

STARBO

On July 18th, a group of "Swedenborgare" arrived at a little country estate in southern Dalecarlia that was once the property of Sara Bergia, the second wife of Bishop Jesper Swedberg. This property went after her decease jointly to Emanuel Swedenborg and to Lars Benzelstierna. It now belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Måns Försell, who kindly welcomed our group for a visit of several hours, greeting us with the message given below.

Starbo was an iron-works near a lake which R. L. Tafel called Barken but seems now to have a different name. The place Starbo is referred to in a notation at the very end of the work called *Spiritual Experiences*, formerly *Spiritual Diary*. The notation is a very interesting piece of personal history, written in Swedish, and quite cloaked—in the first place, because it omits the name of the main person involved, and in the second, because it is not clear how much is actual history, and how much dreamt, or seen in the spiritual world. According to R. L. Tafel, the person Swedenborg referred to was none other than his own brother-in-law, Lars Benzelstierna (*Documents* 11:2, pp. 748-9).

Paragraph 5134 of *Spiritual Experiences* is the basis of this identification; it reads as follows:

I heard a certain person speaking in hell, who had tried to carry out wicked deeds in the world—to kill another from hatred, which he had often attempted and plotted to do, but in vain: L. B., who said that he had not believed such things condemn a person as long as he is in faith, since faith alone saves. There are from the Church very many perpetrators of crime who have believed things like this.

The Swedish notation we refer to, which will bear the number 6110 1/2, begins with the letter B), interpreted by R. L. Tafel as [L.]B.). The following is our reading and translation:

B) incited Nordencrantz, as proven by a letter in the Dalecarlian dialect to his purchaser, about pay.

— Brita Behm was incited, which was admitted and acknowledged by her.

— It was shown how he must have spoken with a henchman Stierncrona, who would not readily agree to killing me.

— Some time earlier with Reutercrona, whose sphere was

known by me as the one who wanted very strongly to kill me.

— He was convicted by some evidence that he had administered the estate and done wrong things for friendship and bribes, without conscience.

— By other evidence about the girl he had ruined, whom he had sought out, taken for himself, enkindled.

— The plan he had made at one time to have me run over on the ice.

— He was filled with deadly thoughts, whenever he reflected on the fact that I got half of Starbo.

— He was convicted of wanting to instigate Brita Behm to begin a law-suit about the division of Axmar.

— The hatred he entertained was shown by a viper soup given to me in sleep, appearing all black.

1) He told a woman from Falckfors to carry me to the other side of the lake and get rid of me, but in vain. 2) He told Daniel something of the kind, but in vain. 3) He told yet another person in Starbo village to throw me in the woods. 4) He went after me there, but in the sight of the people, such an act would not be tolerated. 5) He had the intention and desire to plunge a knife into my breast. 6) He dressed up in servants clothing, went out after me himself. 7) He talked with, and welcomed to his home, the person who had been employed to take my life. 8) She put spiders in the meat, causing me to vomit up gall.

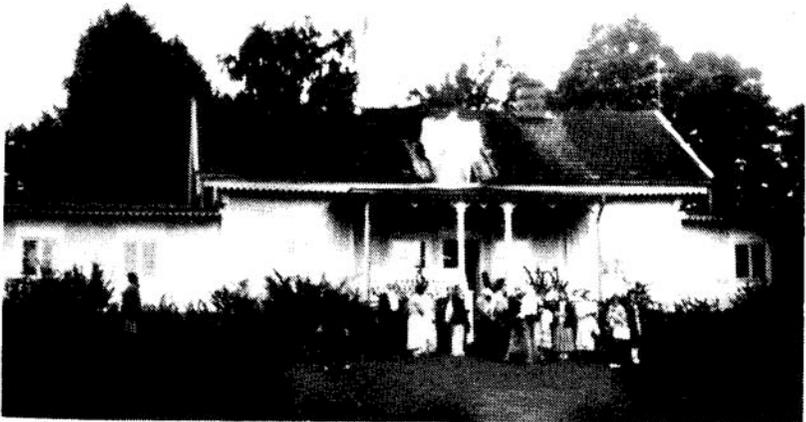
(See also *Documents I*, pp. 303-4, 374-5, 610-11, 674, 11:2, pp. 748-50; and *The Swedenborg Epic*, pp. 36, 65-6, 256, as well as the index references to "Benzelstjerna, Lars.")

)DO

OPPOSITE

- Above: Mr. Måns Förseli, owner of Starbo, addressing the "Swedenborg's Sweden" tour group, Lake Staren in background
- Below: The Starbo house with its two added wings; first visit by New Church group
- Next page: The "Swedenborg's Sweden" tour group at Starbo

STARBO





Dear Visitors,

On behalf of Starbo and its inhabitants, I wish you most heartily welcome.

This is the first time we receive a group of visitors at Starbo. We do it with great pleasure, because you are a very special group of people, who have in common your interest in—and your love for—Emanuel Swedenborg, the very remarkable man who spent part of his time here.

Of course, most things have changed on this place during 300 years. But the greatest quality here, which we who live here today love, and which Swedenborg loved—the nature, the landscape, the view of the lake and the blue mountains in the background—*that* quality has not changed.

Emanuel and his sisters and brothers inherited Starbo from their stepmother, whose father was vicar of this parish, and who was a great landowner in this region. Emanuel's sister Hedvig and her husband Lars Benzelstierna had their home here.

At that time the buildings did not look the same as today. It was the same main building, but the exterior, at that time, showed the structure of lying timber logs with their natural silver-gray colour.

On the north side of the building, two separate wings were situated for servants' quarters, kitchen, wash-house, stores, etc. Those wings have been demolished since a very long time ago.

Starbo got its present look in the 1850s. At that time the two lower wings were added to the main building, and the exterior was covered with yellow panel work and white trimmings.

The only part of the building which is still unchanged, is the cellar. The building-technique of the cellar, with wedge-shaped stones which—without mortar—have been formed into vaults, indicates that this oldest part of the building dates from the sixteenth century.

The only addition which has been made to the buildings at Starbo since 1850 was made this summer. An old timber building, which was the only remains of a deserted farmer's homestead one kilometer from here, is being erected close to the house next door, where part of my family live. The building, which is typical for this region, dates from the 18th century.

In the dining room there is a tiled stove which is of a type that exists only in a very small number. It is said that this stove had its original place in a room on the upper floor, which Swedenborg used

when he lived at Starbo. It is also said that on one of his visits—when he had been refused by Cristopher Polhem's daughter—he was sitting for hours before this stove, seeking consolation in the dancing flames.

In the upper hall—on top of the fireplace—stands a bust of Swedenborg. It was placed there in 1928, when my father got it as a gift from a friend who was a member of the Swedenborgian church in Sweden, and who knew that Swedenborg had a strong connection with Starbo.

My family has owned Starbo since 1922, which was two years before I was born. My father, who was a scientist and professor of medical radiology, bought Starbo because he felt that this was the ideal place for recreation for him and his family—and also for quiet and inspiration in his work.

Since 1971, when my mother died, Starbo has belonged to me and my family. I have the pleasure to be able to introduce to you many of the family members: my wife Mary Ann, our youngest daughter Angelica, who lives next door with her husband Lars and their three children Maria, Erik and Johan, and our son Hans, who is the youngest of our three children. We also have our oldest daughter Mariana's two children, Axel and Olivia, as dear guests from Paris. Mariana, and her French husband Jean Paul regret that they cannot take part in this important occasion. So does Angelica's husband Lars.

Starbo has been loved by all family members as long as the family has been here. For me, it is a *very* special happiness to experience the family-continuity at Starbo. I have in strong memory some of my grandparents here—and now I have our five grandchildren with me as enthusiastic Starbo inhabitants.

To conclude—I would like to express our sincere wish that you will feel at home during your visit at Starbo.

We ask you to help yourselves to coffee or to homemade bread and cakes—and after that freely walk around and have a look at whatever interests you, indoors and outdoors.

While you are indoors—please let us have your names in Starbo's guest book, which you will find in the upper hall.

I recommend a walk down to our bathing place. From there the view has got an extra quality.

Starbo and its inhabitants are standing at your disposal. Please—enjoy yourselves!■