

## 110 SPORTS, PASTIMES, AND PHYSICAL TRAINING

RULE 57.—In making all side or corner wickets the playing ball shall pass through them toward the centre.

RULE 58.—If a rule is violated, a penalty for which has not been provided, the player shall cease his play.

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### THE REWARDS OF FENCING.

BY

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THE fencer is always enthusiastic concerning his art, his *grande passion*. And why is this the case? Why does he not accept his fencing pleasures philosophically and continue in the even tenor of his way? The truth is, that he has found something of great value, of undeniable fascination, and about which he believes all his friends and acquaintances should know. Therefore does he publish the tidings abroad.

Sometimes uninitiated folk marvel at the unbounded praise fencing devotees shower on their favorite diversion. They stand aloof with a superior air and occasionally condescend to show a modicum of interest in the foils.

There comes a time, however, when the supercilious one becomes infected by the fever. He dons fencing garb, grasps a foil, and makes some instructor's life one continuous round of labor for weeks at a time. Then one day he realizes that he is actually a convert to the foils and that his enthusiasm may well be said to border on the fanatical. "I came to laugh and I remained to learn," he says to himself, and delves still deeper into the mysteries of the intricate, yet unparalleled science.

It is through many rewards to its disciples that fencing holds the attention of every man and woman, even though he or she taste ever so sparingly of its cup of pleasure. First, the practice of fencing affords an exercise that is absolutely unrivalled as a natural aid to the highest form of physical development and education. (Muscles as well as brains can be educated.) Can you fail to recognize the fencer? His grace and elasticity of bearing; his elegance of manner; his calm reserve, and, withal, the keenest of eyes; his firm hand-clasp, literally vibrating with energy; the admirable poise of his head; his erect carriage and his buoyant step set him apart from ordinary men, men of sedentary pursuits. The fencer is more what the Creator intended man to be than is the merchant or banker who shuts himself in his private office from morning until night, cramping his chest and lungs, rounding his shoulders and breathing "second-hand" air.

The physical benefits of fencing are so numerous, in fact, that he that would enumerate them in detail must needs possess a vast measure of endurance. Every muscle is brought into play, individually and in combination, and the system is invigorated surprisingly. As

a stimulant, a fencing bout is far more effective than the best tonic a physician could prescribe. So if you are a victim of any sort of a depressing affliction, try the fencing cure. After finishing with the foils, a cold bath and a rubdown with a rough towel will chop off at least ten years from the burden Old Father Time has rolled upon you.

The fingers, wrists, arms, shoulders, and legs are doubled in power by methodical fencing. This development of the muscular tissues, moreover, is invariably symmetrical. No huge, unsightly bunches of muscle stand out to impress bystanders. Lithe, agile, and quick as a wildcat, the operator of the foil is as far removed from the abnormal as is the product of a sculptor's chisel. Large muscles, such as some few of the Italian fencers possess, for instance, retard the rapidity of movement and render impossible good form of even the most elementary description. In addition, overdeveloped muscles tire far more quickly than do those of average size.

Fencing also gives a man a mental equipment superior to that which he originally devoted to the art. The exercise requires study, thought, and memory. It is none the less a science for being a recreation. Do not deceive yourself on this point. The brain is prompted to act without a moment's hesitation. It must change perception into action instantaneously. Readiness of wit is an unmistakable attribute of the fencer. He is as resourceful and as full of cunning as an Apache brave, and this is by no means a comparison to be sneered at. The fencer should make a better financier or diplomat than should a man reared along restricted lines. He should be quick to detect the weakness or strength of an argument or a situation and act swiftly, unerringly. He must do this very thing in fencing bouts. Cannot the same practice be transformed to business or professional life? There is no apparent reason to the contrary.

In social and everyday life the fencer has a distinct advantage over his narrower, uninterested, more prosaic co-laborer. He feels sure of himself at all times and under all conditions. His training has rendered it impossible for him to strike an awkward pose. He will unconsciously make movements that will attract attention through their ease. The constant use of his arms and hands has made him stronger than the ordinary man and the knowledge of this fact gives him confidence he would otherwise lack. In the business world he will be able to stand a great strain. No task will appall. The fresh blood and newly formed tissues will support him through many a crisis when competitors are exhausted and mayhap seriously ill through their efforts. The atmosphere of freshness and enthusiasm that he will unconsciously carry with him is certain to impress favorably the people with whom he comes in contact.

Fencing knowledge has often saved a man's life, or at least preserved him from serious bodily injury or loss of valuables. Attacked by footpads in a lonely spot, the fencer is able to keep his assailants at

a distance with nothing more than a cane and possibly disable them. A relative of the writer was once surprised in his home by a burglar. The intruder, a burly ruffian, sought to overpower the man in question by brute force. The latter, however, seized an umbrella, and, being an expert fencer, resisted the rushes of his opponent and punished him so severely that he was unable to escape from the police.

*Women and Fencing.*

Women find the art of handling the foils to be a wonderful benefit in many ways. The exercise reduces surplus adipose tissue, making the figure trim and comely, rounds the muscles, develops the busts, and the stimulus to the circulation of the blood improves the complexion to a highly desirable degree. They find fencing to be as conducive to lightness of foot and all-around gracefulness as dancing, and all the large fencers' clubs reserve certain hours each week for the convenience of the wives and daughters of the members. In the New York Fencers' Club, for instance, an extract from the provisions of the House Committee reads as follows:

"The Ladies' Class has the privileges of the Club every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning from 10 until 1 o'clock. The Maitre d'Armes and Prévôt will be in attendance to give lessons."

Some of the woman fencers in this country are remarkably expert in execution of the various thrusts, parries, and feints, and Miss Toupie Lowther, the well-known champion of the English women's fencing world, is more than a match for many a man that considers himself a capable performer.

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## FENCING FOR WOMEN.

BY

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**F**ENCING, as may be readily understood, calls constantly into motion all the muscles of the human frame, and yet strains none. Women of delicate physique find it not only without harmful results, but with excellent advantages from the beginning. It trains the faculties of perception and those governing responsive action; it keeps the head as well as the hands, the feet, and the entire body engaged. It lightens and quickens the eye and dispels mental gloom; it gives suppleness and strength, poise, erect carriage, and ease of motion.

It gives physical elasticity, which women in particular desire above muscular development. Heavy muscular development is not in keeping with the real conception of feminine grace. The inherent grace

of form is by its means brought with tension and action enough to give suppleness, firmness, and a correct contour of the muscles.

An unconscious poise is acquired, and is one among many of the valuable results. Speed of eye, of hand, a firm balance, judgment of distance, action, attack, and response bring into play almost every faculty of the mind and body. A few minutes with the foils would convince even the veriest amateur of the great benefit and almost marvellous effect derived from the practice of fencing.

In its essential difference from other sports the matter of graceful, quick, and varying poses necessitated in fencing, contrasts most forcibly with some of the heavier exercises. The correction of any fault in the respiration or circulation is almost immediate, while the effect is to open the pores and produce a perfectly healthy action of the skin, a brightening of the eyes, and clearing of the complexion.

Pupils should be taught to fence with both right and left hands to ensure an equal and symmetrical development and muscular control and to improve ambidexterity. For the reduction of embonpoint it is highly recommended, and is especially valuable in the case of those who are inclined to be anæmic, this condition usually resulting from lack of exercise and fresh air.

#### FIRST LESSONS IN FENCING.

BY WILLIAM J. HERRMANN, INSTITUTE OF PHYSICAL TRAINING, PHILADELPHIA.  
NOMENCLATURE OF THE FOIL.

Foil is divided into Blade and Hilt.

Blade is subdivided into:

"Point," which scores the touch; should be properly buttoned.

"Foible," upper third of weak part of blade.

"Middle," centre third of blade; where engagement takes place.

"Forte," lower third or strong part of blade, edges of which are used to parry.

"Tongue," soft part of blade running through hilt.

Regulation length of blade is 34 inches 5 blade.

Hilt subdivided into:

"Guard," which protects the hand.

"Grip," part grasped by sword hand.

"Pommel," weight of which regulates balance of foil.

#### TO GRASP THE FOIL.

Grip is held between thumb and forefinger, the other three fingers together underneath without clenching.

Thumb rests on convex side of grip about half inch from guard; concave side of grip rests on middle phalange of fore-finger.

The blade is directed largely in its course by the action of the thumb and fore-finger and the wrist. Hold very firmly only when thrusting or parrying, or in a lengthy bout; your hand will become cramped, preventing handling the foil with the necessary delicacy. No finger should loose its position after once having taken the proper grasp.

#### POSITIONS OF THE SWORD-HAND.

"Supination," finger nails up.

"Pronation," finger nails down.

"Middling," thumb up.

"Prime," thumb down.

#### POSITIONS OF THE BODY.

1st or Preparatory Position.

2d or Guard Position.

3d or Lunge Position.

#### First Position.

Heels together, feet at right angles, right foot pointing directly forward.

Sword-arm and blade in one straight line; hand in supination at height of eyes.

Left arm hangs naturally at side, but clearing it, palm facing left front slightly. Left shoulder well drawn back.

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Body shows three quarter left front.  
Head turned to right, looking squarely at opponent.  
Eyes frankly on opponent's.

### *Second Position.*

Feet at right angles, right toe pointing directly forward, heels in line, about twice the length of your own foot between heels, preferable more than less.

Right knee directly over instep, left knee in front of and to inside of left foot. Weight equally divided on both feet, and body poised upright on hips.

Body shows three quarter left front, but left hip well in. Left arm one continuous curve from shoulder to finger-tips, elbow as high as shoulder, finger-tips slightly higher than crown of head, thumb free, shoulder drawn back.

Sword-arm rounded, elbow about eight inches from body, hand in supination, about height of nipple, far enough to the left and high enough that a thrust in that line will not score; blade to cover, point in line about height of opponent's eyes.

As a general rule have your point somewhere between the height of his chin and eyes.

On Guard do not spare your legs; with practice you can bend them further with a consequent gain of power; should be low enough that you do not see your right foot as you drop your eyes.

Sword-arm bent too much handicaps you in parrying, and closing the lines threatened by your adversary's feints.

Sword-arm extended too much exposes your blade to attacks on it, such as binds, froisse's, etc.

As a general rule carry your sword-hand about half-way between extended arm and a strong parry position.

If you show full left front instead of three quarter you handicap yourself; with your body turned full left front, it is extremely difficult to preserve a steady balance, sword-arm is less free; in consequence the parries become wider and slow and the lunge less rapid than it should be, as it is impossible to get the quick action of the loins which is essential to a quick extension.

Too much weight on the forward foot handicaps your lunge.

Too much weight on the rear foot handicaps your retreat.

As a rule, however, it is more to your advantage to favor the left foot than the right.

Regulate your guard according to your opponent's height. Your position on Guard should be free and unconstrained; adequately covered, to facilitate your attacks and defensive movements; the best possible position from which to attack and defend with equal facility. Be always fully on guard in every sense of the word.

### *Third Position.*

In the lunge, glide forward with right foot grazing lightly, heel touching floor first, right foot pointing directly forward, heels in line, left foot flat on ground, well anchored; right knee perpendicularly over instep, left leg straight, left hip well in.

Body upright, left arm extended, palm up, about six inches to a foot from thigh.

Sword-arm extended, sword-hand in supination chin height; do not mask them, point in line with opponent's breast.

The lunge lengthens the thrust.

### *Half-Face Position.*

Similar to first position, but sword arm and blade one straight line from shoulder to point; point slightly to the right about 4 inches from floor; hand in supination, 1st position with lowered sword.

### TO PASS TO GUARD IN SEVEN MOVEMENTS.

Class or pupil at half-face.

1. 1st Position.

2. Lower your sword.

3. Pass sword to left, when right hand is opposite left hip, place back of left hand on the horizontal blade, finger nails touching guard, backs of both hands towards floor.

4. Elevate the arms, raise arms straight over head, keeping the blade horizontal and close to the body in its ascent, the foil and hands maintaining their same relative positions.

5. Rebend your arms, left arm and sword-arm takes position as on "On Guard."

6. Half-bend; bend both knees, separating them at the knees; heels remain on floor.

7. Advance the right foot; advance the right foot twice its own length, pointing directly forward in line with left heel and at right angle to left foot.

At the conclusion of the 7th movement, the pupil or class should find themselves "On Guard" (2d Position). The best position in which you are prepared to advance or retreat, attack or defend with equal ease and facility and without any preparatory movements.

## TO PASS FROM GUARD (2D POSITION) TO LUNGE (3D POSITION).

Extension of the sword-arm. Sword-arm fully extended, but without stiffness, hand in supination at height of chin, point slightly lower than level of sword-hand; the body remains perfectly steady. In extending, extend arm with hand at height of chin, and by action of wrist drop point below hand level in line to chest.

## EXTENSION OF THE BODY.

Quickly and simultaneously straighten left leg, glide forward with right foot, and lower left arm within about six inches of thigh, assuming third position.

Practise the extension diligently until executed with the greatest speed and precision.

The extension of the sword-arm must precede the extension of the body, and the body must remain upright and not fall forward on thigh.

Do not allow the ankle to project beyond the knee in the lunge; it interferes with a speedy recovery.

## THE RECOVERY.

Bend the left leg, spring back sharply from right foot, throw the left arm up, draw back the right foot and sword-arm, finding yourself back on guard in second position.

Do not plant yourself heavily on the recovery, but be ever ready to instantly dart forward again.

Always recover with the greatest speed at your command.

## THE APPEL.

Strike the floor sharply with the right foot without deranging the position of the body; used to test the equilibrium.

Modern fencing uses it chiefly in Grand Salute, although at one time used considerable in the Assault.

## CLOSING FORWARD AND BACKWARD.

*Close to the Rear.*

From second position bring right foot back to the left, assuming first position.

*Close to the Front.*

From second position bring left foot forward to right, assuming first position.

## FOOT WORK.

*Advance.*

Advance by gliding the right foot a convenient distance, the left foot following with the same length step, without deranging the position of the body, sword-arm or blade. Both steps must be taken with the greatest rapidity, right foot always leading.

*Retreat.*

Step back with the left foot, instantly following with the right, without deranging the position of body, sword-arm and blade. Must be executed with the greatest rapidity, left foot always leading. To retreat without a motive is a fault.

## PRACTICAL LESSON IN PRECEDING EXERCISES.

1. Half Face.
2. Pass to Guard, in seven movements.
3. Extend your sword-arm.
4. On Guard.
5. Extend your sword-arm.
6. Lunge.
7. Recover guard.
8. Advance, extend your sword-arm, lunge, recover guard, retreat.
9. Double advance, extend your sword-arm, lunge, recover guard, double retreat.
10. Two Appels.
11. Close to the rear.