

## The Quiet Hour

### Christ at Jacob's Well.\*

Here we have another incident which shows us the Christ imparting the sublimest spiritual truth to a solitary individual; and that individual not merely a woman, and a Samaritan woman, but also one of the world's outcasts. He who explained the need of a new birth to the timid Jewish ruler, sets before the Samaritan woman a lofty view of religion. In both cases there is the same human prejudice and narrowness to be conquered, but when there is no longer escape from the searching influence of His tender teaching, the woman acknowledges the divinity of the revealing light.

Oud Lord was journeying northward with His disciples, and, coming near to the city or town of Sychar, sat down to rest on the well called Jacob's Well, while His disciples went into the town to buy food. Here we note the lowliness of Our Lord, that He took upon Him real humanity, with all its liability to hunger, pain and weariness. This is no phantom body, as men have sometimes thought. "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us." But He was never too weary to take a deep interest in the life of a human soul. He did not keep His great discourses for immense crowds or confine them to the select few. This greatest preacher of all, of Whom it was said "The common people heard Him gladly," could speak persuasively to one. The one is a type of the many. Each spirit has its own lonely life, its secret struggles, known only to the living Saviour.

It was no mere accident that this woman came to the well at a quiet hour of the day and found there the lowly man of Nazareth. There was a Providence watching over a life that seemed so feeble and worthless. Without entering into the theological subtleties of the question whether it is right to say that the divine Christ was a Jew, we affirm that He was to all intents and purposes a Jew. With other limitations He took those of the Jewish nation and church. But in spirit He passed beyond such local bounds; though a Jew, He would speak to a Samaritan woman and beg a favor of her. He can become so interested in her as to forget food and drink in the thought that His meat and drink is to do the Father's will.

The paradox of Our Saviour's life is this, that we always meet a great claim

and a great condescension side by side; two things are combined which seem inconsistent, the truest lowliness, and the grandest self-assertion. He must speak the truth; and, if only the truth was known, there would be a change of position. She, of whom a favor is asked, would be a suppliant at His feet. The small favors that Christ asks of us are not for His benefit, but to stir our life and lift us into a higher world. Some of the noblest women of that time were those who, with devout reverence, ministered to Him of their substance. Thank God they have had their successors in all succeeding ages. When this poor woman really knows who He is, she will find something more interesting than the town's small gossip; she will know what it is to be carried away by an eager desire to speak His praises.

If this woman, like all of us, is fettered by the same literalism and materialism that limited the vision of Nicodemus, she at least discerns the great claim that lies behind His words. The well is deep, and He has nothing with which to draw; but perhaps this strange man thinks himself to be greater than the patriarch Jacob. But how could any common present-day man be greater than the great father of the people, whose memory is sacred with the associations of many centuries. For the moment she, with her bucket and picher, is tempted to think herself better equipped for meeting the real needs of life than this lonely stranger, but there is something in His presence that forbids the thought. So many to-day think that because their science has improved so much upon the Samaritan woman's outfit, they are independent of the Christ. That thought only lives when we do not know Him and are at the same time ignorant of self. If only His pleading tones are heard they find their way into unexplored depths of the soul.

He is not afraid to meet comparison with Jacob or any other venerable patriarch. This well is good, its waters sweet, a refreshment to the weary traveler; the man who digs a well is a benefactor, a helper of his fellow-men. But there is a thirst that this water does not touch. Day by day men need water and seek it eagerly, but the Christ ministers to the soul, and can bring into it a living spring, a source of satisfaction which the world cannot give and cannot take away.

This is what we all need; a life within, a never-failing source of joy. Things

cannot satisfy, they weary us unless we can subdue them and make them instruments of the spirit. Love is our life, and where shall we find love in its purest form save in Him who gave His life for us, and promises to give His life to us. This nimble-witted woman could not dream of this, but the conversation which brings the truth to her soul is to us a revelation of this redeeming love. Over all our pleasures, which ever grow paler and poorer; over our ambitions, which at first seem so golden, and so soon turn to dust, Our Lord writes this golden text: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

No wonder that the response was quick; crude, mistaken though it may be, it is a real expression of human need. "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not aither come hither to draw." There is testimony to the power and impressiveness of His words; if also there is proof that in our human weakness we want a religion that will be labor-saving and ease-giving, something to end with one mighty stroke the ceaseless struggle for sustenance and help. In a far nobler way will our Lord meet that need by giving us such a spirit that life's toil and temptation shall not conquer or destroy us, but develop the life which He implants. At His invitation we may drink of the fountain; and be strong.

### All Your Burthens Bring.

Ye weary, heavy-laden, and oppress,  
Look not upon this careless world for rest  
But come, come hither, all your burthens  
bring.  
And taste this pure, refreshing, drainless  
spring.  
Oh, 'twill revive, 'twill soothe each aching  
heart,  
And quenching draughts of healing balm im-  
part;  
'Twill shed its cooling sweets with tender  
power.  
Like summer rain upon a dying flower,  
'Twill soften, as it falls, and melt the soul,  
And every sorrow, every pang control.

(Lines written on the fly leaf of a Bible over fifty years ago.)

### Explanatory Notes.

The Judaean ministry of Jesus largely filled what is sometimes called "the year of obscurity" in his public work. At its close he returned from Samaria to Galilee.—Sychar (v. 5.). The name was once supposed to be another name for Shechem, but it is probably that of a small village near Shechem that still bears a like name.—The sixth hour (v. 6.) Either noon or six in the afternoon, according to the way of reckoning that John followed.—Samaria (v. 7). The country in general, not the city, which was about seven miles away.—Living water (v. 10). A phrase that was used to distinguish spring-water from water kept in a cistern; but some of the prophets had used it as a symbol as Jesus here did.

\*International S.S. Lesson for January 29th.  
John iv. : 5-15; Golden Text, John iv. : 14.