

as that one wished Anne Hathaway had never been born, - yes, - and one should wish so. Just the same, if she had all the money that the visitors paid - how was it that worth going out to hear?

But I have not mentioned yet why I wanted to write to you about Stratford. Should you think it possible, conceivable even, that it had been reserved for me to set forth anything new about the epitaph - "Good friend" &c.? No, it is not possible, still I never heard, and never saw in print, what

came into ^{from something that I learned on this spot.} my mind, or must have occurred to many, but their observations never reached me.

In Shakespeare's time there was, close to the church, a "bone-house", a place into which human bones from the church yard were thrown from time to time to make room for new burials. There they lay, visible at all times, these ghastly objects, - and if the thought even is horrible to us, what must the sight have been to the sensitive, imaginative boy that Shakespeare undoubtedly was? It is easy to fancy the shuddering aversion with which he passed the dreadful place when he must, - we may be sure he kept away

Springfield Jan. 9. 1900

Dear Mr. Deane,

At this late date I send my thanks for your pretty card of greeting at Christmas. It has not been "out of sight & out of mind" for it stands up amongst my numerous unanswered letters and memoranda the only pretty thing there, and when I look up it rests me to dwell upon the little blue flowers for a minute. My cousin wishes to join her thanks with mine for your remembrance of her.

I wrote Mr. Floyd a long letter a few days ago, and asked him to send it to you when convenient. When Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson was abroad, she wrote "encyclicals" to her friends - why should not I? In fact I did all summer. I want to correct a glaring error in this letter to Mr. F. I said that Milton's "Comus", which he wrote in Ludlow Castle, was acted at once by the children of Sir Henry Sidney who was living

there than as governor of Wales. This was a piece of guide book information or else we had it from the custodians of the fine old ruin, I suppose, - but when even I picked it up, a moment's reflection would have shown the impossibility of the statement, for I am not quite an ignominious in history. Sir Philip Sidney of the time of Queen Elizabeth who died at the early age of 32 could not have been acting in a "masque" in the time of Charles I. It was really the Earl of Bridgewater who held Ludlow Castle in Milton's ^{early years} ~~early years~~ and it was his children who took the parts in the play.

I went over from Hereford to Stratford-on-Avon. Now I seem to hear you saying "just as if I wanted to hear that tiresome old story again for the ninety-ninth time." Have patience. When I was in Leamington eight years ago, I would not go to Stratford although it is very near; I heeded not Richard Francis White's advice; but when in Hereford, much farther off, I resolved to go. Mr. White was a great Shakespeare scholar, I reasoned, - I, only a little one - I had no ideas and preconcep-

tions enough to cause any serious damage even if they did get overturned. I don't think my daughters longed for the trip but she made no objection. What came next you know - town crowded with Americans, - house, the house, crowded - all pushed along from room to room not to stop the procession; when I came out I could not have told, from anything I had learned within, whether little William was born in the garret or the cellar - whether he was born at all. At Richard, you were as right for me, as for yourself.

"I had a vision of my own, At, why did I undo it?" Yet there are good things in Stratford, and if the day had not been one of American heat, I should have had a good time after all, - that is, if I had been wise enough to keep away from "the house". For instance - We drove over to Shottery, - too hot to take the pleasant stroll cut on foot. Saw procession of eight deers, listening to the explanations which the poor lady who has charge of the place was repeating for the ten-thousandth time. She told one of

You told me of the Ornithological
Club amongst those that you
belong to; is Mr. Geo. H. Mackay
a member? I know him very well,
and know his great interest in birds.

M-L-O-

2

when he caved; and we may be sure
that the feelings of the child never wore
off, and that the thought of what might
be done with his own bones drew from
him the imploring cry of his epitaph.
Now, to come to the practical conclu-
sion of the matter, I believe that the
grave might be reverently opened, the contents
inspected and recorded for all future time,
and then all restored & left in its present
~~Content~~ condition, with no danger of
calling down the curse upon those who
did the deed - Delia Bacon said there
were documents buried with the man - I
was going to say "the poet," but, according
to her, he was not the poet - documents
that would prove her theory - Her heart
failed her when she went with the proper
assistants to "move the stones," but I was
so strong in this new belief of mine, that I
did not think my heart would fail; only I
should want a goodly number of helpers &
the church brightly lighted and the choir
singing anthems all the time - I have an

Imagination too. But is not this explanation of the epitaph's meaning a plausible one? — more than plausible? And do tell me if the Theory is well-known even if it has somehow escaped me.

Stratford is very interesting, but Mr. White & I took it by the wrong end, so to speak. The way to enjoy it, to get the good of its associations, is to go there for a week, — no less, but even more than that time, — and to go before or after the tourist season. There are places in the town where one could spend hours with pleasure, where we stayed only minutes, and there are delightful places in the neighborhood, for short excursions.

We had but about fifteen minutes to mourn over the interior of the Church. This ought to have been kept in perfect repair of course, but exactly as it was when Shakespeare was buried there; now they are putting

in stained glass windows and embroideries and carvings and all such showy things just as fast as they can get the money for them. I should wait an hour to condemn and mourn, and then ^{would} leave it forever, shaking the dust from my feet. I should guide them next where the boy had stood and played, where the man had walked on more serious business bent.

I shall write you no more letters of this length — a pleasing promise perhaps — though for myself I am delighted when my friend sends me long epistles, if they only wait demand the same in return, and you are perfectly free to answer as & when you please.

Fifth kind regards to Mrs. Deane as well as yourself.
(over) Yours sincerely Maria L. Owen



Owen, Maria L. 1900. "Owen, Maria Louisa Jan. 9, 1900." *Maria L. Owen letters to Walter Deane*

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/160654>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/313716>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

IMLS

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.