Concerning medicine

Mankind’s diseases and attendant woe
Would simply have melted as warmth does snow
If potion, scalpel, professional time,
Once dispensed, were a certain anodyne.
Touched by the modern medical wand,
Our sufferings are compelled to respond
By vanishing. All stricken men made new?
Alas; beguiling wizardry; untrue.
The man-made oases, brilliant and pure,
That brim with life-saving knowledge and cure,
Entice expectation, bias our glance
Past deserts. Of medical ignorance.

Pain-forged human hope does with huge relief
Wilfully transmute into firm belief,
When marvellous advances – Lourdes-like flowers,
Intoxicate our discerning powers.
Thus we unload at the medical totem
All our flawed flesh; and less overt problems –
Uneasy minds, sad brittle lives that bleed,
Loneliness, and even spiritual need.
Neat solutions called ‘treatment’ often lie,
Seldom solving, prescribed to pacify.
So far from being invariable balm
These instant tokens can wreak needless harm.

Limits of medical power and resource,
Demand we prudently channel its course.
Sometimes, concede; time and nature may mend
Or gently direct to dignified end.
Give treatment only to those whom we’re sure
Are incontraindically helped or cured.
Well meaning meddlesome zeal is perverse,
Medicine must never make peoples’ lives worse.
Yet, shorn of its fake omnipotent role
And yoked to a wider view of the whole,
Ennobled medicine! we can proudly say,
Essential servant of our mortal clay!

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