

Homeward again, at a slower pace,
Go the firemen now with saddened face;
For a messmate, comrade, young or old,
Is truly mourned by the fireman bold.

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The funeral drum in the busy street,
The measured tramp of the firemen's feet,
The empty engines passing along,
The ever sympathising throng,
A mother, a wife, or a loving friend,
Is all bound up in the fireman's end;
A sight that expresses one deep desire,
He has gone, never more to encounter—"Fire."

Harry Bright, M.F.D.

YOUR FATHER KNOWETH.

"**M**AN is born to trouble," and each man is liable, through the inwardness and secrecy of some part of his trouble—ignorant the while of the possibly similar, or even severer, sorrow of others around him—to feel as if he were left to suffer peculiarly alone. Sadder yet, and worse, he allows himself to feel at times as if God had forgotten him. Some of the most moving and marvellous words in all the Bible are words of God, spoken in remonstrance, and as though in pain—through having been grievously wronged by such distrustful thoughts.

Thy judgment is not passed over from thy God, nor thy way hidden, nor thy trouble, nor anything that pertains to thee. "He knoweth thy walking." He troubleth Himself divinely about thy poor human sorrow. He goes with thee, step by step, still caring, still watching, never sleeping, never weary, never discouraged in His work. "He knoweth." Thank God, and take courage.

Dr. Raleigh.

BETH-EL—THE HOUSE OF GOD.

"**M**ORE than three thousand six hundred years ago, a lonely man was walking from Beersheba to Haran. He was a fugitive from the house of his father, and was flying from the wrath of his elder brother. As he wandered on, the sun set with that suddenness peculiar to the Eastern countries, and Jacob found himself alone in a strange path, surrounded by darkness. He could not return home for fear of Esau's revenge, and he could not go forward in the dark, so he contentedly made for himself a bed of the stones, and lay down to sleep. So may we often, if we will trust in God, draw good out of things which seem altogether bad; and surely it is better to turn the hard stones into pillows than to stay awake all night abusing them for their hardness, and grumbling over our discomfort.

So Jacob slept, and then God gave him a beautiful dream, and promised him the land on which he was lying. More than this, God promised that He would be with His servant always, wherever he went. Then Jacob awoke, and exclaiming, "Surely the Lord is in

this place!" he took a stone, and setting it up for a pillar, anointed it with oil, and called the name of the place Beth-el; that is, "the house of God" (Gen. xxviii. 10).

There are more than fifty places mentioned in the Bible whose names begin with the word Beth, and this word means, generally, a house or place. Thus, just as Beth-el is the house of God, Beth-shan is the house of quiet; Beth-zur, the house of the rock, and so on.

Beth-el is mentioned for the first time in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, when we read of Abraham pitching his tent there; but it was Jacob who gave the name to the little spot close to the city of Luz, where God spoke to him in a dream.

Once again does Jacob visit the place. More than thirty years have passed away, and the homeless wanderer has become a powerful chief; better still, he has made peace with his brother. The word of the Lord comes to Jacob, and commands him to go to Beth-el and dwell there, and make an altar unto God. Then, when he obeys, God gives him a reward for his obedience in a blessing on himself and his children, changing his name from Jacob to Israel. Jacob, full of thankfulness for all God's mercies, past and future, builds another altar, and, pouring a drink-offering upon it, he once more calls the place after the name he loves, Beth-el (Gen. xxxv. 6—15).

Years and centuries passed by, and troublous times came upon Israel; then it was that the people went up to Beth-el to ask counsel of God, for there was the ark of the covenant under the charge of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron.

The next mention of Beth-el is in the time of Samuel, when he went from year to year on circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh. Then we hear nothing more of the "house of God" till a wonderful scene takes place there in the reign of King Jeroboam.

Fearful lest his people should turn away from him to King Rehoboam, if they went up to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam set up two golden calves. Full well did he understand human nature when he used as his argument for this idolatry, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem." How often do we make cold or heat, wind or rain, an excuse for not going to a place of worship. It is indeed very often "too much" for us to go up to Jerusalem, and yet we are quite able to go to some place of amusement, which is perhaps quite as far. We can find strength and time for a cup of tea with our neighbour, but we can find neither for a few minutes with our God.

Bethel was conveniently situated, and its very name seemed favourable to King Jeroboam's plans, so he put one of the golden calves there, and the other at Dan. One day, as he stood by the side of the altar, a man of God came fearlessly before him, and prophesied the birth of a God-fearing king, and the destruction of the idol's altar. Then, in his anger, Jeroboam reached out his hand to seize the man who thus dared to prophesy evil things, and lo! his hand was withered up, and he stood powerless, whilst the altar was rent,