
Two Painters of Ontario

unmistakable. It may be full, quarter, or new; it is always pensive with the pale cast of thought. You never catch a Browne moon riding the heavens and brooming away the clouds with a high wind. It is always peering shyly into the nebula of the landscape, between ghosted trees or over phantom waters, to see what the artist has been doing rather than to give the beholder light. Critics have complained that the Browne moon is not distinctively Canadian. Browne aptly retorts that the moon is a universal object which cannot be nationalised. But there are times when the Browne moon is not even an object: merely a subtlety.

There must have been some humour in Browne's original idea to exploit the moon. In so doing he seems to have worked out an alleged theorem of Corot that he could paint the same subject in a hundred various ways and never repeat himself. Browne never pretended that he was interpreting Canada by translating the moon; neither can he deny that a good many of his lunar pictures could have been done quite as well if he had taken the original sketches to a studio in Bombay.

Whatever the first intention was, the artist has now somewhat outgrown it. He no longer dwells in the moonlight of art. Many of his later compositions are exceedingly high-keyed, colourful, and bold—some of them dramatic. In fact some time ago he broke out into a species of realism by painting old shacks and patches of city streets. In his best recent things, however, he has depicted the big valley and the bold cloud-scudded mountain on some arm of the Bay of Fundy. In such things he revels in luminosity, realistic colour, and motion.

Even in these he shudderingly avoids any modern methods in the perpetration of paint. A Browne picture is half done before he begins. He mixes his colours on the palette, not being sure that the beholder has either the ability or the patience to mix them after they are on the canvas. Of course this is an old device. But nowadays it requires occasional courage as an innovator