

tively late, but were made into square or oblong tablets or flat rings and weighed in scales at every transaction. Precious stones also formed a very convenient way of concealing wealth and of carrying it from place to place when there was no system of banking. Riches in the Old Testament sometimes means not only the things possessed, but also

the power and social standing they give and the ease, comfort and luxury they bring. Wealth was at first regarded as a sign of God's blessing, and so of righteousness, but the stubborn facts of the godly suffering every privation, while the wicked were flourishing, led to a deeper view, and the limited power and transitoriness of wealth were recognized.

### THE LESSON APPLIED

The writer of the Lesson passage evidently wishes to draw a sharp contrast between the character of Abram and that of Lot. He may be said to have taken an instantaneous photograph of both as they are engaged in settling a controversy that had arisen between their respective shepherds. The picture of Abraham, the senior member of the partnership that had been maintained up to this date, is a very attractive one. He stands before us as a magnanimous and unselfish man in his proposals of peace, and great in the purity and simplicity of his motive.

Could anything be finer than the dignified words addressed to Lot after long negotiations: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Here is the spirit of conciliation in which we should carry on work among the different churches. Especially in the vast West there is room enough for all and to spare. The plan of co-operation on mission fields is a practical application of Abram's spirit, if it is carried out in a free, generous and trusting way. One cannot but feel how fittingly these words might be addressed also to the preachers and advocates of fads and various kinds of "isms" that frequently invade congregations and disturb the quiet Christian work that is being carried on by the minister. Let these zealous advocates go to those whom the churches with their limited power have failed to reach. There is plenty of room.

In contrast with the gracious personality of Abram, Lot comes before us as a man with

his eye on the main chance—not a wicked man, certainly, but one who is a pusher for his own ends, and is eager to use friends and events for his own business advancement.

What was the secret of Abram's generous conduct in this dispute? It lay here: His life was controlled by a single motive,—to follow the Lord. That his herdmen should get the best pasturage and the best wells available was important enough, but it was a paltry thing, utterly worthless, if it meant a quarrel with his young relative, Lot. Abram was a lover of peace, and was willing to make a sacrifice in order to obtain it. He was as far removed as possible from the Shylock who passionately declared, "I'll have my bond." How many unhappy disputes would never have occurred if we had followed the lofty example of this far away man of God! In Sunday School and church affairs, as well as in ordinary business, let us cultivate the transparent and conciliatory spirit of Abram.

We must not overlook the fact which the Bible suggests, that Abram's policy was best in the long run. As the younger man, Lot should have said to his uncle: "I have leaned on you up to this hour; you have made me what I am. You must take the richest part of the plain: I shall be grateful for what is left." But that was not the way with the calculating Lot. When Abram told him to make his choice, his shrewd eyes lighted up as he surveyed the rich valley before him. He selected all the Plain of Jordan and "moved his tent as far as Sodom." Years later the fire fiend destroyed these cities of the Plain, but did not come near the tents of Abram. Lot escaped, broken in fortune and in morals.

Lastly, the story teaches us, in an impressive manner, the far-reaching effects of a