

IS IT SHAKESPEARE ?

IT has been too often forgotten by the holders of creeds that faith is not a fortress, but a camp on the march : a camp too, not of armed men, but of explorers. Till there is nothing more to know we must be moving continually forward, and an undertaking to show us that we are not on the right road is an offer of service, not an attack. We shall do well to accept it readily, but at the risk of the volunteer himself : he must first make trial of the path he recommends and take all the chances of discomfiture, tragical or ludicrous.

There is certainly plenty more to know about the Elizabethan age, and the old guides have not always proved trustworthy on points of detail. Still we have advanced, and the road through Stratford-on-Avon has seemed one of the plainest and the straightest to most of us. The world has paid little heed to those who cry that this is no road at all, that the highway goes in reality by St. Albans, that the sign-posts have been intentionally falsified these three hundred years past. Many an adventurer has plunged with a gallop down that phantom highway, and gone to pot in the end : and here comes another with the same feverish haste and volubility, the same readiness to rush in, the same heroic disregard of obstacles.

It can hardly be from lack of courage that the latest proponent of the question, " Is it Shakespeare ? " ¹ has concealed

¹ " Is It Shakespeare ? " By A Graduate of Cambridge. John Murray. 1903.