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

**41. ON THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF by JOHN H. JOWET**

*"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."*

*Habakkuk 3:17,18*

There is something very arresting in a man's words when he stands in a hard and difficult place. We hold our breath to catch the testimony of men who are marching through the darkness of the night. I can just remember my old minister, Dr. Enoch Mellor, in the day when he suffered the bereavement of his wife. I was a very young lad, but I vividly remember with what impatient eagerness I waited to learn what his text would be when he appeared again in the pulpit. And my spirit was awed when he read out the words, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, for Thou didst it." There was a quiet serene courage as of a man whose confidence was sure, for he saw the hosts of the Lord upon the road.

But a man's word and act are always arresting when he is brought to the edge of a cliff. When the material means of life begin to fail! When the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine. Or when we lose some faculty or power which has been a vital instrument in our work and existence. How do we adjust ourselves to the change, and what kind of witness is there in our adjustment? Henry Fawcett lost the sight of both eyes when he was out shooting on the moors. He was a highly-gifted man, and he had brilliant political prospects, and it seemed as if they were all blotted out with the loss of his sight. But as soon as he was led back home he said to his staggering father, who had just heard the news, "Father, it shall make no difference.'' When General Booth suffered a similar loss, and found himself blind in old age, he said to his son, "Bramwell, I have sought to serve the Lord with my sight, now I must serve Him with my blindness." These men, and countless others, have built altars out of apparent ruins, and they dedicated themselves anew in the hour of their disaster.

It is a wonderful thing to sound God's praises on an apparently broken instrument, and to compel the instrument to yield the sweetest music. God does not despise the broken reed, and we must not despise it, even though the breakage be in our own life. In the divine fellowship we can make our very breakages bear witness to His grace, and we can fetch melody out of our disasters. Men's words are always very vital when they breathe a quiet courage amid the smashing blows of calamity. "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." That man "builds a heaven in hell's despair."

God does not leave hard places without His own witness. God has wonderful manna for the desert. There is a mysterious bottle of water near Hagar as she wanders in the wilderness. There are "sustaining herbs" on the "cliff-edge of misery." The tree of life lifts itself in utterly unsuspected places, and it bears its fruit in every kind of season. Yes, God has food for courage. We are not left in loneliness and negligence when we come to the brink of terrible things. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The Lord of Gethsemane and Calvary will not desert us when we come to the brinks and precipices where death and destruction seem to make their home. "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.'' "Behold angels came and ministered unto Him."