
3156 12/15/1865 *From:* Wm Heyward

To: General [OO Howard]

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[148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153]

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General

What is written on the other pages was with the expectation that you would visit Augusta, when I promised myself the satisfaction of calling on you in person. Observing by the papers that you had visited Savannah & New Orleans, we fear you may not think it material to return by this way. I am sorry that it proves so. It would have been a satisfaction to invite you to visit and inspect what is called here a "pen" for the comfort of the poor Negroes who have left their former masters. They admit that they were well cared for at home, but they were told they were free, and they seem to be enjoying the practical benefits of such liberty. About 100 men, women & children are gathered in a building in space 100 by 30 ft. You can make your own calculation how much room that gives for each. Not a board covers the sides of the building, a lofty but light roof protects them from the rain & dew. The wind has free access. The divisions for each family are the filthy rags they hang about that. Of course no fires can be made in a house without chimneys. I did not discover a fire even out of the house, and my first visit was on an icy morning. I saw the sick, and asked what provision was made for them - was told that no person had charge of them, that each provided <for> themselves. They were free.

I am willing to think that your benevolent heart would bleed to witness such suffering, and still I fear it is not the most aggravated instance of the misery of these deluded people; I have heard of worse from several quarters. If it was the grand object of your people to destroy the happy relation existing between the master & slave - I say happy - I need not repeat the motive - you know it well - you have accomplished your purpose most effectively. The Negro, no longer willing to work for his master, is no longer a claim for protection and care, in any way - and the often fanatical teachings of your licensed incendiaries Redpath & French, have taught him to be insulant, where he was once respected and respectful. You abolish slavery and tell the Negro that he is the equal of the white-man, and can enjoy his liberty as well. You know all of you that that is simply a lie. You must, and do know, that the Negro never has, & never can attain to civilization without the influence and example of the white man. You all know that in a state of slavery he has been elevated from the brute to civilization. And now that you have destroyed one of the most benevolent of Gods appointed institutions that has ever existed, to gratify a fiendish impulse, you would have the world believing that it is for a holy purpose. Do your people believe in the hereafter, that there is a searcher of heaven, that there is an eternity - a Hell? It is a pity that you're philanthropy is so partial, I might have begun nearer home. Why have you not looked at the evils attendant on your Factory system. To the coal mining pits, some of the operatives who never see the light of the sun. Are they as well off as the most abject slave? Are they any less the slave to enrich the capitalist? In belief prevents you seeing the beam in your own eye, while you would cast out the snake. Suppose we had sent amongst you incendiaries like Redpath-

Phoebus! What a name

He was Christened(?) in blood,

And his path is the same -

to derange your labor system, how long would you have endured such interference?

By the time you have returned to Washington, you will, I hope, have satisfied yourself with the prospect of the new state of things. It will gratify me to hear Gen Howard's private, honest, opinion, whether he thinks Christianity, Civilization & the Negro have been advanced by the convulsions and new order of affairs.

The promptings of duty influenced me to visit my former home, and to inquire into the welfare of those who were once my slaves, and who are left in comfort at my plantation. As I had heard, every plantation-building had been burned, including those at my own residence. A perfect desolation existed, where cheerfulness, and industry, once enlivened both master and slave. A days ride from this place brought me on the track of Sherman's march. I am told General that you commanded a wing of that Grand Army. It may therefore be superfluous for me to tell you that I saw all the evidence that relentless, revengeful savages, had burned and ravaged a peaceful happy people, all to satiate an envious thirst. I saw through two entire days rides nothing but chimneys erect and alone, buildings burned, all burned. And you tell me to pray for such enemies? My poor human nature

revolts at the thought.

I visited Beaufort & Hilton Head where my people (175) had been forcibly carried. I left them on the 15th Jany well supplied for a year or two. Their houses were as comfortable as my own. With blankets and clothes such as the times could afford, in abundance - all, all, had been taken from them, and they were forced to leave their home. I found some of them in and near Beaufort, but the most of them at Hilton Head. Some were so haggard from care and want that I did not know them. All approached me, and greeted me most kindly. They informed me that they were living in earth huts; a contrast to their roomy wooden houses. They told me that the very poor land assigned to them, had not enabled them to make provisions but for a few months, with some not to carry them the winter. They told me that in instances where the white Yankees had in a measure <[ink blot]> their labour they were stimulated more to make cotton wherewith to traffick. I found them all anxious to return to their old homes. As most of them had grown up under me, and the right of property no longer existed between us, I claim that a disinterested impulse prompted me to advance their purpose. Accordingly I applied to the agent at Beaufort, Mr Judd, representing to him the circumstances under which these people had been removed from the mainland. That they had been forcibly taken from their homes in <Felytash>, and were obliged to leave their provisions, clothes, and comfortable houses. That they were now anxious to return with the little provisions they had made, and to prepare for a better crop the next year, and to occupy their comfortable homes, all of which had not been burned. He was told I had not the means to assist them.

In answer to the reasonable request that he would afford me the use of Flats for the removal, was, that he had none, and did not consider himself responsible to aid in their removal although he had granted it to others. Baffled at this point, I hastened to Hilton Head, and applied to Captain Morford at that Post to grant me transportation by steamer or otherwise to remove those suffering people, representing a steamer might go, and return in two days. The answer was even more repulsive from the other. In perfect despondency I was obliged to leave the people to fight their own battles with their <>. Arrived at Savannah I represented the matter to Col. Sickles for his opinion, relating to him all the circumstances of their removal. He sustained the other officials in their decision. Consequently I now appeal to you, the highest authority, to fulfill the assurance you have made to the Freedmen that you are their best friend.

At Beaufort I found the Negroes all quite civil, and all greeting the arrival of their old masters; but none of them were willing to contract for work the next year; at least not before the 1st Jany, when, or before, they were expecting some event. All were more desirous to plant their own crop, and as they chose. They seemed still to expect that lands were to be apportioned to them. They had phantoms of 10 & 40 acre in their conception. The order of the 19th Oct Circular No. 5 had not been promulgated to them. Many of our Planters willing & anxiously waiting, under all the discouraging circumstances to embark under the new order of things, are repulsed at every point. No labourers are to be had, and no security that if contracts are made, that labour will be enforced. And so it is wherever I have seen or heard from. Our country is paralyzed, and our people disheartened - desperate. If the planters are not prepared for actual work by the 1st of Jany, it will be a hopeless attempt for any but a very small crop. The vandal host having burned every house on the plantations. The earth remains only because they could not destroy or consume that also. More Hellish friends ever invaded any country; and all for that envious hatred, for reason that we were superior. Now that the deed is done, we can discover that there is a desire on the part of those in authority to shift the responsibility of those famished on their old masters, who can ill afford to support them although the feeling is strong to do so. I submitted to Mr Judd the following question - suppose as an extreme alternative, a planter, for want of means to hire & support the freedmen, is obliged to engage with them for the hire of his land, to take a certain amount of the product and when the period arrives to be paid, no more than the quantity agreed on has been made. How am I to be paid? Take what you can find, was the answer. What? Take all? He will starve. Yes take all, he will then learn that he must work. It gave me an opening for remarks, but I refrained.

From what I observed while at Beaufort, I am induced to think that Mr Judd, with the shop-keepers generally in the town, are most thrifty cotton-dealers and I am credibly informed that the freedmen are duped and cheated in every possible manner and all by Northern traders. But that the carcas is nearly consumed, and the vultures are about to leave.

In its place I omitted to give you the evidences how many have suffered. Will it surprise to tell you that in 7 months from the 15th Jany 15 percent of mine had died. And I can tell you of an instance of much greater mortality on the Ogeechee river Geo., where on a formerly well conducted plantation 158 negroes had died out of 340, and that in nine months. I think Gen. that I am not far from the fact when I assert that they are a doomed people. Thank God he has not made us the instruments of such cruelty with the hypocrisy attendant. In his omnipotence he has ordained that a people should be trained for such a work. We thank him that our portion with that unfortunate race is evidence we were unsuitable for such a purpose.

I am informed that there are instances where you have addressed the Freedmen & given them advice. That shoulder strapped stependiaris have followed in your track, to undo your work. Can we doubt the motive of such men? It is no wonder that you advise the continuance of the Bureau, when such officials are the assistants.

I need not repeat to you how completely private as well as public property has been destroyed.

But I will point to the imperishable mounds of earth which have been fortified for the defence of our beloved country. They can never be leveled with my consent. Let them remain as memorials, confirm history and tradition. That when "slavery was killed there liberty was buried <... willow [torn page]> now rooted and nourished <by ... [torn page]> thousands of our Martyrs - flourish. Although <> has assumed the ground where the laurel once <lived> & bloomed, in its turn it will again yield to the <adored> emblem, and may that period be not far distant.

If you ever take the trouble to read what I have written, I trust General that you will make me some acknowledgment, if it is only in <a few> lines. I have the kindest feelings towards your cause I believe that you are sincere & honest, but <.ionary>, excuse me for the freedom of the expression.

But if I am in any-way persecuted for this effusion, you may be certain that no one will more cheerfully suffer and even die for our cause than I shall. Even Stephen in all his Glory did not eclipse me.

I have the honor to be
Yours respectfully
Wm Heyward
Of South Carolina

[Written sideways on the last page in a different hand.]

Augusta Georgia
December 15th 1865
William Heyward
of South Carolina

Enunciates extreme Southern opinions with reference to the political questions of the day, and the status <and> prospects of the <Negro> people.

[Stamp] BUREAU R.F.&A.L. WASHINGTON RECD DEC 20 1865