

*New York Herald*  
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*Jeffries' Silence Marks a Thinker, Says Jack London*

*His Brusqueness Not a Pose, But is Hard on the Public*

*Has No Fear of Any Stage Freight*

*Author Declares the Retiring Disposition Does Not Proceed From Shyness*

*Johnson Marked Contrast.*

*Will Lose His Smile and Bantering Manner as Soon as Fight is Well Under Way*

Certainly no hero ever cared less for adulation than does big Jim Jeffries, who of a surety bulks heroically right now in the public eye. Not only does he not care for adulation, but it seems positively to hurt him. Instead of putting up with it, he runs away from it. The presence of an admiring crowd at his training quarters usually signifies the fact that he will not make an appearance. He does not want any admiring crowd, and his delight is to trick such crowds, and put in his best licks when no one is around, and as for compliments, I know, for one, that if the spirit moved me to address a compliment to his face, it would be only after I had got my life insured and armed myself with an ax.

His brusqueness is astounding, and he is just as brusque to the Governor of a State as to the latest cub reporter away from home for the first time. I shall never forget the first time I met him. Our hands went out and clasped, and I smiled my pleasantest. "How do you do," Jeff grumbled, as if he were mad at all the world and at me especially for daring the impertinence of seeking his acquaintance. At the moment our hands gripped, he gave me a deep, solid, searching look straight in the eyes. There was no geniality in his eyes, no kindness. Instead, they seemed to smolder in a somber, resentful sort of way.

At any rate, so forbidding was his expression that speech froze on my lips. It was an awkward half minute. So taken aback was I that I could not think of a blessed thing to say, while all the time I was praying fervently for him to say something. He didn't. At the end of half a minute he abruptly turned his back to me and the conference ended. It was not until I had seen these scenes enacted with others that I came to understand, and now I take great joy in watching beaming innocent personages go up to the slaughter of an introduction with the big fellow.

Now, under the ordinary circumstances, when so received by an ordinary man one would be likely to say, "You little, insignificant snipe, who are you to treat me in this fashion?" But you don't say it to Jeff. I don't know why, unless it is that he is not little and insignificant. Also, possibly, deep down in one's subliminal self is a sudden remembrance that life is sweet and the sun good to look upon.

Now if all the foregoing were a pose on the big fighter's part, if it were a change of manner noted in recent years, the public would have some cause of complaint against his brusqueness and his fooling of audiences at the training camp. But this is no pose on his part. It has always been his way, since the first time he came into the public eye, a raw youngster of 20, down in Los Angeles. Nor does this peculiar attitude of his proceed from shyness or embarrassment.

Modest he is, and unassuming, with no touch of the braggart about him, but he is not shy. He is merely himself, with the strength of character to be himself. A peculiar character, self-granted, but still himself. In his way he is an iron man, simple and quiet and reposeful and not gregarious in a wide way. He feels no impulse to be a hale fellow well met with Tom, Dick and Harry, and he is honest enough not to simulate a feeling he does not possess. All the same, it is darned hard on the public.

It is because Jeffries is misunderstood that some of the near-thinking fight dopsters have raised a question which they fire at one unexpectedly with all the confidence that it is an unanswerable conundrum. "If he is so afraid of a crow," they say, "that he doesn't dare train before a couple of hundred spectators—well, what under the sun is he going to do when he faces 20,000 spectators the day of the fight?"

Yet the answer is simple. He has fought before some very sizable crowds ere now and he has never shown any evidences of stage fright. Another thing is that he is a thinker. A silent man is usually a thinker, and because Jeffries does not blurt out all he knows to the first chance comer is no sign that he does not know a great deal back behind those searching black eyes.

Quite in contrast is care-free, happy Jack Johnson. Nobody was ever more gregarious than he, ever happier to greet old friends and make new ones. He likes crowds, thrives upon them, and in turn does his best to give them a good time. Let him decide on a certain day that he is not going to spar, and then inform him that 200 persons have journeyed all the way out to his camp to see him work, depend upon it, Johnson simply couldn't let them go away disappointed. Out would go the word to his sparring partners, and a few minutes later he would be in the thick of a ten or twelve round exhibition.

Out at his training camp Johnson is always in the thick of things. Usually he is chief entertainer, whether in making music, playing games, presiding at mock trials or spinning yarns. And always his voice is raised to others, inviting them to kick in and have a good time.

On the Fourth these two strangely different men come together for the first time, the silent fighter and the garrulous fighter. Two things I look for from Johnson. As the fight progresses he will talk less and less, and his famous smile will fade from his lips, unless it be frozen there, for there is no doubt that this is the fight of Johnson's career, and if he is ever deadly grim and serious in his life it will be in the ring that day after the opening rounds have brought him down to brass tacks. Of Jeffries it is safe to forecast that he will be no more voluble in any round than he is in the first, and that in the first he will not utter a sound.