

prevail against them ; that they would be carried away from their own God-given country ; and that as exiled captives they would be scattered abroad in strange lands. They did forsake God ; and the prophets who lived among them in the times of their going astray warned them faithfully of their danger, and very clearly indicated the catastrophe which was so close at hand. These predictions, so far as the Kingdom of Judah was concerned, found sorrowful fulfilments in the reign of Ichoiachim when the flower of the land was carried captive to Babylon, and in the reign of Zedekiah when the holy city—Jerusalem—and the temple were destroyed, and the rest of the inhabitants, except a poor remnant, were carried away. There by the rivers of Babylon, with sad hearts and silent harps, they spent weary days fulfilling the seventy years' captivity foretold by the mournful Jeremiah, and there they remained until Babylon herself changed masters and the Persians possessed themselves of that and other parts of the world. Cyrus, the Medo-Persian King, soon after coming to the throne, moved by Him whose way is in the sea, His path in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known, issued a decree which granted leave to as many of these exiles as were inclined, to return to their own land, having permission, if not order, to rebuild the temple which had been plundered and razed to the ground. Comparatively few were found willing to leave the comforts they enjoyed and the associations they had formed in the heathen realms, where their lot had been cast for so long a time, and in which many thousands of them were born. Return to the fatherland meant leaving homes and comforts, bearing privations, facing difficulties and making a new start. Goodly numbers, however, availed themselves of the privilege granted and the aid given. Successive companies left their exile and returned to Jerusalem. The first of these companies returned at the end of the seventy years (536 B. C.) under Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua. This company consisted of nearly 50,000 Jews. The second company returned under the leadership of Ezra, the