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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.



A Photograph of Arnewood Tower.

- | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|
| do | Mr. A. T. T. Peterson. |
| do | Tablet in Sway Parish Church. |
| do | Mrs. Girling. |

Arnewood Tower

*Paper read before the Milford Record Society on
February 8th, 1926.*

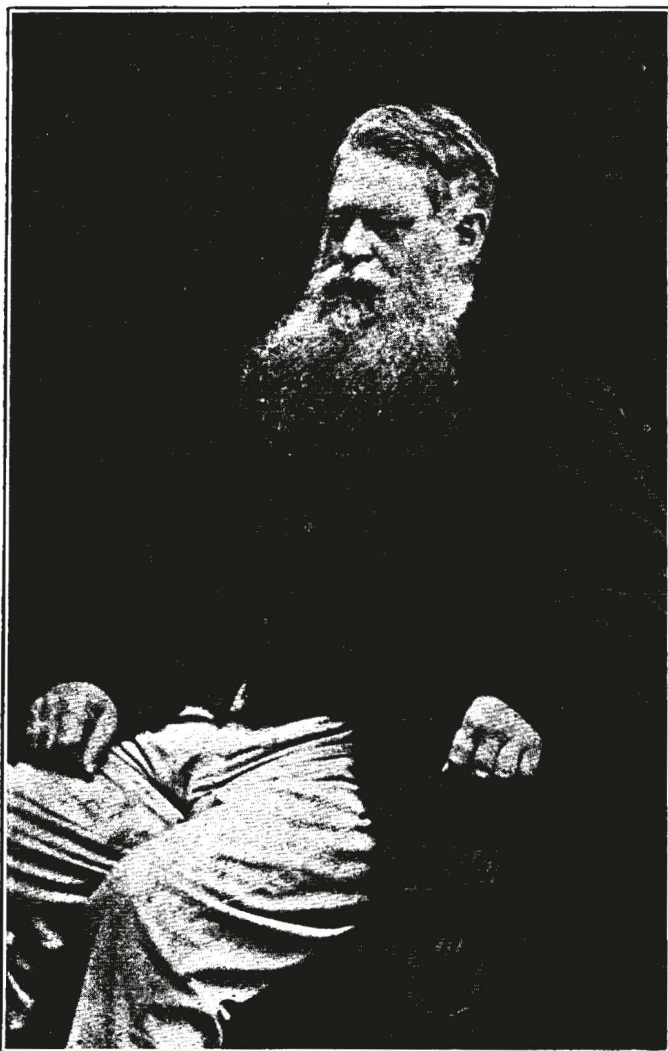
AND

The New Forest 'Shakers'

*Paper read before the Milford Record Society on
October 18th, 1926.*

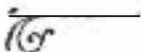
BY

T. A. WYLIE, Esq.



MR. A. T. T. PETERSON.

ARNEWOOD TOWER.



FOR nearly 50 years Arnewood Tower has been an object of curiosity and a subject of mystery not only to local residents but to the vast majority of visitors to the New Forest. Although this Tower is reputed to be the most conspicuous landmark in the County of Hampshire, there seems to be a strange conspiracy of silence on the part of the various guide books in regard to it.

Ward, Lock & Co.'s Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to the New Forest disposes of it in a brief sentence of half-a-dozen words, under the head of "Walks from Brockenhurst," "No. IV, page 30, To Barton and Hordle Cliffs." After indicating the road over Brookley Bridge and past Hinchelsea, it goes on "climb the hill bearing to the left and then to the right by the sign-post to Sway. There is a fine cenotaph here, and a 'folly' known as Peterson's Tower. Then take the Milford road."

Many strange stories are in circulation concerning both the Tower and its founder, Mr. A. T. T. Peterson, and as Hordle Parish in which it stands (in the hundred of Arnewood) at one time formed part of the Ecclesiastical parish of Milford, it seems fitting that an attempt should be made by this Society to place on record some reliable account of the erection of the Tower, and the circumstances which brought it into being.

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My enquiries have been greatly facilitated by an introduction which our Chairman, Dr. Harris, gave me to Mr. Rollo Massy, J.P. of East Boldre who, for many years, was a close personal friend of Mr. Peterson. In addition to furnishing me with many interesting reminiscences of that friendship, Mr. Massy informed me that considerably over 20 years ago he wrote a description of the Tower for the *Western Gazette*, and, thanks to the courtesy of Major Bright, the present owner of Arnewood Court—formerly known as Drum Duan and then as Arnewood Towers, where Mr. Peterson lived for nearly 40 years—in allowing me to see a copy of that article, published in the *Western Gazette Almanac* of 1902, I have been enabled to embody in this Paper the details given hereafter in regard to the dimensions of the Tower and its construction.

But first of all let me give you some account of Mr. Peterson himself.

Andrew Thomas Turton Peterson was born at Wakefield in Yorkshire, in 1813, and died in his chambers in London at No. 4, Verulam Buildings, in 1906, and should any of his friends or relations decide to undertake the task of writing the biography of the 93 years covered by the activities of his robust personality, it will, I am sure, prove a decidedly interesting one.

Even in his early school days he is said to have asserted his independence and self-reliance by running away from school, where he was unhappy, and setting sail before the mast in an orange boat for some destination unknown to any of his people. Apparently he stuck to his job as a seaman for a year or two, and picked up sufficient knowledge of navigation during that time to enable him to take charge of the ship when a mutiny broke out on board, and bring the vessel safely to port. The incident was reported in a newspaper and was brought to the notice of Peterson's uncle, Sir Thomas Turton, who recognised in

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the hero his missing nephew, with the result that happier relations were established for the completion of his education. Evidently he was unable to settle down to an ordinary hum-drum life at home, and set sail once more this time for India, but I have been unable to get any very definite information as to his early career.

Mr. W. B. Greener of Hordle has, however, been good enough to obtain the following particulars concerning the Peterson family history from an old friend of his, and a former Wakefield resident, who writes :-

“The Petersons were merchants doing a large trade with Russia in woollen goods in the 18th century..... Andrew Peterson married, on 29th November, 1787, at Wakefield Parish Church, Elizabeth Nevinson of Wakefield. They had a son, Henry Peterson, who died during his father's lifetime leaving a son, Andrew Thomas Turton Peterson who, on the death of his grandfather, Andrew Peterson on 18th March, 1837, was declared heir-at-law. I have always heard that he ran away to sea because his father insisted on putting him into his counting house.”

On receiving these particulars I asked Mrs. Powell King of Wainsford, Mr. Peterson's grand-daughter, who had previously told me the story about her grandfather running away from school, whether this meant that he had run away to sea a second time. She stated that this second story was quite new to her and she could not say whether or not, when he first went out to India, he went as a sailor.

Mr. Massy now takes up the story, and says that to the best of his recollection Mr. Peterson informed him that when holding a minor appointment at some Salt Works in Ranegunge, he became acquainted with an influential Government official who, recognising his ability, strongly urged him to return to England and undertake the necessary training to enable him to enter the legal profession, in which

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the prospects in India were exceedingly good. This he did, and after passing through Cambridge University he qualified as a barrister and actually practised for a time in the circuit which included Guildford, before returning to India, where for many years he was leader of the Calcutta Bar, and also served on occasion as Acting Judge of the High Court of Calcutta. His abilities enabled him to command enormously high fees and on his retirement several years after the Indian Mutiny, he had amassed a fairly large fortune.

Some doubt exists as to the actual date of his retirement. In the introductory chapter to his book "Essays from the Unseen," to which I shall refer later on, Mr. Peterson writes :-

"Years rolled on ; I found that a tropical climate and hard work had begun to tell on me, and that I must in the order of things give way to younger blood and younger energy ; it became a question of the fittest. So, when close on 60 years of age, I thought it full time to retire."

Evidently this was a lapse of memory or a printer's error as, from other dates mentioned in his book and local records he could not have been much, more than 50 at the time of his retirement.

Apparently he came home by way of Canada, as I am informed by Mrs. Chambers of Downton Lodge that he was a fellow passenger with her father, Col. Raitt, on his return from Montreal by sailing ship, she believes in 1865. The voyage seems to have been enlivened by somewhat heated political discussions—Col. Raitt being a staunch Conservative whilst Mr. Peterson was an equally strong supporter of the Radical Party of that day. Whether or not he had any intention of settling down in Hampshire before he reached England I cannot say, but he certainly made no mention of any such intention to Col. Raitt, as the latter expressed considerable

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surprise when he met his late fellow passenger in Lymington shortly afterwards, and learned that he was about to become a near neighbour.

Whilst staying at an hotel in Lymington, during his negotiations for the purchase of the property in Hordle then known as Drum-Duan, the owner of which was another retired Anglo-Indian (of the name of Marshall), Mr. Peterson had a very unpleasant experience. (I am indebted both to Mrs. Powell King, his grand-daughter, and to Mr. Massy for this story). He had placed some £6,000 in his hand-bag and was on his way to the land agents' office to complete the transaction when, for some reason or other, he went up to his room again leaving the bag on the table in the hall. On his return the bag had disappeared. Fortunately he had taken the numbers of the biggest of the notes, and was able to stop payment of them; but a remarkable fact is that in course of time the greater part of the stolen money was returned to him anonymously.

Shortly after entering into Drum-Duan in 1868 Mr. Peterson purchased additional land from the Peckham family and also from Mr. Massy, and put in hand the work of altering and enlarging the house which was afterwards re-named Arnewood Towers.

During the time he was in India Mr. Peterson doubtless saw a good deal of the extensive use made by the Public Works Department of concrete in building operations, and probably he had of necessity to make a study of the subject in the course of his professional duties as a High Court barrister, most likely in the prosecution or defence of defaulting native contractors.

At any rate he seems to have been so greatly interested in the subject that he determined to put his knowledge into practical experience, all the building work in connection with his estate being carried out in concrete under his

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own personal direction and supervision by local labour, mostly, if not all, unskilled.

About that time there were many men out of work in the neighbourhood, and Mr. Peterson did all he possibly could to relieve the consequent distress by giving employment to these men. It was alleged that he unduly raised the rate of labourers' wages in the district and made it difficult for farmers and other local employers to keep their men: but I am assured by Mr. Massy that there were no reasonable grounds for complaint against Mr. Peterson. It is true that he paid higher wages to his men than the rate prevailing in the district because he did not consider that anything less would give them a fair living wage. He had his own carpenters' and blacksmiths' shops on the premises, and, in the case of ordinary labourers, was careful to take on only men who were genuinely unemployed.

Early in 1872 the arrival at New Forest Lodge of Mrs. Girling and her band of followers, who subsequently became known as the English or New Forest Shakers, caused Mr. Peterson to take up the study of mesmerism, of which he had already had some experience, and "had also seen some of the wonderful things done by Dr. Esdaile of Calcutta in the mesmeric hospital in that city," as he became convinced that Mrs. Girling's power over her proselytes was due to mesmeric influence, and this in turn led to researches into spiritualism, a subject which largely occupied his attention during the next 10 years and which (so he records) entirely altered the whole tenor of his life.

When the various concrete building operations which he had put in hand, some of which were mainly undertaken to provide work for the unemployed, were approaching completion, Mr. Peterson felt greatly troubled in regard to the question of finding further work for these men, some 40 or more in number, and he appears to have sought spiritualistic advice with the result, so he informed his

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friends and relatives, that he received directions from Sir Christopher Wren (through a medium in the usual course) to build the Tower which forms the subject of this paper.

The work was commenced early in 1879, Mr. Peterson being his own architect and builder, both designing (under the direction of his control, Sir Christopher Wren) and carrying out the work under his own supervision.

Christmas of that year brought with it the terrible Tay Bridge disaster, and Mr. Peterson, feeling doubtful as to whether his design for the Tower would stand such a terrific wind pressure, consulted Mr. Rollo Massy who was then in an Engineer's Office at Westminster, and who carefully worked out the necessary calculations and satisfied himself, as far as possible upon the particulars available, that the structure as designed would be quite equal to the highest wind pressure recorded, viz. 55 lbs. per square foot. For various reasons the work progressed slowly and it was not finished until between 1883 and 1885.

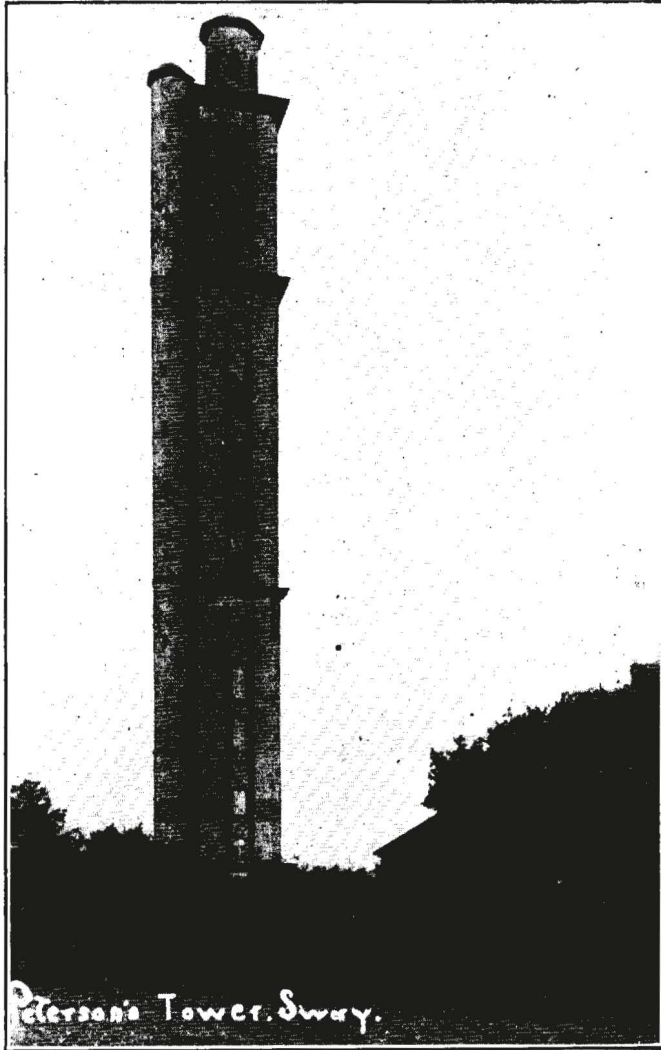
In his description of the Tower Mr. Massy says it is in many ways unique—being the culmination of a vast series of experiments in Portland Cement concrete, extending over a long period. The views Mr. Peterson held on the value of concrete, properly made, as a building material of great strength have since been demonstrated by the bridges of large span constructed by engineers on the Continent and elsewhere. In this country architects are still disputing over the merits of concrete, as shown by the several letters to *The Times* about the end of November and early part of December (1925). One correspondent maintains that as concrete buildings are so comparatively modern we really have no sufficient proof of its lasting qualities, and he considers that "50 years would not be too much experience on which to form a reliable opinion."

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In Arnewood Tower I think we may say that Mr. Peterson has fully demonstrated the valuable and lasting properties of concrete as a building material under an exceptionally severe test, as it has now been standing for over 40 years.

In style "the Tower is a campanile to the square of which, on the north side, is incorporated a hexagon containing a spiral staircase inscribed in a 9 ft. circle, communicating with the upper storeys. In this there are about 330 steps, each moulded separately, laid in position and incorporated in the walls as the building progressed." In the Tower itself there are 13 storeys each about 18 feet square outside measurement. At the base the walls are 2 feet thick and in the upper storeys from eighteen inches to one foot. The lower storey is flanked by two spacious porticos each about 20' x 13½', one on the west side and the other on the east side, with five Gothic doorways moulded in concrete; and the upper storeys (with the exception of the fifth which has only a port hole) are lighted by windows of a Gothic style which were originally made of red concrete by adding a dry red pigment to the concrete whilst mixing, but the colour has faded in course of time and is now barely distinguishable from the rest of the building.

At a height of 92 feet from the ground, about the level of the bottom of the sixth floor windows, the outline is broken by a bold cornice; another occurs between the 10th and 11th storeys and a third at the summit at an altitude of 198 feet where the circular staircase ends. Above this rises an octagonal two-storeyed tower or observatory surmounted with a dome-shaped roof of smaller size than the main tower, and bringing the total height up to 218 feet. From this a magnificent panorama of the surrounding country for many miles is obtainable.



Peterson's Tower. Swary.

Arnewood Tower.

By the courtesy of the present owner, General J. T. Johnston, C.B., I was permitted to ascend the Tower in company with Mr. Massy early in January (1926), but unfortunately the atmosphere was rather misty, and although we could clearly follow the outline of the Isle of Wight from the Needles to the entrance to Southampton Water, our outlook on the mainland did not extend much beyond Christchurch on the one side and Lyndhurst on the other. Mr. Massy informed me, however, that on a clear day it is possible to see the fortifications on Portsdown Hill guarding Portsmouth and Spithead, whilst far away on the West the Purbeck Hills, with Christchurch Priory in the foreground, make a wonderful picture. Looking to the North across the magnificent scenery of the New Forest, it is said that the Spire of Salisbury Cathedral is sometimes distinctly visible.

The method of building the Tower was an entirely original one, the whole of the work being done from the inside without the aid of any outside scaffolding. After the foundations had been laid, specially made wooden frames were fitted in the place where the walls were to be built, blocked apart, and then bolted to vertical battens on each side of the walls. The inside of the framework was then filled up with concrete. Three rows of frames were used each 18 inches high. When the top frame had been filled and rammed, the bottom one, in which the concrete had already set, was removed and placed on the top ready to be used again for a fresh course, leaving the other two to hold the concrete in position until properly hardened. It will thus be seen that there was always a section of three feet of wall drying while the next course of 18 inches was being added and the practice worked out quite satisfactorily.

Where windows and other openings had to be provided for, wooden mouldings and sweeps were inserted in the frame in the required positions and the concrete was then poured in and rammed hard against them, thus leaving

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the required imprint on the finished structure. In some cases the mouldings were made separately in boxes of the required shape and then placed in position in the main structure.

The concrete was made on a board platform on the ground floor. A box containing one cubic yard, with long handles but without top or bottom, was placed on the platform and filled with well washed gravel. The box was then lifted off and the required quantity of Portland cement added and well mixed with the gravel in a dry state. Water was next added and the mixing repeated, till the whole of the concrete was of the required consistency, when it was conveyed to the frames and poured into position and thoroughly rammed.

For the purpose of raising the enormous quantity of material to the required height a derrick was placed on a frame-work at the top of the building, and lifted with it. A pulley was fastened to the ground and a rope carried over this pulley to a corresponding pulley on the derrick. A bucket filled with material was then attached to one end of the rope and a horse to the other, the bucket being lifted at the same rate as the horse moved away from the building. This is a common practice in India in drawing water from deep wells, bullocks being used for the purpose of hauling up the buckets of water, and doubtless this gave Mr. Peterson the idea of raising his building material without any costly machinery.

All the frame moulds, iron and wood work were made in workshops on the premises from drawings prepared by Mr. Peterson, and all the concrete work was done throughout by a band of unskilled labourers organised and trained by himself.

A great deal of the shingle used in the concrete was carted from the beach at Milford, and this also provided

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additional work for local horses and men. Originally the Tower was not protected by a lightning conductor, but some years later it was struck by lightning, fortunately without much damage, and a conductor was subsequently erected.

It was Mr. Peterson's intention to equip the Tower with electric light, and to furnish some of the upper rooms, possibly for conducting meteorological observations, but the Trinity House authorities refused to allow the Tower to be lighted as, owing to its great height, it is one of the first land marks seen by homeward bound vessels.

As a matter of fact Mr. Peterson never furnished any of the rooms in the Tower, and the rumour referred to in the *Western Gazette* Almanac about "all the rooms being well lighted and tastefully furnished" most probably had its origin in the kindly permission given to an artist to occupy one or two of the lower rooms for a short time, when painting in the neighbourhood.

At one time, visitors were freely allowed to ascend the Tower and enjoy the beautiful views from its summit, but the privilege was so much abused by articles being thrown down from the openings, and damage to the walls, woodwork, &c., that the Tower has been closed altogether to the public and only friends of the owner are very occasionally permitted to ascend it.

No information is available as to when and under what circumstances Mr. Peterson first conceived the idea of utilising the Tower as a Mausoleum, but Mr. Massy thinks he had this in his mind from the very commencement, as a ventilating shaft is carried inside the central pillar of the circular staircase from the vault under the ground floor of the Tower up to the top of the coping wall surrounding the top of the main body of the Tower.

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Some time after its completion Mr. Peterson stated that the two oblong cement tables which he had placed in the basement, were intended to be the final resting place of himself and his wife.

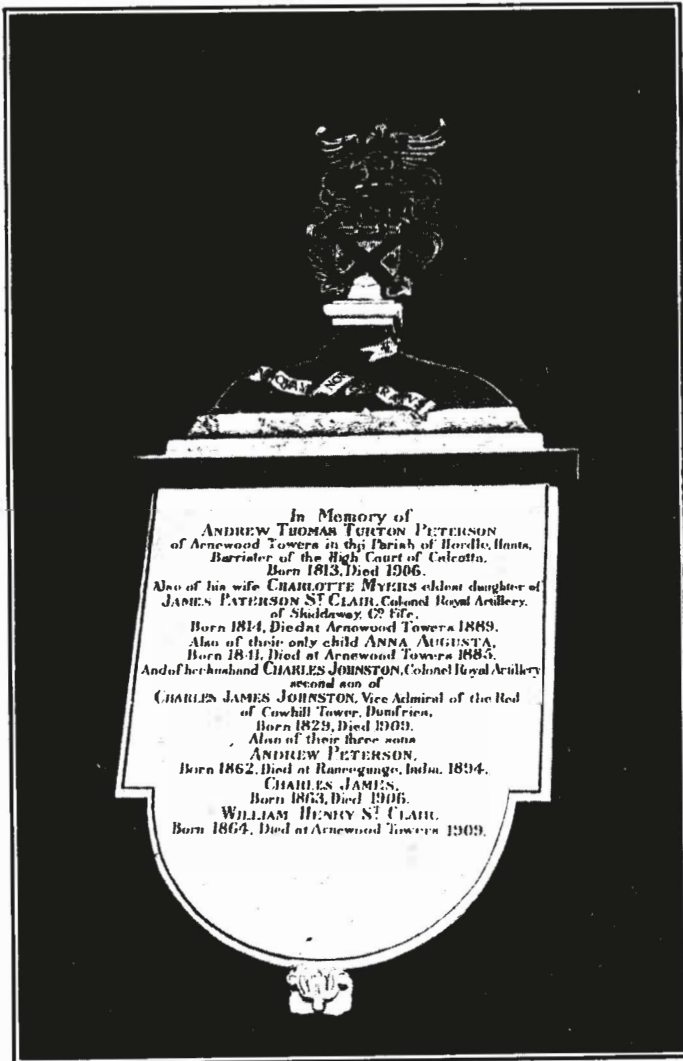
Mrs. Peterson, however, it is said, flatly refused her consent to the proposal so far as she herself was concerned, and declared that at her death she desired a proper Christian burial. She only lived about 5 years after the completion of the Tower, and was duly laid to rest in a grave in the Churchyard of Sway Parish Church in 1889.

Mr. Peterson himself continued to live at Arnewood Towers until a few years before his death, when, owing to failing health, he went to the Canary Islands. There his natural love for building sought a fresh outlet and he built for himself, in a beautiful position at Santa Cruz in Teneriffe, a house after the Spanish style of architecture. He also bought a farm house at Ranion, in the mountains about 2,200 ft. above sea level and 5 or 6 miles from Lagune.

He, however, visited London at intervals in pursuit of his spiritualistic investigations and it was on the occasion of his last such visit that he died at his chambers in 1906, at the ripe old age of 93.

In accordance with his wish, his body was cremated (at Woking) and the ashes placed in an urn and deposited on the right hand stone table in the basement of Arnewood Tower.

Mr. Peterson's only daughter was the wife of Col. Charles Johnston, R.A. By their marriage they had three sons and a daughter, all, I believe, born in India. The eldest son died at Ranegunge in India, in 1894, the second son in England, in 1906, and the third at Arnewood



TABLET IN SWAY PARISH CHURCH.

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Towers in 1909. Their father, Col. Charles Johnston, also died the same year.

Mr. Peterson's grand-daughter, the widow of Mr. Powell King, is still living at Wainsford within sight of her old home, and I am indebted to her for being able to add to the interest of this Paper by showing you a portrait of her grandfather, taken when he was about 90 years of age, and a photo of a memorial tablet which she has caused to be placed in Sway Parish Church, in memory of Mr. and Mrs Peterson and also of her father, mother and three brothers.

Mr. Peterson appears to have taken very little part in the social life of the district in which he resided for so many years. He was a man of simple habits and instead of spending his money on luxuries for himself, he utilised it in making life less hard for those around him. As previously stated his political sympathies were with the Radical party, and he was an ardent adherent of Gladstone until the latter took up Home Rule for Ireland, when he transferred his support to the Liberal-Unionist cause. So keenly did he feel opposed to the Irish Home Rule Bill, that on one occasion, in 1892, he actually organised a local meeting of protest in the Schoolroom at Hordle, and gave, it is said, an excellent address in condemnation of Gladstone's policy.

In regard to his religious beliefs, Mr. Peterson has placed on record in the introductory chapter to his book, "Essays from the Unseen," to which I have previously referred, an interesting account of the mental vicissitudes through which he passed from an early training in the tenets of the Established Church of England by the uncongenial methods of early Victorian days, to indifference, ending in materialism; and of his rescue therefrom by his investigations into mesmerism and spiritualism, ending in

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his becoming a pronounced Theist and a convinced believer in the Immortality of the Soul, coupled with the conviction arrived at by 10 years of closest investigation that "the soul of the departed man, when it can find suitable conditions, can and does communicate with souls still in the body."

In support of his conviction he has published a selection of some 70 communications made to him by various spirit controls, Oriental, ancient Greek and Roman, and Renaissance, all of which were conveyed to him through the lips of a sensitive named William Lawrence, an uneducated labouring man when in a complete state of trance.

In explanation of the "sensitive" speaking in English, a language unknown to many of the supposed speakers, Mr. Peterson expresses his belief that "there is an outside intelligent (although unseen) agency operating on the nervous system (of the sensitive) giving the idea and causing the expression of the idea through his mouth."

"In this state (of trance) he is exactly in the same state as that of a mesmerised patient." Mr. Peterson's account, published under his initials only in 1885, of his investigations into Spiritualism is a most remarkable and interesting volume of 528 pages. Finding that he could not make satisfactory headway under the agency of public professional mediums, he engaged the man, William Lawrence, to sit with him only, which he did for 7 years, and during that time from 1877 to 1885 he received something like 1,000 spirit communications, which he says he faithfully recorded from the lips of the sensitive in a shorthand of his own.

In addition to these communications, Mr. Peterson says he received fully 150 spirit drawings and paintings from the hand of his sensitive, some of which were by the

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celebrated artist Benvenuto Cellini, and three are reproduced in his book; yet in his normal state the sensitive had not the slightest idea of drawing.

On the death of Mr. Peterson, his son-in-law became the owner of the Arnewood property, but when he died in 1909 the Tower, with four adjacent cottages and 17 acres of land, passed into the possession of the present owner (a cousin of Col. Johnston) General James T. Johnston, C.B.

I am told that in manner of speech and action Mr. Peterson was somewhat abrupt, but when his natural reserve could be overcome he was found to be a man of generous social ideals.

One of his chief troubles seems to have been due to the possession of a somewhat hasty temper. Over and over again, in the course of spirit communications, he was warned to strive with strong endeavour to control his temper (Lord Clive, p.78). Plato tells him "your ideas (in the matter of spiritualism) are correct but there is an irascibility of temper which you would do well to conquer. It warps the judgement and often leads to its misdirection. It retards the onward progress of the soul." (page 199.)

Since completing my Paper, I have been fortunate enough to obtain the loan of two of the original spirit paintings which are reproduced in black and white in "Essays from the Unseen," and with the kind permission of the owner, Mr. Brett, who lives in one of Mrs. Powell King's cottages at Hordle, adjoining the Tower grounds, I am able to show them to you this afternoon.

In regard to these pictures Mr. Peterson writes in a preface to his book above referred to:-

In justice to our unseen friends who have so often controlled the sensitive for artistic purposes, a few words of explanation are due with respect to the illustrations

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which appear in this volume. It is impossible to reproduce photographically in black and white the effect of colours, so that the light golden aureole around the head of Thomas Paine and Busiris comes out black. This greatly destroys the fine effect of the originals. Again the sensitive, in trance, has put a varnish on most of his spirit drawings to fix the colours. This has given a dark coat to the countenance of Busiris and Julian, which has made them come out dark in the photographs from which these prints have been produced.

Speaking in his introductory chapter as to the object of the departed spirits in making these communications, Mr. Peterson says (page 40) "They all alike seem to have but one object. The High and Good Spirits to show the consequences in eternity of a life well spent on earth; the others to act as Beacons and Warnings to evil-doers, by recounting the ages of misery and suffering through which they have been going since they passed to the higher life; but all alike, good and bad, speak of God's mercy, and by their very presence scatter to the winds the blasphemy of everlasting punishment. Many of the spirits, who were suffering expiation for their misdoings on earth, have told me that the very fact of their being permitted to speak through the lips of the flesh was to them the dawning of an era of hope, after the many long dark years of expiation and suffering."

