

## A Letter

J. G. Bellett.

Christian Friend vol. 14, 1887, p. 259.

The Lord bless you, my dear sister; and if called on to take the journey somewhat more solitarily than your heart had been wont to count upon, and to know sorrows which had not come within the range of your forebodings, may His hand be with you, and its well-known staff. "God is His own interpreter."

There is no providence by which He deals with us that He will not interpret by-and-by, nor is there any promise by which He sustains and comforts that He will not abundantly make good. There is nothing excessive in the divine descriptions. The spirit of revelation is surely under and not over the mark, though the promises are "exceeding great and precious," and the reality will rather be according to the confession of the Queen of Sheba — "The half was not told me, it was a true report which I heard in my own land."

How beautifully does Luke 1 rise upon the heart in connection with this! It has just struck me very peculiarly. I read it like a new scene of light and joy breaking in after a gloomy and wasted interval, and exceeding all that had been in the earlier days, or that had been promised by the prophets. There had been most surely a return from Babylon in the times of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and they were good times. The zeal of the servants of God, the restoration of the house and the city, the revival of the feasts, and the order and services of the people, made them so. But such times had been clouded. The day was overcast; yea, while it was yet but morning a change had come, and Malachi gives us an evil account of his time, in which condition, with a bright promise to the remnant, Israel goes on till the times of the New Testament — a dreary and evil interval indeed, without one single ray, as from the light of the Lord or the spirit of revelation, to animate or cheer it. But though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, and come with a bright witness. For such is this exquisite chapter. The morning breaks, the heavens are opened, as it were, and the dreary wastes of Israel are revisited; and as in the twinkling of an eye all this takes place. No special harbingers, no marvellous notices of the coming change; but the priest is at the accustomed altar, and the people in their places according to the manner, and in the ordinary current of everyday life. The women of the land were preparing for espousals (Luke 1: 27), when suddenly the heavens open, and visitations are made alike to the temple and the cottage, to the priest, and to the poor, unknown virgin of Nazareth.

The suddenness and the brilliancy of all this are very blessed. And how it tells us that the distance of heaven from earth is nothing when the due season comes for bringing them into communion! The ladder is a short one that will reach from heaven to earth by-and-by. And in this chapter we get a sight of it for a moment, or a sample of some of its happy services. Here the angels of God are ascending and descending. Gabriel enters without wrong into the place of the priests, and stands even at the right side of the altar. He does not take the high place of the angel Jehovah, and ascend in the flame; nor does he, like Jesus-Jehovah, speak of himself as greater than that temple; but being a heavenly one, he enters without *trespass* upon the place of the priest. But so does he enter without *reluctance* into the place of the poor, unknown Nazarene. The earth may not be so prepared to receive such visitations as heaven is to make them, but Gabriel has for both Zacharias, and Mary the same healing and gladdening word "Fear not." And joy, the most satisfying joy, diffuses itself everywhere — old men and maidens, young men and children, join in the millennial dance; Mary and Elizabeth, and the child in the womb, and Zacharias, in their several ways attest their joy, and in principle all creation is lighted up in gladness.

Here is more than earlier days had known or voices of prophets had foretold. Ezra and Nehemiah had never had such days of heaven upon earth as these, nor had Malachi told the remnant of such tastes of soul-satisfying joy as Elizabeth had when she saluted Mary, and as Mary had when she uttered her song of praise. He had indeed said, that they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and thought on His name together; but now in the hearts and on the lips of such a remnant the gladdening light of the Spirit is shed, and the triumphant strains of the Spirit are poured forth. And the suddenness as well as the brilliancy of all this! Who was calculating on a bit of this the day before? And then the ease with which heaven visits the earth when the due time comes. No *reserve* in coming side by side with the highest, no *reluctance* in coming side by side with the poorest and meanest. The ladder stretches its ample foot across the length and breadth of the land, and down to every point of it "abundant entrance" is ministered to the angels in the heavens above. All these features of this communion attract me. Would that the soul could wait more in the joy and patience of faith for the great original of all this — for that millennial day when the ladder shall thus be raised, and the heavens after this pattern shall open on the earth again, when the passage downward shall be thus in full ease and brilliancy; and if the receivers of the joy that is brought be made so happy by it, what shall be the happiness of them who bear it to them, and who in their measure shall experience the divine prerogative, and know that it is more blessed to give than to receive? May your heart greatly rejoice in this. He will interpret the doings of His hands, and will outdo the sayings and promises of His prophets. May He graciously hold you up while you are passing the dreary interval.

\* \* \*

With Mr. - I continue to have full and unreserved communion; but how painful to think that this should not be the general rule, but the exception! But so it is. Partition walls are thrown up, as well as veils cast over, by the god of this world, where the blood of Jesus and the Spirit of grace would throw down and rend. May the Lord greatly refresh and sustain your spirit. May the assurance of His love fill your heart. No one thought more blessed than that. It is so precious that the Holy Ghost makes it of His special service to impart that assurance to the heart. (Romans 5.) May you abound in hope also, longing as for the morning. He has gathered many, and will go on.

Believe me in unfeigned love, Your brother in Christ, J. G. B.