

The legitimate consequence of all these unjustifiable acts is plainly seen in the very small number of votes cast at the last election—in most of the counties not more than one-half of the legal votes were polled, and in some it is believed even a less number. The large bodies of soldiers which were everywhere distributed throughout the State—their appearance and conduct at the polls, the violent arrests of the judges of election, the threatened arrest of others, were well calculated if not designed to intimidate the less bold, and to keep at home the weak, the old and the infirm, and that large and respectable class of voters who study to be quiet and seek to avoid all places where violence or force may be apprehended. Under all these scenes of violence and outrage, and for which there can be no palliation, much less justification, upon the dearest rights of freemen, it speaks loudly in favor of the undoubted loyalty and law-abiding character of the citizens of the State that not one instance of violence or breach of the peace occurred in any precinct of a county, upon rights disregarded and trodden down.

As long as the ballot-box shall be kept pure and free and the constitutional rights of the citizens respected, there is little danger that the institutions of the State will be assailed and “public enemies foisted into power;” but nothing can so speedily insure the downfall of the republic and make the people the slaves of power as the corruption of these privileges, their legitimate exercise trenched upon and invaded, the public will overthrown, and the State made an easy prey to some despot, military or otherwise, who upon the ruins of the Constitution will erect a power from which must issue the edicts of a tyrant.

In portions of our State where this unjust military power has been fiercely exercised, as has been well and appropriately announced by the Governor, “martial law had never been proclaimed,” and the citizens were peacefully following their usual avocations and discharging their duties to their common country, and living in the constant acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Constitution of the United States and the laws thereof, ready and willing at all times to support and defend the same against all invasion, foreign or domestic.

These acts of which your committee have complained, and which merit the condemnation and reprobation of all good citizens, have now passed, and for the honor of the State it is to be hoped will never again be revived. Their repetition could never be sanctioned by the virtuous and the good, and could only endanger the peace and safety of society, and might lead to scenes of violence and bloodshed.