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# LITERATURE IN ESTONIA

By

**E. HOWARD HARRIS**

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E. HOWARD HARRIS,

*Author of*

*"Singing Seas"*

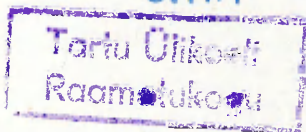
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*To my Wife  
Companion of my Travels.*

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## PREFACE.

This brief survey of the literary history of Estonia is an expansion of a short paper read before the Manchester Literary Club, and afterwards printed. The pioneer production was well received in Estonia, and I resolved to pay further visits to the little country, and to make them primarily (but not exclusively), literary pilgrimages.

My obligations to reading are indicated in the Bibliography, which gives sources and authorities in the native language, in German and French. That English is sparse is unfortunate, but justifies perhaps this endeavour to relate the story of the development of literature among a little people not very well known in England.

Estonia is now a land under the yoke of the Germans, but in the years following the proclamation of independence in 1918, her effort was admirable, and not least in the cultural field, including literature.

These things remain, and deserve to be recorded. A barren catalogue of names and facts would have been dry and uninteresting, but I was fortunate in my contacts, and any concreteness in the narrative I owe to the information given by many friends.

I gratefully acknowledge especially the help of Dr. Oskar Kallas, Madame Aino Kallas, M. August Torma, and most intimately Professor Ants Oras and Mr. Johannes Silvet.

July, 1943.



## CHAPTER I.

### A PORTRAIT AND A BACKGROUND.

Estonia (or Eesti as the natives call it) is a little land in the Eastern corner of the Baltic Sea. It bears some resemblance to Brittany in the conformation of the atlas, but does not resemble it in other ways. It is a fairly flat land, and part of the great Northern Plain of Europe. It has a high forested escarpment on the North called the Glint, and a festoon of low-lying islands great and small on its Western border. In the South it is undulating and here are pleasant downs, farm-lands and many picturesque lake prospects. Karl Hindrey calls this a hunchback country. This part of the land with its barley, rye and flax fields has been called the Denmark of Estonia, and with the addition perhaps of homespun, is the impression made by the country as a whole.

Forest solitudes, perpendicular trees, marshes, reeds, lakes and isolated homesteads are frequent.

For a literary student, it is necessary to relate the geographical, historical and social data to the impact that they make on literature, and while it is untenable to exaggerate their importance, there is no doubt about their effect on atmosphere.

The geographical facts do affect literary production, not only in the choice of themes, but in the mood of the author and the more important element of characterisation.

Life on the Western islands of Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Vormsi and Ruhnu on the Riga Gulf is often stern and spartan, and the mentality of Saaremaa people (for example) has given a strange and powerful aura to the tales of Aino Kallas and August Mälk.

The white silence in winter, the forest solitude, the lonely marsh and lake are fruitful sources for story and poem, and ancient Finnish religion peoples these with elfin preseuces, and grotesque, and sometimes bizarre fancies. The giant, the werewolf and the witch appear, as well as the gentler spirits of earth like Lawn Fairy and the Meadow Mother.

The Seasons in Estonia exercise fertilising effects on Estonian writing. The long winter,—snow and ice bound—colour the reflections and descriptions. The short summer with its garish



flowering, and iridescent "white nights" are periods when writers produce much of their work, as Madam Kallas once confessed to me in one of her delightful letters. It is the time when Tartu—the cultural centre—seems empty, and the authors who gather at the Estonian "Cheshire Cheese—the Café Werner—are estivating at Eiva or Pärnu or Narva-Jõesuu.

Autumn, often called golden (a term of endearment as well as a colour symbol), brings many mellow reflections and elegiac inspiration particularly to poets.

It is Spring, however, that is most exhilarating to writers as well as ordinary people in Estonia. It comes with surpassing rapidity, and is doubly welcome after the rigour of winter. Estonian poetry is full of "Kevad" (Springtime) verse, and the prose writers too describe it with felicity.

Estonia is also a windy country and storm is a fruitful symbol of "sturm und drang" in life. I have seen the summer foliage blown about and ruffled like dishevelled hair and felt that "Tuulemaa" (Wind Land) was not an inappropriate title for one of the collections of poetry written by Gustav Suits.

The Civic Scene, however, is another important source of inspiration for the recreation of past history—a feature of modern literature.

There are several towns with not only surpassing interest for lovers of the picturesque, but for the historian and antiquary.

Tallinn—the capital—a quaint and fascinating place. The silhouette of the Dom with its Danish Castle on a mound which is the legendary grave of the Estonian Hercules, Kalev, is unique—a Northern acropolis. The green-brown Town Hall with its oriental minaret, the old school bearing the name of Gustavus Adolphus, and the cottage in the Kadriorg Park built by Peter the Great are symbols. Tallinn, with its alleyways, multi-coloured roofs, huge pepper-box towers and Gothic spires is old world, but set in modern platinum, for there are well-laid out improvements in the area round the massive cream-coloured National Theatre near the Vene Turg.

Narva is another historic town. It is an embattled border with two good fortresses that sentinel the opposing banks of the Narva river.

These typify Swedish civilisation and the grim imperialism of Czarist Russia. Much of its architecture is baroque and very picturesque, and the town itself has a Russian atmosphere. When you visit the House of Peter the Great, the battlefield at Pritka associated with Charles XII, the massive fortress of Ivangorod, you realise that Narva has a long and interesting history, as well as the more modern Kreenholm Cotton Mills near the great waterfalls of its river.

Tartu is different from both these cities. It is a pleasant leafy place in which the commercial is overshadowed by the academic.

The ancient University of Tartu (or Dorpat as it is still called occasionally abroad) dominates the civic scene. The main building in classic style looks very like the Royal Exchange, but is only one of a great many belonging to the University.

Tartu is the cultural centre of Estonia. It has numerous bookshops and the chief publishing houses in the country. It is the headquarter of the Estonian Literary Society and National Archives, and in the outskirts stands the National Museum. Here most of the authors live, and the chief literary movements began in this town.

It has a famous theatre the Vanemuine, and an equally famous School of Art—Pallas. Tartu also has an eventful history, and the Ema river its legend lore.

There are many ruined castles and curious churches in Estonia—Haapsalu with its ghostly White Virgin, Kuressaare with its dungeons, the monastery of Pirita (St. Bridget), Viljandi's stronghold of the Teutonic Knights and the great fortress at Irboska—the cradle of the Russian Empire.

It is obvious therefore that authors with a "Scott" temperament have plenty of inspiration for recreating past history, and Mait Metsanurk, Karl Hindrey and Aino Kallas have in novel and play depicted it in recent days.



The Estonians are not new comers to the Baltic. They have been there since the beginning of the Christian era. They belong to the same race as the Finns, and are (remotely now) connected with the Hungarians, as members of what is called The Finno-Ugrian peoples. Ethnologists and workers in allied matters are not all agreed about origins, but it seems established that in the time of the migration of races they came to their land from the region of the Volga. The Mongolian idea about them is untenable, and their orientation is definitely Western. They do not differ in appearance from other Baltic people. The frequent fair hair, blue eyes and fresh complexion suggest an admixture of Scandinavian blood, but in many cases their faces are rounder and flatter and they have high cheek-bones. Some country folk have a Samoyede appearance, but in the main an Estonian is undistinguishable from any native of the North.

The population of the country is remarkably homogeneous, ninety per cent are Estonians. The minorities in the land Germans, Russians and Swedes are small, and the seemingly Russian Setus in the South, are only Estonians who have adopted the Russian mode of living, and profess Greek orthodoxy.

They are a poetical minded people who preserve in their songs some of the most characteristic features of Estonian lore.

The character of the Estonian people is described by Professor Villecourt as one of duality. They are passive in one way, and active in another. They can be resigned and rebellious, dour and occasionally demonstrative. Madame Kallas attributes

to them the quality of elasticity. I think these are true judgments and the products of their history. The Estonian is a realist. He practises reason and ponderation. Though he is not very effusive or emotional or even romantic, these qualities are there, but under control. This makes for steadiness in his character, and that he caught up his handicap among the nations, proves that he was not parochial, but progressive. He is willing to adopt new ideas if suitable, and will submit to discipline and authority if persuaded by his mind.

There is no docility and herd instinct in him like the German. He is individual, and his literature shows it clearly.

He resembles the Swede, but is not as tall in stature and has little of the slight hauteur of that race. He resembles also the Dane, but is not so complaisant and passionless. The Finn, especially the Karelian, is perhaps more vivacious, but has had a longer freedom and a fuller purse.

Like the Scandinavian the Estonian is a courteous and friendly person. The tolerant geniality of the Englishman accustomed to sovereignty, or the emotional, and even fiery temperament of the Irish or Welsh is not his. In short, he is the Scotsman of the Baltic. Perseverance, tenacity, endurance are in him, and signs of the Finnish granite in his make-up, but as a peasant he has an instinct for the soil, for freedom, and possesses a shrewd humour, and a poetic view of life as well.

Like the Scotsman he is industrious, sturdy, anxious to get on, and is a firm believer in education and work as vital factors in life. Obstinacy (as in the Finn) is to be found in his character, but he is in the main an imaginative realist.

\* \* \*

The Estonian language belongs to the Finnish group. At least half of its vocabulary is Finnish, or modifications of the Finnish roots. Its agglutinative character makes it strange and difficult to English eyes. There are no resemblances to aid you as in German and Scandinavian. It is highly inflected with fifteen cases to negotiate, but once you have heard it spoken, you appreciate its music, due in part to the frequent double vowels, and are not surprised that it has been called "The Italian of the North", and was placed next to Italian in recent opinion on the melodic values of the languages of Europe.

Estonian was a "Kitchen" speech for centuries, but the people kept it alive in the homes, and although a language that remains unaltered may have merits, a primitive speech if undeveloped, is ineffective to express modern ideas and complexities.

This was quickly observed by the leaders of the "Young Estonia" movement, and Professor Aavik took this problem in hand. He enriched the language from the dialects, from Finnish, and from coinages. Some of his innovations were regarded as a little fantastic, but he contributed tremendously to the movement that raised the peasant language to the dignity of literary

utterance, and writers like Suits, Tuglas and Marie Under used the new forms with power and felicity that was epoch-making in the history of the country. The temporary cleavage between the spoken and written tongues was soon bridged by the new generation, and, as Professor Oras asserts, Estonian can convey any shade of meaning required, and make effective and satisfying translations from other languages.

There is a tendency to analytic change in Estonian, the words are shorter than Finnish and not so forbidding, and on the whole, it is a softer language than the one spoken by that kindred race.

\* \* \*

The history of Estonia is a long story which can only be told in brief outline.

The Estonians came to their sea-girt home about the fourth century at latest, cleared the forests, drained the swamps, and settled down as agriculturists and sailors. They lived a patriarchal life under Elders, and had even Viking instincts, sacking Sigtuna—the ancient capital of Sweden. They were prosperous, for gold and silver relics of those days have been found; but later waves of invaders Germans, Danes, Poles, Swedes and Russians passed over them, and they were held in subjection. They fought with reckless bravery against their oppressors and only had “a breathing space in the suffocating centuries”, when Gustavus Adolphus was overlord. This they refer to as the “good old Swedish days” but compared with the years of independence, it was only relative.

The Baltic barons regarded them as hewers of wood and drawers of water, and any civilisation they possessed was regarded as of no importance and destined to perish.

Some of the German governing class did become Estophiles, but it was not till the early nineteenth century that national consciousness asserted itself, and the only weapon available was the sword of culture—Lydia Koidula became the voice of their patriotism, and native poetry, novel and drama arrived. Publicists, editors and teachers helped the national aspirations, and at last the Estonians led by Konstantin Päts (later the President) gained the civil administration of Tallinn. Political agitation ensued but the rising in 1905 was abortive, and Russian repression followed. This only made the Estonians more determined to assert their individuality as a distinct nation, and they braced themselves to catch up their handicap and keep in step with Western Europe. During the World War 1914-18 they got their opportunity, and soon after the fall of Czarism (which they approved) they declared for independence, and had to endure a German occupation and a Bolshevik attack. Germany withdrew after the armistice, but peace with Russia did not come till 1920, after a War of Independence in which the Estonians fought with skill and bravery, and final success against tremendous odds. Estonia, recognised as a free state, could begin its independent



life at last. It was a political Cinderella story. My visits were in this idyllic interlude, and, in the last one, 1938, the people were singing the songs of freedom in the Kadriorg Park with little apprehension of the turn of events. In the offing, however, was a complete somersault for their national history.

Russia demanded and secured air and naval bases on the Estonian mainland and islands, but did not seem satisfied with the government in Tallinn, which now included prominent Liberals.

Zhdanov, a member of the Supreme Soviet, arrived in Tallinn, and demanded a change to the left. The new government thus installed was composed of Left Intellectuals, two of them well-known poets. The regrettable foreign interference continued, however, and new demands followed. As a result the transition to a Soviet Republic was accomplished without reference to the constitution in force.

When Germany attacked Soviet Russia in June 1941, German troops penetrated into Estonia. Tallinn was captured and partly burned, and Tartu suffered heavily.

After, therefore, a year of Soviet occupation, Estonia had to face an invasion by Germany and is now under the Nazi yoke. The black streak in its national flag has encompassed the whole. Stubborn and silent contempt is the reaction of the people who are definitely anti-Nazi and, as in other sad periods in their history, they will suffer with fortitude and wait for the day of deliverance. An independent life is undoubtedly their heart's desire. The Estonian is fundamentally a democrat.

Literature, however, is happily above the battle.

What a rich field for creative writers in all their history! The early heroic exploits, the regime of the Teutonic Knights and the Swedish and Polish rulers, life under the Baltic barons, the War of Independence and the present dramatic events! There should be a fine crop of novels, plays and poems added to the recent collection of works that mirror history which Metsanurk, Hindrey and Aino Kallas have published.

Finally Estonian social life is of important interest as inspirational material for writers. The Estonians never lose the feeling of getting together. Their religion is overwhelmingly Lutheran, and the church and parish form and fashion community feeling. They are not emotional in religious matters, but reverent and simple in their devotions. Their sympathy for the poor and for children is deep and sincere, and for the dead they have much reverence, partly springing perhaps from ancient ancestor worship. In the Setu country they often gather at the graves. The Lutheran clergy did take interest in their Estonian charges centuries ago, but they were partial to the lords of the manor, and not very sympathetic to national aspirations. Even now, writers like Metsanurk, have treated churchmen with some irony,

but on the whole the pastor is a real one in the Estonian parishes. From their class and the Moravians came the translation of the Bible and other good works. The ancient religion, however, is not without echoes, and animism, which regards nature as alive, endows many a literary production with strange magic.

Education is highly valued among the Estonians. The enthusiasm for it (particularly University education) was so great at one time, that it had to be corrected by emphasising the equally vital importance of practicality. Teachers are much respected, and a great deal is owed to them for their work, not only in the school, but in the community. Their aid in the writing of text books was of great importance, when Estonian printed matter was sparse. The Scotsmen of the Baltic have a regard for learning like the Caledonians.

In the Estonian towns there are always means of getting together. The people are singers and dancers. Their huge Singing Festival every five years draws visitors from all over Europe. They are also fond of the Theatre, and it is an instrument of culture, as well as entertainment. Tartu students talk and argue with as much assiduity as the English play and the German drink.

Estonian village life is full of interest with its wooden houses, stoves, bath-houses, spinning wheels and looms.

Wedding festivals and funeral rites are quaint and curious, and there on occasions you see the picturesque national dresses with their varying regional splashes of colour.

What opportunities there are in Estonian social life for description and characterisation! There is the early life under Elders, the relationship of lord and steward and serf, the stark and severe existence of fishermen and lonely settlers, the proletarian progress in Tallinn and other towns, the different attitudes of farm dwellers and townsmen. Estonian writers have made full use of these themes and will continue to do so.

\* \* \*

There are probably as many reasons as persons, for the attraction that a new country and people have for a visitor, and they are often illuminating to others unacquainted with them. I ought, therefore, to set down mine for Estonia.

In the first place Estonia was a romantic surprise on the Map of Europe after the last war. It would be interesting to see these sturdy people in their freedom. Secondly, still more off the beaten track, Estonia would be an epilogue to Finland, with which it has linguistic and literary affinities. More than all these, was the fact that a new development of a language and literature was in formation, and much attraction for a bookman in that.

The impressions are composite, after many long visits to the country, and cluster round seven nodal points, the best way to see it. I began with the capital—Tallinn. This quaint city

was intriguing, for a fascinating mixture of old and new, is Tallinn, or Reval as it was formerly called. You conjure up history when you see the old Hansa buildings, the Swedish bastion, the Danish Castle, the cottage of Peter the Great in the Kadriorg Park, and the spires, towers and coloured roofs from the vantage ground of the Dom. You imagine a Teutonic Knight, or a Baltic-German burgher, or a mediaeval merchant in the streets, until the honk of a modern motor-car instead of a drosky, the Estonian Flag on the Herman Tower, the National Theatre in situ in a square of modernity, bring you back from your reverie. Tallinn is commercial and careerist in temper. Narva is also a place to conjure up history, with its baroque mediaeval houses, and the two massive fortresses that dominate the river scene. Vestiges of old Russia, however, remain in this old embattled city.

Tartu is a leafy academic city, and the ideal place in Estonia for a bookman. Its ancient University is the magnet for Estonian scholars, and here you may meet most of the authors in the country. I have pleasant memories of Dr. Loorits in his blue overall at the National Archives, of those gatherings in the house and garden of Mr. Silvet, when under the cherry tree, I stood for a snapshot with Tuglas and Semper and Oskar Luts. I recall the Café where so many writers assembled—an Estonian "Cheshire Cheese", and the visit of Jaan Tõnisson, Estonia's Masaryk, and the company of "Arbujad" writers in the house of my friend Professor Oras.

"The Setus are a poetically-minded people" said Ants Oras, and so I paid a visit to Petseri in the South. Here were the homes of the song-mothers, who improvise even now.

A religious procession proceeding from the great monastery with its treasures and caves was like a close-up of "Balalaika". Only at the Singing Festival was there such a splash of colour in the peasant dresses, and such a glint of ornaments.

Not far away was Võru associated with the national poet Kreutzwald—the Estonian Lönnrot.

Pärnu, the Brighton of Estonia, was a pleasant well-developed resort, but the statue of Lydia Koidula was more attractive to me than its mud-baths, shipping, and sea-side amenities. In the summer sun there were inns of tranquillity on the Western isles. The white silence had given place to the garish flowering of summer, and sunlight played on the red castle in dreaming Kuressaare, and the legend-laden one at Haapsalu.

The sturdy people of Saaremaa were encountered, and in the wooden villa on Wormsi, I went many times to our first friends—the Estonian Swedes.

Moreover, all these parts are mirrored in the works of Madame Kallas, August Mälk and Villem Ridala.



At last, back in Tallinn, I was present at the great Singing Festival in 1938, and heard in the melodious speech, the huge choir of 18,000 voices singing the songs of freedom.

"You are more interested in *us* than in our timber, butter and eggs," remarked Dr. Oscar Kallas at the London Legation. "Coming from a singing people and a little race, you will understand *us* better now," said Jaan Tõnisson to me at the Singing Festival. It was true, because here was the soul of Estonia, and the fact that these people without a country for generations, had found one.

Each visit I paid revealed improvements in material things, and there was a national exhibition of vision, realism and sober enterprise. The grey North was sun-smitten.

I found the Estonians a charming, hospitable and enlightened folk, and also found my opinion shared by both the British Minister and the humblest seaman. The Estonian is more Scotch than Welsh in temperament, but nevertheless I was an Estophile.

The reasons must be found in my predilection for little people, in my conviction that in small and secluded gardens choice flowers may grow, in the satisfaction that Cinderella countries may come to wear glass slippers worthily, in the belief that nations can keep their soul (even in subjection) by the sword of culture, and by the consolation and inspiration of song.

This outline portrait of Estonia may help readers unacquainted with the country to anticipate in some measure the literature it has produced, and the course taken by that literature.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MAIN CURRENTS OF ESTONIAN LITERATURE.

Estonian Literature does not really begin until the 19th century, but there is a long period before that which must be included at least as an antiquarian era, because a vast body of oral literature has been recovered from early days, and is gradually finding its way into print, and exercising influence on modern production.

The main currents in the literary story of Estonia are therefore eight in number, though other classifications are possible, and it is uncritical and arbitrary to pigeon-hole movements in any sphere to rigid limits of date.

The first is the Age of Folklore and Folksong, before mentioned. It is a long period when the Estonians had in their memory, but not in writing, a vast collection of lore. The language was then simple, and although there is crudity of expression, there is charm and novelty as well.

The second may be called the Age of Enlightenment and Instruction. It is the period when Estophiles among their German masters began to take interest in the Estonian Language and produced grammars and other books of instruction. From the literary standpoint it is not very fruitful.

The third is the Age of Awakening when native Estonians began to write, and the patriotic poetess Lydia Koidula sang the faith and hope that dwelt in the land of Estonia. It was romantic in character, and served the national cause at a time when inspiration was most needed. It partially coincides with the period of the Estophiles, who produced a loose epic that appealed to the educated classes, but not at first to the nation as a whole.

*complete* The fourth period may be called simply—Realism. The complexities of political and social life had increased. European literature was being permeated by writers like Stuart Mill, Darwin and Zola, and the influence spread to Estonia. Edward Vilde became the greatest realist in prose, Kitzberg in the drama, and Juhan Liiv in poetry.

Next came the epoch-making movement called "Noor Eesti" (Young Estonia) which put the literature into step with Western Europe, developed and enriched the language, and imposed the discipline of art on production. *(Kohv)* Gustav Suits was the leader.

*available* The sixth phase was initiated by the "Siuru" or Bluebird group of writers, who found the academic restraint of "Noor Eesti" insufficient, and favoured abandon and lyrical self-revelation, and a measure of sensualism. This was a gain in some ways, and Estonian writing acquired a glow and colour that was almost Elizabethan in character. Marie Under was perhaps the chief figure in this period. *(Kohv)*

*the Neo-Romanticism in Western Europe* The seventh stage was Neo-Realism, when writers turned back to the problems of social life, and demanded a closer contact with it. The chief writers were Tammsaare and Metsanurk. *the Neo-Romanticism in Western Europe connected with*

The last period may be called Modern Literature. It is characterised by versatility, and affected by all the new currents in European literature. *the Neo-Romanticism in Western Europe connected with*

### CHAPTER III.

## THE PERIOD OF ORAL LITERATURE.

From the 12th century to the beginning of the 19th, the culture of Estonia was foreign. The owners of the land regarded the native people and language as of no importance. The Estonian speech was a Kitchen tongue—a medium of communication for peasants and menials. The manorial masters thought that Estonian was incapable of development, and that simple stories and poems were the only products likely to come from it.

The natives, however, cherished in their memories, but not in writing, a vast body of lore that according to a competent scholar is the richest extant. The collection must of course be linked with that of Finland, which has a parallel history in this period.

The ancient lore is composed of songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, superstitions, spells, dances and dance-music, nature voices, folk games and some short ballads and epic poems.

The themes are very varied. Some are concerned with myths of creation, of the Gods and Nature Spirits. There are legends of heath, lake and sea, stories of black magic and hidden treasure and pestilence. A large part deals with social life, and tales about animals are not only numerous but unique, because older than those in Western lore.

In the National Archives—the folk-lore castle—as the director Dr. Oskar Loorits calls it, there are more than half a million written pages of material. He showed me the albums of songs and music garnered by Dr. Oskar Kallas, and the Setu ballads collected by Dr. Jakob Hurt, and on leaving gave me a valuable pamphlet by himself about the history of the folk-lore movement in Estonia. In it he distinguishes five periods. The first was the attempt of Balt-Estophiles to collect songs of the country folk, as they called them. The second was the period of dreamers and idealists, who wanted to create a distinct Estonian epic comparable to Lönnrot's Finnish epos the "Kalevala". The third period was the real golden age, and Jacob Hurt was the king of it with Professor Eisen as Prime Minister. The connection with Finland was rendered close when Kaarle Krohn became the successor of Hurt. He was the son of Professor Julius Krohn and continued the researches of his father,

extending them to Estonia. His sister Aino Krohn married Dr. Kallas—the first to take a degree in folklore at the University of Tartu—and is, of course, a famous figure in Finnish and Estonian literature. The last period commences with the independence year. Dr. Walter Anderson was made the first holder of a chair of folklore at the University, and the Archives—the E.R.A.—were concentrated in the new building in the Aia tänav.

The methods became more and more scientific. For example, all variants of the song or tale were recorded and analysed, and a most careful study of old and new material made. Dr. Loorits has dealt with the folklore of the Livs who only survive in a few fishing villages in Courland.

In this paper he says that only recently have the writers made use of the material as fully as they might, but there is ample in it for authors for children, playwrights seeking popular expressions, and poets drawing inspiration from legend and ballad.

In conclusion Dr. Loorits states with felicity the purpose of archives everywhere. "The purpose and value of a grain of corn"—he writes—"is not in lying in the granary or mouldering away in the storehouse, but in providing bread for food, or in germinating a new crop; so it is the purpose of archives not only to hoard the memories of the past, but to feed the human mind striving after truth and beauty, and to sow a new crop of creation".

Creative writers have, as a matter of fact, used the old forms and caught a great measure of the atmosphere in recent years, as for example Suits in his "Birth of a Child" (Lapse Süünd) and Marie Under in "The Eclipse of Delight" (Õnnevarjutus).

It is obvious that this vast corpus of folk-lore and folk-song can only be hinted at here.

Folk music and dance are outside the province of this book, but have powerfully affected composers, and one medley of traditional airs is delightful and popular—Miina Härma's "Tuljak". The Archive press has published a very comprehensive book on the subject in recent years. Proverbs are very numerous in Estonia. They are full of shrewd humour and epigrammatic in character, like the one that asserts that the egg of fortune is thin-shelled, and the half of triumph is a bold beginning. The idea that by addressing the evil thing you can exorcise its power gives rise to Charms, which are common to Estonian and Finnish Lore.

It is, however, the stories and songs that are of paramount importance in the oral literature.

There is happily in English a translation of many tales in Kirby's "The Hero of Estonia" and Eugenie Mutt's "Tales from Baltic Lands".



As in many ancient lores there are myths of the creation and how God created the world from an eagle's egg. This is, of course, a variant of the story of Ilmatar in the Kalevala. The stories of the Gods and Nature Spirits reveal the Estonian Pantheon at the head of which is Ukko or Taara—the Old Father. His daughters are Linda and Siuru—the blue bird. There is a God of Thunder Pikker (cf Lithuanian Perkunas), Ahti—the God of the Waters, a forest God—the Tapio of the Finns, Vanemuine—the God of Music.

There is an Estonian Hades called Põrgu, and the king of it is Sarvik. The exploits of the great hero, Kalevipoeg, against it for the treasure there, resembles the spoiling of Annwn in the lore of Wales.

Perhaps the most charming example of these native legends is "Koit and Hämarik", and a comparison between the simplicity of the primitive version and the treatment in art-literature is illuminative of the possibilities of these stories.

The following is the entry in one of the books at the Archives No. 155, 452 Setumaa, parish of Mae Village of S Varesouvia Narrator Nicolai Sormers 1937.

"Then N. Parlu's daughter declared she had heard the following from old Blind Tepo, who had been dead a life-time:

Of old there had been a bashful young man and maid, they had been very dear to each other. Then God on high had seen, and he had arranged it so that they had become a pair as bride and bridegroom and kept their youth eternally. The lad he had set to be dawn and the maid dusk. Once a year on Midsummer Night they met and gave each other a kiss."

Fahlmann made this into a mythical poem in the nineteenth century, and a colourful version of the legend of the white night is given by MacCullum Scott in "Suomi—The Land of the Finns."

Mrs. Mutt's rendering preserves the native flavour and the conclusion is as follows:—

Vanaisa (the Old Father) said to Koit and Hämarik "I am satisfied with the work of you both, and I want you to become perfectly happy. Belong to each other and fulfil your duty in the future as man and wife".

At once they both exclaimed "Vanaisa do not spoil our joy! Allow us to stay for ever as betrothed, in which state we have found our happiness, and in which the love stays young and new." Vanaisa granted their request and blessed their undertaking. The lovers meet at midnight only once a year for four weeks. When Hämarik passes the extinguished sun to Koit, the lovers shake hands and kiss each other. The redness of Hämarik's blushing cheeks is reflected in the pink evening sky, while the yellow shine on the edge of the sky is the foreboding of the rising sun, whom Koit has just lighted anew.

Vanaisa at their meeting time decorates the meadows with the loveliest flowers and to Hämarik resting on Koit's breast the nightingales mocking call, "You lazy girl, you idle girl, the night is long, bring whip! bring whip! whip!"

Another set of stories concerns lakes, heaths and swamps which are abundant in Estonia. A typical one is the legend of the great lake Peipus. . .

In ancient days the Estonians lived under the rule of the great king Karkus. His daughter and only child was carried off by the witch Peipa. The gods were unable to rescue her, but they gave her four gifts—a silver comb, a carder, an apple and a robe of linen. She was to throw them in proper order behind her and they would help her to escape. She fled from the house of capitivity, but was pursued by Peipa mounted on a huge cock. She threw down the comb which became a wide and turbulent river (i.e. the Narva), but Peipa found a shallow, and continued the pursuit. The princess next cast down the carder, which changed into a dense forest. Peipa rode round it and still followed. Next came the turn of the apple and it became a mountain, but the fleet cock rode over it. The princess was now weary, but saw her home gleaming in the distance. She therefore threw down the linen robe, which became the vast lake which still bears the witch's name, for Peipa and her cock-steed were swallowed up in its waters.

Black Magic is much represented in the lore. The Devil and evil spirits in human form appear, but the Devil is generally outwitted by crafty Ants the peasant. The metamorphosis of animals into sinister beings like the were-wolf is a feature that has received artistic treatment as, for example, in the powerful story of Aino Kallas "The Wolf's Bride".

Coming nearer home there are tales of house spirits called kratts. These often robbed the neighbours for the benefit of their patrons. Edward Vilde called his brilliant comedy "Pisuhänd" which has this legend lore as a leit-motif.

Stories about churches are common as of one near Viljandi which relates that a blind nobleman saw a golden cross on a hill and drove up to it. When he touched it he recovered his sight, and in gratitude built a church on the spot. This was destroyed in war time and a tree grew in the ruins. The new nobleman commanded the people to fell it, but regarding it as holy, they refused, so he did it himself and was immediately struck blind.

Pestilence was prevalent in Estonia in ancient days, and there is a great tale about it by Madame Kallas—one of many stories of plagues in the ancient lore.

The stories concerning the origins of animals are particularly curious as, for example, one that explains why swallows have cleft tails.

Tales of social life reveal the relationship between the serfs and their manor-lords, and though sad are often touched with shrewd satire and irony for their betters.



Finally, there are many cosmopolitan tales, variants of universal stories like Cinderella and Bluebeard. The Estonian name for Cinderella is Ash-Katie.

### FOLK-POETRY:

Poetry in modern times in Estonia is relatively more perfect and prolific than prose, and it is not surprising because the volume of folk-song was not only great, but in spite of crudity, of considerable literary interest. There are thousands of poems and songs and the Estonian people, especially in Setumaa, can still improvise like the penillion singers of Wales.

The subjects dealt with in them are generally relative to the life of the people—their daily occupations, festivals, social joys and sorrows. The praise of the song and sometimes of the singer, the pleasures of youth, the joy of betrothals and marriages, the sad lot of orphans and widows, the forced labour (*corvée*) of the serfs, the hatred of harsh feudal lords and overseers—all these themes are found. The character of the folk-poetry is predominantly lyrical and Professor Aavik says the reason is that popular poetry was cultivated principally by young women and girls. The Ilo-Laul symbolised this fascination for song felt by maidens. It is a personification of the cheerfulness of the song, who, disdaining the company of men and women, preferred the troupe of maidens who, liberated from prosaic family life, revelled in rhythmic language and the joy of youth.

The proportion of songs that are sad is high, but there are many that are gay, roguish and ironical. The musical value is often much greater than the literary, for Estonian is soft and melodious.

The form is, as in Finland, of special interest. It can best be explained by an example:—

#### KODU LAULJANNA.

Kus on kullalla koduke  
ja hellal eluaseke  
ja marjal magaduspaika  
ja taimel talutoake?  
Sääl on kullalla koduke  
ja hellal eluaseke  
ja marjal magaduspaika  
ja taimel talutoake:  
kussa kuused need kumavad,  
lepad sirge'ed sinavad.  
kased valge'ed kohavad.  
Sääl on kullalla koduke  
ja hellal eluaseke  
ja marjal magaduspaika  
ja taimel talutoake.

which rendered in English is—

## THE HOME OF THE SONGSTRESS.

Where is then the dear girl's dwelling,  
And the minion's habitation,  
And the bed of the sweet maiden  
And the chamber of the frail one?  
Here is then the dear girl's dwelling  
And the minion's habitation,  
And the bed of the sweet maiden,  
There where now the fir-trees glisten,  
Where the alders slim are bluish,  
And the whitened birch-trees rustle.  
Here is then the dear girl's dwelling  
And the minion's habitation,  
And the bed of the sweet maiden  
And the chamber of the frail one.

This elegaic song depicting the lot of a poor and, perhaps, orphan singer, who has no roof except the forest-tree canopy is a typical lyric.

The form shows neither rhyme nor strophe. These come later when influenced by art-literature. The fundamental element is the trochee of four feet as in Finnish—

kus on | kullal | la ko | duke |

This is, of course, the normal form, but the accentual rule is not always observed, particularly in South Estonia. Another feature is alliteration—Kullalla koduke; taimel talutoake. It is almost *de rigueur* in these poems. Finally the parallelism of ideas and repetition is evident. It suggests concerted singing and a communal origin. Lönnrot in Finland has explained the methods of rune singers, and it is revealed that ballad poetry is not solo work. One other feature is clear that there is a comparative paucity of consonants, and the vowels ensure musicality. This imposes limitations on the translator for the aroma cannot be conveyed, and it is often necessary to call in some imaginative freedom to prevent the simplicity becoming too crude and prosaic. I found the difficulty in rendering folk-songs into English for Miss Aino Tamm. She had a repertoire which she rendered with great acceptance in London, Paris and other European capitals.

One of the best early collections of Estonian folk poetry is the "Ehstnische Volkslieder" of Neus some of which Latham translated in his "Nationalities of Europe". Here is a poem about the Ema or Mother River that flows through Tartu on to Lake Peipus, and a stream rich in allusion.

It is not all who are happy,  
Nor is there for all happiness and good fortune  
To walk along the Mother river  
Looking on the mother's foam,  
Listening to the mother's murmur,  
Sailing on the mother's back,  
Looking on the mother's eyes,  
Seeing yourself again.

and one about the origin of the rainbow—

The rain had children five,  
Foster-children at the font;  
The first lived in the cradle of the sea,  
The second in the lap of a lake,  
The third was the spring's foster child,  
The fourth a maiden of the river,  
The fifth a widow of the fountains.  
They flew up aloft to the clouds  
To build the bridge of the rain;  
And they wove the woof of the mist  
Of the hue of gold.  
They made the vapour—  
Of the red of the Sunset its lining.  
The path of the Maker they made like a bow,  
And the bridge of Mary bright blue.

These renderings are correct, but not very satisfying. English readers will be more intrigued by the folk-songs in the Aino Tamm album. It must be stated that many are not genuine folk-songs, and that the primary interest is the melody. They are immensely popular, and have been set or adapted from traditional music by native composers. This imposed additional bonds on the translator and the crudity of the words in some cases had to be reinforced by some free play. My friends and helpers in Estonia said that my versions were better than the originals, but that the spirit of the "Rahvalaul" had not been lost.

### THE CHILDHOOD OF THE BARD.

(LAULIKU LAPSEPÖLI).

When I was a little laddie,  
Alle-a, alle-a  
Like a violet I flourished  
Alle-a, alle-a  
Mother took me to the meadow,  
Brought my cot into the cornfield,  
Set the cuckoo cradle swinging,  
Summer bird to me came winging,  
Then the cuckoo sang full measure,  
Bird of summer warbled pleasure,  
I began to muse and ponder  
Grew in understanding yonder  
Alle-a, alle-a,  
All I learned, I put on paper  
Alle-a, alle-a  
So of books I am the shaper  
Alle-a, alle-a.

This is a love song—

### COME TO MY HOME.

(TULE KOJU).

Come thou homeward, dearest one,  
Sweetest, fairest, maiden mine,  
Come thou homeward!  
There a little room for you I keep,  
Nest of quiet love and peaceful sleep.

When shall be our wedding, maiden,  
Day of joy, our day of marriage?  
When may I come with love laden,  
In a sleigh or in a carriage?

“ In the spring, when birds do mate,  
In the spring, for you I’ll wait.”

Orphanhood and serfdom are represented in “ The Orphan Child ” (Vaenelaps) and “ The Sigh of the Serfs ”. They have notes of deep dejection, and in independence days the Estonians did not often refer to such.

Here is a lullaby in this mood—

### THE CRADLE SONG OF THE SERF CHILD.

(Orjalapse häällilaul).

Lullaby! Lullaby! Lulla! Lulla! Lullaby!  
Lullaby! to death go dreaming.  
Lullaby! to grave go rocking.  
Feet in front, and head that follows,  
Comes thy body to the coffin,  
Lullaby! Lullaby!

The next song is different; it has a cheerful defiance and a touch of satire. It comes from Saaremaa—a centre of tough resistance to oppression at all times. The chief town is the charming health resort Kuresaare.

### THE COTTAR’S SONG.

Kuresaare’s steward, owner  
Of a hundred roods of land,  
Cannot eat or drink or frolic,  
Cannot revel, cannot rollick.

I am but a simple cottar,  
Owner of five roods of land;  
Yet I eat and drink and frolic,  
I can revel, I can rollick.

Often work and worry knowing,  
All the same my crop I'm sowing;  
I don't mind the labour pressing,  
For from Heav'n comes down the blessing.

I can plough and catch my fish too,  
Tend my farm and fill my dish too,  
To my betters def'rence showing,  
Work to pay the taxes owing.

You are boss, sweet overseer,  
Yet a simpleton I fear;  
I can hear what you are saying,  
At your shout I am obeying.

I know all—the manor's scolding,  
Watchman's wanton am beholding,  
What the grooms do, I am guessing,  
And the brewer's lack of blessing.

The final line of this tuneful and spirited song refers to the monopoly of alcohol by the Baltic manors, and implicitly to the stimuli of brandy and whip used to make labourers work hard.

Rise Up (Ules) is a joyous song with a hidden patriotic ring, calling the people to gather berries and nuts on Sôôru hillside and enjoy minds as sweet as honey, reflected in their sunny faces.

In the song "At Sea" (Merel) a girl adrift in a boat amid the ice longs for reunion with her lover and extols him as a singer and preferable to the Saxon wooer. She relates that now in winter she recalls the coming of the Balt in the summer evening.

Once sitting by the window high,  
I plucked the apple tree,  
A rich young fellow riding by  
Asked apple ripe from me.

I gave him one at his request,  
The best upon the tree,  
But discontented still he pressed,  
And begged a kiss of me.

"I cannot kiss you, Sir, you see  
I have my true love met,  
A singer of fine songs is he,  
And him I can't forget.

Space will permit only one more example, the coquettish duet entitled "Come and be mine" (Tule Mulle).

The swain begs the maiden to share his plenty, to which she replies by asking who has been keeping it before. The duet goes on with variation in two further stanzas, and the suitor then tells her about the wealth in his barrels and boxes. The final stanza gives her answer and is typical of the whole—

You're a trickster, youthful suitor!  
You're a humbug, suitor dearest!  
In your barrels, nothing worth, sir,  
In your boxes, in your boxes, only earth, sir.

The ultimate success of the wooer, however, seems implied in the last word of the second line.

Narrative poetry remains to be noticed in this immense corpus of folksong. It occurs in ballads, and one of the most interesting has been used as a plot of a famous opera by the living composer Artur Lemba—The Maiden of the Tomb (Kalmuneid).

The story is as follows. A young peasant who had land near to a cemetery made a vow to espouse one of the dead if his land was fruitful. Later he forgot his promise and espoused a living maiden. When he was returning to his parents' home with his betrothed, he passed the cemetery and the procession halted for a crowd of the dead encountered him and reminded him of his promise. He offered all that was precious to him—horses, cattle and gold, but in vain—the procession did not move. At last he yielded to the phantoms and the man and maiden with their relatives were in motion again. When they arrived at the homestead the maiden fell dead.

A sense of proportion, however, must bring this chapter to a close, for although Estonian lore is voluminous and revealing, its literary merit is not uniformly great. Nevertheless its inspirational value demands attention in a survey of the literature, for the impact of it is discernible in many modern productions.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PERIOD OF INSTRUCTION AND ENLIGHTENMENT.

This period extends from about the 13th century to the middle of the 19th. Its early stages are of linguistic rather than literary interest and will only be touched on lightly. Towards the end, however, art-literature appears culminating in the publication of a loose epic from legend lore, "Kalevipoeg".

The first books to appear in the Estonian tongue were religious. During Catholic times the Prince Bishop Joannes Kievel, Johannes IV., Bishop of Saaremaa, brought out a Catholic catechism in the native language, and other pieces that appeared were the Paternoster, Credo and Ave Maria.

In 1535, it was discovered recently, the first Estonian book appeared, and 1935 was celebrated in the country as the Book Year (Raamatu Aasta) partly on that account. It was a catechism by Johan Koell of the Church of the Holy Ghost in Tallinn with a translation in Estonian by Simon Wanradt. It was printed at Wittenberg, and its date indicates that printed matter came earlier in Estonia than in Latvia or Lithuania.

When the Lutheran clergy came to Estonia after the Reformation they took interest in their Estonian charges, and many of them had been educated at noted German Universities. They brought out small manuals of religion and moral teaching generally called Home Instructors. This was done by such men as George Muller and Henrich Stahl. Later some churchmen brought out in Latin treatises on Estonian grammar and the prosody of the old poetry with special attention to psalms and hymns.

There were two dialects of Estonian at that time associated with Tallinn and Tartu. The language was simpler and more limited than in modern times and correspondingly easier to read.

The most important event was the translation of the Bible, with which are connected Adrian Virginus, Hornung, Forselius and Anton Thor Helle. Virginus translated the New Testament into the Tartu speech.



The whole Bible was published in Estonian in 1739, and its publication was aided by money given by the Moravians and their leader Count Zinzendorff.

Sentimental literature was spreading in Europe and Young's "Night Thoughts", Thomson's "Seasons" and the novels of Richardson were known to the churchmen, and short moral tales and poems were brought out for their parishoners.

An interesting figure was Johan Wilhelm Ludwig von Luce, a doctor in Kuresaare, who founded a literary society. Then J. H. Rosenplanter brought out in German a philological manual, as did Otto Vilhelm Masing.

In 1801 the first Estonian poet was born in Riga. His name was Kristian Jaak Peterson. He died at the early age of twenty-one, and has been called the Estonian Chatterton, but not very aptly. His poetry is anacreontic and idyllic, and was free from didactic qualities. He was the first Estonian to get a University education at Tartu, and wrote then for a very limited audience. His songs, letters and diaries have been edited by Gustav Suits. His poetry includes pastorals and Pindaric odes which appeared in the Tartu Students paper. He took great interest in Finnish lore, and that leads me to the next phase.

In 1838 a famous society was founded. It was called by a German name, "Die Gelehrte Ehstnische Gesellschaft". It still exists with an Estonian appellation, "Opetatud Eesti Selts"—The Estonian Learned Society. Its aim is expressed in the statutes—to further a knowledge of the past and present of the Estonian nation, of its language and literature, and of the country inhabited by the Estonians. It favoured the Tartu dialect. The Society has a philological and archaeological bias. It publishes texts and studies in the Estonian and Finno-Ugric languages, art, architecture and even numismatics. There is a valuable journal called the *Liber Secularis*, but the outstanding achievement of the Society was the publication of the "Kalevipoeg" by a famous member.

There was a rather German orientation in it, and the patriotic Eesti Kirjameeste Selts—The Society of Estonian Writers—was the reaction to it. In 1938 it celebrated its centenary and there were garlands on graves of two famous members, Fählmann and Kreutzwald.

Friedrich Robert Fählmann (1798-1850) was a medical man in Tartu and one of the founders. He was a Lector in the Estonian language, and editor of the Society's journal.

He was poet and mythologist, and in touch with Finnish lore and German literature, particularly the "Nibelungen Lied" and "Faust". He was convinced that Estonia had legends that could be welded into an epic. He wrote some poems and a beautiful version of the myth of "Koit and Hämarik", but his great work was to plan, but not to complete the "Kalevipoeg". This was done by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald

(1803-1882). He also was a medical man, and lived for a time at Võru—a literary shrine now.

He wrote many lyrics and a philosophical and historical poem "Lembit" about that Estonian hero who fell in conflict with the Teutonic Knights. He was well read in German thought and Northern mythology. His great work is the "Kalevipoeg".

When as a child at school his Estonian name Widri Rõim Ristnõets was germanised to Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, it did not change his Estonian soul. He was enthralled by the stories of the great hero of Estonia—the son of Kalev.

Later as a student he came into contact with Ossian, Percy and Rousseau, and afterwards as a member of the Learned Society carried out Fählmann's plan for a national epos woven from the mythical story of Kalev and his son. He called the poem "Kalevipoeg—Estonian Legend", and there was some appropriateness in the fact that it was printed at Kuopio in Finland, for Kreutzwald is Estonia's Lönnrot.

The hero appears to be the Kullervo of the "Kalevala" transferred to Estonia, not as an ignorant slave, but a giant king.

Kreutzwald uses the eight-syllabled trochaic metre of the Finnish poem which is characteristic also of Estonian. There are twenty cantos or runos, and about nineteen thousand verses.

Dr. Kirby, who has given the only version in English, regards the lyrical interludes in it as interruptions in the story, and though this is true, and the poem is somewhat disjointed, they are nevertheless interesting and have echoes of Ossianic rhapsody.

The "Kalevipoeg" is not, as may be expected, a variant of the "Kalevala". Väinämöinen (in Estonian Vanemuine) is invoked as the God of Song only. Moreover, it is a much more heathenish poem than the Finnish, and has no overlaying of Christianity as in the last runo of the "Kalevala".

The story briefly is as follows:—

Three brothers travel in various directions, and one of them is carried by an eagle to Estonia, where he becomes king.

A widow finds a hen, a grouse's egg, and a young crow. From the first two spring the fair maidens Salme and Linda. Salme chooses the Youth of the Star, and Linda the young giant—King Kalev. Kalevipoeg is their posthumous son.

Linda is carried off by a Finnish sorcerer, but by the intervention of the gods she is changed into a rock. Her son takes counsel at his father's grave, sets out for Finland, and slays the sorcerer. He buys a huge sword from a Finnish smith, and returns to Estonia to build fortified towns, and sets out to Lake Peipus to fetch timber from its shores. He wades through the great lake, but another sorcerer steals his sword and sinks it in the brook Kääpa.

He comes to a cavern at the entrance of which demons are cooking a meal. He enters it in spite of them, and finds it leads to the palace of Sarvik—the Prince of Hades. In the antechamber he finds three maidens. Sarvik is overcome by Kalevipoeg and the maidens are carried away by him.

After an interlude in Finland and Lapland, Sarvik's palace again appears in the story, and after the prince has been overcome Kalevipoeg loads him with chains.

The hero returns to his capital—Linda's bosom—that is Tallinn or Reval. He buries his treasure and retires to the forest, but stepping into the brook Kääpa his sword cuts off his legs. His soul takes flight to the hall of Taara, but is bidden by the gods to reanimate his body. They cannot, however, restore his legs. Mounted on his horse, therefore, he sits stationed at the gates of Hades (Põrgu) to keep watch and ward over Sarvik and his hosts, until the day of redemption dawns.

“Then will the vast fire melt the rock and the Kalevide withdraw his hand and recover his feet, so that he may return to inaugurate a new day of prosperity for his people”.

The form of the poem like that of the Kalevala is the eight-syllabled trochaic line with the accent, of course, on the first foot with some exception. Like the old folk poetry there is alliteration and repetition, but rarely end-rhyme.

The only way to translate it to give some idea of the atmosphere is to use the rhythm of Longfellow's “Hiawatha”. The American poet had a happy chance, when he found the form for his Indian epic in Finnish metres and other characteristics of Finnish song.

Here is an example from the 19th runo where Kalevipoeg listens to a harper singing of Siuru, the blue-bird daughter of Taara—the chief of the Gods.

Siuru, bird and Taara's daughter,  
Siuru, bird of azure plumage,  
With the shining silken feathers,  
Was not reared by care of father,  
Nor the nursing of her mother,  
Nor affection of her sisters,  
Nor protection of her brothers;  
For the bird was wholly nestless,  
So did Ukko wisely order,  
So the aged Father's wisdom  
Gave his daughter wind-like pinions,  
That the child might float upon them,  
Far into the distance soaring.

The melody may be gauged by a few of the lines in the original—

Siuru-lindu, Taara Tütar,  
Siuru-lindu, sinisiiba,  
Siidinarmas sulgedega,

and the scanning from the end of the passage describing the marriage of Salme and the Youth of the Stars.

Tähte | peig ja | Salme | neidu, |  
Pidas | ivad | pulma | ilu. |  
Starry | youth and | maiden | Salme |  
Thus their | nuptials | held in | rapture. |

When analysed the construction of the poem is seen to consist of—

1. An account of the birth, life and death of the son of Kalev.
2. Legend lore interlarded in the narrative.
3. Lyrical poems at the beginning or end of the cantos— as a rule.

Recent research has shown that much of Kreutzwald's poem is not authentic material, that some of it is deliberate invention and, as is obvious, there are many echoes from the lore of other countries. Kalev as a hero-king and defender of his country reminds you of Holger Danske and King Arthur waiting in silent places for the call to bring freedom from danger, and the golden age to their people. Kalev, violent in his cradle and later seducing an unknown maiden, is from Finnish lore. His berserk violence and revenge and the "Hamlet" motif in his career towards the end suggest again Finland's Kullervo. Põrgu is reminiscent of the underworld in the Eddas, and, although he is unlikely to have known it, the spoiling of Annwn (Hades) in the lore of Wales. The Finnish smith who gives the sword to Kalevipoeg is probably Ilmarinen, and Celtic lore makes a great deal of Arthur's sword Excalibur which was handed by magic. There seems little doubt that Arthurian romance at least had reached Estonia. Titanic fighting in the poem is reminiscent of the Norse Ragnarok, and Macpherson's Ossian with its wildness, pathos and glamour was not without influence.

Kreutzwald's obligations to foreign literature have recently been made the subject of a book by an Estonian critic.

There is a passage in the "Kalevipoeg" that has a very modern note. It has been translated by Kirby and is called "The Herald of War". As he asserts the way the gathering symbols of horror accumulate is very impressive. It reminds you of Ibanez in his "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse".

As an example of the lyric parts of the poem (many of which have been set to music) I translate—

### THE POWER OF SONG.

(Laulu Wõim).

When I once begin my singing,  
When my joy from me is ringing,  
Then there are no reins restraining,  
Reins restraining, bonds remaining.

Then I do not heed men's musing;  
Women's mirth I am refusing;  
Then no clouds obscure my shining,  
Nor are widest skies confining.

Then the hamlets are attending;  
And the manor people bending;  
Gentry in a crowd are heeding;  
From afar, the towns are speeding.

The poem of Kreutzwald may have many defects of authenticity and artistry, but it was epoch-making for the intelligentsia among the Estonians. Kalev was a hero of giant strength who challenged the powers of darkness. He was dauntless in adversity and a Promethean figure waiting to return to the aid of his people like the heroes of antiquity. Those who read it could not fail to find appealing symbols, for the Estonian people were then under a double yoke of German feudalism and Russian Czarism. It had inspirational value, and paved the way for a direct appeal to the common people. The educated classes became conscious that Estonia had a past and that there could be a future. The simple folk soon found a voice in the fervent lyrics of Lydia Koidula.

There may be something antiquarian in the "Kalevipoeg" now, but Kreutzwald is a literary and national hero. There is a statue of him at Võru just as one of Lönnrot stands in Helsinki. His grave in Tartu was garlanded when I saw it in 1938, and two plays have been written about him. He was a kindly and sympathetic man, and though Peterson came just before him in time, he has substantial claim to the title in Estonia of "Father of Song".



## CHAPTER V.

### THE AGE OF AWAKENING.

Not far from Pärnu in Southern Estonia is a small town or rather, large village, called Vana Vändra; here was born on the 4th of May, 1819, Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819-1890). He was a schoolmaster and sexton there, but later he removed from Pärnu. As a young man he was influenced by his own master Karl Kõrber who had a good collection of books chiefly in German. Jannsen married Emilie Kock, and two of their children are known in letters, one pre-eminently so. Harry Jannsen wrote some poems and made a collection of legend lore and a Baltic miscellany in German. The other was Lydia, the famous poetess.

Jannsen was not a great writer, but he had descriptive power and a fund of dry humour. He attained, however, with his journalistic and other work, the position of a popular tribune, and he founded the first newspaper in the Estonian language when he removed from Vändra to Pärnu. This was called the "Perno Postimees" (The Pärnu Postman). It was important in the history of the Press, and when Jannsen came still later to Tartu it was the "Postimees" which remained the outstanding daily of the South, and something comparable to the "Manchester Guardian" in England.

Jannsen was influenced much by German music and literature. He often used the "lieder" for inspiration and translation, as did his daughter in a well-known song "The Mother Heart" (Ema süda). Mu isamaa mu õnn ja rõõm, (My fatherland, my delight and joy), indicates that his theme in verse was patriotism.

His work apart from his tales, poems and articles in the "Postimees" is of importance in Estonian history. In Tartu he founded the Vanemuine Society, which began the Singing Festival and dramatic ventures. He was interested in agricultural societies and other organisations aiming at cultural and material progress. He was, however, inclined to compromise with the German landlord class, and this was resented by Jakobson of the "Sakala" and other radicals.

## LYDIA KOIDULA:

On the 12th December 1843 a daughter was born to Jannsen in the school-house at Vändra. She was christened Emilie Florentine Lydie, but was generally called in the house—Lydia. There is an interesting conversation about her youth. She asked her father about his work, and finding it was actuated by his ardent love of Estonia, she plied him with questions, and gradually a passionate desire to use her pen for the sacred cause of her country possessed her.

Later she went to a girls' school at Pärnu and came under the influence of Lilli Suburg—who was one of Estonia's early educationists and writers.

Lydia showed early promise of becoming a writer, and though as in Victorian England it was rare for a woman to do journalistic and literary work, her ability was such that when Jannsen founded the "Postimees" she became his chief assistant. She also began to write short poems and tales, but in Tartu in 1865 she brought out her first verse collection—"Flowers of the Lawn" (Vainu lilled). A year later appeared a second volume, "The Nightingale of Ema River" (Emmajõe Ööpik).

She took the nom-de-plume of Koidula, which can hardly be disassociated from the word "Koit"—the dawn.

The title of nightingale suggests the singing of that bird in the darkness, and the analogy of song in the historic darkness of the land.

These poems went straight to the heart of the people and were received with rapture. The "Kalevipoeg" made its appeal to the educated classes, but Koidula expressed for the common people, feelings that had been pent up for centuries.

Her genius was fundamentally lyrical. Her songs are always musical and have been set to music, but not all her work is of high literary merit. The best of them, however, are not transitory. There is the throb of patriotism in all of them, and even in resignation and bitterness a deep and clarified humanity pervades. She had not only the sorrows of her country for a theme, but a personal tragedy.

She married a Latvian physician, Dr. Michelson, and went to live at Kronstadt. The marriage was not outwardly a failure, but her husband had little sympathy with her patriotic longings and urges. Her children were not encouraged to speak Estonian, and gradually, as one native writer about her puts it, "the mediocrity of her family life suppressed the exaltation of her creative powers". She suffered exile longing—what the Welsh call hiraeth—and after a short illness died in Russia at the early age of 43.

Her letters to Kreutzwald during that period are affecting, as are those she wrote to her home-folk.



During her early life she had visited Finland and met many famous patriots and writers there. These she corresponded with afterwards and there is a collection of letters which she penned to Almberg—the young editor of *Uusi Suomi* (New Finland). Most of her correspondence has been printed now, and there is much that is moving in it.

Her stories are chiefly of peasant life, and she wrote a play "The Country Cousin" (Saaremaa Onupoeg) which was performed by students before the Vanemuine Society in Tartu. It was an adaptation of Körner's drama, and not perhaps of great merit, but as a pioneer it was a landmark in the history of the theatre.

Madame Aino Kallas has written with her rare insight and power the standard life of Koidula. She calls the biography "The Flight of a Star" (Tähdenlento), for Lydia soared across the Estonian literary sky with meteoric brilliance as it were, and vanished.

The book on Koidula by Aino Kallas appeared originally in Finnish, but was soon admirably translated into Estonian by Friedebert Tuglas.

Her fervent lyrics have not appeared in England, so I offer some translations as an example of her quality.

In one poem she describes the fate of her country—

My native land they buried you  
Beneath an ebon cover,  
And blooms of blood on wounded soil  
Were all they could discover.  
You struggled in the fettered yoke  
And quiet grew with sighing,  
And fell at last into a sleep  
The slumber of the dying.

Six hundred years had passed away  
And still you lingered sleeping,  
But there was story secret, strange,  
Among your people creeping.  
How once the people had been free.  
The brave Estonian nation,  
How on a soil that was their own,  
They built their habitation.

Rather naively, however, she hails the liberal Czar Alexander (who freed the serfs) as the forerunner of complete freedom. She lived later to find that reaction had set in, and one of her best poems is the following sonnet expressing her sorrow, courage and faith. There is assuredly a poignant appropriateness now.

## THE JUDGMENT OF SONG.

(Laulu Kohus).

They drive a wedge into thy body now  
Estonia mine! no longer is it meet  
To sing flower songs, the listening birds to greet;  
Ring out my horn! Keep watch upon the brow!  
Evil before thou never didst adorn, but now  
When they would drink the marrow life of thee,  
And hang thy ideals on the gallows tree,  
With boom and barb my feeble verse endow!  
Why dost thou tremble poor distressful land?  
If flame of zeal is shining still in thee,  
That spark like tide of sunset shall expand,  
And food from heaven bring new vitality!  
Darkness no longer will a victor stand,  
But a high dawn the waiting world shall see.

The pulse of her intense patriotism beats quickest in  
“ Estonian Soil, Estonian Soul ” (Eesti muld ja Eesti süda)—

My heart, how rapid is thy beat  
Within my ardent breast,  
When I pronounce thy holy name,  
Estonian homeland blest!  
Both good and evil have I seen,  
And loss has come to me,  
In life I have abandoned much—  
But ne'er forgotten thee!

I could not tell you how my land  
Doth all possess my breast,  
For to thy bosom I would come  
To be my final rest.  
Oh cover me as mother shields  
Her baby's beating heart,  
Estonian soil, Estonian soul—  
What earthly power can part?

In “ Sind Surmani ” (Thine unto death) she declares her  
love of Estonia and her people as an abiding passion—

To the last hour of my life  
I will cherish thee, my land,  
My Estonia in its bloom,  
Dear and fragrant fatherland!  
The praise of mead and stream,  
And thy soothing mother tongue,  
To the last hour of my life  
Shall be spoken, shall be sung.

Dearer is the gentle peace  
Of thy bosom, Mary's land,  
Than the glamour and the bliss  
Found upon a foreign strand.

Yet I often find the tear  
Welling in your saddened eyes;  
Take thou hope, Estonian land,  
Better times shall yet arise!  
For the future that shall come  
Shall transform our hope to sight;  
Firmly walk! Keep head erect!  
Time will put all things aright.

In her last poem—"To Estonia"—before her death, there is the same faith and hope.

Her exile longing in "Jutt" (Conversation) is tenderly and artistically expressed, and must end this short collection from her verse:—

"What news are you telling me, Wind of Dawn?  
I come from Eesti,  
I am tired:  
In the tree tops of the homeland I have played,  
Spring's ornaments arrayed  
Brighten the meads and fields around,  
The little flowers on the ground;  
Oaks, birch and linden, blossoms fair,  
Were gentle fragrant ties to keep me there,  
I saw them play with spring again:  
Why do you now complain,  
Melodious lip of maid in Eesti born?"

"Dear Cloud, you now are travelling to what land?"  
Over thy Eesti  
I shall fly.  
Refreshing field and flower and tree;  
All look at me  
As if I were a heavenly fountain waking  
Though my care-taking  
Is quiet, modest, and in humble guise!  
My might makes merry everybody's eyes.  
In Mary's land the sacred soil is blest.  
Why art thou so oppressed,  
Why, maid of Eesti, do you tear-stained stand?"

"Linger a while oh Bird, why faster do you flee?"  
My wings will take  
Me home to Eesti.  
Between the flowering beds beneath her skies  
More sweet the ties,  
The homeland song of joy and mourning air,  
The grove of tree shades that is there  
Protects my nest, and therein shall I die  
The homeland sounds unbroken passing by.  
Till death my gratitude in songs I'll sing;  
Why art thou lingering,  
Why, maid of Eesti, followest thou not me?"

Daughter of Eesti, why then am I staying?  
 Fly days  
 That now remain  
 And separate the homeland shores from me;  
 Come, oh come speedily  
 That blissful hour for which I have been yearning,  
 The constant question turning,  
 When will you take me homeward to my rest?  
 Does hope caressing still deceive my breast?  
 When shall I greet thee land of song and fame?  
 No answer came  
 From chant of air, or cloud, or little bird still playing.

Three other factors in the evolution of literature during this Age of Awakening need some attention. The first is the work done by writers who may be considered as minor, and only a brief reference is necessary. Jacob Pärn and Maximilian Põdder wrote short novels. Ado Reinwald composed regional poems and legends. J. Kunder was a dramatist and Karl August Hermann a well-known philologist associated with the "Postimees" under the editorship of Jaan Tõnnisson. Lilli Suburg was born in 1842 at Vändra. She was a schoolmistress and greatly influenced by Strauss, Stuart Mill and Malthus. She founded a noted girls' school and was the leader of the feminist movement in Estonia. She wrote novels; one relates the life story of an Estonian school girl.

The press was a powerful factor in the awakening, and as poems and stories often appeared first in the newspapers, it had its share in the development of the literature.

There was a political press war. The radical "Sakala" opposed the "Postimees". The "Olevik" (The Present) which was edited by Ado Grenzstein who died in exile, was Pro-Russian. The "Teataja" in Tallinn stressed economic factors and was later edited by Konstantin Päts, who in 1938 became the President of the Republic under the new Estonian Constitution.

The most interesting literary event was the formation of the Union of Estonian Writers (Eesti Kirjameeste Selts). This was a national society in the real sense, and free from the German orientation of the Learned Society.

Its object was to furnish the Estonian reading public with manuals and other material in the native tongue.

One of its projects was the creation of an Estonian public school—a really National Academy using the native language as the medium of instruction. The project was never realised to the full, for instead of the school at Viljandi, the Russians, aided by the opposition of the Balts, set up one at Põltsamaa, which was a safe compromise from the standpoint of the political masters of the time.

The Eesti Kirjameeste Selts was later suppressed, but its lineal descendant is the Estonian Literary Society.

Nevertheless it had among its members some important figures, and was, in a way, a first attempt to create an Estonian Academy of Letters.

The best account is a brilliant essay of its work and significance by Friedebert Tuglas.

The most important figures in this period were Hurt, Jakobson and Veske.

Jacob Hurt (1839-1906) the "King of Estonian folk-lore" as Dr. Loorits calls him, was the son of a schoolmaster. He studied theology at the University of Tartu, became a teacher of the native language and a clergyman at Otepää in the south. He went to the University of Helsinki, and finally to St. Petersburg where he died in 1906.

He was a leading spirit in the Writers' Union and was associated with the project of the Alexander School at Põltsamaa.

When in St. Petersburg he was attached to the famous painter Johann Köhler—Köhler Viljandi—who was a nationalist in spite of his surroundings.

Pastor Hurt wrote many poems, but it is as a collector of folk-lore that he powerfully aided the Estonian national effort.

He enlisted the aid of the country people in this lore, and his zeal and industry continued until his death. 114,695 pages of manuscript are in the Archives assigned to his name.

He had only about a thousand roubles to do the work, but several schoolmasters helped, and an old "song mother" Mike Ode sang over twenty thousand lines for him.

His printed work consists of two volumes called "The Old Harp" (Vana Kannel) and "The Songs of the Setus" (Setukeste laule).

Dr. Hurt was the leader of the "Museum" venture in Estonia, and it was to his memory that the building that housed the collections was dedicated.

C. R. Jakobson (1841-1882) was the famous editor of "Sakala" published in Viljandi—a great centre of national activity.

He was a big burly man, a radical in politics, and he had many newspaper skirmishes with the moderate nationalists like Jannsen and the party of preachers led by Hurt. He became the President of the Eesti Kirjameeste Selts when Hurt left it.

Implicated in a quarrel, he removed to St. Petersburg and attached himself to the Estonian group there. He wrote some poems and a short comedy and often discoursed to the Vanemuine Society in Tartu.

Michael Veske (1843-1890) was the last important figure. He had some of his education at the University of Leipsic under Professor Brockhaus. He was a keen student of linguistics and in 1875, became Lecturer in Estonian at the University. He carried on researches in folk-lore and a "song mother", Epp Vassar, is always associated with him. Nearly three thousand pages collected by him are in the archives. He wrote several grammars and other books of instruction, and many patriotic poems.

Romanticism was the chief feature of this "Age of Awakening" and it had its fertilising effect on the literature for the time.



## CHAPTER VI.

### REALISM.

European Literature was passing from Romanticism to Realism. The principles of Mill, Darwin, Schopenhauer, Marx and others began to infiltrate, and writers like Zola, Hauptmann and Ibsen appeared. Estonia was soon affected, because conditions were becoming more complex. Trade and commerce were booming. Tallinn was a growing transit port for Russian trade, the proletariat influence in town and country increased. Something more than romanticism and sentimentalism was needed, and so realists in literature arrived.

Estonia must step into the European world and create works with breadth and volume more related to national struggles and the vital issues of social life.

Three outstanding authors appeared—Kitzberg the dramatist, Juhan Liiv the poet, and Edward Vilde the novelist.

August Kitzberg (1852-1927) was the first considerable playwright. His "Hurricane" (Tuulte pöörises) depicted village life with a socialistic and revolutionary background. "The Werewolf" (Libahunt) was a tragedy with a mythological atmosphere. These two plays were epoch-making in the history of native drama, and are still performed at the Vanemuine, Estonia and other theatres. Kitzberg mirrored the life in villages with a new realism and force.

Juhan Liiv (1864-1913) wrote several realistic stories, but is more remembered as a lyrical poet. He wrote under the influence of the realities of his own tragic and unbalanced life. His lyrics are beautiful. They have simplicity and melody, and the pathos of Estonia's sad history is mirrored and symbolised in the expression of his own. He was a teacher and journalist, an alumnus of the noted school in Tartu—the Treffner Gymnasium. He died in the clinic for nervous diseases at Tartu. His verse has an exquisite fragility and tender beauty that is not easy to capture, but I offer a few examples. Once when he had burned some of his poems and wished to recover the thoughts, he wrote the poem "The Women are spreading the Web".—

Women spread the web  
'Neath my window ledge,  
And my web of thoughts  
Hovers on the edge.

Oh, my web of thoughts  
Has no ending found!  
Oh, my web of thoughts  
Web without a bound!

Once upon a time,  
It had blood-red hue;  
Once was snowy white,  
Once was coloured blue.

Red and snowy white,  
Into sky-blue run;  
Shone into my heart  
All the stars and sun.

Oh, my web of thoughts  
Tangled, torn art thou!  
Often thou hast made  
Heart-quake in me now.

Fragments fly about  
In the playing wind,  
Timidly with joy  
Now the threads I find.

In "The Song of the Perishing" he laments the death of summer and youth and life, and in the lyric "They fly toward the hive", he takes the symbol of the bees returning as one of the troubled soul hastening to the homeland.

One more characteristic poem is "Leaves were falling"—

Breezes on the water smote,  
Leaves were falling on the waves;  
Waves were ashen-coloured,  
Skies all leaden-coloured,  
Autumn ashen-coloured.

That was fitting for my heart:  
There—feelings ashen-coloured,  
Skies all leaden-coloured,  
Autumn ashen-coloured.

The great torch-bearer of realism in this period was the novelist Edward Vilde. Although he chose national themes his travels and literary influences were European, and this gave him breadth and a cosmopolitan attitude.

Edward Vilde (1865-1933) was born in the North of Estonia, the son of an overseer in a small estate belonging to German Balts. He was, therefore, able to observe closely conditions and personages in his surroundings and resented the repressive measures under which the peasants lived.

In the village school the instruction was German, but Vilde commenced early to interest himself in the native language and literature although it was forbidden. He wanted to go to America but got no farther than St. Petersburg.

At seventeen he began writing, and as it was impossible to subsist on literary earnings, he took up journalism. He contributed to papers in Tallinn and Riga, and made some journeys to Germany, France and even as far as the Balkans and Asia Minor. For a time he lived in Berlin and Moscow.

Estonia was in political and cultural bondage but the "Teataja" was appearing in Tallinn, and later the still more radical "Uudised" (Tidings) in Tartu.

To these journals he sent many contributions.

At last came the abortive Revolution of 1905 and Vilde and other patriots had to flee. From Finland, Germany and Copenhagen, he got to New York. When the struggle for independence began in 1917 he returned and entered into it.

He was the Ambassador of the new Republic in Berlin.

He concentrated on production and at the time of his death, the Vilde bookshelf contained over forty novels. His 70th birthday was celebrated nationally and he received the honorary degree of doctor from the University of Tartu.

Only his outstanding novels can be considered, and they were undoubtedly the trilogy that was like a vast painting of the life of the Estonian people under the Balts, the excellent comedy about the nouveaux riches, "Pisuhänd", and what many consider his masterpiece, "The Milkman of Mäekula".

The first book in the trilogy describes a revolt of the peasantry that was put down with great severity. It was entitled "The War at Mahtra" (Mahtra Sõda). The second has the long title, "How the Men of Anija came to Tallinn", and has a similar theme—the hostility of the Estonian jacquerie against feudal legislation.

He had in a previous novel, "Into the Cold Country", given a devastating picture of the rural population in the days of the corvée.

The third was called "The Prophet Maltsvet". The theme is dealt with by Madame Kallas in "The White Ship". It relates the story of a peasant named Jean Lemberg who came from a small estate called Maltsvet. He was an eloquent speaker, and I imagine Edward Viiralt's striking engraving was suggestive of him. His followers grew to three hundred. They believed in the eternal truth of the Scripture, abstained from pork, tobacco and alcohol. Their women dressed in white and let their hair grow long. The official church, and even the Pietists, were hostile to the movement, and Maltsvet went to the Crimea with some of his followers. A prophetess among those who remained in Estonia hailed him as John the Baptist and declared he had been sent from God to deliver his people.

It was given out that in the spring of 1861 they should assemble in a meadow near Tallinn and await the coming of the Deliverer in a White Ship. They sold their belongings and awaited the miracle, but were chased by the police, and found it was a hideous dream.

Vilde wrote several plays but his best one is the famous comedy "Pisuhänd". The title is mythical. Pisuhänd or Kratt was a house spirit that was a treasure-bringer and in one way benevolent, but he benefits his patrons by robbing the neighbours.

Tuglas describes the comedy as perfect from the first sentence to the last. Its skilful construction, wit and intrigue make this brilliant satire on the new rich a landmark in Estonian drama.

The genius of Vilde is said to be at its best in the famous novel "The Milkman of Mäekula".

The story is a tragic triangle tale of an Estonian milkman, his wife and a Balt baron, who come to a mutual arrangement by which the woman becomes the mistress of the baron. In other words she belongs to both of them. An inferior writer would make the novel sordid and sensational, but Vilde uses it as a reflection of the sufferings of humanity. Daniel Palgi has recently closely analysed the story in an illuminative essay. He points out that though Prillup, the milkman, and Ulrich von Kremer, the baron, occupy most of the picture, the attitude of Vilde to them is different from the one he adopts to the woman Mari. The men he treats with irony, the woman with partiality and sometimes with sympathetic approval. This dualism is present in the style too, for the treatment of the men is realistic, of the woman imaginative.

Narrative, dialogue and description are well balanced; there is graphic force and suppressed emotion in this great novel.

When the catastrophe comes, and Mari begins a new life, Vilde used the present tense with telling effect.

The milkman is the outstanding character and unravels the knots. His cupidity and remorse are finely shown. Mari is invested with romance and mystery and some measure of elemental power, that is why Vilde is almost lyrical in the treatment of her.

It is hoped that some day an English translation may give us a version of the novel, for it has an universal note.

Edward Vilde, who has some resemblance to Hardy and Meredith, not only by the volume of his work but by its impressive and substantial character, is Estonia's greatest novelist up to 1933.

## CHAPTER VH.

### NOOR - EESTI.

The situation in Estonia after the Revolution of 1905 was one of bitterness and dejection. There were harsh reprisals, and many Estonian politicians and writers went into exile.

There was a turn from realism, for what could it convey but unfulfilled hopes and fears for the future? Suits in his poignant poem, "Eesti", expressed the disillusionment that prevailed.

The spirit of Estonia turned inward to the contemplation of lost happiness in the remote past or to the moods and disappointments of the present. The individual was left only himself to deal with.

This made literature turn to introspection and lyricism. For the expression of these deeper feelings and thoughts the older and simpler Estonian language was inadequate, and intellectuals soon perceived it.

Noor-Eesti (Young Estonia) was the name of the epoch-making movement that not only brought renaissance in the national cultural life, but brought the literature in step with the advancing standards of Western nations.

Noor-Eesti was not a definite school but an impulse like the Renaissance and other phases in European literature.

The chief features of this deeply interesting movement were as follows:—

First Estonia must prove her title to nationhood by being international as well as national. She must possess her soul even in subjection. Implementing Grundtvig's maxim in Denmark, "What we lose in extension we can gain by intensity", she must use the sword of culture, because deprived of the material weapon of force. This culture while primarily national and individual must not be parochial. She must be willing to learn from others and adapt her gleanings from more advanced nations to Estonian conditions.

The movement had a famous slogan— "Enam-kultuuri! Enam euroopalist kultuuri! Olgem eestlased aga saagem ka eurooplasteks". (More culture! More European culture! Be Estonians, but be Europeans as well).



Secondly, the Estonian language must be developed and amplified so that it may be capable of full literary utterance. It must have flexibility and strength so that it may express in literature the new complexities of life and thought which had arisen.

Thirdly, the affinities of art and music must not be neglected and some liaison must be established. This inter-relationship between writers, artists and musicians was a distinct characteristic, and has a parallel in the Finnish Neo-Romantics who include Eino Leino, Larin Kyösti and other poets with Gallen Kallela the painter and Sibelius the musician. Many nations might profitably adopt such a collaboration.

The chief figures in this movement came from Tartu and were associated with the University and the Pallas School of Art.

The literary leader of Noor-Eesti was Gustav Suits. Professor Aavik was the linguistic reformer and Kristian Raud the painter. Miina Härma and Alexander Läte were two musicians exercising influence.

Most of the "Noor-Eesti" people are still living, and though considered old by younger candidates, are active and moreover keep step with new developments in surprising fashion.

Gustav Suits occupied the chairs of Estonian and Comparative Literature at the University. He is not only an eminent poet and critic, but a teacher of great influence. He was born at Võnnu on the 18th November, 1883, the son of a country schoolmaster.

As a student he had a cosmopolitan literary outlook and began to translate from Finnish and other languages. He was a leading spirit of the "Friends of Literature Circle", and to some secret political societies he was not a stranger as well. The authors who influenced him in early years were Brandes, Nietzsche and particularly the Finns, Eino Leino and Järnefelt. He went to the University of Helsinki and specialised in literature, esthetics, philology and folklore. Returning to Tartu as docent he became Professor there.

His output as a creative writer is not large, but it must be remembered that his professional duties absorb much of his time, and he is an erudite and influential teacher.

He has a very high standard for productive work, and revises his poems with meticulous care like Alexander Pope. Some critics say the changes do not improve the originals and that he seems sometimes deliberately to seek obscurity. Nevertheless, he is the best example of a scholarly poet in Estonia.

He is, of course, an acute literary critic and textual expert. As literary leader of "Noor-Eesti" he was the editor of its journal and annuals and also of a forerunner "Kiired".

His first volume of verse is called "The Fire of Life" (Elu tuli). It was written in 1905 and is revolutionary and buoyant in style.

The language has youthful boldness and fiery impulse, and though it dazed the older people it was hailed by youth as the beginning of a genuinely modern literature.

There was some lack of depth, says Professor Oras, but the sweep and vigour of the verse made up for it. Suits was the spokesman of the radical, European-minded youth of his country.

The next collection was different, and was written after Suits had to emigrate to Finland when the Revolution of 1905 failed.

Scepticism, introspection, sombre meditation and disappointment veiled in irony are the moods in it.

The only solace is a kind of Wordsworthian pantheism. "The Fire of Life" was a trumpet blast, writes Ants Oras, an ecstatic chant, "Tuulemaa" (The Wind Land) is more subdued but deeper in vision and feeling.

His poems from 1913-1921 were collected into the largest volume of verse he has published. It is a kind of poetic diary, a mine of literary forms, and technical triumphs. The shadow of the last war is on it, and its title is "All is but a Dream" (Kõik on Kokku Unenägu).

He wrote also a striking poem in ballad metre called "The Birth of a Child".

It is difficult to compare poets from different lands, but Matthew Arnold comes to mind in reading Suits. This "disease of modern life" affects him in the same way. An Estonian "Scholar Gypsy" by Suits would not surprise his audience. Like Bridges he is an experimenter in verse and Shelley, too, is suggested sometimes. The escape to the calm and oblivion of Nature is Wordsworthian.

In "Eesti" he wrote bitterly about the fate of Estonia:—

Who could laugh here outright? Ah! only he  
Who could turn every sorrow into glee.  
Yet life is sighing weighted with its fears,  
Above the hamlets of this Vale of Tears,  
Estonian Life.

Silent the blighting mists upon the heath;  
There is no hand to place the laurel wreath  
Upon the singer's head—for all forlorn,  
The direst of all fates is to be born  
Singer in Eesti.

We sing, though feeling that we soon shall die,  
And be immersed in this accursed sty.  
What are we dreaming of—children of death?  
A better day for others coming yet.  
Estonia's day.

The brooding sense of tragedy is often against a background of snow or storm or a windy landscape as in "The Ringed Moon":—

The ringèd moon is ghostlike gleaming through  
Over the edge of silent fields of snow,  
The tree throws shadows on the roadside too,  
And at the gate as silently I go  
A dismal dog is howling, howling, "Whoo!"  
Life is no longer through its gateways flooding,  
The skis of death are scudding, scudding.

The ringèd moon is ghostlike gleaming through,  
And to the courtyard silver gloom imparts,  
The tree throws shadows on the roadside too,  
And the world's sorrow falls upon our hearts,  
A dismal dog is howling, howling, "Whoo!"  
Life is no longer through its gateways flooding,  
The skis of death are scudding, scudding.

The ringèd moon is ghostlike gleaming through,  
It is the vale of ruin that we tread,  
The tree throws shadows on the roadside too  
Why is it that you walk with bended head?  
A dismal dog is howling, howling, "Whoo!"  
Life is no longer through its gateways flooding,  
The skis of death are scudding, scudding.

but in "All is but a Dream" he finds Nirvana in nature. He contemplates the ethereal spaces, and says that though life is but strife and tangle, war and wrangle, and the cut-throat urge is growing, the radiance of sunset and the calm of evening are for him the hour of prayer. He concludes

To you I raise my eyes  
Oh distant skies!  
Above all this my soul aspires  
To seek in heaven and star,  
My exile far,  
The grove of its desires.

One of his most beautiful and perfect poems is "Under the Quivering Aspens". Not only is it a lovely picture of the Estonian landscape, but a moving expression of the weariness of the soul and its desire to find healing in Nature.

Walking am I beneath the quivering aspens,  
Walking and musing, dumb with ecstasy,  
Weary of reading from the book of day dreams.

Setting in legend scarlet is the sun in the far woodlands.  
With the poor's fevered eyes I look upon it.  
The dying wind of evening now is blowing  
Through the tall tree tops.

Over mown meadows come belated breezes  
From the Wind Country through the quivering aspens,  
Over mown meadows come haymakers wending  
Home by the birch trees in the weary evening.

In my frail body now my soul's awakened,  
Touched by vast distance,  
Yearning to speak to some near kindred spirit.

Silent and serious and with exile footsteps,  
Walking am I among the quivering aspens.  
Into thy trembling arms, Oh aspens take me!

Recently Gustav Suits has collected his poems in two volumes and they constitute a classic contribution to the Estonian muse.

Another considerable literary man in Estonian letters is Friedebert Tuglas. He is a novelist and critic and one of the greatest stylists in the language. His real name is Mihkelson and he was born on the 2nd March, 1886, in Ahja—South Estonia. He is an alumnus of the Treffner Gymnasium, and as a student contributed to the "Postimees". Then he began to write for the "Noor-Eesti" monthly. He was a political exile like Suits, and did much foreign travel. Later he returned to Estonia, and after the passing of the "Noor-Eesti" movement he attached himself to the Siuru group.

He has secured the honours of the literary associations and was President of the Union of Estonian writers, and the Estonian Literary Society. Suits looks the typical university professor, Tuglas with his exuberant hair, and commanding figure suggests a musical composer or conductor, or an imaginative and artistic writer, which he is.

Tuglas is a fine critic, and what is more a sympathetic, if inexorable, mentor for aspirants to authorship in Estonia.

His principal creative works are novels and short stories. After writing "Spirit Land" he brought out a famous novel called "Felix Ormusson" which was a striking picture of an intellectual Bohemian, and a revelation of a certain type of the period.

He gave me a collection of his stories called "Kuldne Rõngas" (Golden Ring) which contains two of his characteristic stories.

Mailmaa Lõpus (At the end of the World) is a kind of variant of the Tannhauser legend. The theme is that beauty is a drug. The hero finds wild Nature in the naked form of a beautiful giant maiden in some remote imaginary island. She enthalls him and he seems incapable of escape, but he finally kills her and comes back to this pigmy world from the land of immensities. He is, however, filled with immortal longings and sets out again.

The rhythmic and inspired prose shows that Tuglas is a master in that school whose ideal is expressed in the well-known phrase "art for art's sake".

The tale by which he is best known outside Estonia is the unique animal story, "Popi ja Huhuu".

A dog and a monkey are left solitary in a deserted house after the death of their master. The master is an alchemist and

scholar, and when he shuts the door of the house and goes out for the last time, both animals are left. Popi, the dog is wise and philosophic. He believes the good master will return with a basket full of meat.

The monkey waits in his cage, and when the day wears on, and the master does not return, he breaks free and sees that he is master. He sleeps in the master's bed, arrays himself in the master's purple robe, and breaks up everything in the house. The dog, at first, admires his power and ingenuity. Later the monkey discovers a barrel of spirits, and drinking from it his cruelty to Popi knows no bounds. In the hungry, tortured brain of the dog is the memory of the good master, and the hope that he will return and depose his tormentor. One day the monkey returns with a piece of bloody meat, and Popi is given it. Admiration for the monkey springs anew in him. At last, however, Huhuu—the ape—finds a box of explosives and dashes it to the ground. The whole house with dog and monkey is blown into the air.

Even considered as a piece of animal psychology this tale is remarkable, but it is more than that. Madame Kallas writes—it swells into a symbolic poem above the level of animal souls into human and cosmic agony. Ungovernable forces rage in the world and the Spirit of God seems to have fled, but there is a distant vision—the memory of a lost paradise.

The quality of his writing may be perceived by the following example from a collection of sketches. The translation is by Professor Ants Oras, which I give by his kind permission:—

#### VISIONS.

“ Sometimes I have visions of distant countries and past times that I have never seen, and in which I have never lived. I see them so vividly that the terror they cause is more awful than the most terrible of memories. What is sleep compared with them, what the delirious dream of the diseased?

It is hot, the sun is like an orb of fire. The dusty pavement of some street by the sea-side—Snow-white buildings, bleached by the sun, with white and red awnings over their balconies— yawning slaves at the gates.

I am sitting, fettered to the bench of a galley, looking with feverish eyes at the scenery around. A companion is sleeping at my side, with his mouth open, his coal-black hair perspiring, his curly head exuding a smell as of some acrid ointment.

The oily sea is motionless. The sun is blazing. I am thirsty.

A group of four slaves carrying a light litter arrives along the empty street. Beside the litter a little Moor is running, holding in his hand a red silk parasol with a long swinging stick. Eunuchs, fat and beardless, with dark-red turbans walk by the litter, before and behind.



In the litter sits a young woman wrapped in a gold-fringed, bright yellow cloak. Her cheeks are painted and her large earrings, vibrating, cause even her head to vibrate as well. She has fallen back lazily into a motionless attitude now, her eyes are half-closed, only her blood-red mouth is alive like a wound.

Who is that woman? Is it Princess Berenice? Is it Arsinoë?

The group passes quickly and silently. I see still the red sunshade vibrating in the distance on its elastic stick. Then yellow dust arises, as though a whirlwind had suddenly blown, and all vanishes.

All vanishes . . . .

Something strange strikes my mind. Where am I? I try to move, but my feet are heavy, fettered as in a dream. Is this error, hallucination?

Those sun-bleached buildings, this motionless sea and that sleeping negro at my side, are they the figments of a dream?

My dry tongue is sticking to the roof of my mouth like a potsherd."

## 2.

"I am hurrying along the sea-shore that is washed by restless waves. On the one side the brown slope a sand-hill, on the other the leaden sea. The coast-line melts into the infinite distance. The sky is covered with heavy and low clouds.

Yet I am hurrying, hurrying, hurrying.

Evening is darkening. A sharp wind blows from the sea. Here and there the white crest of a wave gleams through the twilight. I am wading heavily through the wet sand.

I am gasping. I am hot. My hands are perspiring. I raise them to my face—they are stained with blood. There are big spots on my palms and fingers.

Suddenly I stop in the ominous dusk. I am struck by some ghost-like suspicion, some frightening memory. Yet I fail to recall it all.

I begin to run, and the faster I run the more I feel frightened. My terror grows upon me, it suffocates my breath, it is trammelling my limbs.

From what am I fleeing? Into what haven of retreat? Whither?

## 3.

"A fire is burning on the floor of a cave. Its feeble smoking flame flickers to and fro. Overhead there are black pendant masses of rock with thick roots creeping out of them like coils of snakes.

I am sitting by the fire, cross-legged like a Turk. Three others are sitting with me.

The first of the three has a huge belly, sagging cheeks, and tiny pigs-eyes, but no forehead. The second has painted cheeks and oiled hair and his fingers are heavy with rings. The third again is of a cadaverous thinness, his hair is long, sparse and bristly, his eyes are sunk, his complexion is grey, and his breath sickening like the smell of carrion.

We are cold and terror-struck, but struggle to hide it.

We move towards the fire, and try to be sociable. The thin one talks, the painted one mumbles his frivolous tunes, and the fat one shakes with laughter.

But the fire is dying. The cave grows darker and chillier. One feels strangely oppressed as though for lack of air. The thin one is gasping for breath like a fish, the man with the rings is playing with his fingers, the fat man's laughter sounds like suffocation.

Suddenly I raise my head. The roots are reaching down in awful clusters, black and bulbous like coiling serpents. They are growing perceptibly, putting forth new shoots—thickening. Now they are touching our heads.

And now I am looking at my companions once more. The fat one is lying on his back as though overpowered by laughter, the fellow with the rings is crouching, and the thin one seems to have snapped in the middle—all are motionless. Only the carrion smell has become more positive.

What is the meaning of all this? Who are we? Where are we? Is this a tomb? Have we been buried for years, for many awful years?

Meanwhile the earth overhead is growing. The trees are shooting forth new roots, the sap is flowing along them, buds are opening and a tender spring breeze is bending green tree-tops under an azure sky, where snowy clouds are drifting—light and fair as the dreams of the happy."

It is easy to see that Tuglas has a vein of fantasy, mystery and terror, and that he can express it in impressive literary form. His masters were Maupassant and Edgar Allan Poe and for form particularly, Balzac. There is a touch of De Quincey, and Algernon Blackwood in many of his tales. He is a master too of the macabre and a dreamer of fearful, fascinating visions. He can say farewell to reality and dwell in the sinister world beyond it, but when you look closer his fantasies are not so far removed from realism as at first appears. He was wanted by the Russian authorities at one time, and there is a sense of pursuit, a terror of the non-existent sometimes and something of that nervous electric sensitiveness that many Estonian peasants possess.

But he is also a "priest of beauty". Some of his tales are expressed in almost metrical language. He is a prose-poet.

His psychological power is great, and brings even his dreamiest productions close to reality. As a critic he is the Walter

Pater of Estonia, and has interpreted men and movements in Estonian literature in his "Kriitika" now extending to eight volumes. His life of Juhan Liiv and monographs on the history of the Union of Estonian Writers are solid contributions to Estonian criticism.

He broke a ten years silence recently with the semi-autobiographical "Little Illimar" (Väike Illimar), a beautiful description of the awakening childhood of an Estonian boy.

Tuglas is well-known in the North particularly in Finland. He is a man of integrity and charm, and a writer of European stature.

Another writer in the "Noor-Eesti" tradition is Villem Grünthal-Ridala. He comes from the island of Muhu (Moon). He is a regional poet of distinction. It is the island world in the West that is the background of his productions. He was educated at the Gynnasium in Kuressaare on the island of Saaremaa near his home, and afterwards at the University of Helsinki, where he became Lector in Estonian. He died in 1941.

The folk-lore affinities of Finland and Estonia have influenced him greatly, and he has translated many works from Finnish and French.

"Remote Coasts" (Kauged Rannad) is one of his books, and he wrote a ballad poem called "Toomas and Mai".

The poetry and romance of the Western isles are delightfully treated by Ridala.

Associated with him geographically is an older poet, Ernest Enno, who occupied a place apart from the poets of this period, but was in a measure a forerunner. He lived and died at Haapsalu. There is melody and a certain grave beauty in his verse, and he wrote charming poems for children. "Songs in Grey" (Hallid Laulud) is the name of one of his best books.

The story of "Noor-Eesti", however, would not be complete without reference to two men, who were not literary personages. One is Johannes Aavik—the philologist—and the other Kristian Raud—the artist.

Professor Johannes Aavik was Inspector of Secondary Schools when I met him in Tallinn. He is primarily a philologist and the enrichment of the Estonian language is his great achievement. He built up from the dialects and Finnish and by coinages a vocabulary that made the literary speech more complex and flexible. Aavikisms are abundant, and though for a time unintelligible to the uneducated and older people, have now passed into ordinary speech as well as literary expression. Estonia owes to him a great debt in the field of creative philology.

Kristian Raud was the Principal of the Pallas School of Art in Tartu. This is no place to enlarge on his work which is full of symbolic beauty. One of his pictures depicts Mary and Joseph with the infant Christ sitting by a fire in the woodlands. The intersection of the perpendicular column of smoke

from the fire, and a horizontal cloud in the sky, throws a wonderful illusion of the Cross over the homely scene.

Raud's importance to "Noor-Eesti" was the support he gave to the movement, and the illustrations he drew for many books, and the journal that appeared. In the first number of the latter, one of these illustrations shows a gagged and manacled man in a prison cell. The border is a framework of chains, padlocks and thorns. The simple word "Millal?" (When? or How long?) is at the bottom, but hopelessness is not the final note of the picture, for through the bars of the prison three stars are shining. It is an enslaved nation that is implied. Raud's most recent production was a collection of striking illustrations for the new edition of Kreutzwald's "Kalevipoeg".

Another book-illustrator was the eminent portrait painter—Nicholas Triik. He painted a portrait of Gustav Suits, and designed many book-plates. His cartoons are striking and somewhat bizarre. "Catastrophe" one of the best, is a delineation of war and the devastation caused by it, and prophetically modern now.

Estonia has a remarkable engraver in Edward Viiralt, and he also is a book-illustrator. He depicts Judas and his talon fingers in Alexander Tassa's play "The Gadarene Swine".

Heino Mugasto is another artist in woodcuts of an impressionist type.

To complete the format, Edward Taska has beautifully bound in leather many editions de luxe of past and present authors.

Finally, to the alliance of the Fine Arts, music also contributed, for composers like Alexander Läte and Miina Härna drew inner motives from the old folk melodies, and set many poems by Lydia Koidula and other writers.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SIURU.

There was a certain stately gravity and a measure of academic restraint in the writings of the Noor-Eesti period, but when the war of 1914-18 was in progress an impulse of escape from a world distraught and awry made itself felt. Literature in Estonia began to move towards abandon, self-revelation, revolt against formalism and a craving for the passionate and even sensual, and Bohemian life.

The representative group formed the Literary Union Siuru and its members were Tuglas, Artur Adson, Marie Under, Johannes Semper, August Gailit and Henrik Visnapuu.

The name "Siuru" needs some explanation. It has been mentioned in the chapter on folk-song. Siuru was the daughter of Taara or Ukko—the Jupiter of the old legends, and she is referred to as a Bluebird and the symbol of restlessness and flight to happiness.

The romanticism and lyric impulse evidently appealed to Tuglas, but only his allegiance needs to be indicated.

August Gailit was a novelist who wrote "Toomas Nippernaadi", the account of a thorough-going literary Bohemian. Artur Adson wrote many poems in the South Estonian dialect, and several plays including one on the life of Koidula. He was censor of Films in Tallinn and married Marie Under.

The three outstanding "Bluebirds" were the last named, Henrik Visnapuu and Johannes Semper, though it must be stated that this was only one stage in their literary career. Their work became deeper in later years.

Henrik Visnapuu is essentially a lyric poet. As a "Bluebird" he published what many consider his best volume "Amores". It has force and fire and is brutally frank in confessions.

His melody is good and he himself has said that it is music to which his poetry is attuned. He sings about woman, home, nature and fatherland, and since he has mellowed, of humanity and God. He is something of a dualist. "There are two beginnings in me, heart and flesh," he remarks. On the whole emotion rather predominates over intellect, and his work is



uneven, a little violent, and not always on a high level. Some bitterness due to personal vicissitudes is evident, but he passes from the contemplation of fate to a reawakening of life and beauty. "Under the Home Hill" is one of his last volumes. He has written some patriotic plays. He is a literary critic and became editor of "Varamu" (Tidings).

In one mood is "Oh Melancholy Dog" (Oo, nukker peni)—

In his lone corner crouched, a dog is sitting  
With watering eyes full of desire and staring,  
While dishes load the board for ever flitting,  
And man carouses at the feast and fairing.

A melancholy dog is gazing there and squeaking,  
With watery mouth and empty belly grumbling;  
And now and then the swish of whip is speaking,  
Man eats and drinks and in a song is mumbling.

Unhappy dog! I, too, am hunger bearing,  
Like you from thirst and even pain complaining.  
Unhappy dog! I, too, like you am sharing  
Some crumbs of bliss occasionally gaining.

Oh! mournful friend, one are we in desiring.  
I am a man with hunger unrelenting;  
Let us set up our howl and whine untiring.  
One thirst for you, another me tormenting.

In another mood he writes the idyllic "Golden is the park", but I choose a beautiful poem of the Virgin and child on Christmas Eve,—

The stars are glittering in the moon-less skies,  
Hoary with frost the leafless trees arise,  
It is cold; it is still; it is in the night-time.  
The sleighs are gliding church-ward in the snow,  
Towards the stars on by-path way I go,  
It is Christmas; it is still; it is in the night-time.

Walking uphill what brilliance breaks the gloom?  
Under the snow the earth looks like a tomb,  
It is cold; it is still; it is in the night-time.

Crackles a fire upon the hill-top's crest,  
The new-born babe sleeps on the Virgin's breast,  
It is Christmas; it is still; it is in the night-time.

I am astounded, motionless and dumb,  
Surely some magic to my eyes is come!  
It is vision; it is still; it is in the night-time.

The Mother's words come mournful on the wing,  
"He sleeps, my son, there is no room, he lacketh  
everything."

Shines overhead a lone star; it is in the night-time.  
So I bow down before her, kiss her hand.  
Hoar frost has touched the trees to silver on the land.  
It is the Virgin; it is Christmas; it is in the night-time.

Johannes Semper was the editor of "Looming" (Creation), the Estonian journal most like the "London Mercury". He is a man of erudition with a cosmopolitan mind and a modern outlook. He is a novelist and critic as well as poet. His European affinities are French and Italian writers, particularly André Gide. His essays on the style of Gide and on the Spirit of France (Prantsuse Vaim) are of critical importance, and his "Walt Whitman" deserves translation into English.

Semper chooses his words with scholarly care and his images are concrete and clear-cut. Form and feeling are artistically blended. In appearance Semper is soldierly, and in mind, a Left intellectual like his school-fellow the poet Johannes Barbarus. The verse-collection—"Pierrot" is his contribution to the Bluebird literature. He has psychological power and this is shown in his fine novel "Jealousy". Here is a characteristic poem of his:—

#### THE NAKED SPRING.

It is the first day that street ice is free;  
Scanty the snows that on the roof-prints lie;  
The kerchief of the sun has dried the maple tree.  
The gutters wear blue jerkins of the sky.

Something within my soul seems to be bare;  
For words that have the simple stamp acquired—  
Work-a-day truths, transparent, clear, I care,  
Bashful and scarcely with a rag attired.

But when the moon into the tree-tops rises,  
When the wry forms of lustful cats, I see,  
My mouth odd word and twisting shape devises,  
That which is new and strange rises in me.

Flash of emotion! to earth I seem not bound  
But as if with Orion's belt I toyed:  
I weirdly walk, as on some crumbling ground,  
My head among the stars, my body in the void.

Marie Under is the Queen of Estonian Song and one of the most arresting writers. She has a personal resemblance to Olive Schreiner. Her genius developed late, though she was known among intimate friends long before the publication of her first volume. She commenced with sonnets, which, in addition to the unfettered frankness and intensity characteristic of the Siuru, made it evident that a new form had arisen.

Her poetry is varied—melancholy and joyous, sordid and sublime, dreamy and sometimes terrible. There are novel turns of speech, varied artistry, a Southern glow and Elizabethan exuberance in it and some bold imagery.

Two typical books of hers are "The Voice in the Shadow" (Hääl Varjust) and the other with the intriguing title of "Exulting in a Fine Day".

In the first she is melancholy and eerie and as Dr. Oras says, she can depict with almost neurasthenic nervousness the troubles of a sensitive mind by visions that have the magic and terror of apparition.

Here is her "Dead Man's Moon".

The moon is hanging on the tree so heavy  
And so gory.  
Her frozen sheen like oil upon the river,  
The cataract's mouth is roaring.  
Hark! Hark!  
As from some subterranean mouth  
Voices are pouring.  
This is indeed terror, verily 'tis horror.  
Despair the earth is going.  
Hark! Hark!  
Orphans are crying, widows wailing,  
And now the railing  
And the shrill curses of the ravished virgins.  
Is it the dead form of the cross  
Yon windmill is assuming,  
The hanging dead exhuming?  
Watery the blood and the cold heart is moaning.  
Dwindled the soul into a puzzled groaning.  
Hark! Hark!  
How the wind's fingers strike a hollow music  
From that shrunk harp of bones,  
Like the complaint of some poor wandering spirit,  
Or the forsaken's groans.  
Hark! Hark!  
The cow is lowing in the stable corner,  
As with a vision of the murderous knife;  
Or has she scented, creeping from the hillside,  
The fat wold-werewolf seeking for her life?  
What do we mortals know in truth of cattle?  
And yet, who knows, perhaps, to-night  
We, too, are gushing from the self-same fountain,  
Groaning in chorus, and the dead have sight.  
Hush! you do err, the same cow-bell is crying,  
Hanging upon the necks of all of us who roam,  
Piercing the marrow of our bones and crying,  
Crying to-night for herdsman and for home.

In 'The Poor House', after vividly describing the outward desolation of the house, she gives a portrait of the old woman inmate. The touches are swift and telling. The pauper sits with her bent back and paralysed limbs with a cracked mug before her. Toothless she is with a mouth that is like a scratch on her face—the painful cut of the last farewell. Her eyes are slippery snails, dim with tears and dull with insomnia. Time has written wrinkles on a face which is a locked chest, the key of which has long been lost.

Life has missed its mark:  
Botching her tattered blouse alone is left  
And cleansing it oft-times.

Thus she labours, nodding, dozing,  
Till she falls when life is closing  
From the crutch of her existence,  
Flickers out the flame within her  
As a marsh light is extinguished.

Here is an example of her introspection, for everywhere there is intensity and a complete absorption in her theme.

#### A REBOURS.

Thus it has always been, sleep seldom brings release,  
Thus it will always be; I have no peace, no peace.

Something within me seeks to suffer, though deep joy I feel,  
Craftier it is than I, and filters woe from weal.

All fires within me blaze as at a feast or festal day,  
And yet majestic death burns still these fires away.

I am impelled to plunge in joy, as in a rose tree bower,  
To be thorn-wounded there under the petals' shower,

Breaking a rosy mood as breaks a rotten string,  
To curl up in a corner, long closed from everything.

To deck myself again with the nothingness of pride,  
And laughing fling away the bloom on every side.

To let all pleasure go, and to refuse—the golden cup,  
To be alone, and die of thirst rather than drink it up.

Although the title of her ballad-collection "The Eclipse of Delight" (*Õnnevarjutus*) and "A Stone off the Heart" (*Kivi Südamelt*) suggest melancholy, it would be entirely wrong to infer that her poems are sad. Personally she is anything but that and in the collection called a "Fine Day", she sings beautifully of the overpowering suddenness and exultation of spring in Estonia, the brief luxury of summer and such happy things.

She has confined her attention to poetry and has translated some foreign masterpieces into Estonian verse.

Her associations are with Tallinn and her home was in its garden suburb—Nõmme.

Some critics have compared her with contemporaries like the Finnish poetess L. Onerva, and the French Countess des Noailles; but she is individual, and has secured a permanent and outstanding place in Estonian letters.

## CHAPTER IX.

### NEO-REALISM.

The Siuru state of lyrical intoxication enriched the literature, but the impact of new stresses in the national life made it later a spent force. A closer contact with ordinary life was demanded and socialistic influences began to affect literary production.

The neo-realists wanted both poetry and novel and in some measure, the drama, to treat the life of the proletariat in town and country, to mirror the spirit of economic revolt by depicting poverty and sordidness in some aspects of life.

In poetry the groups called "The Literary Orbit" and "Tarapita" took up the theme of the poor and luckless. Poetry became irregular in form and sharp and incisive in character, like the free verse in Russian literature and the surrealists in France and England.

Johannes Schütz-Sütiste and Erni Hiir in "Song and Boomerang" were poets of this style, and used the staccato music effectively.

The outstanding man, however, was Johannes Barbarus (Dr. Vares). A graduate in medicine of the University of Kiev, he served in the Russian army, and later practised as a doctor in Pärnu. He uses mathematical and symbolic titles for his poems. He has a biological view of the world like Wells, and is an optimist in outlook. His verse is rapid and gritty. Some of his poems are like shouting proclamations, and his style reminds you of Vachel Lindsay. They have, often, the effect of the jazz band. In one noted poem he begins "Hallo! Pan-Europe" as if he were calling on the telephone. He mentions the poets of Europe by name and hails them as a poet of a little people. He ends with the shout—

"The Gods have created chaos—we (the poets) will create order. Hallo! Pan-Europe, Hallo!"

This period has produced many novels. August Jakobson made a sensation with naturalistic work in "The Borough of Poor Sinners"; August Mälk wrote "Dead Houses" and has taken his themes from the stern life of the islanders in the West.

Mention must also be made of Estonia's chief humorist Oscar Luts. He has characteristics recalling Dickens and Mark Twain. He writes charming and humorous tales and is one of Estonia's



most popular writers. His output is large but probably "Kevad" (Springtime) is outstanding. There are fine dramatic possibilities in his works, and Andrew Särev has dramatised many of his novels, making them most attractive in the repertoire of the theatre. "The Marriage of Toots" was being played everywhere, when I met him in Tartu in his house, which had been given to him by admirers.

There are, however, two novelists who have reached European stature in the period of Neo-Realism—Metsanurk and Tammsaare.

Edward Hubel (nom-de-plume Mait Metsanurk) is a social analyst. He believes much more in the message than the manner. In this respect he differs from the esthetic school of Tuglas, and he has been in conflict with them on literary attitudes on many occasions.

He is a revolutionary critic of life—a critical realist as some have called him. He is no dreamer or poet, but emphatically a prose writer. It is characters "hurt by life" that he depicts. The keynote of much of his work is the quotation he used from The Book of Job. "Look! I am crying: Injustice is done to me, but I get no answer. I am appealing, but there is no court. Oh that my words may be recorded".

There are few heroes in his novels, his characters are overwhelmed by vicissitudes and their story is a challenge to injustice. He infers that only fighters survive. Whether it is a young man who gets his farm taken away from him by force, or a slave journalist battling against drudgery and poor pay, or a communist who is shot, the tragedy is a symbol of hard fate and a call for social justice.

He has written plays and historical novels, but he approaches all in a realistic way, and it is the psychological interest and ethical import that is uppermost.

The story of Randma—the communist—is called "The Traceless Grave" and that with "Red Wind" are two of his earliest successes. Recently he surprised the Estonian public by turning to past history. "At the River Umera" will be referred to later.

The second novelist is Anton Hansen or Anton Hansen Tammsaare.

He also is a realist, but different from Metsanurk. He depicts life as it is without revolt.

He studied law at the University of Tartu and afterwards concentrated on novel writing. He was a very modest and retiring man—almost a recluse—when I last visited Estonia. On his seventieth birthday there was a national celebration and his native town erected a statue of him, but he did not attend the ceremonies. His state funeral in March, 1941, was attended by vast crowds in the capital.

He was a fine dramatist and his "Judith" is one of the most original treatments of the theme. "The King is cold"

is an ironical drama on dictators. "The Farmer of Kõrboja" is one of his earlier peasant novels, but his masterpiece is the five volume novel "Truth and Justice". It was begun in 1926 and continued at intervals. The author kept surprising the Estonian reading public by adding a new phase of the story, when it seemed as if the cycle had finished. The last volume appeared at Christmas 1933, and the whole work comprises 2,500 pages of print.

It is a vast painting of Estonian life, and has been compared with "The Peasants" written by the Polish novelist Reymont. Many critics assert that it deserved the Nobel Prize more than the novel of Sillanpää. He has been widely translated but not in English, and as it is the greatest novel in recent Estonian literature an outline seems desirable.

In the first volume there is a picture of rural life in Estonia which gathers round the life of two farms, and peasant proprietors of contrasting character. Andres is the type of the steady good sense of the best specimen of the Estonian race. He is diligent, pious, trustworthy. He works as "under the great taskmaster's eye" and is a lover of truth and justice. Pearu, his neighbour, is the opposite—a domestic tyrant, jealous of Andres' integrity and full of duplicity and injustice.

There are many secondary figures, which give a vivid picture of rural conditions, and have probably autobiographical echoes.

The second volume treats of the children of these farmers—a new generation—a young folk, more adventurous and less bound to the soil. From amongst them emerges the chief figure of the novel, Indrek, the son of the farmer Andres of the first volume. His life at the gymnasium in Tartu is described. Russian and German are spoken, Estonian is more or less forbidden. The headmaster is a bizarre type, tragicomic in fact, and a great creation, as well as all the pupils in the school. Indrek is the shy, reserved pensioner among the company, who are delineated with touches of ironic humour.

The third volume concerns itself with revolution days. Indrek is in the abortive rising of 1905, and one of the leaders of a secret society. Here again is a perfect picture gallery of portraits.

In the fourth volume Indrek is a schoolmaster, a married man with many children, but like many others not enamoured of school teaching. His wife is a superficial, frivolous woman with little sympathy for her husband, and the parvenus of Karin's circle are sarcastically limned by Tammsaare.

The last volume brings the climax to this revealing tale. Indrek, disgusted with the frivolities and infidelities of his worthless wife, shoots at her, is tried and sentenced. Later he returns to the old countryside to the paternal homestead. His old father lives in a lonely cabin there, and his sisters and cousins are in charge of the farm. He sets out to redeem the

past by working on the land. The narrative becomes a rural epic. With sublimity and poetry Tammsaare describes the death of the old farmer in this haven of truth and justice. Karin, the frivolous and faithless woman of his early life, fades out superseded by a servant of the family. She is a beautiful character, simple, affectionate, unselfish and ready for all sacrifices. She it is who revives the lost joy in the afflicted soul of Indrek, and he finds truth and justice and repose upon this Estonian Solveig's breast.

It is a great novel, full of human experiences, with lively and captivating dialogue. It appealed to the intelligentsia as well as those seeking mere entertainment, and its dramatic value was soon perceived.

Much more than that Tammsaare's philosophy of life was in it, for as he said of it, the novel successively depicts a struggle with the soil, with God, with the community and with oneself. The final volume has the keynote of surrender and resignation.

"Yes," says Tammsaare in the closing words of this rich, intense and inspired novel "that is the world. There is always somebody suffering somewhere, while happiness is born."

Hugo Raudsepp is the most prominent Estonian dramatist. He also has noted the social weaknesses of his compatriots, and like Shaw uses the medicine of laughter to point his moral. His plays are very popular, and though he sometimes panders to the groundlings, there is a rocket of verbal wit that makes the most sophisticated laugh. Only an Estonian can enjoy its flavour, but the humour of the situation can be appreciated by others. His chief plays are "Mikumärdi"—the name of a farm—and "Vedelvorst", both comedies. The latter title, literally "Limp Sausage", is the comedy of a "Weary Willie". Raudsepp's dialogue is flashing and rapier-like, but kindlier than Shaw's.

"I have such a sensitive heart," says one of his characters, "when I see another getting on in front of me, it is like drawing a saw through my heart—my poor sensitive heart."

"Rosy Spectacles" is a recent play of his. It describes the overwhelming joy of a bachelor in a second-rate summer resort on discovering his former love, now the wife of a shady business man. The gradual disillusionment that follows, when he finds the woman he once adored, and still worships, is a shallow, flighty, materialistic social butterfly is wittily shown. The contrast between the nonchalant, simple-minded and sincere admirer, and the dressed-up, but now elderly lady is depicted with brilliant irony and fun.

He has written some serious plays like "The Signs of Sinai", and some critics consider these superior to his comedies.

The Finno-Estonian Aino Kallas is an outstanding figure in the literature of the North. She wrote at first in Finnish, and on her marriage to Dr. Kallas—formerly Estonian ambass-

ador in London, and a distinguished folklorist—she made the country of her adoption the background of her powerful stories. She became naturalised, and later wrote in the Estonian language; but nearly her whole output in Finnish was rendered into Estonian by Tuglas.\*

Her work reveals an amazing genius for creating atmosphere, a directness and beauty that called forth the admiration of so acute a critic as Georg Brandes.

Fortunately her tales are available in English in translations made by Alexander Matson. "The White Ship" has variety. One tale about lepers in Tallinn is like a mediaeval manuscript in colour; another "Gerdruta Carponai" is an intense love story set in days of the Great Plague.

"Eros the Slayer" consists of two short novels. One is a love story between a scrivener and a noble lady, which ends in the vengeance of her brothers, who drown her in an ice-fissure in a lake near Viljandi. The other is a triangle tale about a rector and his wife on the island of Hiiumaa.

"The Wolf's Bride" is a story of a peasant woman who became the bride of a werewolf, and lived a Jekyll and Hyde existence.

In all these stories, the medium is either biblical language or archaic speech, and the effect on the reader is powerful.

Madame Kallas has for several years turned to the drama, and her one-acter "A Bathsheba of Saaremaa" was performed in this country by the B.B.C. with Lena Ashwell in the cast. Her mediaeval play set in Viljandi—"Maret and her Son"—made a sensation when played in Tallinn. It shows the intense struggle between mother-love and love of country.

In Estonia her critique of the Noor Eesti period with which she had many affinities had the advantage of detachment as a sympathetic foreigner—which she was at the time,—and her life of Koidula is outstanding.

John Galsworthy praised her work, and there is no doubt that from the pen of Aino Kallas, who is an attractive and forceful personality, have come books that will secure for her a permanent place among the writers of to-day. Quotation is scarcely necessary as her work is in part available in English, but two examples\*\* of varying quality, romantic and realist, respectively, may be cited—

The first is from the exquisite tale "Young Odele and the Leper".

"The bees hummed in the garden, all else was silence, and then the leper replied:

\* Vide the present writer's "The Art of Aino Kallas."

\*\* From "The White Ship" by kind permission of the author, and Jonathan Cape the publisher.

"Woman, there was a time when I desired all that was pleasant on the earth. No joy was there but my senses had revelled in it. I have filled my brain with all the learning of our time, I have borne armour as a soldier; women have heaped on me their love, from princess to scullery maid. All that is past, the curse of God weighs heavily on me, and all I desire is the rose in the hand of thy child. Not even thee, Odele, do I desire, though with these dim eyes I see the delight of thy body and the great gentleness of thy heart. But be merciful, give to the dying what no other man desires."

"Peace be with thee, Odele, daughter of Valdemar, wife of Jurgen Schutte," broke in the old barefooted man. "Fulfil, my daughter, the prayer of the Lord's accursed, show mercy and give him the unneeded rose. The Death Mass was read for him to-day in Church, as is done for lepers, the joiner has prepared his coffin, he is no longer of the living. Be therefore righteous, give to him, as thou wouldst give to the dead."

And Odele, remembering her prayer to the Virgin Mary and overcoming at last the coldness of her heart, grasped the hand of her child and with it cast the rose to the leper.

And lo! she saw as it were a vision:

The taint of the diseased standing there before her fell off like large white scales. The gaping sores they left joined up without a scar, in place of the lost fingers, joint by joint new ones appeared, ulcers grew smooth and were seen no more, the dim eyes regained their lustre, the skin its clear freshness, the eyebrows their curve, the body its brave and gallant bearing.

She saw that the man she had looked upon as a leper was of the race of brave and splendid humanity, the heart of the Creator had beat high at his birth, the stars had danced a golden measure at his coming into the world.

And Odele, the young wife of Jurgen Schutte, Councillor of the town of Tallinn, and Head of the Hospital of St. John, come from afar, from the land of green beech-woods, fled hurriedly into the garden, confusion and a strange languor in her heart, in her hair a golden bee drunk with honey and ready to sting."

The second is the story of the sturdy Bernhard Riives from Saaremaa who was threatened with flogging as the leader of rebellion against the oppressors of his village. It is put into the mouth of an officer, who is more humane than the others, and sympathises with the noble fortitude of the man:

"Let him choose himself between a flogging and death," he said. "That will soften him, you will see."

"I went again to Bernhard Riives and reported the commander's decision to him. He listened in silence.

"With all the means in my power I tried to reason with him.

"Have you a wife?" I asked.



“ ‘Yes,’ he answered simply, as in the examination.

“ ‘Any children?’

“ ‘Yes—five,’ he answered.

“ ‘Then in God’s name—think of them, man.’

“ I was afraid for him and at the same time I desired keenly to break down his obstinacy, the inmost reasons for which were not entirely clear to me. And yet something in him caused me to salute him in secret.

“ He did not answer, but seemed to be battling with himself.

“ ‘Listen to me, now,’ I said, ‘gather your wits. You see I am working for your best. You are a strong man and can well endure the punishment, you will be laid up for a week and then all will be well.’

“ ‘I am not afraid of that,’ he said.

“ ‘What then, why don’t you answer?’

“ ‘I cannot. That is all, my nature won’t let me, I cannot. I can die, but I cannot allow myself to be beaten.’

“ ‘You have always been beaten,’ I said. “ ‘When you were slaves, you were always beaten. Your father was flogged, and your grandfather before him.’

“ ‘That is true, we have always been beaten,’ he agreed. ‘But I will not be beaten. I was born free.’

“ He had found himself again. The old equanimity, sprung from his peasant civilization, that I had noticed at the first sight of him, appeared again in his lofty, square features.

“ ‘Your children, man. Five children who will be left orphans if you are shot.’

“ ‘Better for them to grow up fatherless than the children of a slave. Shoot me.’

“ His wish was fulfilled. I was not there when he was shot. I did not even wish to see his body, which was taken away by his wife and the oldest of his sons, neither did I wish to hear anything of his last moments.

“ But my opinion is this: in this peasant, this Bernhard Riives, seven centuries of slavery straightened its back.”

## CHAPTER X.

### MODERN LITERATURE.

The modern literature has grown to some proportions, and can only be hinted at in this brief survey. Not only is there quantity, but quality in it, and one dominating feature is its versatility. This establishes the individual character of the Estonian people. Until 1940, when contact with it was broken, it was evident that the War had made little influence on productivity. "Eesti Kirjandus" (Estonian Literature), a critical and bibliographical journal belonging to the Estonian Literary Society was appearing, and creative work by the foremost authors was printed in "Looming" (Creation). A massive English-Estonian Dictionary by Johannes Silvet was of interest to English philologists.

Art, music and drama flourished, and men like the arresting engraver Edward Vüralt, the musician Artur Lemba, and players like Ants Lauter, Paul Pinna and Liina Reiman maintained the arts.

The older writers were active, even the poet K. E. Sööt kept step in a surprising fashion. Raudsepp wrote new plays, and Oskar Luts stories that Särev dramatised. Several distinguished writers published travel books of distinction, and excellent translations from foreign authors were made.

The most remarkable feature was the historical novel. Most of the books reverted to the old heroic period. Mait Metsanurk won a State prize for his novel "At the River Umera". This was the story of the defeat of the Teutonic Knights by an Estonian Elder. Karl Hindrey (who was originally a journalist) like William de Morgan commenced to write novels late in life, and some of them would create great interest if translated into English. He wrote an account of the siege of Sigtuna by the old Estonians, a theme that was made the subject of an opera—Vikerlased (The Vikings)—by Aav.

The versatility in the novel can be indicated by further themes. Tammsaare's last work was "The New Devil from Hell's Bottom". The characters of this symbolic tale are the old devil—the ignorant workman, and the shrewd Ants—the exploiting bourgeois. Metsanurk wrote a new novel about the clergy, and a severe but not bitter criticism of pastoral shortcomings. Hindrey added "Urmas and Merike", another viking

tale, to the historical novel, and a younger writer—Enn Koppel—chose the time of Charles XII and Peter the Great for a well authenticated novel called "When the Iron Head came".

August Mälik in "Stones on Fire" treated the life of the workers in the shale-oil industry, but did not desert his island background, for he recently published a novel about fishermen entitled "Under the Bare Sky".

A new comer in this region was Adolf Hint, who in addition to a story of the coast, wrote a striking novel called "Leprosy" about the peculiar life on Saaremaa.

August Jakobson added to his long list of works and J. Semper turned to a study of an architect, whose idealism was unable to stand the strain of material pressure.

Krusten chose the unusual theme about a barber slowly slipping into insanity, and V. Öun won a public prize for a novel about solicitors. Leida Kibuvits gave a picture of an elderly actress who vainly endeavours to re-capture her past. Rudolf Sirge in "Black Summer" described the German occupation in 1918.

A very interesting book was by the younger author Mart Raud. It was called "The Axe and the Moon", and dealt with a father who was knit to the soil, and a son who was a dreamer and a Bohemian. This was dramatised and successfully performed.

The drama in Estonia continued to flourish, and Raudsepp wrote a new play "The Man who holds the Trumps", a satire on dictators and their ilk. Visnapuu contributed comedies—"Boys of our Village" and "Humbug & Co."

The tales of Estonia's leading humorist Oskar Luts still afforded dramatic possibilities, while Artur Adson—a fine regional poet and dramatic critic and producer—supplied romance with his "Queen of Beauty".

The development and present variety of Estonian fiction is an interesting study. From simple stories of a didactic and moralistic character, Estonia emerged in Edward Vilde into the world of European realism. His work set an aristocratic standard, and up to his day, no one surpassed him in the invention of situations and types. He did not, it is true, march with the leaders of "Young Estonia", but he was not unaffected by them, and the fusion of the realism and fantasy in later writers was a clear gain to the literature.

Tassa and Oks and Gailit follow in the wake of these two divergent streams, and Tammsaare crowns the achievement with that combination of imagination and psychological power that makes for endurance. Oscar Luts by his descriptions, full of humour and sympathy, brings to life humble and vagabond types with an appeal that affects all classes of society. The feud between the neo-realists and the neo-romantics is not an unfruitful feature. Metsanurk is practically contemporary with the "Noor-Eesti" group, and has voiced his hostility to many of their principles. His followers are many among the younger

generation. Albert Kivikas has declared war on "lyrical chocolate" and says instead of marzipan he will substitute "bloody steak". He will depict the heavy, obstinate spirit of the Estonian peasant. Jakobson gives delineations of the proletariat and studies of degeneracy and decomposition sometimes, as well as moral and physical heroism. The taciturn character, toil and endurance of the islanders is the contribution of August Mälk. A fine example of modern psychology and literary modernism exists in Semper's novel "Jealousy", and the construction of it is outstanding. Mihkel Jürna and Peet Vallak stand between the two conflicting theories.

The oldest writer of all, Karl Hindrey, with his wide experience of life, has an aristocratic tendency. He respects tradition and has little sympathy with a collectivist conception of life. There is richness and colour, deep experience and maturity in his work.

There remains the domain of verse. The Estonians have always been a poetically-minded people, and in modern times they have kept up the tradition more than ever. It is generally agreed that Estonian poetry of value comparable to that of the Western nations arrived earlier than the prose, and it is now, perhaps, the most important and individual form of literature in the country. This is unfortunate from the point of view of translation, which must be comparatively inadequate even at its best.

The older poets have been adding to their work in recent years, and the dramatic events in modern history have affected them more closely than writers in the other media.

"Over the Threshold" is Barbarus' revolt against disintegration, but Adams holds a court of justice on himself in "A Senseless Hour". Hiir and Sütiste assail the merchants of death and destruction, and dwell on the coming world-catastrophe; but they eulogise productive man.

Jaan Kärner is a quieter man, who arrived years ago, and he seeks refuge from it all in his latest volume "From well-worn Paths" in memories of childhood.

The most modern development in poetry gathers round a group of young writers, who may be designated the "Arbujad" Group. Arbujad is the name of an interesting collection of selected verse from their works by Ants Oras, who is the spiritual father of the group.

Dr. Oras is the Professor of English Literature at the University of Tartu, and a graduate of Oxford as well. Although not a poet himself, which somewhat surprises his friends, he is a critic of distinction and has exercised formative influence on students and younger writers. He has translated Shakespeare, Shelley and other classical poets into Estonian, and written many essays on new movements in English literature, notably a penetrating study "The Critical Ideals of T. S. Eliot."

The word "Arbujad" needs explanation. It comes from a verb associated with soothsaying. The priest or Shaman in the old Finnish religion entered into a state of exaltation in order to divine the future, and combat evil by the discovery of the origin word, which would exorcise evil. This is the clue to the meaning, may be, so "Arbujad", which is plural, may be freely translated as "Divinations", "Insights", or not to strain the matter "Intuitions". That is perhaps as near as one can get and there is no doubt that there is revealing impulse and concentrated force in the volume. The impact of the New Verse movement in Europe is in it, but the form is generally traditional, and there are few corrugated obscurities. Eight authors are represented in the collected volume, and only a glimpse can be given. Bernard Kangro is a native poet and recently a new volume of his, "Barn Owen", goes back to elementals and deals with ghosts and animals of the past. Mart Raud is a novelist and Paul Viiding a prose writer as well.

Perhaps the three outstanding in the book are Kersti Merilaas, Betti Alver and Heiti Talvik.

The first made a best-seller of her volume of poems, and in some of them she exhibits (as one critic puts it) a rare combination of roguishness and logic.

Betti Alver and Heiti Talvik are now married, and as they are a little anterior to her, and I have met them personally, I choose them for illustration.

Betti Alver's poems are concentrated in form and emotion. Here are two specimens of her quality—

#### THE EVIL LIGHT.

Woe unto you, if ere the feast is starting,  
You then refuse the dishes in your sight,  
And with nefarious finger into cranny darting,  
Pierce through the wall to the Forbidden Light.  
Scarce have you tasted of the fruit within it,  
Earth-rhythms vanish as the flush that fades,  
And you will wander from your home, and in it  
Never be seen again, or in its shades.  
Along uncharted lands and island seas forbidden,  
In wake of spirits of the light you'll fare,  
And when you think to seize the trophy hidden,  
A scornful laugh will ring out in the air.  
You across empty tundras will be swinging  
To mountain tops, to fall and rest on them;  
Reaching for some high rock, and to it clinging,  
You grasp a tatter of its radiant hem.  
If when intent upon that trophy tattered,  
The awful avalanche shall on you gain,  
Yet you shall whisper, falling to be shattered,  
I bless thee, Death! I love thee. Pain!



## TO ART.

Your slender hands have thrilled with passion tender,  
When bringing hidden treasures to the view,  
And you have known the rich Renaissance splendour,  
That Alexander and the Medici knew.

A scorpion, in your breast its sting impressing,  
Holds to your neck your gown with clasp of gold;  
Your peace, like heavy velvet, is caressing  
The cold stone surface of the cathedral old.

Here under vaults as if the past recounting,  
Dark Melancholy trickles in your glances now,  
But your keen spirit, and some madness mounting,  
Tower like tiara crown upon your brow.

You, whom severe pale Poverty despises,  
Take water from the font that martyrs share;  
So exquisite your chalice as it rises,  
That holy water turns to poison there.

Heiti Talvik, who has a somewhat Gypsy appearance, is more virile and epigrammatic. There is simplicity and directness in his verse, and it is not so easy to capture it.

Two of his poems are as follows:—

### THE POET.

I never was sincere,  
In either life or song;  
Like leaf that fallen clear  
I drift in wind along.  
My tissue now is dry—  
Like homeless ashes whirled,  
And to the realms on high  
My spirit now is hurled.  
How shines the spacious air  
In solar splendour rolled!  
My core of ashes there  
Transmutes to tawny gold.  
On earth, the magic turns,  
Is fading, and grows cold,  
And childhood's eye alone discerns  
In me a thing of gold.

### WHY WAS I NOT?

Why like a beast was I not made,  
A grey cur sneaking in Thy shade,  
An angry lion on Thy flesh to leap,  
And tear Thee sunder as he does a sheep,  
A hare to run away from Thee and hide,  
A perch that in deep water doth abide?  
Ah! Man alone has noose that's never free,  
One end—the soul—is in the hand of Thee.

Another example must end this brief notice, and it surely has a modern note.

TRUTH.

(Tõde).

Like a dead weed thy flesh appears,  
Drying like leaf within the Sacred Word;  
Thy martyr's face is veiled with woe and tears,  
The clang of shackles on thy feet is heard.

Slithers the Serpent from the Wisdom Tree,  
Spitting Doubt's venom on thy face and pall,  
Oh Truth, that glowing in God's mouth we see,  
In us, fades like old paper on the wall!

Considered as a whole Estonian literature is characterised by fervent patriotism shot through with pathetic hopes and fears in early days, then realism in the rising novel, followed by the grave and stately melancholy and fantasy of the Noor-Eesti period, a surprising warmth and frankness in the time of the Bluebirds, and since then a versatility of themes and reflections.

There is often a strange flavour of the elemental—akin to the spirits of wood and water—of Ariel and Caliban. The eerie and bizarre seems to have an attraction for Estonian writers, and strange beauty is communicable only by literary artists. In the hand of tyros it becomes grotesque. Humour in Estonian letters is pawky and dry generally, and the Scotch type of joke is most appreciated.

Realism is undoubtedly the note in modern work, and the temper is psychological and introspective. On the whole, Estonian Literature has, perhaps, more greyness than glow, and is fundamentally Northern. Romanticism is there, but it is strictly under control. This gives intensity and precision to modern work, and a certainty of enduring life.

Estonia is a small country with a population less than in South Wales, South Lancashire or indeed of some of our largest cities. It seems to me remarkable, therefore, that the Estonians should have been able in a short time to create so creditable a literature. In their modest and realistic fashion, they only claim promise for it, yet a great corpus of curious lore, some novelists of Nobel calibre, and a few poets of European stature are not an inconsiderable achievement for a people not much more than a million in number.

The chief interest, however, is that this literature exhibits the attractive phenomenon of a peasant speech by discipline and enrichment rising into the dignity of literary utterance and making not only a bookshelf of its own, but a contribution to the commonwealth of letters.

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An excellent short account is Friedebert Tuglas' "Lühike Eesti Kirjanduslugu" Tartu. E.K.S. 1936. There are others by K. Mikla, V. Ridala, and numerous books on men and movements, notably "Raamatu Osa Eesti Arengus" (The Place of the Book in Estonian development). Tartu. E.K.S. 1935.

In earlier years the chief sources apart from the native language, were in German, and Estonians used this medium most. An illustrated almanac published by Pallas 1927 "Estnische Dichtung und Kunst" gives an account of modern work with translations of poetry.

Later, French books appeared, and Villecourt in "L'Estonie" Paris 1932, devoted a brief chapter to the literature. A good assembly of stories was translated in "Anthologie des Conteurs Estoniens" Paris Sagittaire 1937.

In English, Kirby's "The Hero of Estonia" and articles by Dr. Kallas in the Folklore journals are good for the early period, and the three books by Aino Kallas (Cape) for creative stories. The articles by Dr. Ants Oras in "L'Estonie Littéraire" (P.E.N. Tartu) are of the greatest value.

The present writer in the "Transactions of the Manchester Literary Club" (Sherratt & Hughes) has treated literary history in "A Glimpse of Estonian Literature"; "The Art of Aino Kallas"; "The Bookshop in the Baltic", etc. In these papers and this book are his translations of Estonian verse (the only available), and have been rendered with the kind assistance of Dr. Oras.

For students of history there is Mr. Hampden Jackson's "Estonia" (Allen and Unwin 1941), and Professor Reddaway's "Problems of the Baltic" (Cambridge University Press).