

## CHRISTIAN MANLINESS.

A LECTURE DELIVERED TO THE Y.M.C.A. OF DALHOUSIE COLLEGE, HALIFAX,  
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It will be my aim in what I am about to say, to show that the Christian religion makes special claims upon youth; because manly strength is the ideal of youth, and Christianity is essentially a strong thing. Now this is not the opinion of many young men; indeed, they frankly tell us that they are not religious because religion is a sign of weakness; they hold aloof from Christian Associations because the members thereof are supposed by them to be lacking in true manliness, and that as the result of their profession of Christianity. And much of the religion—so-called—which is current, goes to justify this prejudice. Mawkish sentimentality is abroad in the land, the self-constituted representative of religion; and high-minded and generous-hearted youths have been turned against all religion by such sickly pietism. They have received the impression that Christianity, however suitable for effeminate natures, and for folk who are dying, is too weak a thing to find any place in the programme of vigorous youth; that it may appeal to the fears of the timid or to the feebleness of age, but has nothing in it which can lay any claim to the strength of early manhood. Now, it is possible that Christian people are largely responsible for this erroneous impression. If religion is regarded by young men as a sign of weakness, the guilt lies at the door of every minister of the Gospel who appeals mainly to the motive of fear in his preaching, of every member of the church who is not honest or true to his profession, of every society which teaches that abstinence from any of God's gifts is a higher Christian virtue

than temperance instead of an expedient for those natures which are too weak for self-control; especially does the blame rest on the effeminate youth, who, although he professes to be a follower of the most manly Man that ever lived, yet,

“Would he be a woman if he could,  
And since he can't, does all he can  
To show the world he's not a man.”

Goody-goodyism, be it never so sanctimonious, can only produce religious nausea in young men. They crave healthful food for their spiritual natures. They will never be attracted to Christ but by the magnet of His perfect manliness, and by the strength of His followers. They admire, and they rightly admire, only that religion which is unaffected, healthy, strong in its naturalness. And it is the business of the Young Men's Christian Association to show that Christianity does not unman, devitalize, dwarf those who accept it, but builds them up into all-round strength; to present the Christian life as a strong, manly life; to preach a religion which is not one whit better adapted to the death-bed than to the campus or the country house or the social gathering. If our associations give the impression that religion appeals to what is timid and shrinking in our natures rather than to what is courageous and outspoken, they will only repel the best class of young men. We must make it clear that sentimental pietism which disgusts so many, is only a burlesque of religion, a caricature of the Christian life, and that a merely prudential religion lacks the highest elements of Christian-