

THE AMERICAN

FREEDMEN'S AID COMMISSION

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WAS organized in the city of New York, on the 24th of August, 1865, by representatives of the leading Freedmen's Relief Associations, formerly independent, for the purpose of unifying their methods of labor, and extending their organization throughout the country.

The end and reward of this common labor is sought in the redemption of the freed people from the degradation into which slavery has plunged them, that they may become thoroughly FIT for complete citizenship. No sectional, no partizan, no class interests are sought or recognized.

That the black population may not *stain* the white population, it is proposed to confine the color to the cuticle, cleansing away ignorance, vice, and degrading poverty, and redeeming to society the millions already redeemed to nominal manhood. In the interest of the nation as one nation, in the interest of the people as one people, in the steadfast faith that it can never advantage one citizen to permit another to miss of the highest standard of manly attainment, the Commission proposes to do whatever its national constituency may permit, to give effect to the Proclamation of Emancipation, and to the Amendment of the Constitution.

The vicissitudes of war could not deprive the freed people of estates or personal property, since they had none to lose; but they were re-

moved from places which had served them instead of homes, and were cut off from opportunities to earn their daily bread.

Simple starvation would have followed, if the President and his advisers had been less truly men than they were. The hand that held the sword of Justice became at once the hand of Help to the needy, and the army rations were distributed to the destitute refugees. The warehouses and barracks seized from the enemy were converted into temporary shelters, and such other relief as was found possible promptly afforded. This, however, could not continue indefinitely, and must all be ended with the close of the war. The Freedmen's Bureau, being located in the War Department, and wisely administered, has continued such aid as was possible; but, unless now liberally provided with means by act of Congress, must soon discontinue its labors—a calamity than which few could be greater, and which is not to be considered as contingent in *this* Congress. We who have once and again sent corn to starving Europe will hardly leave an hundred thousand of our own loyal and unfortunate citizens to starve in neglect.

Large eleemosynary aid in the way of suitable clothing for destitute women and children is demanded, and is being rapidly supplied by the willing fingers of loyal and Christian women in every Northern State.

Meanwhile, not less than six hundred teachers and relief agents are sustained by the Commission in Southern States, who instruct fifty thousand pupils, and conduct twenty orphan asylums, and a large number of industrial, normal, and other training schools.

The present monthly expenditure of the Commission is not far from fifty thousand dollars. If the inviting openings were all entered, it would be at least five times this sum.

It is believed that no other investment of funds, whether derived from the public treasury, or from private liberality, will yield to the nation so early and so large a return as that which provides for the early education

of the people of the South, both black and white. The special encouragement to aid the black people arises from their eager desire to learn. Such a thirst for useful knowledge is without recorded precedent, and when contrasted with the relative indifference of their white neighbors, is truly astonishing. Every word of instruction let fall upon willing ears is a seed of truth received into genial soil.

The Commission has been abundantly encouraged in its work hitherto, both by the Government and by the people, and if such encouragement shall continue, will continue its labor until its work shall be finished.

JACOB R. SHIPHERD,
Secretary.

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