

For the Lexington Atlas.

LEXINGTON, August 8, 1848.

Messrs. Editors:—I wish to address the public through the medium of your valuable paper, upon a subject that deeply involves the interest of this community—and which requires prompt action on the part of the citizens.

The public must be aware ere this, of the escape of fifty or sixty negroes from their masters and probably under the convey of some agents of abolitionists of Ohio. I need not go into any detailed account of the manner of their escape further than to state, that there appears, from the accounts I have been able to collect, the most admirable conduct both on the part of the abducted and abductors. There must be a feeling of the most entire security amid this community, to permit such a number of slaves to rendezvous but a few miles from this city, then to prepare a revel, startling the neighborhood with their boisterous mirth, and then quietly to proceed on their journey to Ohio. I apprehend this will not be the extent of their audacity, unless some stringent measures are employed to check them. Any one coming from Virginia or one of the Southern States would scarcely suppose, did they not know the fact, that this was a slave state, for there is no authority assumed on the part of their masters over their slaves beyond the working house of the week days; after their tasks are completed, they are permitted to stroll over the town and country as they list; nay, are even encouraged so to do, that they may be seduced for the time by strangers. Masters owe the community a duty and it should be enforced, which is, that they should look after their slaves at all times, and not permit them to depredate upon every opportunity: if they were *mulced* whenever a deprudation was committed by their slaves, it would create a species of domestic surveillance that would tend more to the cause of order and good morals than four-fold our present police force.

But to return to the "prompt action," which I spoke of recommending, it is as follows:—A county meeting should be called

and a petition framed, and issued for signatures, praying the County Court to institute an efficient country police, or patrols, as it is commonly called, for both night and day service, whose duty it should be to apprehend all idle negroes and to disperse all nocturnal gatherings of the same, for whatever purpose, and for such other duties as wiser ones may deem necessary. And also if thought expedient, to petition the Legislature for such a duty on pedlers and itinerant venders of damaged and smuggled wares as may affectually exclude them; for I am persuaded it is by these men, that our negroes are seduced, as some of them have been known to take them off in their wagons, and this very recently—besides they are nuisance to our merchants, and such a one to the country people that their dishonesty and cheatry have passed into a proverb.

These are merely suggestions, and every one you meet has some of some sort, and all acknowledge there is a necessity for something to be done. If these are not approved of, as doubtless they will not be, and merely offered to stimulate exertions. I hope some patriarchal citizen who is actuated by both benevolence and personal interest, will step forward and give the community the benefit of his influence.

I wish to assure you, Sirs, and others, that it is no want of a feeling humanity that urges me to recommend a curtailment of the privileges of our negroes, but a sense of the urgent necessity of the things, so far from this, I sirs, only desire to see them encouraged in every useful and profitable recreation; I should be the last to shut the door of the house of God upon them so long as there was a probability, or even possibility of their deriving any good by going there, and in no case would I go farther than to recommend their being closed at NIGHT: for all can have an opportunity of attending once a day, when they will hear more than they can profitably digest in a week.

I would not hesitate a moment to sign my own name to this, if I were not persuaded that my insignificance might deter some from following any suggestions from such a source, therefore I remain,

Yours respectfully,
AN HUMBLE CITIZEN.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands