

THE TENNESSEE DEMONSTRATION

The race riot which occurred last week in Columbia, Tennessee has been reported in various ways in the Press of the country—some of the reports giving one version and some another. It is hoped that a thorough and objective investigation will reveal something of the real cause which led to such an outburst of lawlessness and brutality in a community that was on its way to higher levels of civilized living. Enough has happened and enough about it has come to surface to furnish the basis for at least two observations. One is that even though we are just entering what is called the Post-War world there are many, many people, and especially of the White race, who are not aware that it is a different world from what we had before World War II. And even though the same people may be living in it they are of different mind, different attitude, different determination. And this is a fact that hardly anything can change. The other observation is that there are still many White people, and especially in the South, who harbor the notion that they can "put the Negro back in his place." That is a delusion. Now of course there are many things White people in the South, and elsewhere for that matter, may do to Negroes if they are mean enough, brutal enough, because they have the numbers and the power, both economic, political and otherwise. They can maltreat, abuse and continue the effort of exploitation of the Negro. They can even lynch and burn and destroy their property and deny them their rights as citizens in a country for which they have fought, bled and died. But "putting the Negro back in his place" in the meaning of the average White man is out of the question. The Negro may at times be indiscreet and unwise and reckless. He may be even provoked to lawlessness just as others are at times. No matter what happens to him nor where it happens he is a changed individual. He may run into the fire and be burned; he may leap into the water and be drowned; he may face a mob and be shot to death; he may step into the lynchers' rope and then dangle from a tree. All of that can happen, but it will be happening with and to a new Negro. The sensible thing, then, for both races to understand is that this is a Post-War world or at least it is supposed to be—certainly it is not the same world we had. It is one that will call for new ways of doing things—new attitudes, new methods of handling interracial problems. It is a world that will call for wisdom, patience, good-will, tolerance and a determination on the part of both races to live together in a democratic atmosphere.
