

speaker is supposedly Renan. He represents that nineteenth school of scepticism which, though it may have full sympathy with Christianity and so forms a marked contrast to eighteenth century scepticism, yet refuses to accept the supernatural element in our belief.

The attitude of the modern world towards what is apparently the vanishing of the Christian faith seems hall of sadness, hall of terror.

Gone now! All gone across the dark so far,

Sharpening fast, shuddering ever, shuddering ever, shuttering still,

Dwindling into the distance, dies that star.

The star had been the revelation of God but the Christian conception had been gradually vanishing through the destructive agency of criticism.

In the light of this, have we advanced? We shall not look up and see a spirit corresponding to our own; in the universe we shall see ourselves merely. By man himself shall we be most cursed, for he, through the dethronement of the divine, becomes sovereign.

The answer to it all is given by Browning himself in the third part of the poem. Here he shows how each man, though differing widely from his neighbor, becomes, for a time, the centre of his universe. Then, when his part is played, Nature retires, as it were, and centers round another. But we have no need now for particular manifestations of the Divine. Wordsworth, in "Tintern Abbey," had expressed his idea of the one spirit that is present and visible in all things; Shelley had echoed the thought in the "Adonais," and with the same idea, Tennyson brought the "In Memoriam," to a noble close. To these, Browning now joins himself.

"Why! where's the need of Temple,  
when the walls  
Of the world are that? What use of  
swells and lulls,  
From Levite's choir, priests' cries and  
trumpet calls?

That one face, far from vanish, rather  
grows,  
Or decomposes but recompose  
Before my universe that feels and knew.

#### "IN A YEAR."

"In this poem, simple, pathetic, beautiful, we have but a little observation of Nature." It was the story of a maiden who had offered all, wealth, rank, self for a man's love. His love would more than repay. But that love had lasted but a year and, in the poem, we have brought out the girl's feeling of complete desolation. She cannot understand. She sees no purpose in it all. Then in the last and peculiarly Browningesque stanza, we have vaguely suggested a favorite idea of the poet's, that this passion serves only to lead to some higher love.

Dear, the pang is brief,  
Do thy part,  
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed  
Grows belief!  
Well, this cold clay cloud  
Was man's heart,  
Crumble it, and what comes next?  
Is it God?

#### "A WOMAN'S LAST WORD."

"Let's content no more, love  
Strive nor weep:  
All be as before, love  
Only sleep:  
What so wild as words are?  
I and thou  
In debate, as birds are  
Hawk on bough."

Words are superfluous, wild, hurtful in the presence of love. Debate, contention, striving are their only results. Cold knowledge itself turns false.

What so false as truth is,  
False to thee?  
Where the serpent's tooth is,  
Shun the tree—  
Where the apple reddens,  
Never pry—  
Lest we lose our Edens,  
Eve and I.

Then, in the later stanzas, we have ex-