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

**37. THE MAKING OF HEROES by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"The people that do know their God shall be strong, and shall do exploits."*

*Daniel 11:32*

It is like a strong and noble tree, of which the roots are found in a certain knowledge, and the fruit in heroic deeds. Exploits are not manufactured goods. They are not the deliberate creation of set purpose. They are not works; they are fruits. They are not made; they are grown. They are not the startling surprises of occasional ventures; they are the natural and spontaneous expression of the habits of the soul. A true hero is always heroic. Sometimes his heroism is seen by the public, but he is still heroic when the audience has withdrawn. This kind of tree "yields her fruit every month'' -- that is to say, there is no season when its fruit cannot be found.

If, therefore, a life is to abound in heroic deeds it must have the heroic nature. It must "be strong'' if it is to "do exploits." Every other kind of heroism is superficial, and it will pass with the occasion which excited it. We want a heroism which is heroic in its own secret thoughts. We want heroes who slay dragons in private. We want the royal courage which strangles an unworthy impulse as soon as it is born. We want exploits in sacrificial thinking, magnificent conquests of selfishness in the quiet courts of the soul. A real man must wrestle with lions and bears in the jungle of his own spirit, and there he must register a courage of which the world has no account. All of which means that a man must be a hero in the very pith and fibre of his being. It must be his nature to be heroic.

And how can we deal with a man's nature excepting through his God? How can we make the tree good? The prophet's word gives us the eternal answer -- if a man is to "be strong" he must "know God." And that is not the shallow knowledge of recognition, it is the vital knowledge of communion; it is the partaking of the divine nature. It is the living fellowship which makes a man a branch on the living vine. The life-sap of the tree of life pervades every fibre of his being. He lives; yet not he; Christ liveth in him. In such a life all the fruit shall be exploits, and the flavour of the heroic shall be in everything.