

not been touched by any other artist. His sketches are a complete encyclopædia of all the phenomena of Algonquin Park, and aside from their artistic merits have a historical value entitling them to preservation in the National Gallery.

Thomson painted not merely to paint, but because his nature compelled him to paint—because he had a message. The north country gradually enthralled him, body and soul. He began to paint that he might express the emotions the country inspired in him; all the moods and passions, all the sombreness and all the glory of colour, were so felt that they demanded from him pictorial-expression. He never gave utterance in words to his feelings of the glories of nature. Words were not his instruments of expression—colour was the only medium open to him. Of all Canadian artists he was, I believe, the greatest colourist. But not from any desire to be unusual or to make a sensation did he use colour. His aims were truthfulness and beauty—beauty of colour, of feeling, and of emotion. Yet to him, his most beautiful sketches were only paint. He placed no value on them. All he wanted was more paint, so that he could paint others. He enjoyed appreciation of his work; criticism of its methods he welcomed, but its truthfulness was unassailable, for he had seen it. He never painted anything that he had not seen.

Sombre and gray, or gloriously golden, nature had equal appeal to him. His one criticism of his own work was "there is not enough daylight in that". He saw and painted in pure colour—colour so clean that one almost feels his pictures had been laundered. His colour is varied, brilliant and beautiful, but always dominated by the beauty of emotion. It sings the triumphant Hosannas of the joy and exaltation of nature.

Furthermore, his colour composition is beautiful. The poetry of his soul never permitted the colour, however brilliant, to be anything but harmoni-

ous. Unusual though it may be, it never jars, never brings one up with a jerk. He combined in an unusual degree the sense of design, of pattern, rhythm and decoration with the sense of composition, of character and feeling. The line and pattern—the design—but added greater beauty to nature's garb, yet nature dominated him and actuated all his work.

As has been said, Thomson had but one method of expressing himself, and that one was by means of paint. He did not discuss theories of art, technical methods nor choice of motives. He never told about marvellous scenes, of how they had thrilled and held him. He merely showed the sketch and said never a word of his difficulties or of what he had tried to express. His idea seemed to be that the way to learn to paint was to paint. He did not choose some one landscape or some one kind of landscape. All nature seemed to him paintable—the most difficult, the most unlikely subjects held no terrors for him—the confidence of inexperience it may have been. No doubt he put his own impress on what he painted, but the country he painted ever grew into his soul, stronger and stronger, rendering him shy and silent, filling him with longing and love for its beauties. His stay in the studio became shorter and shorter, his dress more and more like that of the backwoodsman. The quiet hidden strength, confidence and resource of the voyageur showed itself in the surety of handling in his work. He was not concerned with any special technique, any particular mode of application of colour, with this kind of brush stroke or that. If it were true to nature, the technique might be anything. A technique all his own, varying with the occasion, sprang into being, not as the result of any laboured thought or experiment, but because it could not be otherwise. He proved the theory that the technique should harmonize with the nature of the painting, should never overpower or dominate the idea or emotion express-