

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

SPECIAL PROVIDENCES--THE THREE FACTORIES.

BY S. T. RAND.

Perhaps by a simple illustration I can convey my ideas of the uniformity of the Lord's general dealings with his creatures, and the uniformity of his 'Special' interferences in behalf of those who firmly rely upon him, better than by mere words. Take then the case of a Factory. I lately had the pleasure of visiting two such establishments at Dartmouth. One of these establishments turns out skates—"Forbes's Patent Acme Skates"—the other turns out Ropes—both very useful articles in their way; but used for very different purposes. These two factories have many points in common; but their differences are also many and striking. The motive power of the Skate machinery, is water; that which moves the other is the opposite element—fire. There is a great deal of machinery, and many departments in each of the establishments, and at whatever department I stood looking on, both in the one and the other, I noticed that the results of that department were wonderfully uniform. I was not able to comprehend the vast and complex machinery, the order and arrangement of all the departments, the way in which every thing and every person connected with the "concerns" contributed to the completion of the object or objects contemplated; but I had no doubts on the subject. And I took it for granted that the superintendents in each case knew all about the matter; though I question whether either of them could have let me into the secret, even had they tried—which they certainly did not do, and the trouble would have been on my part, not on theirs—my deficiencies not theirs, would have kept me in the dark, notwithstanding all their explanations. Some portions of the machinery, and some departments of the establishment interested me more than others. For instance, in the Skate factory I stood a good while looking at the lathe where small screws were turned off, with marvellous rapidity, and with great uniformity. That arrangement produced a screw, a whole screw and nothing but a screw. Only material of a certain size and form could pass through the process, and nothing but a screw—a small, beautiful bright screw, could come forth. And a similar statement might be made respecting the other departments. The machinery had evidently been contrived and arranged and fitted up, for the express purpose of producing that particular part of an 'Acme Skate' that was there and then formed and fashioned. I do not believe that there is a man, woman or child of ordinary intelligence in the world that could be made to believe that the whole affair was a mere 'accident'—the debris from the Dartmouth lakes driven down by the stream that flows through the Shubenacudie canal, and tumbled together by a lucky hit into the form and fashion of that Skate establishment, and that the screw lathe that so absorbed my attention was not the work of an intelligent contriver: to say nothing of how the iron and steel get there, and the many busy hands that were moving in connection with the noisy clatter of the establishment. Certainly that 'Skate Factory' was not the result of chance. It could not have made itself. It must have been "built by some man." The most credulous atheist could not deny this; though incredulity, when it says "tush! there is no God!" must be the most credulous of all things. It must be able to believe that such a Universe as this is either made itself, or was the result of chance. The "Rope-walk" stands some distance from the Skate Factory. The two 'concerns' have I suppose no connection with each other in any way. They are established on different principles and produce different result. Iron and steel are the principal materials wrought upon in the one; manilla hemp is used in the other. I could not in the brief time I had for the examination, and with my limited knowledge of mechanics, comprehend the whole formation of the rope so as to describe the process intelligibly with all complex machinery; but I had a glimpse of both ends of the operation—I saw where and how the work began, and where and how it was finished off. I stood looking on at the hatching process of the raw material, as I used when a child to watch the process as my mother hatched her flax—and I went on and looked at the women who were spinning, taking care not to try the experiment I once tried when a small boy, of dabbing my fingers into the "flyers," (simply because I had been charged over and over not to do so)—and I went

and watched to see how the ropes were finished off and reeled up ready to be conveyed to their final destination. Among other queer things there was a sort of rail car worked by the machinery, in which I had the pleasure of riding from one end of the building to the other, (nearly a quarter of a mile, I should think), along with the courteous superintendent and his lady, who happened to be with him on her first visit to the establishment at the same time that I was there. In visiting these establishments I enjoyed a "special" privilege in more senses than one. My business was neither to buy skates nor ropes. I went simply to see. I wished to look at the works, and the 'work.' If memory serves me there was a notice at the entrance of each to the effect that no one was expected to go in "except on business." I was acquainted with the overseer of the one factory, and got a friend to introduce me to the other. And though the favor was "special," I have no doubt that whoever would take the same or a similar course, would be granted the same "special" favor. So there was after all, nothing very "special" in my case. I have mentioned the extensive and complicated machinery connected with these two establishments, and have pointed at the marvellous uniformity with which each department turned out its particular part of the work. In the one establishment skates were made, and in the other ropes, by machinery. There were many points of harmony between the two establishments; but the differences were also many and great. You might indeed reason from analogy from your knowledge of the one to what must be in the other. But you would be lost in the fog unless you kept your analogy within very restricted bounds. From what you knew of the way in which the little screws of the "Forbes's Acme Patent Skates" were made, I do not believe you could form the slightest idea as to how "manilla hemp" is "hatched." And were I to tell you that I saw with my own eyes in the rope factory a living man, with what seemed to be a bundle of "tow" under his arm, pulling out a string, for all the world after the mode and manner in which we used to twist tow strings before "king cotton" drove out the flax—I would not give up the point, and allow that I had been mistaken from any argument you might bring from your 'Patent Acme Skate' concern—no, not even from any array of facts you might be able to marshal against me respecting the various departments of the twisting gear connected with the "Rope walk." I might admit all your facts—but my fact would be a fact also. I really visited one department where the "yarn" was "drawn out" by hand, and not by machinery. Yes, and there was one more fact I must notice. Ample and complex as was the machinery in each case, and uniform as were the results, in each and every department, the whole was not carried on by machinery. There were living independent, voluntary agents—there were men, women and children, in great numbers, engaged in the work. And the Superintendents walked about, and conversed and acted quite independent of their machinery. They controlled the machinery, not the machinery them. When I knocked at the door of the gate of the Rope-walk, a lad stepped and opened it at once. I did not have to wait for the ponderous machinery to move round and move back the bolt, nor for the "car" to run its course first away up to the farther end of the building and then back, before I could be admitted. Neither the Superintendents nor any of the subordinates in either of the establishments were either chained to the wheels of the factory, or were themselves moved by machinery. Rule and order evidently ruled and reigned every where—the established laws of nature were regarded, and all the arrangements, from the letting on of the water in the one establishment, and the letting on of the fire in the other, up to the coiling up of the Ropes, and the packing away of the Skates, were carried forward in harmony with those laws. But all this did not interfere in the least with the voluntary actions of the living beings engaged in the work. And totally independent of each factory, and of each other, all these people had, we may be assured, each his own private and domestic affairs to attend to. They could eat and sleep and labor, converse with their friends, take care of their families, such as had families, contribute to benevolent objects, assist their neighbors when sick or in trouble, and do a thousand other things just as easily, and probably more so as if they had nothing to do with these interesting factories, because they performed certain operations by water power, and by steam it by no means follows that they thus performed ALL operations. I visited a third factory at Dartmouth. It was one upon a much larger scale than either of the others. It included these two, and the whole region round, along with them; the city of Halifax was also included, and the whole Province, the whole Dominion, and even the whole Universe! I have never been permitted to walk through the whole length and breadth of this establishment—I have not the slightest idea of what is going on in many parts of it. But I do know that there is machinery therein at work vast, intricate, wonderful, indicating intelligence, and power, and skill, on a scale that overwhelms the imagination!—I have stood and gazed for hours and days and years, and wondered at the operation going on in one or two small departments in a little corner of the building. I have seen the little screws turned off,—and I looked at the pile of iron shavings below, and wondered at what seemed to be a great waste of 'sweet oil,' and I have overheard parties discoursing learnedly about the danger of 'spontaneous combustion' &c., &c., and opened my eyes wide as I looked and listened. I have also seen manilla hemp hatched, and ropes reeled, and men, women and children at their play and at their work, I have ridden in the

rail car, I have heard the roar of water, the puff of the steam engine. I have watched the whir and whirl of the smaller wheels, and looked at the mighty and majestic movements of larger ones; but of the 'Great grand Whole,' I may truly say I know comparatively nothing. No, not even though I have a small, comprehensive lucid, written description of it—containing all things necessary to guide me in all I need to know. But ignorant as I must confess I am, I am sure of several things. I know that mere machinery does not comprise all. I know that in addition to dead inert matter, acting simply as it is acted upon—unable to start of itself when still, and just as unable to stop when started—there are thousands and millions of voluntary agents employed in carrying forward the works. I know that there are men, women and children, and angels "that are great in might," who move of their own accord—who can control the machinery, and direct it, under God, why Himself overrules, controls and directs the whole, and all the parts thereof, and above and beyond all this, is just as independent and able to WILL and to DO, as though no machinery were in operation in the Universe. Mr. Forbes and Mr. Morrow conversed with me in the factories just as freely and kindly as though there were no machinery at work. Only mayhap they had to speak a little louder in order to be heard; especially as I am somewhat dull of hearing. Ah! well! just so it is with Him who rules and reigns over the Universe! His voice is too often drowned by the noise and clatter of earth, and my weak soul cannot distinguish his words, for I am dull of hearing and my intellect is obtuse. But sometimes I do hear him. He speaks directly to me, independently of all intervening machinery and means, he whispers to my soul and comforts me. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with my spirit that I am a child of God.' "Fear not," I hear Him say, "for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee, with the right hand of my righteousness." And then I know that all the angels are "ministering spirits," sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. They too have the power of helping us; and it were a strange and unnatural limitation of their superior powers, to suppose them incompetent to suggest thoughts to our minds, or even to speak to us audibly, or let us see them if necessary. My friends at Dartmouth have not ceased to take an interest in these expensive establishments, simply because they are finished and fairly at work. They do not start the water or put on the steam and then leave the affair to look after itself. They would not be pleased were those who have charge of the various departments to leave their posts during the hours of labor and go to play or to sleep. And certainly they are too much concerned in the proper working and the profits of the establishments to neglect them themselves. And can any one imagine that the "Everlasting God the Lord the Creator of heaven and earth," "who fainteth not nor is weary" has set the creation in motion, and then retired from the scene, allowing it to go on without supervision or care? No! indeed! this cannot be. Such a god may do for the heathen, or the devil, or the atheist. The Jehovah of the Bible is a very different Being—"upholding all things by the word of his power, and working all in all," ruling all things, and all beings according to their respective natures and conditions; himself uncontrolled and free. "And these things declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (John.) I have said that the Bible is a Book of facts. It is more than that. It is a Book of principles. You will find again and again certain facts stated, and at the same time a principle pointed out, and also an inference drawn—See a striking illustration of this and one full to the point in 2 Peter: chap. ii: 4-9. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement, and spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly, and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those who should after live ungodly, and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds,—THE LORD KNOWETH HOW to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished." Let the reader mark the expression emphasized—"THE LORD KNOWETH HOW!" Infinite wisdom and power can neither be restricted nor limited. Abraham was "strong in faith believing that what God had promised HE WAS ABLE ALSO to perform." To believe in the ability of Jehovah is an important part of faith: To limit him is the essence of unbelief. "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and 'limited' the Holy one of Israel" Ps. lxxviii. 41. "Yea they spake against God. They said CAN God furnish a table, in the wilderness?—CAN He give bread also?—CAN He provide flesh for his people? Therefore the Lord heard this and was wroth. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation." Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20, 22. "Now all these things happened unto them for ENSAMPLES; and they are written for OUR admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. THEREFORE"—(again an inference drawn.) "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!" 1 Cor. x. 11, 12. "Let us labour THEREFORE to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same

example of unbelief." Heb. iv. 11. And I will quote one more blessed THEREFORE, from the same chapter and with it another passage or two I will close this article. "Let US THEREFORE come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." "For with God all things are possible." "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,—unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen."

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PHILOSOPHY OF SPECIAL PROVIDENCES.

The mind's office is exploration and investigation. It never sleeps the slumbers of perfect satisfaction. New fields for its exercise continually open around it and from its untiring researches Truth is ever evolved. How marked, how varied the changes in the interpretations of the Bible within the last few hundred years. Man progresses and Science sheds her light as time rolls on. Advance, has there been, from an almost profound ignorance upward and onward to a clearer and clearer understanding of God and Nature. The more man searches into the history of Creation, the more and more plainly does he behold evidence of unchanging Law and progress on great established principles as contradistinguished from immediate and special interference. Formerly man has lived in the realm or sphere of prejudice. To-day the world seems liberal minded. We welcome the era. The peculiar and spiritual doctrines of christianity, how variously have they been conceived of. We look for loftier, better, clearer ideas of the teachings of God as man ascends the mountain of knowledge. The constitution of nature and the constitution of mind point to this conclusion. Do men fear Truth? They fear in vain. It is immortal and cannot die. Do men fear Error? Let them know that error is mortal and cannot live. If in nature we see proofs of the workings of fixed law; if the idea of special interposition attached to events necessarily the results of established principles of action, is unreasonable and contracted by all analogy, what shall we say? By what other light than that of reason, shall we judge of the Bible and interpret its teachings! Did the Infinite intend that His works should contradict His word? Does His word, properly understood, prove that God is ever and anon interfering with the operations of His Laws? What do we gather from the instructions of all these Sciences which unfold the beautiful and stupendous processes and principles of Nature? She speaks to day in tones of deep convincing eloquence, but shows not everywhere marks of Special Providence. The Truths of Nature can never be overthrown. But need we fear them? Every interior enlightened mind feels the sublime assurance that they are Divine. The Bible presents instruction to man according as he is able to receive it. The Scriptures speak according to optical not physical truth and make no attempt to correct very grave errors then existing. The representations of the position of the earth relative to the sun, of the manner of the production of rain, of the physical system of man and of the intellectual operations illustrate this point. To day the feords of the Bible are not considered inspired, but the immortal truths are inherently Divine. There seems to be a tendency abroad in the world of attributing every—shall we say trifling—circumstance, having a show of peculiarity about it to special guidance and interference. That these views may be modified in so far as possible and more ennobling conceptions of God's government suggested is our hope. The cause of true religion is no doubt injured, you very seriously injured, by such tendency on the part of some really good and sincere men—but in whose nature the principle or element of Marvellousness or Spirituality is so predominant as to sway reason. There is need of much caution in the case of these. Two vessels are upon the ocean. A great storm arises. One survives the blasts, the other is lost. The former vessel contained a missionary to the heathen. Was this a Special Providence? Had natural causes nothing to do with it? A few weeks after we hear of the death of that good man at the hands of those he would reform and christianize. Our views of Special Providence now become confused and obscured. The mind is not at ease. But when we come to see the great general principles of Distributive Justice attendant on God's Laws in Nature as concerned in these occurrences light enters the soul, hitherto oppressed with reason-permeated credulousness. A man dies. It is thought that he is called away at a special time and for a special purpose. The