

## CHAPTER XLV

### UPPER GRAMMAR SCHOOL: SHAKSPERE'S LATIN POETS; JUVENAL, AND PERSIUS

TO HORACE IN UPPER GRAMMAR SCHOOL, Juvenal and Persius were sometimes added. In fact, the three were not infrequently printed together, so that at times to have Horace in hand was also to have Juvenal and Persius. In Juvenal, critics have found the greatest number of parallels with the tenth satire. Indeed, Shakspeare is grievously suspected of having made a direct allusion to it. Hamlet enters reading a book, and upon being questioned as to what it is, says it contains slanders upon old age by a "satirical rogue."

*Pol.* . . . What do you read, my lord?

*Ham.* Words, words, words.

*Pol.* What is the matter, my lord?

*Ham.* Between who?

*Pol.* I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

*Ham.* Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

*Pol.* [*Aside*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.<sup>1</sup>

Hamlet's description of these slanders upon age caused Warburton to identify the satirical rogue as Juvenal, and the slanderous passage as the description of old age in his tenth satire, 188 ff. Farmer, of course, would none of it. Had Shakspeare read Juvenal in the original, says Farmer, he could never have given such false quantities to the names Arviragus and Posthumus in *Cymbeline*. Indeed, his treatment of the latter name shows "that Shakspeare could not possibly have read any one of the Roman poets"<sup>2</sup>—a statement now known to be more false than Shakspeare's quantities. Besides, Farmer adds, some one may have translated the tenth satire of Juvenal before Shakspeare wrote. Farmer, of course, has not touched the problem at all.

<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet*, II, 2, 193-208. In the final speech of Polonius, it is supposed by some that Shakspeare was echoing Horace; cf. above, pp. 515-16.

<sup>2</sup> Malone, *Variorum* (1821), Vol. VII, p. 281.