

# OLYMPISM IS A STATE OF MIND

by *PIERRE DE COUBERTIN*

**D**id I, on a previous occasion, imply that Olympism is imbued with the revolutionary spirit, by saying that it aimed at breaking down pedagogical partitions ? But surely, to break down partitions is to transform the interior of a building, not to destroy the walls or even to modify the architecture ? I would not like to incur such a reproach, as I am one of those who consider violent revolutions to be almost invariably fruitless. Most of them break down doors which were, anyway, in the process of opening, and the vehement abruptness of the gesture is such that the door swings back afterwards and slams shut. In any case, the only truly revolutionary movements are those which seek to set up all at once ready made institutions, every detail of which has been organised in advance. There is nothing of the kind in Olympic pedagogy. Olympism is not a system, it is a state of mind. The most divergent formulae can be inspired by it and no one race or era can claim an exclusive monopoly on it.

Olympism is a state of mind which arises from a twofold cult : that of effort and that of eurhythmy. And see how closely the combination



of these two elements — the taste for excess and the taste for moderation — conforms to human nature. Though they may appear contradictory, these two elements' are at the base of any complete manliness. Can we call a man, in the perfect sense of the word, one who is constantly at pains not to overtax his strength and to limit his initiatives, and who takes no pleasure in exerting himself beyond the bounds of what is expected of him ? But at the same time, can we call a man, in the perfect sense of the word, one who does not like to see the intensity of his fervour wear an aspect of smiling calm and self-control and surround itself with order, balance and harmony ?

Neither the inclination to effort nor the habit of eurhythmy develops in us spontaneously. An apprenticeship and training are needed. Do not expect the square of the hypotenuse, even when combined with the fables of La Fontaine, to do the job. It is through practice that these virtues enter into our nature and become a part of it. It is there that the superiority of organised sports activity lies, namely in the fact that it obliges those who devote themselves to it to practise at once moderation and excess.