

Even in cases of Pardon I never grant one unless I can set out on its face facts or circumstances in justification of the proceeding — You will therefore I think understand why I do not deem it expedient to exercise the Executive Prerogative in this case —

The parties as I learn from the papers are imprisoned upon a charge of assisting slaves to escape — an offence which whilst in one view of the case is less important than formerly, has been of late so frequently committed, that to interfere in one case would call for a similar interposition in all or give cause for just complaint — In fact neither these men themselves nor any friends for them have yet sought at my hands any interposition in their behalf — I have nevertheless — to meet as fully as I could what seemed to be your desire, that the Civil Authorities should procure their discharge — made the only suggestion that seemed to me expedient for that purpose, and I would here repeat what I believe I substantially stated in my last letter to you — that on the day I wrote to you, I wrote also at large to the States Attorney of Charles County advising him of the action of the War Department and of what might be its result — I strongly advised him so to act as to avoid all collision between the Civil Authorities and the Military, and urged the expediency, if it could be done lawfully, of discharging these prisoners. I requested him therefore to examine the causes of Commitment — if he found that the offence was not distinctly or sufficiently stated, or the warrant not issued by a Magistrate having proper jurisdiction, to at once discharge the prisoners; but if every thing was lawfully done, and the parties stood committed by proper authority for an offence distinctly charged, so that he could not lawfully direct their release, then to fix a moderate amount for their Bail, and release them as soon as it was given —

I have not yet heard from the States Attorney in reply but have reason to hope that these prisoners will be soon released by one or other of these means — if however this will not suffice and the War Department claims the right to release them by Military force, I can only say that it will be the exercise of a power which it is useless for the State Authorities to discuss, and worse than useless of course for them to attempt to resist —

The papers you enclosed me, and copies of which I have taken I herewith return,

and am Sir, very truly

I respectfully Yours &c

A. W. Bradford