

THE LESSON OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Tel est le titre d'un long et remarquable article paru dans le *Baily's Magazine of sports and pastimes*, sous la signature de M. T.h. A. Cook, le célèbre escrimeur anglais, capitaine de l'équipe qui se rendit ce printemps à Athènes. Nous en extrayons quelques passages suggestifs. M. Cook commence par rendre un juste hommage aux efforts de la British Olympic Association.

« If it had not been for the exertions of the Rev. R. S. de Courcy Laffan, and the British Olympic Council, of which Lord Desborough is President, British athletes would not have got even what little help they had. »

Il compare ensuite les deux series olympiques, celle qui devra avoir lieu à Athènes et celle dont les autres pays continueront de fournir le théâtre alternatif. « It is probable, dit-il, that the Athenian meeting will tend to become more and more local and to draw its competitors from an area within easy reach of the new railways that will soon join Greece to Europe by land. It is also probable that the meetings held elsewhere will gradually tend to absorb all other international events of which it may well be thought that there are now too many..... It sounds at first as if the yearly meetings at Athens would secure a unity of place, and a just comparison of records, which would prove a preponderant advantage, and eventually eliminate the necessity of any similar meetings elsewhere. But this is not quite true. The running-track of the Athenian stadium was certainly much better this year than it was in 1896. Yet it is far from being what an international race-course ought to be, and its four sharp corners make so cruel a demand on fast runners that good performances can never be certain..... An arena seating 60.000 spectators is, of course, a valuable asset ; but white marble is more interesting than comfortable in blinding sunshine ; and many more than 100.000 spectators have been able to enjoy the football in a final tie in our own natural amphitheatre at the Crystal Palace. »

M. Cook fait ensuite allusion à la conférence récente :

« Ideals that are far wider than would be implied by a mere contest for athletic prizes, as has only just been shown by Baron Pierre de Coubertin's meeting in the Comédie Française this May. His whole Olympic movement embraces plans for literature and art, and for an international education on the broadest physical and mental lines. »

M. Cook termine en ces termes :

« It is immensely significant that the whole Olympic movement owes its renaissance to a Frenchman, and that France is the nation which holds the best all-round record at the last games in Athens. We have had to see our pupils beat us, and we can but work our hardest to continue giving them a stubborn contest for supremacy. No friends are closer, no friendships last longer, than those made in the honest struggle for victory in manly sports. The amity of nations has been no little forwarded by the Olympic games. The dream that started them again deserves our strong support. It has already commanded our practical attention. It is now certain of a large measure of permanent success. »

