

# Citius, Altius, Fortius

(Faster, Higher, Braver)

One of our lady readers has asked us who was the originator of the International Olympic Committee's motto. We are glad to reply to this query:

It refers to the most ancient sportive motto of modern times. It originated about sixty-five years ago and was conceived by the famous Father Didon of the Dominican Order who was then head master of Arcueil College near Paris, being appointed there in 1890. Father Didon was a preacher, writer and French pedagogue. Born at Touvet (Isère) in 1840, he died in Toulouse in 1900. His motto dates from around 1895. A great exponent of the virile sports, he soon realized the potential value of sport in school and did not hesitate to use it to educational ends. In a speech, which he delivered while awarding prizes in an interschool athletic meeting organized by his pupils, he suddenly uttered these three superlatives. Thereafter the glorification of new records was defined in classical style and its vital characteristics were described in three concise terms. The success of the new motto assumed far greater proportions than were ever thought of by its author. Its adoption by Olympism spread all over the world. Today its stirring appeal reaches the youths of all nations. This motto appears intermingled with the five symbolical rings wherever Olympism establishes itself in triumph.

\*

The reply which we have just given brings to mind one or two other sports Mottos. In this category appears of course the famous

MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO, to which so many orators of poor imagination have resorted and which has now become so overworked that one can safely dismiss it as an ugly stock phrase. (*Maxim* of Juvenal.) The motto MEN FERVIDA IN CORPORE LACERTOSO has not sprung from an oratory improvisation. It was deliberate and the outcome of due reflection. Baron de Coubertin fixed the wording of this device with the assistance of Mr. Morlet, a scholar passionate latinist, ex head master of the secondary schools of Marseille, Troyes and of Vanves near Paris; he was a great lover of sport. The Renovator of the Olympic Games told as the origin of this Motto and appraised its worth in the *Olympic Review* of July 1911. At a later period, he alluded to it again because another latin scholar, member of the International Olympic Committee, did not fully agree with the use of the term LACERTOSO. Still later on, while in the course of a conversation with Pius XIth at the Vatican, His Holiness questioned the ideal implied by the term FERVIDA. In both cases, the substitution implied a concept of excess to the notion of equilibrium. This was precisely what the author, whose opinion with regard to this doctrine is known, had in mind. Thus it came about that this motto, which implied an ideal of excess, started a philosophical controversy of inexhaustible interest, which filled its author with glee.

\*

Another motto worth mentioning is ATHLETAE PROPRIUM EST SE IPSUM NOSCERE,

DUCERE ET VICERE. (*It is the duty and vital character of the athlete to attain self-knowledge, self-mastery, and have self-discipline.*) In 1923, under the auspices of the International Olympic Committee and through the enlightened generosity of Mr. Angelo Bolanaki, today still the senior member of the Committee, an 'African Medal' was struck with the view of encouraging sports activity among the youths of Africa. On one side, the medal bears the virile form of a coloured athlete throwing the javelin, and on the other side, a design of bamboos across which appears a motto. Precisely the motto referred to above. It is strange to think that the creation of this medal and particularly the inscription in question, should provoke such storms of indignation among certain governmental circles. In what language was the

motto to be inscribed? The African dialects are so numerous that it was out of the question to use one. English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese are regional languages in force according to the character of local colonization prevailing at the time. Why use one of these languages in preference to the others? Or Latin a language practically unknown to everybody? yet the officials and the missionaries are acquainted with this language and could translate the motto into the language spoken by their subordinates. For this reason latin, was chosen enhanced by the prestige of an ancient mode, thus a complete educative programme was engraved among the exotic foliage of the bamboos, whereas the text of the motto symbolized the virility of sport's pedagogy. The main objects were thus attained.