Correlative constructions consist of a relative and a main clause, where the main clause is marked as well as the relative clause. You need to take care with the order in which you translate the different clauses.

Relative clauses are marked by the relative pronoun (see relatives). In a correlative construction the main clause is marked too. These are not usually found in English: a literal translation of a Greek example would look like this:

As many sweets *as* were on the table, *that many* sweets I ate.

The italic words are marked by grammatical words in Greek:

- Relative clause: *as many...as* = Greek relative pronoun (ὅσος, οἷος etc.)
- Main clause: *that many* = Greek deictic pronoun (τόσος, τοιοῦτος etc.)

For example:

ἃ ποιεῖν αἰσχρόν, ταῦτα νόμιζε μηδὲ λέγειν εἶναι καλόν.
(Isocrates On Demonicus 1.15)

Translating this sentence with a word for every word would give us:

What is bad to do, do not think that good even to talk about.

The above sentence doesn't sound very English - more naturally we could write:

Do not think it's good to talk about things it's shameful to do

Similarly, for the initial example about the sweets we would more naturally write:

I ate as many sweets as there were on the table OR I ate all the sweets on the table

It's important to note that in these more natural translations the grammatical words do not map across directly from the Greek construction.

To make this clearer we can consider a fuller example:

ὅσα μὲν οὖν ἐκεῖνος κακὰ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πέπονθε, πολὺ ἂν ἔργον εἴη λέγειν· ὅσα δὲ εἰς ἐμὲ αὐτὸν ἐξημάρτηκεν, ἡγοῦμαι ταῦθ' ὑμῖν προσήκειν ἀκοῦσαι.
It would be a big job to tell you everything that he suffered at his hands. But I think it would be right for you to hear about all the wrongs he did to me.
(Lysias Speeches 3.6)

Here there are two relative clauses, picked up by two main clauses and linked with μέν...δέ.... In the δέ clause there is a correlative construction, which we can translate literally as:

As many things as he did wrong to me, I think it is right for you to hear those things.

More naturally, we swap the order of the clauses round and do not strictly translate the 'deictic' word in the main clause (here ταῦτ'):

I think it is right for you to hear all the wrongs he did to me.

Word order

It is not compulsory for the relative clause to come first in Greek. For example, here the order of the clauses mirrors the normal English order:

τοιοῦτος γίγνου περὶ τοὺς γονεῖς, οἵους ἂν εὔξαιο περὶ σεαυτὸν γενέσθαι τοὺς σεαυτοῦ παῖδας.
Be the kind of children to your parents as you would have your children be to you.
(Isocrates On Demonicus 1.14)

However, it is most usual for the relative clause to come first. Care must therefore be taken when translating to translate the main clause first.

The same advice can be given even when there is no deictic word in the main clause and it is therefore not a 'true' correlative construction. For example:

ὅσας μὲν οὖν εἴληφα, δεσμίους χέρας
σῴζουσι πανδήμοισι πρόσπολοι στέγαις·
ὅσαι δ' ἄπεισιν, ἐξ ὄρους θηράσομαι,
Public servants are watching all the women I caught
And I will chase out of the mountains all those that got away.
(Euripides Bacchae 228-231)

This is not to say that in English the main clause always comes first: just as in Greek, we may put elements first in the sentence to emphasise them (see word order). In the above example, reversing the 'normal' order of the clauses is not impossible:

All those women I caught, the public servants are guarding under lock and key. All those remaining, I will find them in the mountains.

However, in order to make sense of sentences when translating unseen passages, you will make your job easier by translating the main clause first. You can play around with the rhetoric later.