

climb mountains which have never been climbed before and to study the flora or fauna of a great unknown land, or is it only in wartime that we rise to great achievements? I am not going to pretend it is necessary for artists to be explorers, but it would create a lot more respect for the craft if the artists brought back hard won impressions of places where the going was tough.

But after all the wealth of motifs that the new highway has opened up I am going to tell you about an artist who had no need of vast panoramas of mountains and hills and rivers, one who poked around in an old grey canvas-covered canoe, put up his tent, made his camp-fire and fished and painted what he saw about him.

There is an old saying which seems to apply to Thomson, "Gazing man is keenest fed on sparing beauty". When you look over his sketches you are struck with the slightness of the motive which induced the painting, endless variations of almost the same subject matter, different times of the day, different seasons. Imagination and fine craftsmanship endow it with a life of its own, always the feeling of the country, seldom the feeling of being tied down to a particular place in it.

Someone has said, "The power of the imagination is put to very feeble use indeed if it seems merely to preserve and reinforce that which already exists," and Thomson realized that. He gives us the fleeting moment, the mood, the haunting memory of things he felt.

We look back today and we wonder why there was such objection made to Canadian art from 1910 on. In Montreal Cullen and Morrice with a thorough training in France had been disturbing the conventional stuffy Dutch standards which prevailed there. In time Montreal became very proud of them, but it took a long time, and in the end Cullen's influence waned because he had little faith in painters like Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso. Quite the strongest influence on art in Montreal was the long-range influence Morrice exerted from his studio in Paris.

THE desire to liberate art came from two different motives in the two cities. In Montreal the modern movements in France were

stirring the artists to bolder efforts while in Toronto there was the desire to break away from European influence and paint our own country in our own way. The two ideas are perfectly symbolized in Morrice and Thomson.

When I came to Toronto in 1913 this idea of painting our own country in our way was pretty well crystallized. MacDonald, Harris and Lismer had very definite ideas of where we were heading. As for Thomson it was the only road he could take. His whole life was wrapped up in the north country.

So many of our young artists spend years learning the technique of painting. Then they are turned loose with no particular convictions about what to paint. With Thomson there was no uncertainty at all. He knew what he wanted to do and he acquired a technique which suited his purpose perfectly. But when we are told that Thomson alone projected this Canadian art movement it does not make sense. Here is something to remember. I don't know of either Thomson or Morrice ever making a speech or writing an article on art, or taking any part in the organization of art societies, and yet no other artists have had greater influence on the art of this country.

There were a number of other artists here who shared Thomson's love of the north country. They camped and paddled, got jobs as fire rangers and sketched all over it. There was Albert Robson, Tom McLean, Bill Beatty, Tom Mitchell, Neil McKechnie and others. When Thomson started camping and painting up north he did what a lot of the other boys had been doing with pretty much the same results up to the end of 1913. He might have kept on being a commercial designer, working at the Grip company, going off on canoe trips and sketching, until in time the problem of making a living would have curbed his passion for the wilds.

In January, 1919, the Studio Building was completed. It was financed by Lawren Harris and Dr. James MacCallum as a centre for Canadian Art and it brought together a number of kindred spirits. First there was that dynamic figure, Lawren himself, eager, adventurous and restless. Every place he arrived at was

the point of departure for somewhere else. On the spiritual side through theosophy, time and space opened up endless vistas for him.

MacDonald was the philosopher and scholar, widely read, with an amazing knowledge of historical design and ornament and lettering, an expert craftsman, and as an interpreter of the north country he approaches closely to Thomson, which is rather remarkable because he could not paddle a canoe, or swim or swing an axe, or find his way in the bush.

A lot of Thomson's knowledge of design came from MacDonald. A lot of MacDonald's understanding of painting came from Thomson. Life was a constant struggle for Jim MacDonald. He never complained, but a text he constantly made his students do as an exercise in lettering perhaps reveals what he felt about it all. It was: "Against stupidity even the gods are powerless".

Lismer was always the blithe spirit, just beginning at that time to poke fun at humanity with his deft left hand. He had not even dreamed he would go right round the world stirring up the unbelievers to the saving grace of art. I remember he was obsessed with the idea of making the reflection of the sun across the water dazzle you but could not make it any brighter than the paint. But by the end of 1914. he had painted the "Guides Home" which was acquired by the National Gallery, almost the first recognition of the new movement.

And it was not until Thomson had left us that Varley leaped into fame with his dramatic paintings of the war in France, and J. W. Beatty with his heart in the movement, but his long training in Dutch art holding him back, something always urging caution on his reckless soul.

SOME years ago Maclean's Magazine published a double page of great Canadian achievements, and symbolizing Canadian art was a painting called "The West Wind". A bent pine tree rooted to the rocks making a bold silhouette against a gray sky and windswept lake. This picture was stored in my studio for several years when it was not out on exhibitions. We put a price of \$650 on it and tried to ege