

Roanoke Island, N.C.,
June 13, 1866

Dear Sir:--I find there is a great amount of sickness and suffering, which, I think, is the result of the scarcity of food. At one time, during my absence, so nearly did they approach to starvation, in consequence of not being able to get supplies here, that our ladies, besides giving all that they could spare from family stores, were obliged to give out damaged food, which I purchased for our pigs before I left. This the people cooked and ate, to save life.

Is it any wonder that sickness follows? Whose fault is this? Surely not the fault of any one here, for there was no means of transportation to bring food to the island till a boat came down to transport goods from a steamer which was wrecked on the coast. This was seized by our kind-hearted assistant superintendent, Capt. Goslin, and dispatched to Newbern for stores, but owing to a very violent storm, it was gone two long weeks, being eight days on her passage back, and obliged to be lightened by throwing overboard a part of her stores.

During this terrible time, the passengers of the ill-fated steamer, about sixty in number, among whom were the wife and children of the rebel Gen. Price, the private Secretary of Maximilian, and other celebrities, on their way to Mexico, arrived on the island, and having money, could procure food. A boat could also be sent to take them on their way, and every attention shown them. This was as it should be. But should these poor oppressed people, to whom our Government has pledged protection and aid, be left to perish?

Some may say they should leave the island, go into the interior and find employment. They have been trying the experiment to some extent; but many who have not quite confidence enough yet in their former owners, have left their families, and been out to work, and look for a home for their families.

I have been collecting facts from some with whom I am well acquainted, and whom I advised last winter to go out and see what they could do. I will give a few of them. Kinohen Rennick, a house carpenter (whom the N.Y.N.F.R. Association employed in building industrial school and store, a smart man of middle age, having a family to support), left the island the 11th of February, has worked to the amount of \$100 been paid only \$15 in money, and was obliged to leave in debt, was called upon to pay poll tax of \$1.50, and when he inquired what it was for, was told that it was for his freedom.

John Mills, without family, left at the same time, and has made on an average 4,000 shingles per week, which, at the stipulated price for manufacturing, amounts to \$16 per week, and at his settlement, a few days since, found \$10 due him, and that he could not get, and was obliged to work his passage to the island.

Alphonso Lenox, a smart young man, who served as a private during the war, went into Murden [Martin?] County and engaged to work for fifty cents per day and *found, during the days that he work*; but on the Sabbath, he must either work or find himself; chose to do the latter; but after working two weeks found that it cost him nearly as much to keep him over the Sabbath as he could earn during the week, and concluded to return to the island.

Employers keep supply stores, from which they pay their employees, selling them corn meal for \$1.80 per bushel, when plenty can be bought in the vicinity with cash for ninety cents. These facts speak for themselves.

In view of them, is it any wonder that the people hesitate about taking their families into the country?

One more case. Nelson Perkins went a few miles beyond Elizabeth City, engaged work, sent for his family, and got them nicely settled; but, while pursuing peacefully his avocation, was shot down in cold blood; reason assigned, that some time during the war he was serving as a Federal soldier, on picket line, not far from the place where he was at work. After his death, his family came back again to the island.

This is the second case of murder among those who have gone from the island, and yet nothing, so far as I can learn, has been done with the murderers.

Is it any wonder they hesitate about leaving a place of safety?

I hope the number of teachers for the coming autumn will be greatly increased.

In many places the people are doing all they can to prepare buildings, and sustain their schools.

At Rowell's [Powells] Point, near Currituck Court House, the colored people have built a schoolhouse, and promise to board a teacher, and supply fuel.

At Ben [Trent] River settlement, near Newbern, they have a school-house, and \$75 subscribed for support of a teacher. I hope Mr. Pond will see to that when he returns.

There are calls from Hyde County and various other points. Those who go out into the country bring back with them very urgent appeals for teachers.

Say to the people: The harvest is ripe, send laborers.

[Sarah P. Freeman]

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