FRITZ THAULOW—HIS ORIGINALITY AS AN ARTIST AND CHARM AS A MAN: BY JAMES B. TOWNSEND

In the death of Fritz Thaulow, at Volendam, November fifth, the world of art loses a painter of marked originality and ability. In fact with the possible exception of Seganti of Italy, dead ere his prime, and Zuloaga of Spain, Thaulow stood alone among modern European painters, as influenced by no school, and one who in choice of subject and technique was so original and forceful as to make his works attract and appeal.

Born in Christiania, Norway, in 1847, Thaulow inherited from his Scandinavian ancestors that force and ruggedness of character which is a direct outcome and reflection of their cold and somber skies and seas—their grim mountains and sterile valleys. It is this which gives to Scandinavian literature and music, as well as art, not only its strength, but a certain tone or atmosphere—which suggests morbidness to dwellers in summer climes. From this latter characteristic Thaulow was singularly if not almost entirely free. Far Northern scenes—of snow covered hills and roofs, and ice clad rivers—he painted con amore, and as a rule, irradiated by clear sunlight or the keen brilliance of the stars or the silver radiance of the far Northern night. He excelled in painting running water, and no artist old or modern has so well rendered, as Thaulow, the quiet, deep, swiftly moving stream, flowing between snow-covered banks in winter or green ones in springtime or summer, or dashing over mill dams in foam and spray. He was well termed some years ago: “The painter of the night, the snow, and the stream.”

A single red or brick building—low and with peaked roof—snow-covered, or a cluster of the same, or a snow-covered bank of some rapid running stream, winter noons, or a winter dawn or twilight—these were Thaulow’s favorite subjects.

When still a youth he became a pupil of Sorenson at Copenhagen, and later on of Gade at Karlsruhe. His work was known and esteemed in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, but it was not until the Paris Exposition of 1889, when he was 42 years old, and when he received the Cross of the Legion of Honor, that he came prominently before the public eye, and that art lovers even in Europe realized that new great-
THAULOW IN HIS PARIS STUDIO
GIVING HIS SON A VIOLIN LESSON
ness was again among them. The foreign art dealers were quick to
discern the big force, originality, and novelty of Thaulow’s canvases,
bid against each other for them, and he was soon on the road to fame
and fortune.

It was not, however, until about 1895 that Thaulow’s name and
work became well known in America. It was also through the dealers
that he was introduced to American art lovers. Now no collection of
modern foreign pictures in this or any country is considered complete
without an example of the Norwegian painter. This very vogue almost
became Thaulow’s undoing, for the demands upon him for pictures
were insistent and his rewards so great—that he, not unnaturally,
yielded to a temptation to paint too much. Some of his later can-
vases show this, and are not as strong as those of his earlier and es-
specially of his middle period. He also, unfortunately, of late years con-
sented to having colored reproductions of his pictures made, and then
wholesale distribution of them had a tendency to cheapen the value of
his work.

Thaulow visited this country in 1875 and again in 1898. He was
a judge in the art section of the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876, and
acted again in the same capacity at the Carnegie Institute Exhibition
at Pittsburg, in 1898. He married a granddaughter of the late Prin-
cess Saltikoff of Russia.

The photographs of Thaulow reproduced in this article were
taken by Mr. J. Dunbar Wright, an American artist, who ac-
companied the famous Norwegian painter on a sketching trip
in France, in the spring of 1905. Speaking of his visit to Thaulow,
Mr. Wright said: “I called on Thaulow in Paris and showed him
several examples of my work. He immediately proposed a painting
trip to Bové, which is about ten miles from Amiens. I arrived at the
station, in Paris, and discovered the big fellow, attired in a velvet coat,
and wearing a flowing tie, looking the typical painter. He carried
a big arm chair, a pair of wooden shoes, a violoncello, and also a bicycle.
After arranging for the trip we boarded a train. Just before starting
a charming woman appeared at the car window. She was the artist’s
wife. Thaulow was most affectionate as he bade her good-bye. I re-
marked as we left the station that ‘I had never witnessed such a
demonstration of affection in America.’ Thaulow replied that he
FRITZ THAULOW

loved his wife very much, and added, ‘In Christiania we marry for
love.’ ‘I have three daughters married,’ he continued, ‘and one who
is single, but she is too young for you, I fear.’

“We made the run to Amiens in about two hours,” continued Mr.
Wright. “I put my stuff in a cab and rode to Bové. Thaulow fol-
lowed on his bicycle. He had heard of the picturesque streams of the
region in and about this town. It was the country he loved to paint.
At Bové we found an epidemic of scarlet fever, and also no accommo-
dations at the hotels.

“For a time it looked as though we might have to return to Paris
without results. We finally arranged, however, to stop at a little house
near the station, which in reality was more like a café. There we
remained for two weeks. It was delightful. Thaulow was always
jolly, pleasant, and ever willing to instruct. He selected four places
where he could paint nature during the different periods of the day.
We worked in the open, and Thaulow, I observed, always used large
canvases and practically completed his pictures from nature in the
open. He worked diligently and seemed to have all the enthusiasm of
a beginner. It was quite apparent that he found great pleasure in
his painting. The weather at times was cool, and I ceased to paint.
Thaulow continued his work, however, for he did not seem to mind
the cool days at all, so accustomed was he to paint in the snow clad
country of his native land.”

Thaulow had a beautiful home in Paris filled with many interest-
ing works by famous painters and sculptors, including examples by
Rodin, who was an intimate friend of the Norwegian artist. Often
Thaulow would leave his dinner to continue work in his studio. His
wife was a real helpmate, and this may be readily understood, for she
is herself an artist. His children are all talented, especially a young
son of about twelve years of age, who shows distinct taste for the violin.
Nearly all of the great men of the art and musical world assembled at
Thaulow’s house. At a dinner party given in his Paris home not long
ago, many famous artists gathered. Some gave impersonations, and
others entertained in various ways.

Those who once enjoyed the hospitality of the artist could never
forget the fine, big nature of the man.
FRITZ THAULOW AT WORK IN HIS PARIS STUDIO