

ABRAM ... and his excellent eye-exercises
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And Abram went up out of Egypt " (I 3: 1), and probably he was very glad to go. The land of the Pharaohs had been an unpleasant place for the man who had been called to Canaan. His sense of the divine Presence had been lost, and every day registered increasing misery. He had long since regretted the decision to leave Bethel's altar, and wished he could forget the moment when his covetous eyes desired the attractions of Egypt. At last his restless spirit had found relief, and he returned " to the altar which he had made at the beginning" (v. 4). Slowly he journeyed through the country, and a prayer of thanksgiving arose from his lips when the familiar landmarks came into view. The vision of the altar meant more than possession of a mighty palace.

Abram's Increasing Wisdom

" And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen ; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee?" (vv. 7-9). The wise old man had learned to hate discord. It was not only a very bad example to the watching Canaanites, it was ruinous to his own happiness. "Lot, you may have the rich pasture lands ; you may journey in any direction acceptable to you. You may choose anything ; but do not spoil my fellowship with God and man." The saint looked toward Egypt, and shuddered ; he looked around in every direction, and sighed; he looked to the sky, and smiled. Nothing mattered any more but to walk with God. " Lot, my boy, the whole land is before you. Yours is the choice to go whithersoever you desire. Take the land ; take the well-watered places ; take it all, only leave me at peace with God."

Abram's Incessant Watchfulness

" And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere. . . . Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ; and Lot journeyed east and they separated themselves the one from the other (vv. 10, 11). And perhaps old uncle Abram sighed as the boy went away. Regret and relief mingled in his fatherly heart. He was sad for the boy's sake, but profoundly glad for his own. His nephew had probably said, " You don't mind, Uncle Abram, if I take the rich and luscious pasture lands in

the valley to the east? It seems a mean thing to leave an old man with the hills and stony ground ; but I would like to live near the cities, to trade with the people of Sodom, and to exploit these far-reaching meadows. I am sure you will be rewarded even if you do lose these eastern pastures. You don't mind, do you? No, I thought not ; you were always such a wonderful uncle to me." When Abram turned his back on the inviting district of Sodom, his soul sang. What did it matter that he had lost fertile lands and a vast opportunity for increasing wealth? He was happy; he was at peace; he walked with the Highest: all was well. He looked again at the plains of Jordan and said, in so many words, " What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world

ABRAM ... and his excellent eye-exercises and lose his soul?" He looked at the difficult terrain ahead, and said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He looked at the skies, and a voice whispered, " Be not afraid, for I am with thee whithersoever thou goest." And as the glory of God fined his soul, his eyes became stars.

Abram's Inspired Worship

" And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it" (v. 14). "But, Lord, all the land to the east now belongs to Lot." And God answered, "To thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Lot, in grasping for material gain, loses it ; your renunciation of it brings it within your reach. Abram, lift up your eyes and see all the land before you. It is yours; for those eyes see most, which first look to the skies. "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it ; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord." Daily he journeyed among the hills where Sodom's smoke had little chance of getting into his eyes. He had excellent vision-he even saw Christ's day, and was glad.

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