

[Roanoke Island, 3 January 1866]

The interests of our cause are prospering on the island. The Sunday school connected with our Association presents an interesting and hopeful picture in our prospects for the future. We now number 250 pupils; last Sabbath, present 238; two-thirds of this number read, and are committing, for recitation weekly, from two to seventy-five verses of Scripture. Our place of gathering has grown quite too small (the sewing-room in the Industrial School). We propose to enlarge our borders, by removing to the large hall above, although as yet it is destitute of seats. I feel that this increasing demand should be met, and whatever else is withheld from this people, I feel that *the bread of life must not be*.

We have no other help in our school but the members of our own family. There are various other schools on the island, which I presume are prospering, but we are not able to visit them. We need more Testaments, and are not able to supply near all who need them.

Those copies of the Gospels sent out recently we were very grateful for. We distributed them on Christmas Day at a little celebration. We had about 300 present. After some very fine singing and some talk, we distributed to each a trifling present, hoping to leave upon their minds some pleasant remembrance of the day.

OUR INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

After much toil and thought, this school is at length in successful operation, and promises to do much for the future welfare of the people. *More help is needed* to make it a perfect success.

DESTITUTION

The destitution is still great; unless you can send us more for gratuitous distribution, soon it will become fearful. It is represented that our numbers are fast diminishing by the return of the people to their old homes. I do not think this is the fact; indeed, I know that destitution is not diminishing, for all the families that leave here are obliged to come to us to be furnished with an outfit more or less, to prevent their suffering on their passage. How they will fare when they get there is known only to Him who notes the sparrow's fall. Conversing with the commandant of the post last evening, I asked his opinion relative to the diminution of the population. His reply was: "I do not think it is; for although some are leaving, boat loads are coming almost daily." "Those who come are of that class, who are driven by necessity from the homes where they have spent their lives in unrequited servitude, and after gathering the autumn's crops are no longer needed, and it will cost less to drive them out without food and shelter, until their services are again needed.

Who can tell, should they live through the winter, that their sufferings will be enough to make them willing to go back and work another year for simply bread enough to sustain life. These things so stir me at times, that I can only cry: "Lord, help! or we perish!"

While there is no doubt many instances of outrage committed by cruel and selfish men on the main land, there are also to be found many employers of the former slaves who treat them kindly, and with whom they are willing to abide, while they continue to receive a just reward for their labor.

Besides, Northern enterprise is reaching many of the principal places, particularly Plymouth, Newbern, and the other small towns in this portion of the State, and it is hoped that another year will make a demand for about all the surplus labor.

The Government still continues its protection, and the troops appear at places where there is any danger of a collision of the races. The time has not yet come to wholly withdraw all military protection.

[Sarah P. Freeman]

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