

CHAPTER IV

ERASMUS LAID THE EGG; *DE RATIONE STUDII*

IN GRAMMAR SCHOOL, with what subjects would Shakspeare have come in contact, and how would they have been taught? Since we do not have the curriculum of the school at Stratford, it will be necessary first to see if its curriculum can be inferred from what we know of it in the light of the practice of other schools. We shall need, therefore, first to examine surviving sixteenth-century curricula, and then to place Stratford school upon this background. Only then can we examine Shakspeare properly on his grammar school subjects to see how far we can pass him.

I shall find it necessary, therefore, to gather at some length information from the school statutes so as to show what was the common denominator, as it were, of the Elizabethan grammar school, and to see what this common denominator indicates concerning Shakspeare's formal education. The articles by Leach in the *Victoria County Histories* furnish numerous facts, frequently in more authentic form than in Carlisle's mine of information. Watson's discussion of grammar schools to 1660 still reflects its origins from bibliography, and besides centers on the seventeenth-century theorists Brinsley and Hoole, paying comparatively little attention to the sixteenth century. Stowe¹ has examined most of the charters known in 1908, and gives the key to a mass of information; but his treatment is statistical rather than analytical. Neither does he appear to have been conversant with Elizabethan school methods, and consequently it is also to be feared that he has badly misunderstood some of the fundamental technical operations of Elizabethan pedagogy.² I can not, of course, supply the desired treatment of the grammar school as a whole, but perhaps I can sketch the system sufficiently for our present purpose. I shall then unexpectantly hope that someone may give us the badly needed fuller treatment. But I had perhaps best say here that a great deal more work must first be done in collecting the statutes and other fundamental facts before this fuller treatment can be satisfactorily made. It is no holiday job for a dabbler.

¹ Stowe, A. M., *English Grammar Schools in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*.

² Brown, John Howard, *Elizabethan Schooldays* is a pleasant summary of known general facts, but does not aim to be a technical contribution.