



Thomson Country

the Art Gallery of Toronto to buy it but they were not interested. It kicked around in a travelling show all over the United States with the price raised to \$800 and it came back.

It was sent with the Canadian Exhibition to Wembley and the British press acclaimed it a great painting. On its return, the National Gallery at Ottawa intended to acquire it, when a member of the Toronto Gallery concerned over the idea that we did not possess a single example of this artist's work, stirred up the Canadian Club, who purchased it and presented it to the Art Gallery of Toronto. Today it is the best known painting in Canada.

Most of Thomson's canvasses—there are only about twenty altogether—are in public collections. All his early art training was through designing book covers, title pages and various forms of advertising. He dropped this work when he took up

painting as a career.

The first time I met Thomson was in November, 1913, in a studio over the Bank of Commerce at Bloor and Yonge Streets, now the Ladies Club. It was then the studio of Lawren Harris.

Dr. James MacCallum is an art enthusiast who spent his spare time sailing all over the Great Lakes in yawls or dinghies. Few people know the intricate channels of the Georgian Bay as he does. Stormy weather, fog or dark nights just made it a little more exciting. His interest in art was allied with his love of the out-of-doors and the north country. He brought Tom Thomson in to see me and a painting I was working on which the boys called "Mt. Ararat". They said it looked like the land emerging after the flood. Thomson had just come down from Algonquin Park with a lot of small sketches, careful studies of lakes and islands

and ragged shore lines. They had the feeling of the country, sincere, direct transcripts of nature, but the creative impulse had not yet awakened.

YOU liked Thomson right away, a quiet friendly chap, something of the Indian in his bearing, a kind of indolence that changed to sudden alertness and quick movement when occasion arose. Modest about his painting efforts, the idea of being an artist by profession he did not take very seriously.

But Dr. MacCallum thought otherwise. A few weeks before he had found me living in a shack on the Georgian Bay; the shack had such wide cracks in it that if you walked around inside quickly you could see outside. He signed me on for a year, that is, instead of drifting down to the States, I was to take a studio in new building in Toronto for a year,