

WRESTLING.

BY GEORGE HACKENSCHMIDT,
WORLD'S CHAMPION.

Illustrated from photographs by Messrs. Foulsham and Banfield, in which the wrestlers are Messrs. George Hackenschmidt and F. Gruhn.

IT was only natural that the ancients, who valued form and strength above everything, should have placed wrestling high among athletics as rendering men graceful, robust, and capable of endurance.

There are many stories of the enthusiasm with which victorious wrestlers were greeted at the public games. The men among the audience shouted and cried; the women took off their jewels and hurled them into the arena. It was the custom to place the victor in a chariot drawn by horses of the finest breed, and drive him up and down before the admiring spectators. The hero must have cut a fine figure in his tunic embroidered with flowers, proud beneath the crown given for the exploits of the day, and carrying a palm in his right hand, while a thousand voices shouted his name aloud.

Nor was his triumph fleeting. Poets, sculptors, and painters placed his great deeds on record. Of presents he had enough and to spare. The directors of the games gave him slaves, armour, vases; and kings heaped jewels on him. When he returned home, there was no extravagance which his native place would not incur to honour him. Splendid triumphal arches were erected, and in many cases city walls were pulled down in order that the wrestler might have room for his procession of musicians,

dancers, and priests bearing emblems of immortality.

"Ye shall be as gods!" was certainly true of these famous athletes. The State supported them during their lifetime, and at their death mourned their loss as a public calamity. Their memory was kept green by festivals, and future ages were called upon to emulate their feats and virtues.

All this may seem the height of folly to modern reason; but for the most part the moderns are ignorant of the high philosophy and the fine influence on the race which this adoration of strength symbolised. One of the chief causes which led to the Greeks and Romans becoming rulers of the world was that the rewards and honours bestowed on the successful athlete raised up thousands eager to emulate his



F. Gruhn.

G. Hackenschmidt.

1.—THE USUAL FIRST GRIP.

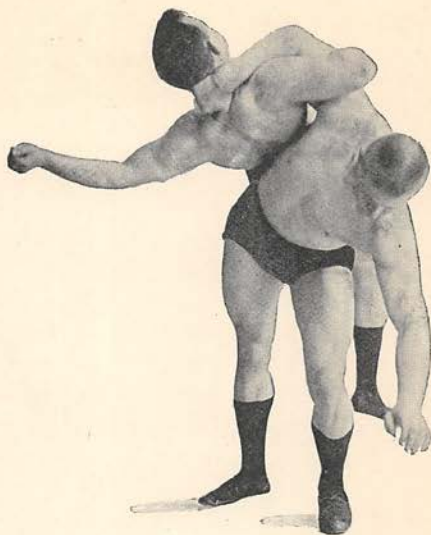
achievements, and so created a race of powerful fighters and defenders. The city which razed its walls to welcome the wrestler home was not committing wanton damage. It was expressing eloquently the fact that heroes are better for defence than all the ramparts ever built. When the young men of antiquity gave themselves up to athletics, it was not from greed of gain, but from hope of glory—the glory symbolised by the crown of wild olive, of pine, or of laurel.

From the earliest times wrestling formed

part of the Olympic games, and we are told that Hercules wrestled with Antæus, and Theseus with Cereyon. Many other celebrated combats have been described for us by ancient poets and historians, notably by Homer in the "Iliad" and Virgil in the "Æneid." Ovid, in the "Metamorphoses," gives a vivid picture of the struggle between Hercules and Achelous, and Lucan, in the "Pharsalia," of that between Hercules and Antæus, and many more examples from classic writers might be quoted.

In course of time the science of wrestling fell into disrepute, the day of the great wrestlers came to an end, and of the Coliseum at Rome only a ruin remained. This process of decay was so rapid that very soon professional wrestlers occupied no better positions than acrobats of doubtful morality with whom people of ordinary culture hesitated to associate. The wrestler was, indeed, so far outside the pale that he could only earn a precarious livelihood by exhibiting his skill in travelling shows held in barns or hastily erected tents. So a race of men once worshipped as demi-gods came to be treated as pariahs by a degenerate and emasculate society, and one of the most ancient and famous of athletic sciences was degraded to the level of a galanty show.

The reaction was long in coming, but it came at last. About five years ago a few generous-minded men, loving sport for sport's sake, banded themselves together with the object of reviving wrestling as a science. Their names were De Luccuski, editor of the *Journal des Sports*; Louis Delmer, presi-



III.—HALF NELSON AND BUTTOCK.

dent of the Fédération Athlétique in Belgium; the Comte de Ribeaupierre, president of the Cercle Athlétique at St. Petersburg; and Frauz Reichel, on the staff of the *Figaro* and the *Vélo*. These were the men who brought the wrestlers out of their barns, off their pavement carpets, and placed them before the public in a manner worthy of their great traditions. Thanks to these five enterprising men, wrestling championships were founded all over the Continent, arenas were built, and a journal founded devoted entirely to wrestlers and wrestling, known as *The Biceps*. Through their efforts the science of wrestling has been raised to something of its old dignity and importance, and public enthusiasm for its exhibitions of skill has been revived. Proof has not been wanting, in those countries where the revival has had most influence, that the wrestler can do as much for his country as the scholar and the soldier. Those who, like myself, are accepted as the foremost wrestlers of the time, have the satisfaction of knowing that their names are celebrated all over the world. Our presence at competitions is eagerly sought after. Instead of being shunned, people flatter themselves upon our acquaintance and are anxious to make it. There has been something like a return to the customs of antiquity in the treatment of wrestlers. Perhaps the day will come when we shall be loaded with honours!

The names of Hercules, Theseus, Milon, Croton, Chilon, Polydamas, Theogenes have come down to us from ancient times, but



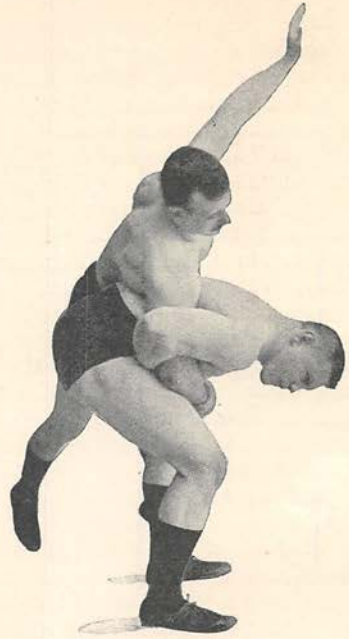
II.—PARRYING THE ATTACK.



IV.—THE CREEL HOLD.

the leading athletes of our own day are worthy to stand side by side with these heroes. Indeed, it is a question whether the anatomy of the modern wrestler is not superior to that of the ancient, as represented to us by the work of the sculptor of his day.

The twentieth century will be pre-eminently the century of sport, the century of physical force. People will be strong because they will have learnt scientifically how to become so. But in wrestling it should always be remembered that one does not become a wrestler because one is strong. One acquires strength through being a wrestler. It should be clearly understood



V.—THE ARM LOCK.

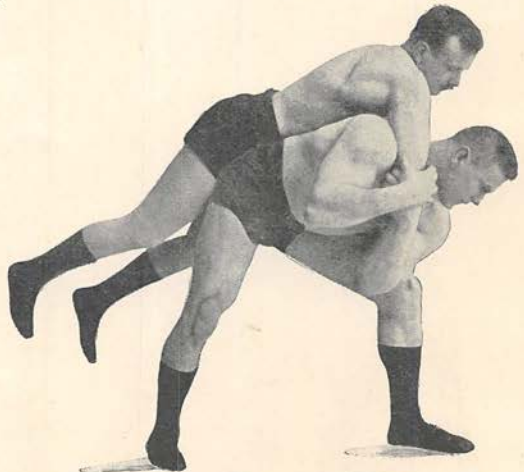
that wrestling is a branch of gymnastics of the highest type, that it involves the possession of health and strength, and that it develops the art of becoming a useful member of society. The younger generation, however, who take it up, should guard against practising it solely with a view to spectacular effect.

GRÆCO-ROMAN WRESTLING.

In the brief abstract of the history of wrestling which I have just given, I have only touched on classic wrestling—that is to



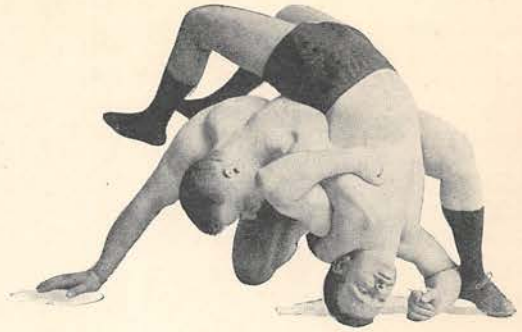
VI.—BUTTOCK FROM THE HIP.



VII.—“THE FLYING MARE,” A FEATURE OF THE DEVON, CORNWALL, AND LANCASHIRE STYLES.



VIII.—NECK TWIST, HALF NELSON, AND HEAVE COMBINED.



IX.—PARRYING THE ARM LOCK, A POSITION SELDOM NECESSARY IN PRACTICE.

say, on wrestling in the Græco-Roman style. There are, of course, many other kinds, such as the Swiss, the "Catch-as-catch-can," and the Turkish wrestle. The principles of these are quite different from those of the Græco-Roman, where one has to throw one's adversary by skill—virtually strength used to the best advantage. In such wrestling the "Collar by force" and the "American arm" are admissible, but such strokes are ineffective unless you want to break one of your adversary's limbs! If anyone doubts the truth of this, let him submit his neck to me for the first, his arm for the second, and I fancy he will be less doubtful.

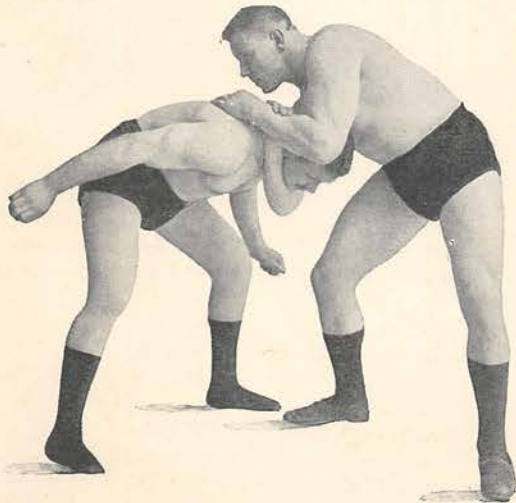
Græco-Roman wrestling is undoubtedly a science. All the moves are determined by

certain rules, and as it argues a lack of skill to touch with the leg, accidents rarely occur. It could not be said of this wrestle as the Turks used to say of their variety: "At the wrestle, the men die—the women cry." Under Græco-Roman rules, each stroke is a matter of thrust and parry. It would take too long for me to give a detailed description of all these strokes here. I must content myself by indicating some of the most usual forms of thrust and parry in the accompanying poses which I have taken up with my friend Ferdinand Gruhn, amateur champion of wrestling in England.

HOW TO BECOME STRONG.

Every day new systems of developing the body are brought to our notice. But developing the body does not necessarily make it strong. You may use a small 5lb. weight and brace your nerves and muscles, develop them too, perhaps, but the exercise will not give you strength. Whereas exercising with heavy weights, augmented from day to day, requires the putting forth of fresh effort, and develops not only the size of the muscles employed, but their strength, which, after all, is the essential thing. This is the *régime* that I have always followed:—

I eat and drink what tempts my appetite,



X.—A NECK HOLD.



XI.—THE BRIDGE.

and as much as my stomach can retain with comfort. I abstain from alcohol.

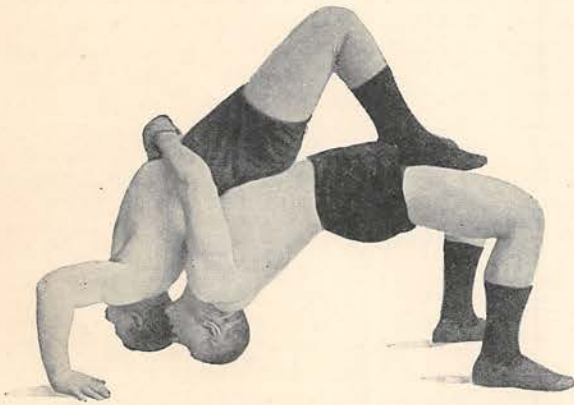
I take exercise daily, but without confining myself to any one branch of athletic training. Such exercise includes skipping, swimming, manipulating heavy weights, and wrestling.

The rest may be summed up in a sentence—as far as possible I avoid *excess* of every kind.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MYSELF.

My object in speaking about myself is that I hope my case may serve as example and encouragement to those of my readers who may feel disposed to take up wrestling. I am also perhaps actuated by a wish to dissipate the idea that there is any charlatancy in my success.

I am twenty-four. Weight, 96 kilos.



XII.—THE DOUBLE BRIDGE.

Height, 1 metre 32 centimetres. Biceps, 47 centimetres round. Forearm, 36 centimetres. Thigh, 68 centimetres. Calf, 42½ centimetres. Neck, 49 centimetres. When I was eighteen, I was at St. Peterburg pursuing my studies as an engineer, and going regularly to Professor Krajewski's gymnasium, where I assiduously practised exercises with weights and dumb-bells. Thanks to this training, I have been able to beat various records, and at the present time I hold twelve official world-records:—

1. Lifting with both arms : 116 kilos.
2. Lifting with one arm : 91 kilos.
3. Turning with one arm : 123 kilos.
4. Outstretched arm to left : 42 kilos ; outstretched arm to right : 44 kilos (simultaneously).
5. Arm stretched out in front : 55 kilos.
6. Arm held up perpendicularly : 105 kilos.

7. The same repeated twenty-one times in succession : 70 kilos.

8. The same repeated nine times : 80 kilos.

9. Turning with one arm four times in succession : 100 kilos.

10. With bent legs, raising and lifting above the head with both hands 141 kilos.

11. Lying on the back, supporting 150 kilos.

12. Lying on the back, turning 165 kilos.

Comparisons have often been instituted between Sandow and me—comparisons which are purely speculative. If Sandow consents to meet me, I shall be able to convince sceptics on the subject of his strength and of my own. Sandow advises training with expanders and light weights. I recommend the system of heavy weights, carefully graduated. Therefore Sandow and I belong to entirely different schools. My meeting with Sandow would prove which school is right—mine or his. Naturally, I am of opinion that my school would prove successful.

It was only after I had occupied myself with every branch of the art of lifting weights that, taking the advice of Count Ribeaupierre, president of the Société Athlétique at Petersburg, I practised wrestling. I was then twenty-one years of age. I had a meeting with Paul Pons, then champion of the world, and threw him in seven minutes. From that time I began to wrestle professionally, and gave up my work as an engineer.

I should never have been thrown by any wrestler if, two years ago, when I was still suffering from the effects of illness, I had not had the imprudence to try a throw with Laurent-le-Beucairois. Before this meeting I had thrown him seven times. I have been proclaimed victor in all the bouts in which I have taken part, and have thrown all the wrestlers who have challenged me, among the more famous of whom I may quote : *Turkish* : Kara-Ahmed, Halil Adali, Cotch Mehmet. *French* : Laurent-le-Beucairois, Paul Pons, Maurice Gambier, Lassartesse, De la Calmette. *Belgian* : Constant-le-Boucher, Clément-le-Terrassier, Omer de Bouillon. *German* : H. Eberlé, Jacobus Koch, Michael Hitzler, John Pohl. *Dutch* : Dick van den Berg. *American* : Piening. *Bulgarian* : Petroff. *Russian* : Michailow. *Danish* : Petersen.

QUALITIES ACQUIRED BY WRESTLING.

Energy, intelligence, and confidence are the qualities which my experience teaches me are the results of wrestling. It is, perhaps, needless to dilate on the value of energy in our moral outfit. The energetic man is not afraid of any enterprise; he does not shrink from any danger. He is insensible to fatigue, for the object in view is the only thing which occupies his mind, and to attain it he will rise superior to suffering and despise comfort. It is energy which distinguishes the hero from other men.

This energy can be acquired and developed by wrestling. Of ten men equally skilful and strong who engage in combat, which is the one who will be successful? I answer, the most energetic. When the muscles grow tired, there remain will and energy, which need never tire. When two men possessed of this remarkable energy engage, their nerves and wills grip as well as their bodies; and when at last one succumbs, one may say with truth that the body alone has been vanquished, and to both of these men who have put out the full measure of their energy one can apply Horace's words: "*Impavidum ferient ruine.*"

That wrestling also develops *intelligence* cannot be denied. Plato, the philosopher with the broad shoulders, was a wrestler. The sport, in which he frequently indulged, did not prevent him from being one of the most vigorous and illustrious thinkers in the world's history. Pythagoras, when he was only fifteen years of age, carried off the prize for wrestling at the Olympic games. This precocious excellence in athletics did not extinguish in him the sacred flame. All



XIII.—THE NECK GRIP. (IN THIS, STEADY PRESSURE ONLY IS ALLOWED—A JERK IS FORBIDDEN.)



XIV.—RECOVERY OF THE ARMS, OR "AMERICAN ARM." (HERE, TOO, A JERK IS NOT ALLOWED—STEADY PRESSURE ALONE MUST BE EXERCISED.)

the world knows the reputation which he has left behind as a philosopher. It is a fact worth noting that wrestling, far from being an affair of brute force, brings into play a skill which at its best must proceed from the intelligence. In wrestling, worthy the name, the head commands, the muscles obey. It is intelligence which makes a wrestler capable of using the many and varied combinations in attack which make wrestling more than an art—a whole science of tactics in itself.

The same difficulties await you in the wrestling struggle as in what is popularly called "the struggle for life." In both a practical intelligence is the secret of success, and the development of this faculty means victory.

Lastly, wrestling, more than any other sport, gives a man confidence in himself. The wrestler is accustomed to looking his adversary in the face, to meeting him without the tremble of an eyelid. There stands a man who may be stronger than oneself. Who knows? Well, it's no good thinking about it. There are no comrades to help, as in some other sports. One has to rely on one's strength and skill, and take the full responsibility of the result. This develops confidence.

The Greeks gave the name "Gymnasium" to the public schools where their young citizens were educated. Wrestling was taught alongside of art and letters. Result—Pericles, Alcibiades, and Plato.

It would be a good thing, both for the intellect and for the physique of future generations, if gymnasiums in the true sense of the word could be revived to-day. And on their programme of instruction I would place "Wrestling" as first among the gymnastics of the world.