THE tree rises from a small seed, it takes root; a tender sapling springs up, slowly it grows toward the heavens and becomes in years a great crowning tree. Like a tree grows a nation’s art. Every country which can show an art of its own, original and reflective of its people, has seen this art develop from the foundations laid by its own primitive painters. Thus comes a national school of painting. America being a newer country had no primitives. Its art grew from a grafted tree; it had no seed of its own. Transplanted, our art received its nourishment from abroad. It became in the sixties the fashion, the necessity almost, for American students to go abroad. To Rome, Düsseldorf and Paris—not the Paris of sunlight and awakened impressionism, but to the classicism of the Beaux Arts flocked the art student. He was made to absorb the “Mutter Glück” point of view of Düsseldorf and the bitumen of Piloty. “Abroad!” was the cry. “When are you going?” “This spring! Lucky boy!” Away from the dinginess of the cities; away from the “barren foot-hills, the rivers and the bleak mountains.” There was nothing to paint in America, no motives, there was no “tone,” no harmony, everything was hard, unpleasant and poor. But some of the students having neither the fare nor the inclination stayed home in the barbaric country and began to look around. Among these heretics was Winslow Homer.

You know the clown in the circus and how he apes other performers, stumbles and hits his nose. The same in paint. Because Munkaczy painted brown soup we served it hot here. We imitated Millet and his peasants, Mauve’s sheep; and because Israels delighted in painting the young mothers of the Dutch, the blue cradle and its infant were done over here in the studios even of Fourteenth Street. Today the lure of the spangles of the Spanish bull-fighters attracts our painters from the Navajos and the Pueblos whose vanishing race is being recorded not by the painter, as it should be, but by the photographer.

The atmosphere in Homer’s day was the same, only the setting was different. He fled from the imitations to live by himself. And living by himself he painted his pictures to suit himself, and not the buyers, and his physical and mental independence, strong as a rock, became the very foundation of his art. Uncouth as the average American is in his honesty, so is Homer. His sincerity gave him an almost religious respect for nature, and his frankness of
expression came with his New England blood. Alone with ocean he lived his own life, painting the things as he saw them. The meaningless smirk of the day, the cliquey prattle of the studio, meant nothing to him.

Winslow Homer's art is not one which appeals to the cliff-dwellers of the great cities. His is the out-of-door man's. Intense, full of brute strength, the power of the sea which smites the rock is behind his brush. There is no compromise, a plain statement, the right expression for his own idea, that grand line of honest endeavor which runs through all his art. The great and simple feeling within demanded its outlet, and pushed him on toward the monumental. He glorified the toilers of the sea, and in paint sang the saga of the mighty ocean. It was his religion, a simple man's devout appreciation of the forces of nature, his expression of his own love for the open.

He understood the rhythm of moving water. With the exception of Zorn (in his early water colors), Homer is the only one who has painted water so that it looks liquid. Few marines have the feeling that the water is wet. Wonderful paint has been produced, the architecture of the moving billow has been rendered with all essential accuracy, but Homer stands above all his kind as one who has made paint represent water, transparent, translucent, and yet having weight and force.

Have you ever been on the rolling Atlantic in a dory or a small boat? If you have you will understand Homer's "Moon Kiss." You are in an open boat gripping the gunwale tight, the men at the oars bending their bodies are straining every muscle to the highest pitch. Your craft pivots on a rising comber, the gray sea breaks into an iridescent green, the spindrift smites your cheek, your wet oilskins sparkle under the evening light. You seem to look out over the whole ocean, your ship is ahead, her sails flapping in the wind; there is a slanting light on the horizon; right under your feet is an inclining abyss of rolling water—you shoot down as on a scenic railway, the sea before you is a moving mountain ready to fall on you, yet your dory rides over without bailing. Right above the crest of a sea you see the sunlit heads of another dory crew, above the scraggly outlines of a wave rise their bodies cut off like the figures in a Punch and Judy show. The sun has melted their features into burnished gold; clean, powerful faces, like from a Meunier bronze. A dull moon rises above the receding seas. And such is Homer's "Moon Kiss," a powerful rendering of the open sea, of the perils of the deep, of sailor man's trust in the Almighty. It is an-
other of Homer’s truths. Homer realized that between the heaving seas lies their trough, and he delighted to show parts of boats and men projecting above an edging sea. This was a new note in marine painting. Few understood the “Moon Kiss.” The effete connoisseurs and their echoing critics failed to see its fineness. It was a freak, they had only seen the ocean from a steamer chair and over the rim of the bouillon cup. Homer was wounded. He expressed his opinions forcibly, but not overpolitely.

WE HAVE Homer’s tropical water colors because the good people of Scarboro found that the painter made an excellent juror. To escape this perennial duty Homer went South and wintered throughout the Caribbean. His water colors, not masterly, in the sense of the cleverness of a Fortuny, gave a clear insight into the simplicity of his artistic character. An oil can be “fussed,” but the water color not; and his water-color sketches are marvels of crispness and directness. The limpid color of the West Indies affected his palette; it became gayer, livelier. Because of his sojourn in Key West he painted his “Gulf Stream,” that gruesome chapter in the life of the poor Conch who, his craft wrecked by the hurricane, mastless,—his sugar-cane almost gone, is to perish from starvation under the watching eyes of the following sharks. To the dandified this picture was another shock, it was called a story-picture, an illustration. But to those who knew the dangers of the Gulf Stream and its thrashing turmoil against wind and wave, his painting came like a truism. Superb in color, splendid in its fine paint, it is a great canvas.

Some painters have understood the dignity of labor and painted it. Millet,—look at his “Sower.” Brangwyn found that the torso of the worker was beautiful. Meunier, the mighty modeler of powerful humans, glorified the greatness of labor. So did Winslow Homer. His work viewed in its ensemble, appears like a new hymn to the sea, a hymn in praise of work, of the toil of the fisher working in his frail dory against the pressing sea—covered with spray, tired but not beaten, trusting to God,—keeping a weather eye on the rising fog-bank.

Homer’s art is not of dreamy compassion, but of manly power, the beauty of man strong in will and muscle fighting the elements. Yes, a hymn to the sea. Look at “All’s Well.” Man, if you ever sailed even one of the seven seas or spent the hours of night listening to its angry roar you would know the real meaning of the lookout’s drawling,—“All’s Well.” Fighting the seas for a livelihood, combating the powers of the wind, maybe escaping a lee shore by
"ALL'S WELL": WINSLOW HOMER, PAINTER.
"THE NORTHEASTER": WINSLOW HOMER, PAINTER.
"THE TORNADO—BAHAMAS"

WINSLOW HOMER, PAINTER.
"THE MOON KISS": WINSLOW HOMER, PAINTER.
a ship’s length, the sailor man is religious. His religion is not of established churches, it is bred in the caves of the winds, on the yard arm in the “roaring forties,” or in a dory in a snow squall on the Grand Banks with the fingers frozen to the oars, the dory-mate limp in the stern—when death is close by, but a higher being seems to push it aside. All that is written in the face of the lookout in Homer’s “All’s Well.” All hands but the watch and the helmsman are asleep, the running lights are burning brightly, the stars shining, the seas move slowly, rhythmically; the old sea dog strikes the bell, holds up his weather-beaten hand—it is “all’s well,” safety is ahead. This is Homer’s greatest canvas, a true epic of the sea.
THE APPARITION

selves. He sang the song of the sea and of his own land, an American always. Undoubtedly he was the greatest of marine painters. Had he followed the examples of Whistler and Sargent and gone to live abroad, great honors, even wealth might have been his. He chose to live his own life among his own people, more or less obscure, known to the select few, alone on his rocks, alone with the ocean before him. He had always been a big painter, and yet we have waited until he was gone to give his art the national appreciation which it was practically without during the master’s life.

THE APPARITION

"DEAD man, why dost thou come to me
Hurry ing through the gloom?
What bearest thou of mystery
From out thine opened tomb?"

"Brother, I bring thee news of peace—
I greet thee with a song:
Thou shalt from sin have sweet release;
Thou shalt grow pure and strong."

"Dead man, thy face is like the face
Of Christ upon the cross:
I see thy thorn-crown in its place;
I see thy wounds of loss."

"Yea, brother mine, for thee I died;
But from the grave of pelf
Behold, I come all purified—
I am thy risen self!"

Edward Wilbur Mason.