

CHAPTER XXVII

LOWER GRAMMAR SCHOOL: SHAKSPERE'S CONSTRUCTIONS; *AESOP*

BRINSLEY AND THE CURRICULA agree that Aesop was almost universally the next subject for construction after Cato. Aesop was usually also reached in the second form, but was occasionally continued in the third. In three instances, the work is prescribed for the third form alone. Thus Aesop followed Cato, was regularly reached in the second form, and was not infrequently continued in the third, but was seldom begun so late. Following those on Cato, came Brinsley's instructions on Aesop.

So in *Esops Fables*, besides the examining every piece of a sentence in the Lectures, as thus:

Gallus Gallinaceus, dum vertit stercorarium, offendit gemmam, &c.

Q. Quid offendeat Gallus, dum vertit stercorarium?

R. Offendit gemmam, &c.

Cause the children to tell you, what every Fable is about or against, or what it teacheth, in a word or two. For example, thus:

Q. What Fable haue you against the foolish contempt of learning and vertue, and preferring play or pleasure before it?

A. The Fable of the Cocke, scratching in the dung-hill.

O[r] after this manner:

Q. What Fable haue you against the foolish neglect of learning?

A. The Fable of the Cocke, scratching in the dung-hill.

2. Cause them to make a good and pithy report of the Fable; first in English, then in Latine: and that either in the words of the Author, or of themselves as they can; and as they did in English. For, this practice in English to make a good report of a Fable, is of singular vse, to cause them to vtter their mindes well in English; and would neuer be omitted for that and like purposes.¹

Brinsley insists on the moral interpretation and application of the fables as well as the examination upon the Latin. Aesop's jewel must be learning, even if that interpretation does make but a dunghill of the school for the poor scratching boys!²

¹ Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius* (1627), p. 145.

² As a matter of fact, Brinsley is only making the application to be found in the regular edition, translated by Bullokar thus, "Understand art and wisdom by the precious stone. Understand a foolish man, or one given to pleasure, by the cock. Neither do fools love liberal arts, when they know not the use of them: nor one given to pleasure, for-why, whom only pleasure can please."