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

**30. THE SONGS OF THE ROAD by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs."*

*Isaiah 35:10*

In his very gracious and inspiring life of his father, Denholm Brash, his son tells us of his father's passionate love for the Methodist Hymnal, and how they agreed to call the sections on Pilgrimage and Guidance "The Songs of the Open Road." I like the title. It tells me that heavenly pilgrims are to be known by their songs. When we overtake them, or when they pass us on the road, they are to be distinguished by their singing. When Christian was creeping through the appalling Valley of the Shadows, and he became very disconsolate, and the way was exceedingly narrow and full of abominations, he heard another pilgrim singing, "I will fear no evil,'' and with that he was made glad, for he hoped to have company by-and-by.

Pilgrims must sing for their own sakes. Songs are the appointed helpmeets of the journey, and if we reject them the road doubles its length. "If the way be weary, tell it Him in song," and in the very telling some of the weariness will have fled. In one of the most powerful of his poems Wordsworth describes a marvellous sunset which he saw from the cliffs on the northwestern coast of England. And this is how he says he felt: "Wings at my shoulders seemed to play.'' And those are the very wings which play upon the shoulders of pilgrims who pace the highway of the Lord singing the songs of Zion. The song fills the soul with a sense of lightness, and gives nimbleness to the heavy feet. Even Mr. Ready-to-Halt "footed it well" when Mercy began to play upon the lute, and melody was heard upon the road.

And we must force ourselves to sing the song even when the bird has injured wings. "How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?" Yes, but as Dr. Rendel Harris has somewhere said, "What might have happened if they had tried?" What missionary influence there might have been in the uplifted psalm! A song in the night has a haunting strain! "Nearer, my God, to Thee," sung when the tempest is sweeping down the road, becomes a call and an evangel to many who have not yet turned to the pilgrim road. And so the pilgrim heart should be the home of song. Song shortens the road, it doubles the service.