



iv. Michel Bréal

If the heart of Baron de Coubertin, that was broken at a park in Geneva, but as he had always wished, is eternally resting at the land of ancient Olympia, the hart of the French Michel Bréal, another warm Greek lover, must have been resting forty-two kilometers away from Athens, at the Marathon tomb, beating vigorously each time the Marathon Racers are starting out their race. Professor of the “Collège de France”, Michel Bréal thought of the Marathon Race as a reminder of the victory of democracy at the Marathon battlefield against the totalitarianism, the win of the civilization against the barbarity.

Michel Bréal, also a member of the French Institute, suggested the Marathon Race at the I Olympiad in Athens 1896, following mentally the traditional course of the ancient racer Pheidippidis, who had run from the Marathon battlefield to Athens to announce the Greek victory against the barbarian invaders in 490 BC.

Michel Bréal wrote a letter to Demetrios Bikelas, that was brought out in the Greek press, revealing the symbolic extent of M. Breal’s resolution: “... I do not know the nationality of the Marathon winner all the same, I shall call him a character of the Greek tradition”. The Olympic Movement owes him a prestigious post at the Olympic Pantheon.

v. Ioannis Fokianos

Ioannis Fokianos, (1845-1896) was the most famous Greek gymnast at the end of the 19th century. He had written in relation with the gymnastics and worked as a gymnast and as a superintendent of the Physical Education.

During the 1880s and 1890s Ioannis Fokianos had promoted the formation of the athletic organizations in Athens as well as at other Greek cities and towns. On 10.02.1891 he had formed the Panhellenic Association of Gymnastics, and being a president he promoted idea of the revival of the ancient Olympic Games.

On the 30th and 31st May 1891 the first Games of the Association took place after the origin of the ancient Olympic Games. I. Fokianos came to a close co-operation with the poet Constantine Manos who wrote the Hymn of the Panhellenic Association of Gymnastics, while the composer Spyridon Samaras wrote its music. He managed to build the gymnasium of Panhellenios.

On 26th August 1894 Pierre Frédy, Baron de Coubertin wrote to Ioannis Fokianos asking him to participate at the International Athletic Congress in Paris, on 23rd June 1894, and as it was impossible for I. Fokianos to be up to the Congress, knowing though its importance, I. Fokianos asked Demetrios Bikelas, the Greek intellectual living in Paris to take part to the Congress as the Greek delegate. Demetrios Bikelas attended every work of the Paris Congress keeping I. Fokianos continuously informed. Ioannis Fokianos had been the main factor of the D Olympia 1888/9.

vi. George Averof

Among the “*Olympians*”, the modern cosmopolitans of the organization of the I Olympiad in Athens 1896, coming to the end of the “*Marathon Course*”, making the phenomenon in Athens, beside Demetrios Bikelas, was George Averof. Deserving his “*Olympic wreath*” of the olive branch. His statue welcomes the visitors at the entrance of the Pan-Athenian Stadium, the only Kallimarmaron Stadium in the world.



In 330 BC the Athenian statesman and rhetorician, Lycurgus, had built the hystero-classical Stadium at a ravine of the Arditus Hill at the site offered by the Athenian citizen Deinios, to cover the needs of the Pan-Athenian Games. In the 2nd century AD, Herod the Atticus covered the expenses for the restoration, as it was found by the archaeologist Ernst Ziller, during the excavations of the 1869/1870.

The National Olympic Committee of the Olympiad I in Athens 1896, under the presidency of the crowned prince Constantine, thought of reconstructing the ancient Pan-Athenian Stadium, for the needs of the track events. In May 1895, the crowned prince Constantine send an individual letter, a plea to George Averof, a Greek living in Alexandria, who immediately responded generously to the National Olympic Committee with the first sum of 920.000drachmas, while a second one of 1.000.000 followed soon.

The architect Anastase Metaxas elaborated the study of the restoration of the Stadium, of 69.000 seats. On the 24.3.(5.4)1896, the eve of the I Olympiad In Athens 1896, the unveiling ceremony of the George Averof's statue took place in front of the entrance of Kallimarmaron Stadium. The sculptor George VROUTOS, who twenty-one years earlier, during the C Olympia in Athens had been distinguished and awarded the second Olympic prize of the Fine Arts, had made the statue of the benefactor. Opposite the innovator's statue stands the figure of the discobolus, a work of Constantine Dimitriadis, and in the small distance, the gymnasium of I. Fokianos is found.

George Averof's generous donation inspired the Greek athletes among them was Spyros Louis, the 24year old first Marathon Racer, who gave their best at the I Olympiad In Athens 1896. Ending the Marathon race, at the Kallimarmaron Stadium, Spyros Louis saluted George Averof's statue. And the following day the self-respecting, modest athlete send a telegram expressing his gratitude: "To the Great Patriot Averof, in Alexandria. I have won the Marathon race. The glory of this victory is succeeded thanks to your inspiration. Louis, Amaroussion"

The brass statue of discobolus greets the marble one saluting the great sponsor G. Averof and both of them looking at the Acropolis in the far distance, like an immense open breast, welcome the international friends of the authentic athletics and lead them to the snow-white grandstands of the Pan-Athenian Stadium.