

HOW SHE WAS CONVERTED.

When somebody asked her under whose preaching she was converted she smiled and said.—“Under nobody’s preaching; it was under Aunt Mary’s practising.”

She had gone to live with her aunt when she was a self-willed, thoughtless, headstrong young girl, leaving the house of her parents because they opposed her marriage to a young man who proved, as she soon found, entirely unworthy of her love. And the aunt, who believed the word of God with all her heart and acted it out in all her life, received her lovingly, and with patient and gentle kindness, and good sense gradually led her to see the error of her course and to receive in love the lessons she endeavoured to impress, till in the end they brought forth fruit an hundredfold, and the niece became a warm-hearted and faithful Christian. And when, as already said, some one asked, “Under whose preaching was she converted,” with a smile she replied, “Under nobody’s preaching; it was under Aunt Mary’s practising.”

And there is a world of meaning in the answer, for example is *ever* more powerful than precept, and a holy life is the mightiest of all arguments for religion. “It wasn’t master’s sermons, but it was master’s life that did it,” said a servant—who had been awakened to think of her sin—of her master, who was a clergyman. Christian reader, can it be said of us that our home life is a daily sermon which every one in the house can read? Of two of the disciples of old we read that men “took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus,” and the command of Christ to all his disciples is, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven.” He does not say “let your professions be loud,” or even “let your doctrines be correct,” important as the last may be, but “let your light shine.”

And this is what is everywhere needed; not only those who profess, but those who practice; not so much better preaching as better living; not the mere assent to the gospel, but carrying out its principles and spirit in the daily life. The Christian looks to the Bible as the great standard of truth and duty, but the world’s Bible is the Christian himself, and to *him* they look to see what religion is, and if every day his life is preaching the gospel they

will see and be impressed by it. For a holy life is the best kind of preaching, and by it every one may preach, in the family, in the workshop, on the journey, by the wayside, just as truly as the minister can in the pulpit, and as effectually too. In fact, we are always preaching—every one of us—for good or evil, to win men to Christ, or tempt them to evil. Our looks, and words, and actions, and business habits, and our daily and hourly unconscious influence—*it is all preaching*, and we should see to it that it is preaching not only the letter but the spirit of the gospel. To every one let the question come home, Am I doing this? Every day am I living for Christ? Do I obey his commands and exemplify his spirit, and so live as to win others to him? Reader, are you doing it?—*Sel.*

MY OWN SPECIAL WORK.

There is a work for all of us. And there is a special work for each of us; work which I cannot do in a crowd, or as one of a mass, but as *one man, acting singly*, according to my own gifts and under a sense of my personal responsibility. There is, no doubt, associated work for me to do; I must do my work as part of the world’s great whole, or as a member of some body. But I have a special work to do, as one individual who, by God’s plan and appointment, has a separate position, separate responsibilities, and a separate work: if I do not do it, it must be left undone.

No one of my fellows can do that special work for me which I have come into the world to do; he may do a higher work, a greater work; but he cannot do my work. I cannot hand my work over to him, any more than I can hand over my responsibilities or my gifts. Nor can I delegate my work to any association of men, however ordered and powerful. They have their own work to do; and it may be a very noble one. But they cannot do my work for me. I must do it with these hands or with these lips which God has given me. I may do little or I may do much. *That* matters not in the least. It must be my own work. And by doing my own work, poor as it may seem to some, I shall better fulfil God’s end in making me what I am, and more truly glorifying His name, than if I were either going out of my sphere to do the work of another, or calling another into my sphere to do my proper work for me.—*John Ruskin.*