

CHAPTER XL

UPPER GRAMMAR SCHOOL: SHAKSPERE'S DECLAMATIONS AND ORATIONS

THEMES LED ON TO ORATIONS or declamations as the crown of grammar school rhetoric. Brinsley is doubtful whether the grammar school exercise really deserves to be dignified by the term oration, though he gives instructions for performing it under the title of declamation. We should remember, however, that Brinsley is not thinking of the great schools, or even of the schools on regular foundations as was that at Stratford, but of the makeshift country schools. As he himself says,

But herein let not any man expect from me great matters, in a lofty kind of verse or prose, or eminency in declamations, orations, or the like, this I leaue to our worthy renowned schooles of Westminster, Eaton, Winchester, and the rest both in London & elsewhere . . . I haue trauelled chiefly for our meaner & ruder schooles.¹

He hopes especially to be of benefit for schools in Ireland, Wales, and Virginia. So for these meaner and ruder schools—meaner and ruder than that at Stratford—Brinsley sketches his idea of how to teach the declamation.

Spoud. But for Declamations what examples or helpes would you vse?

Phil. The Declamation being nothing else but a Theame of some matter, which may be controuerted, and so handled by parts, when one taketh the Affirmatiue part, another the Negatiue, and it may be a third moderateth or determineth betweene both; we haue very good Presidents in the *Thesis* in *Aphthonius*: as in that question handled both Affirmatiue and Negatiue, viz. *Vxor est ducenda, Vxor non est ducenda*.

If it be in a more vehement inuectiue against some vice, we haue sundry examples in *Aphthonius*, in *Loco communi*. As *In villarum incensores, In sacrilegum, In contumacem, In auarum*.

Likewise the seuerall examples there set downe of praise and dispraise, of persons, cities, or the like. So the Presidents in *Aphthonius* of particular actions, in accusing or defence of them, may be great helpes to giue much good direction.

For further patternes, see *Tully* his Orations; and specially the Inuectives against *Catiline*.

In these kinde of Theames, we shall haue farre more vse of those figures of Sentences, which are the very life and strength of an Oration; as of Ex-

¹ Brinsley, *Consolation*, pp. 25-26.