

CHAPTER XXVI

LOWER GRAMMAR SCHOOL: SHAKSPERE'S CONSTRUCTIONS; *SENTENTIAE PUERILES*, AND *CATO*

BESIDES THE GRAMMAR ITSELF, Shakspeare also shows knowledge of several other conventional books and processes which accompanied it in the lower forms. As Kempe would say, the grammar furnished the precepts. The second step, examples, would be found in the accompanying Latin authors, who were studied for "constructions." By query and answer, Stockwood brings out this the proper sequence.

What is next to be done, after that you haue once perfectly learned the eight parts of speech set downe in your Accedence?

Answer. We do then commonly, and for the most part vse to enter into the rules of construction, that we may be able to learne some easy Autor in the Latin toong, meetest for the capacitie and vnderstanding of yong beginners.¹

This is, of course, the order prescribed in the preface to the grammar itself.

So Brinsley also speaks of "construction, which is the first thing that our children enter into, after their Accedence, and Rules";² and the curricula show that his statement is correct. Brinsley sought to procure

the perfect knowledge of their Accedence and Grammar rules first, and then the practice of that golden rule of construing, together with Grammaticall Translations of the first ordinary schoole Authours, framed according to the same rule, if they be translated rightly in propriety of words, phrase and sense.³

Brinsley has himself sketched the genesis and evolution of his own solution as embodied in the golden rule and grammatical translations, tracing it from Ascham, "Master Askams Schoolmaster whom I principally esteeme and propound."⁴ He then sums up Ascham's system of double translation as derived from Cicero's *De Oratore*,⁵ and claims that his own grammatical translations perform the same things for ordinary schools more surely and speedily. Ascham in-

¹ Stockwood, *Rules of Construction* (1590), p. 1.

² Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius* (1627), p. 89.

³ Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius* (1627), p. 91.

⁴ Brinsley, *Consolation*, p. 32.

⁵ Ascham also alleges the authority of Pliny the Younger (Ascham, *Schoolmaster* (1570), pp. 34r and v).