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THE RESPONSE OF CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD.

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(*Baptist.*)

Well, Master, thou hast said the truth.—Mark xii., 32.

IT WAS no uncommon occurrence for our Lord to be surrounded by the keenest critics of His age. The majesty of His character and the seeming audacity of His claims commanded attention. He moved upon the world with an irresistible and fascinating power. The leaders of human thought could not afford to regard with indifference a life and ministry that were revolutionizing society as His were. They could not endure the keen application of our Lord's teaching to themselves without the intensest bitterness and opposition. Often and often would they have taken Him by force had not their vengeance been restrained by fear. They would have eagerly used the basest instrumentalities in effecting their cruel purposes, were such methods compatible with their own safety. Too cowardly to pursue a course that would have exposed them to unpleasant consequences, they resorted to weapons with which they were nevertheless skilled. They sought to entrap Him in His words. But their crafty sophistries were not effective. They only brought contempt upon their own heads. His answers to their questions were clear, lucid, discriminating, profound. He dealt with the fundamental principles submitted to Him with such sublime mastery as to cause one, at least, of His very enemies to exclaim in the honesty of his heart, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

Is there not in this utterance of one who was constrained to speak out his convictions, not certainly from any affection for our Lord, a suggestion of very wide significance? Does it not reveal a

THE SONG AT THE WELL.

By REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

THERE was once a sermon at a well. The teacher was Jesus of Nazareth, and the discourse was delivered to one poor, sinful woman, as the entire audience. The Son of God felt (what we ministers too often forget) that a single immortal soul is a great audience.

Other wells in the Bible are historic besides the well of Sychar. One, at Bethlehem, is associated with a princely act of chivalry; another, at Nahor, with the beginning of a singular courtship. We venture to say that there is one well beside which most of our readers never halted, and out of which they have never drawn either a song or a sermon.

It was situated on the borders of Moab, not far from Mount Pisgah. It bears the name of Beer, which signifies well-spring. Up to this spot thirsty Israel came, on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. The Lord had just said unto Moses: "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Here is a promise; but, like most of God's promises, it is coupled with a condition. The condition in this case is, that the leaders of the congregation were to dig for the water.

A striking scene unfolds itself. The leaders of the host begin to open the loose sand with the staves which they carried. Moses directs the work, and the earth is thrown out fast. While the digging goes forward, the people sing a simple song—one of the oldest snatches of song that has come down to us: "Spring up, O well! Sing ye unto Him? The princes dug it; the nobles of the people opened it, with the lawgiver's scepter, with the staves."

Presently the cool water begins to steal in and fill up the cavity. The water bubbles up to music. The splash of the cool liquid mingles with the song of the multitude, as they press forward and draw the sweet refreshment for their thirsty tongues. It is an inviting scene, and is brimming with spiritual instruction. Many a sweet lesson may be drawn from this outgushing well at Beer.

We learn afresh the good old truth, that the Lord will provide. It is a grievous sin to doubt God, or to limit the Holy One of Israel. He can open rivers in the midst of the desert, and can make the dry land to become springs of water. As long as we remain unbelieving, our souls parch up with the dryness. Poor, stingy, faithless

professors, find their religious life little better than a dull march over a very barren Sahara of formalities. There is no joy in their souls, and no song on their tongues. As long as Christians neglect duty, and forswear prayer, and disobey God, they must expect nothing else than drought and barrenness.

God put His well-springs of blessing inside the gateway of *faith*, and our faith is to be proved by our obedience. As soon as Israel believed God enough to dig, and as soon as the staves were thrust into the sand, the waters began to bubble up. The people began to work, and God began to work also. They began to pray also; their prayer took the form of a song. They sung their prayer: "Spring up, O well!"

Really the deepest, richest, and devoutest hymns we sing, are full of aspiration and petition. They are yearnings toward God and outcries for blessings. That matchless hymn, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," is the soul's passionate call upon Jesus to open His bosom of love and let us hide ourselves there. "Nearer, my God, to Thee," is a prayer which has floated up on the wings of song from thousands of yearning hearts. "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah!" is another. When a long-thirsting church is beginning to arouse into a revival, their hymns begin to become fervent soul-cries for the power from on high. Such song is irrepressible. The soul bursts into it. Petition mingles with praise, and the heart's deepest wants are blended with the heart's fullest gratitude. While we are digging for the water, and praying for the water, we are singing for thankfulness that the water begins to flow. This complex idea runs through all of David's richest psalms. They are blended prayer and praise.

This triple process belongs to every Christian's best labor and sweetest joys. He yearns after Jesus, and after a fuller tasting of Jesus' love, and after a fuller enduement with the Spirit. With his hands he is digging, but with his lips he is singing. Duty is no longer drudgery; it is delight. Witness all ye beloved brethren who have experienced the richest joys of revival seasons. Has not preaching the Word, and praying for the conversion of sinners, and honest work for the Master, been a spiritual luxury? As you plied the staves, and the waters of salvation gushed out, you have taken out Israel's strain: "Spring up, O well! Sing ye unto Him."

That gathering at the fountain of Beer was a primitive praise-

meeting. We should have many such in our churches, and if we were filled with the Spirit, we would multiply our "sacrifices of praise." The more the blessings, the more the joys, and the more the joys the more the music. While Israel continued to murmur against God, they were parched with draught. When they began to work, and to pray, and to sing, the fountain burst forth. An ounce of song is worth a ton of scolding. As a group of sailors on the deck, when they pull with a will, always pull to the cadence of a song, so God's people will always pull with more harmony and strength when they join in the voice of praise. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." God never loves to hear us murmur, or scold, or revile each other. He loveth the prayer of faith, and upspringing of joyful praise. It was not only Paul's prayer, but Paul's midnight song of praise, that shook open the old dungeon of Philippi.

One other thought must not be forgotten as we stand by that well of Beer. Those inflowing waters are a beautiful type of the Holy Spirit. As the previous scene of the uplifted brazen serpent is a type of the atoning Saviour, so the fountain of Beer is a symbol of the influences of the Spirit. Christ himself employed the same emblem, as we read in the seventh chapter of John's Gospel. When the Divine Spirit flows into our souls, then come refreshment, peace, strength, holiness, and the sweetest, purest of all joys. Then we work for Christ with elastic hope. Then we see the fruits of our toil springing up like Beer's bursting well. Then we have the words put into our mouths, and our hearts make melody. Life becomes an antepast of Heaven. We are becoming attuned for those hallelujahs which we shall sing with rapturous sweetness beside that crystal stream, which floweth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

THE spirit of the New Testament, and the spirit of the Old Testament illumined by the light of the New, is "Hate evil, not in other folks, but in yourself. Hate the habit of prevarication. Hate selfish deception. Hate meanness. Hate all forms of stinginess. Hate every kind of conduct that minifies magnanimity and grandeur of soul. Hate these things in yourself." The man who sets out to do that will not have very much time to be looking after his neighbors.—*Beecher.*