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'IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET ITS CUNNING.' Ps. 137. 4, 5.

### CHRISTIAN MANLINESS.

(EXTRACT FROM SERMON BY PRINCIPAL  
CAIRD.)

IN many passages of the New Testament, and especially in those parts of it which contain the record of our Lord's teaching, the character of childhood is represented as typical of the true Christian spirit, and its distinctive qualities and virtues are described as those which in mature life we should strive to retain or reproduce. "Except be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;"—The idea common to these and similar passages is, simply, that the noblest nature is that which is most childlike; that the highest saintliness is his who, amidst the exigencies and temptations of riper years, preserves in its freshness and simplicity the spirit of a little child.

Nor is it difficult to see what the particular qualities are which lend moral attractiveness to childhood, and which constitute the child-life the type of Christian goodness. There is, for instance, that which strikes us most obviously, its purity and innocence, the unstained freshness of a nature over which the shadow of evil has not yet crept, the mind that is yet a stranger to guilty knowledge and dwells as in a sanctuary which no unhalloved step has ever crossed, the soft impressible heart which custom and selfish passion have not yet begun to harden, the conscience yet untroubled by any recollection of bygone sins. There is, again, the sweet joyfulness and contentedness of childhood, its capacity of finding delight in simple pleasures,

and extracting materials of unbounded happiness, in absolute independence of any stimulus of excited passion, from the commonest scenes and objects and the simple routine of daily life. There is, once more, the absolute resignation and unquestioning trust in a love and care that fence it round as an atmosphere, the instinctive docility and reverence for an authority in which power is blended with sweetness, and severity itself takes the guise of love; there is the guileless unsuspectingness, the readiness to believe in human truth and goodness, the utter absence of cynicism or scepticism, the confidence in humanity which has not been sapped by worldly wisdom or rudely uprooted by the experience of ingratitude and falsehood. And, to name no other quality, there is that which suffuses and lends a double charm to all the other elements of the typical beauty of childhood—viz., that it is a beauty which, at first at least, and until sophisticating influences have all too soon begun to mar it, is absolutely free from self-consciousness;—that, with so much to attract, childhood is ignorant of the admiration it wins;—that, transparent and open to its inmost depths, no undercurrent of self-reference can be detected in its actions; and that in its artless looks and words and in the simple gracefulness of its unrestrained movements, it recks as little of what men will think or say as a flower of the eye that gazes on its loveliness, or the summer brook of the ear that listens to its song.

It is true, indeed, that in what I have now said, I have been depicting rather the ideal of childhood than the aspect which it actually or invariably presents. All children are not good. The child is father to the man; and the seeds of manhood's vices, of vanity, selfishness, willfulness, greediness, impudence, may soon be detected even in the most carefully tended soil. And the soil is not always carefully or wisely tended. There are, unfortunately, too man