

LIFE OF JOHNSON'S WHITE WIFE WRECKED WHEN WILLARD SMASHED NEGRO'S JAW

BY CECELIA WRIGHT KEITH

Havana, April 7.—When a woman witnesses the greatest disaster that can be—the fall of a man who for years was a leader in his profession—her thoughts naturally go to the woman most vitally interested.

So when Jack Johnson entered the ring at Miramar Monday, confident and assertive, I turned to the ringside boxes and saw the white girl who had bound up her life with that of the black—exiled by her own family, by her friends and by her country.

She is a pretty girl, perhaps a little swagger because of the boulevards of Paris and the avenues of Buenos Aires, but nevertheless she is a woman with the feelings of a woman. And in her life's crisis her own sex must reach out the hand of understanding to her.

I hold no brief for her actions in the past. I am only telling of her looks as her partner in life went into the conflict that was to change him from champion of the world to one of the heroes of the past.

Every turn in the battle was followed by this 22-year-old girl from the west. She wore the same smile that spread over the face of Johnson. Both took the battle as a jest. To them it was only another misguided white man added to the ring record of Jack.

Then, as the rounds wore on, every trick in the amazing category of the world's champion was tried, but in vain. From the smile of confidence to the strained look of worry was the transition of only a moment. At last the ebony face of Johnson began to show that he realized the battle in front of him was the acme of his career.

The face of his white wife reflected the feelings of the black fighter. In the early stages, when Johnson's confident smile presaged certain victory,

she, too, smiled with him. Then, when the battle went past the fifteenth round and Willard still was baffling the champion, Johnson's smile changed to seriousness and with the look came the strange reflection of awe into the now pale face of the girl in the ringside box.

When she was the wife of Jack Johnson, champion, she was the center of attraction. As the wife of plain Jack Johnson, dethroned negro fighter, she would be an outcast and the subject of ostracism. These thoughts, I know, ran through her mind as round by round Willard proved Johnson was not the Johnson of Reno days.

Then came the twentieth round. Into the eyes of Johnson there crept the look which shows when a man is in the last ditch—before the firing squad. Jack Johnson, master of ring craft, conqueror of Jeffries, knew his Waterloo was approaching. He was battling against his master and thinking now only of the miserable white girl who had left her own race to cast her lot with the glamour of his life. He sent for Promoter Curley.

Curley arrived at the end of the twenty-second round. Johnson leaned from his corner and whispered:

"Take my wife to the gate, Jack; I'm going fast and I don't want her to see the finish if I am to be knocked out."

When all that is said against Johnson is totalled in the ledger of life, I want to place to his credit that one act. In the dizzy avalanche of blows showered upon him by Willard his real thoughts were for his wife, and as Curley led her, downcast, discouraged and tearful, from the arena she knew the doom of her pitiful romance and sodden life had been sealed.

The end of time, for her, had arrived.