

## BOATING FOR GIRLS.



FINISH OF STROKE.

It is rather remarkable that among the many excellent sportswomen in Great Britain there are comparatively few who are proficient with the oar. And yet rowing is an exercise eminently suited to women; it is graceful and health-giving, and it carries with it visions of sleepy river-nooks, overhung with willows, where the volume of poems, appropriately selected, drops gently from the hand, and the fair rower is lulled to dreamland by the lapping of the waters.

garden slopes down to the river edge, may scull a little for pleasure, but it is undeniable that they lack form and style.

On the Thames many a lady plays with her sculls, handing them over to another when the whim is gone; but a good, swift, even sculler is seldom seen in woman's garb.

There have recently been started in London some women's rowing clubs, which aim at encouraging scientific rowing. The members row two mornings before breakfast and two evenings a week, and are coached by an experienced boatman. Every fault of style is carefully corrected, and, on an average, five out of seven members develop into really good rowers. "No little sculling for amusement," as the captain will tell you, "but perfect oarsmanship, strong, steady, regular and correct."

The following is a rough summary of the points to be thoroughly mastered. Rowing (with one oar) on a fixed seat, remember:—

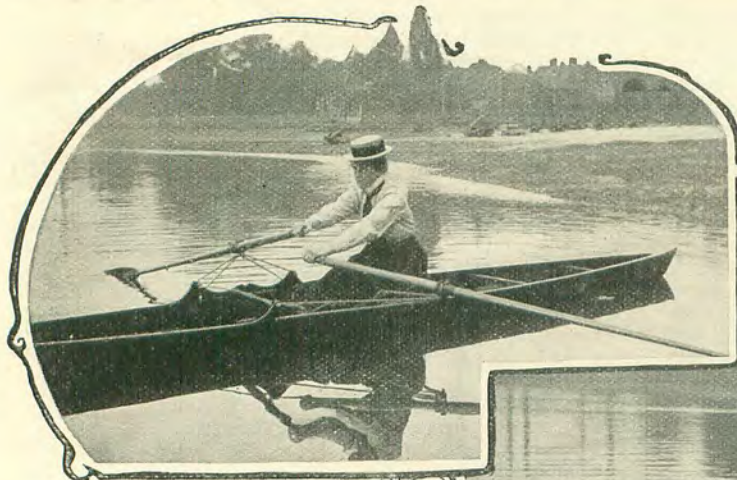
(1) The back must be rigid, and the body must swing from the hips alone. One of the commonest mistakes of women rowers is to bend the back, and to keep the legs stretched out and powerless. Then expand the chest, increase the respiration, and give an effectual stroke; the back should be quite rigid, the legs should be apart, and the knees bent outwards, as the body swings forward, so that the body can lower itself to a greater reach.

(2) The shoulders must be braced when the oar grasps the water, for if they give way, and the sockets stretch, the stroke is weakened.

(3) The legs and feet must be utilised at the exact time and in the right way; that is, they should press against the stretcher at the same moment that the oar touches the water, to give full force to the stroke.

(4) The oar must be held properly in the fingers—not in the fist, with the lower joints nearly straight, and the thumb underneath, not over, the handle.

(5) The depth of the blade in the water must be exactly governed. For this a free wrist is necessary, and after



WRONG POSITION—LEGS UNUSED.

Rowing is hard and vigorous exercise, but the strain can be relaxed at any moment, and the tyro can rest till she has recovered. More than any other exercise, perhaps, is it injurious when carried to excess, but more than any other is it health and strength-giving in moderation.

It is hard to say why so few women have gone in thoroughly for boating. Those who possess a boat, and whose



CORRECT POSITION—LEGS WIDE APART.

a little practice a certain particular depth is reached mechanically.

(6) The oar must be brought home to the chest, and the arms bent just when the body has found the perpendicular. The upper arm should be close to the ribs and the shoulders well back.

(7) The stroke should be rowed home by the shoulder muscles, not by the biceps.

(8) The roots of the thumb should touch the chest when the oar comes home. If the knuckles of the fingers touch the chest before the blade comes out of the water, the blade is feathered under water—a common fault.

(9) It is most important to avoid any delay between the stroke and recovery. The least delay entails a great loss of power. The hands should rebound from the body, the arms should straighten and the body should follow. Never "hang" after the stroke.

firmly and evenly against the stretcher, so as to take the weight of the body off the seat and transfer its support to the handle of the oar, thus making the most of one's weight and one's extensor muscles.

This list of points is not so formidable as it looks, and it must be carefully mastered, for a slight mistake in rowing soon becomes mechanical and is then very hard to conquer.

Of course sculling, that is, rowing with an oar in each hand, is the more popular form of exercise for women. One-oar rowing necessitates a companion, and is apt to over-develop the muscles of one side. The masculine tradition, that rowing is the only sport and sculling mere amusement, does not as a rule affect the boatswoman, who likes to sit square in the middle of her boat and work equally with both arms, feeling her craft move directly through her exertion. It may be woman's mission to



CORRECT POSITION.

(10) To feather with accuracy. The turn of the wrist will do this.

(11) The height of the blade above water during the recovery should be exactly governed. Only practice and observation can ensure a clean, even feather.

(12) The toes during recovery should feel the strap across them on the knuckle-joint of the big toe. The legs should open and allow the body to go between them.

(13) Keep the button of the oar home to the thole. This depends upon the swing of the body being true and exact.

(14) Regulate the speed of arms and body relatively to each other.

(15) Return the feathered oar to the square position at the right time. A common fault is to square the oar too soon, which encounters extra resistance of air, or too late, which is liable to lead to a foul. It should be squared at full reach, sharply, not gradually.

(16) The hand should be raised at the right moment and the blade lowered. The instant the body is fully forward and the oar square, the hand should be raised sharply to the exact height required to drop the blade to its proper depth in water.

(17) Recommence the action of the new stroke at the right instant, that is, at once, with the body sharply back, the arms stiff and the shoulders braced, the feet pressing



WRONG POSITION.

teach conservative man how much sculling is preferable to rowing.

In sculling the stroke is longer, and the body can be taken farther back. There must be a uniform pressure on both sculls, and they must come home one slightly in front of the other. The top joint of each thumb should cap the scull. This gives the wrist more play and avoids cramp.

The question of sliding seat is rather a vexed one. Its use makes sculling so much less fatiguing that for women especially is it to be desired. The legs extend gradually, the stroke is increased, less power is required, and the abdominal muscles are relieved. Some ladies use it, tying their skirts in at the ankles—a somewhat clumsy makeshift, and fatal in case of an upset. A few up-to-date girls row in rationals. The question of costume, however, will be solved when boating becomes more popular among women. For the present most of us find the fixed seat good enough.