

CITIUS

ALTIUS

FORTIUS

*"Every son of the far-flung
Hellas in whom beats the
unshakeable heart of a fight-
er who is free, who is pure
and who does not pursue a
life of crime, is awaited
by Olympia so that Kaliste-
fanos can crown the virtue,
the courage and the beauty
with a wreath of wild olive".*

"The Sacred Peace".

How beautiful is the superb valley of Elis, illuminated by the warm rays of the Peloponnesian sun, whose dawns are heralded by such sweet perfumes and the silence of whose evenings is broken only by the soft murmur of the blue waters of Olympia's two sacred rivers, the Alpheus and the Kladeos. Everyone who sees this valley is left breathless with admiration at the sight of the beauty created by man and nature working harmoniously together. A light mountain breeze caresses the leaves of the olive trees and cypresses, the fragile flowers of the oleanders and the shady plane trees. The scent of the pines and song of the nightingales entrance the tired traveller seeking a haven in the shade of the walls and temple of ancient Olympia.

You, who are this traveller, have been overcome at last by sleep. The valley that welcomed to its bosom the sons of far-flung Hellas coming from its stadiums and hippodromes, weary from their rivalry on the track and in the arena, this same valley has also welcomed your travel-worn body and lulled you to a deep sleep with the insistent wooing of the crickets and the babbling of the blue waters.

When you wake, roused by the golden rays of the

rising sun, you will see the antique ruins of ancient Olympia and the two rivers with their waters rushing towards each other and proud Mt. Cronion. You will see the remains of a civilization which - although it has succumbed to the grip of time, although its works have been concealed from human eyes by winds and earthquakes and have lain buried for centuries under the deep deposits left by the two rivers - has never been able to be destroyed, for the beauty created by man as an offering at Olympia still shines and entrances us, both you and me and all those who come to this sacred spot and smell the perfumed air and feel the warmth of this eternal valley.

It all started a long time ago, a very long time ago and nobody has succeeded in discovering just when this rich civilization that we are ready to worship first saw the light of day. Men wished to live in peace, to celebrate life, to develop to the full their intellectual and physical powers, they wanted everyone to be able to enjoy and benefit from what the mind of man had conceived and the hand of the talented creator had made. As you know, this great unfulfilled desire that all men should be brothers, that virtue and humanity should unite them, that equality should become reality, that the sword and the canon and everything that destroys should be banished into oblivion, this long-forgotten desire which was nevertheless always there, has in fact never been fulfilled. It is up to us, to you, to me, to every young man today to contribute to the fulfilment of this sublime wish of man. How, you will ask? How is it possible to ensure that "the sacred peace", this code respected by all Greeks and all strangers who came to Olympia, should also be our code today, and that of our descendants for all time. Iphitos put these same questions to the oracle in the temple of Apollo at Delphi and received the following answer: "Let Iphitos and the men of Elis revive at Olympia the old sporting contests long fallen into disuse". Iphitos believed in the Gods, in their power, and asked for their assistance, hoping to receive the best advice. We believe in man, in mankind, and that is why we turn to him for help, asking him to replace his bayonet with garlands of flowers with which to crown the Olympic victor just as the Greek people of old crowned Coribos, citizen of Elis, the first Olympic victor in the stadium at Olympia.

Iphitos, a famous son of all-powerful Hellas, transmitted the message of the Pythia, high priestess of the temple of Apollo, to the people of Elis who received it with enthusiasm, and thus the foundations were laid for the Olympic Games, this greatest achievement of Greek civilization, in the shade of Mt. Cronion. where the two sacred rivers meet, on the hallowed ground of Olympia.

To start with the Games were local in character; they were part of a deeply religious festival. It was several hundreds of years before the Games of Olympia were raised, thanks to the dictates of "the sacred peace", and set on the pedestal of virtue, courage, daring, honour and humanity. And the small local festival came to be accepted and celebrated by the whole Greek people.

The towns of Asia Minor and the Middle East, the island of Cyprus, the colonies of the Black Sea, the Adriatic, North Africa and Sicily, as well as towns all over Greece welcomed with pride and joy this call from Olympia. There was not a single Greek - poet, philosopher, artist or scientist - who did not wish to offer the works - of his mind or his hands to Olympia. All Greeks knew the glory of these works and were proud of them. In this way Olympia became the religious, cultural and sports centre of Ancient Greece, while the Games became the symbol of greatness, honour and honesty, the past, the present and the future. In time, the Games came to be identified with the idea of heroism, nobility and honour and for many centuries were the inspiration of all Greek youth. The Games were not only the expression of a physical competition between the athletes of Ancient Greece in the various kinds of sport, or the manifestation of the physical abilities and the possibilities expressed by movement, but at the same time the reflection of the harmony between the physical possibilities of man and his intellectual qualities. This harmony rendered by the beauty of movement was like a harmonious synthesis of the mind and body. Legends have given us countless examples of the greatness of the Greek mind, their great sense of beauty, their enthusiasm and their victors. In crowning the victor with the wreath of wild olive, they were crowning the virtue of a hero risen from the people, and every young Greek wished to be this victor. Only in this way can we explain the force of this cult of physical education and love of the finest human virtues in Ancient Greece. The victor was expected to

possess in equal degree beauty and strength of body as well as intellectual riches. The beauty of the human body, both male and female, was the symbol of beauty of ancient Hellas. The silent admiration of the ancient Greeks before the sculptures of Phidias was no less than the cry of admiration of a hundred old men on the Areopagus at the sight of the divine body of Hetaera who was being tried because of her beauty. Owing to her unsurpassed beauty no sentence was passed. The Greeks knew that man's character was formed by physical and non-intellectual impulses, and to be master of his mind man had first of all to master his body.

The centuries passed and the glory of the Olympic Games continued to grow. The myth of Olympism disturbed the foreigner. Herodotus, the father of Greek history, tells us of this through the dialogue of a Greek deserter who had gone over to the Persians after the battle of Thermopylae. Speaking to the Persian king Xerxes of Olympia, of the peaceful rivalry of the Greeks in the stadiums and hippodromes, he was questioned by the king: "And what is the prize for the winner?" - "A wreath of wild olive", answered the Greek. Struck by this reply, the king's son turned to the Persian commander Mardonios and said: "Woe unto us, Mardonios, you have brought us here to combat against men who fight not for riches but for honour!"

To win at the Olympic Games meant basking in the glory of the whole of Greece, being glorified by one's people like a hero, having one's name and that of one's parents and one's home town inscribed on the temple of Zeus at Olympia, and having one's bust carved in cypress or olive wood for the victors' walk in the Altis.

There are countless legends about the winners, but the finest and the most faithful to the Olympic spirit is that of Diagoras, the glorious winner of several Olympic Games. This name evokes all the fine exploits of a great boxer in the stadium of Olympia. He was acclaimed victor three times, his sons Aukilios and Damahitos too as well as his grandson Pisidoros who, garlanded in flowers and crowned with the wreath of wild olive knew the same thrill of the victor's tour of the stadium. Diagoras never forgot Olympia. He continued to return to the scene of his triumphs and each time felt the same great thrill. Watching his sons boxing he remembered the times when he too

competed in the same arena. He was happy when they won, and when the wreath of olive cast its shadow on their shoulders, old Diagoras wept. He triumphed anew. His blood, a part of himself and the idea that guided him, celebrated the victory. His sons wanted to thank him, to share their joy and offer their victory to the Gods. Thus it was that the ageing Diagoras, with tears of happiness in his eyes, found himself raised high on the shoulders of his sons who were making their victor's tour of the stadium laden with flowers and overwhelmed by ovations. It was a wonderful sight that no one who was present ever forgot. They celebrated the victory which was that of Diagoras, his sons and the idea that inspired them. As they passed in front of the spectators from Sparta, a Spartan not noble enough to forget defeat in the struggle with Diagoras and his sons, shouted: "Die, Diagoras. You will never go up to Olympus. You will never be received among the Gods". This exclamation of envy pierced the heart of the old man like an arrow, and he was unable to resist. On the shoulders of his sons, at the Olympic Games, honoured and celebrated by the whole of Greece, old Diagoras died in the stadium. The triumphal procession to cries of "Long live Diagoras" became the funeral escort of a great fighter-

The soul of Diagoras lived on in the bodies of all young Greeks, his blood was the blood of every Greek who came to this valley of Elis to celebrate life, admire beauty and strive for victory.

Times were one again stronger than men and the dark clouds of war and bloodshed hid the blue of the Greek sky from view. Men were ready to fulfil their eternal desire to live in peace like brothers. But now strength was proved by the sword, and the red flowers that decked the victors' walk were replaced by roses of blood sown by the hatred of men. The winds, erosion and the deposits of the two blue rivers covered the temples, the stadiums, the gymnasiums and everything that adorned Olympia and spoke of the glory of the Olympic Games and their victors, and the earth hid them from the invaders, deep in its bowels.

But men did not give up, they refused to admit that their greatest desire was not being fulfilled. A man who believed in his brothers, an inhabitant of this earth, a humanist and a great teacher tried once again to replace swords by roses. Pierre de COUBERTIN devoted his life to

mankind and asked them to forget hatred and hostilities and to continue to live in peace, unified by this great idea of Olympism. The world understood the great wish of this Iphitos of modern times, and the Olympic Games became the meeting place of young people from all over the world. Sport became synonymous with virtue and courage. The winner was once again treated like a hero and the youth of the world, black and white, rich and poor, with or without religion, marched arm in arm in the victory parade round the Olympic stadiums of the whole world. And the ancient cry of the athletes at the Olympic Games of Ancient Greece:

CITIUS

ALTIUS

FORTIUS

resounded again in the stadiums, the winners ran faster, jumped higher, and threw further. The Olympic torch became a symbol of peace and the white flag with the five Olympic rings became the banner under which all men are equal, as brothers and men.

Avery BRUNDAGE has said: "The idea of Olympism and the Olympic contests are perhaps the greatest force of our society today, they are the reality of our time."

May equality become reality, may virtue and humanity be the good that unites men, may the idea of Olympism become the religion in which the whole world believes, for it bears within it life lived in peace and the creative rapture of the human mind. May the message left by Pierre de COUBERTIN be fulfilled. May men forget hatred and reach out their hands in friendship. And may all the men of this world, those of Alaska, Tahiti, Kamtchatka and Tierra del fuego, and the men of the North and the South, the East and the West become brothers, may man's eternal desire at last be fulfilled.

LET US LIVE IN PEACE

Here, dear traveller, is my story intermingled with legend and fact, recounted to you on this clear morning in the warm rays of the Peloponnesian sun, in the variety of the colours of life which throbs again in the superb valley of Elis.

And when you continue on your way, on your pilgrimage, think of Spandophores, the citizen of far-renowned Elis who, travelling throughout the length and breadth of

Hellas, invited young Greeks to come to the stadiums of Olympia and compete for the olive branch.

We hope that you too will invite all young people in the world who possess the unshakeable heart of a fighter, who are ready to love and to respect their opponent in the field of combat, without prejudice as to religion, colour or political creed, who do not know hate but love, and who are ready to wear on their breast the medal of victory, the symbol of virtue, courage and beauty, and who believe in the force and greatness of the Olympic idea. Invite them to the stadiums of Rome, Tokyo, Mexico, Munich and all other Olympic sites, so that together we may celebrate the victory of an idea that will lead us towards everlasting peace.