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Jacob's Well at Shechem.

Jacob's well, or Bir Yakub, as it is locally known, is not mentioned in Genesis as the work of Jacob during his sojourn at Shechem. It will be remembered that he bought a plot of land for 'an hundred pieces of money,' whereon he erected an altar, which he called El-elohe-Israel; but of the well nothing is said.

Coming to St. John iv., however, we find direct evidence, not only of the plot of ground,

'deep well' which Jacob gave to his people. Jews, Samaritans, Christians and Mohammedans all agree about it; and when we remember that the Samaritans have dwelt in the locality for two thousand three hundred years, any reasonable doubt vanishes.

The modern town of Nablous represents the old Shechem, though it is probably not exactly on the same site, and the rich plain which stretches eastward and southward grows valuable crops even to-day, and is as beautiful to

down to ascertain the fall fill it up somewhat. From seventy-five to eighty feet deep is the most reasonable estimate.

The mouth—which is an orifice in a dome or arch—and upper part are built of masonry, and the sides appear to have been roughly lined with the same material at some distant date. It must be remembered in this connection that a succession of ancient churches originally stood over it, the last of which was destroyed after the defeat of the Crusaders in the year 1187.

Nowadays the water usually lasts until the month of May, and sometimes a little later. Then it disappears, practically, until the return of the rainy season. Fifteen feet of water was sounded so long ago as May, 1697, and that is about the average till drought sets in.

Our illustration fortunately shows it in its earlier state, for the traveller to-day sees it under other and less natural circumstances. The parcel of ground wherein it is situated was acquired some years ago by the Greek Church in Nablous, and everything possible is done to preserve the place. The plot of land, surrounded by a drystone wall, has been planted out as an orchard, a hut has been built over the well, whilst near the gate of the close there is a small habitation for the keeper. The key is in charge of an attendant priest, who is always ready to accompany a visitor, and tell what he knows of the well and its surroundings.

On the whole this well is an object which draws us near to the past and future in one—that Fountain of living waters, the unfailing source of all our happiness and comfort, and the well of water springing up to eternal life. As James Freeman Clarke has written:—

Here, after Jacob parted from his brother,
His daughters linger'd round this well, new made;
Here, seventeen centuries afterwards, came another,
And talked with Jesus, wondering and afraid.
Here, other centuries past, the emperor's mother
Shelter'd its waters with a temple's shade.
Here, 'mid the fallen fragments, as of old,
The girl her pitcher dips within its waters cold.

And Jacob's race grew strong for many an hour,
Then torn beneath the Roman eagle lay;
The Roman's vast and earth-controlling power,
Has crumbled like these shafts and stones away;

But still the waters, fed by dew and shower,
Come up, as ever, to the light of day,
And still the maid bends downward with her urn,
Well pleased to see its glass her lovely face return.
And those few words of truth, first uttered here,

Have sunk into the human soul and heart;
A spiritual faith dawns bright and clear;
Dark creeds and ancient mysteries depart.
The hour for God's true worshippers draws near—



JACOB'S WELL.

but of the well itself . . . 'near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there.' . . . It was here that the woman of Samaria met our Lord and gave Him a drink, on which incident He founded the parable of 'living water,' which has comforted generations past and gone, and will comfort untold generations to come.

But, apart from Holy Writ, there is a vast body of reliable evidence that the well as it exists to-day is not to be confounded with any other fountain or cistern, but is in truth the

the eye as when it attracted Jacob, or arrested the glance of our Saviour. The well itself is on the end of a low spur or swell running out from the north-eastern base of Mount Gerizim, and stands fifteen or twenty feet above the level of the plain.

Early travellers describe its mouth as covered with two large stones easily removed. This mouth is less than two feet in diameter, though the well is about nine feet across. Its depth has been variously stated, possibly because the water never rises to the surface, whilst stones and pieces of masonry thrown