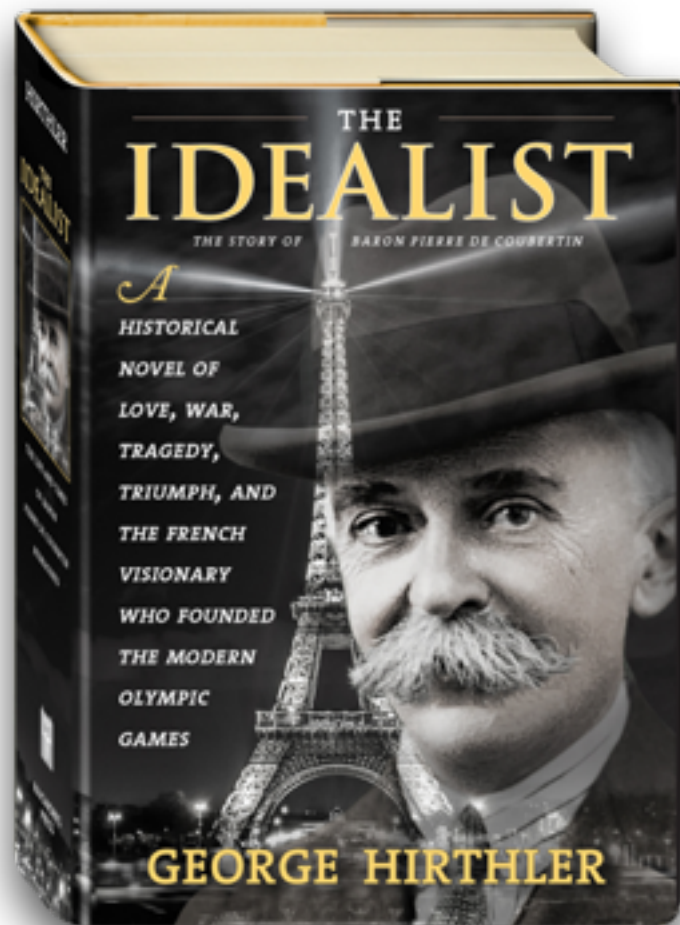


The Idealist: Pierre de Coubertin & The Origin Story of the Modern Olympic Movement

Presentation by George Hirthler

17 December 2021



THE IDEALIST

The Life and Times of Baron
Pierre de Coubertin: Reimagined

It's January 1937. Baron Pierre de Coubertin has just turned 74. He's broke, his health is failing, and although he has created one of the most influential international movements of the 20th century, he is completely unknown outside a small circle of admirers. Angry at their losses, his wife can hardly withhold her bitter animosity, his son is tragically impaired, his daughter is battling mental illness, and his great creation is about to fall into the hands of a Nazi madman leading the world to war. But hope arrives when a new ally appears. Jacques St. Clair from *Le Petit Journal* in Paris, the world's leading Olympic sportswriter, moves to Lausanne with his American fiancé, the painter Juliette Franklin, to spend a year writing the baron's biography. Once St. Clair begins the interviews, Coubertin is rejuvenated as his story unfolds in scenes that flash back through the past seven decades. The young couple becomes fully immersed in Coubertin's life—as Juliette begins to paint the baron's portrait—and both are deeply affected as his health declines and the race to finish the interviews faces an increasingly impossible deadline.

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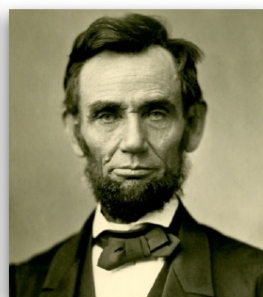
"Why don't we know him?"



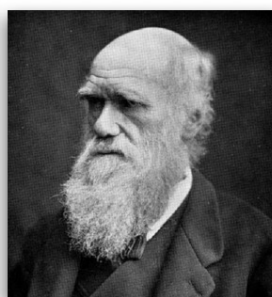
The Ten Most Influential People of the 19th Century



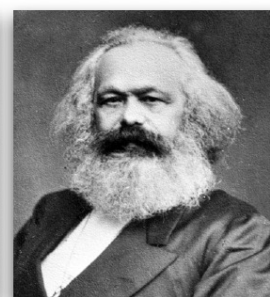
Napoleon Bonaparte



Abraham Lincoln



Charles Darwin



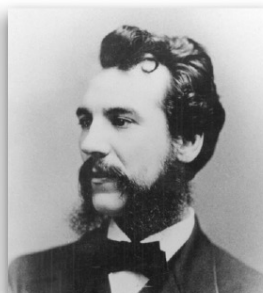
Karl Marx



Thomas Alva Edison



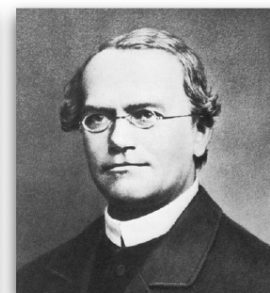
Louis Pasteur



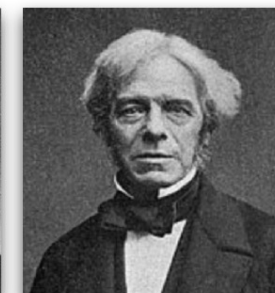
Alexander Graham Bell



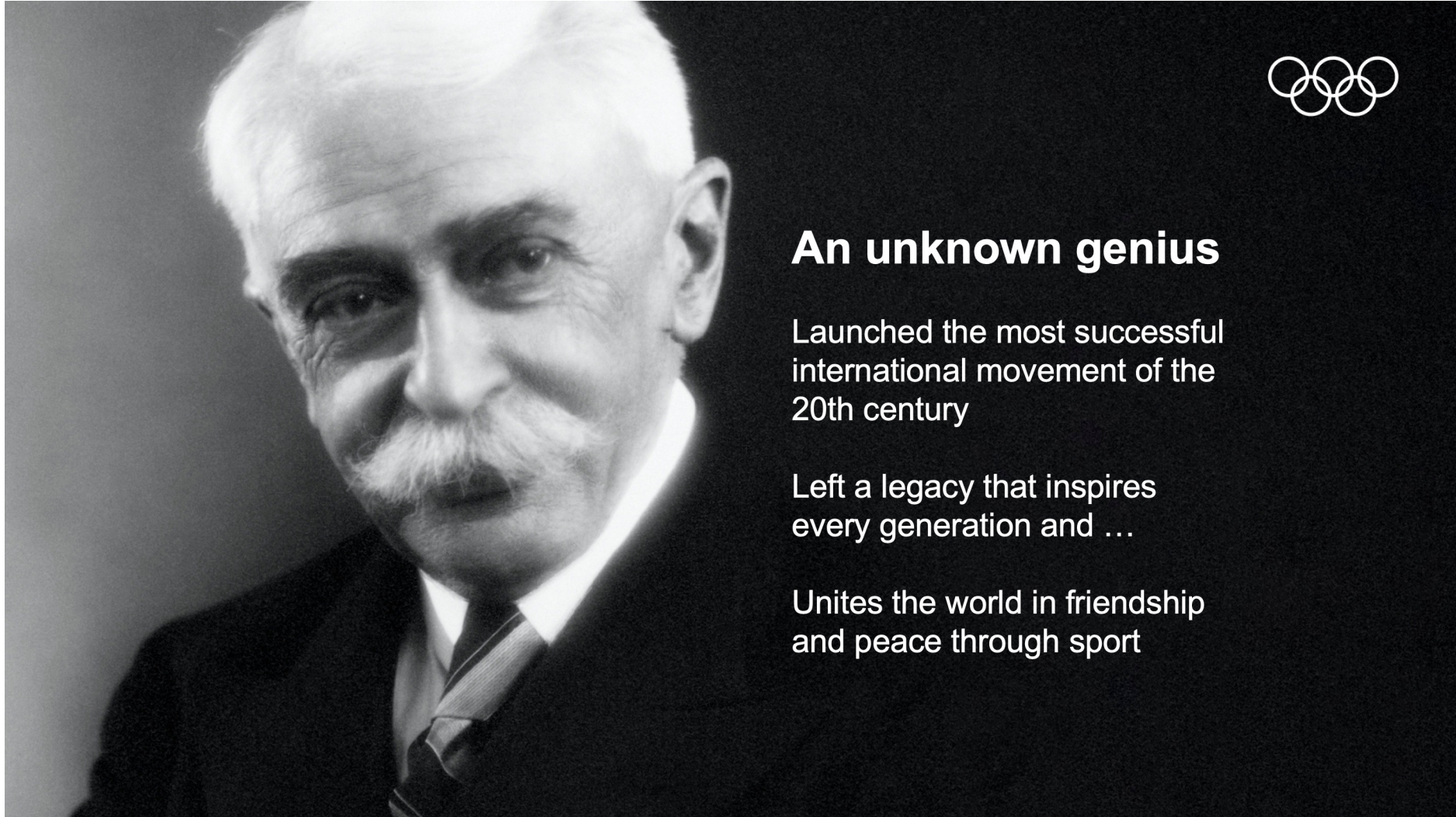
Marie Curie



Gregor Mendel



Michael Faraday



An unknown genius

Launched the most successful
international movement of the
20th century

Left a legacy that inspires
every generation and ...

Unites the world in friendship
and peace through sport



An enchanted childhood

Aristocratic family dating back
to the Court of Louis XI

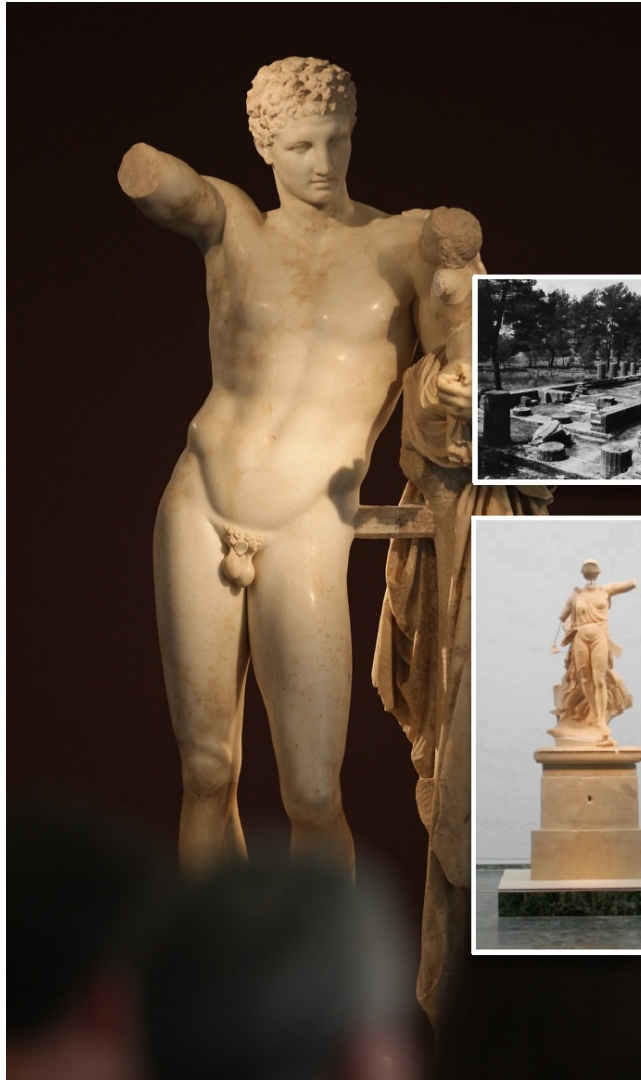
Raised in chateaux in Normandy
and Saint-Rémy-lès-Chevreuse

A brilliant student of the Jesuits
studying the classical world



Shattered by war





Fresh hope

- The German excavation of Ancient Olympia, 1874-1880
- 130 statues, 40 monuments, 6,000 coins, 13,000 bronzes, 400 inscriptions
- The Hermes of Praxiteles, exactly where Pausanias' *Travels in Greece* said it was
- Created a European frenzy for the classical world



“Nothing in ancient history had given me more food for thought than Olympia. This dream city ... (this) factory of life-forces, loomed with its colonnades and porticos unceasingly before my adolescent mind.”

Pierre de Coubertin





Education reforms

- Coubertin at 20:
A quest to reform French education
- 1883: First trip to England
to study British education
- A vision at Rugby – and a lifelong hero:
Thomas Arnold
- With Jules Simon's backing, leads drive to
integrate sports into French schools



**“The future of civilization rests at this moment
neither on political nor on economic bases. It
depends solely on the direction which will be given
to education.”**

Pierre de Coubertin



Broadening horizons

- 1889 Paris Universal Exposition
- 32 million visitors in six month
- First International Congress on Physical Education
- First Universal Congress on World Peace
- First of two trips to US:
20+ colleges and universities



Birth of the Olympic Movement

- 1894 Olympic Congress:
- Athens elected for 1896, Paris for 1900
- The IOC is formed
- The cause of peace gains a new ally
- Coubertin begins to define the philosophy of Olympism



Birth of the Olympic Movement

- 1894 Olympic Congress:
- 78 Honorary Delegates at the Olympic Congress
- More than half from the European peace movement
- Six of the first 13 winners of the Nobel Peace Prize
- A movement of peace through sport was born





"We shall not have peace until the prejudices which now separate the different nations shall have been outlived. To attain this end, what better means than to bring the youth of all countries periodically together for amicable trials of muscular strength and agility."

Pierre de Coubertin



“Olympism fears no tragedy and can stand up to any peril. That is why it survived four years of all-out war without a scratch.”

Pierre de Coubertin



**"The Games are global.
All people must be allowed in,
without debate."**

Pierre de Coubertin

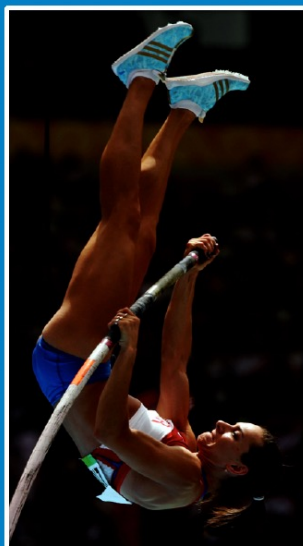


**"For every man, woman and child,
sport offers an opportunity for self-improvement
quite independent of profession or position in life.
It is the prerogative of all, equally and to the same
degree, and nothing can replace it."**

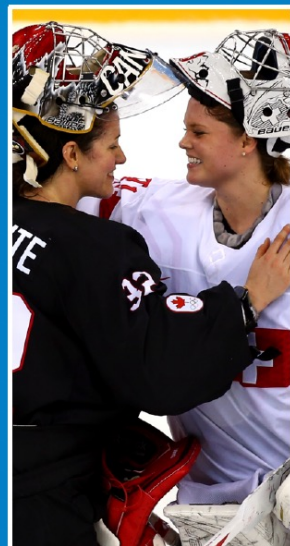
Pierre de Coubertin



The Five-Point Olympic Ideal



**Human
excellence**



**Mutual
respect**



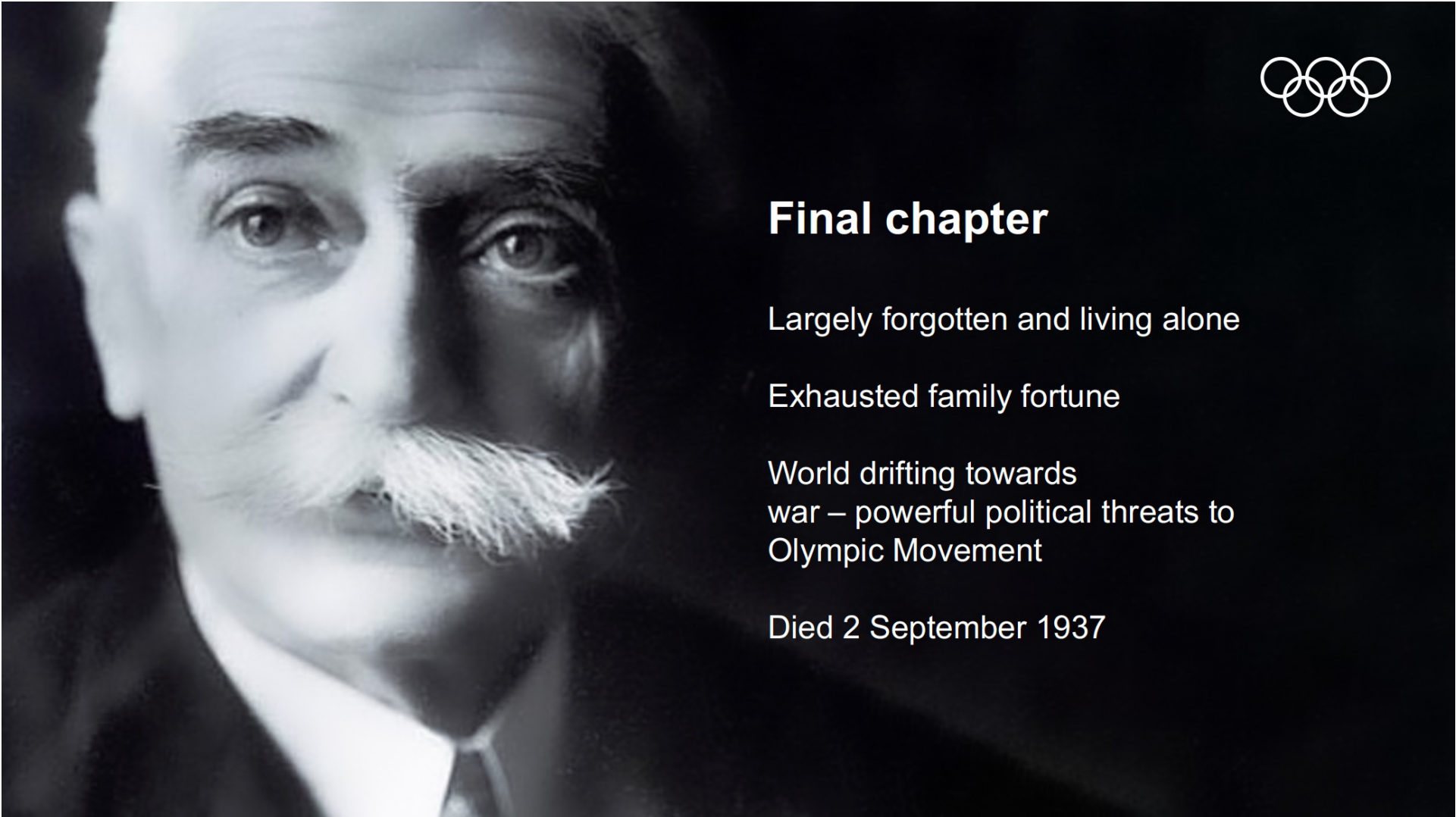
**Friendships
formed on
the field of play**



**International
understanding**



**Peace through
sport**



Final chapter

Largely forgotten and living alone

Exhausted family fortune

World drifting towards
war – powerful political threats to
Olympic Movement

Died 2 September 1937



"Awards become tarnished and diplomas fade. Championships are mythical things. They have no permanence. What is a gold medal? It is a trinket, a bauble. What counts, my friends, are the realities of life: the fact of competition and, yes, the great and good friends you make."

Jesse Owens



"We pursue one ideal, that of bringing people together in peace, irrespective of race, religion and political convictions, for the benefit of mankind."

Juan Antonio Samaranch



“If Coubertin were with us today, I think he would be pleased to see how relevant his Olympic dream is ... But knowing of his idealism, I also know that he would have had a message for us: ‘Keep striving. Keep changing.’ In this Olympic spirit ... as he said, let us stay united with faith in ourselves, striving for even more change and excellence in the next 125 years and beyond.”

Thomas Bach



Baron Pierre de Coubertin

(1863-1937)

The French visionary
who founded the modern
Olympic Games