

and the classical influence is even more marked in his poetry. His father, the Rev. Dr. Arnold, master of Rugby, had made him familiar in boyhood with Homer and the Greek tragedies, and the best literature of Christendom, and he continued to study these throughout his life. He made them the standard of poetical composition. The best lines of Homer, Dante, Milton, and Shakespeare he had at his fingers' ends and used as touchstones to try all poetry. And this study and practice will tell more and more in his favor as time goes on, for it helped to make him what by nature he was already fitted to be—the poet, not of a particular age, or of special social conditions, or of a peculiar intellectual or aesthetic cult, but of universal Art, which reached its highest development in Greece more than two thousand years ago—of Art, which is perennial as love and unchangeable as truth.

Just how great Matthew Arnold is as a poet it is difficult as yet to say. It is safe, to affirm, however, that he is much greater than he is generally supposed to be. In our estimate of poetry, one of the first things to possess ourselves of is the principle that contemporary opinion means almost absolutely nothing. Byron was the rage, then Tennyson, now Browning. But Shakespeare made no hit in his day, and we have no reason to believe that Homer did. The extravagant judgment of Tennyson which prevailed in the popular mind five and ten years ago is already, one is tempted to think, in process of reversion. Tennyson was a great poet in the eyes of the English—almost, in fact, a poet of the first rank—but never so great in the eyes of other peoples, the French, for instance. And posterity will likely decide that the world is larger than English manners and English tastes and English theology in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The more thoughtful of Tennyson's readers, while none can ever become indifferent to the charm of his poetry, have in great measure deserted to Browning. And why? Because Browning is stimulating, and people with healthy minds want stimulation. And good