

Dover Beach (Matthew Arnold)

The poem, Dover Beach has been composed by Matthew Arnold. This is a beautiful ode written in elegiac strain. The poem possesses the characteristic of Arnold in many ways. It has been aptly remarked by an eminent critic that Arnold was 'a classic writing in a romantic age', and the present poem is an illustration in painting. The poet has presented here a scene that is full of romance. The sea near the Dover has been flooded by white moonlight and is at its full tide. The shore of France is visible in the distance beyond the sea where a light gleams and is gone. The poet is looking at the scene and inviting his beloved to witness it. Then again he is experiencing a sense of melancholy wistfulness at what he is seeing. He yearns for the sea of faith that once was full but is now sunk to low. All these show him as a romantic poet.

But in his artistry, he is perfectly classical. His style is simple and direct. His pictures are complete and ~~classical~~ clear with a wonderful economy of words. Again the reference to Sophocles shows his classical scholarship and is perfectly appropriate in a poet like him.

As usual with Arnold, there is an application of ideas of life. The poet finds in the melancholy sound of the retreating tide a new thought. He is reminded of the decay of faith in modern life and the supreme need of love which alone is real amid all the vain shows of life. Yet the poem is scarcely to be taken as embodying Arnold's deliberate creed for which we must look rather to such poems as morality, self-dependence and The Rugby Chapel. He regarded poetry as a criticism of life. So he wrote very differently from one who regards poetry as the natural language of the soul. He wrote for the