

THE CHILDREN'S PORTION.

DOES GOD SPEAK TO ME?

Yes He does, *in His providence*. In this land of Sabbaths, and Churches, and Bibles, and Christians, God is always speaking to you. Did He not speak to you in the first human voice that reached your infant mind? Might you not say with Coleridge, "My faith in Christianity is bound up with my mother's chair, and with the earliest remembered tones of her blessed voice?" And did not God speak to you in that illness? "Hear the rod, and who hath appointed it." Every rod of affliction has a voice, and it is the voice of God. A wild man, who was nearly killed by an accident, told me that he was not surer of his own existence, than he was of the fact that God was speaking to him.

And God speaks to you *by His word*. For His word is not like the word of a man in a book, a dull, dead thing: but in it you may hear God's living voice. The other day the newspapers told us that a woman had travelled from London to Balmoral to plead with the Queen for the lives of her two sons condemned to death. The people at Ballater took pity on her, and got her a seat in the mail gig. She sat on a bag of letters, one of which, from the Home Secretary, really granted her request. The Queen received her kindly, but could do nothing; the decision lay with the Home Secretary. The woman returned with a heavy heart; but when the Queen had read the welcome letter, she despatched a horseman with the glad tidings to the poor woman. The Word of God may do you no more good than that letter did to the poor woman when she sat upon the letter-bag; but it brings new life to you as soon as you catch in it the living voice of the living God. For while we cannot hear God's voice in heaven, we may hear it on earth in the blessed gospel. Dr. Duncan tells that the first time he felt that he had God's word on his lips, the idea went through him like a flash of electricity, and made him another man.

And God speaks to you *by His Spirit*. How often we read of the Spirit speaking to us,—*"The Spirit and the Bride say, come;"* *"The Holy Ghost saith, To-day,"* and so on. It is really the Holy Spirit that speaks to you in Providence and the Word. Oh how many voices come from God to you! The air is all trembling with God's voices if we only had the ear to hear them, and to distinguish them from the coarse voices of earth, that are always mingling with them. Your soul is like a shell with which I have seen a boy astonish his little sister. The shell put to her ear caused a quick play of wonder and delight, like the shadows of the clouds chasing each other upon the surface of a lake on a windy summer's day. *"How is the sound there?"* she asked. The shell had been long in the sea, he said; the sound of the waves had got into the very inside of it, and could never be taken out again; the sea was still making music in it, though it had been on the dry land for a long, long time. The boy was just saying what the poet says,

"Pleased, it remembers its august abode
And murmurs as it murmured then."