

MAY 1890

The Theological Monthly

THE SITE OF THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN AND THE "PITS" OF THE VALE OF SIDDIM.

THOSE two wealthy sheikhs, Abraham and his nephew Lot, met one day on the highlands of Israel in amicable conference on the subject of their separation. This had been rendered necessary by the vast increase of their flocks and herds, so that "the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together," that is, could no longer supply them in one place with sufficient pasturage and water. And we read that "Lot carefully viewed [literally "lifted up his eyes and viewed"] all the Circular-plain (כִּכָּר *kikkar*) of Jordan, that all of it was irrigated [literally "drinking"] before Jehovah's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, like a garden of Jehovah, like Egypt's land."¹ These last appear to be Lot's own words as he looked long and eagerly on the tempting landscape, for had he not travelled with his uncle in this same land of Egypt, and been as fascinated as travellers are to-day with its wondrous subtropical verdure? The expression he uses, "a garden of Jehovah," if it stood alone, and if it had the definite article, which it has not, might refer to Eden; but being the first, and therefore, on the face of it, the weaker of the two similes, it must be taken merely as the strong Hebrew superlative, like "trembling of God," *i.e.*, "a

¹ Gen. xiii. 10.