

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE RHETORICAL TRAINING OF SHAKSPERE:
ERASMUS, *COPIA*

IN DISCRIMINATING SUSENBROTUS from others we have had frequent occasion to point out his close connections with the first book of the *Copia* of Erasmus. This close connection is natural, since Erasmus had constructed his first book with intent to show how to use the tropes and figures in the interests of varying. Naturally, therefore, Susenbrotus kept his eyes closely on *Copia* in constructing his work. Naturally also *Copia* would tend to be coupled with the text on *elocutio*, whether Mosellanus or Susenbrotus. So Eton boys about 1528-30 studied "mosellanys figures or *Copia rerum et verborum* of Erasmus" in the sixth form out of seven, and we have seen how Mosellanus was printed along with a corresponding *tabula* "In Rhetorica Philippi Melanchthonis. Item In Copiam Dvpticem Erasmi Roterodami." The Mosellanus, the *Rhetorica* of Melanchthon, and the *Copia* of Erasmus formed a battery of texts in rhetoric, two of which are specifically required at Eton, and Melanchthon also may have been, for we remember the adaptation which the other Coxe was at this time making of Melanchthon in English. When Mosellanus or Susenbrotus went before, *Copia* was usually not far behind, to show how to apply the *elocutio* learned in those works.

The nature of this work of Erasmus is well brought out by Veltkirchius, who in 1536 published an elaborately annotated edition of it. This became the school type, and is the form printed in England. Veltkirchius explains,

And this copy¹ indeed is twofold; that is, copy of words and of things. Copy of words is born from grammar, copy of things is born from dialectic; but rhetoric brings its ornament of speech, and light to both. So in the first commentary from the beginning to the seventh chapter Erasmus renders the auditor attentive by commendation and praise of copy. And so he wins the benevolence of the reader, for whose benefit and use he promises he is about to teach these most useful precepts concerning twofold copy. Then in chapter seven he more fully explains and defines twofold copy, and enumerates the chief chapters . . . For whatsoever precepts concerning copy and promptitude and facility of speaking have been taught by the grammarians here and there, or by some dialecticians wittily, or by many rhetoricians at

¹ "Copiousness, abundance, fullness, richness," *N. E. D.*