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LECTURE I.

FALLACIES OF THE FACULTY.

*Introduction—Phænomena of Health and Sleep—
Disease and its Type—Causes.*

GENTLEMEN:—We daily hear of the march of intellect, of the progress of perfection of many branches of science. Has MEDICINE kept pace with the other arts of life—has it fallen short or excelled them in the rivalry of improvement? Satisfactorily to solve this question, we must look a little deeper than the surface—for TRUTH, as the ancients said, lies in a WELL—meaning thereby that few people are deep-sighted enough to find it out. In the case of Medicine, we must neither be mystified by the boasting assertions of disingenuous teachers, nor suffer ourselves to be misled by the constant misrepresentation of the medical press—for these publications for the most part are nothing better than mere organs of party, and, like the newspapers of the day, do often little more than crush and cry down any truths that militate against the interest of the schools and *coteries* they are employed to serve. The late Sir William Knighton was at the head of his profession; he was, moreover, physician to George the Fourth. Joining, as he did, much worldly wisdom and sagacity to a competent knowledge of the medical science of his age, his opinion of the state of our art in these later times may be worth your knowing; more especially as it was given in private, and at a period when he had ceased to be pecuniarily interested in its practice. In one of his private letters, published after his death, he thus delivers himself:—"It is somewhat strange that, though in many arts and sciences improvement has advanced in a step of regular progression from the first, in others, it has kept pace with time; and we look back to ancient excellence with wonder not unmixed with awe. Medicine seems to be one of those ill-fated arts whose improvement bears no proportion to its antiquity. This is lamentably true, although Anatomy has been better illustrated, the *Materia Medica* enlarged, and Che-

mistry better understood." Dr. James Gregory, a man accomplished in all the science and literature of his time, was for many years the leading physician of Edinburgh; but he nevertheless held his profession in contempt. On visiting London, he had an opportunity of being introduced to his equally celebrated countryman and contemporary Baillie. Curious to know Gregory's opinion of the man who then swayed the medical sceptre of the metropolis, his friends asked him what he thought of Baillie. "Baillie," he replied, "knows *nothing* but physic;" in revenge for which Baillie afterwards wittily rejoined, "Gregory knows *every thing* but physic." But what was Dr. Baillie's own opinion of his profession after all? I do not now allude to his language during the many years he was in full practice; then, doubtless with the multitude who thronged his door, he really believed he knew a great deal; but what did he say when he retired from practice, and settled at his country seat in Gloucestershire? *Then*, without the slightest hesitation, he declared he had no faith in Physic whatever! Gentlemen, you must not from this imagine that the fortunate doctor intended to say that the world all along had been dreaming when it believed Opium could produce sleep, Mercury salivate, and Rhubarb purge. No such thing—he only confessed that he knew nothing of the manner of action of these substances on the body, nor the principle upon which they should be used. Now, what would you think of a sailor who should express himself in the same way, in regard to the rudder and compass, who should tell you that he had no faith in either instrument as a guide to steer a vessel by? why, certainly that he knew nothing of the profession by which he gained his living. And such really was Dr. Baillie's case. The great bulk of mankind measure the professional abilities of individuals solely by their degree of reputation—forgetting Shakespeare's remark, that a name is very often got without merit, and lost without a fault. That Baillie actually attained the eminence he did, without any very great desert of his, what better proof than his own declaration?—a declaration which fully bears out what Johnson tells us in his life of Aken-side: "A physician in a great city, seems to be the mere plaything of fortune; his degree of reputation is for the