

**THOUGHTS OF A  
PHYSICIAN: BEING THE  
SECOND SERIES OF  
"EVENING THOUGHTS"**

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Thoughts of a Physician: Being the Second Series Of "Evening Thoughts" by Joseph Bullar

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**JOSEPH BULLAR**

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SECOND SERIES OF "EVENING THOUGHTS."



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## THOUGHTS OF A PHYSICIAN.

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### SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-DECEPTION.

Two men may be alike in habitually failing to act up to the promptings of their higher and better life, but so differ in self-knowledge as to be different characters. The one, with clear self-knowledge, knows with painful accuracy the amount of his deviations, regrets them constantly, and does not amend. Evil inclinations are too strong for his sense of duty, and his will becomes the servant of his baser nature. He does not resist, although he knows he shall suffer for it. He does not attempt to palliate himself to himself; he is not self-deceived; he understands his weakness much better than his friends know it; and if regret, and shame, and melancholy, and remorse, were sufficient punishment, he would expiate his faults even here. But, with all

## 2 SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-DECEPTION.

this self-watchfulness and self-knowledge, he makes no amendment. Indulgence, not self-denial, has been the rule of his life so long, that he cannot break the iron chain with which he is darkly bound.

The other sins in the same manner habitually against his conscience, but excuses it, having always some convenient theory to justify himself to himself. Any doubts and misgivings as to his line of conduct are not met by looking the matter boldly in the face, and with cool judgment pronouncing self to be guilty, as in the other case, but the doubts are stifled by some plausibilities. If there is a strong will and powerful feelings, and a speculative intellect, and a constant religious sense, the peculiar religious theory which is adopted will be that which fits most easily and gracefully the permanent defect, and so hides it. Indeed, in some cases it may not be difficult to prognosticate from the besetting sin the particular religious system which will be embraced, or at any rate to trace the particular form of belief to the mental idiosyncrasy. Such persons cannot bear to be thought wrong (even by themselves), and are singular contrasts to the similarly erring

one who never shirks from dragging his failing into the light of his own consciousness, and holding it up to his own miserable and unavailing contemplation. Both have their own idols, which they equally worship in the dark dens of their own hearts; but one thrusts out the image, when he has sacrificed to it, into the glaring daylight, and sees and knows that it is a false one, and that it has disturbed his worship at the altar of the Invisible; whilst the other keeps his idol in its shrine, and lets the sunlight and the moonlight fall upon it from without, through windows which he has himself stained with rich colours, and tries to persuade himself that there is so much beauty in the form of his image in his coloured light, that it surely must partake of the Divine.

In both men there is weakness of will and strength of desire, but with self-ignorance there is self-conceit in the one, and, with self-knowledge, there is humility in the other; so that, in the eyes of those who know him best he may be the object of the most sympathetic regard, with the sanguine hope that help will ultimately come, and that a mind so really humble, so jealously self-watchful, so aware of its own weakness, may be even suddenly