**THE EAGLE LIFE - STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**18. STRENGHENING THE HANDS by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"And they strengthened their hands for this good work."*

*Nehemiah 2:18*

What is the good of planning a work if we have no strength? What is the use of elaborate programmes if we have no provisions? What is the good of building windmills if there is no wind? And yet that is just what many of us are always doing. We pass resolutions, but nothing happens. We dream and talk about rebuilding the battered city, but the walls do not rise. And so often our visions become indolent reveries, and we just dream of doing all day long. But these men of the olden time not only had their great dreams, they strengthened their hands in God, and into them there came a glorious power of "lift,'' and they laid hold of the ruined heaps of their city, and lo! the desired walls rose in their purposed plan and order. In his essay on Milton, Hazlitt has this glowing and suggestive word: " Milton seized the pen with a hand just warm from the touch of the ark." And so Milton's imagination was fired with religious zeal. And so his genius was elevated and sanctified. It shone and burned with mystic flame. Milton's pen was taken in hand in the very passion of consecration. And this is surely the secret of triumphant work of every kind in the Kingdom of our Lord. Our work so often fails because we do not bring enough to it. We do not come to the pen from the ark. We take it up with a cold hand. We approach our tasks from below and not from above. "Ye are from beneath: I am from above.'' No holy retinue accompanies us in our enterprise. And therefore we are unarresting and unimpressive. There is no inevitable energy in us wherewith to shape disorderly circumstances into the order of the Divine Will. Circumstances laugh at us! "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" We issue our commands before we have had communion. We lay hold of our tools before we have strengthened our hands. We take the pen before we have touched the ark.

In times like these the manner in which we approach our problems will determine whether we shall solve them. There is no end of rebuilding to be done. Precious things are lying in ruin on every side. Let us come to our tasks from the very sanctities of the holy place. Let us strengthen our hands for the work, with this as our prayer: "Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."