



Pierre de Coubertin.

Bibliography

Pierre de Coubertin The Olympic Epic

The autor. Marie-Thérèse Eyquem is one of those people one does not easily forget. An intelligent woman with a warm heart, her whole character is eminently French, with the dynamism and keenness of mind her compatriots are noted for. Those familiar with the world of sport will know that she is the Head of Feminine Sports at the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Paris.

What is less well known is that Marie-Thérèse Eyquem, whose family descends from that of the essayist and moralist Montaigne, has made the principles of Olympism an integral part of her life. While barely in her teens she was obliged to earn her own living but she already showed a strong liking for effort, a thirst for knowledge. Although working she continued her studies, making up for lost time and even forging ahead, which enabled her, once she had her degree, to win a number of prizes and obtain executive posts in the civil service. At the same time, Marie-Thérèse Eyquem took an active part in athletics and badminton, and showed a keen interest in all aspects of feminine emancipation.

Her intellectual curiosity, which could easily have turned her into a dilettante, but which was accompanied by a will of iron and a profound realism, made her a woman of action. For a number of years now, alongside her professional activities and her fight for the promotion of women, Marie-Thérèse Eyquem has gone in for literary studies and written historical and biographical works.

The sensitivity, intuition and talent of Marie-Thérèse Eyquem shine forth in the difficult art of biography which demands the humility of the author in the presence of the personality he is trying to discern through the distorting mirror of fame. With Pierre de Coubertin, the undertaking was all the more difficult as the picture that remains of his work is incomplete and the man little known. Four years of work and research have restored both to us in their entirety.

The work. What strikes us and remains beyond the chronicle of his life is the harmony, the understanding, the extraordinary intimacy one might almost say, between the author and her subject. The "Épopée olympique" is not merely a portrait of Pierre de Coubertin, it makes him appear vividly before us, and makes him live before our eyes not only in his daily thoughts but also in the keen perception he had of mankind as a whole.

For the whole world, Pierre de Coubertin is above all the reviver of the Olympic Games. He would have preferred to be called : "Pierre de Coubertin, humanist". We must not forget that the revival of the Games was only one application of the Coubertinian ideal, which was based on the free development of the individual and mutual respect.

While the Right criticized him for dabbling in socialism and the Left looked askance because of the handle to his name, Coubertin, persevering on his course, laid the practical foundations of a physical, intellectual and moral education ("These three aspects of education are inseparable and must merge together in the melting-pot out of which will *emerge* the perfect gentleman of our times", he wrote in 1915) which would enable the peoples of the world to get to know each other better and to respect each other more, if not to love each other more, and enable human beings to find an inner equilibrium.

"I shall instil new strength into a flabby, idle youth, remoulding its body and character through sport, with its risks and even its excesses. I shall widen the vision and understanding of youth by revealing the great sidereal, planetary and historic horizons, especially those of universal history which, fostering mutual respect, will become an effective spur to practical international peace, for everyone, without distinction as to birth, race, fortune situation or profession."

The education of the masses, the reformation of education, a change of attitude towards history were the main ideas of this democrat, this teacher and historian, who was at the same time the reviver of the Olympic Games.

"The Olympic Epic" reads like a novel, the only difference being that the emotion we feel and the respect roused in us at each page are inspired by an admirable life which lives on in a work and a conception of mankind that it is up to each of us to try to understand more fully in order better to serve them.

Marie-Thérèse Eyquem's book should be read in order to gain a better understanding of sport in general and the Games in particular. It should be read by all those remotely or closely interested in the intellectual development of man and by all those who take part, directly or indirectly, in the Olympic movement. Pierre de Coubertin's message, which is



Marie-Thérèse Eyquem.

being revived for us in its entirety and which has kept all its up-to-dateness, could very well become their common breviary.

The link dreamt of by Coubertin the humanist is still to be forged ; he who insisted that one should continually remind "teachers, who must be born to the vocation, and athletes, whose education should go hand in hand with their training, of their ideals, their

duties and the real values in life", wrote shortly before his death, what we feel is the supreme lesson : "Effort is the supreme joy ; success is not an aim in itself, but a means of aiming ever higher ; the individual has value only in relation to the rest of mankind. He is born to act with all his might, and to die with resignation."

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