

“Visit to Dred Scott - His Family - Incidents of His Life - Decision of the Supreme Court,” June 27, 1857

Content Warning: Please be aware of the use of extremely derogatory language used in this historical document below.

VISIT TO DRED SCOTT–HIS FAMILY–INCIDENTS OF HIS LIFE–DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT.

While standing in the Fair grounds at St. Louis, and engaged in conversation with a prominent citizen of that enterprising city, he suddenly asked us if we would not like to be introduced to Dred Scott. Upon expressing a desire to be thus honored, the gentleman called to an old negro who was standing near by, and our wish was gratified. Dred made a rude obeisance to our recognition, and seemed to enjoy the notice we expanded upon him. We found him on examination to be a pure-blooded African, perhaps fifty years of age, with a shrewd, intelligent, good-natured face, of rather light frame, being not more than five feet six inches high. After some general remarks we expressed a wish to get his portrait (we had made efforts before, through correspondents, and failed), and asked him if he would not go to Fitzgibbon’s gallery and have it taken. The gentleman presented explained to Dred that it was proper he should have his likeness in the “great illustrated paper of the country,” overruled his many objections, which seemed to grow out of a superstitious feeling, and he promised to be at the gallery the next day. This appointment Dred did not keep. Determined not to be foiled, we sought an interview with Mr. Crane, Dred’s lawyer, who promptly gave us a letter of introduction, explaining to Dred that it was to his advantage to have his picture taken to be engraved for our paper, and also directions where we could find his domicile. We found the place with difficulty, the streets in Dred’s neighborhood being more clearly defined in the plan of the city than on the mother earth; we finally reached a wooden house, however, protected by a balcony that answered the description. Approaching the door, we saw a smart, tidy-looking negress, perhaps thirty years of age, who, with two female assistants, was busy ironing. To our question, “Is this where Dred Scott lives?” we received, rather hesitatingly, the answer, “Yes.” Upon our asking if he was home, she said, “What white man arter dad nigger for?--why don’t white man ‘tend to his own business, and let dat nigger ‘lone? Some of dese days dey’ll steal dat nigger--dat are a fact.”