

Werk

Titel: Edmund Malone at Stratford and Shakespeare's Bust

Ort: Weimar

Jahr: 1895

PURL: https://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?338281509_0031 | log29

Kontakt/Contact

[Digizeitschriften e.V.](#)
SUB Göttingen
Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1
37073 Göttingen

✉ info@digizeitschriften.de

Edmund Malone at Stratford and Shakspeare's Bust.

The following curious record is from the *Birmingham Weekly Post*:

The Historical Manuscripts Commission is continually bringing to light rare and valuable records, buried long ago in old mansions and muniment rooms. A recent issue of the 'Manuscripts and Correspondence of James, first Earl of Charlemont' (1784—1799), part viii. of the Thirteenth Report, includes a long letter from Malone, November 15, 1793, and which gives a full description of his famous 'daubing' of Shakspeare's bust in Stratford Church, which won for him the following lines:

*Stranger, to whom this Monument is shown,
Invoke the poet's curse upon Malone,
Whose meddling zeal his barbarous taste displays,
And smears his tombstone as he marr'd his plays.*

His letter to Earl Charlemont is now for the first time in print, and is well worth reading as a record of facts:

For these some months past, I have been more intently employed on Shakspeare than ever, endeavouring to form a new life of that extraordinary man, which you may remember I promised in my preface. The corporation of Stratford, early in the summer, very obligingly furnished me with some of their earliest records, which, however, were written in so old a hand that I was some weeks employed merely in reading them. When I had advanced some way in the life, my brother and his family came to Harrogate, in Yorkshire, where I went down to see them, and, after their return to Ireland, I resolved to devote a fortnight to a thorough examination of everything that either Worcester or Stratford could furnish. The latter is in the diocese of Worcester, and consequently several old wills of the Stratfordians were proved there. After spending a few days there, where I thought my trouble very well repaid by finding two wills very material to my purpose, I repaired to Stratford, where, by the aid of my friend, the vicar, and the permission of the mayor, I was allowed a complete rommage through all their papers. I examined, I am confident, not less than three thousand, many of them as old as the time of Henry VI. Out of the whole mass I selected such as I thought might be useful to me, and have since carefully read and arranged them all under distinct heads. I had before laboured hard at the Rolls Office, and in the examination of several registers, and found some new and curious notices; and within these few days I have been lucky enough to meet with a paper in the Record Office in the Tower that also contains some important intelligence. From all these different sources, if I can but manage the various information I have

procured, tolerably well, I hope to make at least a very curious life. In Rowe's account of our great poet there are, I believe, but ten or eleven distinct facts told; and I think I shall prove seven of them to be false, so little reliance is to be placed upon tradition. Two others are extremely doubtful, and the remaining two, which are indisputably true (the time of his birth and death), he had from the parish register. I had flattered myself with the hope of obtaining some of his handwriting, but did not meet with a scrap of it. However, as the children say, 'I burned,' for I found in the archives of Stratford a letter to him, a very fine relic, in excellent preservation, about two inches long by one broad. I ought not to forget to tell you that I did a public service while I was there. His bust, you know, about forty years ago was painted all over with various colours by some players, under the notion of beautifying it. With Mr. Davenport's permission I brought it back to its original state, by painting it a good stone colour, and then, having first erected a small scaffold, we drew him carefully from his niche and took a very good mould from his face, from which Nollekens has since made a mask and then a model; so that we shall now be able to judge whether this representation is entitled to any credit as a resemblance. It appears to have been executed by a very ordinary hand, but there are several little particulars in which it corresponds with the print in the first folio and the Duke of Chandos's picture, particularly a very great distance between the end of the nose and the mouth. Some of these particulars incline me to think that it was done from a mask taken from his face after death. Mr. Steevens will not allow, in his late edition, that there was ever any picture of him; for which, as well as several other things, I mean to trim him as well as I can.
