

In the absence of any order from any Department of the Government, which, to my knowledge, assumes to justify such action under any statutory enactment, it is not perhaps proper for me to enter into the discussion of such authority; I cannot, however, forbear the suggestion, that if such power is conferred by any act of the 37th Congress, as some have asserted, then it is being executed here with less regard to the interests of a State that has stood steadfastly by the Government, than has been observed towards others that have been the most conspicuous in the Rebellion.

When your Excellency, by your Proclamation of the 1st of January last, declared the slaves of the States then in Rebellion free, you took the very proper precaution to advise the citizens of those States, by another Proclamation a hundred days before, of the act you contemplated; you not only gave them this timely notice, but you therein announced the purpose of indemnifying even in these rebellious States, all loyal owners who were to be deprived of their slaves; and you manifested a proper regard for the interests of industry by strongly recommending to the slaves so liberated, to continue in all cases when allowed, to labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

You also took the precaution particularly to call attention to, and set forth at length in the first of your said Proclamations, the 9th and 10th sections of the Act of Congress, of 17th July, 1862, which provides for the freedom of certain classes of slaves belonging to citizens engaged in the Rebellion or aiding and assisting it; and if the very succeeding section of the same Act conferred, as some contend, the power to enlist the slaves in loyal States and of loyal citizens, or that power had been created by any other Act—which, for all practical purposes, is equivalent to the emancipation of those enlisted—it is but fair to presume that such a power should not have been set in motion, without at least calling similar attention to its existence and the purpose of enforcing it. But without any such notice, or a notice of any kind, and after the free laborers of the State engaged to such an extent as volunteers in the country's service have left our community almost destitute of agricultural labor, the practice to which I refer is fast stripping it of the little that is left.