

the slaves that such a force with all the vigilance it could reasonably exercise, could reclaim or prevent from escaping. This perhaps would not of itself be a controlling consideration; but there are others connected with it which would seem to render such a proceeding on my part highly inexpedient. To suppress the evils to which these Resolutions point, by means of a force of the kind referred to, organized by the Executive, that force must not only be formidable in numbers, but, — as your Committee admitted — must be adequately armed, & there is every reason to fear that the employment of such a force of that character under the circumstances of excitement said to exist already in that portion of the State, would in all probability provoke serious collisions, and result in still more serious calamities. Your own Resolutions seem to contemplate some such results when they declare that "the people of said Counties are practically prevented from protecting themselves by lawful patrols because bodies of Federal soldiers occupy the termini of the roads leading into said District and threaten to prevent any interference with said escaping slaves".

You may possibly suggest in reply to this, that there would be less probability of such threatened interference with a force organized under competent public authority than towards individuals however numerous combined: This is by no means certain, but if it be, your own County authorities possess ample power in the premises. The Sheriff of the County is invested not only with authority but it is his duty where the peace of the Community is disturbed or likely to be by such proceedings as your resolutions contemplate, to take measures to provide against them, and to which end he is armed with ample authority even to the calling out of the entire power of the County. He too is on the spot, with opportunity of observing the character and extent of the apprehended disturbances and better informed than I can possibly be of the degree of force necessary to quell them.

There is still another consideration which has its influence in determining me to decline proceeding as you request, and that is that it would be calculated most injuriously to augment excitement upon a subject, the agitation of which notwithstanding the calamities in which similar agitations have already involved us, seems still to be the favorite policy of political fanatics on each side of the question. Whilst the act emancipating the slaves in the District, to the passage of which your resolutions point as the source of the present discontent among your slaves, was pending before Congress, no one deprecated its passage more earnestly than I did — or felt more provoked and indignant at the selfish and incendiary course of those, who at the very moment when the Nation is struggling for its existence, and all its energies should be concentrated to that end, have persisted in this