

It will be well first of all to orient the Elizabethan grammar school. As Watson remarks,

Substantially, the Grammar Schools stood by the developments of the two subjects of the mediaeval Trivium, viz., grammar and rhetoric, letting the formal study of the third subject of the Trivium, viz. logic, drop out of the school course. They were thus, as indeed Edward Leigh in 1663 describes Eton, Winchester and Westminster, "trivial" schools.⁸

The essentially trivial nature of the grammar school both the theorists and the curricula of the sixteenth century recognize.

For instance, in his *The Education of Children* William Kempe gives us in 1588 a fully coordinated and philosophized scheme of the contemporary grammar school. Kempe recognizes four stages of education before university. The first of these stages preceded grammar school, and was concerned with the necessary preliminary training in the vernacular. Similarly, the fourth stage for which Kempe argues was a kind of postgraduate half year to be devoted to arithmetic and geometry. As Kempe himself recognizes, these subjects are not properly grammar school subjects, but ordinarily belong to the next stage of education. Only the second and third stages of Kempe's system concerned grammar school proper, and divided it into an upper and a lower division. Kempe calls this lower division "the second degree of Schooling, which consisteth in learning the Grammar, and knowledge of other languages" (F 3 v). The chief object of the lower division, presided over by the usher, or lower teacher, was the mastery of grammar. The boy memorized his grammar, and learned how to apply it in speaking and writing. The chief object of the upper division, under the master, was literary finish under the tutelage of rhetoric. Kempe puts it,

Then shall followe the third degree for Logike and Rhetorike, and the more perfect vnderstanding of the Grammar and knowledge of the tongues (G2v).

But the scholar was to learn the precepts of logic chiefly because they were necessary for understanding rhetoric. Thus Kempe recognizes, and builds his grammar school upon, the underlying trivium, as probably every other competent person in the sixteenth century did.

We shall see also that the surviving sixteenth-century curricula regularly make this distinction between the lower division of the grammar school under the usher, devoted to grammar, and the

⁸ Watson, F., *The Beginnings of the Teaching of Modern Subjects in England*, p. xxii.