

Patrol.

We have heard among our citizens of late much complaint, in regard to the unlicensed conduct of our slave population, and have been frequently asked "do our statute books contain any patrol law, and if they do, why is it not enforced by our officers?"

By the acts of 1846 and 1850, which are now in operation, it is made the duty of the county court of every county, upon application, when necessary, to appoint a patrol detachment, to consist of one captain and not more than five privates, nor less than three, for each district or company division in the county. These detachments are by the acts mentioned, invested with ample powers to prevent unauthorized conduct on the part of slaves, and to apprehend all white persons who may be found in any assemblage of slaves, or about any negro quarter, as sociating with, or participating in common with the slaves of such assemblage, or quarter, in amusements or associations, without the permission of the masters or owners of such slaves.

We have also in force a city ordinance, which makes it the duty of our city Marshal to inflict punishment on those slaves who shall be found out of their proper quarters after 9 o'clock at night.

We are advised that notwithstanding, in most of the counties in our State, the act of 1846, referred to, which provides for the appointment of patrols, has never been enforced on account of its unfortunate connection with our ponderous militia law, which has ever since its enactment remained on our statute books a *dead letter*, our county court has upon application, ever evinced a disposition to enforce it; that the act has not been effective in consequence of the indisposition of parties to perform their duties; and that there is, at this time, no patrol detachment, because no one of our citizens has thought it necessary to make application for one.

Why the city ordinance is not enforced we know not. Our present Marshal has, during his term of office, been ever prompt in the performance of his other duties. Perhaps he has found that it is impossible for a single individual, who is not possessed of ubiquity, to render it effective.

There never was a time when, or a community in which, the rigid enforcement of the laws concerning slaves was more needed than at this time, in this city and its environs. Negroes are frequently seen strolling about our streets at all hours

of night, without license from their masters, and sometimes carrying about their persons loaded fire-arms and other deadly weapons; and they have been seen more than once, in daytime, near our corporate limits, with their pistols testing their skill as marksmen by shooting at targets. Then we have in our community not a few low, unprincipled white men, who associate almost entirely with negroes, either because they wish to effect some evil design, or because they are conscious that they do not deserve the respect of decent persons of their own color, and consequently, resort to negroism for society and sympathy.

During the last few months the negroes in and about our city, have been accustomed to assemble at periodical, unlicensed balls, some of which have been given by white persons for the purpose of speculation. These balls are, we have been informed, of a most outrageous character. They give rise to frequent combats between negroes, and are usually attended by almost as many of the class of white men mentioned as of negroes. At them it is not uncommon to see *white gentlemen* and black ladies trip it on "the light fantastic toe," together; and there is often such a mingling of "black spirits and white, red spirits and gray" that the observer almost imagines himself in the land of *amalgamation, abolition meetings, and woman's rights conventions*.

Such things are disgraceful to any community in which they are tolerated, and highly dangerous in their tendency. If they continue uninterrupted, we will ere long have a Southampton insurrection, or a general negro stampede for Mexico. It is no easy matter to estimate the bad influence a few vulgar, unprincipled white men can, in a short time exert over a large community of ignorant negroes, who, if not tampered with, would remain quiet, inoffensive and dutiful.

In view of such facts, it is the duty of those of our citizens who are interested in the prosperity of our community, to do everything which the law allows them to do, as citizens, to arrest the evils complained of; and it is their particular duty to forward the administration of our patrol laws. This last they can effect by making application to the county court for the organization of patrols, by procuring the appointment of those persons who will do their duty and by serving in person as patrol, when necessary, and it is also the duty of our city Marshal to do everything in his power to enforce properly our city ordinance.