Selma Mch 14th/63

His Excy Gov Jno Gill Shorter

Dear Sir.

I have just received yours of the 12th inst enclosing Col W M Brooks complaint for the taking of Mrs M A Tarrants hands. I am surprised at the statements made, as they were most certainly exaggerated, to Col Brooks. However I will state the facts and the duplicate receipt will show, which are thus. Mrs M A Tarrants tax list shows a return of 60 slaves. Mr John Mosely Supt Agt went two or three times to Mrs T. plantation and notified her ~~hands~~ to send hands to work on the defences. This he or she failed to do each time, and on one occasion he (Mosely) was necessitated to go out and get others to supply their place, as it was windisig up of a requisition and we wished to get off all at the one time. Again, it was too far out to the plantation, say about 23 miles, to act promptly. In the call for 180 hands for Mobile was one of the times she was notified to send two hands, which she failed to do. We were scarcely through this requisition when we received the one for 230 hands more. Mr Mosely then notified me and as Sheriff I went to the plantation with a Posse ~~comm~~ summoned for the purpose and took four slaves to fill the notice of Mr Mosely according to law, and according to the rates of what we were assessing others it required one more making five in all. The day was rainy and disagreable, the roads muddy and a part prairie and as others were sending their hands on waggons to Cahaba and as their waggon was already hitched up engaged in hauling wood, and I could not think of making them walk. I required their waggon to take them their provisions, clothing, bed clothes &c to Cahaba

and sent it back - June 2 did not find any white person on the place but I found her old trusty colored man, who had control and management of the place and who refused to let me have provisions for the negroes - This was on Friday noon the 6th, their weeks allowance being issued on Saturday the next day. To take off the slaves without any meat having your last order with me, I thought would not do - The old negro man proposed to rip a strip on the smoke house which he, as he said, had done before to save it from burning down and in the presence of the Posse I weighed out the amount necessary and renailed up the strip, took them to and arriving in Cahaba the next day Saturday, together with Mr Mosely sent the five hands to Mobile with a large gang shipped at the same time and sent the waggon, team and driver back home - I left on the plantation some 5 or 6 men ~~more~~ or perhaps more, several of the Posse are well acquainted with the plantation and negroes - There was considerable complaint that Mrs Tarrant would not send hands to assist -

I think I hardly need say to your Excy that Mr Mosely and myself have labored hard to distribute the burden of supplying hands as equally as possible amongst all - In fact in order to do this it has taken time, and a great deal of riding through all weather -

The adjoining plantation alluded to must be that of Mr Canal and Lumpkin - They are new comers and consequently their names do not appear upon the tax list - When I called at that plantation the overseer only gave me 57 slaves and I required 3 from him which he promptly furnished - Another adjoining plantation is that of J B Haverlis tax list returns 49 slaves and he has furnished 4 - I could go on and state others in the

same ratio.

Now if Mrs Tarrant had ever sent any hands to work on the defences, neither Mr Mosley or myself have any evidence of the fact. It would have been very easy for her or her overseer to have made affidavit and given it to us and we would certainly have credited her for what she furnished - but let her neighbours speak about that - they know. I regret that Col Brooks deems this impressment "unjust and wicked" - If so, I have treated many others in the same way though I have the proud satisfaction of knowing that this is the only case that needed a Posse, Tme, I have summoned others but the necessity arose from a misunderstanding and not wishing to do ~~any~~ one injustice I have been able to rectify and correct matters - Mr Mosely and myself have endeavoured to discharge our duties faithfully and impartially and Mrs M A Tarrant has no right to complain - She is better able to send hands to work on the defences than many others who have sent - and many widow women at that have sent cheerfully without a murmur and who did not own as many slaves as she does -

I am truly in hopes that you have made the last call you will have to make - We are heartily tired of the office -

With great respect I am
Yo Excy's Most Obdt Servt
"Signed" J W Harrison -

P.S. I expect to visit Montgomery in a short time and will see your Excellency.