

## CAN YOU?

BY MARY E. FOLSON.

Can you make a rose or a lily—just one?  
Or catch a beam of the golden sun?  
Can you count the rain-drops as they fall?  
Or the leaves that flutter from tree-tops tall?  
Can you run like the brook and never tire?  
Can you climb like the vine beyond the spire?  
Can you fly like a bird or weave a nest?  
Or make but one feather on robin's breast?

Can you build a cell like the bee? or spin  
Like the spider, a web so thin?  
Can you lift a shadow from off the ground?  
Can you see the wind, or measure a sound?  
Can you blow a bubble that will not burst?  
Can you talk with echo and not speak first?

O my dear little boy, you are clever and strong,  
And you are so busy the whole day long,  
Trying as hard as a little boy can,  
To do big things like a grown-up man!

Look at me, darling, I tell you true,  
There are some things you never can do.  
—Selected.

## GETTING UP SERMONS.

Many of our readers will be interested in the following particulars, given by Dr. Maclaren, of his method of pulpit preparation:—

I write my sermons in part. The amount of written matter varies. When I can, I like to write a couple of sentences or so of introduction, in order to get a fair start, and for the rest I content myself with jottings, fragmentary hints of a word or two each, interspersed here and there with a fully written sentence. Illustrations and metaphors I never write; a word suffices for them. If I have "heads" I word these carefully; and I like to write the closing sentences. That is my ideal—a sufficiently scrappy one you will think—but I seldom attain to it, and am most frequently obliged to preach with much less preparation. The amount written varies from about six or seven pages widely written with short lines, each line holding only a word or two, to the barest skeleton that would go in half a page. Of course I do not adhere to what is written, as there is very little of it sufficiently consecutive, I make no attempt to reproduce more than the general course of thought, and I constantly find that the best bits of my sermon make themselves in preaching. I do adhere verbatim to my introductory sentences, which serve to shove me off into deep water, but beyond that I let the moment shape the thing. As to preparing expressions, I do not. Aaron described his procedure precisely as I should describe mine—he put all the stuff in the fire, "and there came out this calf." If I cannot get the fire well alight, that is what I care for most. I began my ministry with the resolution that I would not write sermons, but would think them and feel them; and I have stuck to it ever since. It costs quite as much time in preparation as writing, and a far greater expenditure of nervous energy in delivery; but I am sure that it is best for me, and equally sure that everybody has to find out his own way himself.

It is understood that, with all his freshness and vigor, Mr. Spurgeon's method is closely akin to that of Dr. Maclaren.

## A CALL TO OUR SISTERS.

Dr. Thoburn of India, says, in relation to woman's work: "I wish to say that the work of missions is rapidly slipping into the hands of the women. When I first went to India there was not one zenana missionary there. We have one missionary Conference in Calcutta, and it is the largest in the world, and it rarely happens that the ladies are not in the majority. God is opening before the Christian women of that country a door that is wider than anything noticeable until recent years. We have many tokens of good. I wish to say that the thanks of the Christian world are due to the women who have founded and are carrying forward the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society." I would emphasize the truth that it is not optional with Christian women whether or not they shall do missionary work. How can we be Christians if we do not have the spirit of missions? By the overflowing munificence of God to us, does he constrain us to impart that which we have so freely received to the desolate women who are without the pale of our privileges. Too often do we act as though in some way we were the favorite of Heaven, and all our blessings came to us by inherent right, and what we did solely by the action of God's Spirit on our selfish hearts, was an act of grace on our part, and was commendatory in the extreme; while the fact is, not one of us is doing our simplest, barest duty to the heathen world, and scarce one of us has learned the initial letter of the word sacrifice.

Hear what a Syrian woman says to the Christians of America: "No matter who you are, what Church you belong to, or even if you are a minister, if you do not believe in foreign mis-

sions, you are not a Christian. If you are a Christian, Christ has left a command for you, and it is your duty to help spread the Gospel to every creature. You know that He gave His life for you; what have you done for Him?" I have thought how strange it must have seemed to Mrs. Barracatt, whose words I have just quoted, on her recent visit to America, to hear American women talking of the sacrifices they made or were prepared to make for the missionary cause, and to learn that the vaunted sacrifices, for the most part, amounted to a few hours of comparative leisure and a few dollars of, possibly, easily spared money, as the utmost done in the cause. Then the contrast presented by her life must rise sharply before her—a life of blows and taunts of hunger and fatigue, of deprivations of all sorts, of persecutions and separation from friends and kindred—in short, of the fiery ordeal that every woman must pass through in renouncing a false religion. Dear sisters, let us awake to the honor our Master confers in allowing us to work for Him. We have a goodly heritage; let us not be unworthy of it.

In all ages of the world women have been true to God. In this present age women generally are true to their idea of a god, whether it be the true and living God or a dim and blurred conception. When our dear Lord was upon the earth, the women of Galilee—oh, highly-favored ones!—followed him in all his wanderings, and even at the cross, when all others forsook him, they were weeping around him. Shall we not exult to put into our daily round and trivial task the shining bits we can do for Christ—the grains of pure gold among the chaff that must perish at last? We will not use the too cold word "duty" when designating our work for our Master. The love of Christ shall constrain us. Again: We catch the never-ceasing music of Christ's utterances in taking Mary's part: "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath done a good work," or, as it has been translated, a beautiful thing.

## SKEPTICISM AND CHARACTER.

It is a great and suggestive truth, that "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he." This is true of bad as well as good thoughts. If right thoughts of God's character and of our duty and destiny mould character and inspire conduct for the better, wrong thoughts on these great practical themes must have the contrary effect. It is therefore, a question of great interest, what is the probable and practical effect upon character and conduct? Does the current materialistic philosophy present safe rules of conduct, with suitable authority and obligation for the conscience? Mr. Watkinson's Fernley lecture for 1886 on "The Influence of Skepticism on Character" is an answer to this question. Mr. Watkinson maintains that so far from modern theories of man and nature adding new sanctions to the moral code, the morality of the old paganism was more strongly enforced than that of our modern paganism. He shows that our modern skeptics, who disparage Bible morality as if it was not lofty enough to suit them, assign an inferior place to virtue and righteousness of character, as if they were secondary to scientific knowledge.

It is assumed that men of great intellectual power are also men of great moral power; although it is well known that great intellectual force has often been found in connection with great moral depravity. There is really a denial of the separateness and reality of the moral law and its obligations. George Eliot once wrote: "I suppose no wisdom the world will ever find out will make Paul's words obsolete—'Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.'" But M. Renan gives a new catalogue of the virtues in which he gives the first place to truth—knowledge. Other writers of the modern skeptical school in a similar manner denounce the undue supremacy which Christianity gives to moral character and conduct. John Morley maintains, that "a character is much else besides being virtuous or vicious." He says, "the least important thing about Burns was that he drank too much and was incontinent." Carlyle and others give men credit for a latent morality that never manifests itself in action, as if anything that gave no sign in character or conduct could be taken to balance actual selfishness and wrongdoing! The rules of conduct of this school are too hazy and indefinite to be of any value in practical life. It is easy to see that the effect of such notions must be demoralizing. All who regard character and conduct as the natural outcome of forces which inhere in matter must, to be consistent, deny the freedom which is essential to personal responsibility. No one can believe

that moral evil is necessary and inevitable, without having a great barrier against sin and wrong broken down.

Mr. Watkinson declares that "the whole mood of mind created by skepticism is unfavorable to a lofty living morality;" and he presents very striking evidence from the lives of the most distinguished examples of modern skeptical culture that their principles did not bring forth good fruits in their lives. Glimpses at the lives of Goethe, Godwin, Carlyle, George Eliot, Shelley, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Harriet Martineau, Schopenhauer, Comte and Voltaire each in turn is presented to furnish evidence that loose views had a bad effect on life and conduct. In some of the high places of skeptical culture and pessimism in Germany, crime is rampant. No one can read Mr. Watkinson's able lecture without seeing powerful evidence that when the authority of the Divine will as the law of life is rejected, and the impulses of unsanctified nature are taken as the chief rule of conduct, there must be a serious moral decline.—*Christian Guardian.*

## MAKE EXCUSES.

Not for yourself, but for others. So little is known of the interior life even of those whose history is thought to be well known, that motives would often justify what seem like very strange acts.

A brother in the church whose income was known to be constantly on the increase was condemned because his contributions to the support of the gospel did not increase, as was thought, proportionately. But matters of equal importance with those of the church's interest were making constant demands upon his purse, and, as it was in the direction of a private nature, outsiders thought him simply close and unwilling to give as he was able.

A nobleman whose sensitiveness was mistaken for hauteur was anxious to secure as private secretary a man who would be likely to think charitably of his unfortunate manners. While riding one day he overtook a man who had been pointed out to him as a very eccentric, though learned, person. The nobleman, in his hunting-suit, presented so different an appearance from what he did in court costume that the gentleman failed to recognize him when he overtook him and began a conversation.

"I see," said the nobleman, "we are riding over the domains of the Earl of X—"

"Yes; so I thought."

"He is said to be a very dogged sort of person."

"Is he, indeed? Do you know the earl?"

"Yes; I know him very well. I'm sorry to say he is churlish at times."

"Then he is a man to be respected."

"Why so?"

"If he is churlish at times, he must be heroic, as the cause of occasional petulance must be the result of a constant trial. This must be under control when he is pleasant."

"But he is distant and haughty besides."

"You must excuse me, but I should have to be convinced of that before I could accept it as a fact."

"Then my word is not enough for it?"

"Sir, the word of no one is sufficient guaranty in attacking the name or fame of a person unknown."

The man, though poor when he entered the earl's grounds, was soon raised to a position of honor—one for which his early teachings had fully fitted him.

An aged Christian who always would find excuses for every one, no matter how glaring the fault, was once told of the shameful misdeeds of a professing Christian, the account being concluded with the words, "You surely can not make excuses for such conduct as that?"

"Very well," was the reply; "then I shall surely leave it to God to condemn him."

Make excuses whenever you can; when that is impossible, imitate the example of this aged saint: leave condemnation to God.—*Golden Rule.*

## "That Your Joy May be Full."

Has any one ever measured the length and breadth, the height and depth, of the human heart? That must be done before you can tell all that is meant by fullness of joy. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness," saith the Lord. Fullness of joy, then, is to be obtained by asking in the name of Christ, and receiving from the Father. There must be fullness of joy.

The believer cannot be made completely happy by any private blessing, even though that blessing be spiritual. The soul of the believer is sometimes gloriously overflowed by the tide of God's love. But, after a season, it becomes evident to him that even the

mightiest and fullest and most constant stream of divine love cannot make him permanently happy if he be not permitted to communicate happiness to others. His soul is oppressed with the love of God when that love stops there. The love of God transforms him into the likeness of God, and the likeness of God makes it the law of his being that he should largely find his happiness in communicating happiness. As surely as we feast upon the love of God we find it impossible to continue alone at the feast. We rise up, saying, "We do not well; this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." The branch drinks in the fullness of the vine, but can only continue to do it in the measure that it prepares itself for fruitfulness. The clusters are the glory of the branch. Conceive of a branch that would say, "I will drink abundantly of the tide of life proceeding from the vine, and I will treasure it all in myself; wherefore should I engage in laborious fruit-giving? Pent up happiness, it turns to misery."

—From Love Revealed, by Rev. George Bowen.

## Needed Shortening.

A certain woman once called upon her minister to tell him how much her mind had been hurt. Her pastor received her with all tenderness, and inquired into the cause of her distress. She went on to say that her mind was very much hurt indeed, but she did not know how to tell him. The minister, judging it must be something serious, urged her to be explicit on the subject of her distress. At last she said: "It is the length of your hands when in the pulpit." "Oh," said the minister, "the length of my hands, is it, that so distressed you? I will take care that that shall be a source of distress to you no more." So, fetching his hands, he said: "Here is a pair of scissors; cut them to your wish." After she had done this she thanked him, and professed to feel her mind relieved. "Well, my friend," said the minister, "I may tell you that my mind has also been very much hurt, perhaps even more than yours." "Oh, sir, I am sorry for that; what, sir, has hurt your mind so?" He replied: "It is the length of your tongue; and now, as one good turn deserves another, you will allow as much to be cut off as will reduce it to about its proper length." It need not be remarked that the woman was speechless, and, it is to be hoped, learnt an important lesson with respect to her unruly member.

## Prepared for a Trial.

Dr. Thoburn tells how his mother received the proposal that he should go as a missionary to India: "My widowed mother was beginning to feel the infirmities of age, and every one assured me she would not consent to my going. I had anticipated as much, and was not surprised when told that she had said she never could consent to let me go. But when God undertakes to open one's way, he can fully accomplish the task. When I began to talk the matter over with her she spoke to me as follows: 'I crossed the ocean in hope of finding a home around which all my children might be gathered, and at first I felt that I could not consent to let you go. But some days before your letter came, God began to prepare a great trial for me. Each night as I lay down to sleep a strange peace would fill my heart, and I would become very happy. Something made me understand that this was God preparing me for a great trial, and on every occasion I had a clear impression that in some way the trial would be connected with you. I understand it all now. I feel as if I could not bid you go, but I cannot bid you stay. It is of God and I cannot doubt it.'

## After Death.

The hour is approaching when the message will come to us, as it comes to all: "Arise and go forth from the home in which thou dwelt, from the city in which thou hast done thy business, from thy family, from thy friends. Arise and take thy last journey." And what know we of the country? A little we have read thereof, and somewhat has been revealed to us by the Spirit, but how little we know of the realms of the future. We know that there is a black and stormy river called "Death" God bids us to cross it, promising to be with us. And after death, what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight? What scene of glory will be opened to our view? No traveler has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the heavenly land to make us welcome our summons thither with joy and gladness. The journey of death may be dark, but we go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil.

We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here, but we shall be going to our Father's house—to our Father's home where Jesus is—to that royal "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

This shall be our last removal, to dwell forever with him we love, in the midst of his people, in the presence of God. Christian, meditate much on heaven; it will help thee to press on and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country; this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss. "There remaineth therefore rest to the people of God."

"Prepare us, Lord, by grace divine,  
For thy bright courts on high;  
Then bid our spirits rise and join  
The chorus of the sky."

—C. H. Spurgeon.

## Faith in Sorrow.

Mrs. Elizabeth Prentiss writing to a bereaved friend, said: "What you want is to let your intellect go overboard, if need be, and to take what God gives just as a little child takes it, without money and without price. Faith is his; unbelief ours. No process of reasoning can soothe a mother's empty, aching heart, or bring Christ into it to fill up all that great waste room. But faith can; and faith is his gift; a gift to be won by prayer—prayer, persistent, patient, determined; prayer that will take no denial; prayer that, if it goes away one day unsatisfied, keeps on saying: 'Well, there's to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow; God may wait to be gracious, and I can wait to receive; but receive I must and will.' This is what the Bible means when it says: 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' It does not say the eager, the impatient, take it by force, but the violent, they who declare: 'I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.' This is all heart, not head work."

## A Practical Religion.

We want a religion that softens the step and tunes the voice to melody, and checks the impatient exclamation and harsh rebuke; a religion that is polite, deferential to superiors, courteous to inferiors, and considerate to friends; a religion that goes into the family and keeps the husband from being cross when the dinner is late, and keeps the wife from fretting when the husband tracks the newly-washed floor with muddy boots, and makes the husband mindful of the scraper and the door-mat; keeps the mother patient when the baby is fretful, and amuses the children as well as instructs them; cares for the servants besides paying them promptly; projects the honeymoon into the harvest-moon, and makes the happy home like the Eastern fig-tree, bearing in its bosom at once the beauty of its tender blossoms and the glory of the ripened fruit. We want a religion that shall interpose between the ruts and gullies and rocks of the highway of life and the sensitive souls that are traveling over them.

## Personal Experience.

It is only through our personal experiences that we gain the power of sympathizing with others. We should never be able to feel another's pain, if we had never felt a pain of our own. So it is in all the trials of our fellows; before we can enter into the feelings of one who is tempted, or who is disappointed, or who is humiliated, or who is bereaved, we must ourselves suffer—being tempted, or being disappointed, or being humiliated, or being bereaved. It is hard to have these trials for ourselves; but it is good for others that we have, and exercise sympathy with those who are called to such trials for themselves. And as we can never gain this power except through these trials, let us find a comfort in the thought that every trial sent to us is a call to added fidelity in the all-important ministry of loving sympathy. When God afflicts us he honors us, in order that we can honor him by helping others who are afflicted. *S. S. Times.*

Seek opportunities for earnest Christian work. They are within reach of you, and you may find them. The door is open. Enter in. Go to work wisely, meekly, with a loving, tender heart; but be in earnest. Maintain a prayerful spirit, and you will find the promise verified to you, "Lo I am with you always," and He whose servant you are will honor and bless your labors.

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