

## SELF-DECEIT.

There is room for much self-deceit in the differences of conduct which we are inclined to allow ourselves under different circumstances. For is it not the case that men sometimes have, in a manner, two characters—one in their serious moods, another when they are at ease; one in office, in the eye of the world, in any responsible position, where their credit or dignity is at stake, another in private, in their hours of relaxation, in the enjoyment of society? In the former, the highest principles and the greatest and best objects are not only professed, but even intended with sincerity, and followed up for the moment with corresponding actions. But let the occasion pass by, and the very person seems to be changed. And yet men do not disavow their principles, nor deny their character, nor abate their claims to authority: but these considerations seem to be for awhile in abeyance, while the natural inclinations prevail. Thus the mind which seemed to be on some occasion really devoted to Christ, and labouring for his Church, may seem at another time to be the most active among those who are wholly absorbed by the interests of this world: the lips which at one time were preaching glory to God, and peace and good will to men, at another may indulge themselves in levity and sarcasm, in idle trifling or vain display, or uncharitable censures, in the current style of conversation; they whose business it is to minister in the congregation of Christ's flock may be engrossed by amusements, the keenest and the readiest perhaps among those who make sports their business. Need I mention one inconsistency more? They who profess themselves members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, may be sometimes found to allow themselves deliberately in occasional acts of known sin, without intending thereby to disown their Christian profession, to renounce their Christian vow, or to forfeit their hope of the future. But this, perhaps, it may be said, can hardly be counted for self-deceit; it is too deliberate to have that excuse; it is the wilful love of sin. If there be any who can persuade themselves that they may, as it were, lay aside the Christian law of holiness, and gratify themselves in the sins to which they are most tempted, and then return again to the Christian character, they are indeed fatally deceived. Let me earnestly warn who are here against such a delusion. He who would be the disciple of Christ must be always, so far as human infirmity permits.

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Every one, in attempting to judge of his progress and real condition in Christian

life, would claim a right to make his estimate of himself in his most favourable character, in his serious thoughts, his graver occupations, his most important duties and useful works: he would forget or overlook what he was in his lighter moments, when he might have to take into the account time and means wasted, hours of trifling, or vanity, or self-indulgence. But when the actions and the feelings are so different as they may be in the same person in these two different positions, the question may be asked, which is more truly *the man himself*: the man as he thinks and acts under the restraints of office, or of observation, or any other responsibility, or the man as he is when left to himself in freedom and at ease? If men would think it unfair, as they would in many cases, to have their personal qualities judged of by their official acts, without waiting to be seen in other relations of life, we may well doubt whether we shall make a true judgment of ourselves by looking at ourselves in the performance of our serious duties only: we may doubt whether indeed our true self be not that light, selfish, vain, envious being, loving the praise of men, full of the cares and intent upon the pleasures of this world, which we find ourselves when left freely to ourselves, rather than such as we seem to be when we have a character to support, full of high resolves, and looking only to the highest ends. As we know that "where the treasure is, there the heart will be also" (Matt. vi. 21), so we may infer that where the heart is, there the treasure is in reality; and consequently, if it is in the amusements, the relaxations, and the *reliefs* of life that men find their *pleasure*, rather than in the duties which are done with an effort, we cannot but fear that the former will sometimes give a truer picture of the man in his real character, and exhibit his real condition, how far he is or is not *conformed to the image of Christ*, more exactly than those things to which he would like to appeal as evidence of himself.—Hussey.

## COUNTERFEIT MECKNESS.

I would clear true meekness from the adulteration of counterfeit: it has no connection with a certain weakness of principle, which may be glad to shelter itself under so respectable a name. It is not meekness for a man to have no character, no opinion of his own; to adopt the tone and sentiments of whatever company he may happen to be in; to take his standard of religion or morals from those around them; to be a Christian among Christians, or a man of the world among the children of this generation. It is not true meekness, to be without a firm, consistent,