

Through the drear way, do you expect to see  
Their city dawn afar amid the clouds ?

*Paracelsus.* Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known  
tale ?

For me, I estimate their works and them  
So rightly, that at times I almost dream  
I too have spent a life the sages' way,  
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance  
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance  
An age ago ; and in that act, a prayer  
For one more chance went up so earnest, so  
Instinct with better light let in by Death,  
Than life was blotted out—not so completely  
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,  
Dim memories ; as now, when seems once more  
The goal in sight again : all which, indeed,  
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,  
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me  
That my belief, explained to you or no.

*Festus.* And who am I to challenge and dispute  
That clear belief ? I put away all fear.

*Michal.* Then Aureole is God's commissary ! he shall  
Be great and grand—and all for us !

*Paracelsus.* No, sweet !  
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind  
'Tis well—but there our intercourse must end :  
I never will be served by those I serve.

*Festus.* Look well to this ; here is a plague-spot, here,  
Disguise it how you may ! 'Tis true, you utter  
This scorn while by our side and loving us ;  
'Tis but a spot as yet ; but it will break  
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.  
How can that course be safe which from the first  
Produces carelessness to human love ?  
It seems you have abjured the helps which men  
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,  
Have humbly sought—I dare not thoroughly probe  
This matter, lest I learn too much : let be,  
That popular praise would little instigate  
Your efforts, nor particular approval  
Reward you ; put reward aside ; alone  
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,  
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,  
None share your triumph—still you must retain  
Some one to cast your glory on, to share  
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,  
I would encircle me with love, and raise  
A rampart of my fellows ; it should seem  
Impossible for me to fail, so watched

By gentle friends who made my cause their own ;  
They should ward off Fate's envy—the great gift,  
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,  
Being so a gift to them as well as me.

If danger daunted me or ease seduced,  
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach !

*Michal.* O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,  
Without first calling, in my fancy, both  
To listen by my side—even I ! And you ?  
Do you not feel this ?—say that you feel this !

*Paracelsus.* I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length  
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need  
A further strengthening in these goodly helps !  
My course allures for its own sake—its sole  
Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine  
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.

Your sages say, " if human, therefore weak : "  
If weak, more need to give myself entire  
To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .

No matter ! I deny myself but little  
In waiving all assistance save its own—  
Would there were some real sacrifice to make !

Your friends the sages threw their joys away,  
While I must be content with keeping mine.

*Festus.* But do not cut yourself from human weal ?  
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect  
To spend his life in service to his kind,

For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them  
By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole ! No—  
There are strange punishments for such. Give up

(Although no visible good flow thence) some part  
Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,  
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.

Say, say almost to God—" I have done all  
" For her—not for myself ! "

*Paracelsus.* And who, but lately,  
Was to rejoice in my success like you ?  
Whom should I love but both of you ?

*Festus.* I know not :  
But know this, you, that 'tis no wish of mine

You should abjure the lofty claims you make ;  
Although I can no longer seek, indeed,  
To overlook the truth, that there will be

A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,  
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees :  
—A being knowing not what love is. Hear me !

You are endowed with faculties which bear  
Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation  
To summon meaner spirits to do their will,

And gather round them at their need ; inspiring  
 Such with a love themselves can never feel—  
 Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.  
 I know not if you joy in this or no,  
 Or ever dream that common men can live  
 On objects you prize lightly, but which make  
 Their heart's sole treasure : the affections seem  
 Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste  
 Or die : and this strange quality accords,  
 I know not how, with you ; sits well upon  
 That luminous brow, though in another it scowls  
 An eating brand—a shame. I dare not judge you :  
 The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,  
 There's no alternative—I own you one  
 Of higher order, under other laws  
 Than bind us ; therefore, curb not one bold glance !  
 'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all .

*Michal.* Stay with us, Aureole ! cast those hopes away,  
 And stay with us ! An angel warns me, too,  
 Man should be humble ; you are very proud :  
 And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such !  
 He warns me not to dread a quick repulse,  
 Nor slow defeat, but a complete success !  
 You will find all you seek, and perish so !

*Paracelsus.* (After a pause.) Are these the barren first  
 fruits of my life ?  
 Is love like this the natural lot of all ?  
 How many years of pain might one such hour  
 O'erbalance ? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,  
 What shall I say, if not that I desire  
 To merit this your love ; and will, dear friends,  
 In swerving nothing from my first resolves.  
 See, the great moon ! and 'ere the mottled owls  
 Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems  
 You acquiesce at last in all save this—  
 If I am like to compass what I seek  
 By the untried career I chuse ; and then,  
 If that career, making but small account  
 Of much of life's delight, will yet retain  
 Sufficient to sustain my soul—for thus  
 I understand these fond fears just expressed.  
 And first ; the lore you praise and I neglect,  
 The labours and the precepts of old time,  
 I have not slightly disesteemed. But, friends,  
 Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no rise  
 From outward things, whate'er you may believe :—  
 There is an inmost centre in us all,  
 Where truth abides in fulness ; and around  
 Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,

This perfect, clear perception—which is truth ;  
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh  
Blinds it, and makes all error : and, “ *to know* ”  
Rather consists in opening out a way  
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,  
Than in effecting entry for a light  
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly  
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,  
And you trace back the effluence to its spring  
And source within us, where broods radiance vast,  
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance  
Shall favour : chance—for hitherto, your sage  
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,  
As little knows he what unlocks their fount ;  
And men have oft grown old among their books  
To die, case-hardened in their ignorance,  
Whose careless youth had promised what long years  
Of unremitted labour ne’er performed :  
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,  
That autumn loiterers just as fancy-free  
As the midges in the sun, have oft given vent  
To truth—produced mysteriously as cape  
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.  
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,  
The lowest as the highest ? some slight film  
The interposing bar which binds it up,  
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage  
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence  
Truth issues proudly ? See this soul of ours !  
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed  
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled  
By age and waste, set free at last by death :  
Why is it, flesh enthralled it or enthrones ?  
What is this flesh we have to penetrate ?  
Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth  
And power emerge, but also when strange chance  
Ruffles its current ; in unused conjuncture,  
When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,  
Excess, or languor—oftenest death’s approach—  
Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl  
Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,  
Unmoved—and he goes mad ; and from the wreck  
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,  
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.  
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,  
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh  
Bars in the spirit ! We may not be doomed  
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest  
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God !

But elevate the race at once! We ask  
 To put forth just our strength, our human strength,  
 All starting fairly, all equipped alike,  
 Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—  
 See if we cannot beat thy angels yet!  
 Such is my task. I go to gather this  
 The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed  
 About the world, long lost or never found.  
 And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope?  
 Why ever make man's good distinct from God's?  
 Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?  
 Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me?  
 Mine is no mad attempt to build a world  
 Apart from His, like those who set themselves  
 To find the nature of the spirit they bore,  
 And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams  
 Were only born to vanish in this life,  
 Refused to fit them to this narrow sphere,  
 But chose to figure forth another world  
 And other frames meet for their vast desires,—  
 Still, all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but life  
 Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am priest!  
 And all for yielding with a lively spirit  
 A poor existence—parting with a youth  
 Like theirs who squander every energy  
 Convertible to good, on painted toys,  
 Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though I spurn  
 All adventitious aims, from empty praise  
 To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps  
 Important, and concerns himself for me,  
 May know even these will follow with the rest—  
 As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep  
 Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.  
 My own affections, laid to rest awhile,  
 Will waken purified, subdued alone  
 By all I have achieved; till then—till then . . .  
 Ah! the time-wiling loitering of a page  
 Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring  
 The stately lady's presence whom he loves—  
 The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat  
 Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types!  
 See how they look on me—I triumph now!  
 But one thing, Festus, Michal!—I have told  
 All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say—  
 Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

*Festus.* I do believe!

*Michal.* I ever did believe!

*Paracelsus.* Those words shall never fade from out my  
 brain!

This earnest of the end shall never fade !  
 Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,  
 Two points in the adventure of the diver :  
 One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge ?  
 One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl ?  
 Festus, I plunge !

*Festus.* I wait you when you rise !

## II.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE.—*Constantinople.*—*The house of a Greek conjuror.*  
 1521.

### PARACELSUS

Over the waters in the vapourous west  
 The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold,  
 Behind the outstretched city, which between,  
 With all that length of domes and minarets,  
 Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs  
 Like a Turk verse along a scimeter.  
 There lie, thou saddest writing, and awhile  
 Relieve my aching sight. 'Tis done at last !  
 Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat  
 Could win me to this act ! 'Tis as yon cloud  
 Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top  
 And break upon a molehill. I have dared  
 Come to a pause with knowledge ; scan for once  
 The heights already reach'd, without regard  
 To the extent above ; fairly compute  
 What I have clearly gained ; for once excluding  
 My future which should finish and fulfil  
 All half-gains, and conjectures, and mere hopes—  
 And this, because a fortune-teller bids  
 His credulous enquirers write thus much,  
 Their previous life's attainment, in his book,  
 Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,  
 Make that life perfect : here, accordingly,  
 'Mid the uncouth recordings of such dupes,  
 —Scrawled in like fashion, lie my life's results !  
 These few blurred characters suffice to note  
 A stranger wandered long through many lands,  
 And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few  
 Discoveries, as appended here and there,  
 The fragmentary produce of much toil,  
 In a dim heap, fact and surmise together  
 Confusedly massed, as when acquired ; himself

Too bent on gaining more to calmly stay  
 And scrutinize the little which he gained :  
 Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber  
 And a mad lover's ditty—lies the whole !

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—  
 A whole life,—mine ! No thought to turn to act,  
 No problem for the fancy, but a life  
 Spent and decided, wasted past recall,  
 Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, turn the page  
 And take its chance,—thus : what, concerning “ life ”  
 Does this remembrancer set down ?—“ We say  
 “ ‘ Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’  
 “ 'Tis the mere echo of time ; and he whose heart  
 “ Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech  
 “ Was copied from a human tongue, can never  
 “ Recall when he was living yet knew not this.  
 “ Nevertheless long seasons come and go,  
 “ Till some one hour's experience shows what nought,  
 “ He deemed, could clearer show ; and ever after  
 “ An altered brow, and eye, and gait, and speech  
 “ Attest that now he knows the adage true  
 “ ‘ Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’ ”

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same time  
 As well as any : let my hour speak now !

Now ! I can go on farther ; well or ill—  
 'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance ;  
 I cannot keep on the stretch ; 'tis no back-shrinking—  
 For let the least assurance dawn, some end  
 To my toil seem possible, and I proceed  
 At any price, by any sacrifice :  
 Else, here I pause : the old Greek's prophecy  
 Is like to turn out true—“ I shall not quit  
 “ His chamber till I know what I desire ! ”  
 Was it the light wind sung it, o'er the sea ?

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once  
 Admitted, gains strength every moment ! Rest !  
 Where kept that thought so long ? this throbbing brow  
 To cease—this beating heart to cease—its crowd  
 Of gnawing thoughts to cease !—To dare let down  
 My strung, so high-strung brain—to dare unnerve  
 My harassed o'ertasked frame—to know my place,  
 —My portion, my reward, my failure even,  
 Assigned, made sure for ever !—To lose myself  
 Among the common creatures of the world—  
 To draw some gain from having been a man—

Neither to hope nor fear—to live at length !  
Oh, were it but in failure, to have rest !  
What, sunk insensibly so deep ? Has all  
Been undergone for this ? Was this the prayer  
My labour qualified me to present  
With no fear of refusal ? Had I gone  
Carelessly through my task, and so judged fit  
To moderate my hopes ; nay, were it now  
My sole concern to exculpate myself,  
And lessen punishment,—I could not chuse  
An humbler mood to wait for the decree !  
No, no, there needs not this ; no, after all,  
At worst I have performed my share of the task :  
The rest is God's concern—mine, merely this,  
To know that I have obstinately held  
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot  
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-courts so far  
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,  
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,  
Whose wrath he met unquailing, follow sly  
And fasten on him, fairly past their power,  
If where he stands he dares but stay ; no, no—  
He must not stagger, faint and fall at last,  
—Knowing a charm to baffle them ; behold,  
He bares his front—a mortal ventures thus  
Serene amid the echoes, beams, and glooms !  
If he be priest henceforth, or if he wake  
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,—  
Both well ! What's failure or success to me ?  
I have subdued my life to the one end  
Ordained life ; there alone I cannot doubt,  
That only way I may be satisfied.  
Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond  
The obligation of my strictest vows,  
The contemplation of my wildest bond,  
Which gave, in truth, my nature freely up,  
In what it should be, more than what it was—  
Consenting that whatever passions slept,  
Whatever impulses lay unmaturing,  
Should wither in the germ,—but scarce foreseeing  
That the soil, doomed thus to perpetual waste,  
Would seem one day, remembered in its youth  
Beside the parched sand-tract which now it is,  
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.  
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail  
I felt them not ; yet now, 'tis very plain  
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first—  
If not love, say, like love : there was a time  
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge



Set not remorselessly love's claims aside ;  
 This heart was human once, or why recall  
 Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which the Mayne  
 Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise,  
 And counsel, and grave fears—where is he now ?  
 Or the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?  
 I surely loved them—that last night, at least,  
 When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better : I am saved  
 The sad review of an ambitious youth,  
 Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,  
 But let grow up and wind around a will  
 Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone  
 Purging my path successively of aught  
 Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.  
 I have made life consist of one idea :  
 Ere that was master—up till that was born—  
 I bear a memory of a pleasant life  
 Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn  
 I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,  
 Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell  
 Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,  
 To leave all trouble for futurity,  
 Since I had just determined to become  
 The greatest and most glorious man on earth.  
 And since that morn all life has been forgot ;  
 All is one day—one only step between  
 The outset and the end : one tyrant aim,  
 Absorbing all, fills up the interval—  
 One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up  
 Through a career or friendly or opposed  
 To its existence : life, death, light and shade  
 The shows of the world, were bare receptacles  
 Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,  
 Not instruments of sorrow or delight :  
 For some one truth would dimly beacon me  
 From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink  
 O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble  
 Into assured light in some branching mine,  
 Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—  
 And all the beauty, all the wonder fell  
 On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;  
 Men saw the robe—I saw the august form.  
 So far, then, I have voyaged with success,  
 So much is good, then, in this working sea  
 Which parts me from that happy strip of land—  
 But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too !  
 And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,

And still more faint as the sea widens ; last  
 I sicken on a dead gulph, streaked with light  
 From its own putrifying depths alone !  
 Then—God was pledged to take me by the hand ;  
 Now—any miserable juggler bends  
 My pride to him. All seems alike at length :  
 Who knows which are the wise and which the fools ?  
 God may take pleasure in confounding pride  
 By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—  
 He who stoops lowest may find most—in short,  
 I am here ; and all seems natural ; I start not :  
 And never having glanced behind to know  
 If I had kept my primal light from wane,  
 Am thus insensibly grown—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter,  
 To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin—  
 Plague beneath plague—the last turning the first  
 To light beside its darkness. Better weep  
 My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,  
 In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win  
 Some startling secret in their stead !—a tincture  
 Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed  
 Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change  
 To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it  
 Indignant back, I might convince myself  
 My aims remained as ever supreme and pure !  
 Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,  
 That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,—  
 That, though I sink, another may succeed ?  
 O God, the despicable heart of us !  
 Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject  
 Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;  
 At all events, once launched, to hold straight on :  
 For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit  
 Your gains will bring if they stop short of such  
 Full consummation ! As a man, you had  
 A certain share of strength, and that is gone  
 Already in the getting these you boast.  
 Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—  
 “ Great master, we are here indeed ; dragged forth  
 “ To light : this hast thou done ; be glad ! now, seek  
 “ The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting ! ”

And yet 'tis surely much, 'tis very much,  
 Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,

To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn  
 Arrive with inexhaustible light ; and lo,  
 I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not !  
 While I am left with grey hair, faded hands,  
 And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,  
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?  
 Knowledge it seemed, and Power, and Recompense !  
 Was she who glided through my room of nights,—  
 Who laid my head on her soft knees, and smoothed  
 The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began  
 When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—  
 God ! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake ?  
 God ! Thou art Mind ! Unto the Master-Mind  
 Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone !  
 All else I will endure : if, as I stand  
 Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,  
 I bow me ; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will ;  
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die :  
 And if no trace of my career remain,  
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind  
 In these bright chambers, level with the air,  
 See thou to it ! But if my spirit fail,  
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,  
 Hast thou done well by me ? So do not thou !  
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed !  
 Hold me before the frequence of thy seraphs,  
 And say—" I crushed him, lest he should disturb  
 " My law. Men must not know their strength : behold,  
 " Weak and alone, how near he raised himself ! "

But if delusions trouble me—and Thou,  
 Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help  
 Throughout my toil and wanderings, dost intend  
 To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour—  
 To crown my mortal forehead with a beam  
 From thine own blinding crown—to smile, and guide  
 This puny hand, and let the work so framed  
 Be styled my work,—hear me ! I covet not  
 An influx of new power, an angel's soul :  
 It were no marvel then—but I have reached  
 Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a man !  
 Give but one hour of my first energy,  
 Of that invincible faith—one only hour !  
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance  
 The truths I have, and spy some certain way  
 To mould them, and completing them, possess !

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,  
 And why dispute it now ? I'll not believe

But some undoubted warning long ere this  
 Had reached me : stars would write his will in heaven,  
 As once when a labarum was not deemed  
 Too much for the old founder of these walls.  
 Then, if my life has not been natural,  
 It has been monstrous : yet, till late, my course  
 So ardently engrossed me, that delight,  
 A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,  
 Though such were meant to follow as its fruit,  
 Could find no place in it. True, I am worn ;  
 But who clothes summer, who is Life itself ?  
 God, that created all things, can renew !  
 And then, though after life to please me now  
 Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders  
 Reward from springing out of toil, as changed  
 As bursts the flower from earth, and root, and stalk ?  
 What use were punishment, unless some sin  
 Be first detected ? let me know that first !

*(Aprile, from within)*

I hear a voice, perchance I heard  
 Long ago, but all too low,  
 So that scarce a thought was stirred  
 If really spoke the voice or no :  
 I heard it in my youth, when first  
 The waters of my life outburst :  
 But now their stream ebbs faint, I hear  
 The voice, still low, but fatal-clear—  
 As if all Poets, that God meant  
 Should save the world, and therefore lent  
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused  
 To do his work, or lightly used  
 Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,  
 And mourn, cast off by him forever,—  
 As if these leaned in airy ring  
 To call me ; this the song they sing.

“ Lost, lost ! yet come,  
 With our wan troupe make thy home :  
 Come, come ! for we  
 Will not breathe, so much as breathe  
 Reproach to thee !  
 Knowing what thou sink'st beneath :  
 So we sank in those old years,  
 We who bid thee, come ! thou last  
 Who, a living man, hast life o'erpast,  
 And all together we, thy peers,  
 Will pardon ask for thee, the last  
 Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast

With those who watch, but work no more—  
 Who gaze on life, but live no more :  
 And yet we trusted thou shouldst speak  
 God's message which our lips, too weak,  
 Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem  
 Our fault : such trust, and all, a dream !  
 So we chose thee a bright birth-place  
 Where the richness ran to flowers—  
 Couldst not sing one song for grace ?  
 Nor make one blossom man's and ours ?  
 Must one more recreant to his race  
 Die with unexerted powers  
 And join us, leaving as he found  
 The world, he was to loosen, bound ?  
 Anguish ! ever and for ever ;  
 Still beginning, ending never !  
 Yet, lost and last one, come !  
 How couldst understand, alas,  
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,  
 As their shades did glance and pass  
 Before thee, night and day ?  
 Thou wert blind, as we were dumb ;  
 Once more, therefore, come, O come !  
 How shall we better arm the spirit  
 Who next shall thy post of life inherit—  
 How guard him from thy ruin ?  
 Tell us of thy sad undoing  
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing  
 Our weary task, ever renewing  
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave  
 Our powers, and man they could not save ! ”

—*APRILE enters*—

A spirit better armed, succeeding me ?  
 Ha, ha ! our king that wouldst be, here at last ?  
 Art thou the Poet who shall save the world ?  
 Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine eyes on mine.  
 Thou wouldst be king ? Still fix thine eyes on mine !  
*Paracelsus.* Ha, ha ! why crouchest not ? Am I not  
 king ?  
 So torture is not wholly unavailing !  
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair ?  
 Art thou the Sage I only seemed to be,  
 Myself of after-time, my very self  
 With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,  
 Who robs me of my prize and takes my place  
 For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect ?

I scarcely trusted God with the surmise  
That such might come, and thou didst hear the while !

*Aprile.* Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ; my hair  
Is soft, nay silken soft : to talk with thee  
Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale,  
True, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,  
The siren's ! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained !  
Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest ?  
I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed  
In after-time ; that I should hear the earth  
Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,  
While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

*Paracelsus.* Not so ! I know thee, I am not thy dupe !  
Thou art ordained to follow in my track,  
Even as thou sayest, succeeding to my place,  
Reaping my sowing—as I scorned to reap  
The harvest sown by sages passed away.  
Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,  
As if, except through me, thou had searched or striven !  
Ay ! tell the world ! Degrade me, after all,  
To an aspirant after fame, not truth—  
To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

*Aprile.* Nay, sing them to me ; I shall envy not :  
Thou shalt be king ! Sing thou, and I will stand  
Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,  
And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant  
To fill thy throne—but none shall ever know !  
Sing to me : for already thy wild eyes  
Unlock my heart-springs as some crystal-shaft  
Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount  
After long time—so thou reveal'st my soul !  
All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

*Paracelsus.* (His secret ! my successor's secret—fool !)  
I am he that aspired to know—and thou ?

*Aprile.* I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved !

*Paracelsus.* Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed.

*Aprile.* Thou deem'st  
That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,  
Born for thy fate—because I could not curb  
My yearnings to possess at once the full  
Enjoyment ; yet neglected all the means  
Of realising even the frailest joy ;  
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,  
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—  
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march,  
O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,  
Neglecting nought below for aught above,  
Despising nothing and ensuring all—  
Nor that I could (my time to come again)

Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own :  
 Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.  
 I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

O ye who armed me at such cost,  
 Your faces shall I bear to see  
 With your gifts even yet on me ?—

*Paracelsus.* (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature after all !  
 Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :  
 They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed  
 To echo one foreboding of my heart  
 So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands  
 With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair  
 Which turns to it, as if they were akin :  
 And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue  
 Nearly set free, so far they rise above  
 The painful fruitless striving of that brow  
 And enforced knowledge of those lips, firm set  
 In slow despondency's eternal sigh !  
 Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause ?)  
 Be calm, I charge thee, by thy fealty !  
 Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

*Aprile.* I would love infinitely, and be loved.  
 First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,  
 The forms of earth. No ancient hunter, raised  
 Up to the gods by his renown ; no nymph  
 Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree,  
 Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,  
 Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king,  
 Regal with his white locks ; no youth who stands  
 Silent and very calm amid the throng,  
 His right hand ever hid beneath his robe—  
 Until the tyrant pass ; no law-giver ;  
 No swan-soft woman, rubbed with lucid oils,  
 Given by a god for love of her—too hard !  
 Each passion sprung from man, conceived by man,  
 Would I express and clothe it in its right form,  
 Or blend with others struggling in one form,  
 Or show repressed by an ungainly form.  
 For, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit  
 With a fit frame to execute his will—  
 Ay, even unconsciously to work his will—  
 You should be moved no less beside some strong,  
 Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,  
 Endeavouring to subdue it, and inform it  
 With its own splendour ! All this I would do,  
 And I would say, this done, “ God's sprites being made,  
 “ He grants to each a sphere to be its world,  
 “ Appointed with the various objects needed  
 “ To satisfy its spiritual desires ;

" So, I create a world for these my shapes  
 " Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength ! "  
 And, at their word, I would contrive and paint  
 Woods, valleys, rocks, and plains, dells, sands, and wastes,  
 Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,  
 Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun ;  
 And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking  
 A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice  
 Around them, and fare onward—all to hold  
 The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone—  
 Bronze labyrinths, palace, pyramid, and crypt,  
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples, and terraces,  
 Marts, theatres, and wharfs—all filled with men !  
 Men everywhere ! And this performed in turn,  
 When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes,  
 And fears, and hates, and loves which moved the crowd,—  
 I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,  
 And I would speak : no thought which ever stirred  
 A human breast should be untold ; no passions,  
 No soft emotions, from the turbulent stir  
 Within a heart fed with desires like mine—  
 To the last comfort, shutting the tired lids  
 Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away  
 Beneath the tent-tree by the way-side well :  
 And this in language as the need should be,  
 Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,  
 Now piled up in a grand array of words.  
 This done, to perfect and consummate all,  
 Even as a luminous haze links star to star,  
 I would supply all chasms with music, breathing  
 Mysterious notions of the soul, no way  
 To be defined save in strange melodies.  
 Last, having thus revealed all I could love,  
 And having received all love bestowed on it,  
 I would die : so preserving through my course  
 God full on me, as I was full on men :  
 And He would grant my prayer—" I have gone through  
 " All loveliness of life ; make more for me,  
 " If not for men—or take me to thyself,  
 " Eternal, infinite Love ! "

If thou hast ne'er  
 Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,  
 Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art  
 No king of mine.

*Paracelsus.* Ah me !

*Aprile.* But thou art here !  
 Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end  
 Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss  
 Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad to grasp



At once the prize long patient toil should claim ;  
 Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I  
 Would do as thou, a second time : nay, listen—  
 Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,  
 Our time so brief,—’tis clear if we refuse  
 The means so limited, the tools so rude  
 To execute our purpose, life will fleet,  
 And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.  
 Rather, grow wise in time : what though our work  
 Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,  
 Be crippled every way ? ’Twere little praise  
 Did full resources wait on our good will  
 At every turn. Let all be as it is.  
 Some say the earth is even so contrived  
 That tree, and flower, a vesture gay, conceal  
 A bare and skeleton framework : had we means  
 That answered to our mind ! But now I seem  
 Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon  
 My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,  
 Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the east ;  
 Who heeds them ? I can waive them. Serpent’s scales,  
 Birds’ feathers, downy furs, and fishes’ skins  
 Must help me ; and a little here and there  
 Is all I can aspire to : still my art  
 Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.  
 “ Had I green jars of malachite, this way  
 “ I’d range them : where those sea-shells glisten above,  
 “ Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set  
 “ The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,  
 “ Woven of mere fern and rush and blossoming flag.”  
 Or if, by fortune, some completer grace  
 Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample  
 Of my own land’s completer workmanship,  
 Some trifle little heeded there, but here  
 The place’s one perfection—with what joy  
 Would I enshrine the relic—cheerfully  
 Foregoing all the marvels out of reach !  
 Could I retain one strain of all the psalm  
 Of the angels—one word of the fiat of God—  
 To let my followers know what such things are !  
 I would adventure nobly for their sakes :  
 When nights were still, and still, the moaning sea,  
 And far away I could descry the land  
 Whence I departed, whither I return,  
 I would dispart the waves, and stand once more  
 At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,  
 And fling my gains before them, rich or poor—  
 “ Friends,” I would say, “ I went far, far for them,  
 “ Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds

" Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,  
 " Past tracks of milk-white minute blinding sand,  
 " Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly  
 " Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,  
 " In haste—not pausing to reject the weeds,  
 " But happy plucking them at any price.  
 " To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,  
 " They are scarce lovely: plait and wear them, you!  
 " And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed—  
 " The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,  
 " The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew!"  
 Thus for my higher loves; and thus even weakness  
 Would win me honour. But not these alone  
 Should claim my care; for common life, its wants  
 And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues:  
 The lowest hind should not possess a hope,  
 A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better  
 Than he his own heart's language. I would live  
 For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,  
 As a discoverer's memory is attached  
 To all he finds: they should be mine henceforth,  
 Imbued with me, though free to all before;  
 For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine  
 Should come up crusted o'er with gems: nor this  
 Would need a meaner spirit, than the first:  
 Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed  
 In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit—  
 As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow,  
 And comforts violets in their hermitage.  
 But master, poet, who hast done all this,  
 How didst thou 'scape the ruin I have met?  
 Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,  
 Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,  
 Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,  
 Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey—  
 That will not wait thy summons, will not rise  
 Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand  
 Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd  
 By thee for ever, bright to thy despair?  
 Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er  
 Resolve to single out *one*, though the rest  
 Should vanish, and to give that one, entire  
 In beauty, to the world; forgetting, so,  
 Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power?  
 And, this determined, wert thou ne'er seduced  
 By memories, and regrets, and passionate love,  
 To glance once more farewell? and did their eyes  
 Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until  
 Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,

And laugh that man's applause or welfare once  
 Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when years  
 Had passed, and still their love possessed thee wholly;  
 When from without some murmur startled thee  
 Of darkling mortals, famished for one ray  
 Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,  
 Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells,  
 And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil  
 Thy early mission, long ago renounced,  
 And, to that end, select some shape once more?  
 And did not mist-like influences, thick films,  
 Faint memories of the rest, that charmed so long  
 Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,  
 As whirling snowdrifts blind a man who treads  
 A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm?  
 Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;  
 Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,  
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord!

*Paracelsus.* Clasp me not thus,  
 Aprile! . . . That the truth should reach me thus!  
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not, or I faint!

*Aprile.* My king! and envious thoughts could outrage  
 thee!

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice  
 In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise  
 Go bravely through the world at last! What care  
 Through me or thee? I feel thy breath . . . why, tears?  
 Tears in the darkness—and from thee to me?

*Paracelsus.* Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn  
 To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!  
 We wake at length from weary dreams; but both  
 Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear  
 Appears the world before us, we no less  
 Wake with our wrists and ancles jewelled still.  
 I, too, have sought to know as thou to LOVE—  
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.  
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:  
 What penance canst devise for both of us?

*Aprile.* I hear thee faintly . . . the thick darkness!  
 Even  
 Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew: I speak,  
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face!  
 O, poet, think of me, and sing of me!  
 But to have seen thee, and to die so soon!

*Paracelsus.* Die not, Aprile: we must never part.  
 Are we not halves of one dissevered world,  
 Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part?  
 never!  
 Till thou, the lover, know; and I, the knower,

Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear!  
 We will accept our gains, and use them—now!  
 God, he will die upon my breast! Aprile!

*Aprile.* To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.  
 Hush! hush!

Ha! go you ever girt about  
 With phantoms, powers? I have created such,  
 But these seem real as I!

*Paracelsus.* Whom can you see  
 Through the accursed darkness?

*Aprile.* Stay; I know,  
 I know them: who should know them well as I?—  
 White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

*Paracelsus.* Let him but live, and I have my reward!

*Aprile.* Yes, I see now—God is the PERFECT POET,  
 Who in creation acts his own conceptions.  
 Shall man refuse to be ought less than God?  
 Man's weakness is his glory—for the strength  
 Which raises him to heaven and near God's self,  
 Came spite of it: God's strength his glory is,  
 For thence came with our weakness sympathy  
 Which brought God down to earth, a man like us.  
 Had you but told me this at first! . . . Hush! hush!

*Paracelsus.* Live! for my sake, because of my great sin,  
 To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words  
 And their deep import. Live! 'tis not too late:  
 I have a quiet home for us, and friends.  
 Michal shall smile on you . . . Hear you? Lean thus,  
 And breathe my breath: I shall not lose one word  
 Of all your speech—no little word, Aprile!

*Aprile.* No, no. . . . Crown me? I am not one of you!  
 'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one . . .

*Paracelsus.* Give me thy spirit, at least! Let me love!

I have attained, and now I may depart.

## III.—PARACELSUS

SCENE.—*A chamber in the house of Paracelsus at Basil.*  
1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

*Paracelsus.* Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out!

*Festus.* True, true!

'Tis very fit that all, time, chance, and change  
Have wrought since last we sate thus, face to face,  
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,  
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred  
By your long absence, should be cast away,  
Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal  
Of our affections.

*Paracelsus.* Oh, omit not aught  
Which witnesses your own and Michal's love!  
I bade you not spare that! Forget alone  
The honours and the glories, and the rest,  
You seemed disposed to tell profusely out.

*Festus.* Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive:  
The wondrous Paracelsus—Life's dispenser,  
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools,  
And Courts, shall be no more than Aureole still—  
Still Aureole and my friend, as when we parted  
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained  
As I best could the promptings of my spirit,  
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,  
To the pre-eminent rank which, since your own  
Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,  
Has won for you.

*Paracelsus.* Yes, yes; and Michal's face  
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light,  
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?

*Festus.* Just so.

*Paracelsus.* And yet her calm sweet countenance,  
Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing  
Alone . . . Does she still sing alone, bird-like,  
Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt  
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under  
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice  
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,  
Sate conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves,  
Much wondering notes so simple could divert  
My mind from study. Those were happy days!  
Respect all such as sing when all alone.

*Festus.* Scarcely alone—her children, you may guess,  
Are wild beside her . . .

*Paracelsus.* Ah, those children quite  
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind :  
A girl—she was so perfect, so distinct . . .  
No change, no change ! Not but this added grace  
May blend and harmonise with its compeers,  
And Michal may become her motherhood ;  
But 'tis a change—and I detest all change,  
And most a change in aught I loved long since !  
So, Michal . . . you have said she thinks of me ?

*Festus.* O very proud will Michal be of you !  
Imagine how we sate, long winter-nights,  
Scheming and wondering—shaping your presumed  
Adventures, or devising their reward ;  
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.  
Though it was strange how, even when most secure  
In our domestic peace, a certain dim  
And flitting shade could sadden all ; it seemed  
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,  
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—  
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided  
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt  
To point to one so loved and so long lost.  
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—  
How you would laugh should I recount them now !  
I still predicted your return at last,  
With gifts beyond the greatest vaunt of all,  
All Tritheim's wondrous troop ; did one of which  
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled—  
As well aware of who would prove his peer.  
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,  
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

*Paracelsus.* Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much  
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams  
Of a raw, restless boy !

*Festus.* Say, one whose sunrise  
Well warranted our faith in this full noon !  
Can I forget the anxious voice which said,  
“ Festus, have thoughts like these e'er shaped themselves  
“ In other brains than mine—have their possessors  
“ Existed in like circumstance—were they weak  
“ As I—or ever constant from the first,  
“ Despising youth's allurements, and rejecting  
“ As spider-films the shackles I endure ?  
“ Is there hope for me ? ”—and I answered grave  
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,  
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,  
For all your glorious . . .

*Paracelsus.* Glorious? ay, this hair,  
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine! Recall  
With all the said recallings, times when thus  
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale,  
As now. Most glorious, are they not?

*Festus.* Why . . . why . . .  
Something must be subtracted from success  
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,  
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,  
You are changed—very changed! 'Twere losing nothing  
To look well to it: you must not be stolen  
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

*Paracelsus.* My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a  
doubt:  
By talking, not of me, but of yourself,  
You will best gain your point.

*Festus.* Have I not said  
All touching Michal and my children? Sure  
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks  
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;  
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds  
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope  
Have I that he will honour, the wild imp,  
His namesake! Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask  
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.  
But you are very kind to humour me  
By showing interest in my quiet life;  
You, who of old could never tame yourself  
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

*Paracelsus.* Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,  
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:  
And I am Death's familiar, as you know.  
I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,  
Warped even from his go-cart to one end—  
The living on princes' smiles, reflected from  
A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick  
He left untried; and truly well nigh wormed  
All traces of God's finger out of him.  
Then died, grown old; and just an hour before—  
Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes—  
He sate up suddenly, and with natural voice  
Said, that in spite of thick air and closed doors  
God told him it was June; and he knew well,  
Without such telling, hare-bells grew in June;  
And all that kings could ever give or take  
Would not be precious as those blooms to him.  
Just so, allowing I am passing wise,  
It seems to me much worthier argument  
Why pansies, eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize

From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—  
 Than all fools find to wonder at in me,  
 Or in my fortunes : and be very sure  
 I say this from no prurient restlessness—  
 No self-complacency—itching to turn,  
 Vary, and view its pleasure from all points,  
 And, in this matter, willing other men  
 Should argue and demonstrate to itself  
 The realness of the very joy it tastes.  
 What joy is better than the news of friends  
 Whose memories were a solace to me oft,  
 As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight ?  
 Yes, offer than you wasted thought on me  
 If you were sage, and rightly valued bliss !  
 But there's no taming nor repressing hearts :  
 God knows I need such !—So you heard me speak ?

*Festus.* Speak ? when ?

*Paracelsus.* When but this morning at my class ?  
 There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.  
 Surely you know I am engaged to fill  
 The chair here ?—that 'tis part of my proud fate  
 To lecture to as many thick-sculled youths  
 As please, each day, to throng the theatre,  
 To my great reputation, and no small  
 Danger of Basil's benches, long unused  
 To crack beneath such honour ?

*Festus.* I was there ;  
 I mingled with the throng : shall I avow  
 I had small care to listen ?—too intent  
 On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd  
 A full corroboration of my hopes !  
 What can I learn about your powers ? but they  
 Know, care for nought beyond your actual state—  
 Your actual value ; and yet worship you !  
 Those various natures whom you sway as one !  
 But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

*Paracelsus.* Stop, o' God's name : the thing's by no  
 means yet  
 Past remedy ! Shall I read this morning's work  
 —At least in substance ? Nought so worth the gaining  
 As an apt scholar ! Thus then, with all due  
 Precision and emphasis—(you, besides, are clearly  
 Guiltless of understanding a whit more  
 The subject than your stool—allowed to be  
 A notable advantage) . . .

*Festus.* Surely, Aureole,  
 You laugh at me !

*Paracelsus.* I laugh ? Ha, ha ! thank heaven,  
 I charge you, if't be so ! for I forget



Much—and what laughter should be like ! No less,  
 However, I forego that luxury,  
 Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.  
 True, laughter like my own must echo strange  
 To thinking men ; a smile were better far—  
 So make me smile ! If the exulting look  
 You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long  
 Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles are born  
 Alone of hearts like yours, or shepherds old  
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,  
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,  
 In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.

Never change, Festus : I say, never change !

*Festus.* My God, if he be wretched after all !

*Paracelsus.* When last we parted, Festus, you declared,  
 —Or did your Michal's soft lips whisper words  
 I have preserved ? She told me she believed  
 I should succeed (meaning, that in the search  
 I then engaged in, I should meet success),  
 And yet be wretched : now, she augured false.

*Festus.* Thank heaven ! but you spoke strangely ! could  
 I venture  
 To think bare apprehension lest your friend,  
 Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find  
 Henceforth less sweetness in his own, awakes  
 Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not, dear friend,  
 That I shall leave you, inwardly repining  
 Your lot was not my own !

*Paracelsus.* And this, for ever !  
 For ever ! gull who may, they will be blind !  
 They will not look nor think—'tis nothing new  
 In them ; but surely he is not of them !  
 My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—  
 Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,  
 Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye,  
 Untroubled by the false glare that confounds  
 A weaker vision ; would remain serene,  
 Though singular, amid a gaping throng.  
 I feared you, or had come, sure, long ere this,  
 To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,  
 And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts  
 A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest  
 Past all dispute ! 'Tis vain to fret at it.  
 I have vowed long since that my worshippers  
 Shall owe to their own deep sagacity  
 All further information, good or bad :  
 And little risk my reputation runs,  
 Unless perchance the glance now searching me  
 Be fixed much longer—for it seems to spell,

Dimly, the characters a simpler man  
 Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books  
 Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space  
 Remained unchanged in feature—nay, his brow  
 Seemed hued with triumph: every spirit then  
 Praising; *his* heart on flame the while:—a tale!  
 Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?

*Festus.* Some foul deed sullies then a life which else  
 Were raised supreme?

*Paracelsus.* Good: I do well—most well!  
 Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves  
 With what 'tis past their power to comprehend?  
 I would not strive now: only, having nursed  
 The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,  
 One, at least, not the utter fool of show,  
 Not absolutely formed to be the dupe  
 Of shallow plausibilities alone;  
 One who, in youth found wise enough to choose  
 The happiness his riper years approve,  
 Was yet so anxious for another's sake,  
 That, ere his friend could rush upon a course  
 Mad, ruinous, the converse of his own,  
 His gentler spirit essayed, prejudged for him  
 The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,  
 And warned the weak one in such tender words,  
 Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—  
 That oft their memory comforted that friend  
 When rather it should have increased despair:  
 —Having believed, I say, that this one man  
 Could never lose the wisdom from the first  
 His portion—how should I refuse to grieve  
 At even my gain if it attest his loss,  
 At triumph which so signally disturbs  
 Our old relation, proving me more wise?  
 Therefore, once more reminding him how well  
 He prophesied, I note the single flaw  
 That spoils his prophet's title: in plain words  
 You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—  
 I have not been successful, and yet am  
 Most wretched: there—'tis said at last; but give  
 No credit, lest you force me to concede  
 That common sense yet lives upon the earth.

*Festus.* You surely do not mean to banter me?

*Paracelsus.* You know, or (if you have been wise enough  
 To cleanse your memory of such matters) knew,  
 As far as words of mine could make it clear,  
 That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief  
 Solely in the fulfilment of my plan,  
 Or plot, or whatsoe'er it was; rejoicing

Alone as it proceeded prosperously,  
 Sorrowing alone when any chance retarded  
 Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days!  
 Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,  
 I have pursued this plan with all my strength;  
 And having failed therein most signally,  
 Cannot object to ruin, utter and drear  
 As all-excelling would have been the prize  
 Had fortune favoured me. I scarce do right  
 To vex your frank good spirit, late rejoiced  
 By my supposed prosperity, I know,  
 And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,  
 Would well agree to let your error live,  
 Nay, strengthen it with fables of success:  
 But mine is no condition to refuse  
 The transient solace of so rare a chance,  
 My solitary luxury, my Festus—  
 Accordingly I venture to put off  
 The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,  
 Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,  
 Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend!  
 Not that he needs retain his aspect grave;  
 That answers not my purpose; for 'tis like,  
 Some sunny morning—Basil being drained  
 Of its wise population, every corner  
 Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,  
 Here Œcolampadius, looking worlds of wit,  
 Here Castellanus, as profound as he,  
 Munsterus here, Frobenius there,—all squeezed,  
 And staring, and expectant,—then, I say,  
 'Tis like that the poor zany of the show,  
 Your friend, will choose to put his trappings off  
 Before them, bid adieu to cap and bells  
 And motley with a grace but seldom judged  
 Expedient in such cases:—the grim smile  
 That will go round! It is not therefore best  
 To venture a rehearsal like the present  
 In a small way? Where are the signs I seek,  
 The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn  
 Due to all quacks? Why, this will never do!

*Festus.* These are foul vapours, Aureole; nought  
 beside!

The effect of watching, study, weariness.  
 Were there a spark of truth in the confusion  
 Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus  
 Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard  
 These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.  
 You would not trust a trouble thus to me,  
 To Michal's friend.

*Paracelsus.* I have said it, dearest Festus!  
The manner is ungracious, probably ;  
More may be told in broken sobs, one day,  
And scalding tears, ere long : but I thought best  
To keep that off as long as possible.  
Do you wonder still ?

*Festus.* No ; it must oft fall out  
That one whose labour perfects any work,  
Shall rise from it with eyes so worn, that he  
Of all men least can measure the extent  
Of what he has accomplished. He alone,  
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,  
Can clearly scan the little he effects :  
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,  
Estimate each aright.

*Paracelsus.* This worthy Festus  
Is one of them, at last ! 'Tis so with all !  
First, they set down all progress as a dream,  
And next, when he, whose quick discomfiture  
Was counted on, accomplishes some few  
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,  
They look for every inch of ground to vanish  
Beneath his tread, so sure they judge success !

*Festus.* Few doubtful steps ? when death retires before  
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,  
Broken in body, or subdued in mind,  
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise  
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?  
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams  
Of what delights them most—swooning at once  
Into a sea of bliss, or rapt along  
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?  
When we may look to you as one ordained  
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees  
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?  
When . . .

*Paracelsus.* Rather, when and where, friend, did you get  
This notable news ?

*Festus.* Even from the common voice ;  
From those whose envy, daring not dispute  
The wonders it decries, attributes them  
To magic and such folly.

*Paracelsus.* Folly ? Why not  
To magic, pray ? You find a comfort doubtless  
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about  
Us or our doings : once we were judged worth  
The devil's tempting . . . I offend : forgive me,  
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole  
Was fair enough as prophesyings go ;

At fault a little in detail, but quite  
Precise enough in the main ; accordingly  
I pay due homage : you guessed long ago  
(The prophet !) I should fail—and I have failed.

*Festus.* You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed  
Your youth have not been realised as yet ?  
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto ?  
Or that their innate . . .

*Paracelsus.* As I said but now,  
You have a very decent prophet's fame,  
So you but shun details here. Little matters  
Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,  
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools ;  
Or whether my weak wits are overcome  
By what a better spirit would scorn : I fail.  
And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme,  
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.  
I say confusedly what comes uppermost ;  
But there are times when patience proves at fault,  
As now : this morning's strange encounter—you  
Beside me once again ! you, whom I guessed  
Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)  
No friend have I among the saints at rest,  
To judge by any good their prayers effect—  
I knew you would have helped me !—So would He,  
My strange competitor in enterprise,  
Bound for the same end by another path,  
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,  
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close—  
How goes it with Aprile ? Ah, your heaven  
Receives not into its beatitudes  
Mere martyrs for the world's sake ; heaven shuts fast :  
The poor mad poet is howling by this time !  
Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,  
I could not quite repress the varied feelings  
This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent,  
And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still  
Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what  
In my time was a gate) fronting the road  
From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

*Festus.* Trifle not !  
Answer me—for my sake alone. You smiled  
Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy  
Yourself might blot the else so bright result ;  
Yet if your motives have continued pure,  
Your earnest will unfaltering, if you still  
Remain unchanged, and if, in spite of this,  
You have experienced a defeat that proves  
Your aims for ever unattainable—

I say not, you would cheerfully resign  
 The contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—  
 But sure you would resign it ne'ertheless.  
 You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even love ;  
 No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat  
 Your very words : once satisfied that knowledge  
 Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,  
 Yourself the first. But how is the event ?  
 You are defeated—and I find you here !

*Paracelsus.* As though " here " did not signify defeat !  
 I spoke not of my little labours here—  
 But of the break-down of my general aims :  
 That you, aware of their extent and scope,  
 Should look on these sage lecturings, approved  
 By beardless boys, and bearded dotards,—these  
 As a fit consummation of such aims,  
 Is worthy notice ! A professorship  
 At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,  
 And think my life was reasonably drained  
 Of life's delights to render me a match  
 For duties arduous as such post demands,—  
 Far be it from me to deny my power  
 To fill the petty circle lotted out  
 From infinite space, or justify the host  
 Of honours thence accruing : so, take notice.  
 This jewel dangling from my neck preserves  
 The features of a prince, my skill restored  
 To plague his people some few years to come :  
 And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth  
 For me, but that the droll despair which seized  
 The vermin of his household, tickled me.  
 I came to see : here, drivelled the physician,  
 Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault ;  
 There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope  
 Had promised him interminable years ;  
 Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth  
 With some undoubted relic—a sudary  
 Of the Virgin ; while some other dozen knaves  
 Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)  
 Were actively preparing 'neath his nose  
 Such a suffumigation as, once fired,  
 Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.  
 I cursed the doctor, and upset the brother ;  
 Brushed past the conjuror ; vowed that the first gust  
 Of stench from the ingredients just alight  
 Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,  
 Not easily laid ; and ere an hour, the prince  
 Slept as he never slept since prince he was.  
 A day—and I was posting for my life,

Placarded through the town as one whose spite  
 Had near availed to stop the blessed effects—  
 Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded  
 By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—  
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up  
 Hard by, in the abbey—raised the prince to life ;  
 To the great reputation of the seer,  
 Who, confident, expected all along  
 The glad event—the doctor's recompense—  
 Much largess from his highness to the monks—  
 And the vast solace of his loving people,  
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,  
 The prince was pleased no longer to defer  
 The burning of some dozen heretics,  
 Remanded 'till God's mercy should be shown  
 Touching his sickness, as a prudent pledge  
 To make it surer : last of all were joined  
 Ample directions to all loyal folk  
 To swell the complement, by seizing me  
 Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—had endeavoured  
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct  
 The prince's cure, and frustrate Heaven, by help  
 Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.  
 By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks  
 Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest  
 Of further favours. This one case may serve  
 To give sufficient taste of many such,  
 So let them pass : those shelves support a pile  
 Of patents, licenses, diplomas, titles,  
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy :  
 They authorise some honour : ne'ertheless,  
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;  
 He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his friend,  
 And him " I raised " (nay, read it) " from the dead " .  
 I weary you, I see ; I merely sought  
 To show, there's no great wonder after all  
 That while I fill the class room, and attract  
 A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay ;  
 And therefore need not scruple to accept  
 The utmost they can offer—if I please :  
 For 'tis but right the world should be prepared  
 To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants  
 Of one like me, used up in serving her.  
 Just as the mortal, whom the Gods in part  
 Devoured, received in place of his lost limb  
 Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think ;  
 You mind the fables we have read together.

*Festus.* You do not think I comprehend a word :  
 The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough

To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath ;  
But surely you must feel how vague and strange  
These speeches sound.

*Paracelsus.* Well, then : you know my hopes ;  
I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain ;  
That truth is just as far from me as ever ;  
That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow  
On that account is vain, and further effort  
To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing,  
As useless : and all this was taught to me  
By the convincing, good old-fashioned method  
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

*Festus.* Dear Aureole ! you confess my fears were just ?  
God wills not . . .

*Paracelsus.* Now, 'tis this I most admire—  
The constant talk men of your stamp keep up  
Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear  
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,  
To see the will in question characterized  
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot  
Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.  
I know as much of any will of God's,  
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,  
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows  
That plague him every way, and there, of course,  
Where least he suffers, longest he remains—  
My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,  
Subdued, but not convinced. I know as little  
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped  
Better things in my youth. I simply know  
I am no master here, but trained and beaten  
Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,  
Until some further intimation reach me,  
Like an obedient drudge : though I prefer  
To view the whole thing as a task imposed,  
Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—  
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision  
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;  
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—  
Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring  
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length  
Part of the flesh it eats. I hate no more  
A host of petty, vile delights, undreamed of  
Or spurned, before ; such now supply the place  
Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods  
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots  
Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and pale,  
Chill mushrooms, coloured like a corpse's cheek.

*Festus.* If I interpret well what words I seize,



It troubles me but little that your aims,  
 Vast in their dawning, and most likely grown  
 Extravagantly since, have baffled you.  
 Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater praise ;  
 Because they are too glorious to be gained,  
 You do not blindly cling to them and die ;  
 You fell, but have not sullenly refused  
 To rise, because an angel worsted you  
 In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer  
 And though too harsh and sudden is the change  
 To yield content as yet—still, you pursue  
 The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy-strewn.  
 'Tis well : and your reward, or soon or late,  
 Will come from Him whom no man serves in vain.

*Paracelsus.* Ah, very fine ! For my part, I conceive

The very pausing from all further toil,  
 Which you find heinous, would be as a seal  
 To the sincerity of all my deeds.  
 To be consistent I should die at once ;  
 I calculated on no after-life ;  
 Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)  
 Here am I with as passionate regret  
 For youth, and health, and love so vainly lost,  
 As if their preservation had been first  
 And foremost in my thoughts ; and this strange fact  
 Humbled me wondrously, and had due force  
 In rendering me the more disposed to follow  
 A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—  
 You will not understand—but 'twas a man  
 With aims not mine, but yet pursued like mine,  
 With the same fervor and no more success.  
 Who perished in my sight ; but summoned me  
 As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,  
 To serve my race at once ; to wait no longer  
 'Till God should interfere in my behalf,  
 And let the next world's knowledge dawn on this ;  
 But to distrust myself, put pride away,  
 And give my gains, imperfect as they were,  
 To men. I have not leisure to explain  
 How since, a strange succession of events  
 Has raised me to the station you behold,  
 Wherein I seem to turn to most account  
 The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive  
 Some feeble glimmering token that God views  
 And may approve my penance : therefore here  
 You find me—doing most good or least harm :  
 And if folks wonder much and profit little  
 'Tis not my fault ; only, I shall rejoice

When my part in the farce is shuffled through,  
And the curtain falls ; I must hold out 'till then.

*Festus.* 'Till when, dear Aureole ?

*Paracelsus.* 'Till I'm fairly thrust  
From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle  
And even professors fall : should that arrive,  
I see no sin in ceding to my bent.  
You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us  
We sin : God's intimations rather fail  
In clearness than in energy : 'twere well  
Did they but indicate the course to take  
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain  
Be spared a further sample ! Here I stand,  
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

*Festus.* Remain but firm on that head ; long ere then  
All I expect will come to pass, I trust :  
The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.  
Meantime, I see small chance of such event :  
They praise you here as one whose lore, divulged  
Already, eclipses all the past can show,  
But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,  
Are faint anticipations of a glory  
About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds  
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content  
That he depart.

*Paracelsus.* This favour at their hands  
I look for earlier than your view of things  
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day  
Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,  
The novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe  
Whose innate blockish dullness just perceives  
That unless miracles (as seem my works)  
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight  
To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous set  
Who bitterly hate established schools, so help  
The teacher that oppugns them, and o'erthrows,  
'Till having planted his own doctrine, he  
May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;  
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves  
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,  
But seeks, by flattery and nursing craft,  
To force my system to a premature  
Short-lived development . . . Why swell the list ?  
Each has his end to serve, and his best way  
Of serving it : remove all these, remains  
A scantling—a poor dozen at the best—  
That really come to learn for learning's sake ;  
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,  
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

*Festus.* 'Tis no encouraging picture : still these few  
Redeem their fellows. Once implant the germ,  
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

*Paracelsus.* God grant it so !  
I would make some amends : but if I fail,  
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,  
That much is in my method and my manner,  
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,  
Which hinders of reception and result  
My doctrine : much to say, small skill to speak !  
Those old aims suffered not a looking-off,  
Though for an instant ; therefore, only when  
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap  
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth  
So dearly purchased—only then I found  
Such teaching was an art requiring cares  
And qualities peculiar to itself ;  
That to possess was one thing—to display,  
Another. Had renown been in my thoughts,  
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it !  
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

*Festus.* If it be so, which nowise I believe,  
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation  
To leave a labour to so little use :  
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

*Paracelsus.* A task, a task ! . . .  
But wherefore hide from you  
The whole extent of degradation, once  
Engaged in the confession ? Spite of all  
My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,  
Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn  
If when the old task really is performed,  
And my will free once more, to choose a new,  
I shall do aught but slightly modify  
The nature of the hated one I quit.  
In plain words, I am spoiled : my life still tends  
As first it tended. I am broken and trained  
To my old habits ; they are part of me.  
I know, and none so well, my darling ends  
Are proved impossible : no less, no less,  
Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when  
Their faint ghosts sit with me, and flatter me,  
And send me back content to my dull round ?  
How can I change this soul ?—this apparatus  
Constructed solely for their purposes  
So well adapted to their every want,  
To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;  
This intricate machine, whose most minute,  
Least obvious motions have their charm to me

Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,  
 An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,  
 A property, a fitness, I explain,  
 And I alone:—how can I change my soul?  
 And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked  
 Under that soul's dominion—used to care  
 For its bright master's cares, and quite subdued  
 Its proper cravings—not to ail, nor pine,  
 So the soul prosper—whither drag this poor,  
 Tried, patient body? God! how I essayed,  
 To live like that mad poet, for awhile,  
 To catch Aprile's spirit, as I hoped,  
 And love alone! and how I felt too warped  
 And twisted and deformed! what should I do,  
 Even tho' released from drudgery, but return  
 Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,  
 To my old life—and die as I begun!  
 I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake  
 Of beauty only; nor can drink in balm  
 From lovely objects for their loveliness;  
 My nature cannot lose her first intent;  
 I still must hoard, and heap, and class all truths  
 With one ulterior purpose: I must know!  
 Would God translate me to his throne, believe  
 That I should only listen to his words  
 To further my own aims! For other men,  
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around,  
 And I were happy could I quench as they  
 This mad and thriveless longing, be content  
 With beauty for itself alone: alas!  
 I have addressed a frock of heavy mail,  
 Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;  
 And now the forest-creatures fly from me,  
 The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more!  
 Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrives  
 I shall o'ertake the company, and ride  
 Glittering as they!

*Festus.* I think I apprehend

What you would say: if you, in truth, design  
 To enter once more on the life thus left,  
 Seek not to hide that all this consciousness  
 Of failure is assumed.

*Paracelsus.* My friend, my friend,  
 I speak, you listen; I explain, perhaps  
 You understand: there our communion ends.  
 Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?  
 When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state  
 We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft  
 The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,

And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare  
 My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up  
 My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem  
 Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?  
 That is the crowning operation claimed  
 By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,  
 And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you  
 Secure good places—'twill be worth your while.

*Festus.* Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said  
 To call for this? I judged from your own words.

*Paracelsus.* Oh, true! A fevered wretch describes the ape  
 That mocks him from the bed-foot, and you turn  
 All gravely thither at once: or he recounts  
 The perilous journey he has late performed,  
 And you are puzzled much how that could be!  
 You find me here, half stupid and half mad:  
 It makes no part of my delight to search  
 Into these things, much less to undergo  
 Another's scrutiny; but so it chances  
 That I am led to trust my state to you:  
 And the event is, you combine, contrast,  
 And ponder on my foolish words, as though  
 They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—  
 Here, loathsome with despair, and hate, and rage!  
 Is there no fear, no shrinking, or no shame?  
 Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?  
 Must I go deeper? Aye or no?

*Festus.* Dear friend . . .

*Paracelsus.* True: I am brutal—'tis a part of it;  
 The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter,  
 How should you know? Well then, you think it strange  
 I should profess to have failed utterly,  
 And yet propose an ultimate return  
 To courses void of hope: and this, because  
 You know not what temptation is, nor how  
 'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.  
 You are to understand, that we who make  
 Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:  
 There is not one sharp volley shot at us,  
 Which if we manage to escape with life,  
 Though touched and hurt, we straight may slacken pace  
 And gather by the way-side herbs and roots  
 To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm—  
 No; we are chased to life's extremest verge.  
 It will be well indeed if I return,  
 A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!  
 I would forget hints of another fate,  
 Significant enough, which silent hours  
 Have lately scared me with.

*Festus.* Another! and what?

*Paracelsus.* After all, Festus, you say well: I stand  
A man yet—I need never humble me.  
I would have been—something, I know not what;  
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl:  
There are worse portions than this one of mine;  
You say well!

*Festus.* Ah! . . .

*Paracelsus.* And deeper degradation!  
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,  
And vanity, should become the chosen food  
Of a sunk mind; should stifle even the wish  
To find its early aspirations true;  
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—  
An atmosphere of craft, and trick, and lies;  
Should make it proud to emulate or surpass  
Base natures in the practices which woke  
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!  
Utter damnation is reserved for Hell!  
I had immortal feelings—such shall never  
Be wholly quenched—no, no!

My friend, you wear  
A melancholy face, and truth to speak,  
There's little cheer in all this dismal work;  
But 'twas not my desire to set abroad  
Such memories and forebodings. I foresaw  
Where they would drive; 'twere better you detailed  
News of Lucerne or Zurich; or I described  
Great Egypt's flaring sky, or Spain's cork-groves.

*Festus.* I have thought now: yes, this mood will pass away.  
I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,  
And easily ravel out a clue to all.  
These are the trials meet for such as you,  
Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal  
Is to be plied with trials manifold.  
Look round! The obstacles which kept the rest  
Of men from your ambition, you have spurned;  
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them best,  
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought  
Avails to awe, save these delusions, bred  
From its own strength, its selfsame strength, disguised—  
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole! Since  
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,  
The fawn his rustling bough, mortals their cares,  
And higher natures yet their power to laugh  
At these entangling fantasies, as you  
At trammels of a weaker intellect.  
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts!  
I know you.

*Paracelsus.* And I know you, dearest Festus !  
And how you love unworthily ; and how  
All admiration renders blind.

*Festus.* You hold  
That admiration blinds ?

*Paracelsus.* Aye, and alas !

*Festus.* Nought blinds you less than admiration  
will.

Whether it be that all love renders wise  
In its degree ; from love which blends with love—  
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself  
In silent mad idolatry of some  
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,  
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored :—  
I say, such love is never blind ; but rather  
Alive to every the minutest spot  
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed  
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of :  
Love broods on such : what then ? When first perceived  
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,  
To overflow those blemishes with all  
The glow of general goodness they disturb ?  
—To make those very defects an endless source  
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears ?  
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand  
Made even for much proved weak ? no shrinking-back  
Lest, rising even as its idol sinks,  
It nearly reach the sacred place, and stand  
Almost a rival of that idol ? Trust me,  
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,  
To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits,  
Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,  
Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause ;  
And least from those who hate, who most essay  
By contumely and scorn to blot the light  
Which will have entrance even to their hearts ;  
For thence will our Defender tear the veil  
And show within each heart, as in a shrine,  
The giant image of Perfection, grown  
In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned  
In the untroubled presence of its eyes !  
True admiration blinds not ; nor am I  
So blind : I call your sin exceptional ;  
It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds  
Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God !  
I speak of men ; to common men like me  
The weakness you confess endears you more—  
Like the far traces of decay in suns :  
I bid you have good cheer !

*Paracelsus.* *Præclarè ! Optimè !*  
 Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest  
 Instructing Paracelsus ! yet, 'tis so.  
 Come, I will show you where my merit lies.  
 'Tis in the advance of individual minds  
 That the slow crowd should ground their expectation  
 Eventually to follow—as the sea  
 Waits ages in its bed, 'till some one wave  
 Out of the multitude aspires, extends  
 The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,  
 Over the strip of sand which would confine  
 Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,  
 Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,  
 And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad  
 If all my labours, failing of aught else,  
 Suffice to make such inroad, and procure  
 A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;  
 For, whatso'er my notions of true knowledge  
 And a legitimate success, may be,  
 I am not blind to my undoubted rank  
 When classed with others : I precede my age :  
 And whoso wills, is very free to mount  
 These labours as a platform, whence their own  
 May have a prosperous outset : but, alas !  
 My followers—they are noisy as you heard,  
 But for intelligence—the best of them  
 So clumsily wield the weapons I supply  
 And they extol, that I begin to doubt  
 Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones  
 Would not do better service than my arms  
 Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall  
 Sooner before the old awkward batterings  
 Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

*Festus.* I would supply that art, then, and withhold  
 Its arms until you have taught their mystery.

*Paracelsus.* Content you, 'tis my wish ; I have recourse  
 To the simplest training. Day by day I seek  
 To wake the mood, the spirit which alone  
 Can make those arms of any use to men.  
 Of course, they are for swaggering forth at once  
 Graced with Ulysses' club, Achilles' shield—  
 Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles !  
 Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step !  
 A proper sight to scare the crows away !

*Festus.* Pity you choose not, then, some other method  
 Of coming at your point. The marvellous art  
 At length established in the world bids fair  
 To remedy all hindrances like these :  
 Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore



Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit  
 For raw beginners ; let his types secure  
 A deathless monument to after-times ;  
 Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy  
 The ultimate effect : sooner or later,  
 You shall be all-revealed.

*Paracelsus.* The old dull question  
 In a new form ; no more. Thus : I possess  
 Two sorts of knowledge ; one,—vast, shadowy,  
 Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued :  
 The other consists of many secrets, learned  
 While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few  
 First principles which may conduct to much :  
 These last I offer to my followers here.  
 Now bid me chronicle the first of these,  
 My ancient study, and in effect you bid me  
 Revert to the wild courses just abjured :  
 I must go find them scattered through the world.  
 Then, for the principles, they are so simple  
 (Being chiefly of the overturning sort),  
 That one time is as proper to propound them  
 As any other—to-morrow at my class,  
 Or half a century hence embalmed in print :  
 For if mankind intend to learn at all,  
 They must begin by giving faith to them,  
 And acting on them ; and I do not see  
 But that my lectures serve indifferent well :  
 No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,  
 For all their novelty and rugged setting.  
 I think my class will not forget the day  
 I let them know the gods of Israel,  
 Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,  
 Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,—  
 Were blocks !

*Festus.* And that reminds me, I heard something  
 About your waywardness : you burned their books,  
 It seems, instead of answering those sages.

*Paracelsus.* And who said that ?

*Festus.* Some I met yesternight  
 With Æcolampadius. As you know, the purpose  
 Of this short stay at Basil was to learn  
 His pleasure touching certain missives sent  
 For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he  
 Apprized me that the famous teacher here  
 Was my old friend.

*Paracelsus.* Ah, I forgot ; you went . . .

*Festus.* From Zurich with advices for the ear  
 Of Luther, now at Wittemburg—(you know,  
 I make no doubt, the differences of late

With Carolostadius)—and returning sought  
Basil and . . .

*Paracelsus.* I remember. Here's a case, now,  
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn  
The books you mention: pray, does Luther dream  
His arguments convince by their own force  
The crowds that own his doctrine? No, indeed:  
His plain denial of established points  
Ages had sanctified and men supposed  
Could never be oppugned while earth was under  
And heaven above them—points which chance, or time  
Affected not—did more than the array  
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny!  
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening  
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting  
The thunderbolt which does not come; and next,  
Reproachful wonder and enquiry: those  
Who else had never stirred, are able now  
To find the rest out for themselves—perhaps  
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,  
—As never will my wise class its instructor.  
And you saw Luther?

*Festus.* 'Tis a wondrous soul!

*Paracelsus.* True: the so-heavy chain which galled  
mankind  
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all  
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker  
Of our own projects—we who long before  
Had burst its trammels, but forgot the crowd,  
We should have taught, still groaned beneath the  
load:

This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!  
Whatever be my chance or my despair,  
What benefits mankind must glad me too:  
And men seem made, though not as I believed,  
For something better than the times produce:  
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights  
From Suabia have possessed, whom Munzer leads,  
And whom the duke, the landgrave, and the elector  
Will calm in blood! Well, well—'tis not my world!

*Festus.* Hark!

*Paracelsus.* 'Tis the melancholy wind astir  
Within the trees; the embers too are grey,  
Morn must be near.

*Festus.* Best ope the casement: see,  
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,  
Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep  
The tree-tops all together! Like an asp,  
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

*Paracelsus.* Ay ; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree  
By the hour, nor count time lost.

*Festus.* So you shall gaze :  
Those happy times will come again . . .

*Paracelsus.* Gone ! gone !  
Those pleasant times ! Does not the moaning wind  
Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains  
And bartered sleep for them ?

*Festus.* It is our trust  
That there is yet another world to mend  
All error and mischance.

*Paracelsus.* Another world !  
And why this world, this common world, to be  
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,  
To some fine life to come ? Man must be fed  
With angel's food, forsooth ; and some few traces,  
Of a diviner nature which look out  
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him  
In a supreme contempt for all provision  
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks  
Which constitute his essence, just as truly  
As here and there a gem would constitute  
The rock, their barren bed, a diamond.  
But were it so—were man all mind—he gains  
A station little enviable. From God  
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,  
Intelligence exists which casts our mind  
Into immeasurable shade. No, no :  
Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity ;  
These are its signs, and note, and character ;  
And these I have lost !—gone, shut from me for ever,  
Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more !  
See morn at length. The heavy darkness seems  
Diluted ; grey and clear without the stars ;  
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if  
Some snake that weighed them down all night, let go  
His hold ; and from the east, fuller and fuller  
Day, like a mighty river, is flowing in ;  
But clouded, wintry, desolate, and cold :  
Yet see how that broad, prickly, star-shaped plant,  
Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,  
All thick and glistening with diamond dew.  
And you depart for Einsiedeln this day :  
And we have spent all night in talk like this !  
If you would have me better for your love,  
Revert no more to these sad themes.

*Festus.* One favour,  
And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;  
Unwilling to have fared so well, the while

My friend has changed so sorely : if this mood  
 Shall pass away—if light once more arise  
 Where all is darkness now—if you see fit  
 To hope, and trust again, and strive again ;  
 You will remember—not our love alone—  
 But that my faith in God's desire for man  
 To trust on his support, (as I must think  
 You trusted,) is obscured and dim through you ;  
 For you are thus, and this is no reward.  
 Will you not call me to your side, dear friend ?

## IV.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE.—A House at Colmar, in Alsatia. 1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

*Paracelsus.* (To John Oporinus, his secretary.) *Sic itur ad astra!* Dear Von Visenburg  
 Is scandalised, and poor Torinus paralysed,  
 And every honest soul that Basil holds  
 Aghast ; and yet we live, as one may say,  
 Just as though Liechtenfels had never set  
 So true a value on his sorry carcass,  
 And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.  
 We live ; and shall as surely start to-morrow  
 For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy scathe  
 To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused  
 With a delicate blush—no fainter tinge is born  
 I' th' shut heart of a bud : pledge me, good John—  
 “ Basil ; a hot plague ravage it, with Pütter  
 “ To stop the plague ! ” Even so ? Do you too share  
 Their panic—the reptiles ? Ha, ha ! faint through *them*,  
 Desist for *them* !—while means enough exist  
 To bow the stoutest braggart of the tribe  
 Once more in crouching silence—means to breed  
 A stupid wonder in each fool again,  
 Now big with admiration at the skill  
 Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes ;  
 And, that done, means to brand each slavish brow  
 So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,  
 That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it  
 Out of the furrow of that hideous stamp  
 Which shows the next they fawn on, what they are,  
 This Basil with its magnates one and all,  
 Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,  
 Dispatch my trusty John ; and what remains  
 To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip  
 Are yet to be completed, see you hasten

This night ; we'll weather the storm at least : to-morrow  
 For Nuremburg ! Now leave us ; this grave clerk  
 Has divers weighty matters for my ear, (*Oporinus goes out*)  
 And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,  
 I am rid of this arch-knave that follows me  
 As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep ; at last  
 May give a loose to my delight. How kind,  
 How very kind, my first, best, only friend !  
 Why this looks like fidelity. Embrace me :  
 Not a hair silvered yet ! Right : you shall live  
 Till I am worth your love ; you shall be proud,  
 And I—but let time show. Did you not wonder ?  
 I sent to you because our compact weighed  
 Upon my conscience—(you recal the night  
 At Basil, which the gods confound)—because  
 Once more I aspire ! I call you to my side ;  
 You come. You thought my message strange ?

*Festus.* So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger  
 Has mingled his own fancies with the words  
 Purporting to be yours.

*Paracelsus.* He said no more,  
 'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave  
 Said fifty-fold more roughly. Well-a-day,  
 'Tis true ; poor Paracelsus is exposed  
 At last ; a most egregious quack he proves,  
 And those he overreached must spit their hate  
 On one who, utterly beneath contempt,  
 Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard  
 Bare truth ; and at my bidding you come here  
 To speed me on my enterprise, as once  
 Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend ?

*Festus.* What is your purpose, Aureole ?

*Paracelsus.* Oh, for purpose,  
 There is no lack of precedents in a case  
 Like mine ; at least, if not precisely mine,  
 The case of men cast off by those they sought  
 To benefit . . .

*Festus.* They really cast you off ?  
 I only heard a vague tale of some priest,  
 Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,  
 Knowing his life's worth best ; and how the judge  
 The matter was referred to, saw no cause  
 To interfere, nor you to hide your full  
 Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother  
 His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame  
 That Basil soon was made no place for you.

*Paracelsus.* The affair of Liechtenfels ? the shallowest  
 cause,

The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence !  
 I knew it, I foretold it from the first,  
 How soon the stupid wonder you mistook  
 For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise  
 Of better things to come—would pall and pass ;  
 And every word comes true. Saul is among  
 The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased  
 To play off the mere marvels of my art—  
 Fantastic gambols leading to no end—  
 I got huge praise ; but one can ne'er keep down  
 Our foolish nature's weakness : there they flocked,  
 Poor devils, jostling, swearing, and perspiring,  
 Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !  
 I had a kindness for them, which was right ;  
 But then I stopped not till I tacked to that  
 A trust in them and a respect—a sort  
 Of sympathy for them : I must needs begin  
 To teach them, not amaze them ; “ to impart  
 “ The spirit which should instigate the search  
 “ Of truth : ” just what you bade me ! I spoke out.  
 Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,  
 Filed off—“ the sifted chaff of the sack,” I said,  
 Redoubling my endeavours to secure  
 The rest ; when lo ! one man had stayed thus long  
 Only to ascertain if I supported  
 This tenet of his, or that ; another loved  
 To hear impartially before he judged,  
 And having heard, now judged ; this bland disciple  
 Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,  
 Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most :  
 That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,  
 Did it because my bye-paths, once proved wrong  
 And beaconed properly, would commend again  
 The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,  
 Though not their squeamish sons ; the other worthy  
 Discovered divers verses of St. John,  
 Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,  
 But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,  
 The cholic, and what not :—*quid multa* ? The end  
 Was a clear class-room, with a quiet leer  
 From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance  
 From those in chief, who, cap in hand, installed  
 The new professor scarce a year before ;  
 And a vast flourish about patient merit  
 Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure  
 Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—  
 Of which the example was some luckless wight  
 Whom my arrival had discomfited,  
 But now, it seems, the general voice recalled

To fill my chair, and so efface the stain  
 Basil had long incurred. I sought no better—  
 Nought but a quiet dismissal from my post ;  
 While from my heart I wished them better suited,  
 And better served. Good night to Basil, then !  
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe  
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them  
 The pleasure of a parting kick.

*Festus.* — You smile :

Despise them as they merit !

*Paracelsus.* If I smile,  
 'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned  
 Flesh into stone : this courteous recompense ;  
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit  
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache  
 At gangrened blotches, eating poisonous blains,  
 The ulcered barky scurf of leprosy  
 Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing  
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,  
 —I say that, could you see as I could show,  
 I would lay bare to you these human hearts  
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since  
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.

O, sages have discovered we are born  
 For various ends—to love, to know : has ever  
 One stumbled, in his search, on any signs  
 Of a nature in him formed to hate ? To hate ?  
 If that be our true object which evokes  
 Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate !

*Festus.* But I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole !

*Paracelsus.* What purpose were the fittest now for me ?  
 Decide ! To sink beneath such ponderous shame—  
 To shrink up like a crushed snail—undergo  
 In silence and desist from further toil,  
 And so subside into a monument  
 Of one their censure blasted ; or to bow  
 Cheerfully as submissively—to lower  
 My old pretensions even as Basil dictates—  
 To drop into the rank her wits assign me,  
 And live as they prescribe, and make that use  
 Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow—  
 Proud to be patted now and then, and careful  
 To practise the true posture for receiving  
 The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance,  
 When they shall condescend to tutor me.  
 Then one may feel resentment like a flame,  
 Prompting to deck false systems in Truth's garb,  
 And tangle and entwine mankind with error,  
 And give them darkness for a dower, and falsehood

For a possession : or one may mope away  
 Into a shade through thinking ; or else drowse  
 Into a dreamless sleep, and so die off :  
 But I, but I—now Festus shall divine !  
 —Am merely setting out in life once more,  
 Embracing my old aims ! What thinks he now ?

*Festus.* Your aims ? the aims ?—to know ? and where  
 is found

The early trust . . .

*Paracelsus.* Nay, not so fast ; I say,  
 The aims—not the old means. You know what made me  
 A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you know  
 The when and the how : hardly those means again !  
 Not but they had their beauty—who should know  
 Their passing beauty, if not I ? But still  
 They were dreams, so let them vanish : yet in beauty,  
 If that may be. Stay—thus they pass in song !

[*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes  
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls  
 Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes  
 From out her hair : (such balsam falls  
 Down sea-side mountain pedestals,  
 From summits where tired winds are fain,  
 Spent with the vast and howling main,  
 To treasure half their island-gain.)

And strew faint sweetness from some old  
 Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud,  
 Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;  
 And shred dim perfume, like a cloud  
 From chamber long to quiet vowed,  
 With moth'd and dropping arras hung,  
 Mouldering the lute and books among  
 Of queen, long dead, who lived there young.

Mine, every word !—and on such pile shall die  
 My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,  
 Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,  
 Or why abjure them ? So I made this rhyme  
 That fitting dignity might be preserved :  
 No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs  
 Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse  
 Halts like the best of Luther's psalms !

*Festus.* But, Aureole,

Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—  
 Did you know all, indeed ! I have travelled far  
 To learn your wishes. Be yourself again !  
 For in this mood I recognize you less



Than in the horrible despondency  
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy ;  
But rather let me gaze on that despair  
Than hear these incoherent words, and see  
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye !

*Paracelsus.* Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,  
I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?  
Aprile was a poet, I make songs—

'Tis the very augury of success I want !  
Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

*Festus.* Joyous ! and how ? and what remains for joy ?  
You have declared the ends (which I am sick  
Of naming) are impracticable.

*Paracelsus.* Aye,  
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool !  
Listen : my plan will please you not, 'tis like ;  
But you are little versed in the world's ways.  
This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—

I will accept all helps ; all I despised  
So rashly at the outset, equally

With early impulses, late years have quenched :  
I have tried each way singly—now for both !

All helps—no one sort shall exclude the rest.  
I seek to KNOW and to ENJOY at once,

Not one without the other as before.  
Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause

Once more, as first I dreamed, it shall not balk me  
Of the meanest, earthliest, sensualest delight

That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,  
And why spurn gain, however small ? My soul

Can die then, nor be taunted " what was gained ?"  
Nor, on the other hand, if pleasure meets me

As though I had not spurned her hitherto,  
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion

With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,  
Glorious with visions of a full success !

*Festus.* Success !  
*Paracelsus.* And wherefore not ? Why not prefer

Results obtained in my best state of being,  
To those derived alone from seasons dark

As the thoughts they bred ? When I was best—my youth  
Unwasted—seemed success not surest too ?

It is the nature of darkness to obscure.  
I am a wanderer : I remember well

One journey, how I feared the track was missed,  
So long the city I desired to reach

Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar  
Flashed through the circling clouds ; conceive my joy !

Too soon the vapours closed o'er it again,

But I had seen the city, and one such glance  
 No darkness could obscure : nor shall the present  
 A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,  
 Destroy the vivid memories of the past.  
 I will fight the battle out !—a little tired,  
 Perhaps—but still an able combatant.  
 You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow ?  
 But I can turn even weakness to account :  
 Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least  
 To push the ruins of my frame, whereon  
 The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,  
 Into a heap, and send the flame aloft !  
 What should I do with age ? so sickness lends  
 An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all  
 We boast of : mind is nothing but disease,  
 And natural health is ignorance.

*Festus.*

I see

But one good symptom in this notable plan :  
 I feared your sudden journey had in view  
 To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes ;  
 'Tis not so : I am glad.

*Paracelsus.*

And if I pleased

To spit on them, to trample them, what then ?  
 'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools  
 Provoke it : I had spared their self-conceit,  
 But if they must provoke me—cannot suffer  
 Forbearance on my part—if I may keep  
 No quality in the shade, must needs put forth  
 Power to match power, my strength against their strength,  
 And teach them their own game with their own arms—  
 Why be it so, and let them take their chance !  
 I am above them like a God—in vain  
 To hide the fact—what idle scruples, then,  
 Were those that ever bade me soften it,  
 Communicate it gently to the world,  
 Instead of proving my supremacy,  
 Taking my natural station o'er their heads,  
 Then owning all the glory was a man's,  
 And in my elevation man's would be !  
 But live and learn, though life's short ; learning, hard !  
 Still, one thing I have learned—not to despair :  
 And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,  
 I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room  
 Must wait awhile for its best ornament,  
 The penitent empiric, who set up  
 For somebody, but soon was taught his place—  
 Now, but too happy to be let confess  
 His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate  
 (*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)