



*Enjoying the snow at Chamonix, from left to right : Pierre de Coubertin, Count Clary, Frantz Reichel and Mr. Le Kentisch.*

## THE PURITY OF WINTER SPORTS

*by PIERRE DE COUBERTIN*

On 5th February 1924, the closing ceremony of the Olympic Winter Sports Week, regarded as the first edition of the Olympic Winter Games, took place in Chamonix. This month, we are reproducing the speech delivered on that occasion by the restorer of the Games, to be found in Volume III, « *Pratique sportive* », of the selected writings on Pierre de Coubertin and originally published in the official report of the event.

Mr. John Lucas, lecturer at the Pennsylvania State University in the United States, who has provided us with an English translation, informs us that he read the text in the French daily paper « *Le Temps* », dated 7th February 1924.

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Some among us would be unhappy if I did not take this opportunity to underscore my gratitude and my sense of admiration for the highest degree of cooperative technical efforts at these successfully completed first Winter Olympic Games. One Scandinavian high official said yesterday that these games were a model of efficiency even by comparison with the honoured Northern Games.

My dear colleagues of the French Committee, you are due an explanation of the unfair criticism rendered by many spectators in attendance at these games, criticisms that confused the roughness of certain winter sports with violence and thus failed to see their intrinsic beauty. Such misunderstanding is the result of two misconceptions.

Firstly, the hygienists and pedagogues confuse physical education and competitive sport. Physical education is a science engaged in with moderation by the masses and is directed by administrators. Competitive sport, on the other hand, is audacious, physically demanding, requires great will power, and by its very nature borders on excess. The latter demands high levels of competition, championships and record-breaking events, its breath-taking beauty and awesome physicality the causes of elevated health and strength. The other misconception is that sport is intrinsically good ; it is no such thing and requires constant, sensitive care. Without such care it will become corrupt and wither away. These winter sports here have about them a certain purity and I am thus inclined to support and nurture them in this Olympic environment. Done well, these Olympic sports can help us perpetuate idealized sport, making the individual athlete's experience an uplifting educational experience.

Sport requires constant care and attention to keep it from dishonour and corruption. But the rewards are great if sport is kept honest and I can now see clearly that winter sports very much belong on the Olympic Games calendar and the recent unprecedented success of these games, as well as our greater understanding of them, give us hope for their perpetuation.

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