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# A Glimpse of Estonian Literature

BY  
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*With the Author's  
kindest regards  
and  
thanks*

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## A GLIMPSE OF ESTONIAN LITERATURE.

By E. HOWARD HARRIS, M.A.

THE reading of this paper synchronizes with the anniversary of the foundation of the Estonian Republic proclaimed on February 24th, 1918, and there is, therefore, some historic appropriateness in it. Moreover, the subject is somewhat novel, for with the exception of a few printed books and the flotsam and jetsam of pamphlets and journals, little is known in England about Estonia, and still less of its language and literature.

I should not have had the temerity to attempt the subject but for the aid of Estonians themselves, and the unfailing kindness of Dr. Kallas, their Ambassador in London, of my late lamented friend Mr. Hans Pöhl, of Tallinn, and the invaluable aid of Mr. Ants Oras, Lecturer in English at the University of Tartu, must not be unrecorded.

I do not claim to do more than turn a few leaves in this comparatively sealed book in a difficult agglutinative language, and I have, therefore, called this paper frankly, and, I hope, modestly, "A Glimpse of Estonian Literature." If any other apology be needed it is surely this, that the contemplation of the literature of any land (especially one so little known), however imperfect, ought at least, to quicken in us the sense of the unity and interconnexion of all mental life and progress throughout the world.

Although I am sure that all of you are too well informed to make the mistake of an estimable friend of mine when I said I was going to Estonia, namely, that it was inadvisable considering that all the trouble came

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from the *Balkans*, it will be illuminating and even necessary for the purposes of a literary sketch to give a brief cameo of the land and people whence this literature comes.

In the extreme corner of the Baltic Sea—the Baltic Levant, as it were—lies the little Republic of Estonia, or Eesti, as the natives call it. It is bounded by Russia and Latvia, and the waters of the Gulf of Riga and Finland wash it on its western and northern coasts respectively. It is a fairly flat land, a part of the great northern plain of Europe, but there are undulations in the south, and a beautifully forested escarpment in the north called the Glint. Islands and lakes abound, and there is much marshland and bog. Nevertheless there are pleasant farmlands, too, with corn and flax, and delightful prospects, as, for instance, at the Holy Lake (Pühajarv), enchanting as a Finnish scene.

Snow and icebound in winter Estonia blossoms into beauty with surprising rapidity in spring, and after a warm summer enjoys a golden autumn before the long winter days set in. The people live out of doors on the islands and in the numerous watering-places in these delightful days, and praise of Estonia in summer furnished even Tschaikovsky with the inspiration for a sonata.

The towns are neither numerous nor large, for the bulk of the people obtain their living from the land; but two cities concentrate the communal life of the Estonians. One is the university town of Tartu, a pleasant leafy place, and the centre of the cultural life. The other is Tallinn—the capital—better known, perhaps, as Reval. It is one of the quaintest capitals in Europe. A city of seven centuries, it bears the marks of its varied history. A fascinating mixture of old and new is Tallinn, a town of pewter-coloured steeples, red roofs, quaint alleyways and numerous towers like

gigantic pepper boxes—a treasure house of mediæval architecture—an old commercial city where the shades of Hansa merchants seem to linger. Its castle is Danish, its oldest school bears the name of Gustavus Adolphus, and in the Kathrinval you may see the shoes of Peter the Great under his bed in the Russian cottage.

But what of the Estonian people? They are not newcomers to the Baltic, for they have been there since the fifth century. The truth is that until the Great War they were a people without a country. They suffered through the centuries the violence of the German Knights of the Sword, the arrogance of the Baltic feudal lords and the barbarities of Muscovite rule, and had only one breathing space in their history, still called “the good old Swedish days.”

Immediately before the War Estonia could be properly described as a country with a Finnish population, governed by a German—Balt aristocracy under Russian rule—a double yoke of Teutonic feudalism and Russian Czarism. Now the Estonians are free and English aid was a factor in their liberation.

They belong to the tough industrious Finnish race which is neither Aryan nor Mongol, but a separate group which also includes the Finns and the Hungarians. Their faces are flatter than Western races and they have high cheek bones, but there is much admixture of Nordic blood, and except for some Samoyede features in country folk I did not find them different from the Scandinavians. Their outlook and mentality are emphatically Western.

The romance of reconstruction in Estonia is one of the most fascinating episodes in modern European history. Keeping their souls through singing and the collecting of folklore and folk songs during the suffocating centuries they set about the building of a state on the recovery of their freedom. They formulated a fine

constitution, stabilized their currency, settled their agrarian problem and made intense efforts to place themselves in line with **European culture and civilization**. A little people, remarkably homogenous, they appear to possess tenacity and practical wisdom, and yet have not forgotten spiritual adventurousness and romantic feeling.

But my special province to-night is the literature of the country. I will speak of its general course first.

The attitude of the owners of Estonia for nearly seven centuries was that the native language and people were part of a civilization incapable of development and destined to perish. They were fit for experiment but not for co-operation. In early days, therefore, the people had to content themselves with poems dealing with the domestic life and habits of the nation and legend lore of which Estonia has probably the richest collection extant. Much of this still remains unprinted.

It is true that the German clergy at the time of the Reformation turned their attention to the language of their charges in Estonia, and that in 1632 during Swedish days the Bible was translated into Estonian in the dialect of Tallinn. But not till the middle of last century were the masses of the people stirred to race-consciousness and provided with a literature of their own.

An early writer was K. J. Peterson. His death at the early age of 21 at Riga has earned for him the not quite appropriate title of the Estonian Chatterton. His poems were gay and popular and free from didactic qualities.

Under the influence of Western ideas and by the inspiration, let it be noted, of Ossian, the well-educated classes of the population began to take interest in popular poetry. Mythical fairy tales were written and Fählmann commenced and Dr. Kreuzwald finished a

loose epic which has become a national possession to the Estonians in much the same way that Lönrot's "Kalevala" has to the Finns. Although now regarded as a personal production with deliberate inventions it did at least inspire the people with a national consciousness which bore fruit later on. It only appealed, however, to the educated classes, and the masses were, as yet, untouched.

In Parnu was a sexton and schoolmaster, J. W. Jannsen, who had a gift for prose writing, and was talented and humorous. He founded a nationalist newspaper called the *Parnu Postimees* which still exists and has grown into the *Manchester Guardian* of Estonia—the *Postimees* (Postman)—the great paper published at Tartu. He was the founder of the first Singing Festival in Estonia and was interested in the drama and the novel. His family circle must have been of peculiar interest, for his daughter Lydia was the first writer of modern Estonian Literature, and a great figure in national history. Lydia Jannsen, or Lydia Koidula as her pen-name has it, was a patriotic poetess, a dramatist, and a delightful letter writer. Her poems enraptured her contemporaries, and though not all of them are good, all of them are outbursts of feelings contained for centuries.

The age of Lydia Koidula was one of awakening in the drama, in the Press, and in the novel as well.

Estonia became more and more the outlet for Russian trade, education became less of a luxury, and a proletariat came into existence.

After Juhan Līv had added his passionate, direct, and perfect poems to the collection August Kitzberg laid the foundation of the native drama with his two famous plays "Hurricane" 1906 and "The Werewolf" 1912.

The torch bearer of realism, however, was Edward

Wilde, the most productive and, perhaps, the most outstanding novelist that Estonia has produced.

But if proof were needed that the little country did not intend to mumble at its own chimney corner and pursue a course of parochial nationalism, it came unmistakably in the next movement in Estonian Literature. This was the "Young Estonia" or Noor-Eesti movement. Its watchword was the wise and sane saying "We must not ~~be~~<sup>only</sup> be good Estonians but good Europeans as well." The leader of the group was Gustav Süits who still occupied the chair of Estonian Literature at the University of Tartu.

The object of this movement was not to found a school, but to urge Estonian writers to put themselves into line with European culture and submit to aesthetic discipline, and so raise the peasant speech of an awakening people into the dignity of literary utterance. The cult of form, the exaltation of art, and the pursuit of fantasy and lyricism were the objects sought. In so far as the leaders of the Noor-Eesti insisted on the influence of other literatures, particularly of the great nations, they seem to have played much the same role as George Brandes in Denmark.

The poetry of Gustav Süits is distinguished by a pure style, a fine artistry, and a revolutionary fervour—that is in his volume "The Fire of Life." In "The Country of the Winds" he is graver and more melancholy. There is a note of meditation and philosophical speculation in most of his poems.

This movement also produced a striking prose writer in Friedbert Tuglas. He is a gifted novelist and critic, and has a taste for the exquisite and the fantastic. His work in moulding Estonian prose is an achievement sufficient to give him distinction apart from the intrinsic value of his writings.

“Noor-Eesti” can hardly be said to be spent now, for foreign authors are appearing in translation continually, and exerting influence.

But the gravity and academic stateliness of many of the poets of this movement made it inadequate for succeeding writers after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

A new note entered into the literature and a movement arose that may recall to us in England the fertilizing effects of the Renaissance and the Romantic Revival.

This movement was called the “Siuru”—a name that needs some explanation. Siuru was a mythical heroine of the ballads and was a Blue Bird, so that the writers of this group favoured abandon, a surrender to intense feeling, and a craving for strong sensations and a love of the bohemian in life. This involved a certain loss of balance so it was not favoured by Süits, but it fitted in with the restlessness of the times that were so distraught and out of joint, and its inexorable impulse led to a great gain in range and force. The works of this group were characterized by a kind of lyrical intoxication which completely refutes Von Baer’s opinion of the Estonians as phlegmatic and unemotional people.

The two greatest figures in this movement were Marie Under, one of the most arresting poets in Estonia, and Henrik Visnapuu, forceful, but a little uneven. August Gailit with his extremely bohemian novel “Toomas Nappanaadi,” belongs to this school.

The most recent writers belong to two new phases called respectively “Tarapita” and “L’Orbit Litteraire,” and they seek to scourge the social vices of the nation, and to maintain a closer relationship with the real life of the people. Three fine novels have recently appeared—“Truth and Justice” by A. H. Tamsaare,

and "The Traceless Grace" and "Red Wind" by Mait Metsanurk. These deal with the political life.

It is the opinion of competent critics that Estonian poetry has attained the stature of the literature of other lands, but the prose has still some headway to make. Song accompanied the Estonian people in their bondage, it blossoms anew in the Promised Land.

As far as I have been able to observe it, Estonian literature seems to be characterized by a fervent patriotism shot through with pathetic hopes and fears, by a grave and stately melancholy in its more academic poems. There is also a strong and a strange flavour of the elemental, something akin to the spirit of wood and water, that is typically Finnish. This often exhibits itself in the bizarre and eerie that makes you think of the fantastic "Troid" that Jonas Lee, the Norwegian novelist, evolved from the Finn blood in his veins. Many poems recall those of Edgar Allan Poe or Coleridge in his "Christabel" mood, and the visions of Tuglas remind you of the opium dreams of Thomas de Quincey. Sometimes it seems as if the Estonian writer, having awakened from the nightmare of the ages, fears something behind his back, like the child in the dark. In the novel and the drama realism, as befits this age of complexity, figures largely, but humour may come more frequently in these happier days.

If time would permit I should like to speak more fully of the older Estonian literature and the smaller writers who merit attention. For example, there are the peasant dramas of Kitzberg and the delightful comedy "Pisahund" by Edward Wilde, the fine lyrical poems of Juhan Liiv, the polish of the reclusive Villem Ridala, the metaphysical Johannes Semper, the technical experimenter Vilmar Adams and a number of others. But that would be to give a barren catalogue

of names. That is what I least desire to do, so I will make a choice of some of the chief writers and endeavour to give some concreteness to the treatment by means of free and tentative translations as specimens of their quality.

The abiding interest for me in the literary story of Estonia is that it exhibits the interesting phenomenon of a peasant speech—a forbidden speech—rising like a phoenix out of the fires of the past into something that possesses literary distinction.

Estonia possesses an immense folklore, much of which is in manuscript. This was collected as a patriotic act by such devoted workers as Dr. Jakob Hurt, Professor Eisen, Dr. Kallas, and others. "Together with the Finns," says the Estonian ambassador, "we possess, and I think I am not exaggerating, the largest folklore collection in the world." It comprises 30,000 melodies, 55,000 tales, 125,000 riddles, 135,000 superstitions, 21,000 proverbs and nearly 200,000 songs with about four million written lines.

It is, therefore, important that I should speak of the loose epic which Dr. Fählmann commenced and Dr. Kreutzwald completed, and which is called "The Kalevipoeg." Notwithstanding the depreciation in its importance due to recent research it still has some significance.

There are twenty cantos or runos in it, comprising about 19,000 lines. The theme is the adventurous career of a mythical hero of gigantic size—the son of Kalev—a kind of Estonian Hercules. Between the cantos there are lyrical interludes which rather break the continuity of the story, but have often much beauty of their own. The story, which is not well-pieced together, is pre-Christian, and it is a more archaic and heathenish poem than the Finnish "Kalevala."

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. The 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 famous Finnish smith and returns to Estonia to build fortified towns, and sets out to Lake Peipus to fetch timber. He wades through the great lake, but a sorcerer steals his sword and sinks it in the brook Kapa.

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 ante-chamber he finds three maidens. Sarvik is defeated by the Kalevipoeg and the three maidens are carried away by him. After an interlude in Finland and Lapland, Sarvik's palace again appears in the story, and this time the Kalevipoeg overcomes him and loads him with chains.

The great hero returns to his capital Linda's Bosom—that is Reval or Tallinn. He buries his treasure and retires to the forest, and stepping into the brook Kapa his sword cuts off his legs. His soul takes flight to the halls of Taara, but is bidden by the gods to reanimate his body; but they cannot restore his legs. Mounted on his horse, therefore, he sits stationed at the gates of Hades (Porgü) to keep watch and ward over Sarvik and his hosts.

This, together with many fantastic legends and some lyric interludes, is the material from which Kreutzwald

fashioned a loose epic. There is a complete prose version of this in English in Kirby's "The Hero of Esthonia," but the original is in the eight-syllabled trochaic familiar to us in Longfellow's "Hiawatha." The American poet found this metre from Schiefner's translation of the "Kalevala," and pretty obviously many incidents as well; so that if the Finns are indebted to Ossian they have repaid the debt by the inspiration of the metre and incident of the English poem on the North American Indians.

It is easy to detect in the Kalevipoeg the analogies with the stories of Arthur, Holger the Dane, William Tell, and other guardians of their nation waiting in secret places to hasten to the aid of compatriots when the hour of danger arrives.

The lilt of the verse can be exemplified by the following extract from the 19th runo, where the Kalevide listens to a harper singing of the adventures of Suiru, the blue-bird daughter of Taara—the chief of the gods.

Suiru, bird and Taara's daughter,  
 Suiru, 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,  
 Like a swallow needing shelter;  
 So did Ukko wisely order,  
 And the aged Father's wisdom  
 Gave his daughter wind-like pinions,  
 That his child might float upon them,  
 Far into the distance soaring.

The bird that was restless and had wind-like pinions was surely a fitting symbol of that movement of lyrical abandon of which I spoke before in connexion with the poems of Marie Under and other writers associated with her.

Time will not permit me to speak of other beautiful myths in Estonian folklore. They are to be read in Kirby's book. Two are deeply poetic—"The Song God's Departure" and the story of "Koit and Amarik." The first describes how Vanemuine—the Vainamoinen of the Finns—a culture hero and minstrel, took his departure, and how the Estonians remembered only faintly his lays, until they are vouchsafed once more by poets who alone can move their brethren with the divine voice of song. The second relates how the old father had two servants, the brave Koit and the beautiful maiden Amarik. The girl was the warden of the sinking sun, and to Koit was given the duty of re-kindling it at dawn. But in the season of the white nights they meet and kiss within the silver twilight. The old father bids them wed, but they desire to live for ever as lovers. It is granted, and Amarik rests on Koit's bosom and her rosy cheek is reflected in the sunset.

The work of Kreutzwald, however, as I mentioned before, affected only the educated classes. It was the work of a noted correspondent of his that was to reach the masses of the people.

Lydia Koidula lived at Parnu and Tartu which must surely be holy ground to the Estonians. She wrote letters, small novels, and the first Estonian comedy "The Country Cousin from Saaremaa"; but it is her poems that are of most interest. They pulsate with national feeling. She married a Latvian physician at Krondstadt and died in 1886 at the early age of 43. Here are some touches of her quality.

Oh! could I tell you how my land  
 Doth all possess my breast,  
 How 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,  
No earthly power can part.

My native land they buried you  
Beneath an ebon cover,  
And blooms of blood in 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 have passed away  
And still you linger sleeping;  
But there's a story secret, strange  
Among your people creeping.

How once the people had been free,  
The old Estonian nation,  
How on a soil that was their own  
They built their habitation.

And so she counsels them with a prophetic instinct like  
Kreutzwald—

And though I find tears in thine eyes,  
Firm walk, raised hand possessing,  
The future will confirm thy hopes,  
And time will bring the blessing.

The most considerable literary man in Estonia is undoubtedly Edward Wilde. His works are to be published soon in 33 volumes. He was brought up among the German-Balts, and he has given in his novels a devastating picture of the state of the Estonians under that regime. His outlook is European. Like many writers he was a political exile and travelled extensively. After the independence he returned and for a while was ambassador in Berlin. He is a realist with fine psychological powers. His first book is about Siberia and is called "Bleak Land," but his trilogy of novels that followed form a broad epic of the nation during the period of the *corvée* in the middle of the last

century. His novels have not been translated, and in any case quotation from the novel is generally inadequate, so I will just mention the daring plot of his last book, "The Milkman of Mackula."

A dairyman, his wife, and a Baltic baron contract by mutual consent to the arrangement that the wife should become the mistress of the baron. This may sound crude and repulsive. Wilde has shown by the tragic effects accruing from this, the reflection of a remorseful and suffering humanity. "The work of Wilde," says an Estonian critic, "embraces the past in a larger and more comprehensive way than any other of our writers."

I now come to Professor Gustav Süits—the leader of Noor-Eesti. His poetry is a model of virility and exactness. Artistic and restrained in form, it nevertheless has moods of revolutionary fervour and grave meditation. Matthew Arnold comes to mind in some of his work.

Here is a specimen:—

UNDER THE QUIVERING ASPENS.

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!

The "Blue Bird" movement produced two writers who, speaking personally, interested me greatly.

The first is Marie Under—perhaps the most arresting poet in Estonia. Her genius matured late, although she was known among intimate friends long before the publication of her first volume. She commenced with sonnets, and it was soon evident that a new spirit and a new force had appeared in Estonian letters. Her work went from strength to strength and with "The Voice in the Shadows" she attained a masterpiece. It had new forms, new rhythms, a bold syntax, and a great vocabulary. There is an ornamental, sensuous, Elizabethan richness in her poems, which have almost a southern glow in them. In her joyous moods, as in "Exulting in a Fine Day," she can sing beautifully of the overpowering suddenness of the Estonian spring, the brief luxury of summer and such happy things. But in other mood she can, with almost neurasthenic nervousness, depict the troubles of a sensitive mind by visions that have the magic and terror of apparitions. She deserves a full treatment, but I can only give one example of her arresting power.

#### 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 goring.  
Hark! Hark!  
Orphans are crying, widows wailing,  
And now the railing  
And the shrill curses of the ravished virgins.  
Is it the dread 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.

Henrik Visnapuu also belongs to the "Blue Bird" school. He has force and beauty, but is a little uneven, for his talent is unbridled, and he is often brutally frank in his confessions. He has a beautiful poem on "Golden Autumn" that reminds you of Walter de la Mare's "Silver," but I select his "Melancholy Dog" for translation.

#### OH! MELANCHOLY DOG.

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.

Another poet is Johannes Barbarus—the latter name a pseudonym. He is a doctor. His verse is gritty and rapid, and reminds you of Vachel Lindsey. His poems are like shouting proclamations, often in free verse. They have often the effect of the jazz band. In one 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 will create order.  
Hallo! Pan-Europe, hallo!

I have left two writers for the conclusion of my paper—the novelist and critic, Friedbert Tuglas, and Madame Aino Kallas.

Friedbert Tuglas is one of the outstanding prose-men of Estonia. He has written a cycle of novels entitled "Fate," and a large number of critiques of high quality. He is a disciple of the "Art for art's sake" creed, and his leaning is towards the exquisite and fantastic. He is the subject of a critical essay by Madame Kallas, which is available in English. Much of his work is realistic. He writes from experience, for he was exiled by the Russian authorities.

There is a night side to the Estonian soul and Tuglas is one of the best exponents of this "graveyard imagination." Sudden sicknesses are, it seems, frequent in parts of Estonia. "The dark sea of the human soul is so boundlessly deep that no plummet can sound it," he writes. I give as an example of his work the striking tale "Pope and Huhuu." I wish I could convey the atmosphere of it.

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. Pope the dog is wise and philosophic. He believes the good master will return with a basket full of meat. The monkey waits in the cage, and when the day wears on, and the master does not return, he breaks from his captivity 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. He discovers a barrel of spirits and drinks from it, and now his cruelty to Pope 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 persecutor.

One day the monkey returns with a piece of bloody meat and Pope is given it. He now conceives an admiration for the monkey. But finally, the monkey finds a box of explosives and dashes it to the ground. The whole house, with dog and monkey, is blown into the air.

The rhythmic description of this even considered as a piece of animal psychology is wonderful, but it is more than that. It swells, says Madame Kallas, 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. In this fine essay we get a glimpse of Estonian literature all too rare.

Madame Aino Kallas is a Finn and the wife of the Estonian Ambassador in London. Estonia is the country of her adoption, and though she writes in Finnish, Tuglas has translated her entire output into Estonian; for the scene of most of her tales is in the republic, and most often in the Island of Saaremaa, the birthplace of her husband, where she often goes to obtain local colour.

She is the author of "The White Ship" which is included in the Traveller's Library. To this, the late John Galsworthy contributed a preface, and praising her powers, remarked that you are conscious of a strange dish in her story, something that belongs to primal and elemental things. Her literary method is simple, clean, and direct, and there is an extraordinary sense of atmosphere.

You should read "The White Ship," particularly the powerful tale of Gertruda Carponai—a finer parallel of "The Blue Lagoon"; but I will conclude with just one example of her quality, from "Bernard Rives."

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

I went again to Bernard Rives 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 Rüves, seven centuries of slavery straightened its back.