

REPORT OF FRIENDS' ASSOCIATION FOR THE  
AID AND ELEVATION OF FREEDMEN.

The following letters published in the Report of the Executive Board of Friends' Association, for the aid and elevation of the Freedmen, are inserted for the information of those who may not have seen the Report:

LUOY CHASE, Norfolk, Va., 3d month 27th,  
writes as follows:

1864  
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"I am very glad to hear that you are turning your plough into wider fields. I would suggest to you, that you would establish among contrabands Industrial Schools. I think you would do well, yea, very well, if you would send out here, or elsewhere, young men to establish and superintend shoe-making and cobbling. If you would, as far as practicable, dispense your charities directly through your agents, you would feel a satisfaction that you cannot now feel. Charity is still needed here, as well as elsewhere. The negroes who earn wages, do not receive enough to buy clothing for their families, and there is still, and will continue to be, a large pauper community. Still I can but feel that the crying need is in the West. If judicious persons administer to the contrabands there, you might well feel that a penny spent there, would do more good than two spent here. Yet the need here is never met, and the Norfolk poor I am utterly unable to assist.

Seven hundred negroes came in a body a few days ago, each with some tie sundered, but joy, exultant joy abounding, and sweet and peaceful satisfaction enriching the heart of every tired wanderer. To-day, one of our ladies tried to urge an aunt to send to the Orphan Asylum two young children, who were under her care. She said she promised her sister she would watch over them, and of her last crust they should surely have half. A woman in our

neighborhood said, to-day, that on a recent visit of hers to the rope-walk, she spied her mother, whom she had not seen for twenty years! 'Oh, yes, I reckon I did know her, and I took her right to my home, and I'm going to keep her there, too.' Another woman lost a beautiful grandchild a day or two ago. When I spoke of the white folds of its raiment, she said, 'Oh, yes, I made a nice little shroud for him; and now he's splendid, and genteel enough to meet his Saviour.' 'I've been the mother of fourteen children,' the good woman said, 'and I've seen three die in my lap. I never cried. No, indeed. I always thanked the Lord when he took my children away. I washed 'em, and I dressed 'em, and I put 'em in the box, and I nailed it down, and my old man put it in the ground; and I went right to the ironing-table and the cooking stove, and I thanked the Lord. I had suffered too much to want them here, and I knew they would suffer, and I know the Lord did all things right. No, indeed, I never cried when my children died.'

All the charity of the North could be judiciously expended here. Of the absolute poor there are enough to absorb it. Yet the need is greater in the West. I will not be too selfish to deny it. The warm weather is at hand, and most of the needy can withstand their needs. I long to have you noble people of New York and Philadelphia, put your wealth into new channels. Open work-shops here. pray do, and that at once. Let a woman be sent to one to work a few hours, till she has earned a new garment, and then give her a ticket for one. Open the way for every one to earn everything he receives. Work is the great need. How can we ask people to pay us for clothing when they have no money, and can make none? Government does wonderfully well. It feeds all. It offers land and a cabin to each. It pays small wages to those who use the spade, and it does its full duty. But it cares for the body only. It cannot make men and women. It does its best to compel each able-bodied person to work, but it necessarily leaves many available avenues of industry unopened. *These, Northern philanthropy can command.*"

From Harriet Jacobs, Alexandria, Va., 3d mo. 22d, 1864.

"I have been laboring among the Freedmen for the past fifteen months. In looking back on the miserable condition in which I found them, and contrast it with to-day, I am convinced that the negroes are not so far behind other races as they are represented to be, if only justice is meted to them. When I came to this place, I found, in a few miserable dwellings, old founderies, old breweries, old mills, and a school house, thousands of men and women and children crowded together, the small-

pox raging among them; sick from other diseases; dying, on the average, from five to seven a day, without bedding, without a change of clothing, without nourishment, without the commonest necessaries for the comfort of the sick and dying. These painful sights have almost disappeared; though I find many who need help, it is not a general thing. All who come in from beyond our lines are very destitute. We give them clothing. The old and infirm must be fed and clothed—the orphans must be remembered—the hospitals must be supplied. We have seven thousand colored people in our midst. I would not have you believe the above mentioned represents the larger portion of this people; far from it. Not one-third are dependent on others where they can work; they are fast learning to think and act for themselves. I can see the results—it takes time for them to realize that they are free men and women.

At the present time Government issues less than four hundred rations to colored people in Alexandria.

Within the last eight months seven hundred small houses have been erected by the Freedmen in this place. We have ten colored schools, which are well attended; and it is encouraging to see how eager they are to learn. The largest school house was built by the Freedmen, and they own it as their property."

From LAURA TOWN, St. Helenaville, S.C., 3d mo. 27, 1864.

"I am happy to be able to report a decided improvement in the health of our island, and, nearly every person on it having been through the small-pox, we are free from apprehension regarding any such time of suffering among the people as last winter was. This disease has prevailed very widely, and we hardly see a face not marked with it. Neither vaccination, nor having had it before, prevented its occurring violently in some cases. There were many instances of devotion to the sick, and disregard of personal safety among the people, but so much ignorance and prejudice, that the malignity of the disease was fostered, and its fatality greatly increased.

The progress of the people towards enlightenment and comfort is very cheering. When I came here, about two years ago, the cabins were unswept and unscrubbed, unlighted, except by slips of 'fat' pive, called 'lighters,' and totally unfurnished with dishes, spoons, &c., except where those taken from the residences of the masters had been hidden away. Now, the people use kerosene lamps in many cases, and have neat shelves with tin and crockery. They have even window-sashes in some of the more ambitious cabins. One man said to me, 'Oh, I didn't neber feel so happy till I wake in de night and saw de moon shining in, till I could

see most like de day time.' Their old cabins have only board shutters, which they keep close shut at night, summer and winter, and consequently this man had grown old without ever before seeing the moon shining through his window-pane, to cheer the night. An old woman was walking one Saturday down one of their streets (which they call 'de nigger-house yard') with me, and called my attention to the scrubbing and splashing going on in nearly every house. She laughed heartily as she said 'dey neber forgets Mrs. Johnson and Miss Mary, and how dey set all de plantation to scrubbing ebery Saturday. Dey keeps it up; but some seems like dey don't know Secesh bin gone, dey's so dirty.' Mrs. Johnson and Miss Donelson were among the first comers by the Atlantic, and their lessons have been well remembered, and with gratitude and affection. The houses had no gardens about them. Now every one that I have seen this spring has a little patch fenced in, and in many of them, peas are up and neatly staked, almost in blossom. There is nothing, except land, which they desire so eagerly as garden seeds. These they really need, for the stores have not supplied them. They show, also, a proper sense of the value of implements, and working animals; and in the late sales of confiscated property they have paid enormous prices for mules and horses; the people all clubbing together to buy a plough-horse, where no *one* could afford it. In their dress the change is very striking, especially in the school children. They begin to look like northern scholars, instead of patched or ragged, and often, half naked little savages. One of the young girls at 'the Oaks' was married a few days ago, and we hear that the wedding was really stylish, for dress, cake, &c. We have no stronger wish than to see weddings made of consequence, and duly celebrated with attraction and impressive ceremonies; and we have done all we could to discourage the carelessness about the matter, which we found to prevail here, though there were a few grand weddings from the first. There is a decided change for the better in most social respects; the care of infants, for example, the behavior of young persons and the proper emulation in respectability.

You ask of the people's needs. They are nearly all not only self-supporting, but growing comfortable in circumstances. They need good stores, good schools, good preachers, and good laws, and I think they will want nothing more. If Government will only protect them in their industry, and give them the homesteads they pray for, they will make good sons of the republic, and some day, I hope, good citizens. But had it not been for Gen. Saxton's judicious care, I do not know what might have been their state. If they had been taught by him to de-

pend upon Government for their support, instead of being steadily urged and compelled to take work and support themselves, they might have been *fostered* into pauperism; and on the other hand, if he had not protected them against fraud, they might have been *discouraged* into pauperism, by being cheated of the fruits of their labor. His judicious order last winter, that no cotton should leave the department till the laborers had been paid for it by those who hired them, gave peace and content to many an uncertain mind. It also gave a confidence in Government, and its protection of their rights, which even the late unfortunate contradiction of orders by the powers in Washington, concerning pre-emption claims, has not quite shaken."

A VISIT TO THE FREEDMEN.

J. M. ELLIS, M. ELLIS

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For Friends' Intelligencer.

A VISIT TO THE FREEDMEN.

BY J. M. ELLIS.

(Continued from page 302.)

*Third-day morning.*—Our first business this morning was making arrangements for taking care of our hospital property, clothing, &c. During our explorations yesterday, L. had made a list of sundry articles that would be very useful to a few of the aged, infirm and helpless; and we made up various packages for these; marking them, so as to be sure of reaching the proper recipients. The remainder of our stores Captain Carso has kindly offered to take care of for us at Freedman's Village, until our future sphere of action is more definitely settled. These arrangements, and a visit to the school then in session for the last time, consumed the time until the conveyance he had furnished for us drove up.

We next proceeded to Camp Todd, located back of the village, and where Emily Howland has for some time been teaching. Aside from those at Freedman's Village, this is one of the most interesting schools we have visited. The pupils average some fifty or more in attendance, and some of them walk a mile and a half to reach it, showing a desire for the acquisition of knowledge that is highly creditable. We noticed a number who were particularly apt and bright looking. The multiplication table was said backwards for us, without a single error, and in which exercise a large majority of the children joined. We also examined some of their slates, on which their efforts at writing were very praiseworthy.

This school has been an exclusively private enterprise of Emily Howland's, but as she now feels the positive necessity of a respite from her benevolent labors, Sarah Ann Cadwallader, one of the teachers from Mason's Island, has made arrangements with her for its continuance, and we sincerely wish it all the success

that could be desired under its new administration.

The temptation to linger in the examination of these interesting exhibitions, was such as to leave us only time to return to Washington and to reach the wharf situated at the lower end of the city, from which the boats for Alexandria depart. On our way down we called again on Col. Eaton, and gave him some of our views in a very hurried manner, leaving the matter, however, for another interview, of which we may possibly have more to say.

Committees who have previously visited the localities we have been over, have so frequently been queried of as to the condition of things in Alexandria, without being able to give the desired information, that we felt it incumbent on us to consider a trip there, as a part of our mission. By dint of industrious enquiry and considerable locomotion, we found, first, *The Colored Hospital*, which we merely glanced at, and then, *The Colored Contraband Hospital*, which was the one we wished more particularly to find; Doctor Pettijohn being stationed there, and with whom L. had a previous acquaintance.

We found him a valuable adjutant to our enquiries, accompanying us in our walks, and piloting us to the objects of interest, of which we were in quest. We visited a Primary School, which presents a very interesting field of labor for our Association, if other engagements will permit it to embark therein. The Freedmen have built a Meeting-house of rough boards, with the intention of also using it as a school-room. Over this, there is a debt of about one hundred and fifty dollars hanging, which it would be very desirable to cancel.

A Primary School of some thirty or forty pupils is there taught by a lady, who claims that she is both mentally and physically incompetent for the task, but that she has yielded to the repeated importunities of the people to embark in it, and she is very desirous to turn it over to others she may deem better adapted to the labor. There is one point about the school that she is certainly well qualified for. Notwithstanding, we claimed her attention so much, the children maintained the most perfect order, as much so as though she were pursuing her ordinary course of instruction. This formed the subject of encouraging comment to them in a few words. The teacher's compensation is realized, by all the parents who are able paying one dollar per month for each child—those who are too poor to do this are taken free.

During our investigations we obtained the following information. When the school census for Alexandria was taken on the last day of the year, there were about thirty day and evening colored schools, embracing 1,646 pupils. Of these schools, the Pennsylvania State Association has a very large one. It is free, and

averages one hundred and fifty in attendance. Nearly all its pupils were once slaves. Another of about one hundred pupils is taught by a colored man, and is nearly self-supporting—scholars who cannot pay, are also admitted here free.

Amongst other matters of interest we learned that the colored population of Alexandria own fifty-two thousand dollars worth of real estate, on which, of course, they pay their proportion of taxes as well as the whites; and on this point, if on no other, they feel the question of the right of suffrage to bear with considerable force. It is said that over one thousand houses have been built within the past two years by the Freedmen, and that a considerable spirit of industry is manifested by them. Unfortunately they do not own the lots on which these houses are built, but have been obliged to take them up on "ground rent" at very high rates. We had an interesting conversation with the well-known Harriet Jacobs, who continues to manifest that deep interest in the welfare of the colored race, for which she has ever been renowned. A gentleman in making a comparison between Washington and Philadelphia (and, to our shame be it said, to the great discredit of the latter), in reference to this proscribed class riding in the passenger cars of the two cities, illustrated the difference of feeling by an incident. He was riding in one of their cars, in which were also two very respectable colored women. After a time a man entered, and began abusing these women with his tongue, accompanying the word "nigger," with some expletives, &c. The gentleman left his seat, went to the conductor, queried if they allowed ladies to be abused in their cars, and pointed out the guilty individual. Upon learning the nature of the offence, the negative reply of the conductor was confirmed by instantaneously collaring the would-be man and ejecting him from the car.

After obtaining all the information we could in reference to the especial object of our visit, and having a very few minutes ere embarking on the returning boat, we sought a view of that, not "time honored," but time-disgraced building, formerly known as the "slave pen of Alexandria!" It still bears over its threshold, a sign, with the words in large letters,

"BUCK, PRICE & CO.,"  
"DEALERS IN SLAVES,"

and while it is almost a libel on the now free State of Virginia, to permit such an obnoxious combination of letters to remain exposed to the public gaze, possibly it is better it should be so, for the present, lest we too soon forget what once existed in a country and a community claiming to be Christian! Who knows, but that this sign may yet find a place in the cabinet of some antiquarian, preserved not only as a relic of one of the things that were, but as a

monument of the deep degradation from which our beloved country has just emerged, through the instrumentality, in the Divine hand, of a loved one, for whose untimely fate a nation has truly mourned.

It is not worth while to attempt a description of the interior of this building—it was adapted for the purpose for which it was intended, and is now used as a prison, or place of confinement for deserters. Neither is it worth while to record the feelings of abhorrence that crowded the mind against that "sum of all villainies," during the few short moments of our stay. It is situated, immediately opposite "The Soldier's Rest," a delightful spot, and while in broad contrast with the gloomy den we had just left, it is doubtless as well adapted for its benevolent purpose, as was the former for its infamous one.

We passed by the blockade, which was built near the depot, during the period when Alexandria was in imminent peril from the anticipated attacks of the rebels. It is about three ordinary squares in length one way, and extends a considerable distance the other—is built of rough trees, say six inches in diameter, and some ten or twelve feet high, driven into the ground so close as to touch each other, well sharpened at the top, and with port holes at regular distances, through which to thrust muskets for the defence of the place—altogether it was quite a formidable looking affair.

Just in time again for the boat. We were soon on our way to Washington, and so completely was our time taken up, that no opportunity was afforded to procure anything to eat from breakfast time until late in the evening. *Mason's Island* is now in a fair way of becoming a "deserted village." The first day of our arrival there, all the patients except two were removed from the hospital to Freedman's Village, and subsequently all who desired it were sent by government to their former localities in Virginia. This constituted a large number. The orphans were removed to the Orphans' Asylum at Georgetown, and on the first of this month the remaining occupants were sent to Freedman's Village. The island has been very healthy for several months past, the deaths only averaging about one per month, quite in contrast with the perfect charnel-house it presented last summer; though it must be borne in mind, the "sickly season" has not yet commenced. The sanitary arrangements existing at present reflect the highest credit on those having it in charge; had the same care have been exercised from the commencement, we should have been spared the harrowing tales of sickness and death that at one time prevailed.

It was a source of considerable regret that important business demanded my immediate return home, as I felt, that, although most of our

Harriet  
Jacobs

arrangements had been perfected, I should have liked to have given another day to the service. My companion, however, did remain—had another very interesting interview with Colonel Baton, and furnished him with a brief sketch of our labors in the vicinity of Washington, accompanied with our views as an Association, as to the importance of embodying "industrial" instruction with our labors to elevate the Freedmen, teaching the females domestic economy, and as far as possible their household duties. With these views he was particularly gratified, expressing the opinion, that no system would be successful without this practical education; thus confirming the opinion previously expressed, of his sincere interest in the welfare of this people.

Camp Wadsworth was again visited by L., and more time spent at the "upper farm," where Lydia T. Atkinson is located, thus making some reparation for the very short visit before spoken of.

In this neighborhood the ravages of war are plainly discernible. For some thirty or forty miles round scarcely any fences exist, except of an impromptu kind made out of the tops of trees, with the bark on, and even these are mostly confined to the road-side and consist of a single rail—few or none being seen in the fields.

The weddings, (for it appears there were to have been two of them), which were postponed on account of the non-arrival of the minister, were arranged to come off this evening, and from L., who hurried back to the island to be in time to witness the ceremony, I have obtained an account of the affair.

Nearly the whole remaining population, white and black, assembled in the large school-room which was suitably arranged, and quite brilliantly lighted up for the occasion. The minister arrived in due time, and the two couples to be married, with quite a train of bridesmaids soon followed. The brides were gaily attired in all conceivable kinds of cast off finery, the skirts of their dresses ornamented with sprigs of box and arbovitæ.

The grooms dressed in coats and pants, looking very like some that our association had sent, and with snowy cotton gloves, concealing their black horny hands, behaved with proper decorum. One of the brides, who (by the way, was taking "for better for worse," an old man who threw away his cane and straightened up for the occasion, as he had not done since his arrival on the island), quite amused us by the coquettish way in which she tossed her head, and turned from her ancient groom, as they took the seats provided for them in front of the minister.

The ceremony was short but impressive. The minister is a city missionary of the Baptist

faith, a tall, powerful man, full of zeal, and has been the religious attendant of the Island ever since its occupancy as a contraband camp. The responses by the grooms were given with clear manly voices, while the brides were only required to give their hands to the minister. As he pronounced them husband and wife, he laid a hand on the head of each, in the most solemn and impressive manner, invoking the Divine blessing on their union. The wedding party then kneeled, and a fervent prayer was offered up for their present and future welfare. The couples were separately married, but one of the grooms had failed to obtain a license, according to the laws of Virginia, so a permit from a Justice of the Peace was obtained instead.

After the ceremonies were over, the company joined in singing, and an effort was made by some of the white gentlemen present to get up a "wedding dance," but nearly all the men, and very many of the women, being members of the Baptist church, only a few could be found to engage in it, while it was found extremely difficult to introduce even games amongst them. L. states she mingled freely with them through the evening, administering words of encouragement on the course they had taken, and listening to the grave and serious reasons given for their choice, in which service she experienced no small gratification.

Upon closing our labors at this place we gratefully acknowledge the kindness and attention we have received at the hands of various officials; and though at times there was not as perfect a concert of action as would have been desirable, it possibly came more from the want of a definite understanding of each other, than from any intention to thwart our efforts. Nor must our teachers be forgotten. Without their untiring zeal and aid these efforts would have been powerless. Those who were pioneers in both the educational and sanitary departments, had practical evidence of the privations and difficulties to be encountered in this labor of love, and merit the especial thanks of all who take an interest in the good work. These remarks, as respects both officials and teachers, will also apply to other localities; and to all who have lent us a helping hand in this field of labor, we cannot but feel greatly indebted.

But to return to the Freedman. After all my investigations, I have arrived at the conclusion, that he is in a fair way to become self-supporting ere long, and all he needs is, to be protected in his rights, to be practically educated, and then—to be let alone.

J. N. ELLIS.

Phila., 7th mo., 1865.

Ancestress  
of Kevin  
Bacon