

Protestant Episcopal Freedman's Aid Commission.

DEAR SIR:—

In the providence of God *four millions* of men, lately held in bondage at the South, have been suddenly invested with the rights and responsibilities of freemen. They are exposed to terrible destitution and suffering. Unless they are *immediately* helped, thousands must perish. Citizens of the Southern States, and visitors from the North, agree in their testimony as to this matter. Through the press and private correspondence we are kept so fully and definitely informed, that detailed statements are not needed here. The Federal Government undertakes to keep the Freedmen from *starvation*. More than this it cannot well do. The rest must be done through the voluntary efforts of the people.

With such extreme and wide-spread suffering at our very doors, shall *we* of the Protestant Episcopal Church be negligent or dilatory in relieving those who suffer? Will we not remember that these are the NATION'S poor, and that they have been brought into their present lamentable condition through no ill-advised movements of their own, but in the course of *our* efforts to maintain the integrity of our country? Can we, in any measure, shut our ears against their piteous cry for help?

But although the physical necessities of these unfortunate people are the more immediately pressing, our duty toward them and toward ourselves goes farther than merely to attempt to relieve *these*. If we would have the Freedmen to be indus-

trious and well-ordered, now that the restraints of slavery are removed, we must see to it, that they are educated up to the responsibilities of their new position; they must be made *intelligent* laborers, in order that they may have a sufficient motive for labor. Still farther, all who have had to do with them during the two or three years last past, unite in attesting their eagerness, as well as their ability, to learn. If they are not permitted to learn, as they are capable of doing under favorable circumstances, we have reason to apprehend a war of races, the results of which must be most disastrous to our *National* interests.

Again, we must give the Freedmen *religious* instruction. We recognize our duty to "*preach the Gospel to every creature.*" Are we not under special obligation to enlighten the semi-heathen of our own land? Is not this obligation made *doubly* imperative by the peculiar circumstances of their present condition? Can these people be anything else than an element of danger and of weakness in our National constitution, unless they shall be thoroughly Christianized?

The work of supplying the *physical* necessities of the Freedmen, and of giving them *secular instruction*, might be performed by general societies. But the all-important duty of *religious* instruction cannot be managed without great embarrassment by a mixed Commission, composed of men of radically different religious views. It can be faithfully performed only in connection with professedly religious associations. Recognizing this fact, our General Convention formed a "*Freedman's Aid Commission*" last October, in connection with our Board of Missions. In this work the Church, North and South, co-operated. Southern Bishops were actively interested in its inception, and several Northern Bishops (among them the Bishops of Ohio and Massachusetts) issued Pastoral Letters, requesting collec-

tions in their several Dioceses for the work of the Commission on the day of National Thanksgiving, thus testifying their confidence in its management.

The following are the officers of the Commission :—

Executive Committee.

REV. DR. HAIGHT,	REV. DR. LITTLEJOHN,
“ “ A. H. VINTON,	“ “ ECCLESTON,
MR. HAMILTON FISH,	MR. G. D. MORGAN,
“ F. S. WINSTON,	“ JOHN WELSH.

Corresponding Secretary.

REV. DR. WHARTON.

It is proposed to send immediately to the Freedmen what they need for the supply of their physical necessities; especially clothing of all kinds, both old and new, as well as materials, out of which they may, under the direction of their teachers, make their own clothing. It is proposed to send them *books*, both for instruction in elementary principles, and for general reading. It is proposed to send them *teachers*, concerning whom it will be required, *only* whether they are competent to teach, and are persons of good religious character. There are such teachers waiting to be sent just so soon as funds shall be provided for the purpose. Letters containing assurances of co-operation with such teachers have been received by the officers of the Commission from many of our clergy at the South.

The undersigned, having been appointed Agent of the Commission for the Diocese of Pennsylvania, will receive and promptly forward any funds which you may desire to contribute for this work.

WM. J. HARRIS, 2043 *Chestnut Street.*

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 20.