

For the Repertory.

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Fierce factions rage,

Which e'en the public danger can assuage.

Crucford.

In my last essay I threw out some observations on the present state of medicine in this place, and propose in this paper to continue the subject, that one more effort may be made to root out a formidable and growing evil.

I hope I have said sufficient to prove that the science which I am defending takes a most comprehensive field of knowledge into its circle. It must of course appear plain that in order to become a physician in its true and extensive signification, a man must appropriate not a little of his time and serious attention. Two or three writers have exhibited the insignificance of the pretensions of a man without study to the character of a physician, in a very striking light. If, say they, it requires six or seven years to qualify an artist to practice the most lowly and mechanical craft, in which none but the most ordinary exertions of intellect are requisite, how much longer time should be necessary to acquire the principles and practice of an exalted and extensive science, in which genius,

† Polesia is a name given to the palatine of Brest, in Lithuania; Brest, Bric scia, or Brossici, is situated upon the banks of the river Bog.

‡ There are several towns of this name in Russia. This seems to have been Novogorod Velicki, or Great Novogorod, the capital of a duchy of the same name.

judgment and all the noblest faculties of the human mind are indispensable! Let any man of common capacity take a view of the subject; let him behold the science of physic in all its relations; let him see the bearings and dependencies of all natural knowledge on the subject of the physicians inquiry; let him read the works of some of the writers on medicine; and establish in his mind its leading principles, and then he will be enabled to judge whether the healing art be of easy or of difficult attainment.

There are few persons, those destined to the practice of physic excepted, who give themselves any trouble to inquire into the merits of medicine. Such only, however, who have some knowledge of the subject are capable of perceiving the gross and abominable blunders into which quackery falls. The ignorant pretender in medicine calls not reason to his aid, he has frequently no powers of reason to call; his compounds are made up at hazard, and after having been administered to a few who would most probably have recovered by the aid of nature alone, and their efficacy attested by nobody knows who, they are dignified by some sounding title as would make us believe that we are in possession of the elixir of immortality so much desired and at more than one time supposed to have been discovered by the quacks of former ages, and are then puffed off to the public in the newspapers of the day. The wise and the well informed disdain such contemptible pretences to superior ingenuity, but the credulous and the ignorant consume their property, endanger their constitutions and their lives, by the injudicious and intemperate use of powerful and noxious drugs, and thus encourage hypocrisy and fraud, and repress the conscious and unassuming merit that, despising the petty arts of accumulating wealth, will not, unasked, afford rational and efficacious advice which might benefit the constitution and prolong existence.

The rational and scientific physician pretends not to be infallible. He knows the deficiencies of his art and never conceals them; but he also knows that unless reason is the medium, no cure can be effected; and he is confident from the analysis of patent medicines and experience of their powers, that it is unreasonable to administer them with any expectation of their producing salutary effects on the system. He knows that if men who have been studious in acquiring every thing which belongs to the profession of physic, scientifically speaking, are unable to conquer disease, it is hardly to be expected that persons of little or no education should be capable of performing what reason was unable to do.

Man appears to be, naturally, a credulous animal. He believes all that is told him, till he discovers a falsehood, and this discovery being frequently repeated, he learns to guard himself from the wiles and machinations of the world. Disease, says a great writer, makes man a selfish and timid creature; he catches on every thing for support, and flies with most alacrity for relief to that man who pretends to be most acquainted with the case, and talks most of his own surprising powers. Thus quackery arose, and thus it is supported. There is at this time a man in Liverpool who calls himself *doctor Solomons* whose advertisements only amount annually to the enormous sum of thirty thousand pounds, and who makes many thousand pounds yearly out of the broken glass in his shop. Such is the force of credulity, such are the fruits of quackery; if it were possible to disregard the dictates of reason and humanity, physicians had better throw aside their books, study no more, supply themselves with vegetable cordials, itch ointments, and grand restoratives, set up shops, cheat the people, and grow rich.

Some of our *doctors* would have us believe that they possess a magic power; they talk of medicated apparatus and metallic points as wizzards would of their wands, and endeavour to teach us that there is virtue in their very touch.

The quack always professes to cure incurable diseases; but this, experience teaches us, is not sufficient to condemn them. They are still run after and praised for gods and will continue so as long as health and life are matters of no consideration.

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