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Poetry.

The Valley of the Gaspereaux,

HORTON, N. S.

The Spring's embroidered kirtle, hung gracefully round
the earth,
Starred with the rainbow blossoms of glad rejoicing
birth—
The green trees shook the tassels in feathery beauty
lung,
And music filled the forest by a thousand voices sung.
The bladed grass looked upward from the rich and
fallow soil,
And Sabbath beauty mantled the homes of happy
toil,—
While the sun from Heaven's blue arches, cast a won-
drous golden glow
On the glad and fruitful valley of the lovely Gas-
pereau!

Fair slept that pleasant valley—a sweet Arcadian
scene,
As the lazy river sparkled, the sloping banks be-
tween—
The blue flags cast a shadow of azure on its breast,
And sedge-grass twined the mill-wheel now motionless
in rest.
The wild rose shed its perfume upon the balmy air,
And the graceful Linnaea trembled in lilac beauty
there—
While the green and pleasant willows bent lovingly
and low,
Like a band of trusty wardens o'er the winding Gas-
pereau!

Far in the hazy distance some feathery elm trees grew,
So graceful in their grandeur, so emerald in their
hue—
One like a broad umbrella of nature's own design,
Caught the glistening dew of heaven and the rays of
glad sunshine
Each lifting to the southwind a leafy diadem,
Whose soft green clusters shadowed the old centennial
stem—
The elm trees and the willows brought back the long
ago.
When Acadian peasants wandered by the happy Gas-
pereau!

Here in this peaceful valley they tilled the grassy sod,
And lifted up the incense of simple hearts to God;
And here beside the river in purple eventide,
They set those willow saplings—now old and sancti-
fied.
Aye! sanctified by sorrow, by suffering and by time,
By the dearer things of memory that stir the spirit's
clime—
For those willows chant a legend by the river where
they grow,
Of the first Acadian settlers by the lovely Gaspereau!

The elm trees and the willows are but memorials now—
Through the rich and fruitful ridges, the Saxon speeds
his plough—
Rough English voices echo through the woodland's
green expanse,
Where fell the silvery cadence of the sunny land of
France!
The hearthstone is deserted and low the roof-tree lies,
While Nova Scotia claims the soil beneath Acadia's
skies—
But the exiles live forever! still their storied annals
grow,
In the elm trees and the willows by the sunny Gas-
pereau!

Strange mystery of nature—defying change and time,
Keeping the soul immortal amid earth's frosty rime—
The hands have long been lifeless that set each tender
stem,
But these wave a living witness—a type and pledge of
them!
Like a good name after burial—each elm and willow
bears
Sign manual for the exiles of the land that once was
theirs,
And their hallowing presence lingers through the still-
ness soft and low,
That wraps the pleasant valley of the shining Gas-
pereau!

Halifax, 1858.

M. J. K.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER LV.

The Quiet Period.

From A. D. 1688 to A. D. 1792.

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Andrew Fuller and John Sutcliffe were
"men that had understanding of the times,
to know what Israel ought to do." When
they saw that the time was come they pre-
pared to rouse the people. To this their
discourse, delivered at a meeting of minis-
ters at Clipstone, Northamptonshire, in
1791, mainly contributed. Fuller preached
from Haggai i. 2, on "the pernicious in-
fluence of delay;" Sutcliffe from 1 Kings
19. 10, on "jealousy for the Lord of Hosts."
Decisive action followed shortly afterwards.

The Denomination had been gathering
strength for several years. In 1763 the
number of churches was about 200. In
1760 there were 326 churches in England

and 56 in Wales, besides the churches of
the General Baptists, the number of which
is not given.

Before I proceed to furnish information
respecting the state of our body in other
parts of the world, I will give you a brief
account of the principal ministers who
flourished in England during this period.

Dr. John Gale was educated at the Uni-
versity of Leyden, where he obtained the
degree of Doctor in Philosophy at the early
age of nineteen. Proceeding thence to
Amsterdam, he studied theology under
Limborch, author of the "History of the
Inquisition," and other works. On his re-
turn to England, in 1705, he became assis-
tant to Mr. Allen, then pastor of the
church in the Barbican, London, and after-
wards to his successor, Mr. Joseph Bur-
roughs. He died in 1721, in the 41st year
of his age.

Dr. Gale is best known by his answer to
Dr. Wall, in a volume entitled, "Reflec-
tions on Dr. Wall's History of Infant Bap-
tism." This is a standard work in the
Baptist controversy. The author's various
learning is advantageously employed, and
in a very effective manner. Even those
who differed from him acknowledged the
great merit of his work. It is reprinted, I
observe, in the Oxford Edition of Wall's
History. This evinces remarkable fairness
and impartiality.

I am sorry to be compelled to say that
Dr. Gale's religious sentiments were lamen-
tably defective on some points. He incul-
cated the morals of Christianity rather than
its evangelical truths.

John Skepp, who was some time pastor
of the church in Paul's Alley, Cripplegate,
London, and was a self-taught, learned
man, published a volume entitled, "Divine
Energy; or the operations of the Spirit of
God upon the soul of man in his effectual
calling and conversion, stated, proved, and
vindicated." In assigning his reasons for
the publication he said, "that he had heard
and read of much contempt thrown upon
the doctrine and preaching of the Spirit's
work, as if it was not necessary to make
the gospel ministry effectual for illumina-
tion, conviction, and conversion, and for
carrying on the work of faith with power."
Doubtless this was true, for it was a day
of declension; yet it must be confessed
that though Mr. Skepp's book contained
much important truth, the opinions he held
on one subject disqualified him for the
work of revival. He refused to address
the invitations of the gospel to the uncon-
verted; he would declare—proclaim—an-
nounce to men their sin and danger; but
he would not call upon them to return to
the Lord. That would be interfering with
God's work! So serious a mistake could
not but affect his ministry and mar his use-
fulness. Mr. Skepp died in 1721.

John Brine became pastor of the same
church in 1730, and laboured there thirty-
five years. His views harmonised with
Mr. Skepp's. They were placed before the
public in numerous books, sermons, and
tracts, and probably influenced the minds
of many of his brethren in the ministry;
the more so, as from his character, talents,
and high standing in the Denomination, he
was likely to be consulted and followed.
Messrs. Skepp and Brine were eminently
pious men, who contended earnestly for
the faith, and stated with great clearness
and force the distinguishing doctrines of the
gospel. It was much to be deplored that
their minds were warped on the subject be-
fore alluded to, as the results were certain-
ly injurious to a great extent. But I turn
with pleasure to the record of Mr. Brine's
last hours. It is said that "not long before
his decease he expressed the state of his
mind by saying, 'I think I am of sinners
the chief, of saints the least; I know that
I am nothing, but by the grace of God I
am what I am;' which words he ordered
should be inscribed on his tombstone."—
(Ivimey, iii. 371. His wish was complied
with. He was buried in Bunhill Fields.
Perhaps some have read the words on his
tombstone, and received them as a message
from God to their souls.

Mr. Brine died Feb. 21, 1765. A great
man, with whom he had long co-operated
in christian labour followed him to the

grave little more than six years afterwards.
I refer to Dr. Gill, who was in some re-
spects the most learned man that had yet
appeared in our Denomination. Nor, in-
deed, have any equalled him, to the present
day, in acquaintance with Hebrew and
Rabbinic literature.

John Gill was born at Kettering, North-
amptonshire, Nov. 23, 1697. He was
educated in the Grammar School of that
town, but was taken from it at the age of
eleven, in consequence of the unreasonable
conduct of the master, who insisted on the
attendance of the scholars at prayers in the
parish church, on week-days. To this,
those of the parents who were Dissenters
would not submit, and therefore they re-
moved their children from the school.
Young Gill had made such extraordinary
progress in Latin and Greek that his friends
endeavoured to procure assistance with a
view to the prosecution of his studies at
one of the Universities; but they were un-
successful. This did not damp his ardour.
Part of his time was necessarily spent in
attendance on his father's business (he was
engaged in the woolen trade); every minute
of the remainder was employed in gathering
knowledge. He improved himself in Latin
and Greek. He studied logic, rhetoric,
and natural and moral philosophy. He
acquired a knowledge of the Hebrew, in
which language "he took great delight."
He read a large number of Latin treatises
on various subjects, but especially on theo-
logy. All this was accomplished by his
own unaided exertions.

In 1716 he was baptized on profession of
faith, and immediately afterwards com-
menced preaching. His labours were very
acceptable, and the church at Kettering
would have gladly detained him among
them; but that was not his destined sphere.
In compliance with the request of the
church at Horsely-down, Southwark, over
which the celebrated Benjamin Keach for-
merly presided, who was succeeded by his
son-in-law, Mr. Benjamin Stinton, then
lately deceased, he visited them, and after
preaching to them several months was
chosen pastor. The ordination took place
March 22, 1720.

More than fifty years of unremitting toil
succeeded that transaction. Mr. Gill's life
was emphatically a laborious one. His
duties as pastor were punctually and faith-
fully discharged. Besides attending to
these, he constantly enlarged his acquaint-
ance with all learning. He watched the
movements of the enemies of truth, and
held himself in readiness to repel assaults.
His pen was never idle.

The great work of his life was the com-
mentary on scriptures. It was originally
given to his people from the pulpit, in the
form of expository discourses. He began
with Solomon's Song, on which he preached
one hundred and twenty-two sermons.
The Exposition was published in 1728, in
a folio volume. Three folios more were
occupied with the New Testament, the
third of which appeared in 1748. In that
year the author received from Marischal
College, Aberdeen, the degree of Doctor in
Divinity. Special mention was made in
the diploma of Dr. Gill's proficiency in
Sacred Literature, in the oriental languages,
and in Jewish Antiquities. The Exposition
on the Prophets, in two folios, was issued
in 1757, 1758. The remaining volumes
appeared in 1763, 1764, 1765, and 1766.
Truly it was a gigantic undertaking!

The particular excellence of this work
lies in its plain, strong sense, its perspicu-
ous style, the care with which every sen-
tence and almost every word is explained,
—and especially, the light thrown upon
many passages by extracts from Jewish
authors. Dr. Gill was a profound Rabbi-
nical scholar. He was familiar with the
whole circle of Jewish literature. None
could compete with him on this, his own
ground.

A judicious reader may derive much
benefit from the use of Dr. Gill's Exposition.
He will know how to supply his defi-
ciencies, and he will abstain from following
him in the interpretation of allegorical pas-
sages. For the results of modern criticism
he must repair, of course, to other sources.
But this Exposition will ever be a mine

which will repay the labours of the discreet
explorer.

In addition to the Exposition, Dr. Gill
published a Body of Divinity, in three
quarto volumes, which, like the Exposition,
was first preached to his congregation:—
"The Cause of God and Truth," being an
examination of all the passages of Scripture
usually adduced in the Arminian contro-
versy;—and "Sermons and Tracts" (in-
cluding a learned "Dissertation on the an-
tiquity of the Hebrew language,") in three
volumes, 4to.

Dr. Gill's preaching was rather solid
than attractive. Like Messrs. Skepp and
Brine, he abstained from personal addresses
to sinners, by inviting them to the Saviour,
and satisfied himself with declaring their
guilt and doom, and the necessity of a
change of heart. It is not surprising that
the congregation declined under such a
ministry. His steady refusal to have an
assistant or co-pastor operated also in-
jurious on the welfare of the church.

He preached but once on the Lord's day
during the last two years of his life. Yet
he laboured on in his study till within a
fortnight of his death. A short time before
that event he said to his nephew, the Rev.
John Gill of St. Alban's, "I depend wholly
and alone upon the free, sovereign, eternal,
unchangeable love of God, the firm and
everlasting covenant of grace, and my in-
terest in the Persons of the Trinity, for my
whole salvation; and not upon any righte-
ousness of my own, nor on any thing in
me, or done by me under the influences of
the Holy Spirit; not upon any services of
mine, which I have been assisted to perform
for the good of the church; but upon my
interest in the persons of the Trinity, the
free grace of God, and the blessings of grace
streaming to me through the blood and
righteousness of Christ, as the ground of
my hope. These are no new things to me,
but what I have been long acquainted with
—what I can live and die by."—(Rippon's
Memoir, p. 134.)

Dr. Gill died Oct. 14, 1771, in the 74th
year of his age, having been fifty-one years
pastor of the church.

Robert Hall "did not like Dr. Gill as an
author. When Mr. Christmas Evans was
in Bristol, he was talking to Mr. Hall
about the Welsh language, which he said
was very copious and expressive. 'How
I wish, Mr. Hall, that Dr. Gill's works had
been written in Welsh.'—'I wish they had,
Sir; I wish they had, with all my heart,
for then I should never have read them.
They are a continent of mud, Sir.'—
(Works, London Edition, 800, vi. 125.)

This was a severe verdict. But it was
the language of an eccentric though won-
derfully great man, whose elegant taste was
shocked by what he deemed the uncouth
bluntness of Dr. Gill's style; probably,
also, he was repelled by the sternness or
the obscurity of some of his opinions.

Mr. Walter Wilson, a Pædobaptist, au-
thor of "The History and Antiquities of
the Dissenting Churches in London," gives
a different decision. He says, "Such were
the life and death of Dr. Gill, who, for the
value and extent of his writings, will be
considered by future generations as one of
the fathers of the church."

The Rev. Augustus Toplady, an Episco-
palian clergyman, writes as follows:—"If
any one man can be supposed to have mod-
ified the whole circle of human learning, it was
Dr. Gill. His attainments, both in abstruse
and polite literature, were (what is very
uncommon) equally extensive and profound.
Providence had, to this end, endued him
with a firmness of constitution, and an
unremitting vigour of mind, which rarely
fall to the lot of the sedentary and learned.
It would, perhaps, try the constitutions of
half the literati in England, only to read,
with care and attention, the whole of what
he wrote.

"The Doctor considered not any subject
superficially, or by halves. As deeply as
human sagacity, enlightened by grace,
could penetrate, he went to the bottom of
every thing he engaged in. With a solid-
ity of judgment, and with an acuteness of
discernment, peculiar to few, he exhausted,
as it were, the very soul and substance of
most arguments he undertook. His style,