

Roanoke Island, November 7, 1864

Mr. Leigh.

*Dear Sir:*--I will not attempt to express my feelings on receipt of your kind letters, with the intelligence that relief was at hand for the suffering around us, or my joy upon the safe arrival of the cases announced. They reached here a week ago this morning, and I proceeded immediately to open them.

#### THE WORK OF DISTRIBUTION

On Thursday I had them open at the distributing office, and proceeded to business. Worked all day, admitting eight or ten at once, and after attending to that number dismissing them, and admitting more, till night overtook us, and then hundreds were obliged to go away without getting any thing. Friday was again devoted to unpacking and assorting, preparatory to the work of distribution. At night, after patient waiting in suspense, my heart was cheered by the arrival of my daughter, accompanied by two other teachers. Saturday, I went again to the office to find myself thronged again; and, after working all day, was obliged to return to my home wearied, and while rejoicing that so many had been made comfortable, yet sad that hundreds equally needy had to be turned away with their wants unsupplied. Yesterday being the Sabbath, I devoted to rest, attending two Sunday schools, and finding their numbers increased nearly one-half, by the supply of clothing. Then and there I had opportunity to rejoice at what the Lord had done [illegible]and philanthropic Christian friends to listen to, and so far provide for, our wants. How gladly would I, had I language to do so, express to that Association of Friends our deep and lasting gratitude for their very generous expression of their Christian sympathy, embodied in those two valuable boxes of clothing. I can not estimate, much less express, the amount of good those clothes will do, coming, as they have, at this our time of greatest necessity. The shoes also will save many from an untimely grave, but we need many many more; and shall I still reiterate our wants?

I know that you will bear with me. I have appealed to friends in different places, from whom I am confident I will get a response. Yet there will be many things which are needed, and as yet unprovided for. We wish now to start our industrial school, and we must have material for that; also our orphan asylum, for which we need provision by way of bedding and furniture.

#### THE RECAPTURE OF PLYMOUTH

The recapture of Plymouth is also bringing, and will bring, a large number of our people, who were taken when it fell into rebel hands. These have been subjected to the hardest condition of servitude, since falling the second time into rebel hands, and now come to us again destitute of all things. We need, for them, large supplies, and I know that their appeal shall not be in vain.

### WHAT IS NEEDED

What we most need next is unmade goods of coarse, stout material, warm for winter; flannel shirts, made and unmade, for men and boys; jackets and pants, for boys; coats and pants, for men, as well as children;s clothes of all descriptions.

There were not any infants' flannel petticoats among the goods; those are much needed, as well as red or blue flannel for the aged and rheumatic men and women.

Your plan of selling to those able to purchase, I fully appreciate, and have practiced upon, refunding at the close of each month the avails of salves, with my monthly returns. to Newbern, keeping separate accounts of goods from each Association; and for those sold, which I receive from personal friends, I return under the head of miscellaneous goods, generally aiming to make gratuitous distribution from that class of goods as much as possible, so as to avoid making or drain upon the treasury of the Association. I will endeavor to keep the business as straight and correctly as possible, under the circumstances. I have no account books, and can get none. But I hope the time is not far distant when we shall have a store here--for it is greatly needed--and division of the labor, with a competent clerk to attend to the part of business, for I now have more to attend to than I can possibly do, and do it well, even if my strength would admit. A gentleman (Mr. Culver) has just left the island, who had been engaged in teaching for some time, and whose heart is deeply engaged in our work. He has superintended one of our Sunday schools, and acted as teacher in two others, and is every way competent to conduct the business of trade, well understanding the wants on the island. I have conversed with him and know that he can now be secured. He has gone home to Jersey City. I requested him to call at the rooms of the Association. I spoke of him to Mr James and he told me he would see him; but Mr J was taken sick, and unable to attend to any business. Why I mention this to you at this time is because I feel very anxious that, so far as possible, we may have earnest Christian men engaged in this work, when they can be found equal in other respects to men of an opposite character who care nothing for the welfare of the colony, but seek only to promote their own interests in business. I feel no little solicitude as to who shall be "superintendent" on the island. I try to pray: "Lord, send by whom thou wilt send," but can not help adding sincerely, "Oh, send me one after thine own heart."

Mr. James is convalescent, but not able to attend to any business yet.

Shall I make returns on the goods sent directly to me from New York, at Newbern, as I have formerly done, or make them directly to the Association? I shall dispose of what I have on hand in the course of a week or ten days. Thanking you for your ready personal sympathy, as well as response to the wants of the people, I will close by assuring you that I will labor earnestly, endeavoring to trust in God under all circumstances.

Yours truly, Sarah P. Freeman

[“Roanoke Island: Mrs. Freeman’s Letter,” *The Freedmen’s Advocate* 1 (December 1864): 42.]