

Reviews

MELBOURNE.—Art in Australia is likely to have a great impetus given to it by the forthcoming Australian Federal International Exhibition, to be held in Melbourne at the Carlton Palace (or Melbourne Exhibition Buildings). This exhibition has been initiated with a view to promote the interest of arts, sciences and industries, to develop their advancement in the Australasian States, and, more especially, to afford Australian artists and their students or pupils an opportunity to bring before the public the art progress made within the last decade. Invitations have been sent to eminent artists in Europe and America to contribute to this exhibition, and the management are hopeful that the collection thus obtained will prove one of the attractions of the exhibition.

The Yarra Sculptors' Society purpose holding its annual exhibition in conjunction with the Federal Exhibition, and in addition to the year's work the leading pieces of sculpture from the previous exhibitions will be included in the display, so that it will be the largest exhibition of sculpture that has been shown by local artists at any exhibition in Australia. The Victorian Artists' Society, and the Sydney Art Society intend to hold their Summer exhibitions also at the same time and place. They have secured well-lighted galleries, and intend exhibiting a very representative collection of Australian pictures.

REVIEWS.

Die Englische Baukunst der Gegenwart. By HERMANN MUTHESIUS. (Leipzig und Berlin: Cosmos, Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft.)

Stilarchitektur und Baukunst. By HERMANN MUTHESIUS. (Mülheim-Ruhr: Verlag von K. Schimmelpfeng.)

These two books, both of them proceeding from the pen and due to the extraordinary fertility of Mr. H. Muthesius, afford those interested in the immediate past and the present of English architecture, and anxious as to its future, the double opportunity of examining a recensus of its output for the last twenty-five years down to the present day, and of considering it from the stand-point of a German critic, not, on the whole, unfriendly and certainly well-equipped. The credentials of Mr. Muthesius may be indicated by the fact that a few years since he left the editorial chair of the "Centralblatt der Bauverwaltung," the leading architectural journal in Berlin, to occupy the post

his government offered him of Technical or Art Attaché to the German Embassy in London.

The "Englische Baukunst der Gegenwart," a large folio volume of one hundred and ten plates (besides many plans and other illustrations in the text), includes in its consideration of modern English secular buildings the names of nearly every architect of note during the period it passes under review, and gives on a large scale illustrations of the works it discusses, in all cases from photographs especially taken for the work. It thus escapes the fallacious—and generally intentionally so—inaccuracies of the work of the "expert perspective draughtsman." In his introduction, Mr. Muthesius shows himself well-posted in the history of our architectural progress—or otherwise—of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He does not omit even such neglected incidents as that of the powerful influence wielded on design in the seventies by Eden Nesfield. It is not his fault if he is unable to give illustrative evidence of the reasons for the even stronger influence exerted by Mr. Philip Webb's forceful personality in design. Perhaps, some day, a waiting world may have an opportunity of enjoying, and profiting by, a full presentment of the life-work of a great and too modest artist.

But while, in the introductory essay prefixed to the larger work, he passes in historical and critical review English architecture alone, the author's "Stilarchitektur" covers a much wider and more general ground. It traverses, with such limitations as a volume of 67 pages must impose, the evolutionary process in architecture as evidenced, for the most part, in Germany, France, and England, and finally lands us at the same culminating point in the present day with regard to each of these countries.

In each men are asking—Mr. Muthesius is himself an expression of the tendency—What *is* this style—nay, this stylism—to which we are bred up to submit ourselves passively and unquestioningly? Is it a power above and beyond ourselves, to which we fain must bow—a dogma as true as Truth, and with the same penalty for defiance and the same threat of damnation for unorthodoxy? Ought we, in architecture alone of all the arts, to refrain from saying hopefully with Browning, "the best is yet to be," and to recognise as true, and accept as binding, the sterilizing dictum "the best has *been*"?

The modern wave of feeling—one dare hardly, as yet, call it a Renaissance—taking its rise in England but a few years since, and evidencing itself in the recrudescence of the various arts