

THE FIGHT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

It was a fight between a white man and a black man, but it is well at the outset not to pin too much racial importance on the fact. The conflict was a personal one, not race with race. There are other black men who can whip other white ones, and a greater number of whites who can whip blacks. Even if it were a matter of great racial import, the whites can afford the reflection that it is at best only a triumph of brawn over brain, not of brain over brawn. The black pugilist may be able to deliver stunning blows, but the stupidest mule in Missouri can hit harder. Johnson may spar cleverly, but a kitten can feint and ward better than any man. If the white race has no greater claim to superiority than that of pugilistic fitness, the sooner it abdicates in favor of its betters the happier it will be.

Pugilism and civilization bear no direct connection, but are in inverse ratio. The Roman boxers may have been less clever than the winner of the fight at Reno; but as to taking punishment, the man who stood up against the sole-leather cestus shod with brass nails could claim superiority over any modern fighter who has yet stood in the ring. In war (a vastly higher type of conflict) there are those who consider the African fresh from the jungle the making of the best soldier in the world. But the question is, how would they fare in battle commanded by one of their own race with an army of Europeans under the leadership of Napoleon, Gen. Grant or Von Moltke.

The white man's mental supremacy is fully established, and for the present cannot be taken from him. He has arithmetic and algebra, chemistry and electricity; he has Moses, David, Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron and Burns; he has Herschel, Tyndall, Darwin and Edison, to fall back upon. His superiority does not rest on any huge bulk of muscle, but on brain development that has weighed worlds and charmed the most subtle secrets from the heart of nature.

The members of the white race who are not a disgrace to it will bear no resentment toward the black race because of this single victory in the prize ring. That would be to manifest lamentable weakness, not strength; stupid foolishness, not wisdom; a cowardly disposition, not manliness.

Let the white man who is worthy of the great inheritance won for him by his race and handed down to him by his ancestors "take his medicine" like a man. If he put his hope and the hope of his race in the white man who went into the ring, let him recognize his foolishness, and in his disappointed hope let him take up this new "white man's burden" and bear it like a man, not collapse under it like a weakling.

And now

A Word to the Black Man.

Do not point your nose too high. Do not swell your chest too much. Do not boast too loudly. Do not be puffed up. Let not your ambitions be inordinate or take a wrong direction. Let no treasured resentments rise up and spill over. Remember you have done nothing at all. You are just the same member of society today you were last week. Your place in the world is just what it was. You are on no higher plane, deserve no new consideration, and will get none. You will be treated on your personal merits in the future as in the past. No man will think a bit higher of you because your complexion is the same as that of the victor at Reno. That triumph is the personal asset of Arthur Johnson, a negro to be sure, but not the particular person who stands in your own shoes.

Remember that if it did establish the fact that, man for man all through the two races, yours was capable of being wrought into the best pugilist (which is not the case,) even then there would be no room for becoming swollen with pride. That would not justify your jumping at the very illogical conclusion that you are "on top." You are no nearer that mark than you were before the fight took place. You must depend on other influences to put your race on higher ground, and you must depend on personal achievement to put yourself on higher ground.

Never forget that in human affairs brains count for more than muscle. If you have ambition for yourself or your race, you must try for something better in development than that of the mule.

As to the white man who attempts to insult you because of the fair victory won by one of your race from one of the white race, you can well afford to ignore him and respect yourself. The fact that the man's skin is white does not make him more or less brutal or cowardly. He is no credit to the white race and would be none to any race. Such conduct is more than foolish. It is asinine. No savage fresh from the jungle could manifest more brutish traits of character than this. White men who are men worthy of the name will not join in any fresh crusade against your race, already too long and too cruelly persecuted.

Do not dwell too much on matters of race, particularly when it relates to the characteristics in which the dullest of the brute creation is superior to men of all races and colors. Think rather of your own individuality, of your personal achievements. Be ambitious for something better than the prize ring. Cultivate patience, grow in reasonableness, increase your stock of useful knowledge, try for new things which distinguish man from the beasts that perish and leave no results of their life behind them. Endurance is part of Johnson's qualities which stood him in good stead; helpfulness and good nature are others. Try to emulate this member of your race in these qualities. Their possession will do you more good and count for more in behalf of your race than it would if a black man were to "knock out" a white man every day for the next ten years.