

etc. etc., for a year, he guaranteeing my living expenses, and so now I had to help him to persuade Thomson to drop his job as a commercial artist and devote all his time to painting.

At first Thomson would not entertain the idea. He wanted to paint for his own pleasure, but to earn his living at commercial art. If he could just drop his work three or four months a year and go off in his canoe with a tent, that was fine, but to make it his life's work was taking his abilities too seriously.

However, in his boarding house on Isabella Street we would talk it over and finally he decided to try it for a year, Dr. MacCallum guaranteeing his expenses too.

Early in January, 1914, we moved into the Studio Building while the workman were still all over the place and our fellow artist, J. W. Beatty, urging them to greater efforts to get the work done. J. E. H. MacDonald, Arthur Heming, Curtis Williamson and Lawren Harris were the other tenants.

No artists in Canada ever worked under happier conditions—spacious studios with big windows facing the North, with an open park across the way, only five minutes' walk from Bloor and Yonge Streets, and half that time to the Busy Bee or the Lennox Hotel, where most of us had our meals.

Thomson started to paint canvases from his sketches. He and I shared a studio. He was cheerful company, and loved talking of his life up north and liked to hear about my experiences during the years I spent in Europe, and as he had never been to Europe, and I knew nothing of the North, we pulled very well together.

As early as 1913 one of the Toronto papers had dubbed us "The Hot Mush School". We were merely visualizing a kind of painting which did not depend on cows or sheep, thatched cottages, windmills or all the stock junk which clutters up conventional rundown art movements which represented popular art at that time.

I remember meeting an old lady who had a large house, filled with very bad imported pictures. Among them I came across one small sketch by a Canadian artist. It was refreshing and I told her so. Her reply was

"Oh, it's bad enough to have to live in this country without letting it in to your house."

In our new quarters we soon settled down to work. There was a feeling of adventure in the air. We were out to blaze new trails. Harris and I wrote letters to the papers scoring the National Gallery for buying old masters and doing next to nothing for Canadian art. We expected Sir Edmund Walker, who was Chairman would be very annoyed, but he wasn't. He came around to the Studio Building to see what all the noise was about, and said he was hoping to see a Canadian movement develop, and that the National Gallery would do all they could to encourage it. They did, too.

We talked art, read books, visited each other's studios to discuss the latest experiments. I remember Harris working on a strange creation which was known as "Tomato Soup"; he would pull his brush through red, yellow and blue paint and flick it on the canvas, but this picture was never exhibited. Today, these efforts look very sane and conventional and people wonder why such exception was taken to them.

**A** MOVIE show on Saturday night was about all we could afford in the way of amusement. Thomson was not a great reader but if he found an interesting book, he would sit up all night and read it through, and then go on with his work. The doctor would drop in to look over our sketches and pretend to be very critical: "You fellows must have something wrong with your eyesight" or "you can't tell me you ever saw anything like that". "Well, I think I'll just take this one along with me," and he would dig into his pocket for some bills.

Thomson talked of his beloved Algonquin Park so much to me that I decided to go there, and arrived one night towards the end of February with the temperature 45 below zero and soon I was snowshoeing all over this country Thomson had described. It was a ragged country. A big lumber company had hacked it all up and then gone broke. Fire had swept through it and beaver had flooded it and it was a happy hunting ground for wolves.

To the few natives, Thomson's

name was like a password. He had made his headquarters at the Frasers, with whom I boarded and from there he would start off in his old grey canvas-covered canoe and disappear for weeks on end.

Off course, we were accused of adopting a narrow nationalistic point of view but artists in Canada had been humble too long, too obedient to tradition and the obedient in art are always forgotten. Corot once remarked that those who follow are always behind.

When I returned to Toronto in the spring, Tom was packing up, not to return until November. With him went Arthur Lismer for several weeks sketching. It was autumn when I joined Thomson again at Canoe Lake and for more than a month we camped and painted round Canoe, Smoke and Ragged Lakes. It was a gay autumn, sharp frosty nights and sunny days, and the maple and the birch and later the tamarac in turn ran their gamut of color. We sketched on small birch panels, always with the idea that the sketch was a motif for bigger compositions later on. The difficulty of carrying canvases around by canoe and living in tents has led many Canadian painters to work in this way. In the evening round the campfire we discussed the day's work, while we cooked good husky meals—no canned stuff. Tom was an expert on bannock' and flap-jacks and of course we had fish, which Thomson seldom failed to catch.

**E**VERY few days we would change our camp and leisurely move on. Unless we were in a hurry Thomson liked doing all the paddling while I sat in the bottom of the canoe keeping a lookout for subjects. He paddled like an Indian, using the weight of his body more than his arms, and he could keep going all day with no sign of fatigue. We talked of going further afield. The Rupert River flowing into James Bay was going to be our objective, but in the background of all our dreams was the rumble of guns as the Great War spread its shadow even over the quiet serenity of the North Country.

Thomson was making amazing strides, his color becoming richer, his composition freer and bolder and his fine sense of design in commer-