

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

READ JOHN iv. 27-12.



JACOB'S WELL.

WHEN the disciples came back, they were surprised at finding their Master, whom they had left alone, in conversation with this Samaritan woman. Doubtless *they* felt as others did on the subject of Jew and Samaritan. But they said nothing. Their reverence for Him

would not let them question what He did.

The woman, forgetting what she came for, and leaving her waterpot behind, now goes back to the city with her wonderful news. She calls the men of the place to come and see. Here was a man, she told them, who had told her all she had ever done: must He not be the *Christ*?

Meanwhile the disciples were still with Jesus at the well. But when they asked Him to eat of the food they had brought, this was His answer: "I have meat to eat that *ye* know not of." What then? Had any one brought Him food while they were away? So they questioned among themselves. But Jesus had eaten nothing. "My meat," said He, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." The word "meat," here and elsewhere, means food in general.

In that conversation He had been doing His Father's work, the work for which He had been sent, the work of grace, the work of salvation. He *loved* the work; especially because it was His *Father's* work. It cheered and comforted Him. While He was about such work He forgot hunger and fatigue. Oh, for more of the spirit of our Lord, that we too may so delight in doing our Father's will that it may be as *food* to us!

The conversation was a very important one. In that very place it led to many souls being won to God. And it was almost the beginning of that harvest of souls which was to follow the ministry of our Lord, and of His servants after Him. The thought of this rejoiced Him greatly, and He encouraged His disciples with the same thought. It was not then the season for the common harvest, there wanted four months to it; but there was another harvest, a spiritual harvest, which was already ripe. The people of that place were ready to hear and receive the Gospel, all through the land hearers would be found, and far beyond that land, the whole world was now to hear. He Himself was the Sower, He was beginning the work; and others too had had their share in the work of preparation—the prophets and John the Baptist.

Now the disciples were to go forth, and reap where

others had sown. Let them do it faithfully; their work would not be in vain. Fruit should be gathered unto life eternal: men should be converted; souls should be saved; every faithful labourer should have his reward; and all at last should rejoice together.

How happy is this prospect! How blessed is this work! All workers for God are fellow-workers with Christ Himself. It is an honour to do the *least* service in such a work, and for such a Master. Are *we* doing what we can? Look at the fields around us! Look at our own immediate neighbourhood, look at our own country, look at heathen lands! Are not the fields ready for us? Are they not white to harvest? Does not the Lord send *us* also?

The woman's first words to her town's-people had some effect; many believed on Jesus because of them. But many more believed afterwards. For He taught them Himself, during the two days that He passed there; and those who attended on His teaching were brought to a clear and full belief; "we have heard Him ourselves," they said, "and *know* that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." No such profession of faith had yet been made by any body of men as was made by these Samaritans. How great a blessing had come to that city! How good for them it was, that they besought Him to stay with them!

Let us beseech Him to stay with *us*, let us cherish His presence by the Spirit, let us abide in Him and He in us. We may learn much by the ministry of man; but He Himself is the Great Teacher. He will teach all who seek Him, He will teach them more and more. A man's words may arrest the attention, and strike the conscience, and lead to further inquiry; but they who are thus led will not be satisfied without learning from the Lord Himself; and sometimes those who are thus taught of Him will learn to know even more of spiritual things than the preacher or friend himself who first was made use of to draw their thoughts that way.

F. B.

THE WORD OF LIFE.

The following lines used often to be written on a blank leaf of the Bible in the days of Queen Elizabeth.—

HERE is the spring where waters flow,
To quench our heat of sin;
Here is the tree where truth doth grow,
To lead our lives therein.

The tidings of Salvation dear,
Come to our ears from hence!
The fortress of our faith is here,
And shield of our defence.

Read not this Book in any case
But with a single eye;
Read not, but first desire God's grace,
To understand thereby.

Then happy thou in all thy life,
Whatso to thee befalls:
Yea, doubly happy shalt thou be
When God by death thee calls.