



THE MAIN BUILDING OF ÅBO ACADEMY

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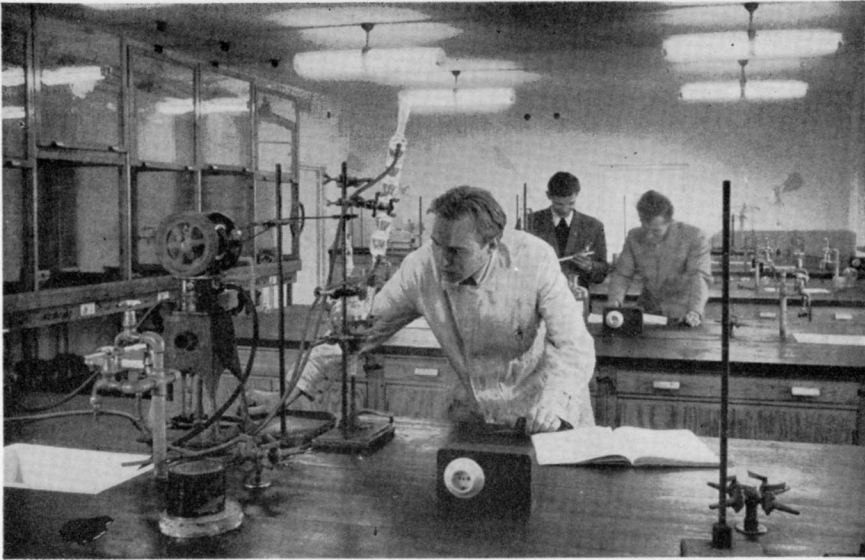
BY LARS ERIK TAXELL

THE SWEDISH-SPEAKING population of Finland is concentrated in the southern and western parts of the country and numbers about 350,000 persons. This ethnic group has played and is still playing an important rôle alongside the Finnish majority in both the political and economic life of the country. Their Swedish culture and traditions have not been forgotten, however, but have been cherished and nurtured with special care. And the best proof of this statement are the numerous educational institutions which have been established in the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland. The best known and most important of these institutions is Åbo Academy,

which is the only Swedish university outside the boundaries of Sweden and also the only university in Finland in which all the instruction is in Swedish.

Åbo Academy began its work in 1918, shortly after Finland had obtained her independence. The main reason for the founding of the Academy was the great need for a center of higher education for the country's Swedish-speaking youth. It may also be said that the school was a direct result of the cultural traditions created in Åbo (now equally well known as Turku) during the period 1640-1827, when that city could boast of the only university in Finland.

From small beginnings Åbo Academy



THE CHEMICAL LABORATORY



A SEMINAR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES



THE NEW SCHOOL OF CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

has grown rapidly and now comprises five schools or departments, in addition to various scientific institutes. The Department of Humanities is the largest, its main object being to graduate teachers for the Swedish high schools and colleges in Finland. Many courses in various fields are offered by this Department, with special emphasis on history, literature, and languages. Future teachers may also study in the School of Mathematical Science, in which mathematics, physics, chemistry, and geology are the main subjects. The Department of Political Science provides instruction in disciplines of especial use to people who intend to enter the government and the civil service; the Department of Physical Chemistry trains engineers for careers in industry, and the School of Theology offers instruction for future ministers and teachers of theology and religious history. There is also a School of Com-

merce, which provides training for higher positions in trade and commerce.

Students come to the Academy from the entire Swedish-populated area of Finland, with about 600 being in attendance annually. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity to study medicine or law at the Academy. At the University of Helsinki, however, Swedish-speaking students may enroll in the Schools of Medicine or Law and study these subjects, at least to some extent, in their own language. At Helsinki they can also, of course, study in Finnish many of those subjects which are given at Åbo in Swedish.

The Academy's program includes a great deal of scientific research, which is carried out in many different fields, ranging from engineering to theology and the humanities. A special task of the Academy in this respect is the investigation of everything associated

with Finland's history and culture and their varied forms of expression. The Academy's own scientific publication, in which some of the results of research are published, is sent to a large number of universities and scientific institutions in different parts of the world.

Another function of the Academy is to serve the many cultural needs of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland. This is done by arranging lectures in various places and by giving courses especially intended for high school teachers and the public.

Among the Academy's departments, the largest and perhaps the most important is the library. The library now contains about 400,000 volumes, most of which have been donated by private



THE SCHOONER "SIGYN"



*THE "SIBELIUS ROOM" AT
THE INSTITUTE OF MUSIC*

persons. It may safely be said that no library in northern Europe has received so many valuable gifts of books as the library of Abo Academy. With a strong emphasis on books on science, the library's main purpose is to aid in research and instruction while at the same time retaining its importance as a Swedish-Finnish national library.

Closely related to the Academy are a number of independent institutions which also are devoted to research and instruction. Of these the Sibelius Museum should be mentioned first; it comprises a collection of material on the history of music, and also contains the largest collection of music by Sibelius that is to be found in any one place. The Museum of Maritime History has concentrated on collecting historical



INTERIOR OF A STUDENT'S ROOM



THE FOYER IN THE STUDENTS' HOME

objects and records as well as models and photographs of ships. The most valuable acquisition of the collection is the schooner *Sigyn*, which lies anchored in the Aura River.

The Academy's various divisions and institutes are housed in several buildings, all situated near the old cathedral of Åbo. Many of these buildings were once owned by private citizens and have been willed to the Academy; a few larger buildings have been erected for their present purpose, among which are the library, a laboratory for chemistry, and a student dormitory.

The students at Åbo spend their time both pleasantly and profitably. They have their own association or union, whose main object is to help them in many ways, in both the physical and spiritual aspects of college life. Within the student body there are also a number of special clubs and organizations which are constituted mainly along the lines of various

subjects and university departments. Sports, too, play an important part in the lives of the students. There is much friendly rivalry with the Finnish university in Åbo, a rivalry which is climaxed with the annual rowing race between students from the two institutions.

Åbo Academy was created by and has always been solely supported by private donations. This has entailed—and will continue the need for—great economic sacrifices by those Swedish-speaking Finns who are interested in safeguarding the Academy's future. Swedish-Finnish people from different social levels and from various parts of Finland give their support with the firm conviction that Åbo Academy is essential for the continued existence of their Swedish culture. Through its achievements in research and instruction the Academy is indeed one of the vital centers of cultural life in the whole of Finland.

Dr. Lars Erik Taxell is the President of Åbo Academy