

their conviction that all that is necessary to secure their freedom is to cross the District line.

Looking at the subject therefore in every possible aspect in which I have been able to regard it, whether as it concerns the public weal or the individual interest of the slave owner, I feel constrained to differ with you as to the expediency of the course suggested in the first of your Resolutions.

In regard to the request contained in the second, that I would "protest to the Federal authorities against the aforementioned illegal and unconstitutional action of the Federal officers and soldiers &c." I had already taken measures to call the subject to the attention of the Government in the manner that seemed to me best calculated to subserve the interest of the slave owner. About a week before your Committee waited on me, the report reached me to which your resolutions advert - that the Marshal of the District of Columbia had refused to execute process for the arrest of fugitive slaves, under an order from the Government, upon the ground that the fugitive slave law was not applicable to the District - I immediately addressed a letter to the Attorney General, calling his attention to that rumor, deprecating such a proceeding by the Administration, as calculated to excite the just alarm of our people and at war with the construction they had always placed upon that law - and asked that if any such construction had been given to the fugitive slave law, and any such order issued, that it might at least be suspended until the question could be brought before the proper tribunals and the construction of the law judicially settled; intending if such were the fact to immediately employ Counsel on the part of the State to try such case.

The copy of that letter and of Mr. Bates' reply was shown to your Committee, in which you will remember that he declares that he had never heard of any such order given by any one connected with the Government and as the Marshal of the District was placed by Act of Congress directly under the supervision of his office he thought it very improbable that such an order had been given without his knowledge.

I felt satisfied therefore and so stated to your Committee that the supposed interference by the President with the service of such process by the Marshal had originated in some misunderstanding and that the principal source of your alarm was therefore causeless - From some circumstances however in the knowledge of some of your Committee, you took a different view of it, and I then promised that I would go to Washington the following day, and as the best means of promoting the objects of your Committee would have an interview with the President, ascertain the facts of the case, and so far as assurances I could receive calculated to allay the apprehensions of yourself and your friends and communicate them to you on my return - I went accordingly the next day to Washington, and though I saw the President for a few moments he was so engrossed by pressing engagements at the time, that it was