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

**29. THE TRANSFORMED DESERT by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."*

*Isaiah 35:1*

I HAVE lately read two fascinating articles, which had most suggestive titles. One of them was entitled "Notes from an Ambulance Train," and it contained the detailed observations of a fervent botanist, and the observations were made through the window of the train as it journeyed up the line for a load. "Traveller's joy runs riot over the bushes and sloping banks; coming just after the roses have gone, it is especially welcome." "The Scottish bluebell is a welcome sight in the hedgerows." And this is from an ambulance train running through the desolate parts of France! The second article bore the title, "The Wild Flowers of the Trenches," and the enthusiastic observer tells how he has seen along the line of the trenches, and around the shell holes, such flowering plants as marguerites and hedge parsley and poppies. When I read these eager records of these waste places I could not but remember the words of the astonished prophet, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose."

Seen from an ambulance train? A much more marvellous record might be compiled from the intimate observations made by the sick and the broken as they look out over the fields of their stricken life. I went to see one such sick friend in New York, and he quietly said to me as he lay in bed: "Things look very different when seen from the horizontal position." Yes, and it is not only that things appear in different colours, and assume quite different shapes and sizes, but the grace of God reveals itself in fresh and gracious surprises. The via dolorosa has many a sweet blossoming thing springing up in the gloomy way. Yes, even "traveller's joy runs riot over the bushes,'' as the joy of the Lord appeared in the prison at Philippi to two scourged men whose feet were fast in the stocks. "At midnight Paul and Silas sang praises, and the prisoners heard them."

What is that but the traveller's joy? And what surpassing plants of heavenly hearts-ease appear when the Lord makes the wounded spirit whole and calms the troubled breast! And what exquisite gentleness when the great Physician is busy with our broken hearts, and when He wipes away the secret tears which no other eye can see! There was one sufferer who emerged from his season of grief and bruising with this grateful song upon his lips: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress." His eyes had been opened to undreamed-of riches in the inheritance of grace, and God's gentleness had made him great.

The wild flowers of the trenches! Beautiful things springing up in the home of struggle! The scenes of warfare now become the scenes of novel loveliness! The fields of carnage the site of new worlds! And who can tell what strong and healthy moral growths are to spring out of all the tragic desolations of our time? God's seed has been sown in the blood of our sacrifices and on the stern wilderness golden harvests will be reaped by generations yet unborn. There be some who say, "To what purpose is this waste?" The waving corn of coming days shall be the answer and the memorial of our sacrifice.