

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### UPPER GRAMMAR SCHOOL: SHAKSPERE'S THEMES

IN THE PROSE SEQUENCE, the formal theme came immediately after the epistle. The reason for this will appear from the current text upon themes. The ultimate classical author upon the type was Aphthonius. In England, Pynson had printed Aphthonius probably as early as 1520, and there are numerous editions in England, beginning in 1572. As we have seen, Rainolde mentions Aphthonius in 1563 as the conventional guide, and Aphthonius is prescribed for the fifth out of six forms at Sandwich in 1580; is required specifically at Rivington in 1566; Norwich, 1566; Durham, 1593; Blackburn, 1597, and is regularly implied when not specifically prescribed. No other text is mentioned. Indeed, it may be fairly said that there was no other. The form of Aphthonius current in England at least from 1572 was that translated into Latin by Rodolphus Agricola and Johannes Maria Cataneus, with the scholia of R. Lorichius. Naturally, therefore, Brinsley refers to this form, though Hoole wishes he could have both the Greek and the Latin. Agricola and his colleagues not only translated from Greek to Latin, but also greatly expanded Aphthonius with illustrations.

These sixteenth century expanders of Aphthonius point out that Quintilian would have children exercised in the minor forms of writing before they take up orations.

Quintilian, that most rare master of eloquence, teaches that youths must first be exercised in the minor works of the faculty of speaking before they are brought to that great work of declamations. But there are fourteen minor works: *Fabula, Narratio, Chria, Sēntentia, Cōfutatio, Confirmatio, Locus communis, Laudatio, Vituperatio, Comparatio, Ethopoeia, Descriptio, Thesis, Legislatio* . . . Of which these are of the kind *Deliberative*, *Fabula, Narratio, Chria, Sententia, Thesis. Judicial, Confirmatio, Confutatio, Locus Communis. Demonstrative, Laus, Vituperatio, Imitatio, Comparatio*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aphthonius (Lyons, 1555), pp. 2-3 (slightly repunctuated); (London, 1575, 1580, neither in S. T. C.), pp. 1v-2r. My copy of 1580 has various compositional jottings on its end leaves, apparently by one John Ashbye. John was quite excited about the Spaniards, and has written two themes in Latin meter against them, but in praise of the English, besides chance jottings. On a loose sheet, someone has varied in English "I desire you may have a happy voyage & a safe returne"; has jotted down in Latin a few noteworthy subjects from his readings, including two from the preface (1626) to Pasor's *Lexicon*; has made jottings from Aphthonius himself *De fabula*; and so on. It will be seen that varying and Greek are alongside composition under the tutelage of Aphthonius, as usual.