

if it is to evolve to its fullest capabilities. On the effective first causes, the human race no longer has even belief; its belief has been transferred to the process itself, and from the motive force behind the process. Ostrich like, it thrusts its supposedly intellectual head into the sand, and feels secure. It believes in movement, in change, in the process; and calls it progress. Motion is not progress, unless there is an objective; it is merely motion. And motion, not to say commotion, has become a religion; we believe in progress.

A main factor in Shakspeare's growth was his constantly and consciously applied method of imitation—imitation of others, imitation in himself of what he had previously best imitated from others. This was a chief instrument of his growth, constantly and consciously used. It was a chief instrument in the growth of the Renaissance, consciously, constantly, systematically used. In this, Shakspeare was of his age. He could not have been otherwise; there was nothing else to be. To be at all was to be that; but there were different degrees of being. Some learned the lesson effectively, others did not. Where did Shakspeare get the method? He would have got it from the very air, unless he had been immune. Where he got it is relatively unimportant after all. But grammar school was planned as a hothouse of infection, and it is safe to assume that Shakspeare was sufficiently susceptible to catch it there. We know that part of it, at least, he did catch there, because we find him imitating the authors he should have studied there, by methods he should there have been taught. The degree of infection depended partly on the source, but also partly on the subject himself.

And here for the present the case must rest. As thus we strive to pluck the heart from the mystery of existence methinks I hear the ruefully sardonic sanity of Shakspeare saying perhaps, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" and certainly, "I wish you all joy of the worm."