

Johanne Agerskov – Messenger of the Light!

“She had a beautiful, fine and noble face and an acute intelligence; but although she had gotten a good education and had for some time been a private teacher, she was far from having the encyclopedic knowledge of her husband. However, she had a rare poise and dignity in her speech and appearance, ...”

This is how the writer Chr. Jørgensen describes Johanne Agerskov in his autobiography, “The Years that Passed” from 1968 (p.145). There are not many eyewitness accounts of Johanne Agerskov – but the few we have, such as the one by Chr. Jørgensen, bear witness of a woman of a very special character. And those who met her did not easily forget the special charisma from her eyes and her figure. For a long time it would seem that Johanne Agerskov would have a rather traditional life; like so many other women of her time she did not get a higher education. In her youth she worked for some years as a teacher, but soon she married, had a daughter and dedicated her life to her family – as a housewife - and did not have any other ambitions in life than wanting to do her duty as a mother and a wife in the best possible way for her daughter and her husband.



Johanne Agerskov, born Malling-Hansen (1873-1946), Michael Agerskov (1870-1933) and their daughter Inger Johanne Agerskov (1900-1968). Both photos: Private.

The Victory of Light in the Spiritual World.

However, time was going to show that she was destined for something quite different. Certainly, she had had experiences indicating that she had a particularly well developed intuition and premonition about future happenings, but little did she know during this period in the beginning the 20th century that she, together with her husband, were to experience the perhaps most extraordinary occurrences any human being has come across. And those of us who know the great book, *Toward the Light!*, engendered thanks to Johanne and Michael Agerskov’s unselfish and unshakable confidence in the powers of the light – we know that the effort that they made together for mankind in reality enabled the absolute turning point in the history of planet earth. By means of their loving and compassionate prayer for him that first

succumbed to darkness and who is responsible for all suffering and death on earth – the devil – he was redeemed from darkness, and all of a sudden darkness was without a leading intelligence. By this step the light had prevailed in the spiritual world, and from now on it was only a matter of time before brighter times would come also to earth...



Johanne Agerskov's mother, Cathrine Georgia Heiberg, 1841-1876. She gave birth to 7 daughters during the years 1866-1875 and died very tragically in 1876 while giving birth to yet another girl. Photo: Private collection.



Johanne Agerskov's father, Rasmus Malling-Hansen, 1835-1890, inventor, priest and principal of the Royal Institute for the Deaf-Mute in Copenhagen. He succeeded his father-in-law in this position in 1865. Photo: Private collection.



Johanne Agerskov's stepmother, Anna, nee Steenstrup, 1842-1897. Rasmus Malling-Hansen married her in 1880, when Johanne was around 7 years old. Photo: Private collection.

Born into a Family of Very Talented People.

Johanne Agerskov was born in Copenhagen in 1873 as the 5th daughter of the reverend and principal of the Royal Institute for the Deaf-Mute, the inventor Rasmus Malling-Hansen, 1835-1890, and his wife Cathrine Georgia, nee Heiberg, 1841-1976.

Rasmus Malling-Hansen came from humble circumstances – born in the tiny village of Hunseby, near Maribo, as the eldest son of a teacher, Johan Frederik Hansen and Juliane, née Matzen, (1809-1885), the daughter of leaseholder Matzen of Knuthenborg manor. The father died from typhus already when Rasmus was 5 years old, and the mother Juliane then moved back to her foster father, Rasmus Malling, who also became the foster father of her three sons. Rasmus Malling was an elderly and well educated man, and the mother, Juliane, is said to have been an unusually wise and able woman.

Rasmus Malling-Hansen soon proved himself to be a very talented and likeable young man, and thanks to financial support from the count of Knuthenborg he received teacher training, graduating from Jonstrup college in 1854 and in 1865 graduated in Theology. He was a very colorful person, and his life was characterized by innovative thinking, reforms and ingenuity – in his work as a principal and priest of the Royal Institute for the Deaf-Mute in Copenhagen (1865-1890) as well as in his private activities as an inventor and scientist. He invented the first commercially produced typewriter in the world, the writing ball, in 1865, and he made groundbreaking discoveries about the cyclical growth of children.

Cathrine Georgia Heiberg was a daughter of Malling-Hansen's predecessor as principal of the Institute for the Deaf-Mute, Søren Johan Heiberg (1810-1871) and his wife Engelke Marie, nee Rørdam (1814-1855). Engelke Marie gave birth to a total of 9 children before she died in 1855, and Søren Johan Heiberg then married her two year older sister, Emma (1812-1897), who became stepmother to the children. The Heibergs are a very old family with branches in both Denmark and Norway and has produced a lot of talented women and men within the arts as well as science; all of Cathrine's brothers received a higher education and they all had excellent careers within their respective fields. Søren Johan Heiberg was known as an able person, however strict and conservative, preferring to keep within the established traditions. He was also a personal friend of the Danish queen, and she frequently used him as a kind of personal advisor.

Rasmus Malling-Hansen is said to have met his second wife, Anna, already as a young man. And the story goes that the two fell in love. But since Anna came from Copenhagen's upper social layer, while Rasmus was merely a destitute boy of common people, they could not become a couple. But in his first period as a teacher at the Institute for the Deaf-Mute, from 1859 to 1861, he made the acquaintance of the principal's daughter, Cathrine, and they fell in love and got engaged to be married before Malling-Hansen stopped teaching in order to finalize his theological studies, as well as working for a couple of years at the Institute for the Deaf-Mute in Schleswig.

But in 1865 Malling-Hansen returned to Copenhagen and in the same year they were married and he got his beloved Cäthe! And everything indicates that their marriage, lasting from 1865 until 1876 when Cäthe tragically died while giving birth, was a very happy and loving union! Malling-Hansen was a man with a strong family feeling and very much concerned with his daughters' welfare, their childhood diseases, their every little progress and development and their challenges. He writes very vividly about this in the many letters of his that have been preserved, to his mother and his two brothers. And the little Johanne is frequently mentioned, just like her 6 sisters, in these letters from the 1870-ies. The Malling-Hansen home was open to visitors, and the family led a very active social life. They lived in the principal's apartment of the Institute for the Deaf-Mute, an 11 room apartment, hence with plenty of space, and we know that Johanne shared a room with her two younger sisters, Karen (born in 1874) and Marie (born in 1875). At the backside of the building they had a garden room with an exit to a large private garden with a large false acacia tree, planted when the institute had just been erected, and here the small girls would play when the weather was pleasant and when they were not sick with scarlet fever or other childhood diseases!

Johanne Agerskov experienced, while still young, the loss of three of her nearest caregivers – before she was 25 years of age. Tragedy struck the family for the first time when she was only 3 years. In 1876 her mother died while giving birth, and the daughter she was giving birth to died with her. Like so many other women in those days Cathrine had children in quick succession, until her body could take no more, and the multiple childbirths became her bane. One of the descendants after Johanne's sister Marie, Gerda Forman Jensen, has claimed that the midwife's bad hygiene was the cause of the fatalities. In spite of Johanne having been so young that she can hardly have understood much of what was happening, still it must have left its mark in her mind to lose her mother at the age of 3. From "Some Psychic Experiences" we know that Malling-Hansen employed a foster mother for his daughters, and life continued. Perhaps the loss of the mother at such a tender age was one of the reasons why Johanne became so strongly attached to her father, and there is no doubt that she loved him very much.

But in 1880 Malling-Hansen once again met the woman he had loved in his youth, and she had waited for Rasmus and had not married in spite of several suitors, among them the man who founded the Carlsberg Breweries. They married in 1880, and judging from the personal letters of Rasmus and Anna, Anna Steenstrup appears to have been a very warm-hearted and wise woman, who fully adopted the children as her own.



This is the Institute for the Deaf-Mute as it appears in our time – a peaceful, yellow-washed building, where deaf-mute are still being taught. In the basement is the museum of the Historical Society of the Deaf, showing many historical events from the history of the building. The apartment of the Malling-Hansen family was on the middle floor, to the left from the B and further beyond up to the point where the building makes a turn. Their kitchen was at the corner and faced the schoolyard. Today the apartment has been remodeled into classrooms and storage space. The picture to the right was taken from the door facing the garden and we see the big acacia tree. Both photos: Sverre Avnskog.

Augury of Future Events.

In his book about the making of *Toward the Light!*, Johanne's future husband, Michael Agerskov, relates some very special events from his and Johanne's childhood. While still very young they had some experiences which they, at the time, could not understand, but which seen in the light of their later experience can be explained in a perfectly logical manner.

Agerskov writes that as a young girl his wife suffered from insomnia and that she was in the habit of putting her head on the edge of the bed, and the result was that she developed deep marks on her forehead. This was after her mother, Cathrine Heiberg, had died, and she and her six sisters had a foster mother, who used to scold Johanne for her bad habit and put her in the center of the bed with a strict admonishment not to move to the edge. One night, while she was awake in her usual position, Johanne experienced that somebody suddenly pinched her nose hard, and she cried out loudly to the person to stop. She was sure that it was one of her two younger sisters, Karen or Marie, with whom she shared the room, who had pinched her, but they were fast asleep quite a bit away from her, and they could not possibly have had time to return to their beds, and none other person was in the room. Naturally, Johanne did not understand what could have happened, but she often remembered the incident. And the explanation must have been that a spirit with the ability to materialize a hand and to give a proper pinch did this to her.

The other very unusual occurrence Michael Agerskov mentions is an episode that he remembered from his childhood – when he was around 9 years old. One day as he was nearby home, the residence of the customs official at Rørvig, suddenly a small girl was standing beside him. He did not know her, did not know her name and also did not ask her about her name. The small girl put her hand in his, they chatted with great familiarity and spent quite a long time together, and Michael Agerskov remembers that he was immensely fond of her. But suddenly she had disappeared, just as quickly as she had emerged. Michael inquired in vain about her a couple of times but otherwise did not mention the episode to anybody.

When Johanne Agerskov came to Rørvig for the first time at 15 years of age, she was astonished at how well-known the area around Michael Agerskov's childhood-home seemed to her, whereas the town itself and the vicinity were completely unknown to her. And when Johanne and Michael Agerskov as adults had established contact with Johanne Agerskov's dead father's spirit, he explained the related incident. Because Johanne and Michael, prior to their incarnation, had promised to find each other and together become the intermediaries who would bring the truths of the light to the earth, once when Johanne Agerskov was had fallen ill and was asleep, her guardian angel had brought her spirit to Michael Agerskov's home and had through light manifestations materialized her spirit such that she for Michael appeared as a living child. This had been done in order to create, already at this stage, a psychic bond between the two. It was crucial that their work as terrestrial intermediaries must succeed, and this materialization was, of course, done with God's permission.



Johanne Agerskov as a young girl together with her sisters Karen (born 1874) left and Marie (born 1875) right in front. The photo comes, just like the other two photos of the Malling-Hansen sisters, from Emma's photo collection and was originally torn into pieces. I have had it digitally repaired. Photo: Private.



From left: Zarah (born 1870), Emma (born 1869) and Engelke (born 1868). Emma was a dedicated follower of Toward the Light all her life. Photo: Private.



The three eldest sisters together - From left: Emma, Juliane (born 1866) and Engelke. Juliane was the first of the sisters to be interested in the spiritual world. Photo: Private.

“I Am not Dead. I Am Alive!”

Michael Agerskov then relates something from 1890, when Johanne Agerskov was 17 years old. On a dark autumn evening that year her father died very suddenly from a coronary thrombosis on his way home from a meeting with his freemason brethren. He collapsed in the street with terrible chest pains. Two persons observed what was happening and tried to help him, but unfortunately it was too late, and his body was brought home and put to rest in his study. Johanne had been very fond of her father, and on the following day she was standing in the living room, her back to the door, looking out at the garden, in her grief thinking about how sad it would be never again to meet her father alive. While she was meditating like this, she suddenly heard her father’s voice, loud and clearly, saying: “I am not dead, I am alive!” Full of surprise and joy she thought that her father was not dead after all and had entered the room without her having heard the sound of the door. She turned around to see him, but there was no one there. She assumed that he had proceeded to go and tell also the sisters and the stepmother that he was not dead, but nothing happened and the room was as empty as before, and then she opened the door to the study and saw her father’s body, still and peaceful in the same position as when they put him down.

Johanne Agerskov was very much moved by what she had experienced and did not talk about it with any of her sisters or her stepmother – she did not mention the episode to other people until she was grown-up. At such a young age she could not possibly really understand what had happened, but with the knowledge she acquired later on – about the human spirit continuing to live after the physical death of the body – the happening could be explained quite logically. In reality her father had, even if she did not know it, provided her the first proof that the spirit lives on, and this would not be the last time she had contact with the spirit of her dead father.

We do not know in detail what happened in the life of the young Johanne Agerskov after her father’s death. But we do know that she was employed a couple of years later at the Branner Sisters’ Girls’ School in the town of Slagelse. As far as I have been able to ascertain she worked there for two years, from 1893 until 1895, and her sister Emma worked at the same school, but the latter continued there until she got married and was employed for a total of eight years. According to letters that Emma, married name Mathiesen, wrote later, the two sisters also lived together during this period. Johanne taught longhand (copperplate), drawing and physical education, while her sister, who had spent a year in England, taught English language and mother tongue. Johanne never kept it a secret that she did not consider herself very talented and later wrote that she had never been very adept of expressing herself. But she was a proud and headstrong woman and could be very direct and straightforward in her statements, and I have no doubt that she has certainly handled the young pupils with a firm hand, and she surely must have had no problems in upholding discipline!

However, Johanne Agerskov left the teaching task already in 1895, and we do not know the reason for this, but perhaps it had something to do with the fact that her stepmother, Anna, at this time fell seriously ill. The obituaries do not mention her disease, but it is reasonable to believe that it must have been cancer, because she underwent several big operations, unfortunately failing to cure her, and she died in 1897 only around 55 years old – approximately the same age as her beloved Rasmus when he passed away. Perhaps Johanne chose to end her professional career in order to take care of her sick stepmother? We do not know for sure. But with the stepmother’s death in 1897 Johanne had lost her mother, her father as well as her stepmother; all the same, it must have been a positive aspect that there were many sisters and that they were close and supportive of each other – at least during this

period. Doubtlessly Johanne also enjoyed good support these years from her fiancé, junior teacher and later on lecturer Michael Agerskov, the son of the customs inspector of Nykøbing Sjælland.



On the backside of this beautiful picture of his daughters, Rasmus Malling-Hansen has written the year 1886. It was sent to the Heiberg Museum at Sogndal, Norway, where it is today. Malling-Hansen was proud of his daughters, and they were also very proud of him! Photo: The Heiberg Museum



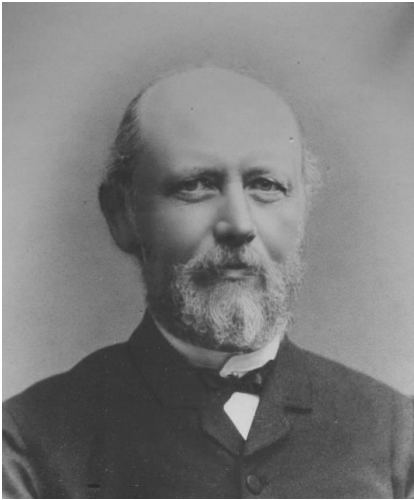
A greeting to her sister, Engelke. She was given the moniker “long-legged” in the family because of her height. The letter has no year indicated, but it is probably from 1884 when Engelke was a tutor with a family in England. Copyright: The family.



Johanne's future husband, Michael Agerskov, photographed together with his siblings (from left: Henriette, Anna, Christian and Michael). Photo: The Royal Library. Copenhagen.



Landscape painting from Rørvig, where the Agerskov family lived until Michael was around 10 years old. Here Michael had a very strange experience with a girl, and later he understood that it must have been the little Johanne. The picture was painted by Agerskov's cousin, Katinka Agerskov.



The last photo of Rasmus Malling-Hansen, taken just a few months before his death in September 1890. Photo: Private.



This beautiful painting of the garden of the principal's residence once belonged to Johanne Agerskov's sister Emma, married name Mathiesen. Her descendants donated it in the spring of 2006 to the Historical Society for the Deaf. Photo: Jan William Rasmussen.

The Spirits Are Seeking Contact!

Johanne and Michael married in 1899 and settled in Copenhagen, where Michael taught at the Marie Kruse Girls' School. Johanne soon became pregnant and gave birth to the couple's only daughter, Inger Johanne, in 1900. The first years after the childbirth their life was similar to that of any other couple from the upper middle class in Copenhagen. Michael Agerskov's professional field was literature, and in addition to teaching he also wrote, producing several books of poetry and also some novels. Together with a colleague he also published a literature textbook spanning the entire range from grade 1 and until the tertiary level of education. This was also adapted and translated into Swedish. And while Mr Agerskov had his professional career and his authorship, Mrs Agerskov managed their home and took care of the daughter and did not have ambitions beyond that. Johanne Agerskov was a friendly woman, although somewhat reticent and withdrawn and did not like having any focus on herself. But in 1908 the events started which were to turn life completely upside down for the couple, and particularly for Johanne life took a turn that she had had no inkling about whatsoever. Johanne's elder sister, Juliane nee Danckert, had for a long time been interested in occult phenomena and often talked to the sister about the spirits, which she experienced at so called table séances. However, in the beginning Johanne was very skeptical in relation to this and was loath to try something like that herself. Hence, one evening when she experienced metallic sounds being produced in their own drawing room, she was very much alarmed and demanded that whoever made those sounds must stop. And she was not a bit happy when a string in their piano was struck as she was entering their drawing room. But gradually she let herself persuade to participate in a table séance together with her sister and some other people, and when the table immediately leaned towards her, the others felt that someone from the extrasensory world must be calling her. Only then she had to, somewhat reluctantly, admit that it really seemed that someone was trying to contact her from the extrasensory world. And not long time after that she and her husband held their first table séance in their home. This became the start of a very long career as a medium for the extrasensory spirits, and what eventually was revealed to her and her nearest goes beyond most of what we can imagine! And in the role of her spiritual advisor in this endeavor was the spirit of her dead father – Rasmus Malling-Hansen.



Johanne Agerskov's paternal grandmother, Juliane Hansen, 1809-1885. She was the daughter of leaseholder Matzen of Knuthenborg Manor, but grew up with her foster father Rasmus Malling, who also became the foster father of her sons. Photo: Private collection.



Her maternal grandfather Søren Johan Heiberg, 1810-1871, principal and priest of the Royal Institute for the Deaf-Mute in Copenhagen. A personal friend of and advisor to the Danish queen. Photo: The Heiberg Museum, Sogndal, Norway.



Her maternal grandmother (and aunt) Emma, nee Rørdam, 1812-1897. When Søren Heiberg's first wife, the biological mother to his child, Engelke Marie nee Rørdam, died in 1855, he married her two year older sister, Emma. Photo: The Heiberg Museum, Sogndal, Norway.



*Johanne Agerskov's eldest sister, Juliane married name Danckert, 1866-1920, was the first of the sisters to take an interest in spiritism, and she also had mediumistic abilities. She participated in the séance circle that received *Toward the Light!* – together with her husband. Photo: Private.*



Engelke, married name Wiberg, 1868-1949, worked for a number of years as a teacher at the Royal Institute for the Blind. She and Johanne Agerskov made a giant effort, collecting documentation about their father's invention, the writing ball. She also contributed with questions to the Supplements. Photo: Private.



*Emma, married name Mathiesen, 1869-1954, was a very close supporter of Johanne Agerskov in the work around *Toward the Light* and formulated questions inserted into the Supplements. She also published an open letter to the dean Martensen-Larsen and defended *Toward the Light* against his accusations. Photo: Private.*



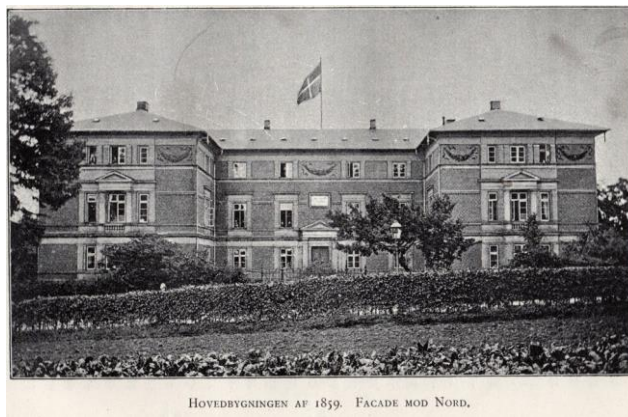
Zarah, 1870-1955, married Fritz Bech, a very central figure in the Danish milieu of deaf-mutes. He wrote numerous articles about his father-in-law and very much contributed to Malling-Hansen not being forgotten. One of their sons immigrated to the USA, where his descendents are still living. Photo: Private.



Karen, 1874-1955, was the only one of the sisters who did not marry, even if she was very keen to do so, as one of the nieces wrote. We know that she supported her sister's mediumistic activities wholeheartedly and had all the publications among her belongings. She worked her entire life as a nurse in Copenhagen. Photo: Private.



The youngest sister, Marie, 1875-1945, married the vicar Axel Perch Forman, and they participated at an early stage in some of the séances with the Agerskov couple. However, disagreements gradually estranged Marie's relationship with her elder sister, and according to a descendent in the family the Agerskovs was one subject not broached in the family. Photo: Private.



Johanne Agerskov didn't have a long professional career. At «Frøknene Branners Pikeskole» in Slagelse (left photo) she worked as a teacher for three years. Her sister Emma also worked at the school at the same time, and the little sister, Marie also worked there for a year at a later time. The building has later been torn down, unfortunately. Photo: Slagelse local historic archive. Johanne also probably worked for a year at «Gamle Bakkehus Aandssvageanstalt» as a substitute along with her sister, Engelke. Photo from the 50 years jubilee book from 1905. A notice from a Danish newspaper also tells that a J. Malling-Hansen was employed as first female teacher at The Royal Institute for Deaf Mutes in Copenhagen in 1896. It is not possible to be absolutely safe if "J. Malling-Hansen" means Johanne or her sister Juliane.

Messenger of the Light!

Gradually it became clear to Johanne and Michael Agerskov that they were being led by the extrasensory spirits towards some kind of task, but it was not revealed to them from the beginning what was required of them. During the initial period they received poems from dead people and after some time they also began to pray for earth-bound spirits who were brought to them, but gradually it became more and more clear to them that they were being led towards a far greater purpose. And in March 1912 their self-sacrificing work in praying for the suffering spirits culminated when Christ, the supreme leader of this task on the spiritual side, brought the one who had fallen deepest of them all and who is responsible for life on earth having become a life in sin, suffering and death for mankind; the devil himself, who in reality was one of God's own angels, millions of years ago succumbing to darkness together with many of his siblings. And the Agerskovs' forgiveness and loving prayer for the devil, or Ardor, as his name shall be henceforth, awakened his memories of life in God's kingdom and with that also his sorrow and anger over all the evil he had done, and the spirits of the light were able to take him home to God, who immediately forgave him. By this the light had triumphed in the spiritual world, the throne of the devil is empty, there is no intelligence who is the slave of darkness and evil, and from this moment on it was only a matter of time before brighter times would come also on earth!

But for whatever evil Ardor has committed against humans, each one of us must forgive him during our life on earth, and therefore God commanded Ardor to return to the Agerskov couple, after a year of rest, in order to tell his story to mankind and to say a prayer for forgiveness. And thus began the exceedingly arduous toil to create the work we know today as *Toward the Light!*. It was generated through weekly séances at which one of the extrasensory spirits dictated to Johanne Agerskov by means of thought flow dictation of what they wanted her to note down. And Johanne would repeat in a loud voice what was incurred into her thoughts, and one of the other people present would write down what was conveyed. In the beginning Ardor was the one dictating – with good support from some of the spirits of the light, because his deep-felt sorrow over all the evil he had caused made it difficult for him to bring all of his thoughts clearly through to the medium.

After Ardor other spiritual personalities dictated their parts of the text, and after several years of very time-consuming and painstaking toil *Toward the Light!* had become one coherent whole, containing new knowledge in many areas of life, within religion, science and philosophy/ethics. For the very first time we are provided with a coherent presentation of the origin of life until our time, we learn about the reason behind the struggle between good and evil and we are presented the true story about the life of Jesus on earth – without the false additions and adulterations of later epochs. And all of this was possible thanks to the Agerskov couple's tender-hearted forgiveness of Ardor and to their patient and self-sacrificing work as medium and publisher of "*Toward the Light!*" and the adjacent works, "*Greeting to Denmark*" (1915), "*The Doctrine of Atonement and the Shorter Road*" (1920) and the two "*Supplements*" (1929 and 1930). More details about the content and the genesis of the texts can be found in the article, "*Toward the Light! – A Divine Revelation in Our Time*".



Two specimens of the first official model of the writing ball that was built into a wooden box still exist. This one is photographed in The Museum for science and technology in Elsinore. Photo: Sverre Avnskog

Johanne Agerskov and Her Father's Invention.

Johanne Agerskov had, quite understandably, a very special relationship with her father, Rasmus Malling-Hansen! Johanne as well as the other sisters loved and respected their father dearly from the time of their childhood and youth, and the close cooperation in *Toward the Light!* obviously also created very strong ties between father and daughter. It was therefore quite consistent that Johanne Agerskov came forward in order to defend her father, when the director of the Technical University of Denmark, professor Harald Immanuel Hannover, in an article in the daily newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* in 1924 made allegations that a different inventor had the honour of having invented the writing ball, namely the teacher and councilor Jacob Ahrend Peters, and that Malling-Hansen had used Peters' invention as his foundation without informing about it. The background to Hannover's claim was that the technological collection of the university had received a donation from a relative of the then almost 90 year old Peters, consisting of parts of a typewriter, and he gave the information that these parts were from a typewriter constructed by his grandfather already in 1868. Hannover took this information seriously, decided to investigate the issue and went to see Peters in order to interview him. However, the problem was that Peters at this point in time was almost deaf, which gave rise to several serious misunderstandings concerning his invention, and Hannover gained the entirely false impression that Peters was the inventor of the principles on which Malling-Hansen's writing ball were based, and that Malling-Hansen consequently had plagiarized Peters' invention without informing about it. The reality was that Peters' invention had never been developed to the point of a fully usable machine. He had tried to raise financial support for further development of his idea, but it had been refused because nobody had believed in the invention. But because professor Hannover was so keen to contribute to providing a forgotten inventor redress before his death, his far too cursory investigations led him to deeply violate another respected inventor, namely Rasmus Malling-Hansen.

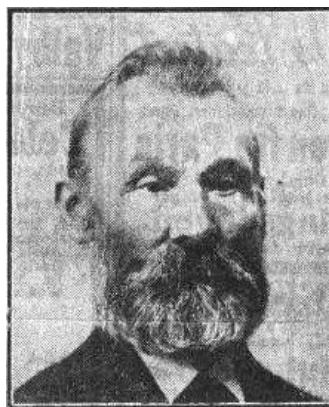
Johanne Agerskov and her sister Engelke Wiberg set in motion thorough investigations in order to try and counter the allegations of the professor, and they quickly found out that the

claims had no basis, rather the whole thing was based on misunderstandings. But Hannover was not a man to give in very easily – he was a proud and self-righteous person, loathe to admit that he had been mistaken, and the press probably attributed his words far more weight than those of Johanne Agerskov, who of course might easily be seen as a somewhat biased party in this issue. But never the less, the sisters were right, and in this case Johanne Agerskov’s steadfastness and persistency really came into its own, and she had no intention to surrender without a fight. It ended up with a prolonged polemic in the newspapers and a heated private correspondence in addition to irreconcilable personal meetings. But in the end the professor was forced to yield, since all the documentation that Johanne Agerskov and Engelke Wiberg managed to produce constituted an overwhelming proof that their father had had absolutely no knowledge about Peter’s typewriter when he first worked with his own invention in 1865, three years before Peters claimed to have invented his machine. And though there were some similarities between the two machines, all that was left of Peter’s writing machine, was the keyboard, where Malling-Hansen developed his invention into a fully functional fast speed writing machine. Both machines could be said to be “downstrikers”, as the pistons went through the surface of the keyboard and stroke the paper from above. But the pistons on the writing ball were straight and directed down towards the paper in an angle, as the pistons on Peter’s machine went straight down and then were bent inwards in the end. The keyboard of Malling-Hansen’s writing machine was formed as a hemisphere, as Peter’s was flat. The great benefit of the writing ball when it comes to placing the hands in an anatomicly relaxed manner and to get a maximum fast writing speed could not be achieved on Peter’s keyboard.

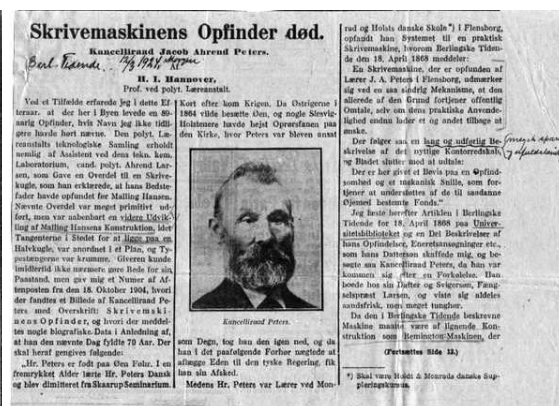
Today we can be very grateful that the sisters took the trouble to dig out documentation about the development of the writing ball, for much of the information that they succeeded in finding would probably otherwise have been lost, and we can thank their heroic effort that we know so much about how the writing ball was developed from idea to reality. Johanne Agerskov also published a book about the issue in 1925: “Who Was the Inventor of the Writing Ball?”



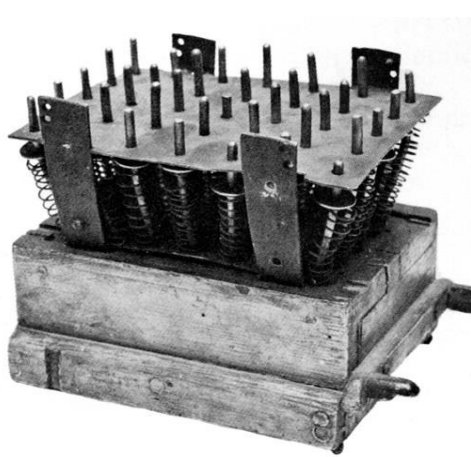
Director of the Technical University of Denmark, professor Harald Immanuel Hannover, 1861-1937. Peters was 89 years old and practically deaf when he was interviewed by Hannover. Photo: The Royal Library.



Jacob Ahrend Peters, 1835-1924, Danish school teacher, got a typewriter patented in 1868 and developed it further into a new model in 1872. He never received any support for the production of his machine, and it was forgotten.



The first part of Hannover’s article in Berlingske Tidende from 1924. Hannover’s motives were probably good – he wished to rehabilitate a forgotten and misunderstood inventor. But because he did not carry out sufficiently thorough research before nominating Peters the proper inventor of the writing ball, he committed the grave error of violating the posthumous reputation of a much greater inventor,



One has to admit that there is a certain similarity between the writing machines of Peters and Malling-Hansen. But as Malling-Hansen developed his ideas into a good functioning commercial typewriter with everything one would expect from a modern typewriter, all that remains from Peters' prototype, is the keyboard. And because Malling-Hansen invented his keyboard in 1865, and Peters first in 1868, there can be no question about plagiarism. Right photo: Sverre Avnskog.

Adversity and Disappointments

Johanne and Michael Agerskov were incarnated on earth with the mission to help Christ and the other spirits of the light in their task to reclaim Ardor back to the light. And when it had succeeded, then the true account of the many different enigmas of life could be brought to mankind, because the devil was no longer able to sneak in his adulterations into that which the spirits of the light tried to teach the humans. Together with Johanne and Michael God had also incarnated a large number of other high spirits who had promised God to contribute to *Toward the Light!* becoming known in Danish society and also that the Danish church would adopt the new teachings and go through a reformation on the basis of the truth in *Toward the Light!*. When the text was published in 1920 it was distributed to as many as 60 Danish priests and to all the seven bishops, and these people had all, prior to their life, given a promise to work for *Toward the Light!*. But unfortunately this part of the plan did not succeed. *Toward the Light!* had its point of departure in spiritism, but this was only because that was the only way in which Johanne Agerskov could be made aware that she was able to receive messages from the extrasensory spirits. After the contact having been established the couple parted completely with the spiritistic milieu and went their own way, and in *Toward the Light!* we are warned, in the strongest terms, against trying to contact the dead, because it brings great disturbance in their life in the spheres. But in 1920 not everyone managed to realize that *Toward the Light!* had nothing to do with common spiritism and hence categorized the work with much of the humbug and vulgar spiritism of that time and therefore were not able to see the beautiful and truthful in the message that *Toward the Light!* brought to earth. This was probably an important reason why the church all but ignored the text, and the years following the publication of the work were probably a very big disappointment to the Agerskov couple, who had dedicated their lives to the great task of being the helpers of the spirits on earth. Only few people adopted and accepted the text, and the Agerskov couple always kept an open home for visitors and interested persons and also responded to lots of questions by letter. All of this probably exhausted the couple's strength and they were also struck hard by illness. Following a serious case of the Spanish Flu in 1928 Michael Agerskov was stricken by steadily increasing muscle paralysis forcing him to resign as a lecturer in

1931 and became a bed-ridden patient under care until his death in 1933. Mrs Agerskov herself was badly afflicted by recurrent bronchitis attacks and very painful biliary colic.

Even if Ardor had been redeemed to the light, there were still many of his evil helpers incarnated on earth, and they have probably done everything possible to pull darkness around the Agerskov couple. In 1938, five years after her husband had passed away, Mrs Agerskov published yet another text from the extrasensory world, commonly known as the Episcopal Letter, and from the very first moment this text was very controversial, and many people see it as an attempt by darkness to adulterate the message of *Toward the Light!* and are of the opinion that she must have been tricked by one of Ardor's evil assistants! The reader can find further information about this in the article "The Counterattack by Darkness – The Episcopal Letter!"

Both Michael and Johanne Agerskov were very modest and truthful persons, who never wished to promote themselves! They saw themselves as mere earthly assistants and never tried to take credit for anything that they received from the spirits of the light. Michael was known for his warm-hearted personality and friendliness and was, moreover, a highly educated and literary schooled person. Johanne Agerskov was very trustworthy and had a strong will-power as well as a natural modesty, never seeking anything for herself. At an early stage she felt that the sunlight inhibited her capacity as a medium and therefore avoided spending much time outdoors, and on the few occasions when she did venture out, she would wrap herself very carefully in large capes and hats. Albeit initially skeptical in relation to communicating with the extrasensory world, once she had accepted the task of conveying the thoughts of the light to the earth, she went at it with great sense of duty, and even if she would later on write that the work was extremely wearisome, she never gave up. For many years she renounced all kinds of social activities and never went to the theatre, cinema, see friends etc. Prior to her death she also had all her photos destroyed out of fear that ill-advised people might come to worship her as a saint and focus on her instead of on the text that she had received in such a self-sacrificing way together with her husband. However she did not manage to have all photos destroyed, because even at the beginning of the 20th century apparently people were photographed so frequently that there will always be a picture here and there with other people, and Mrs Agerskov's sisters and her daughter had, for instance, kept some pictures of her.



Three photos showing different stages in Johanne Agerskov's life. Two of the sisters had kept the left picture in their albums. The photo in the middle is from her daughter's album. And the last one I found inserted into a book that belonged to her daughter. It's a detail from a larger photo.

Personally I am among those who regret a few of the things that Johanne Agerskov did towards the end of her life, such as the publication of the controversial text from 1938 and the destruction of the photos. However, these are mere trifles in relation to all the things that I find we have all the reasons to thank her for. Because all of us who rejoice over the fact that the world owns a text such as *Toward the Light!* have infinitely much to thank both Johanne and Michael Agerskov for – there can be no doubt about that – while still bearing in mind that they were, on the whole, ordinary people like you and me.



*As adult, Mrs. Agerskov's daughter, Inger, also participated in the efforts to spread the knowledge of *Toward the Light*. She was a member of the board of "Selskabet til Vandrer mod Lysets Udbredelse". She also took part in the first effort to translate *Toward the Light* into English – it was published in 1950. Soon after she was struck by a heart attack and became disabled. Photo: Privat.*

Oslo 02.04.2010
Sverre Avnskog

English translation by
Jørgen Malling Christensen

Gymnastik for Damer og Børn.

Til 1ste Februar agter undertegnede Lærerinde ved Frk. Branners Skole at begynde et Kursus i svensk Gymnastik a 3 Kr. for Voxne og 2 Kr. for Børn.

Indmeldelser modtages daglig paa Skolen mellem 3 og 5.

J. Malling-Hansen.

This notice was published in "Slagelse - Posten" 12. januar 1892. Johanne, who at that time was a teacher at "Frk. Branners pikeskole" is seeking for participants to a course in Sweedish gymnastics.

Drenge og 2 Piger). Da Forstrelærerinde, Fruen Egede afgik ved Døden den 6. December efter trofast at have virket ved Institutet i 34 Aar, blev Fruen J. Malling-Hansen konstitueret. Hov. Stabssergent Gøhl har ledet Gymnastikundervisningen

In an article in «Nationaltidende» from the 24. of January 1896 it is informed that Miss J. Malling-Hansen is employed as first female teacher at «Det Kongelige Døvstummeinstitutet» in Copenhagen, the same place as her father spent his whole professional caeer.

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