

Mr. Gaston Meyer's reply

In accordance with our usual practice, we submitted Mr. Méricamp's letter to Mr. Gaston Meyer who let us' have this brief reply :

Alas yes, (I say alas, because it does not help to make me feel any younger), I was present and did witness the victory of El Ouafi at Amsterdam in 1928. On the track, at the tunnel's entrance, there were Louis Maertens of the periodical *Auto* and Paul Méricamp with or without an umbrella ? The umbrella was an integral part of the personality of the Gen. Secy of the French Athletic Federation. It would have been a pity to forget it !

This is mentioned in passing. The account rendered by Paul Méricamp is strictly accurate. But I disagree with the conclusion which he reaches. At that time, the accented views on amateurism were exceedingly strict. It is quite obvious that, as the result of El Ouafi turning professional, the latter could not expect to receive any assistance from Organizing Bodies of amateur sport, not even a charity. To their way of thinking, he had betrayed the cause of amateurism. This indeed was pointed out to him in my presence, by my friend Marcel Delarbre who was Gen. Secy of the French Olympic Committee at that time.

El Ouafi was a simple rather primitive man who could not perceive these subtle differences.

Let us come to the simple conclusion that were he to be the winner of the Olympic

Marathon in our present time, he would never have dreamt of becoming a professional athlete and abandoning the amateur status. The State would showered him with honours and crowned him with laurels as well as taken upon itself to assure his future.

His Olympic victory is undoubtedly the origin of his 'social downfall' but this is certainly not to be feared in the case of Mimoun, for example. That is all that I meant to say.

Gaston Meyer.