FREEDMEN'S WORK IN VIRGINIA.

[The following interesting report of the operations among the freedmen at Portsmouth, Va., is from one of the teachers of the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association:]

With reference to my mission to the South, I will speak first of the school with which I was connected.

I reached Portsmouth, Va., the 29th of November last. On entering the school I found 225 pupils and one teacher.

A lady from New Hampshire (who was commencing her second year) had opened the school. Was holding this mass of children together, and for six weeks had been carefully begging for her salary. A Boston lady and myself had made our bargains, arrangements to go to her relief, but neither of us was able to leave home until the first of November.

This teacher from over effort and anxiety lost her should not reach her at all, here at the beginning of her labors. She was thoroughly tired out, and scarcely rallied from her fatigue through the whole winter. After three of us were ready for work we divided the school into three grades. I took the middle division. We gave the pupils of an interesting age, ranging from 8 to 16, with the same diversity in their ability to learn that you would find among children in Northern schools. Many of them showed upon their studies and kept up their interest with an earnest enthusiasm. I never made it a pleasure to be their instructor; others were indolent, and required constant urging to make them keep up with their classes. The discipline of the school was a severe tax upon my strength.

There is a kind of rough and tumble animal life about these children, which is difficult for the burden of their stories would be something like this. They had had years of toil on a distant plantation, their children had all been sold South; they had prayed year after year to be delivered from their bondage; finally the war came, and then the proclamation of freedom. With broken shackles and with great joy they came within lines of the Union army, they left their owners and came into town, but the younger, strongest people took all the world, and they, old and feeble, had no one to help them. The consequence, broken, still bound and fettered these poor creatures, so that the government should take them long to them. Yet they will always say, with exclamation, "Yes, for me, bless the Lord for that."

I shall never forget old Aunt Charlotte, to whom permit me to give an introduction. She came to our house on a cold winter's day, and asked for help; I, being at liberty, went to attend to her wants.

She at first interested me; the way she sat in her chair, her whole manner and her style of talking reminded one of the "old mistress" of the South." She had a little, shrivled face that wore an expression of earnestness and suffering. About her delicate person she wore two or three middle wrappings, that hung in such grotesque style that I wished some artist could place her picture on canvass. Our servant gave me an introduction, adding she was a nice old lady. I said: Well, Aunt Charlotte, what do you need? where do you live? and how do you take care of yourself?

She told her story with such an air of truthfulness that it forbade all questioning and won my fullest confidence. She lived alone in a Southern kitchen—the room was very open and cold. She thought the people did not value her very highly, for they had never called upon her for rent. She had her little time with broken bone fever, and had suffered greatly from cold and hunger."

From a box of clothing sent me by Philadelphia friends, I gave her some things that she needed—then wrote a note to Major Remington, of the Freedman's Bureau, asking for rations, which were duly granted. This was more than the old woman could stand, she felt she could never express sufficient gratitude. She would call at the house, and always repeat the same thing: "I'm warm now, and always have something in my house to eat. I could not do for myself. I hope I shall get stronger now; then I can work and pay for my fire."

I learned that she had been the house servant of a military officer's family, that her mistress's children were dead, and now, as she could see to do service to the teachers, they had no interest in her; that her only boy had been sold away years ago, but her husband, while living had managed to earn enough to support them comfortably, but that she never saw him after leaving her old cabin home, with most other slaves of her mistress. This wrong is the representative of a class whom we tried to comfort and help, though their future looked so dark to us as it did to them. They are persons who have borne the heat and burden of slavery—their spirits have been crushed into a sort of mute endurance, and their faces wear an expression of meek resignation, or rather hope long deferred. Their "promised land" is not of earth—they trust that they will be released from their, while generations have passed away—you may have some faint conception of the deprivation and wrong which these people have suffered.

The colored people seem to accept the missionary teachers as their divinely appointed instructors and helpers, hence they feel the greatest freedom in calling for their wants of our school, as their cases may demand.

The government imposed quite a tax upon us by way of writing "ration papers." The winter was hard, labor was very scarce, and money still. The government, to meet the needs of the old and sick, issued rations, commencing at part of the winter and spring; requiring of the applicant a paper from the teacher, certifying that they were needy and worthy of government aid. This, of course, involved a good deal of investigation upon our part. To make an intelligent inspection, for the applicants were not only those who needed help, but we were beset by the indolent and avaricious, who would come with their smooth stories of poverty, wishing to support a family of children to support, so that it required patience and wisdom to know just how to deal with all these different cases.

I do not think, however, the colored people are any more given to deception in this particular than any other class in a similar condition. Those who have to do with benevolent societies know that you have to be on your guard, for you have it everywhere; it only proves the one nature running through the whole human family. As we had time and strength, we visited among the poor and sick, and, as far as we could, relieved their necessities. Many and yet interesting histories have grown up by this class as a result of the burden of their stories would be something like this. They had had years of toil on a distant plantation, their children had all been sold South; they had prayed year after year to be delivered from their bondage; finally the war came, and then the proclamation of freedom. With broken shackles and with great joy they came within lines of the Union army, they left their owners and came into town, but the younger, strongest people took all the world, and they, old and feeble, had no one to help them. The consequence, broken, still bound and fettered these poor creatures, so that the government should take them long to them. Yet they will always say, with exclamation, "Yes