

GAME OF FITNESS

with Dr Carl Diem

The timely distance from the festivities of the XIV Olympic Games of our era allows the more essential of events to be set off more clearly than would have been possible during the overwhelming symphony of the festivities in London.

The strengthening of the Olympic idea was most marked since 1936. In spite of all the terrible happenings, by which this period was filled, the number of participating nations was increased by ten (to 59), that is to say ten new peoples have joined the ensign of occidental culture. Ten more peoples consider themselves the guardians of the Olympic flame, the youth of ten more nations belongs to the universal community of sport and during the Olympic Games sees the highest festival of sporting idealism and that all civilised nations belong to each other.

But sport has also grown mentally. The game and the deportment becomes more and more united. They just are from one school, the modern sporting school. The methods of this school are common property of such high efficacy against which purely natural talents cannot compete. They appeared less than formerly in the lists of the winners ; successful instead were the types of decathlon com-

petitors, that is to say athletes with a general training compared with those who are talented only one-sidedly. One noticed for instance such athletically trained men also amongst the most successful swimmers compared with those who knew how to be victorious up to then thanks to their « swimmer-figure ». Also the difference between the races begins to disappear and this signifies something decisive, the true fulfilment of the Olympic idea that sport is the means of working out the *all humane*.

But still more important appears to be a second event : More than ever before, this time the older competitors were victorious. This does not say that the younger ones were not there. When looking over the a Official Report » just published the open faces of young people of both sexes in the prime of life are looking at you, the 19 years old d'Oriola, the French foil fencer, Wright, the English middle-weight boxer, Dreyer, of the same age, the South African light-weight boxer, just as old and the wonderful youth, the 17 years old Matthias, the American decathlon competitor just to mention a few. They are in their young years the representatives of their generation who have taken the Olympic flame from their predecessors, in order to hand it over to future generations. But there were really extraordinary many mentioned in the lists of winners or present with successful results of an Olympic standard who also set the flame on fire at the previous or even still earlier Olympic Games and who still are in their full vigour. They are headed by the 40 years old Englishman Finlay, who took the Olympic oath in the name of the athletes of the world. He lost his chance for the final of the 110 m. hurdles by a fall, but he proved himself to be equal to the best of the world in a race requiring all youthful jumping ability. Side by side with him the Swede Lidman must be mentioned, who in 1936 finished the 110 m. hurdles in 14,4 seconds as fourth and twelve years later in 14,3 seconds as sixth. There were several such veterans in the short and long distance runs. In the 400 m. run the Englishman Roberts and the South African Shore were successful competitors of 1936 and they were as good as

any man in the intermediate heats. The winner of the 400 m. hurdles, the American Cochran carried his 32 years over the course in 52 seconds. The twice second in the 100 and 200 m. race, the American Ewell was just as old and the winner of the 10 000 m. race and the second in the 5000 m. race, the Czech Zatopek, are no longer juveniles either (26 years). The same must be said of the phenomenal double winner in modern Olympic pentathlon, in the winter and summer Games of 1948, the Swede Grut. In discus throwing the sixth of 1936, the Greek Syllas took part as well this time. In 10 km. walking the Swiss Schwab and the Norwegian Bruun were successful confirming their splendid achievement of 1936. The third in the 50 km. walking, the Englishman Johnson is 48 years old. The winner of the marathon race, the Argentine Cabrera is 29 years old, the Englishman Richards is 38 years old ; just as old in this trial of human juvenile energy is the South African Coleman who took sixth place in 1936 each time in 2 hours 36 minutes only this time with 6 seconds, he was 11 seconds quicker than 12 years ago. This achievement is a huge improvement, for the London course was more hilly and difficult than the one in Berlin. In swimming it was the Frenchman Nakache, who was this time victorious in the intermediate heat for 200 m. breast-swimming and who also distinguished himself in 1936. In gymnastics there were five successful competitors of 1936 again in the favorite class, i. e. the Finns Savelainen and Saarvalen, the Swiss Reusch, the Hungarian Mogyorossy and the American Cumiskey, to whom must be added other Olympic winners of 1936, who almost 40 years of age now still show Olympic achievements to-day without having been in London (Steffens, Schwarzmann, Konr. Frey, Stadel, Stange). Amongst the scullers the two English victors of the Coxwainless Pairs, Wilson-Laurie are marked as veterans who already in 1938 won the Silver Goblets at Henley. But here we may close the chain of success of the year 1936, where the 37 years old Jack Beresford was successfully rowing at the Olympic Games thus continuing the victorious career which was started already by his father. In conclusion, Birger Ruud of the winter Olympic Games must be mentioned, who received the gold medal in 1932 and 1936 and who was honoured this time with the silver one.

The chain of success is closed by the successes of the women. Here the Dutchwoman Mrs. Blankers-Koen must be mentioned in the first place, who is 32 years old and mother of two children. She won four Olympic medals and pursuant to her achievements shown previously one might grant her the expectancy for a further two in leaping. Here one may remember the Russian Nina Dumbadze who — 28 years old and mother of a 8 years old son — put up during this Olympic year an astonishing world record by throwing the discus 53.25 m. — only Russia did not take part at the Olympic Games in London this year. The winner of javelin, the Austrian Bauma, was fourth in 1936. The winner in foil fencing, Elek-Schacherer was then also decorated with oak leaves and in Ellen Müller-Preis, this time third, we have an approved Olympic price winner, who was victorious in 1932 and third in 1936.

Now what do all these results signify ? Sport is the means of prolonging your youth. Perhaps even to prolongue your life, but at all events to make it brighter. For if it succeeds in extending the whole vigour of the body and sole, which is required to be victorious at the Olympic Games, to two decades, then this will mean a certain augmentation of deepest vitality and of human happiness.

And with this proof the Olympic Games have reached the testimony of maturity.