

## SPORT IS KING

by *PIERRE DE COUBERTIN*

**H**ow can we doubt its royalty when we encounter so many dazzling proofs of it every day : and the most dazzling of all is the fact that, after an upheaval of incredible violence and amplitude, the modern Olympic Games have resumed their course immediately with a certitude of which antiquity provides no more striking example. There can be no doubt but that Belgium has played an essential role here. To the record of national honour which it acquired in 1914, it wished to add in 1920, that of intelligent and rapid organisation or — if I may be allowed to use a less academic and more expressive term — sheer resourcefulness. This record too, it has made its own. But, in the circumstances, its merit, far from diminishing the power of sport, of which the Olympic Games are at once the emblem and the demonstration, most certainly serves it.

As we know, all royalty is exposed to dangers, and the future of sport, crowned as it is by the favour of peoples and the enthusiasm of the young, is no exception. For those of us who form, so to speak, its universal chancellery, it is important to ensure, to the very best of our ability, the perennity of its power, working all the while to enhance its effectiveness and prestige. What are the elements that constitute the true solidity of a throne? It is in this very country that the question should be asked, for the recipe is close at hand. To grasp it, all you need to do is look around you.

Three elements enable sovereignty to be sure of tomorrow : steady work pursued with prudent boldness — an unflinching devotion to the ideal and disinterestedness — and finally, day-to-day adaptation to the collective good, the service of all. Armed with these precious indications, we can go on to establish in a purposeful way the plan of a wise policy for sport.

The progress of sport has been uninterrupted since it regained its rightful place in the pedagogical sphere : its technical progress, above all. Let us only take care to ensure that the technical aspect does not prejudice the pedagogical one. The latter requires that things be done with a certain discretion; it is not easily reconciled with fanfares and façades. It would not be progress (far from it!) if, confusing preparatory physical education with sports-based pedagogy — the latter being full of still unexploited resources — one were to create within the State organisations a mandarinat, examinations and full-time inspectors with yet another bureaucracy. It would not be progress either, if, in the guise of promotion, an intensive publicity campaign in the press were to prepare the way for the wave of disfavour which inevitably follows the impact — always artificial — of fashion on opinion. It would not be progress, finally, if a certain scientific pedantry were to invade this domain and if, in their concern to find an ideal method for the training of the muscles, sports instructors were to become the exclusive disciples of a physiological jacobinism, as much in love with discipline and uniformity as political jacobinism can be.

Sport needs freedom; it needs respect for individuality, the possibility for each person to adapt to the good or bad characteristics of his nature, those which help him and those which hold him back... What then is progress in sport? Which way should we take in order to achieve it? The answer is simple. Let us work to facilitate the daily practice of sport, to create more and more favourable opportunities to encourage the individual, to remove pointless obstacles, to simplify complicated regulations. Let us place the instrument of sport within the reach of everyone, let us keep working to improve it whilst keeping its costs low, let us try to bring the various sports yet closer together, combining them and enhancing them with the pleasure of their contrasts and the harmony of their similarities... That is the horizon of activity which should attract us and which we can make for with complete confidence.

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