

Roanoke Island, August 30, 1864

My Dear Miss Luckey,

I have neglected answering your kind letter till I am quite out of patience with myself. It is not for lack of interest, or forgetfulness of the pleasant acquaintance formed while engaged together in labors of love at Beaufort. Since I have been alone I find much to occupy my time, and, as a matter of consequence, all correspondence, except that which is most intimately connected with my duties among these people, has to be indefinitely postponed. I have not been lonely, for I find no time for it; every moment is fully occupied, yet I find not much accomplished. In view of the approach of cold weather, the destitution is truly frightful on the island. My heart sometimes sickens at the thought of the suffering that must ensue, if relief does not reach us from some quarter. Here are 3,000 bodies nearly naked, nine-tenths of them are women and children; and in all the goods I have received for distribution (gratuitously), not a dozen suits for women. I have received about 800 vests, and about 100 old coats of the poorest quality, and in all not over twenty pairs of pants. Can you not do something by way of presenting our wants while you are at home among friends? Many of the people here would buy but many more are unable to buy for want of money. Those who are at work get no pay, and a feeling of distrust and discouragement pervades the minds of the people generally. I daily labor hard to counteract this, but I am too weak in faith myself to do it. The mill, so long in process of erection, is at length in operation, and works finely. So I hope the time is not far distant when lumber may be more plenty. We are living just about as when you left us, as it regards furniture. The many comforts went in the shape of bedding, linen, etc., have made me very happy. Our garden flourishes, adding many real luxuries to our table. In future these are to be our chief dependence, as our rations are cut off, but I trust "Elijah's God" will send us food.

I can not say that things look very encouraging on the island at present, but I hope other fields are in a more prosperous condition. I know very little what is being done in other departments.

In looking over what I have written you above, I find it is rather blue. I am almost ashamed that I should suffer myself to so far lose sight of God's overruling hand in all the events that are transpiring, to "doubt for one moment the prosperity of this cause ultimately; but so shortsighted am I that I am ready to be affected by every obstacle.

I have heard nothing from our poor friends at Beaufort; but once the father of that little baby that died at your house was on the island, and called upon me a short time since. He said their condition was much improved, sickness had abated, and they were getting settled in houses.

Yours with much love,

Sarah P. Freeman.

[“Letter from Mrs. S. P. Freeman,” *The Freedmen's Advocate* 1 (October 1864): 34.]