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AN ESTONIAN NOVELIST.

FRIEDEBERT TUGLAS.



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I.

A SIDE of Estonian spiritual life to which too little attention has hitherto been shown, at least in its bearings on the present literature of that country, is what might be called the night-side of the Estonian soul. The well-known Balt scientist v. Baer describes the Estonian character as calm, phlegmatic and cold-blooded, impervious to diseases of the mind. As well might the Estonian landscape be depicted as consisting only of fertile fields, orchards, luxuriant marsh-meadows between low hills, smooth, evenly-flowing rivers and lakes between low shores. But as in Estonian landscape the miles of wide-stretching bogs and marshes are an inevitable element, so in the Estonian soul do we find, in addition to the above characteristics and side by side with the self-conscious, boastful sturdiness of the Viljandi farmer, grown rich in selling flax, another element full of surprises, sensitive, prone to extremes, with a leaning towards the fantastic and visionary. One need only recall to memory the fanatical religious movement, reminiscent of the legends of the Middle Ages, which scarcely fifty years ago broke out as if by magic on the shores of Tallinn—in an era of steam, electricity and the modern newspaper—when a host of pilgrims numbering several hundreds awaited for weeks in the Lasnamägi meadow the “white ship” promised by their prophet. A nervous electric sensitiveness is one of the characteristics of the present civilised Estonian community. One may expect at any time conditions that resemble accumulations of electricity, discharging themselves in emotional excitement.

Despite the present strongly materialistic aspect of the Estonian commonwealth, the fantastic element has certainly not vanished. Doubtless the roots of this spiritual characteristic lie extremely deep, and in seeking its foundations the investigator might possibly have to delve as far as the historic strata common to all the Finn races. Naturally it would be wrong to see in this

trait something confined to Estonians only, a mistake even to suggest that the night-side of the human soul is more noticeably developed in the Estonian people than elsewhere. Religious movements of the kind described above are not uncommon in more southern latitudes and among the Latin races, and the bent of the Celtic mind towards the fantastic is well known. But though it be granted that such a construction of soul is fundamentally common to mankind, it is still impossible to deny the existence of a peculiar Estonian sensitivity, signs of which are not restricted to our time, but are to be observed already in Estonian folklore. The Estonian alienist J. Luiga has shown, for example, how often hallucinations appear in Estonian folktales. Someone wanders in the night, in darkness; suddenly "a light is struck" around him and he sees a vision, usually fear-inspiring. Sicknesses caused by sudden frights are frequent in the Estonian islands and even on the mainland. The Estonian prose folk-myths—which in this certainly resemble those of many other countries—are rich in elements of terror: they teem with all manner of fearsome beings, and with numberless tales of human wolves and dog-faced men, with nightmares and weird apparitions. It is as though the fantasy of a people oppressed by centuries of slavery had consciously set itself to seek for causes of terror and tribulation, as though the horrors of actual existence had been insufficient, and it had felt itself compelled to bear the burden of its daily experience even in its dreams, shuddering before the phantoms of its own brain.

The constant state of depression both of soul and body created by slavery, undoubtedly nurtured this "graveyard imagination," as Tuglas calls it. Brains worn out by a lifetime of half-starvation were favourable soil for fantastic ideas. In addition came endless years of war with all the horrors of a fugitive's life, when the sensitive, vision-filled imagination of the people fed on the gloom of the deep pits and caverns in which the inhabitants of whole villages cowered for days at a stretch. A considerable space in Estonian tales of dread is given over, as might be expected, to bogs and morasses. There rise mysterious white stallions and gigantic haycocks, the terror which they spread is inexhaustible, they represent the great unknown, the great sphinx, endowed by the peasant imagination with sombre visions, full of the poetry of the will-o'-wisp.

Taine spoke the truth when he remarked that every gifted author unconsciously reflects the character of his race. In rare cases he can be a synthesis of all the various traits which together

build up the soul of his race and tribe. More often, the racial inheritance, is scattered, and different individuals reflect each his own fraction of the great, common racial capital. Of this connection with his race an author may often be almost unconscious, and in no way need its fruits amount to what we are accustomed to call "national" characteristics in literature. There are examples enough of authors who in choice of subjects are fully cosmopolitan, and who yet, in a deeper significance, have been the interpreters of their own race.

It would appear as though Friedebert Tuglas, the most gifted prose-writer of the Young Estonian school, had received in heritage from the race-spirit of the Estonians the sensitive and fantastic side of that spirit, the graveyard imagination. It is extremely probable that only through contact with certain great kindred souls in the world's literature was he awakened to a full knowledge of this racial heritage. However that may be, he is a direct descendant of all the numberless, nameless makers of folk-tales who once created the Estonian romanticism of fear, hearing in the howling of wolves the plaint of an imprisoned human soul.

In the spiritual life and creative activity of Tuglas a particular wavelike movement is apparent. It is as though his emotional life tended towards recurrent states of excitement, of nervous tension, under the influence of which his actual creative work is done ; the other phases of his mental activity seem, on the other hand, to have been produced during the intervals of these fevered periods. Hence the great unevenness in the quality and atmosphere of his production. Tuglas creates while under the influence of emotion concentrated to its highest pitch, in a kind of intoxication of spirit ; his art is the poetry of the neurotic.

The emotion of fear occupies a large space in the work of Tuglas. He has written of the "voluntary nightmares and home-made phantoms" of his youth. Fear is undoubtedly a component in his blood ; there was obviously no need for him to go outside the circle of his own experience in order to describe it. On the contrary, his instinct is never so sure as in his treatment of fear, that excitement of the soul, the strength and intensity of which, when culminating in the fear of death, can be compared only with the soul-shaking quality of eroticism. In the description of the gradual awakening of this instinct, so paralysing in its effect on all other instincts, Tuglas celebrates his greatest literary triumphs. A sense of pursuit recurs constantly in his work.

It is naturally vain to attempt to tie down a spirit as many-sided and as capable of further development as that of Tuglas

within the limits of a phrase, or to attempt too great a simplification of his spiritual ground-plan. In the intervals of his nightmares he sees the visible world in a decorative and richly coloured light, a world full of tender, fragile idylls and gentle lyricism. But Tuglas is undoubtedly nearer to his own being when in a moment of poetical inspiration, to use his own words, "a pitch-black heaven stretches above me, filled with the twinkling of bright, passionate and pain-burdened stars."

II.

Friedebert Tuglas has himself given the key to his spiritual complexity in his copious autobiographical novel *Felix Ormusson* (1915). This work holds a notable place in his output; it resembles a collection of marginal notes, annotating his other books.

Felix Ormusson is Tuglas' *ego* condensed into an artistic whole, a confession the sincerity of which there is no reason to doubt. The author has clearly confirmed this view in a series of polemical articles in a Review published in Estonia: "I believe I know Felix Ormusson. We have moved for years in the same circle of phenomena and impressions. Often it seems to me, as though he were nearer to me than my own self. His inclinations, tastes, words, voice,—regarding these I could indeed never be mistaken."

It is another question, whether the author has after all given his whole self. Rather one might say that he has chosen one essential side of his nature and, by stressing this, created a type of general significance. Friedebert Tuglas has a broader nature than Felix Ormusson. But in any case, even though the spiritual boundaries of Felix Ormusson and Friedebert Tuglas do not fully coincide, they are still so near each other that the novel can be used as a guide to the rather labyrinthine world, rich in surprises, of the author's mind.

Felix Ormusson—only in a later stage of development—is Friedebert Tuglas, who, having hardly quitted school, was drawn into active participation in the revolutionary movement of 1905 with the whole passionate temperament of his youth. Full of the incendiary romanticism of the period, he wandered from parish to parish making revolutionary speeches, with the result that he was imprisoned later in the "Long Hermann" Tower at Tallinn as a suspect. A sentence of at least ten years hard labour in Siberia awaits him, but he makes his escape over the frontier, and thence onward, for close upon twelve years, lives outside the

boundaries of his country, seldom daring to visit his home and then only at the risk of detection and imprisonment. For years he lives voluntarily the life of a vagrant, making excursions into Spain and Italy and, like Felix Ormusson, spending long periods among the artistic Bohemians of Paris, followed by several years in Finland. Not until the March revolution in 1917 did he obtain full citizenship rights in Estonia.

Felix Ormusson is the result of the development undergone by Tuglas during these 'prentice years, from a revolutionary agitator to a full-blooded æsthete. A complete change occurs in this "romantic soul, full of pathos and passion," as Felix Ormusson describes his twenty-year-old self. And he continues: "My temperament, my mood, my soul has altered,—compelled thereto by the force of surroundings, perhaps also of germs hidden away in my own nature." "A couple of years, a couple of solitary years, filled with self-examination and analysis, were sufficient to disturb my soul to its depth and then to form a crust of ice on its surface that only few events can sunder." Tuglas breaks away from the Baltic States; as he broke away from the Internationale, so he frees himself from other dogmas, literary and political. It is the same painful process of emancipation that was experienced at the same time in the heavy air of reaction by the whole of the Young Estonia group. The stages of the journey are the same: disappointment, wholesale doubt, a milder spirit, æsthetism. In 1906 Tuglas wrote in his rather rhetorical manner: "To fight in war, to fall in battle,—how easy compared with this: But to live, seeing everything collapse, to continue to breathe, seeing everything changed into unreality, hallucination, dreams, a horrible, fear-inspiring, dreadful nightmare,—what unbearable torture!" Of all the innumerable altars to the gods and idols of youth only one survives: beauty. As reality becomes more painful, more alien, another life, unreal, invisible, but as deep in its significance as reality, begins to take shape. A double personality is created, which lives simultaneously in two different spheres. Felix Ormusson is ready-formed.

"The duty of genius is to develop the bent of the age to its noblest, fullest and most conscious potentialities. Thou (Felix Ormusson) art qualified to nurse the aspirations of thine age."

The words are from the preface to the novel. And one autumn night full of rain and the spleen of loneliness, the same Felix Ormusson writes in his diary:

"Ay, why should I not keep a diary in earnest or begin a correspondence, like Werther or Jacopo Ortis,—in order to relate

to posterity my tragedy? It is a pity that these human experiences, all this self-analysis should be lost, profitless and without a trace. Do they not contain the materials for a whole myth, when time shall have dimmed them and distance enlarged them? Might not Felix Ormusson in his own sphere be like Don Juan or Werther—non-existent, and yet more to be believed in than the whole world? That would be the one comfort. For this it would be truly worth while to live. For this I would be ready to suffer, to endure the most intense suffering.”

Tuglas' purpose was certainly not to display an exceptional individual soul, as if it were a rare specimen; on the contrary, he had probably already early felt the typical, characteristic similarity between his own development and that of his generation. Friedebert Tuglas, or, in other words, Felix Ormusson, was undoubtedly inspired by the same task that has tempted so many artists, among them some of the very greatest: the gathering of the most characteristic traits of their time, the winnowing from them of all accidentals, their intensification to their highest degree, in a word, the moulding of a key-word that would interpret the dumb inarticulate murmurings of the age. One premiss is that the poet feels himself to be a synthesis of the currents of his time, feels within himself the accumulation of all the influences of the age, whether oppressive or liberating and struggling towards the light, feels himself to be *l'enfant du siècle* in the widest significance of the term. Such works are never the outcome of mere outward observation. They are, on the contrary, ever the most personal, subjective art, fearless self-confessions, revelations that never dread to utter openly that which Rousseau declares to be more difficult than the confession of crime, the confession that brings down our neighbours' laughter upon us. They are the medical reports of a diseased age. The author is at once the patient and the physician, he opens out to us without mercy the sickness of his own soul, which is at the same time the sickness of his generation, developing it to its crisis and to its greatest intensity, as though to cultivate from it a protective lymph against a repetition of the danger.

The *Werther* of Goethe, the *Adolphe* of Constant, the *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle* of Musset, Lermontov's *Hero of our Time*—in Scandinavian literature Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne*, Kierkegaard's *Diary of a Seducer*—all these recur to the mind while reading *Felix Ormusson*. Not that the Estonian novel, as a work of art, comes even near to these deathless monuments of intimate exposition. Yet it is as if some invisible tie, irrespective of time

and nationality, connected these varying names, as though they were links in a human chain running through the centuries. Felix Ormusson is of the race of all these famous sufferers from *Weltschmerz*, his sickness springs from the same root as theirs. The same deep melancholy, founded on nothing more material than the inherent tragedy of existence which once gnawed, as the Vanity of Vanities, at the heart of Solomon, and as *Weltschmerz* gnawed at the heart of Werther, the feeling to which the French romantic school gave the name of *ennui*, and which ever makes itself felt as a bitter undercurrent in all the experience of Pechorin and Niels Lyhne,—the same agony, the same wave of doubt and æstheticism can be felt in the Estonian Felix Ormusson.

Let us say at once : *Felix Ormusson* is not a living book as we understand the expression. All that happens, in this novel written in the form of a diary, remains as phantomlike to the reader as it has apparently been to the writer. Felix Ormusson, an author returned from Paris, spends the summer with his friend, a middle-class radical Estonian physician, falls in love during the course of the summer first with Helène, the worldly and sensual wife of his friend, then with the wife's sister, the cold and virgin Marion, both of whom, although to Ormusson's undoing, in inverted order love him. Disappointed in the end by both, Felix Ormusson returns to Paris, covering the humiliation of his retreat after the refusal of both women by inventing a legend of a mysterious Frenchwoman, which enables him to depart with his halo of Don Juan and adventurer still intact.

But in the aphorisms, flashes of thought and of moods, of which the book is the mosaic, the central figure undoubtedly develops and comes to life.

Felix Ormusson is above all the tragedy of a romanticist, of a dreamer, of a being incapable of action. He altogether lacks the art of living. Like the young Norwegian poet Obstfelder, he, too, feels incessantly that he has lighted on the wrong planet. As Tuglas himself says of him : " Felix Ormusson has from the beginning two spheres of existence : a real and an imaginative. In the real world he is always unsuccessful." He is a literary character, in the sense that his point of view is above all literary ; letters and books are to him a greater reality than the tangible world : life, including love, has for him only a decorative and æsthetic value. More : he often feels the same atmosphere of unreality with regard to himself, as though he were but " a kind of hallucination, a species of *idée fixe* of nature." Like the hero

of Huysmans' *A Rebours* on his artificial ocean steamer, Felix Ormusson, too, lives in a crystal sphere of dreams and imagination, of which he dreads the destruction. "More and more fragile is the wall of glass that divides existence from non-existence, worn by the friction of thought. One day a pitiless diamond will pierce the mirror of illusion. And what then?" Reality has always been a source of pain and suffering to him.

He is a man whose strength and wealth lie in the imagination, and who cannot bear the slightest contact with actual life. Some unknown centrifugal force drives men of his calibre from everyday life, they are doomed eternally to circle round the source of all warmth, as the moon circles the sun, themselves cold. They are helpless and clumsy when confronted by the multitudinous phenomena and demands of life, as soon as these appear before them in reality and not in dreams. The many-hued wings of their imagination wilt immediately in the atmosphere of reality. In short, they lack the one essential: the art of living.

His conflicting nature and the pathos of his existence spring from the fact that, despite his fear of life and his incapacity, he longs for the reality which nevertheless he despises and dreads. A simple, naturally-expanding and throbbing life awakens his envy. He envies old Adam, the labourer, who, when driving a stake into the earth, never asked, "What is a stake in itself, what is the inherent idea of a stake?" To him, they are happy who "eat, drink, sleep and beget children." And the æsthetic Felix Ormusson dreams of becoming a farm labourer, to escape seeing life from literary and æsthetic angles, while at the same moment he is irritated by the rough hands and rougher voices of the mowers and his own lack of skill in handling the scythe.

In spite of his incapacity for life, a thirst for life constantly tortures him. He yearns for a fulness of living, in the Renaissance sense of the words, a complete capacity for enjoyment with all his senses, both bodily and spiritual. He thirsts with equal passion after perfection, like his other self in Friedebert Tuglas' sketch *Pro domo mea*. He too has a deathless longing for "perfect worlds, crystal regions, over which the bright blossoms of the great secret and the fullest consciousness burst into the fulness of their flowering."

He has in his blood the desire of a young race for life and pleasure. It irks him that he cannot drain at one gulp the cup that the world holds to his lips. In Venice, on a summer night, a merry company glide in their gondolas by the light of Chinese lanterns out to sea,—and he, Felix Ormusson, is not of the com-

pany! In tropical forests the day dawns, the red cocks crow, a drove of monkeys run shrieking over the treetops, crowned with large, juicy blossoms, shaking the rose-red petals from the branches like snow over the crocodiles basking on the water's edge,—and he sees nothing of it! In one half-hour he would see every earthquake, every volcanic eruption, all the astronomic, geologic and biologic developments of millions of years. Still more: in the space of his own existence he would live through Darwin's theories in practice, from an amoeba upward to the superman.

Felix Ormusson is the story of an æsthete, to be more accurate, of an Estonian æsthete at the turn of the century. Perhaps not a definite dissection, but at any rate a conscious attempt at such. As another Young Estonian author has said: The kin of Felix Ormusson already wander through the land! But the book is in itself the beginning of a reaction against exaggerated æstheticism. During the course of the story, Felix Ormusson, the æsthete, begins to doubt what has hitherto been his only religion, æstheticism, as he has earlier doubted everything that exists. He himself destroys the idol of his own creation: "Æstheticism is poison. Play intensified, when believed in, becomes tragedy. The tragedy lies in the fact that afterwards, both play and actual life become impossible." And in another connection he notes: "There is something terrible in feeling beauty with all one's being, in looking the godlike in the face. Having penetrated down to the foundations of art, feeling it in every limb, conscious of it in every sense like religion, neither art nor life can afterwards succeed."

He begins to seek ethical values in life, where earlier he had seen only the decorative, in love and in marriage. The superman Felix Ormusson is near to becoming a moralist, he exchanges his æsthetic view of life for an ethical one. But ethics can no more render him capable of life than æsthetics. And after his final stumble he casts both aside, admitting with pleasing airiness:

"Life is neither an æsthetic nor an ethical phenomenon. It is, in essence, comedy. Let us accept it as such!"

Ride, si sapi! The world and life finally appear to Felix Ormusson in the same mocking, distorted light as fell over his own wooing, when to his discomfort he chanced to sit before the large glass sphere in the garden, and on its rounded surface saw himself distorted to a caricature. The last end of everything is farce. The French, or more rightly, the Greek habit of exhibiting a ludicrous, side-splitting farce after a tragedy, of sweeping the stern truth of life aside in a burst of enfranchising laughter,—such is the final conclusion of the philosophy of Felix Ormusson.

But vainly does Tuglas attempt to cast a tragi-comic shimmer over the tragedy of the dreamer. It is and remains a tragedy, from whatever redeeming point of view the author tries to contemplate the mistakes of his second *ego*.

Felix Ormusson, alias Friedebert Tuglas, was fated from the beginning, by his own spiritual construction, sooner or later to retire from all reality and to withdraw beyond its pale into the phosphorescent world of the fantastic, where every situation glows dimly in a *chiaroscuro* illumination,—a world which from the beginning of time has been the refuge for dreamers of his type, and where the right to live and rule is theirs.

III.

“The creation of a myth,—that is the highest aim of an artist,” wrote Tuglas in one of his later articles. And elsewhere he writes: “We have lost all hope of crystallising truth in a scientific axiom,—let us attempt at least to approach it in presentiments, moods and dreams. The *mare tenebrarum* of the human soul is so boundlessly deep that no plummet can sound it.”

An attempt in this direction is plainly to be seen in Tuglas' collection of short stories *Saatus* (Fate), which contains the stories *At the End of the World*, *The Cannibals*, *Freedom and Death*, *Popi and Huhuu* and *The Golden Circlet*. An immeasurable distance divides the present intellectual man from the *Götterdämmerung* of the time when myths were created, the perfectly naïve and fruitful primal chaos of mankind which alone possessed the legend-evolving power of imaginative exaggeration, the unbridled fantasy, encompassing heaven and earth, necessary for the creation of a myth. It is difficult for us to return to the Paradise of the childhood of mankind, when also the myth, the flower of divine legend, blossomed, the cherub of our future keeping watch at the gate. There have been great creative artists who have poured new components into the old myths common to all humanity, but how many new myths have appeared in the literature of the world since the printing-press was discovered?

And yet every now and again spirits are born in whom, in some inexplicable and secret manner, one discerns a connection with those distant and vanished times—dreamers, diviners, poetical explorers who expand the area of poetry into the realms of imagination.

In his new collection of short stories Friedebert Tuglas took a decisive step: he said a final farewell to all reality. The fragile

wall of glass between the real and the non-existent had broken down. True, he has borrowed from reality a number of superficial details, but the illumination is another, the dimensions new. Beneath the visible and tangible world and behind it, another world ever makes itself felt, many times larger and more terrible, and it is precisely the constant pressure of this invisible world made visible that creates the oppressive, choking atmosphere which floods many of the later novels of Tuglas. In the beginning, the dimensions seem quite natural, but as the story progresses a strange hallucination seizes the reader: the outlines grow as though by the power of some unknown force until they melt into immensity.

Despite the apparent realism of the story, one is conscious the whole time of that 'road in the air' of which Huysmans speaks in the foreword to his *Là-bas*. In plain language, truth and imagination are deceptively mingled. The author's purpose has been to make the threshold between dream and reality as invisible as possible, to convey the reader blindfolded into his new, unreal world. All the details are undeniably real, but the world which they unite in forming never existed elsewhere than in the poet's vision-filled brain.

Terror and a sense of oppression now dominate the imagination of Tuglas. But the dread depicted by him is only partly real, only partly caused by actual circumstances. The greatest incentive to fear is born without reason, arises out of the void, out of *nothing*, and Man is powerless before it as before all cosmic forces. And in the new novels of Tuglas broods that nameless, apprehensive terror, the roots of which lie in the incomprehensible tragedy of all that exists and has being, seeming in itself to be the reaction of the created against an unknown, hostile cosmic order. The same dread that Edgar Allan Poë compressed into the one word: "Nevermore!"

The imagination of Poe, stimulated by alcohol and morphine, recurs more than once to the mind while turning over Tuglas' latest stories. There is a kind of resemblance between the great Anglo-Saxon and the Young Estonian visionary, though it exists only in the fundamental atmosphere of their work. Poë retains his outward calm and matter-of-factness in the midst of his recital of fear; his most fantastic visions are related coolly and circumspectly. The style of Tuglas is much more feverish and nervous, prone to lyricism; in the tenseness of the atmosphere one feels, particularly in the opening stages, the influence of the Russian writers of tales of dread, especially that of Leonid Andreyev. But

the essence of the terror created is in both cases the same : the terror of the non-existent.

In no other story has Tuglas succeeded so completely in displaying this cosmic fear as in his short story *Popi and Huhuu*, the story of a dog and monkey left solitary after the death of their master.

In an old house, among pictures, rolls of parchment and the apparatus of alchemy, lives the master with his beagle Popi and his monkey Huhuu. The master is old and feeble, and going off one morning into the town, he closes the door after him, and never returns. The two animals are left to their own resources. Popi is a wise and philosophic dog, of the race of Anatole France's Ricquet, held in thrall by boundless love for his master. The master's wisdom has no limits. He goes out, an empty basket on his arm, and returns with the basket full of meat ! Who else but the master could do this ? But the day wears on without a sign of the master. The monkey Huhuu grows more and more restless in his cage ; evening draws near, and still no return. Suddenly the hungry Huhuu breaks the bars of his cage and at one glance sees himself master of the situation. A wild, mad game now begins. It is as though with the monkey, all the worst instincts of mankind had broken loose and started a devilish, bestial orgy. Huhuu immediately takes over the mastership of the house, sets himself in his master's place, sleeps in his bed, arrays himself in his purple cloak, transforms his peaceful study into a pile of rubbish, breaking and destroying everything he can lay his hands on. Finally he discovers a barrel of spirits, and now there are no bounds to his cruelty. He tortures and ill-uses Popi, who is half-crazy with fright, feeling instinctively the chasm between his present and his former master. In the hungry, tortured brain of Popi the memory of a Golden Age and a Good Master still dwells. But he is after all a dog, and as such accustomed to fear and to honour. He *must* have a master, and thus in the absence of a better, he regards as his master the wild and evil Huhuu, the caricature of the man who has passed out of his life. As he had at one time admired the wisdom, kindness and beauty of his former master, in like manner he now admires the cruelty, fickleness and ugliness of his new master. And when Huhuu, after a thieving expedition through the window, brings home a basket containing a piece of bloody meat, it becomes finally clear to Popi that Huhuu is a master too. Thus the dog and the monkey eke out a wretched family life in the forgotten, isolated house, until one day Huhuu finds a box of explosives and

dashes it on to the floor, with the result that the whole house, with dog and monkey, is blown into the air.

Every detail in this remarkable story bears the impress of truth. As such, and as a mere study in animal psychology, it would be rated high. But throughout the whole work another reality makes itself inevitably felt, the "inherent symbolism of matter," as Tuglas once calls it. It swells into a symbolic poem above the level of animal souls to human and cosmic agony, to the tragedy of all creation. Ungovernable, destructive forces rage in the world, whence the spirit of God seems to have fled. Mankind is helpless before these blind and incomprehensible forces, the hostility of which it feels and to which it nevertheless submits, treasuring in its inner consciousness as a distant vision the memory of a lost Paradise, even as the beagle Popi cherishes the memory of the days of a good master. In the feeling of helplessness that overwhelms a shelterless animal dependent on mankind, when it feels its provider and protector gone for ever, there is something of the same sense of affliction that Maeterlinck has depicted in his play *Les Aveugles*, where the blind sit helpless round the dead body of him who tended them.

Full of the terror of pursuit is the story *Freedom and Death*. It is the tale of Rannus, an Estonian horse-thief, who after super-human efforts succeeds in escaping from his prison along a secret subterranean passage. But the passage does not lead direct to freedom, but to a vault, the iron-barred window of which the fugitive is compelled to force. After days of torture and hunger, during which the passionate panorama of life and its toil and pleasures passes before his eyes, divided from him by iron bars only, the task is at last accomplished. But liberty comes too late. Half dead of hunger, intoxicated by air and freedom, he murders an innocent beggar for the sake of a crust, only to sink down lifeless immediately afterwards.

The whole story is like a nightmare, a leaden-heavy dream. Attention has already been drawn to the constant recurrence of the terror of pursuit in the work of Tuglas. It returns again and again, now in dreams, now in reality. It is probably no mistake to assume that the constant danger of detection and imprisonment to which the author was subjected for upwards of ten years, with the resulting necessity of frequent changes of domicile, was in itself sufficient to give rise to flights of imagination of a fixed character. In the stories of Tuglas, descriptions of flight, blind, panic flight, as of one pursued by furies, recur unceasingly.

Undoubtedly the frequency of these panic-stricken flights in

imagination, which recur with all the persistency of an *idée fixe*, has behind it much of personal experience.

All the later stories of Tuglas show a strange disproportion between the relatively insignificant characters and the magnitude of the events which befall them—so to speak, a strange disproportion in the underlying perspective of the story. Despite its anthropological title, *The Cannibals* is a study of children who become witnesses to the mysteries of love and death. The chief character in *The Golden Circlet* is a quite ordinary middle-class druggist who, having strayed into the dangerous confines that lie between dreams and reality, can find no other exit than death. A ship's boy, animals, half-grown children, a horse-thief, these are the heroes of Tuglas' tales. Their psychology is the most primitive and instinctive possible. But their fates are greater than themselves, with their aid mysterious forces fulfil their purposes, all unknowingly they are the instruments of eternal laws. And in this intentional contradiction lies a great part of the power of these stories.

However, the intoxication of terror is not the only obsession known to Friedebert Tuglas. His erotic, strongly sensual imagination is not sexless like that of Poë, with whom the voluptuousness of fear makes up for the absence of that of love. Beauty, too, is a drug, like hashish or opium, intoxicating both the intellect and the blood.

The sixteenth song of the Kalevipoeg, the Estonian national epic, tells of the journey to the End of the World made in the sailing-ship *Lennuk* by Kalevipoeg and his comrades. After marvellous adventures they reach the Island of Sparks. Kalevipoeg goes ashore with his armed retainer to inspect the island, but the retainer loses his way, and a white bird comes to tell the others that he has remained behind the ice-hills and snowfields in the eternal joys of the mermaids.

This episode, together with the adventure which follows Kalevipoeg's journey to the world's end—in which the heroes come to the Land of Giants "where the song of birds is never heard" and where the Giant Maiden gathers them in her apron,—has provided the foundation on which Tuglas' imagination has woven one of the most fantastic of his fabrics, gleaming with all the colours of the rainbow, his story *At the End of the World*. Of all the works of Tuglas it approaches closest to his new literary ideal: the creation of a myth. In one sense it is, at the same time, a variant of the Tannhäuser legend. One could draw other comparisons also. Quite of itself, the very nature of the theme

brings to the reader's mind Gulliver's adventures in the land of giants and young Glumdalclitch, even though we admit the infinitely more lyrical and romantic character of Tuglas' young Estonian ship's boy as compared with the intellectual Anglo-Saxon voyager, the passion of the Hiigla-Maid-Venus of the island in her boundless intoxication of love as contrasted with the calm giantess of Swift.

Like Kalevipoeg's vessel *Lennuk*, so does the ship of Tuglas fare in its journeys over strange waters across the boundary that no man has ever crossed. They come into pitch darkness in which the ship gropes for several days ; when finally the darkness dissolves, a number of uninhabited islands lie before the travellers. A boat is lowered, and seven men, among them the youngest of all on board, the ship's boy, land on the largest island. The boy is sent up into a tree to keep watch, but falling asleep in the foliage, he is left behind on the island by his companions. Wandering alone there he meets a beautiful giant maiden who takes him to her home, where she lives with her father, the only other inhabitant of the island. Between Hiigla-Maid and the child of Man, a great and all-devouring love is born, and their days and nights pass by in an endless intoxication of love. The giant maiden is like Nature herself, she is everywhere present. "She was everywhere whither I turned, in the trees, the lakes, the meadows, Heaven and earth were filled with her. The luxuriant grass was like her hair, I clutched at a wisp of fog as though at her plait, trembled on a quaking bog as on her breast. The nightly darkness was like her embrace, the flash of the Northern Lights like the throbbing of her blood." But no human being can endure an incessant, inextinguishable fire of soul and body ; he feels he is being consumed to ashes in the embrace of the giant maiden, he attempts again and again to save himself by flight, until finally he thrusts his sword into Hiigla-Maid's heart, killing his beloved. But on his return to his own village after many venturous voyagings, the wanderer finds everything little and confined, and eternal longing consumes his breast. "Human, all too human was everything around me. Too confined, too mean for one who has lived with giants in eternal space !—What were to me the thoughts and works of men ! What could the love of the daughters of men signify to me ! I took up a beggar's staff. Many years have gone by. I have no home." And this second Tannhäuser, delivered from the Mount of Venus, longs to return thither. He prays to the sun: "O light of the world, take up my agony in your ray, carry my longing beyond the seas ! I am

humble and poor, but if I have not the strength to live there, let me at least die there ! ”

A brief account can give no inkling of the beauties of this story, disturbed here and there by a too insistent lyricism. There are pages which resemble the rhythmic and inspired prose of the Song of Solomon. But there are also pages, the graphic clarity of which brings to the mind the style of the classic masters of story-telling. Of the beauty of the visions Tuglas' imagination creates, an example or two may be given :

“ She came through the water. I saw her flanks in the waves, her breasts in the foam.

“ She came in a flock of great birds. Their blue wings beat about her neck. They picked at great, bright-red berries which she held between her teeth like a string of beads.

“ Then with both hands she cast the birds into the air, like handfuls of flowers, and offered her lips to me. Around us were the birds, like a rainbow mist.”

Another description of Hiigla-Maid, magnificent in its pantheism :—

“ And wherever my feet led, ever I found her before me. Like Nature she was in all things. She was like the hills, the hummocks, like the meadows between the mountains.

“ She lay on the grass. She held out her hands towards me like branches. Her eyes gleamed blue as the springs between the hills. The wind drove her hair like clouds.”

The reality of dreams, their right to exist side by side with everyday life,—such is the refrain of these fantastic novels. It is for the reader to try to follow these hallucinations of the human mind, to accompany it on the most unexpected Odysseys. If in the ramifications of the human mind there is room for such agony and distress, for such feverish visions of beauty, a place must be granted them in Art also.

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