

Freedmen and Union Refugees Department of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair.

Contributors

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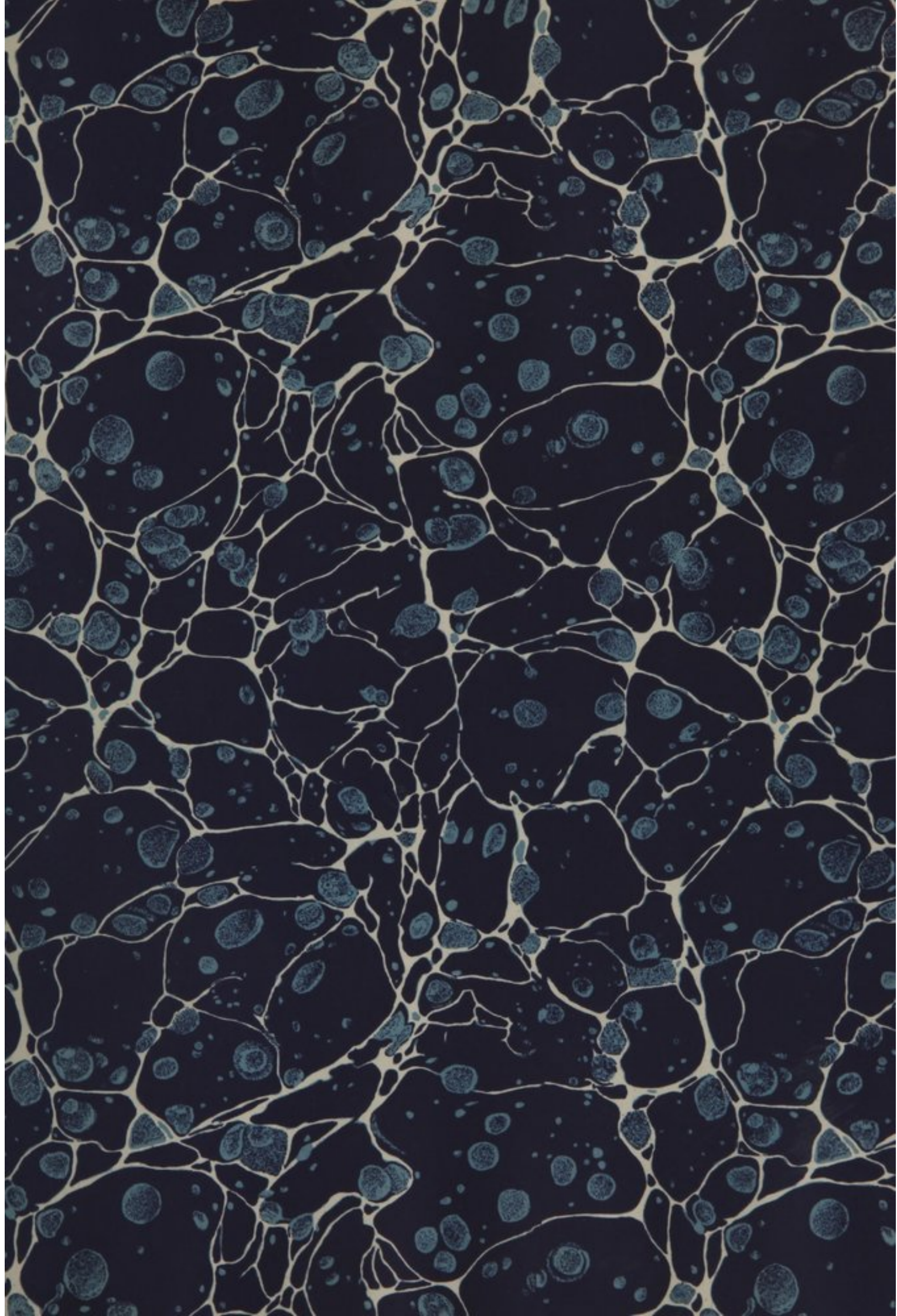
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Mar. 17, 1864

FREEDMEN AND UNION REFUGEES' DEPARTMENT

OF THE

Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair.

The object of this special department is to provide means for supplying the wants of those large numbers of persons whom the military measures of the Government have made free, but who are, for the present, homeless and destitute; and for the Union people whom the rebellion has driven from their homes. Our armies are largely re-enforced by enlistments from among the freed men, but considerable numbers of the men who offer themselves are rejected by the medical examiners, as physically unfit for the service, and very large numbers of women and children are left without any adequate provision.

The policy of the Government in the treatment of these people is humane. Officers are appointed to have supervision of the camps and places in which they are gathered; encouragement is rendered to all who are able to find employment as servants or laborers; and in the south, an extensive system of employing them on the "abandoned plantations" has been inaugurated. It is not to be expected that all these arrangements can be worked so perfectly that there will not be much suffering and destitution to be relieved by voluntary charity. So our Western Sanitary Commission have found; and, with characteristic humanity, they have promptly undertaken this necessary work. They have agencies already established, through which they have so beneficently ministered to the soldiers; they have the confidence of the military authorities; they have full knowledge of routes, of localities, and of the most economical and expeditious methods of conveyance and disbursement; they are men of tried and approved fidelity, humanity, and wisdom. It is difficult to see how those humane persons who desire to contribute to the relief and improvement of the freed people, can entrust their gifts to a safer or better management.

It should be understood that the measures supervised by the Western Sanitary Commission, embrace not simply the supply of the present bodily wants of these people, but the maintenance of schools, the encouragement and assistance (which they so much need) to decent and virtuous family arrangements, and whatever is practicable, that tends to their advancement in civilization, and in fitness for the enjoyment of liberty, with advantage to themselves and safety to the community.

For the "Union refugees," it would seem that no other plea can be needed, than the simple statement that they have been deprived of all their property, and been driven from their homes, simply because they would not be rebels. We have all had to make sacrifices in this war for the Union, but what possible sacrifices can we have made, whose homes remain to us, which deserve to be mentioned in comparison with those which have fallen to the lot of these impoverished and homeless Union refugees.

It was a happy suggestion to the executive committee of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair, to institute a department through which provision could be made for these two classes of sufferers, in connection with the provision which we all love to make for the sick and wounded of the republic, and most properly did the executive committee unanimously adopt the suggestion.

The special committee having charge of this department have issued a circular, which we publish below, and we respectfully and earnestly request the publishers of papers friendly to these objects to copy the circular, and so much of this appeal as may be convenient, and to commend the enterprise to the favorable consideration of their readers.

It should be noticed that this is, so far as known, the only one of the great Sanitary Fairs which has instituted a department of this kind. Those, therefore, who have opportunity to con-

tribute for the relief of soldiers through other Fairs may find this the available channel of their charities towards freedmen and Union refugees. We earnestly entreat all to whom these words may come to take prompt measures to render such assistance as they can to this unique and interesting enterprise.

FREEDMEN'S AND UNION REFUGEES' DEPARTMENT
OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY SANITARY FAIR.
(Circular.)

St. Louis, Mo., March 17, 1864.

The war for the Union has shaken the prison of slavery to its foundations, and is demolishing it utterly. Many millions of slaves are liberated. The nation has accepted the able-bodied men among them as soldiers, and they are surpassing all expectations by their good conduct. The families of these accepted defenders of the Republic are homeless; are unused to the responsibilities of freedom; are destitute of all things. They must be fed; they must be protected, instructed and as rapidly as possible guided to positions of self support, and taught the methods, the moralities and the happiness of virtuous homes. For the time being, large sums of money and much benevolent labor are needful for these ends. Voluntary associations have been organized, and have earnestly and harmoniously co-operated in this work. Such are the Freedmen's Aid Society of St. Louis; (at first called the Contraband Relief Society) the Freedmen's Aid Society, of Cincinnati, and similar associations at the East.

The Western Sanitary Commission, in the prosecution of its noble work for the army and navy, has been brought in direct contact with the multitudes of freed people who have taken refuge within our army lines, and has provisionally found a way to act most efficiently and comprehensively in co-operation with the Government and with the voluntary associations, for the benefit of these poor people. The President of that Commission, James E. Yeatman, Esq., has lately made investigations, and has aided the officers of Government in the improvement of its methods for employing, protecting and elevating the freed people, which are engaging the interested attention of the benevolent in all the land.

There are also thousands of homeless whites, made so by the rebellion. These Union refugees are in great numbers, and in utter destitution, at different places within our army lines, especially in St. Louis. They have come from Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, and many of them have endured hardships almost incredible in escaping from the homes out of which they have been driven because they hated treason and were hated by traitors. Great numbers of this unfortunate class of loyal citizens have been clothed, fed, sheltered and forwarded to their friends in the loyal States, or returned to their homes as our military lines have been extended. In this work the Commission have acted partly as agents of the Government, and partly with funds entrusted to them for such uses. The demand for aid to the Union refugees will be necessarily of short duration; and if the freed people are but treated with justice, generosity will not long be needed. But for the current year, during the transition period, there is more than enough to do, and all the funds that the largest philanthropy can spare will find profitable employment in elevating four millions of slaves to the condition of freemen, all the zeal and liberality of a carismatic community will find room to work. These statements are made to show that this special department of relief has a legitimate place in the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair.

By unanimous consent of its Executive Committee a special department has been assigned to the interests of freedmen and Union refugees, and a committee has been appointed to take charge of this department, in the reception and disposal of goods, and for all other purposes connected with it in the conduct of the Fair. Contributions of money, of articles for sale in the Fair and of such as can be directly used, are most earnestly solicited.

All packages must be specially directed to "The Freedmen's and Union Refugees' Department of the Mississippi Valley Sanitary Fair," and donors will be careful to designate clearly whether their contributions are "for freedmen" or "for refugees," or for both, at the discretion of the Western Sanitary Commission. All contributions will be secretly appropriated to the object indicated.

COMMITTEE.

Gentlemen—Rev. H. A. Nelson, D. D., Rev. Henry Cox, Rev. Wm. G. Elliott, D. D., Rev. W. H. Corkhill, Rev. T. M. Post, D. D., Rev. G. Anderson, Wm. King, A. J. Conant, Jas. E. Yeatman, Brig. Gen. W. A. Pilo, Hon. F. A. Dick, Lucien Eaton, W. C. Welox, J. H. Parker.
Ladies—Mrs. U. S. Fisk, Mrs. Lucien Eaton, Mrs. Henry Johnson, Mrs. G. C. Bailey, Mrs. H. A. Nelson, Mrs. H. Kennedy, Miss A. S. Forbes, Mrs. Haussier, Mrs. Crawshaw, Mrs. J. H. Parker, Mrs. Wells, Mrs. Washington King, Mrs. W. T. Hazard, Mrs. Esos Clarke, Mrs. Truman Woodruff, Miss L. P. Allen, Mrs. Wm. McKee, Mrs. L. Braxton, Mrs. N. Stephens, Mrs. J. S. Thomas, Mrs. Goodidge, Mrs. Dr. Hester.

NOTE—All goods and packages, of whatever kind should be distinctly marked with the name of the donor and place from which sent, and directed James E. Yeatman, St. Louis, Mo. (For M. V. S. Fair, F. & U. R. Department) And bill of lading or other proper notice should, at the same time, be sent by mail to Major Alfred Mackay, Corresponding Secretary, &c., St. Louis, Mo., Committee Rooms, No. 10 Leaden Hotel.

Donations of money are specially solicited, and should be sent by mail or express to Samuel Copp, Jr., Treasurer, &c., St. Louis with specific directions for F. & U. R. Department.

N. B. This is believed to be the only fair which has such a department.

