

“Startling Revelations from the Department of South Carolina,” 1864

Title Page

Startling Revelations from the Department of South Carolina, and Expose of the so called National Freedmen’s Relief Association

Page 6

who had been kidnapped in Africa in their childhood, who told me they could get no clothes from the Freedmen's Association without buying them, and that they could not do. I found Scipio, who is not less than one hundred years old, lying one night on the bare floor, suffering from the cold. I went and obtained a blanket, the fruit of a Christmas Fair gotten up for the benefit of the poor colored people who could get no assistance from the Freedman's Relief Association, and gave it to him, which filled him with gratitude, and brought from him a hearty, "God bless you, massa."

The above Association keep a store in Beaufort for the sale of their goods, and also, from time to time, make sales of their clothing at public auction, some of which auctions I have myself attended. Several persons have told me that they have declined to buy at this store, and have gone, in preference, to the suttlers, and bought of them, because they could buy cheaper.

I have been informed by reliable persons that all moneys obtained from these sales of the Association, are paid into the hands of Gen. Saxton, to whom all goods are assigned.

Seven months of intimate relations with the people of the Department of South Carolina, has enabled me to communicate with many thousands of the colored inhabitants, and all, with one accord, confirm the gross violation of public faith and charity of the National Freedmen's Relief Association. And I will add that among all these thousands, I have not found a single person who had received a garment from the Association as a gift.

In the commencement of the establishment of schools in Beaufort, both colored and white children met together in the same schools; but recently they have introduced the odious Northern system of caste, by establishing separate schools for the negro children, thus perverting the very object of this mission among the freedmen of the South, which was to elevate the colored people, break down the prejudice against color, and thus produce a homogeneous society, as the basis of freedom and peace.

I will also add a word in respect to the general management of the plantations. These plantations are monopolized by Northern speculators to the almost entire exclusion of the freedmen, who are made the mere serfs of these lords of the soil. On the plantations, the highest price paid to colored laborers, to my knowledge, is thirty cents a day, they subsisting themselves. Many have told me that they have worked all the year, producing from three hundred pounds to five hundred pounds of cotton, and have received only from \$5 to \$15 for their years toil. They who plant a small patch for themselves, are often denied the use of mules and necessary implements unless they will plant the same amount,

gratuitously, for the superintendent; and in some cases they have been driven off the plantations because they would not work on the agent's terms. I have met with hundreds of these poor laborers, and all say they have never received the amount of wages secured to them by act of Congress, * viz: \$8 per month for men, and \$4 per month for women.

[Note : *This pay was promised, however by the Commander of the post.]

Colored laborers, on the wharf at Beaufort, get out \$8 per month, and not fully paid at that, while white men, doing the same work, get from \$30 to \$50 per month.

Capt. Isaac Simmons, Black Isaac, as he is called, is a pilot, and the best in those waters, and who has more brains than nine-tenths of the whites, gets only \$45 a month, while the white pilot gets from \$60 to \$75; a wicked and oppressive discrimination against the black man.

Under this unrighteous and oppressive treatment, universal sadness is written on every countenance. Many have told me their present condition under these "Buchramen," as they call them, is worse than under their old masters; proving to them what "Old Massa" told them, that the Yankees were not their

Page 7

friends. Cheating these people is in proportion to their ignorance, and as a consequence universal ill-will prevails among them towards the whole horde of plunderers who have come down there, not for the good of the freedmen, but for their own profit. The cry of these suffering people comes up: "Pay us for our labor, and treat us as free men and women, giving us an equal chance in the participation of the soil, and we will buy our own lands, keep our own store, and relieve the Freedmen's Association of the benevolent task of drawing on the charities of our real friends in the North, for donations for our benefit, which we never receive as a free gift, as the donors designed."

Witnessing for many months, these high handed acts of oppression under the rule of General Saxton, I have not failed, in season, to lift up my voice against them, and rebuking their authors, to their faces. As a consequence, a conspiracy was formed among these guilty officials against me, prominent among whom was the Quartermaster John A. Moore, formerly a slaveholder of Augusta, Ga., and a slaveholder still in spirit, as his acts do testify. These men clamored against me, carrying their complaints to Gen. Saxton, who was very willing to join with them to further their designs, feeling himself, no doubt, implicated in the censure I had brought against the mismanagement in the Department; for upon their representations it was that he so summarily removed me from my position of Assistant Contract Surgeon. The injustice of Gen. Saxton, in his treatment of me, is more fully demonstrated by his own statements, in an interview I had with him on the subject of my removal.

After receiving notification from him of my removal from office, I called on him, on the 2d of February, to learn the reasons of his action, when the following conversation took place. I said, "Gen. Saxton, I have been condemned, it seems, without a hearing." To which he replied, "Did you ever tell the colored people that they did not get as much pay as the whites?" "Yes, I have." "Have you ever told them that second hand clothing has been sent to them that they never got?" "Yes." "Then," said he, "that is enough; I don't want to hear any more; I did appoint you clothing inspector." I replied, "I have nothing to regret, nothing to retract; I thank God I have spoken the truth. I serve the same God here that I did in Boston." He then advised me to leave the Department.

Not chosing to take the advice of the General, I continued in my work among the colored people, who universally and gratefully accepted my services, and gave me their sympathy and support, while I became more and more obnoxious to their Northern oppressors, until my office culminated in the part

I took in the Convention that met on the 17th of May, held for the purpose of electing delegates to the Baltimore Convention. This Convention was called, without distinction of color; I accordingly instructed the colored people as to their rights in the Convention. On the assembling of the meeting, the colored men were largely in the majority. Judge Smith was chosen President by the votes of both whites and black. I was nominated for Vice President and elected, but only in consequence of the excess of colored members, for on the vote being taken, every colored man voted for me, and every white man voted against me. The Convention then proceeded to the election of delegates, sixteen being the number required. I proposed that four of these should be colored men. Several white men were first nominated and elected. Then the colored men nominated their four delegates, whereupon great confusion prevailed, and the chair directed that the white and colored members be divided, the whites taking one side of the house and the blacks the other. The vote was taken, and the colored delegates were elected almost wholly by colored votes, the whites being almost unanimously opposed to the election of any colored delegates.

The part I thus took in the Convention in rallying the colored men to the exercise of their rights as freemen, in securing men of their own color to represent them in the Baltimore Convention, seemed to set on fire the wrath of their white