

*Hans Thoma and his Work***H**ANS THOMA AND HIS WORK. BY HANS W. SINGER.

THOMA lived and worked for thirty years unknown and unnamed by public and critics alike. When at length he found an apostle to proclaim his powers, when the public at last acknowledged his genius, the good fortune came too late in life to have any measurable influence upon his development as an artist. To the best of my knowledge, he does not belong to the class of painters who have suffered actual privations in consequence of the world's lack of charity; but his shortcomings are partly the outcome of lack of recognition, for, seeing that the world did not court him, a certain spirit of contradiction seems to have seized him, and persuaded him to hold even its just demands in contempt.

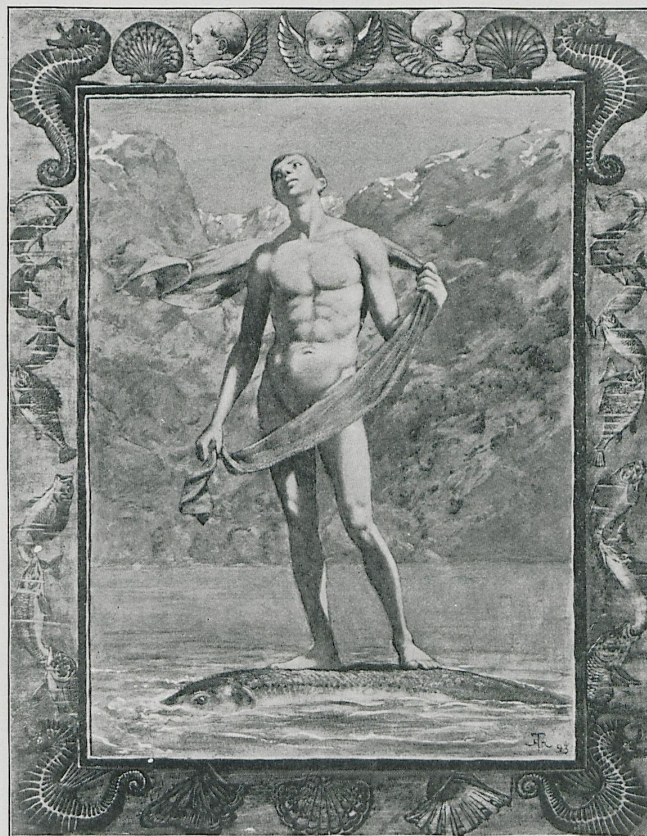
Hans Thoma was born on the 2nd of October 1839 at Bernau, a small village in the Black Forest. This region is famous for its watchmaking industries, and Thoma, as a child of poor people, was at first engaged in the business. He had at an early age disclosed a natural talent for design and colour, in consequence of which he was set to decorating the faces of watches and clocks.

During leisure hours he contrived to fill many sketch-books with landscape studies of the country thereabout, peopling them with the peasants and labourers among whom he lived. These drawings came by chance to the notice of Schirmer, who was at that time director of the Academy at Karlsruhe. During the first half of our century Schirmer was at the height of his fame as a landscape painter. Starting from Romanticism, he, under the influence of prolonged

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Italian journeys, drifted gradually into the classic style, with its flowing lines and its absence of intimacy and feeling. Although to-day we do not rate his artistic impulses among the highest, he seems, nevertheless, to have been a good teacher, and was not blind to talent when it came his way. He recognised Thoma's talent at once, secured the Grand Duke of Baden's interest in the youth, and obtained for him admission to the Academy at Karlsruhe.

Thoma remained at this institution from 1859 to 1869, most of the time under Schirmer. I have never seen paintings of this earlier period by him, and do not believe that many are extant. Schirmer's influence upon Thoma was probably sufficiently strong for the time being, since it was through him that the student was actually made acquainted with the technicalities and primary



"THE WATER SPIRIT"

FROM A PAINTING BY HANS THOMA

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