

wanton violence to the feelings of the border states, and in hurling this firebrand among those of their citizens who have that end chiefly at heart — So long as there was an apparent possibility of preventing the passage of that act, I repeat, that I never hesitated to denounce it as a measure in every respect to be reprobated; but so far as legislation is concerned, emancipation in the District is an accomplished fact, and the further agitation of the subject at this time leads to nothing but an aggravation of every evil it may be calculated to inflict — I am aware, Sir that in presenting these Resolutions you disclaimed the influence of any political purpose in the action which you requested at my hands, nor would I by any means be understood as questioning at all the sincerity of that disclaimer; but at the same time, I can not shut my eyes to the fact, that honest and sincere as may be your own motive and those you more particularly represent, in looking only to the proper exercise of your right of property, there is still another class in the Community quite as numerous at least, who apprehend no such loss of their property, a majority of whom possess no such property, nor feel the slightest concern at any peril supposed to threaten it, and who are yet by far the most clamorous of all in the display of a factitious indignation —

That class is composed of men who for a year past have been as ingenious as vigilant in the invention or suggestion of every device calculated to weaken the hands of the Government in the National struggle in which it has been engaged — and I feel assured that so far from feeling apprehension or alarm at the passage of the District law, the most inveterate abolitionist in Congress was not more delighted than they at such a result — They welcomed it as furnishing another opportunity in the border states of fostering a spirit of discontent, and promoting rebellious designs by the introduction of a new disguise.

Such men desire nothing so much as an inordinate agitation of this subject — no matter with what evils national or individual such agitation may be fraught — Among the evils of such an agitation in an individual point of view none are more manifest, as it seems to me than its probable effect upon the slaves themselves — The course which the discussion of this subject has taken has been well calculated already to impress upon their minds the belief that the effect of the act was to secure freedom to every one who could find his way to the District, and such a misconception of the purpose of the act, occasioned chiefly by the exaggerated accounts of it put afloat principally by the class just referred to, has perhaps done as much as any thing else in augmenting the number of slaves now leaving the neighboring Counties —

Any extraordinary means taken by me to prevent their egress from the State, whilst it must necessarily fail to a great extent in arresting those who have made up their minds to escape, would tend still further to confirm