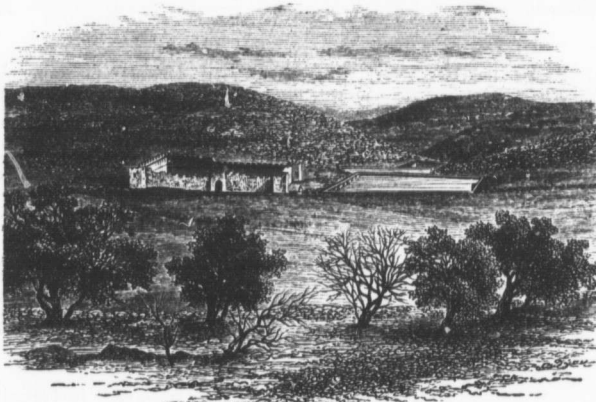


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POOLS OF SOLOMON WITH SARACENIC CASTLE.

Pools of Solomon.

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THERE is little doubt that these are the pools mentioned in the Book of Ecclesiastes: "I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees." They are three enormous cisterns of marble masonry: the lower, 582 feet long, breadth at the east end 207 feet, at the west 148 feet, depth at the east end 50 feet. Dr. Thompson says: "When full it would float the largest man-of-war that ever ploughed the ocean." The middle pool is 248 feet above the lower one, its length 423 feet, its breadth at east end 250 feet, at west end 160 feet, its depth at east end 39 feet. The upper pool is 160 feet above the middle pool, its length is 380 feet, its breadth at the east end 236 feet, at the west end 229 feet, its depth at the west end, 25 feet. These enormous cisterns are in

splendid preservation, and the course of the aqueduct can still be traced by which they supplied water to the temple, a distance of some twelve or fourteen miles. To-day it is conveyed as far as Bethlehem, and close beside the time-worn aqueduct we now took our way toward that town.

A short distance below the Pools, in a valley richly fertile, lies the village of Urtas, which is supposed to occupy the site of Etham, where, as Josephus says: "Solomon was in the habit of taking a morning drive." If this be so, and it is more than probable, the fertile valley corresponds with the gardens of which he speaks. "I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted in them of all kinds of fruits;" and here are laid the scenes of the Song of Songs. An earthly paradise, indeed, must this valley have been, under the lavish wealth and taste and wisdom of the royal poet.