

## Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

## A FRIENDLY WORD OF CRITICISM ON SPECIAL PROVIDENCES.

BY O. C.

Mr. Editor,—

In a late issue of the *Messenger*, I find an interesting article by "John Baptist," on two paragraphs of which I wish to make a remark. The first passage is this: "But I must solemnly protest against any teaching, that calls upon me to place other events, incapable of demonstration, in the category as these related in the books of the Old and New Testaments."

I suppose the writer here means, that he is unwilling to place them in the category of special providences, unless they are demonstrated to belong to that category.

The question is here suggested: May it not be more safe to regard them as belonging to this class? Is not this more nearly allied to scripture, than the opposite way? Do not the sacred writers refer events to the prime, rather than to the secondary cause? And is not this recognition of divine agency and purpose well nigh tantamount to the recognition of Special Providence? And does not a departure from this savor of Pantheism, Positivism, Scepticism? Let not this question be repelled by the christian, but rather, let it be pondered. I would prefer protesting against the undefining, general providence, or pantheistic view, rather than against that of a special providence. In the one case I feel that I am in the best of company, and on the side of safety. In the other case, may I not be on the margin of a declivity, the descent of which may be rapid, ruinous.

What is a special providence? It is an event, usually brought about by the intervention of law, on the part of Deity, to meet a particular case or a peculiar exigency.

And I ask, are these cases and exigencies more rare now, than in the days of patriarchs, prophets or Apostles? No, nor will they be, until the consummation of the wondrous scheme of salvation.

In the second passage, the writer says, "Have a care how you yield up your opinions to wonderful coincidences, under the guise of special providences, or quasi-miracles." I suppose the writer here means, beware of viewing wonderful coincidences as special providences. So long as I possess the Book of *demonstrations* on this subject, so long, the "have a care" of J. B. will awaken no sense of danger, will cause no alarm. Rather would I say, beware of anti-supernaturalism, and all its cognates, so prevalent and so aggressive at the present time. Yea, that is the side of danger, at all times. Reader, you need not "have a care" against special providences. Look for them, rest on them, exult in them. You need not shrink from quasi or *prorsus*, from such as are almost or altogether miracles; but what I say unto one, I say unto all, beware of banishing the Deity for one moment, from any portion or point of his dominions.

I hope our friend, John Baptist, will not regard this as a captious criticism, but as a gentle caution, designed for general benefit.

For the Christian Messenger.

## A LETTER FROM FLORIDA.

The following letter from Dr. L. Van Ess Parker, now in Florida, to his sister Mrs. David Freeman, gives some interesting particulars respecting the climate of that country, and its adaptation to invalids. It was not written for publication, but we were favored with a perusal, and readily consented to give it insertion, believing that many of our readers would also be glad to see it.

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, Feb. 1870.

Dear Sister,—

I have not forgotten your request, and agreeably to promise will attempt to give you a description of the climate of Florida, its desirability as a resort for invalids suffering more particularly from pectoral or bronchial diseases, and the advisability of your removing here for your own health. The selection of a climate for invalids is one of vital importance, of vastly more importance than either patient or physician as a general thing fully appreciate. Invalids are apt to go where it is most convenient, most agreeable to them, forgetting that every disease, or every case of the same disease, is not at all suited to the same climate. The result is that many an invalid is sent into the cold dry atmosphere of Minnesota to die, who in Florida would live many years, and many a one is sent

here to die who perhaps would be benefitted in a cold dry atmosphere like Minnesota, or live longer at home surrounded by home-comforts and the little luxuries so necessary to them among sympathizing and familiar faces. In selecting a climate for those suffering under pulmonary affections it is all important to find one that has at the same time, a mild and moderately moist atmosphere, an equable temperature, prevalence of moderate and regular winds and freedom from local disease. A cold dry air is often chosen for this class of invalids, but it is a serious error. A moist, warm air, moderately charged with vapor, or even approaching a saturated condition is soothing to the air-passages while dryness is irritating. At the same time it should be comparatively free from that depressing humidity which debilitates the healthy and exhausts the invalid. The bracing atmosphere of some of the Western States, Minnesota for example, is certainly very exhilarating for those in robust health, but for invalids with pulmonary disease is not suited, as they must of necessity a large part of the year be kept within doors. If consumptives are to live at all they must live in the open air, one not so low as to exhaust in resisting the cold, but one which permits flannel or silk clothing so light that the surface of the body can be fully acted upon or bathed in the surrounding air. There are here hundreds of hopeful health-seekers, full of joy at their liberation from the pitting cold of the north, and all or nearly all are benefitted who are not in an advanced stage of disease before coming. The atmosphere of all tropical climates is of course more moist than in colder latitudes. In Florida however, the winter being the dry season, its atmosphere is less moist in winter than in more tropical climates. The winters are delightful. Though the air is somewhat humid, it is not too much so either for comfort or health and has a balmy softness, soothing to bronchial irritation. Of the summers I cannot yet speak from experience. All with whom I have conversed and many of them are Northerners who came here years ago to die, are now in perfect health, speak in highest terms of the summers. They declare that the heat is not oppressive and the nights are cool. During nearly the whole year, and especially the summer, the Peninsula is fanned with a cool and refreshing breeze, which arises in the forenoon and continues until sunset. The coolness of this breeze is owing to the cooler waters of the higher latitudes constantly flowing along the coast by the back current of the ever flowing gulf stream. As a climate for invalids suffering under pulmonary affections, I believe that Florida is unsurpassed in America. It stands preeminent for the following reasons; the air is warm and moist; the climate is equable, being subject to fewer atmospheric variations and the thermometer ranges less than in any other part of America excepting a portion of the coast of California. It is constantly fanned by a gentle and healthy breeze; the gulf stream on one side and the Atlantic on the other. Also by the south east trade winds which play over the whole Peninsula. The local diseases are those only found in nearly every state of the Union and in Canada, and are of a mild type. Inter-mittent form is the most prevalent, scarcely any part of Florida is wholly exempt from it some months in the year. Reliable statistics show that the deaths from this fever among the troops during the war were less than in other parts of the United States. In the middle division the proportion was 1 death to 36 cases. In the Northern Division 1 to 52. In the Southern 1 to 54. In Texas 1 to 78. In California 1 to 120. And Mexico 1 to 148, while in Florida 1 to 287. What is true of Florida as a state is particularly so of East Florida. In many seem strange that rich hammock land, exposed to the rays of a tropical sun should produce a malarial disease so much milder than a northern latitude: This is explained by the fact that the luxuriant vegetation which in the other southern and middle States passes through all the stages of decomposition, is, in East Florida, dried up before it reaches the putrefactive stage of fermentation and decomposition, and consequently the malaria is less than in climates more favorable to decomposition. The soil too is of so porous and absorbent a character that moisture is seldom long retained on the surface. The atmosphere is in constant motion and there is more clear sunshine than in any other part of America. I have said that for equability of temperature, Florida is unsurpassed. Surgeon General Lawson in his official report on the climate of Florida gives some comparisons with other States. For example. The winter at Fort Snelling, Minnesota is 48 degrees colder than at Fort Brooke, Fla., while the summers at Fort Brooke are only 8 degrees warmer. The mean annual temperature of Augusta, Georgia, is nearly 8 degrees, and

that of Fort Gibson Arkansas upwards of 10 degrees lower than at Tampa Bay, Florida, yet in both these places the summer temperature is higher than at Tampa Bay. A registry kept at Key West, the extreme southern part of Florida, for 14 years, exhibited but three instances where the mercury rose to 94 in the shade, but did not rise to over a hundred. Such is the constant prevalence of refreshing sea breezes, it is said that less inconvenience would be experienced than at 75 in many other places.

I wish that Florida in every respect was as inviting as its sun, sky and climate. But it is yet a wilderness and, like all new countries, is comparatively barren of the home comforts, luxuries and elegancies of the north. The people are poor and indolent, and satisfied to live as few even in humble life could do in the north. Northerners are fast settling here and by their enterprise and industry will by and by establish a new condition of things and make this one of the most desirable countries for a residence under the sun. At present almost everything that is consumed is imported from the north and necessarily is expensive. Jacksonville is a neatly laid out city on the St. John, 20 miles from its mouth. The streets are wide and well shaded with fine oaks which are evergreen. It is the largest city in the state, and is rapidly growing. The climate of some other parts of the state, especially the east coast, is even more desirable for invalids or for any one than Jacksonville. There are serious objections to these localities however. They are very sparsely settled, and at present almost wholly shut out from communication with any other place. If a colony of thirty or forty families would take up a track of land in some one of these places, say New Smyrna or Key Biscayne Bay, on the east coast, they would constitute an agreeable society of themselves, and there is no reason why in a few years they should not be wealthy at half the labor required to obtain a livelihood in Nova Scotia. There is no more delightful climate in America than is found at these two places. The mean temperature for Dec. Jan. and Feb. being about 62 degrees, and the summer not oppressively warm. The soil will grow almost every thing that is grown north, besides oranges, lemons, limes, arrow-root, indigo, coffee, sugarcane, cotton, rice, figs, melons, coconuts, pine apples of all kinds and indeed all the productions of a tropical climate. Key Biscayne Bay abounds in chalybeate and other mineral springs and magnificent scenery. Turtles, oyster and a variety of fish are found in great abundance. Florida has been called our Southern Italy. In their almost cloudless sunshine they are very much alike. But here art has done nothing to add charms to the country, while in Italy there is every thing to please the eye. There the heat of summer is intense, and the winters in many parts are severe, the atmosphere often damp with violent atmospheric and thermal variations; while Florida by her geographical position, being placed almost in the fountain of that gulf stream; whose waters are ever freighted with a genial atmosphere; has an equable climate unsurpassed for salubrity. Florida, "the lazy man's paradise" is not as some suppose a vast flower-garden and orange-grove. It is an almost unbroken wilderness. This is not to be wondered at when we remember that it has three or four times changed its nationality, that it was desolated by the most relentless Indian wars up to 1857, that slavery has cursed and blighted it, and the late war has laid waste the whole land. It has a soil, that with little cultivation and enriching, is very productive, and will yield a most bountiful return to the husbandman. At first sight no one would think the soil productive; and many go away regarding the whole State as desolate tracts of barren sand, and impenetrable and worthless swamps. The surface is principally a sandy rolling country, for the most part covered with immense forests of yellow pine, interspersed with strips or patches called hammocks, densely and heavily wooded with oak &c. A large part of the southern portion is low and rarely more than six feet above the sea level. The everglades cover an area of about 4000 square miles, on which during the whole year the water rests from one to four feet in depth. This with the Big Cypress—a large swamp fifteen miles long, and thirty-five broad are of course worthless. The whole state lies on a vast bed of coral, raised in the sea and covered with strata of sand, largely mingled with pulverised coral or sea shells. With the addition of a vegetable mould which in the course of time has accumulated from the rank growth of a tropical climate, the lands of Florida have become powerfully productive. The river St John between three and four hundred miles in length is almost daily traversed by steamers as far as Enterprise—over two hundred miles. Thousands of acres on either bank, never yet

cultivated and perfectly adapted to the climate, and temperature of the country, invite immigration. Much of this land in a cold latitude would be worthless, but seems admirably adapted to the semi-tropical productions of this country.

But my letter is already too lengthy. Were there half the home comforts you now enjoy to be found here, I would not one moment hesitate to say by all means remove to this climate next autumn, if your health then should be nearly as good as when I last saw you. Those who come here, unless they have abundance of money, find living rather "rough," even to get along economically it is an expensive place to live in, and luxuries are only purchased at a dear rate. My cough disappeared almost the day I stepped on Florida soil, and have had none since. But I must wait until I see you in the summer when I can more fully explain all the pros and cons. With love to all.

I remain,

Your affectionately,  
L. VAN ESS PARKER.

## IRISH MISSIONS.

(To the Editor of the Christian Messenger.)

DEAR BROTHER.—As some of our Baptist brethren in Nova Scotia may not be aware of the special circumstances which have led the British and Irish Home Mission to send a deputation to this continent, I forward some particulars respecting the condition of Ireland, which may interest some of the readers of your journal, and may, perhaps, enlist the sympathy and support of the friends of our Mission in your Province.

Since the revival of 1859, our Baptist denomination in Ireland has been doubled. 20 Missionaries are now employed, preaching the Gospel in about 100 stations, and having about 1,000 children in their Mission Schools; but these agencies are almost entirely confined to the Protestant districts in the North-Eastern parts of Ireland. In the South and West, where the Romanist population is in vast preponderance, we have scarcely any agency, and yet, within the last few years, there has been such an opening for the Word of the Gospel in Ireland, as has not presented itself for generations past. About 40 years ago, one-half of the entire population could not read and write, now about one million of pupils are attending the public schools, and learning to read the Word of God for themselves, and the demand for that Word is increasing daily. One Bible Society has distributed last year 25,000 copies more than they ever did before.

The spread of Fenianism has tended to loosen the hold of the Priesthood on the minds of the people. In many places the Fenians have turned their hostility against their spiritual leaders, and have set the orders of the priesthood at defiance, insulted their persons, and even attacked their houses. In one county they have returned a candidate to Parliament in opposition to the combined power of the priesthood; and matters in Ireland seem rapidly verging to the condition of Spain and Italy, before their recent revolutions. Among the Irish speaking population in the West, Missionary effort seems to be crowned with recent and unexpected success. In the district of Duon, including but three parishes, within a few years about 1,500 converts from Romanism have been reported, and every year fresh accessions are coming. In the Province of Connaught, where there was but one Protestant for every 100 Romanists, there is now one for every 20; and in the Connemara district, Archbishop French, of Dublin, says converts may be reckoned not by units, but by hundreds.

Yet with this great work progressing, and, in the crisis of that country, our Baptist denomination is almost entirely unrepresented. In the whole Western half of Ireland, with a population equal to the whole of Scotland, there is not at the present time a single Baptist Missionary, Colporteur, Bible reader or agent of any kind. In the whole Southern Province of the island, there is but one Missionary; so that we have but one Missionary for nearly the whole of Roman Catholic Ireland, with a population of about 4 millions.

To meet this extreme destitution, I am glad to say that brethren in the United States have kindly responded to our appeals, and the cities of Philadelphia, Brooklyn, New York and Boston have each agreed to sustain a Missionary in some part of Ireland. Other towns in New England and elsewhere are combining to send two or three more, and we trust that our brethren in the Provinces will not leave this matter without a helping hand.

Yours truly,

R. M. HENRY.

[Our readers will doubtless be interested in the information contained in the above communication. The claims of Home and Foreign Missions, Ministerial Education, and Infirm Minister, in addition to sustaining their own pastors, Sabbath School operations, &c., resting on our churches, we think, will scarcely warrant the expectation of their giving aid to any extent in this good work.—Ed. C. M.]

What a pleasure it is, after a long and laboured climb, to get upon level ground; and, oh! will not that, my brother, be one of our first felicities as we step upon the threshold of God in Heaven?