FENCING.

OUT-DOOR exercises are the best as a general rule, but the weather does not always admit of them. Of in-door games, tennis and racquets stand very high; but it is seldom that one lives near a court—it is a great chance if it is disengaged, if one does—and the expense is considerable. Now any barn, out-house, or unfurnished room will do for fencing, which is, after all, the finest exercise in the world; for it is the only one I know of that brings every muscle in the body equally and impartially into play, while the skill required makes it extremely interesting. The hand and eye learn to act together more rapidly than in any other practice, so that the cricketer who had fenced all the winter would be astonished to find how much smarter he had grown during the months that his bat was lying idle in the corner.

But mind this: fencing is the most stupid amusement in the world if it is not practised properly. Two fellows standing opposite, and poking at each other with foils, would soon get tired of the operation; or, if they did not, they might keep on at it for six hours a day all their lives, and never improve a little bit. Nay, they would probably incapacitate themselves from ever learning to fence at all, such bad habits would they acquire.

The first steps in learning anything are bound to be tedious; a grammar book is never lively reading. But unless you will mug a bit at grammar you will never learn the language properly, and if you slur over the rudiments of fencing you will never do any good at it. And even after you have attained a certain proficiency, it is very necessary to be careful how you indulge in loose play, especially with opponents inferior to yourself, or your hand will soon lose its cunning, and it will take a strict course of longeing to get it in again.

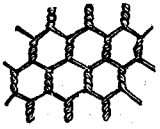

Fig. 1.—HEXAGONAL MESH FOR MASKS.

Now, I do not mean to tell you that you can learn to fence as well from a book as you can by the personal instruction of a good master; but good masters are not always to be had, and many drill-sergeants who profess to teach fencing know nothing at all about it. And I will say that if you *carefully* follow the instructions here given, you will make much better progress than by picking up the faults of a gymnast who finds it necessary to profess to teach an art of which he is entirely ignorant, in addition to those exercises which are his peculiar province.

Only, you must be a little patient and attentive. I on my part will be as clear in my descriptions as I can, if you on yours will try to understand them by comparing them with the diagrams, and taking pains to place yourself in the correct attitudes.

Before we begin our instructions, a few hints about equipment may be useful.

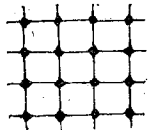

Fig. 2.—UNSAFE WIRE-WORK FOR MASKS.

Health and comfort will be promoted by wearing a flannel shirt and trowsers under the defensive clothing, which must consist of mask, jacket, glove with gauntlet, and thigh-piece or apron. The masks must be made on the French plan of twisting the wire, so as to form an hexagonal mesh (Fig. 1). English wire-work is unsafe, as the broken end of a foil would stab through it (Fig. 2).

The German foil blades that are imported from Solingen marked "King's Head" have the oldest reputations, but they are so generally imitated that it

is difficult to make sure of getting them. They generally sell terrible rubbish at the toy-shops. If you join a Fencing School or Club, of course the master will provide you with everything; it is his perquisite. For the jacket, some men prefer soft leather, lined and padded; others choose a leather which is stouter and stiffer, and requires no lining; but, however it is made, it must be high and stiff in the collar, to guard the neck (Fig. 3).

The glove must be nicely stuffed at the back of the fingers, and the thumb end well covered, to protect the nail in case of a jar; the palm of very soft pliable leather, so as not to interfere with the grip of the sword hilt; the gauntlet long enough to guard the wrist.

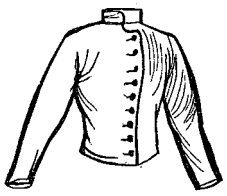

Fig. 3.—FENCING JACKET.

If you were certain never to meet any but cool, careful, and skilful fencers, all defensive clothing might cease at the waist, but as such a state of affairs exists only in Utopia, and we have not got there yet, you should wear a thigh-piece, strapped round the middle and the upper part of the leg, and having a flap to pass between the legs, kept in its place by a third strap fastening it to the waist behind (Fig. 4). Or, if you prefer it, a leather apron will answer the same purpose. The instructor, having to receive the perpetual longes of his pupils, must wear a thickly-padded breastplate called a plastron; this sometimes has a little heart of red cloth sewn on in the centre, to direct the thrusts.

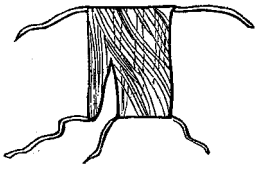

Fig. 4.—THIGH-PIECE.

The shoes should be soft and pliable, but we do not recommend india-rubber soles, which heat the feet. Some fencers like to have a broad flap spreading beyond and on both sides of the right shoe, while others cannot see any advantage in it; taste and toes differ.

The great matter is to feel easy and comfortable, and not to wear anything which cramps the free play of the limbs or impedes the circulation.

We cannot too strongly urge you never to fence with any one who is not properly protected, with mask and jacket at any rate. In a school, indeed, it is seldom or ever that you will find any one inclined to neglect such a natural precaution, but sometimes, in a private room, or the hall of a country house, you may meet one, a tyro most probably in the art, who will propose a bout at fencing, and simply pull his coat off.

Refuse to cross foils with him unless he will put on something more efficiently defensive than shirt-sleeves. It is all very well for him to run the risk of being hurt if he chooses, but he has no right to put you in the way of incurring the danger of hurting him.

There is nothing more distressing than to inflict an injury on a friend while mutually engaged in sport; and, indeed, when such accidents occur, the one who is injured may generally be considered to have the best of it.

When a foil becomes bent, it may be readily straightened again by laying it on the ground, placing your foot upon it, and drawing it upwards in the opposite direction.

The foil is a quadrangular blade; it should measure thirty-four inches from point to hilt. The most esteemed foil blades, as we have already seen, are manufactured at Solingen, and bear that name.

Beware of the flat blades, flexible as a riding-whip, sold in some toy-shops.

The handle should be seven inches long, almost square, slightly curved, of uniform size throughout, and should be covered with twisted twine of two sizes;

the pommel not too large, and just heavy enough to balance the blade when placed on the forefinger between two and three inches from the guard.

The best hilt is the ordinary open iron one, but both sides should be bent upwards, to protect the thumb and fingers from injury, and should also have a piece of strong leather or buffalo hide on the side next the handle.

The button on the point is sometimes covered with a bit of cardboard, with wash-leather tied over it, but gutta-percha will be found more convenient. Take a small square of that substance, warm the point, and mould the gutta-percha over it.

COST OF IMPLEMENTS.

Best Solingen ("King's Head") or English foil-blades, are 24s. the dozen; pommels and guards, 6s. the dozen; foils complete, from 3s. 6d. to 6s. each; gloves, from 5s. 6d. to 12s.; fencing masks (French pattern; don't have the cheap English masks at any price), 9s. 6d. to 15s.; stick masks (about which you need not be so particular), 19s.; single-sticks, 4s. the dozen; buffalo-hilts, 7s. each; jackets, from 14s. to 80s.; thigh-protectors, 14s. 6d.; plastrons, 6s. 6d. to 15s.; spring practice bayonets, 58s. or 70s.

Of course these figures are approximate only; if a club imports its own implements it may get them cheaper. Our own experience, however, makes us confident about *this*, that the most economical plan is to get the very best articles in the first instance.

Fig. 5.
CORRECT ATTITUDE—FIRST POSITION.

The object of him who desires to become a good swordsman must be to combine with perfect coolness the greatest possible rapidity of movement, with firmness on the legs, and suppleness of body; to parry without effort, and yet effectively; to feint with safety.

Five qualities are necessary for the attainment of this ideal: knowledge, precision, rapidity, a quick eye, and a strong wrist. The first three are only to be acquired by careful practice of the rudiments before loose practice is indulged in. Let us therefore begin with

THE POSITION.

If attitude is not "everything" in fencing, it is at least a very great deal, for without securing a correct position, into which the learner shall fall instinctively, without thinking about it, further progress is impossible. The more pains he takes to come on guard and longe correctly the quicker will he get on afterwards.

Place yourself with your right breast opposite the adversary, your eyes fixed on his, your right foot pointing to the front, the left to the left, at right angles; the right heel in front of the left ankle; the body upright; the hips rather drawn back, but without constraint; the head erect, but not thrown back; the hands hanging easily at the sides, the left holding the foil as if it were a sword in its scabbard, convex side of the handle upwards (Fig. 5).

Fig. 6.
CORRECT ATTITUDE—SECOND POSITION.

Raise the right hand in front of the body as high as the face, palm upwards, and bring it across to the hilt of the foil, which grasp lightly. Raise both hands above the head, separating them, so that the left hand shall hold the point of the foil (Fig. 6).

Bring down the right arm with the foil, until the elbow is about on a level with the waist, and some eight inches in front of it; thumb along the surface of the hilt; forefinger under the thumb; the point of the foil as high as the chin; the fore-arm and foil in a straight line. The left arm must remain in the position in which it held the point above the head, except that the palm of the hand is to be turned to the front. Then, without moving the body, head, or neck, bend both knees, sinking down as low as you can, and advance the right foot some twelve or fourteen inches, so that the leg from the knee to the ground is perpendicular (Fig. 7). Now you are on guard, which is the position from which all attacks are made, and in which all attacks are parried. Short men should have their guard as high as their necks, men of middle height a little above the middle of the chest; tall men should take the middle exactly. As a rule, you must always regulate the height of your guard by that of your adversary.

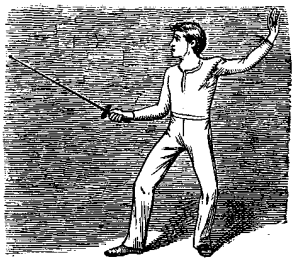

Fig. 7.—CORRECT ATTITUDE—"ON GUARD."

Pay great attention to the hold you have of the hilt, for upon it depends that freedom and suppleness of the wrist, without which the various movements to be described hereafter cannot be performed. However the arm and hand may be turned and twisted, no finger should ever stir from the position in which it is first placed on the handle (Fig. 8). The foil then must be held firmly, but not grasped hard; the thumb advanced along the upper side of the hilt, and nearly touching the shell; the forefinger exactly underneath it; the other fingers close up to the forefinger, not separated.

Fig. 8.—HOW TO HOLD THE FOIL.

Remember also with regard to the feet, that in all positions, whether you advance, retire, or longe, they must remain as they are placed when on guard, *i.e.*, at right angles, the right foot pointing to the front, the left to the left; for if the toes are turned outwards or inwards the body will at once lose its balance, while in the case of longeing, your point will be turned aside from the adversary's breast.

The Advance.—Take a short quick pace to the front with the right foot, which must not be raised high, but just skim the ground. As the right foot touches, bring up the left the same distance, taking care to keep the feet in their relative positions, *i.e.*, at right angles, and the right heel on a line with the left ankle.

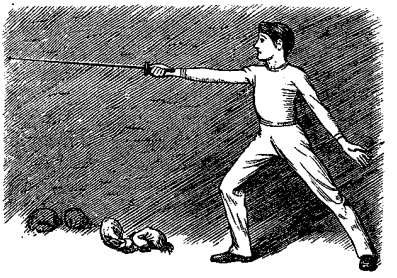

Fig. 9.—THE LONGE.

The Retreat.—Take a short quick pace to the rear with the left foot, and as it touches the ground bring back the right foot, planting it firmly on the ground.

The Longe.—Straighten the right arm raising the hand, and depressing the point of the foil, until arm and foil form one horizontal line; and as you do this

turn the nails upwards. Then step forward from fifteen to eighteen inches with the right foot, and straighten the left leg by pressing back the knee, taking care not to move the left foot, which must be kept flat and firmly planted: at the same time let the left hand fall to within a few inches of the thigh (Fig. 9).

After a little practice, these actions are performed simultaneously, but it is of such vital importance that the nails should be turned upwards (Fig. 10)—a slight movement which gives strength and suppleness to the wrist, while it communicates rigidity and accuracy of direction to the sword—and also that the arm should be perfectly straight when the right foot darts forward, that you must begin by making two distinct movements; first straighten the arm, then longe. It is well to have a mark on the adversary's plastron to aim your point at; or for private practice, make a mark on a wall at the height of the centre of a man's breast, and longe at that. You cannot take too much pains to acquire the habit of performing this movement properly; for if you once get in the way of plunging forwards with a bent arm, and making a poke, you will find it very difficult to break yourself of it. You would never have the opportunity of doing so if you were opposite a weapon with a point to it. On the first occasion of the experiment, your adversary would merely hold his sword straight, and you would plunge upon it.

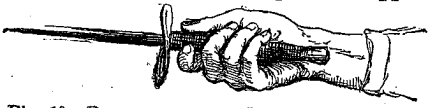

Fig. 10.—Position of the Hand in Longeing.

Pay great attention to the position of the body when extended: see that the feet remain at right angles; that the right leg is perpendicular from the knee to the ankle—if the foot is beyond the perpendicular line, you have "longed" too far—that the head and shoulders are not bent forward, but retain the same position as when on guard.

The lowering of the left arm is of use in preserving the balance.

To *recover* from the extended position, press the ground with the right foot, springing back to the position of the guard, re-bending the left knee, and tossing up the left hand again. These are the movements which may be considered as having reference to the *position* in fencing.

That half of the foil which is nearest the handle is called the *forte*, the other half the *faible*.

Constantly to oppose the forte of your own blade to the faible of your enemy's is one of the secrets of fencing. Therefore you should try to keep your wrist raised a little above that of your adversary, so as to dominate his, in the upper lines; in the lower lines, keep your wrist a little lower than his.

The Line is the direction which the foil should take either for attack or defence, pointing to the opponent's body, not his extremities.

The Defence.—Pupil and instructor are on guard opposite to one another at longeing distance; the blades of their foils joined on the inner line, touching but not pressing one another.

The best and clearest description of the lines of defence is afforded by the diagram, with explanations, given by Captain Chapman in his excellent little work on foil practice, which we cannot do better, with his kind permission, than reproduce here (Fig. 13).

A swordsman presenting his point to the front, either defensively or offensively, may be himself attacked in one of the following four directions, termed the lines of defence:—

On the left of his sword-hand beneath the hilt	The low inside line.
On the right of his sword-hand beneath the hilt	The low outside line.
On the right of his sword-hand above the hilt	The high outside line.
On the left of his sword-hand above the hilt	The high inside line.

It will thus be seen that, with a sword of ordinary length, one only of these lines can be defended at a time, and consequently the three other lines must remain open to attack.

For the defence of each line there are two parries (*see* Fig. 13); the sword in both parries being placed in a similar direction, the parries themselves differing only in the position of the sword's edge, the sword-hand being held in the one case in supination (the nails turned upwards), and in the other in pronation (the nails turned downwards). These eight parries are called:—

1. Prime.	5. Quinte.
2. Seconde.	6. Sixte.
3. Tierce.	7. Septime (or half-circle).
4. Quarte.	8. Octave.

The allotment of these eight parries to the four lines of defence is thus:—
From the centre of the breast, and with the elbow moderately bent.

1. Prime and 7. Septime (or half-circle).	The hand tending to the left, the point lowered and inclined to the left, the nails turned down. The same, but with the nails turned up and the arm elongated.	Parry the attack directed on the inside low.
2. Seconde and 8. Octave.	The hand tending to the right, the arm straightened, the point lowered and inclined to the right, the nails turned down. The same, but with the nails turned up.	Parry the attack directed on the outside low.
3. Tierce and 6. Sixte.	The hand tending to the right, the point raised and inclined to the right, the finger nails turned down. The same, but with the nails turned up.	Parry the attack directed on the outside high.
4. Quarte and 5. Quinte.	The hand tending to the left, the point raised and inclined to the left, the nails turned up (slightly). The same, but with the nails turned down.	Parry the attack directed on the inside high.

These parries are effected with the forte of the blade upon the adversary's faible, either by a sharp beat or a simple pressure.

Observe that in each of the two parries which may be employed to meet the same attack, the foil blade follows the same line, so that the point is in exactly the same spot when the movement is completed, the difference lying in the position of the wrist, arm, and elbow, caused by turning the nails up or down.

The question then may be asked, why this complication? Why not simply teach four parries to meet the four attacks?

Because the parry should always be formed with the view to riposting, or attacking immediately the adversary's blade is turned aside, and this is most readily and effectively done, sometimes with the hand in supination, at others in pronation. Thus, the double parry gives scope for the attainment of that most desirable object in fencing, variation in the attack.

There is also another object in having these two parries for each thrust, which is not apparent in the use of the foil, and need not be more than summarily alluded to. Fencing is adapted to the use of swords of different form, and when your weapon is of the two-edged description, such as a rapier, it is requisite to avoid parrying with the flat of the blade.

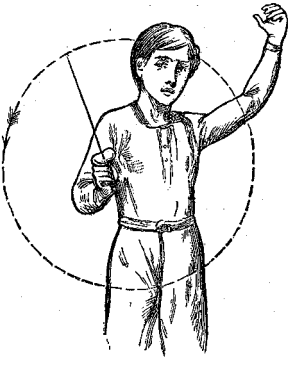

Fig. 11.—TIERCE.

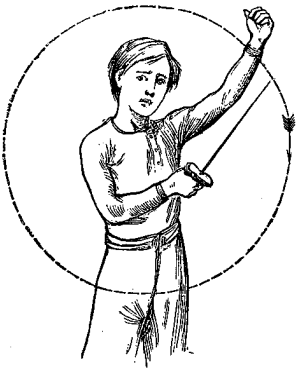

Fig. 12.—QUARTE.

Crossing swords with your opponent is termed the *engagement;* when in attacking you he shifts his blade into a new line, as from the inside to the outside, or *vice versâ*, he *disengages*. In the engagement the sword should be held securely, but without strain; at the moment of parrying the hold should be tightened.

Simple parries are those which are made when, on the adversary's disengagement, your point is passed in direct course either from tierce to quarte, or quarte to tierce (high lines); septime to seconde, seconde to septime (low lines); or when the point is raised and lowered from the high to the low, or from the low to the high lines on the *same* side, *e.g.*, from quarte to septime, septime to quarte. Thus the simple parries always throw off the attack in the line in which it is directed.

Counter-parries are when the sword-hand, in parrying a disengagement, describes with the point a circular course round the adversary's blade, until it meets it again in the line of the original engagement, throwing off the attack in an opposite line from that in which it is directed.

This circular movement—done by the action of the fingers more than by that of the wrist—commences under the adversary's blade in the high lines, and over his blade in the low; thus, from the engagement of quarte (the foils joined on the inside), on the adversary's disengagement the circle is described by lowering the point, passing it under his blade, towards the right, returning upwards, and resuming the position of quarte.

From the engagement in the other lines, the disengagements are parried upon the same principle, as will be clear if you refer to the diagram, where the arrowheads denote the course taken by the foil.

The counter or round parry may also be used to meet a direct thrust, with-

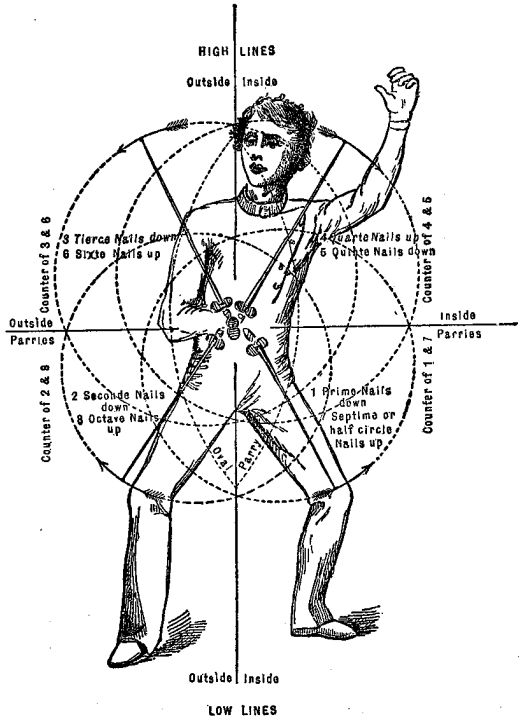

Fig. 13.—DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING THE LINES OF DEFENCE.

out disengagement; in quarte, by dropping the point under the adversary's blade and circling upwards, throwing off the attack in the opposite line, that of tierce; in tierce, by the reverse action, throwing it off in quarte.

The parries are termed *semi-counters* when, by a half-circular action, the attack is thrown off from a high line into the opposite low (*e.g.*, from quarte to seconde), or brought upwards from a low line into the opposite high (as from septime to tierce).

As a general parry a circular or deep elliptic movement of the point directly in front of the body, from right to left, or left to right (the hilt maintained at the centre), may be adopted. (*See* "Oval Parry," in Fig. 13.)

Two or more parries are often combined in continuous action, so that if the adversary's blade is missed in one line it may be met in another. A simple parry is performed after a counter, or a round parry after a simple. But systematic combinations are only to be learned by constant practice; the great thing is to take pains in studying the correct formation of the regular parries.

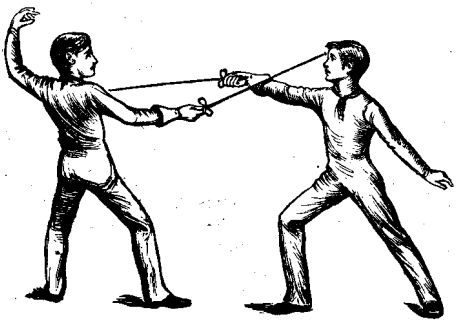

Fig. 11.—THRUST IN QUARTE.

And here it may be observed that all these parries which have been indicated and described are not of equal importance. Tierce, with its counter (or the outer circle), and quarte, with its counter (or the inner circle), should be principally employed (Figs. 11 and 12).

In parrying during the action of recovering from the longe, the outer circle is preferable to the inner. All other parries are but variations of quarte and tierce in lowering or raising the point.

Practice in Parries.—Engage in quarte, press the instructor's blade lightly —you have the advantage, being protected while he is exposed. He therefore disengages, by directing his point under your wrist, with the intention of passing to the opposite side of your blade. Before his point is raised, lower your own by the action of the wrist and fingers, with the nails up, and in straightening the arm. You have parried, *half-circle*, in the inside line low. He disengages by passing his point over the forte of your blade. Turn your nails down, pass the hilt a little to the right, on the same level, and catch his blade with the forte of your own; you have parried *seconde* in the outside line low.

He disengages by raising his point above your hilt. Raise your hand and point, bending the elbow, and catching his blade with the forte of your own.

You have parried *tierce* in the outside line high. He disengages by directing his point past your blade. Turn your nails to the left, catching his blade with the forte of your own. You have parried *quarte* on inside line high, the original engagement.

The Attack.—The thrusts are named, like the parries, quarte, tierce, &c. So also are the engagements: when the foils are joined in the inside high, you are engaged in quarte; on the outside high, in tierce; and these two engagements are almost universally adopted. though there is no rule to that effect; the position of quarte, indeed, is that into which you naturally fall on coming on guard.

Suppose you are engaged in quarte, then while your adversary's blade is in a true line it is evident that a very slight movement of his hand to the left would

turn aside a direct thrust; or if he were to extend his arm at the moment of your longe, you would throw yourself upon his point. You therefore seek, by pressing with the forte of your sword upon the faible of his, to force it out of the line.

If he allow you to do this, his breast lies entirely exposed to your attack, and a direct thrust will hit it without risk to yourself, his point not being directed towards your body; so that if he should thrust simultaneously it must go past you, and he will be the only one struck; and as Molière's fencing-master explains to his pupil, the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, the art of fencing lies in two simple things—to hit, and not to be hit (Fig. 14).

But suppose your adversary obtains the advantage in the engagement, and that his sword commands yours, the direct thrust becomes impossible, and you must *disengage* to get an opening.

The more completely his inside line is guarded (you are engaged in quarte, remember) the more exposed must he be on the outside line.

Lower your point, then, under his hilt, straightening your arm as you shift to the outside line, and longe like lightning.

Rapidity is everything in the disengagement; so you must be careful not to draw your point back, instead of merely lowering it, and not to make a wide semicircle round your opponent's blade. Your foil should slip, as it were, from quarte to tierce, close to his, acted on by the fingers only (Fig. 15).

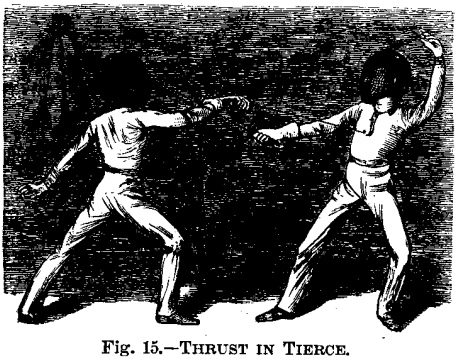

Fig. 15.—THRUST IN TIERCE.

Rapid as you are, your adversary is as quick; his eye is fixed on your wrist; his foil, touching yours, aids him to divine your intentions, and the moment you disengage he is ready with his parry in tierce or seconde before you longe.

In this case you seek your opening by a second disengagement, and hit him in quarte after all.

This double disengagement is called the "one, two," and is very hard to defeat with two simple consecutive parries; for the formation of the first leaves the breast so much exposed, that it is barely possible to form the second in time.

It is therefore met with the counter or round parry. How are you to receive this? By a counter-disengagement—that is, by letting your point follow his blade round the circle it describes until the position of the first disengagement is resumed, and then longeing.

The opponent seeks to defeat this attack by a combination of simple and counter parries, which is to be evaded by a similar combination of disengagements and counter-disengagements, unless arrested in their action by a beat, wrench, or pressure upon his blade.

Binding.—In a counter-disengagement your foil follows and avoids that of the adversary; when, on the contrary, your blade clings to his as it turns with it, in conjunction with the delivery of your thrust, it is termed binding his blade.

The favourite attack formed on this principle is termed the flanconade, and directions for the conduct of it will best explain the principle.

Draw your wrist sufficiently in towards your body to enable you to oppose the forte of your blade to your antagonist's faible; then suddenly from that position bind your sword over his, and without quitting it bring your point in a line with his body under his arm, and immediately longe, strictly in opposition; which will here be in octave.

This direction is Roland's, and he adds that the attack is most useful against an adversary who, being taller than yourself, depends upon his own superior length of reach, and stands with his arm extended, intending to oppose a straight thrust to any longe you may make; which, though bad fencing, might succeed if you quitted his blade to make an attack.

The Opposition mentioned above is that of the one blade against the other. If the swords are not in opposition, you cannot presage an attack, and are therefore unable to ensure against mutual hits.

The Change of Engagement differs from a disengagement, inasmuch as it is a mere shifting of your foil from one side of your adversary's to the other without straightening the arm; it is an attack upon his blade only.

In the high lines it is performed by a circular movement which carries the point of your sword under that of your adversary. In the low lines, by passing over the forte of his blade into the opposite line.

When an adversary changes his engagement, follow him, so as to prevent his gaining the command of your blade; if he beat, do not change engagement, but disengage.

During a succession of changes of engagement, remain always on the *qui vive* to parry; for your adversary will convert his change into a disengagement in a moment if he catches you napping.

Feints are used to bring an adversary, who seeks an advantage by refusing his blade, to an engagement, or to draw him from his line of defence. They may be either offers of direct thrusts or disengagements without longeing.

A Beat is a sharp blow on the opponent's blade with the purpose of confusing him, or throwing his weapon off the line preparatory to a feint or attack. But a frequent extension of the right arm without longeing is to be avoided.

Cut over Point.—The attacks which have been hitherto mentioned are directed either below the adversary's hilt or to one side or the other of his blade; there is another in which you seek to reach the adversary's breast by a whip over his weapon; raising your point, clearing his, extending your arm as your point descends again, and longeing when it is extended; these motions, of course, being simultaneous, when you have learned to perform them with accuracy.

The action may be exemplified by taking a cricket stump and fixing it in the ground by a downward *throw*. The action is that of striking or cutting, but the result is to fix the point in the spot aimed at.

Never attempt the cut over in loose play until you are perfect at it, or you will slash your unfortunate opponent over the arms and shoulders, instead of striking your point upon his breast; and a cut from a foil is no joke, even through sleeves of stout leather.

You would naturally imagine that the most dangerous moment for a fencer must be that following an unsuccessful attack, and this is indeed the case. The return thrust is called

The Ripost, and more hits are made by it than by any other form of attack. Nothing pays better than the constant practice of the direct ripost with the instructor, or an opponent acting in that capacity.

Commence carefully, paying great attention to the proper and strong formation of the parry, that the attacking blade may be thrown out of line, and then, from the position of the parry, without longeing, (the adversary's body being

brought within distance by his longe), without any movement but that of the sword-arm, thrust in return.

Then, as you acquire precision, make the ripost more and more rapidly until that and the preceding parry become almost one movement to the eye of a bystander.

Rapidity is the great thing, the formidable element in the ripost; give the adversary too large a fraction of a second, and he will have recovered; the opportunity has gone.

Fig. 16.—HAND IN SUPINATION.

Some men who never attain to any great proficiency in the higher branches of fencing—who never learn, that is, to fence with their heads, carrying out a combination of attacks studied beforehand, are, for all that, extremely dangerous opponents from the lightning rapidity they have acquired in the ripost, with and without longeing.

The ripost is generally delivered with the hand in supination (Fig. 16), but sometimes, when executed from a parry in which the nails are turned down, as from prime or seconde, there is advantage in keeping the hand in pronation (Fig. 17) during the return thrusts.

Fig. 17.—HAND IN PRONATION.

But the ripost with the mere extension of the arm is not always feasible; the adversary, feeling his thrust parried very early, may recover in time, and yet leave an opening; then the ripost must be accompanied by the longe.

These riposts, so deadly from their rapidity, are called *direct*, but if you are quick enough to seize the opening afforded by the adversary's attack, and find the line of direct return closed, you must make your ripost by disengaging, cutting over the point, or passing under the hilt, either with or without the longe.

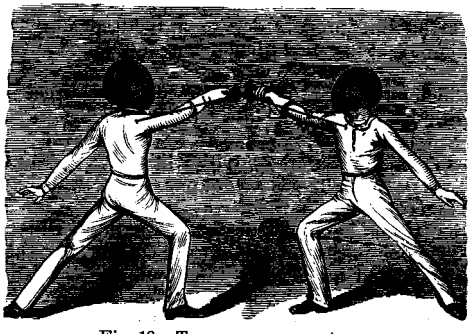

Fig. 18.—TIME OVER THE ARM.

The Remise.— When the original attack is yours, and your adversary delays the ripost after having parried, especially if the parry has been widely formed, so as to afford a good opening, you may repeat your attack while on the longe, without springing up to the guard again in the ordinary way. This is called the *remise;* and being made in consequence of an error in your opponent's play, and therefore with a more than average prospect of success, is to be carefully distinguished from

The Reprise, which is also a redoubling of the attack while on the longe, but made without reference to the opponent's play.

To attack originally with the foregone intention of making a second thrust (should the first be unsuccessful) while on the longe, whether the attack is met skilfully or the reverse, that is the *reprise*, and it had better be avoided by those who wish to acquire good form and steadiness, as it is apt to induce a rough, scrambling, haphazard style of fencing.

There is another sort of *reprise*, however, which is legitimate enough, and

that is a sudden repetition of the attack made, not upon the longe, but after recovery to the position of defence.

Time Thrusts are so called because their success depends entirely upon their being *timed* exactly as your adversary is planning or executing an attack on you. You trust in forestalling it, instead of turning it with a parry.

When they are made correctly they are highly scientific movements, requiring great judgment in planning them, and great accuracy and precision in their execution. The adversary must either be led by a carefully thought-out stratagem to make the attack you wish, or else you must be able to discover that which he is intending to make, and have sufficient quickness and decision to time him as he commences his feint, or to wait for his longe, as the occasion may require.

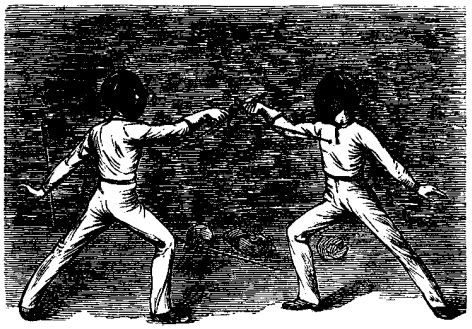

Fig. 19.—TIME IN OCTAVE.

Time thrusts are made either in opposition (with the swords crossing) or out of opposition (with the blades not meeting). Those in opposition are the least exposed to the danger of an exchange of hits, and of these there are two, the time over the arm, and the time in octave.

Time over the arm (Fig. 18) is applicable to all thrusts when the longe is made on the outside. Time in octave (Fig. 19) is employed when the longe is directed to the inside of the body or under the arm.

Time thrusts out of opposition are only to be employed where the adversary exposes himself, either by exceeding wildness in attack, drawing back his arm to thrust, or longeing without straightening it. In short, they are not to be thought of if your opponent fences in any form whatever. Even the legitimate time thrust, made with the swords in opposition, is a thing to be avoided unless you are quite sure of what you are about; for if you make the slightest mistake a mutual hit is hardly to be avoided.

Fencers who practise without a master should make it a rule to go through a longeing lesson before they commence; first one putting on the plastron and acting as instructor, and then the other. A very simple exercise will suffice if the men have but once learned, say this:—

On guard, engage in quarte; disengage, longe, recover in tierce.
Engage in tierce; disengage, longe, recover in quarte.
Engage in quarte; mark one, two, longe, recover.
Same from engagement in tierce.
Engage in quarte; disengage, the instructor parrying with the counter, follow him round, longe.
Same from tierce, longe.
Round quarte; round tierce, longe.
Instructor disengages; parry simple, longe.
Instructor disengages; parry counter, longe.
Engage in quarte; beat and longe.
The same; beat, one, two, and longe.
Same in tierce.

In these exercises the pupil must touch the plastron when he longes. The instructor, when he disengages, need not longe; it will be sufficient for him to point his foil towards the other's breast, to show the attack. To fill his part usefully he must pay great attention to the other's form, and check him if he fails to straighten his arm properly before longeing, if he bends forward, over-longes, leans on the plastron, or is slow in recovery, or neglects to lower his left arm. The pupil, in longeing at the plastron, is to relax the grasp of his fingers and raise his hand as high as the face as his point touches.

Fig. 20.—RESTING ON THE LONGE—POINT TOWARDS BODY.

If you cannot get any one to take the part of instructor, longe at the wall, paying strict attention to the position of your arm, body, and legs, for a little time before commencing loose play. By this means you will in some measure check the deterioration in style which is apt to attend too constant fencing without intervening lessons from a qualified master.

For a couple of ordinary amateurs to attempt to practise the more intricate exercises together would, however, be of such doubtful advantage that we do not think it advisable to give them here. But there is another way in which steadiness and a correct position may be maintained, and that is by two fencers keeping up the old-fashioned custom of

THRUSTING IN QUARTE AND TIERCE

before they commence loose play.

The exercise, which is a very showy one, is thus performed:—The fencers, fully accoutred, with the exception of their masks, which are laid on the ground at their sides, face one another in the upright position, with their left hands hanging easily, the palm upon the thigh, the points of their foils presented towards each other. Then, bringing their weapons to their left sides, and raising both hands above their heads, as shown in our remarks on position (*see* pp. 144, 145), they come on guard, crossing swords in the engagement of quarte, beat twice with the right feet, and expose their breasts, with their hands in tierce. Then one proves distance by longeing in quarte, reaching, but not actually hitting, the other. Next, both rise to the upright position by bringing the right heel to the left instep, and salute the spectators by turning the sword-hand to quarte, to tierce, with corresponding movements of the head and eye, and then saluting one another in a similar way, they bring the foil to the left side, and come on guard as before, repeating the movements of raising both hands above the head, &c.

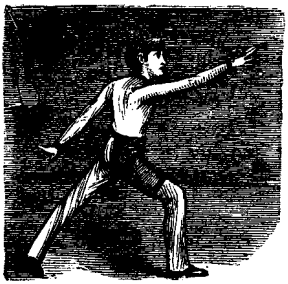

Fig. 21.—RESTING ON THE LONGE—POINT TOWARDS SHOULDER.

The one who has proved distance now disengages into the outside line high, nails up, maintains the opposition of the blade, and directly the disengagement is fully developed and the other's parry felt, slackens his hold upon the grip, and, by reversing his fingers, turns the point towards himself, the pommel towards his adversary. In this position he rests a little on the longe (Fig. 20).

Meantime, the other parries tierce on the disengagement, and presents his

point as in return of seconde, but without touching. The fencer on the attack recovers in tierce, disengages in quarte, again reversing the point, in this instance towards his right shoulder, the pommel towards his adversary, the eye glancing over the arm (Fig. 21).

The defender parries quarte, and presents his point as in the return of septime (a half-circle), but without touching.

After repeating these longes a few times, the fencer on the attack pauses in quarte, beats twice with his foot, and offering his breast, by turning his hand and blade aside in tierce, affords the other the opportunity of longeing, in his turn, to prove his distance. Both rise to the upright position, salute to right, to left, to each other, as before, and fall on guard. He who first attacked now parries, and *vice versâ*.

Fig. 22.—Hand and Hilt during the "Salute."

Upon the termination of the thrusting, the double beat with the foot, and the *one, two*, both regain the upright position, and then move the left foot one step backwards, falling on guard; beat twice with the right foot; bring the left foot up to the right, again assuming the upright position, salute in quarte and tierce, fall on guard, the right foot in advance of the left, beat twice again, bring the left foot up to the right, reassuming the upright position, and at the same time salute each other by bringing the hilt up to the mouth, and lowering the sword slowly.

Captain Chapman likewise recommends practising the counters of quarte and tierce: the fencers dispensing with the salute, wearing their masks, and longeing with the intention of touching, but always waiting until the position of defence is perfectly recovered before passing the disengagement.

Fig. 23.—Hand and Hilt during the "Salute."

After a few thrusts, on both sides, from the engagement of quarte, and upon which the counter of quarte should always be taken, the players should change their engagement to that of tierce, when, upon the disengagement and longe, the counter of tierce becomes the necessary parry.

The two diagrams (Figs. 22 and 23) representing the positions of the hand and hilt, while resting on the longe during the performance of the salute, are taken from Captain Chapman's admirable work, "Foil Practice."

Some men are put off their play when they find themselves engaged with a left-handed fencer, but there is no real reason why they should be. All you have to do is to watch the hilt, feel the blade, and attack where you see an opening. Keep cool, and you will find that the parries required are precisely the same as on ordinary occasions.

Have nothing to do with the charlatanry of the art, such as seeking to disarm your opponent, the volt or springing aside, &c. &c. Nothing pays like steady fencing, and the acquisition of the utmost rapidity.

There are, indeed, a thousand combinations and intricacies, which are to be learned by an apt pupil who has the rare good fortune to meet with a talented instructor; but the more haste the worse speed is as true of fencing as of anything else.

When mutual hits occur, the hit is reckoned in favour of the fencer making the attack, provided the attack does not occupy an unreasonable time in its delivery. When mutual hits occur between the remise and the ripost, the hit is reckoned in favour of the fencer making the ripost.

The faults which fencers have to guard principally against in loose play are—

closing upon each other, overlongeing, pressing on the longe, repeating the attack without regarding the opponent's ripost, and drawing back the arm to deliver the thrust.

We will conclude with a few general rules, which will pay right well for careful attention.

Engage out of the immediate reach of your adversary, and always cross his foil, if possible, in quarte or tierce; but your guard must be relative in height to his.

If your adversary will not cross blades, threaten him with the point, but do not longe under such circumstances, that is, out of opposition, unless you have a very decided advantage over him in reach.

If he raise his point, beat sharply, and longe. If you are the taller, attack; if the shorter, trust chiefly to the ripost.

Do not be disconcerted when you find your foil jarred and crossed in contraction, from your opponent having parried in an irregular fashion. With a little practice you will see how to avoid his blade, and profit by the irregularity.

Whip along the blade in tierce, or wrench over it from the engagement of quarte, when the adversary engages with a straightened arm, or attempts to arrest the attack by extending it.

Disengage into the opposite line when the adversary attempts to beat.

Yield the wrist and blade to his action, without quitting his weapon, when he attacks by encircling the blade, for by yielding the wrist the foil is brought round to the original engagement.

Beat or wrench before riposting, when the adversary rests upon his longe.

Regain the position of defence immediately after the longe, whether successful or not.

Feign the semblance of disengagement, in order to observe your adversary's usual manner of parrying, so as to plan an attack upon him.

If he tries that upon you, adopt some particular parry in order to draw an attack founded upon it, which you will then be prepared to meet and turn to advantage.

All disengagements made under the wrist are more dangerous than those made close along the blade. It is easier to cut over the point when the adversary's guard is low and his point high, and your forte therefore near his faible. And it is easier to hit with a disengagement when your point is near his forte.

Watch good fencers whenever you have a chance.

BROAD-SWORD OR SINGLE-STICK.

We have treated hitherto of the thrusting sword, and the rules for its use only; we now come to the consideration of weapons which are used simply for striking, or for both cutting and thrusting, as well as of those where the point alone is employed, but which are wielded with both hands.

The single-stick, which represents the broadsword, as the foil does the small sword or rapier, is an ash plant, pickled and baked, with a little peg driven through at the handle end to keep it from slipping through the guard. This used formerly to be made of wicker work, but is now generally of buffalo hide, which lasts almost for ever, while the baskets are soon knocked to bits.

Defensive clothing is not of so much importance as in fencing; the only disadvantage of dispensing with it altogether will be a few stinging cuts, raising weals, and possibly causing a slight abrasion of the skin, with the exception, indeed, of the face, over which a mask must be worn for the protection of the eyes, which might possibly receive injury from an unlucky blow.