

Methodist Freedmen's Bureau.

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In emancipating the slaves, the nation assumed the relation of guardian to the emancipated, involving the obligation to provide for them and protect them. The provision included rations for the destitute, and a supply for their intellectual wants. The protection included not only military and civil defense of their persons and their rights, but such educational help, so far and so long as was necessary, as would enable them to understand and assert their rights as freemen. Hence originated the Freedmen's Bureau. Its specific work was continued only so long as the then apparent and pressing exigence lasted, after which, and quite too soon, as many believe, its functions ceased. By a providential call, too obvious and imperative for mistake or neglect, the Churches were summoned to supplement the work of the Freedmen's Bureau, just as during the War the Sanitary and Christian Commissions supplemented those of the Commissariat and the Medical Department of the army. As those commissions saved many valuable lives and promoted the comfort and efficiency of the troops, so these voluntary freedmen's associations greatly augmented the usefulness of the Freedmen's Bureau, while it continued, and perpetuated its beneficence after it had ceased to operate. Nearly all the Churches responded to the providential call, some of them with commendable earnestness and liberality, and none with more promptness and energy than our own Church. The call was proved Divine, and the obedience to it was justified, by the great usefulness which has crowned the movement. The responsibility of the Churches in this direction has not ceased. Their work for the freedmen is not yet completed. On the contrary, the demand for its continuance is stronger to-day than that which called it into being.

The amount of good effected by the Methodist Freedmen's Bureau in six brief years, as shown by the Sixth Annual Report of our "Secretary of the Interior," Rev. Dr. Rust, is both surprising and in a very high degree encouraging. Among the millions of destitute, dependent freedmen—suddenly thrown upon their own resources; without experience in self-care; degraded by generations of oppression and ignorance; inheriting the hatred of many, the prejudice of more, and the neglect of all; and in a country which had been harried and scourged by war—this Society has profusely scattered the leaven of truth and the germs of mental activity and of moral improvement.

It is proposed in this brief article to display somewhat the mode and the measure of this great Christian philanthropy. In doing this, the reader's attention is invited to some of the facts submitted in the Sixth Annual Report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This is a well prepared pamphlet of fifty-six octavo pages, crowded with significant facts, and brimming with eloquence. Every Methodist should read it and carefully digest its facts. If they do, we cannot doubt that many and large contributions to the cause will be made.

1. The Managers of this Society have aided in introducing into the South the New England system of education—which has done so much for the whole country—by planting, first, free schools, then training schools, and then seminaries, colleges and universities. This planting of the school system has been thoroughly done by New England teachers. That this movement should at first encounter formidable obstacles is not strange. The same things were true in New York and Pennsylvania at an early day. These obstacles were not raised by the freedmen. But such obstructions will as surely give place in the South as they have elsewhere. Indeed, they are already diminishing.

2. The ability of the freedmen for intellectual advancement has been demonstrated, compelling the admission that equal relative progress is made in their schools as in those attended by white children. Among the pupils in these colored schools are found proficient in higher arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and the languages.

3. Incidental to these intellectual results, but scarcely less valuable, has been the elevating personal influence of the cultured teachers sent out by this Society upon the manners and lives of the freedmen. These teachers have successfully exemplified cleanliness, industry, purity and religion, thus awakening noble aspirations. They have taught in Sunday-schools, attended the social meetings; some of them have regularly preached the Gospel to the poor, visited the sick and the sorrowing with kindly ministrations, and carried to the dying the precious hopes of a blissful immortality.

4. For six years an average of eighty Christian teachers has been maintained in the field, exerting their elevating influences upon these needy and dependent people. As the visible results of their direct labors, forty thousand pupils have received the elementary branches of education; hundreds have been prepared for teaching who are now engaged in that work; scores have been trained for the ministry, who are now employed in that holy calling; others, not regularly trained, have been greatly assisted in preparation for the ministry of the Gospel; many school-houses have been erected by the freedmen themselves; six universities, several of them including theological departments, five normal schools, two seminaries, and two biblical institutes—in all fifteen of these higher institutions, all of them largely attended and officially conducted—are estab-

lished in nine of the Southern States: namely, one each in Tennessee, Mississippi, South Carolina, Alabama, Virginia, Maryland and Florida, two in Texas, and three each in Georgia and Louisiana; some forty schools of ordinary grade are maintained in all the Southern States except three. Of some three thousand pupils in the higher schools, more than one thousand are preparing to assist in elevating their race, either as teachers or as preachers of the Gospel. The accounts given of these several institutions by those who have visited and examined them, as Drs. Curry, Taylor, Fuller and Bishop Haven, and others, show that they are doing thorough, useful work.

These are some of the visible, tabulated results of six years of consecrated effort in this field—effected at a cost, in money, of \$370,000. There remains in the South in the form of real estate, grounds, structures, and school appurtenances, property to the amount of \$175,000. Of the unseen and unrecorded results, who can tell the sum! God only knows how many germs of spiritual life and blessedness have fructified under these labors. Eternity will perhaps disclose them as a part of our reward.

5. In view of this really grand showing, the Secretary may well plead, as he does most eloquently, for increased and persistent effort in this behalf. If six years of labor, and an average yearly contribution of \$61,707 35, can produce, with God's blessing, such a harvest, we have the most ample inducement to renewed and enhanced endeavor. Thus, following up and supplementing the footing and impetus already gained, results far exceeding these in moral grandeur may be expected in the near future. The Secretary well concludes that patriotism, philanthropy and Christianity concur in enforcing the claims of the Methodist Freedmen's Aid Society.