

They let him keep his kit and gun; and faithfully he wrought,  
A servant when they were in camp, a soldier when they  
fought.

In tent and field and all the time he lent his ready aid;  
His mind was muddled, but his soul was staunchly unafraid.

The Russian hordes had met the Finns and made a strong  
attack;

And these along the river bank were slowly falling back  
To where a guard of twenty men were stationed on a ridge,  
Just where the road went down the bank and led across a  
bridge.

They had been sent to mend the road; and now, his duty done,  
Were taking in a house near by the rest which they had won.  
They helped themselves to what they liked, as such are wont  
to do,

While Sven did all the heavy work;—for he was with them,  
too.

However, this was not to last; for at his utmost speed  
Came General Sandels' orderly upon a panting steed.

"Down to the bridge at once," he cried, "there'll be the deuce  
to pay;

'Tis said a Russian regiment is marching down this way.

"And," turning to the man in charge, "don't stop to catch  
your breath;

Destroy the bridge if possible, or fight unto the death;  
The army's lost if here the foe attacks us from the rear;  
The general is on his way. Be brave, he'll soon be here."

He rode away. They reached the bridge as quickly as they  
could,

And over on the other bank the Russian soldiers stood;  
They formed in line, took careful aim—no pity stayed their  
hand—

And eight of the devoted Finns lay dying on the sand.

Another deadly volley came, and there were only five  
Of the ill-fated Finns who still remained alive;  
And these obeyed the quick command: "Give way, my men,  
fall back!"

—Excepting Sven, who thought the chief had ordered an  
attack.

Instead of joining the retreat he grasped his trusty gun,  
And to the middle of the bridge he went upon the run;  
Prepared to teach, as there he stood, each mother's son who  
came,

The secret of his skill in arms and military fame.

They came upon him with a rush; he knew nor friend nor foe,  
But rained about him lusty blows and promptly laid them  
low;

Gave right about and left about, repelling all attacks,  
And smiled upon his enemies, and felled them in their tracks.

They could not beat the giant down—he had not learnt to  
yield;

They pressed so close upon him that they served him for a  
shield.

Against his simple strategy all efforts came to naught;—  
Then Sandels with his troops appeared and saw how Dufva  
fought.

"Well done, well done!" the general cried; "my gallant man,  
stand fast;

Let not a devil of them all succeed in getting past.

That's what I call a soldier bold; that's how a Finn should  
fight!

Make haste, men, to the rescue, now, and God defend the  
right."

And now upon the bridge was heard the tramp of many feet;  
The Russian troops were driven back and soon were in retreat.  
The general dismounted then, when ended was the fray,  
And asked for that intrepid man whose arm had saved the  
day.

They pointed to Sven Dufva then, who now, his battle done,  
Had laid himself to rest upon the laurels bravely won.  
He lays there sleeping peacefully beyond all pain and strife,

More pale, and yet not more serene, than he had been in  
life.

The general looked; then bending low he took a closer view,  
And recognized poor, blundering Sven, whom all the army  
knew,

A rifle ball had found its mark and dropped the giant dead,  
And just beneath his loyal heart the grass was colored red.

Then gently spake the general: "'Tis plain as plain can be,  
That bullet knew just where to go; 'twas wiser far than we;  
It cared not for his brain, for that was truly not the best,  
But sought the vital, noble part, his brave and honest breast."

These words were quoted far and wide, as Finnish soldiers  
tell;

And all the army were agreed that he had spoken well.

Sven Dufva was a stupid man, as everybody knew;

But though his head was weak, they said, his heart beat  
strong and true.

In 1818, fourteen years after Runeberg's birth,  
another Finnish poet, Zacharias Topelius, was born  
in Nykarleby, located only two Swedish miles from  
Runeberg's birthplace. He was a son of a prominent  
Finnish physician and had all the advantages that a  
social position can give. Early in life he became ac-  
quainted with Runeberg and through his tutorship  
and help, Topelius' poetic talents were developed. He  
became a writer of exceptional versatility, writing  
dramas, lyrical poems, school books and fables for  
children. He also wrote songs, political essays and  
history. "The Surgeon's Stories," is one of Topelius'  
best historical romances, dealing with the history of  
Finland and Sweden from the period of Gustavus  
Adolphus down through the century. He died in  
1893. Topelius' manner of telling folk stories in  
poetry, is something of the Runeberg type. One of  
his most popular poetic stories is called "The Milky  
Way." In the following translation by Peer Stromme  
the product has lost little and is a splendid presenta-  
tion of Topelius in the American language:

#### THE MILKY WAY

The lights are out, and quiet reigns on earth and in the sky,  
And hazy memories rise up of ages long gone by;  
And gentle legends of the night in through my window  
swarm,  
And then the heart grows strangely sad and still more  
strangely warm.

The myriad stars are looking down through winter's icy  
breath

With smiles as happy as if earth held no such thing as death.  
And do you hear their voiceless speech? I know a legend  
dear,

A story told me by the stars. I'll tell it if you'll hear:

Far, far away, where heaven ends, He lived upon a star;  
And She lived on another sun removed so far, so far.  
They longed but for the time when they might re-united be;  
And she was Salami the Fair, Bold Zulamith was he.

They had been lovers long before, while on this earth they  
dwelt;

But sin and death had parted them, and sorrow keenly felt.  
While here they lived and loved, alas, not wisely but too well,  
And so were doomed in different worlds far, far apart to  
dwell.

But each thought of the other still in longing and in tears,  
The while they sat and listened to the music of the spheres;  
But countless miracles of God, stupendous planets rolled  
Between poor Salami the Fair and Zulamith the Bold.