

## Fältskärens berättelser II

*Z. Topelius*

July 5, 2019

In this book we witness a transition. The old original Bertelskild is still with us, married to Regina but very much a soldier hardened by his profession. We see him in action in Poland under Charles X desperately getting out of a trap. Furthermore he plays a role in the famous crossing of the Belt where he is assigned to judge the safety of the ice by crossing over. Once over he hijacks a child and brings it back to troops. Why? A gratuitous act of cruelty? In a subsequent duel two of his fingers are chopped off, and with it his magic ring, which bestows its wearer with immunity against mishaps. True enough on the actual crossing of the frozen belt, his horse plummets through the ice and he dies. The magic ring, which supplies the stories with an underlying theme is ostensibly picked up by the young kidnapped child of whom we will hear more later.

Meanwhile there is a transition. The handsome son, the fruit of the liaison with Regina is making the court to many a young lady, including one simple and innocent girl whom he will desert and eventually marry some other after many a romantic adventure we are led to understand. He takes over the property, which is flourishing, but the intendant is giving trouble, and it transpires that he is the kidnapped child. At the end of the book we are treated to a visit by the young Carolus XI and there are some complications, too tedious to recall. Topelius also manages to squeeze in a witch hunt and a concomitant water test as being typical of the time. Everything is set for the next assignment. And as with the first book there is actually precious little I recall, except for the episode with the fingers cut off and the ring rolling astray. The reason I may recall it is that shortly after reading the book I slightly hurt my finger (from the memory it must have still been at Prinsgatan and most likely in 1960) which made me think of the much worse predicament suffered by the character in a book. I concluded that your imagination of physical pain is much enhanced by being pricked a little and then getting hold of something to enlarge.

August 14, 2019 **Ulf Persson:** *Prof. em, Chalmers U. of Tech., Göteborg Sweden ulfp@chalmers.se*