

tried the fortunes of war he had been too late in calling God into council, and had resolved to take occasion by the forelock in this. Three things in particular he determined to do : to set himself to seek Jehovah, to proclaim a fast throughout all Judah, and to hold a national convention in Jerusalem. There was not a moment to lose. From city to city the king's couriers sped, summoning the heads and representatives of the people to the capital, as his father, Asa, had done in a similar emergency, to ask help of the Lord ; and in answer to the king's invitation they came, the princes and chiefs of the fathers' houses, with the principal men out of all the cities of Judah. In the wide quadrangle, or outer court of the temple, which perhaps had been recently repaired and swept, the vast concourse assembled. The good king, then a middle-aged man, and weighted as he had never been before with cares of state, stood forth in the middle of the throng, most likely on the scaffold or platform, beside the brazen altar which Solomon had erected, and there, "without form or premeditation," (?) says Adam Clarke, "offered one of the most sensible, pious, correct, and, as to its composition, one of the most elegant prayers ever uttered under the Old Testament dispensation." It was undoubtedly a noble supplication, of soaring sublimity, yet of lowly humility ; brief but comprehensive ; impassioned and withal calm. Addressing Jehovah in terms so exalted and spiritual as to indicate an ampler and clearer, purer and higher vision than one is accustomed to associate with an Old Testament standpoint, the king spoke of Him as a God at once personal and present, ancestral and faithful, celestial and mundane, universal and local, omnipotent and omnipresent. Reminding Him of the different claims they had on His assistance,—His own covenant mercies in giving them the land from which they were then threatened to be driven ; the expectation they had been led to cherish by the fact that His temple was among them, that He would hear and keep them when they called upon His name ; the ingratitude of the enemy then repaying Israel's former clemency to them as a people by attempting to drive her from the land ; the utter helplessness of Judah to contend with such a horde as was