of the paint. It was an interesting contrast, reminding me of a painting of my Aunt Marian's (an unrecorded New Zealand artist as far as I know) in which she had the same kind of contrast, but to the point of exaggeration.

Her subject was more high falutin than van der Velden's but her painting I suspect not so good. It had come to her by way of a vision, she told me, at an Anzac Day service. She shook her head to see if it would go away; but it was still there and a Voice (my aunt was a spiritualist) instructing her what measurements to make the picture. The figure of Christ, she quoted to me, had to be seventeen inches high. He was standing on the far side of the River Styx which flowed, van der Veldenly dark, down the middle of the picture from a lurid red sunset in the distance. On the near side of the mythical river were soldiers, coming in from the right roughly alive still, but dying on the bank of the river and then being rendered in smooth paint, as spirits. When they reached that stage, they were each allotted one of two expressions; joyful recognition of Who it was on the other side of the river if they had listened and believed at their mother's knee as infants, and led pure and blameless lives as a result; or fear and horror if they had not believed, and grown into rough, swearing men.

The expressions were masklike, my aunt (like myself) lacked an art-school training. But it may have been a primitive. Who knows, in these days of art fancying and the elevation of the inept, the simple and the naive, what a treasure, if it had survived, that picture might not be in some important collection? As far as I know it didn't survive. When my aunt wrote to me from a home for the aged asking me to be responsible for her lifetime's collection of what seemed to the rest of us mostly useless bric-à-brac, with perhaps odd items of more interest among it, I was financially unable to make the trip from Greymouth to Wellington. I suppose the picture was buried in a rubbish tip in some deep gully and is now far beneath a street of new suburban houses.

Nobody, in those days, seemed to worry whether our painting was New Zealand painting in the way we do today. A phrase, 'The Church of England in the Province of New Zealand', seems to express the situation very well, translated into terms of painting. Before I left Nelson, Hugh Scott was saying how much New Zealand artists would profit by the working visit to our country of 'a great European painter'. He would show us how to paint our