It Will But Shake & Totter

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Many poems have been written about the turgid sea.  
For instance the one about the man & his lover on the cliffs above the turgid sea. 
It is the English Channel 
& he is Matthew Arnold in 1851. 
Across from him: “ignorant armies”, “clashing by night”. 

The armies are not French. 
They may be stars if what we’ve always thought 
Of as stars tuned out to be the fading chalk of a fading language, 
Turned out to be nothing but the small sparks of rocks 
being struck by chains in the corners of the sky.

Like a Russian novel, the sea roils and cedes, roils and cedes. 
Fish do their fish-like work among its atavistic depths. 

Notice how the moonlight glistens like lacquer 
Between the crests and troughs, 
The heavy, salt-stung air.

All night the moon rings and rings. 
No one answers. The telephone has not yet been invented. 
All night the wind searches the cliffs for a flag, 
A kite, a woman’s hat. It would like 
To reassert its authority, 

It would like to say a few words about 
Divine provenance, but it is 1851 and God is dying or dead. 
Love, I say, let us be true. Let us be. 
The world is but a darkling plain. A hill of beans. 
We are the few & we are the far between.