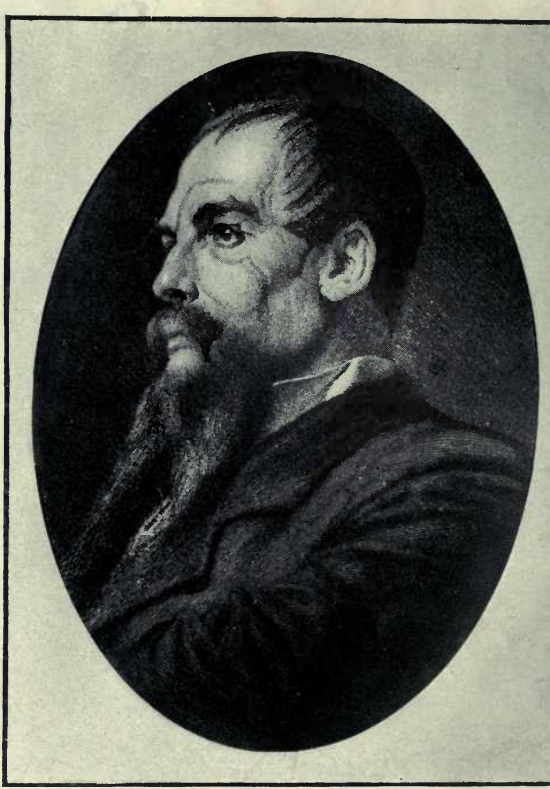
J. Lewis Duncan

Sep. 11. 1911.

THE SENTIMENT OF THE SWORD.



CAPT. SIR RICHARD BURTON, K.C.M.G.

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THE SENTIMENT OF THE SWORD.

A COUNTRY-HOUSE DIALOGUE.

BY THE LATE
CAPTAIN SIR RICHARD F. BURTON,
K.C.M.G., F.R.G.S.

Edited, with Notes, by
A. FORBES SIEVEKING, F.S.A.;

and a Preface by
THEODORE A. COOK.

REPRINTED FROM THE "FIELD."

LONDON:
HORACE COX,
"FIELD" OFFICE, BREAM'S BUILDINGS, E.C.

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1911.

PRINTED BY HORACE COX, THE "FIELD" OFFICE,
BREAM'S BUILDINGS LONDON, E.C.

THE EDITOR'S SHARE IN THIS WORK IS

Dedicated to

CHARLES FELIX CLAY,

A FINE FENCER;
AN ORGANISER OF BRITISH FENCING AS FIRST
HON. SECRETARY TO THE AMATEUR FENCING ASSOCIATION;
AND THE TRANSLATOR OF
BAZANCOURT'S 'SECRETS DE L'EPÉE,"
WHICH INSPIRED BURTON THROUGHOUT
"THE SENTIMENT OF THE SWORD."

PREFACE.

LIFE, as we know it, had scarcely crowned the travail of creation and produced a man when man rose up and slew his brother. That first killing must have been some uncleanly business, with a boulder clenched in an angry fist. It must have taken very little time to discover that other men were better slain with some more elongated instrument. At first the flint that flaked so easily into a fatal shape was bound with deers' sinews to a wooden shaft. Then Earth gave up her secrets at the call of Death, and with bronze and iron the forge of Tubal Cain's descendants set to work at weapons. Leaves, or tall fronds of water plants, were instant models for the prehistoric sword. The falchion that Achilles wielded flashes its primeval origin. The strong blade of the Roman legionary warred down the world with trenchant edge and thirsting point until the hordes out of the ancient East swept over Europe better armed. Against the scimitar of the Moslems, the long, straight Norman sword hewed out its path to Palestine and reigned, in turn, as Death's best sceptre from Scandinavian fiords to the Sicilian seas. By war man smote his way to freedom,

> Stripped and adust in a stubble of empire.
> Scything and binding the full sheaves of sovranty.

By the sword he held his blood-stained fief until the age of chivalry was overpast, until the mailed knight vanished at the first whiff of Friar Bacon's villainous saltpetre, and gunpowder, which choked Don Quixote's dream, produced the art of fence. The days had passed when, in a clear air, hand to hand, the lines of warriors met and grappled; when every wound showed gaping red, and every hand that dealt it reddened; when armoured cohorts, irresistible, charged by sheer weight through legions of the lesser sort, and trampled, hacked, and hewed them into lifelessness. Now missiles came from far through murky tracts of smoke-stained mist, belched from some iron artifice, like blasts of Tophet, and in their path was death that no cuirass, no carapace of armour could withstand. So the one excuse for a complete protection of the body vanished, and from the crowd of ancient armour-cracking weapons, mace, hammer, flail, and such like, the sword rose paramount. More lightly clad, the horseman could ride swifter, move his limbs with greater freedom. The joints in his harness expanded into gaps. One by one his metal shields dropped off, and, as he

thus gradually used his armour less and less, so did he become more vulnerable to the skilled swordsman, and so did the point begin triumphant to assert its superiority over the edge.

One result was an immediate outpouring of volumes on the new science of fence from Perpignan, from Spain, from Italy, from Germany. The whole continent was agog with geometrical and mathematical theories, with complicated and encyclopædic treatises, which overlaid the subject with so many extraneous trivialities that all sight was lost of the one deadly principle that simplicity is best, when killing is your game, and when the killer is a man of human passions, human errors, human shortcomings. A fatal stroke is rarely made by one whose nerves are absolutely calm; it is never made, save in the foulest ways of murder, without the necessity for self-defence at the same moment. It is, therefore, best made as the easiest of simple and instinctive movements. But this was the last thing fencing masters realised. The discovery of the point had fairly dazzled them. Though for many years it did not involve anything like complete abandonment of the edge, yet that discovery alone gave the rest of Europe a temporary and marked superiority over England in the art of duelling, for your downright Englishman would at first have nothing to say to the new-fangled "foining" from across the Channel. A good heart and a strong blade was all he wanted. But time after time the ruffian who had learned to lunge in France was found to be more effective than the Briton who trusted to the edge alone. Slowly and cautiously the foreign fencing master was admitted; for these islanders, who "were strong, but had no cunning," found themselves obliged to learn. At Westminster, upon a July 20, in the thirty-second year of his reign, Henry VIII. granted a definite commission to certain "Masters of the Science of Defence," and for this reason the Tudor rose is to-day the badge of English fencing teams in international tournaments, under the rules of the Amateur Fencing Association, whose patron was King Edward VII. and is now King George V. Under Elizabeth the "scholar" obtained his diploma of efficiency after a kind of examination called "Playing his Prize," which consisted of bouts at certain weapons, supervised by the masters, and these were, no doubt, the origin of the "Prize Fights," which Pepys observed in the days of Charles II.; but development moved very slowly still. Only by tedious degrees did the deadly form of fence which Agrippa invented for the weapons of his day spread throughout Europe, and become general, as swordsmanship and fencing spread among all classes. The rapier play perfected at the end of the sixteenth century kept a great deal of cutting with its use of the point, as the famous duel between Jarnac and Chataigneraie sufficiently shows; it also kept a great deal of use of the left hand, either with a dagger or with a

cloak, and sometimes unarmed, for many an Elizabethan duellist "with one hand held cold death aside, and with the other sent it back to Tybalt." The reason of this was that the rapier was a long and heavy weapon; its real size may be gathered from the old rule that "with the point at your toe the *cross* should reach as high as your hip bone." This meant that a weapon which nearly always resulted in severe wounds when used in attack was not handy enough alone to provide an efficient defence, and the left hand, with or without a dagger, had to be brought into play to protect the swordsman. This at once involved the disadvantage that adversaries, doubly weaponed, must perforce stand very square to one another, and would risk many chances of grappling and "in-fighting," at which the better fencer might be worsted by a muscular opponent; science, in fact, made far less difference than it does at present. A more accurate and more complete system became a necessity. So the point by degrees superseded the edge entirely. One weapon was found sufficient both for attack and for defence; for the point kept men at their distance, and the fencer, using one hand for balance, did all that was possible, by standing sideways, to efface the surface of his body open to attack.

It is, perhaps, significant that the era which produced the perfection of fencing, the crowning masterpiece of the *riposte*, was also the age when duelling with the sword went out of fashion in those countries where the national skill had not rendered it practically innocuous. The history of firearms provides an example of a similar series of causations. When Gentlemen of the Guard fired first, and the officer's cane pressed down their musket barrels on a mark some fifty paces distant, the slaughter of the volley would have made modern humanitarians turn pale. But in these days of the repeating rifle and the Mauser magazine, one army has hardly time to see the manly countenances of its foes throughout a whole campaign, and, relatively, very little bad blood has been spilt when all is over. It has remained for the days of "scientific hygiene" to count more victims killed by disease than fell in action. So the sword was in danger of becoming a mere symbol, though always a brilliant symbol, for the martial poet,

> Clanging imperious
> Forth from Time's battlements
> His ancient and triumphing song.

Perhaps this is why, both in France and England, the military authorities have shown a creditable anxiety to remove it from the vulgar sphere of practical utility, and the six-shooter has entirely replaced it in the United States, and meanwhile the subtle perfection of foil play steadily came more and more into favour. Emancipated from the bonds of too strenuous utilitarians, freed from the fetters of an encyclopædic scholasticism, yet

glowing, still, with the romance of all its glorious past, the sublimated spirit of good swordsmanship throughout the ages seemed to float over the fencing-rooms of the last decade of the nineteenth century; for here, even in England, the discovery of the French duelling sword (or *épée de combat*) had given renewed zest to practice with its elder sister, the foil. Even the exquisite art and laudable enthusiasm of a Camille Prévost could not, however, recommend to the average militant male a pursuit which he regarded as a mere academic elegance, with very little reference to the serious issues of personal combat and no pretence to the employment of a serviceable weapon. Englishmen asked for something more practical, and in épée play they have found it. The late W. H. C. Staveley, whose recent and untimely loss all English fencers have so sincerely mourned, was first-rate with the foil before his épée and sabre play had reached international form, and he was as eager to preserve the qualities of the foil as he was to fight the foremost with the sword. Capt. Hutton, too, who died within a few days of his younger comrade, was a president of the Amateur Fencing Association whose place will be difficult to fill, for he guided modern developments with an experience of the past that was well-nigh unequalled, and the swordsmanship of the last thirty years owes much to his presence and example.

But though our amateur fencing championships, with foil, épée, and sabre, are now regularly carried out each year, it may be feared that the art of swordsmanship remains a mystery to the larger part of the inhabitants of these isles, and that few of the great sporting public know the meaning of the little Tudor rose (commemorating Bluff King Hal, as aforesaid) which hangs at the watch-chain of those who have represented England in an International Tournament. Yet there was a time when Englishmen, sword in hand, could face the rest of Europe without fear, either in the fencing-room or on "the field of honour." They had at first been a long time learning that the Continent had really got something to teach them; having at last learnt it, they proceeded to outdo their masters. But they gave up the game as soon as they dropped wearing swords. Practical danger appealed to them; artistic recreation left them cold. They had laughed duelling out of fashion, both with steel and pistol; they forthwith gave up going to the fencing-room. Angelo's work seemed likely to be wholly forgotten within scarce two generations of his prime. A few men only—Burton, Chapman, Hutton, Egerton Castle, the two Pollocks, perhaps a short half-dozen more—saved foil play from complete oblivion in London during the long years of eclipse. The following dialogue, of which the first publication began in the pages of the *Field*, is from the hand of Sir Richard Burton, that curious blend of the mystic and the athlete, of the explorer and the linguist, of the antiquary and the scholar. A man who

felt as strongly as it has been ever felt the passion he calls "the wild and fiery joy which accompanies actual discovery," Burton equally delighted in the subtler expression of intellectual, temperamental, even psychical emotions; and was therefore very peculiarly qualified to describe "the Sentiment of the Sword." His sketch of "Shughtie," one of the characters in his conversation, is probably intended as a portrait of the writer (or one side of him) by himself. His dialogue, which throws several curious sidelights on Mid-Victorian society (in velvet smoking caps and whiskers), is valuable not merely for its sound doctrines of swordsmanship, but for its revelations of his own character and personality. It has been edited by Mr Forbes Sieveking, a skilled upholder of the foil, to whom London owed, some dozen years ago, an exhibition of first-rate foil play in the Portman Rooms that was not surpassed either in excellence or in interest until the famous evening when the King saw Pini and his Italian champions vanquished in the Empress Rooms by Kirchhoffer, Mérignac, and the flower of France. That was a typical encounter, for which those who had seen Camille Prévost's elegant classicalism on the former occasion were more than half prepared. The passing of the sceptre from Italy to France had been foreshadowed already. It may now be taken as an accomplished fact.

First-rate foil play has invariably been too delicate in its essence, too ideal in its aim, too unpractical in its courteous fragility for the majority of Englishmen. It is the foundation of the knowledge of all weapon play, and your true foil player need never be at a loss in a scrimmage, even if he bears but that unromantic symbol of civic respectability—the silk umbrella. But in itself the foil has always appealed to a very small minority of our countrymen. The scoring was complicated, restricted, and liable to much misconception, save by the rare and tyrannous expert. The somewhat artificial ceremonies attending it had too Continental a flavour for your insular athlete, who liked to know both when he hit his foe and when he had been hit himself. And so the whirligig of time has brought yet other changes. Fencing has experienced a miraculous Renaissance in this country owing to the introduction of the pool system and the *épée de combat*, the triangularly fluted rapier of the French duellist, with its semicircular cup hilt, its light blade, and foil handle, its grim simplicity of method, its virtual reproduction of the conditions of the duel, its strictly businesslike and obvious scoring. The first pool ever held here in public with this weapon was in the Steinway Hall in 1900. By 1903 the first English fencing team that ever crossed the Channel competed in Paris in the International Tournament. Much to the surprise of their compatriots they were not last, for a victory over the Belgians served as an anticipatory atonement for lost Grand Challenge Cups at later Henleys.

In 1906, only three years afterwards, the English team fought France to a dead heat in the final at Athens for the first time in any open international event. It is not too much to hope for even greater honours in the future. The popularity of the new sport—for new it is, in its first decade still—would have fairly astonished Richard Burton, and, we may safely add, have thoroughly delighted him, for he knew all about the possibilities of the épée, as did a few other Englishmen in the latter half of the nineteenth century; but it never became really popular till after 1900, and now we hear so great an authority as J. Joseph-Renaud, across the Channel, saying that "foil play is dead." We do not believe that the foil will ever die while swordsmanship remains alive; but it is a fact that the épée has given an impulse to English fencing of which the foil has never in its whole history been capable. *Non cuivis contingit adire Corinthum;* not all may wear the Tudor rose of English swordsmanship, but scores more than ever cared to perfect themselves with a foil may now learn something of the joys of swordsmanship, may feel the fine thrill of that *sentiment du fer* when your blade seems like a nerve outstretched from the eager point of it to your own heart and brain, when your opponent's steel bewrays him as it palpitates with the tremor of his struggling will and adverse energy. In any weather, indoors or out of doors, at any hour, at any age, this game of games is at your service. To begin it without foil play as an introduction were as futile as learning slides before fixed seats in rowing, but once the preliminaries are mastered an épée pool becomes the true combat of personalities, the keen revealer of temperaments, the merciless arbitrament of skill. It changes with every pair who stand up man to man. It can be twenty minutes of the hardest bodily exercise ever known, and it may be either a series of single matches or a combined team fight in sets of four or six. The days of Angelo have come back again, with a difference: the tragic comedians of the duel have silently vanished into limbo, and one of the best sports in modern Europe sounds in the ring of glittering steel.

THEODORE ANDREA COOK.

January, 1911.

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A COUNTRY HOUSE DIALOGUE.

FOREWORD.

THE MANUSCRIPT of the following Dialogue was entrusted to me by the late Lady Burton some time after Sir Richard Burton's death in 1890, together with the notes and memoranda he left for the continuation of his *Book of the Sword*. It will, I hope, be of interest as the work of one of the greatest travellers, finest sportsmen, and strongest personalities of the Victorian era; but it will appeal more especially to lovers of the sword and foil, who have increased so vastly in numbers since Burton wrote. For it contains the matured opinions upon the art and methods of offence and defence in England and on the Continent of one who was throughout his life an ardent student of the theory, and an acknowledged master of the practice, of the art of swordsmanship.

We have Burton's own statement (*Life*, Vol. I., p. 134) that he began his long practice with the sword seriously at the age of twelve, sometimes taking three lessons a day, and he never missed an opportunity of studying the fencing or fighting methods of whatever country he was in, savage or civilised. In 1850, at the age of twenty-eight, he was devoting himself to fencing at Boulogne. "To this day," writes his widow, "the Burton *une-deux*, and notably the *manchette* (the upward slash disabling the sword arm and saving life in affairs of honour), are remembered; they earned him his *brevet de pointe* for the excellence of his swordsmanship, and he became a *maître d'armes*." This diploma he placed after his name upon the title page of his *Book of the Sword*. In 1853 he published *A Complete System of Bayonet Exercise*, which, at first pigeonholed at the War Office, was subsequently adopted in the army.

Burton's original title for his work was "The Secrets of the Sword," suggested by the Baron de Bazancourt's volume *Les Secrets de l'Epée*, published in Paris in 1862, from which he quotes freely in the following pages, and so well

known in England by Mr C. Felix Clay's fine translation (illustrated by Mr F. H. Townsend), which has forestalled this title here. The one chosen in its place, "The Sentiment of the Sword," perhaps suggests even better to non-fencers Burton's intimate sympathy with and affection for the weapon and its correspondence with his own nature, while to swordsmen and fencers it brings home *le sentiment du fer* invented by our "sweet enemy France" for that inner feeling of the foil, that magnetism of the blade, that sense of touch or "tact" which no other expression in any language so happily conveys.

I have ventured to omit a few passages from Burton's work which time has rendered of less lively interest, and have allowed myself the liberty of a few notes where the text seemed to require it, or the title of an early fencing work has been given in full.

A. Forbes Sieveking.

12, *Seymour Street, W., December*, 1910.

The First Evening.

Nè, che poco io vi dia da imputar sono,
Chè quanto io passo dur, tutto vi dono.—Ariosto.

I.

In the long world journey of the traveller, who is something of an explorer, there are two lights. The greater is that wild and fiery joy which accompanies actual discovery; the lesser light is the mild and tranquil enjoyment snatched from rude life and spent amid the radiance and fragrance of civilisation.

* * * * *

II.

One evening, many strangers being in the smoking-room, our talk happened to touch upon the sword. Seaton was certain that the English would never be a fencing nation, that the *Pointe* was the invention of modern Continental Europe, that the French school is the only system worth learning, and so forth—the usual commonplaces of swordsmen.

I differed with him upon sundry details. It is hard to say what a nation cannot do; two centuries ago England could teach music to that all-claiming German race—why should she not teach it again? The Greeks and Romans used the point, although their weapons were rather knives than "long knives," and the Turkish yataghan, the Malay kris, the Afghan "charay" (1) the Kabyle flissa (2), and the Algerian dagger,

(1) "A congener of the Egyptian flesh-knife sword" (*Book of the Sword*, page 212).

(2) See *Book of the Sword*, page 164, for illustration.

from which the Duc D'Aumale borrowed the French sword-bayonet, are made for "thrust" as well as for "cut." We must not go beyond the assertion that only the exclusively pointed weapon, a revival of the old "stocco," that with which General Lamoricière proposed to arm the French cavalry, is the invention of comparatively modern times. As regards the Italian schools, the old and the new, I supported their prowess in the field, and the aristocracy of the family from which they claim descent.

The discussion became animated enough to impress the general ear, despite the protestations of the schoolman and the objections of the cosmopolite. The many present who had never touched a foil were impressed with the halo of feelings which I threw round my favourite pursuit. They began to understand that mind or brain force enters, as well as muscle, into the use of the sword; that character displays itself even more than in the "bumps" of the phrenologists, or the lines of the physiognomist; and that every assault between experts, who despise the mere struggle of *amour-propre*, is a trial of skill and temper; of energy and judgment, of nerve, and especially of what is known as "*coup d'œil*" and the "tact of the sword." Regarding nerve, I asserted that the same quality which makes an exceptionally good rider, marksman, or skater, a cricketer, tennis, or billiard player, to name no others, is required for the finished swordsman. Lastly, I proved, to my own satisfaction at least, that, although the man who would be a perfect master of fence must begin in boyhood, simple offence is easily, and defence is even more easily, taught. I fear, in fact, that my form of conversation became somewhat lectural, professorial, and dogmatic.

III.

"Do you know," said the Châtelaine, "that you are revealing to us the Secrets of the Sword?"

I accept the epigram, was my reply, and certainly nothing can better describe my intention. Amongst all weapons the rapier alone has its inner meaning, its arcana, its mysteries. See how it interprets man's ideas and obeys every turn of his thoughts! At once the blade that threatens and the shield that guards, it is now agile, supple, and intelligent; then slow, sturdy, and persevering; here light and airy, prudent and subtle; there, blind and unreflecting, angry and vindictive; I am almost tempted to call it, after sailor fashion, "she."

Unhappily its secrets are generally neglected, and even those who give what are called "fencing lessons," like those who take them, mostly fail to pass beyond the physical view.

Our great-grandfathers wore swords by their sides, and all gentlemen learned to use them. Presently the pistol came into fashion—an ugly change of dull lead for polished steel. and the

"art of arms" fell so low that many a wealthy city in England had a "fencing master" who combined the noble functions of dancing master—sometimes of dentist. The effect of the "muscular movement" has made the foil rise again in the market of popularity, but it is too often used as a mere single-stick might be—the single-stick, like the quarter-staff, a weapon for Gurths and Wambas.

"Please don't abuse the single-stick," Shughtie interrupted; "it once saved my life."

Nothing newer than to hear him speak of his adventures, as he was that rarity, a lion who seldom roared. The smoking-room at once seized the occasion for insisting that the whole tale be told. The words had fallen from him inadvertently; he could not withdraw them, and so with a resigned air he began:

"Once upon a time, as the story books say, I was travelling amongst the Galla (3), who at first held me in high honour; few had ever seen the 'hot-mouthed weapon,' and those who had knew only ball, so when I made a flying shot they cried 'Wak, wak, the man from the sea brings down the birds from heaven!' Presently the marvel waxed stale, and my savage friends, in this matter very like the civilised, began to treat me as one of themselves—which means I was going very fast down a deep slope, with a deep drop at the end. My 'long knife,' as they called my broad sword, also sank in public esteem with its owner. One day a certain ruffler, a fellow of the bully type, showed his *entourage* how easy it was to beat me with spear and targe; I laughed in his face, and he prepared a trial. My Abyssinian servants were sorely frightened —'if you fail, we're all down among the dead men.' I chose a stout, solid stick, and made my boaster take one the length of his assegai, not wishing to trust him with the spear-head. We stood opposite each other; I cut ostentatiously at his face; he guarded with his shield, and my stick was broken, with a resounding thud across his—well, his flank, low down. A roar of laughter sent him flying in a fury to snatch up his weapon; I cocked my gun, and the bystanders interfered. But my name was made for ever and a day. So I don't abuse single-stick, nor do I ever shoot the 'kattá,' the sandgrouse, which saved us during the same journey from a torturing death by showing a spring of water." (4)

I ventured to assert it was exceptionally rare to find, as in this smoking-room, two out of ten who have made the sword's principles their study.

(3) The Galla is a fierce pastoral nomad tribe of Eastern inter-tropical Africa. See *Life of Burton*, I., page 260. The same story is told in Burton's Diary on page 203 of Vol. I.

(4) This journey is described most vividly on page 215 of Burton's Life, Vol. I.

Such assertions could hardly be disputed, but the auditory, especially those who did not fence or intend to fence, were loud, and I thought invidiously loud, in their praise of "wet bobs and dry bobs," of out-of-door exercises and sports, athletics, boating, rowing, from cricket to foxhunting.

I should be the last man in the room to decry them; but do not let us be Pharisees, who can see no good beyond a certain pale. Athletics are the great prerogative of the North as are gymnastics of the South, and this is one of the main reasons why the North always beats the South—has always beaten it, from the days of Bellovesus and Brennus, to those of "Kaiser Weissbart," and allow me to predict always will beat it.

"Unless," cried Seaton, "some avatár, some incarnation of Mars like Alexander or Hannibal, Cæsar, or Napoleon Buonaparte, throw in his sword to turn the scale. But, happily, it would take half a millennium to breed such men."

Out-of-door exercises give bodily strength, weight, and stature, endurance, nerve, and pluck; tell me how many foot pounds two racers can raise, and I will point out the winner in the long run.

But the use of the sword is something more: look at the fine health and the longevity of the *maître d'arms*—I doubt if the poet or the mathematician exceed him in this matter of great individual importance.

Our study also is the means adapted to an end. He who can handle a rapier well can learn the use of any other weapon in a few days. It teaches him flexibility of muscle, quickness of eye, judgment of distance, and the consensus of touch with sight, one of the principal secrets of the sword. If he practise consecutively, as much with the left as with the right side, it obviates that serious defect of training only one-half of the body to the detriment of the other. Do you know why men who lose their way in the Arabian desert, on the prairies and pampas of America, on the Russian steppes, or in the Australian bush walk round and round, describing irregular circles and broken ovals, till they droop and drop and die of fatigue, perhaps within a mile of the hidden camp? Simply because when the brain is morbidly fixed upon one object muscle asserts itself, and the stronger right runs away with the weaker left.

"I'm not quite sure," Shughtie objected, "that men do not sometimes wander 'widdershins' or 'against the sun.'"

Moreover, I continued, without noticing the remark of the "objector general," these are the days when the "silver streak," our oft-quoted "inviolate sea," must not be expected to ditch and moat us, especially as we seem likely to burrow under it in a measure which I greatly fear will turn out——

"Yes," cried Seaton, "with peace-at-any-price policy, some

day we may have a hundred thousand men hold the *tête-de-pont* before our unreadiness has time to move a corps. Nothing proves so well the greatness of Englishmen, nationally and individually, as their wonderful success, despite their various governments.

And now, when "la force prime le droit," when Europe stands up like Minerva in her panoply ready for the trial by what sciolists call "brute strength," I would see the old nation, England, take a lesson from her fair and gallant daughter, Canada. It is really refreshing to read of four millions being able to arm nearly 700,000 hands. We are fast returning to those fine old days, still preserved in Asia and Africa, where every free-born man was a born man-at-arms, when every citizen was a soldier, and our falling back on the "wisdom of antiquity" in this, as in other matters, is not one of the least curious features of the age. I would make Professor Sergeant part and parcel of every school. This has been tried partially and has failed, because the boys take little interest in learning the dull course of "sitting up" and "squad work," which the artless tutor proposes as the art of arms; but when the parents shall set the example, the sons will follow them.

"Où le père a passé, passera bien l'enfant," but the sooner drill is introduced perforce into our public schools, the better.

"The worst of fencing," said Charlie, the Oxonian, "is that one must begin from one's childhood, like riding; one must work for years to be a tolerable hand; if one does not keep it up, it becomes as rusty as running or swimming."

Parenthetically, I knew that my fresh-cheeked and stout-framed Oxonian had been an inveterate sportsman from his greenest years, and that even now many an hour during vacation was given to otter hunting. He could also whip a stream and throw a quoit admirably—in fact, he had spent upon these and other recreations time and toil enough to make a complete swordsman. But he was leading up to my point, so I told him bluntly enough he was wrong.

"Pardon me, I've turned over a treatise or two in the library, and they made me feel small; really, it is like reading up geometry or alchemy, or any other secret science."

IV.

Now we come to the gist of the matter. You are quite right about the treatises. They are produced mostly by or for men far more used to the company of Captain Sword (5) than that of Captain Pen. Though some masters in the olden day were highly educated men, and, later still, others have

(5) "Captain Sword and Captain Pen," a poem by Leigh Hunt, 1835.

written comedies, the pretensions of the modern school are less to literature than to moral dignity. For instance:

"Le maitre d'armes doit avoir une conduite irréprochable, une humeur égale, de la bonté, de l'indulgence sans faiblesse, il doit surtout être juste et impartial, c'est le moyen pour lui d'obtenir l'estime publique et la confiance de ses élèves.

"Le professorat est un sacerdoce, et le maitre d'armes ne doit jamais l'oublier.

"Le maitre d'armes devrait être non seulement un modèle de tenu, de dignité, de maintien, de politesse et de courtoisie, mais encore un modèle d'honneur."

This does not much help one with a foil. Again, the art of arms is a subject which, like chemistry, cannot be learned from books; even illustrations give only the detached stanzas of the poem (6). Chief of all, these are the words of the professional men who take a pride in making and multiplying difficulties; as masters they must know everything, and as authors they must show what they know. With them the noble art becomes an abstruse science, a veritable mystery of which they are the Magi, the priests. It is well, indeed, when each one does not modify the principles of all others and propound his own system. Without such show of erudition they would expect to be called "ignorants."

Lastly, like the *Leçons d'Armes* (Paris, 1862) of the good Cordelois, the book too often becomes a mere puff.

A few in England and elsewhere have tried to simplify these treatises, with the effect of a skeleton drill book. These also have unduly neglected principles, or, rather, *principes*, and the result has been a mere tax upon the memory, resembling those abstracts and manuals of history, all names and dates, which no brain—at least, no average brain beyond its teens—can remember.

The voice of Seaton now made itself heard.

"I agree with you here. It is my opinion that the affected names and the endless hair-splittings of the fencing books make up a mere jargon. Why talk of the hand in 'pronation' or in 'supination? Can't you say 'nails down' or 'nails up'? We had trouble enough at school to learn the difference between pronus and supinus, I'm sure. Why must we be taught such technicalities as *Avoir de la main, des doigts, des jambes, de la tête, de l'épaule, chasser les mouches, passer en arrière, caver, faire capot, le cliquetis, éperonner* (7), and scores of the same kind? They remind me of my crabbed Madras major,

(6) One of the rarest books on fencing happens to be the poem *La Xiphonomie* (1821), by Lhomandie, a pupil of Texier de la Boëssière, the British Museum having no copy.

(7) Many of these terms are still current in the Salle d'Armes. The definitions may be found in M. La Boëssière's *Traité de l'Art des Armes* (pp. 18-24).

who knew some three hundred native names for horse furniture, and could turn them upon any hapless sub. he wanted to 'spin,' or 'pluck,' as you call it here."

"But every art and every science must have its own vocabulary—its own slang, if you like. And why not fencing? I, for one, am sure that many of the hard words are of use in fixing the things firmly in memory. And I'm certain," said Shughtie, slowly and deliberately, "that strange alphabets help to fix strange terms in one's memory. My head could never hold Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic from one of your new-fangled, Romanised things all powdered into points, accents, and italics. Hungarian and Slav are bad enough, especially Slav; it is beautiful in native costume, and uncomely and barbarous in Latin dress. When I want to learn a new language I use my eyes, my ears, and even my tongue; I read out loud, and I read standing, if possible, by way of distinguishing study from the common way of wasting time over printed stuff. And the want of alphabet would add a month to my work."

Are we not digressing a trifle? I suggested. Granted there must be technical words for technical things; but every art has enough of them without inventing superfluities.

What I most object to in the older and best treatises is the eccentric mania of increasing and multiplying passes and parries, attacks and replies (*ripostes*), the baggage of the so-called "romantic," the classical and professional schools of arms. I object, also, to the *amour-propre* which thinks only of *faire école*, of inventing its own system. L. J. Lafaugère, a practical foil of note, gives (*Traité des Armes*, 1825) 1272 thrusts and combinations, which remind one of those venerables and reverends who calculated how many angels could stand upon a needle point; beyond this what can man possibly invent? His eccentricities in high attacks engendered by way of reaction the *escrime terre-à-terre* (8). And what I especially reproach these gentlemen with is their excess of method and order, making their books the most wearisome things after the Newgate Calendar. They read like a list of chess problems, handfuls of detached items——

"Scattered pearls, the Persians would more politely call them," remarked Shughtie.

—Placed before you without the connecting and carrying thread.

Let us begin at the beginning. After "engagement," or crossing blades, the swordsman may be attacked, or he may attack, in any of these four directions, technically called the lines of defence and offence.

1. On the right of his sword hand beneath the hilt=the low line outside.

(8) A term borrowed from the Manège art: might be translated "ground-game fencing."

2. On the left of his sword hand beneath the hilt=the low line inside.

3. On the right of his sword hand above the hilt=the high line outside.

4. On the left of his sword hand above the hilt=the high line inside.

Evidently the sword, unless describing a circle, can protect only one of these lines at a time, and the other three remain unguarded.

Each line, therefore, relies upon two parades (parries), which may be reduced to half, as the direction of the blade is the same in both; and the only difference is in the nails being turned upwards or downwards. The parries were named by the Italian school after the Latin numbers, and we have adapted them from the French. These are (1) prime (or first position), so called because it is that naturally and necessarily taken by a man drawing his sword from the scabbard which hangs to the left side; (2) seconde; (3) tierce; and (4) carte or quarte (*carte dans les armes*), as it is technically called.

These four are the natural or elementary parries or passes; but many first-rate fencers use only two, tierce and carte, with the modifications of high and low taking the place of prime and seconde. Excuse me, but it is hardly possible to speak of the art without using these terms, yet we are perfectly aware how unpleasant they are to the public ear. "I expected a book about the sword," once said to me a London publisher, "and now you send me a thing full of carte and tierce." Thus did that eminent man of type "put the cart before the horse."

"Will you explain," asked Charlie, "if 'low carte' means the hand held low, or the point directed low?"

In the schools, as you may see in the famous La Boëssière (plate 8), *carte basse* means point low and hand high. But there is a difference of opinion; some masters refer it to the hand, and others to hand and point when in the same position.

Prime and seconde yearly become rarer; the first because of its many risks in case of failure, and the second because it causes the point to deviate absolutely from the line of direction. Wary swordsmen affect them only against those who "run in," or to force the blade which lingers too long on the lunge.

Another simplification, probably due to the facility which it is the fashion of our age to cultivate, has been apparently borrowed from the Italian school. The old tierce, with nails down, and the carte, with nails up, are reserved for certain conventional exercises; they embarrass the learner, and they waste time in execution (9). We now adopt the *posizione media* as a general guard, the thumb upwards, pressing upon the

(9) There has been a tendency of late years in the modern French school, led by the classic Camille Prévost, to revive the use of Tierce

convex side of the grip, and the little finger downwards, the sole requisite precaution being an additional "opposition," or, as some call it, "angulation"—that is to say, pressure upon the opposing blade. This may be called the natural position because all the muscles are comparatively at rest; turn the hand one way or the other, and you have tension or extension.

A low and sullen murmur made itself heard; it came from the direction where Seaton was sitting.

There are four other parries and passes which are affected by the treatises, as late as the nineteenth century. Some of them are now so rarely used, even in books, that many a fencing master either knows them only by theory, or has a very hazy idea of them. You need not learn them—I quote the names only to complete my list. These are (1) quinte, for which the moderns use "low carte"; (2) sixte, also called "carte sur les armes"; (2) septième, of which nothing remains but its classical parry, the demi-circle; and (4) octave or seconde, with the nails turned up, sometimes used to force in a weak guard.

I can tabulate the whole eight within a minute:

Inside or Left.	Outside or Right.
1. Prime (low line).	2. Seconde (low line).
4. Carte (high line).	3. Tierce (high line).
5. Quinte (demi-circle, high line).	6. Sixte (high line).
7. Septième (low line).	8. Octave (low line).

This contains every guard, thrust, and parry that has ever been devised, or that ever will be devised by man; you can add no more to it than to the forms of the syllogism, or to the orders of architecture. It is the less formidable, as only one-half is necessary to be learned, and only a quarter is generally used.

Perhaps, if you will allow me to define certain other technical terms, thus they will more easily be grasped by memory.

"Disengagement," the reverse of "engagement," is withdrawing beyond measure (10). By measure (*mesure, misura, das maas*) we understand the distance which separates two adversaries. It is of three kinds:

1. The short measure ("within measure"), when the "strong" (*forte*), or lower halves of the blades nearest the hilt, meet and cross.

2. Normal, or middle measure, when the swords join in the centre of both.

(10) Since Burton's day the word "disengagement" is solely used for the French *dégagement* (Italian *cavagione*), which means passing your point under the adversary's blade from tierce to carte or *vice versâ*. Since his day, too, sixte has come largely into use in place of tierce.

3. Long measure ("out of measure"), when the "weak" halves (or *foibles*) cross each other.

Being "above the arms" (*le haut des armes; il disopra delle armi*) is when your hand and sword are more elevated than those of your opponent. It is necessary to remember this distinction, as some schools assign the victory, when both opponents touch simultaneously, to the "higher line" of thrust.

By thus mastering first principles, the most complicated treatises will readily be understood, and the theory of managing the sword becomes self-evident. My royal road to learning, in fact, is the path of common sense. You are spared the list of subjects to which this rule may be applied.

Until late years, we prepared ourselves for the business and labours of life by giving, say, five hours a day, between the ages of eight and eighteen—an existence of ten years, and ten such years!—to reading not speaking, to understanding not mastering, a few books in Latin and Greek——

"Please leave Greek and Latin alone," was heard faintly, and as if from afar.

—But swimming, which might save a life, was unknown even to many sailors. Fencing, one of the most beneficial exercises to brain as well as muscle, the power of defence which may preserve us from the insults of the bully, and the dangerous attacks of the duellist—in fact, the large class which the French sum up as *les impertinents, les brouilleurs, les querelleurs et les méchants*, was considered an "accomplishment" like that piano so fatal to the feminine mind.

This was the opposite extreme, quite as uncommendable as that of Duguesclin, who would never learn to write; or of the Spartan-English mother of our day who declared that no son of hers should ever know how to sign his name. In India not a few officers have actually gone into action without even wearing their swords. Who can feel for them if they come to grief?

See, also, until the reign of Napoleon III. (who, as the courteous Scotch earl observed to him, made the English a military nation), how much we suffered in person and reputation under the effeminacy arising from our neglect of manly weapons. But I need not press this point.

"Hear! Hear!" said the smoking-room, with quiet emphasis.

V.

"You must not let your listeners suppose," remarked Lord B., "that you would make arms the business of every man's life."

Of course not, unless they are to be soldiers; we may leave that to their intelligence. A pleasant and useful exercise should not be turned into an absorbing pursuit. Some will be amateur fencing masters, like myself; others will take up a foil gymnastically, or to spend a pleasant hour amongst friends.

But I must again notice Charlie's remark that fencing, like riding, must be begun when the boy is breeched. This is a long subject—

"Which will lead us into the small hours," quoth Shughtie with intention.

"Bear with me till you finish your last pipe—a ponderous meerschaum, by the by—perfectly *bien culottée*. The average intellect, we may say, learns most during its first ten years, and after fifty it generally fails to assimilate a new idea. What the usual run of mankind want to master quickly, and thoroughly to retain, must, I own, be studied in youth; but there are many exceptions—men with all the qualifications necessary to success save one, and that is opportunity. I remember two instances in particular. A. had passed thirty before touching a foil; at thirty-five he was a first-rate fencer. B. was a "gunner," who had never mounted anything but a donkey, and that in his Ramsgate days. He slipped over the horse's head at his first leap, his second trial threw him upon the pommel, and the third found him in the saddle. I did not witness the process, but I did see him win certain welter stakes, when he rode like a professional.

Then, again, there are degrees and degrees. The collegian, who wants only to understand the Pentateuch, does not read after the fashion of his neighbour who intends to become a Hebrew professor. If men refused to ride unless they could rival Lords Waterford and Cardigan, they would be doomed never to sit on pigskins. Fencers like the inimitable Chevalier de Saint-Georges (11), of Guadaloupe, called the *phénix des armes* of the last, and Lord Henry Seymour in the present century—not to mention those now living—spent long years in physical toil, in deep meditation, and in pure devotion to their art. But of what use would be such *excellences hors ligne* to anyone in this room? Rather a source of trouble than of pleasure and profit. I knew a Brazilian who laid out all his money in buying a diamond fabulous as to number of carats, and who was nearly starved because he could not sell it.

"You have forgotten to tell us," urged Shughtie, "that your inimitable Saint-Georges was twice buttoned and soundly beaten, once in London by an Englishman, Mr Goddart (in foreign books called 'Godart'), and again by an Italian, the celebrated Giuseppe Gianfaldoni, of Leghorn. The famous Creole was travelling from France to Italy, and at an academy

(11) A biographical sketch of Chevalier Saint-Georges, with his portrait, is given in Angelo's *Treatise on the Ability and Advantages of Fencing* (Fol. 1817, London) and a "Notice Historique" by M. La Boëssière in his *Traité de l'Art des Armes* (1818, pp. xvi.-xxii.), Saint-Georges having been a pupil of the elder La Boëssière.

he received two buttons to one. An account of the *rencontre* was published at Leghorn by the victor's brother in 1825."

I owned not to have heard of it before.

"Then we are to understand you," asked Claude, "that it is as easy to learn fencing as riding?"

The Cantab was thoroughly at home on horseback, and he had that slightly parenthetical form of leg which betrays infantine acquaintance with the saddle; indeed, the length of body and the shortness of the extremities had suggested to his friends the sobriquet "Jock."

I should say fencing was as easy as riding for most men, whose sight is good and whose nerves can be depended upon. Of course, we must not push the comparison between fencing and riding too far.

The first point to try with the pupil is to flash the sword before his eyes. If he winks nervously, and if no practice will cure him of winking, he will never be a perfect swordsman or a first-rate shot.

"I'm certain of that," interrupted Shughtie. "In Upper India a Sikh will swing his open hand across a stranger's face without touching it, and cry 'You are a soldier!' if the eyes do not blink; if they do, 'Chi! you are a peasant,' or, worse still, a 'coolie.'"

What I mean is that the winker can never depend upon a simple parade and *riposte*, upon that "tic-tac," which is the height of good, clean fencing. But an old master will teach him to supplement his weak point as the stammer doctor walks his patient round the difficulty, and he may even be able to get beyond mediocrity—no easy task.

"My cigar's finished," said Seaton, with intention, but no malice.

My friend had begun riding and fencing early in life; he was short of stature and long of back, his nose was prominent, and his hair, moustache, and regulation whiskers were, his friends said, auburn, his unfriends fiery. Such sanguine temperaments usually have strong opinions, and their strongest are about themselves.

My lecture is over. Briefly, in six weeks men with "good dispositions" can do something; with a year's work they ought to make palpable and real progress in the noble art of arms. But they too often go to a mere sciolist of *tierce* and *carte*, or to the dancing-master; fencing-master (12). For the *seri studiorum* the coach is all in all, and I can prove it.

"Advice to people about to marry!" murmured Shughtie.

(12) There is early literary authority for this combination: Thoinot Arbeau's (Tabourot's) *Orchésographie*, published in 1595, is not only the earliest printed "Dancing-Master," but also comprised "méthode et théorie en forme de discours et tablatures pour apprendre à . . . tirer des armes et escrimer"—but this title-page promise only realises a sword-dance performance!

On seeing him for the first time a stranger would be apt to exclaim, "That's a hard-looking man!" and, after hearing where he had been and what he had done, the stranger would be apt to add, "He's just the man to do it." Hard, indeed, was the character of Shughtie's weather-beaten features—hard as his heart was soft. High cheek bones, grey eyes, set deep in cave-like sockets, shining forth a fierce light, with prominent eyebrows jutting over them like a pent-house; forehead low and slightly retreating, nose thick and anything but classical, a beard falling to the waist, and grizzly, short-cropped hair which, they say, prevented his becoming bald; an upper lip clothed with a large moustache, stiff but not bristly—that shows the rough "son of Neptune"—yet hardly large enough to hide the setting of the lips, and jaws vast and square, as if settled down into a somewhat humorous war with the world, at the same time showing none of the futile pugnacity of the Celt. Such was the countenance. He was a tallish man, whose vast breadth of chest and shoulders made him appear below middle size. The *tout ensemble* of face and figure was intended, said the jealous, for a born pugilist. Such men, who voluntarily assume the bearskin, are apt to growl, and sometimes to barb a growl with a venerable quotation from Mr Punch. (13)

"Perhaps, gentlemen," said Lord B., with even more than usual kindness, "to-morrow evening Capt. Burton will give us a sketch of his curriculum?"

With all the pleasure in life! But I would warn you that it will be as an improvisatore, not as a professor. And now good-night. Seaton, have you brought your *plastron?* (14) Shughtie, do not mistake in your dreams that other valley for the valley of the Nile! And under cover of these feeble shots I effected my escape.

THE SECOND EVENING.

I.

I HAD spent part of the morning in the library, where a few treatises, old and new, had refreshed my memory in matters that had faded from it; yet I felt somewhat nervous as the smoking hour drew near, like a lecturer who had not thoroughly prepared his lecture, a professor unprovided with all his notes. As it was therefore understood that my introduction would not only deal with general principles, but also be somewhat historical, the Marchioness and her two daughters kindly declared their intention of joining us.

(13) I think Burton here sketches his own portrait in Shughtie: compare it with the other painted by Lady Burton—pages 166-7 of her "Life."

(14) The plastron is the fencing master's thickly padded shield or guard worn on the breast to receive the pupil's thrusts.

The only face which changed expression at the announcement was Shughtie's; his code did not admit of shag and cavendish, or even long meerschaums or short briar-roots, in the indoor society of fair dames, and his tastes were too far gone for such babe's diet as Syrian or Turkish, Havannahs and Manillas. The gallant Seaton was charmed by the presence of his future pupils, and so, I may add, were all the rest of us. The Marchioness has often been mistaken for the elder sister of her daughters, and Ladies Margaret and Mary would certainly have been called Minna and Brenda in the Shetlands. Minna showed traces of Irish or rather Celtic blood in the silky black hair, the dark-fringed grey eye, and the tall bending figure. This is nowhere more conspicuous than on the northern coast of Tenerife, at lovely Orotava, where so many Irish Catholics settled during the old persecuting days. Brenda, with a wealth of dull gold locks and a complexion delicate as an infant's, was always called "Anglo-Saxon," which, in the language of experts, means Anglo-Scandinavian as opposed to Anglo-Celtic.

It is not so easy to settle down into places when masculine brusquerie is tempered by softer material. A large armchair, a "Sleepy Hollow," extra sleepy, was playfully proposed as my *cathedra*, but firmly and uncompromisingly rejected; the hardest cane chair is likest the saddle, and the saddle is the properest seat for man. At length cigars and cigarettes were lighted, the trays stood upon the side-table, the doors were closed, and a solemn silence invited—I will not say encouraged—me to begin. You will have before heard the "Voice of Silence sounding from her throne," and you know that Silence in prose as in poetry is, strange to say, seldom silent.

II

My ladies, my lords and gentlemen——

"Before you proceed with the proem," said the Marchioness, "perhaps you will kindly let me know what you think of fencing for women."

The timely interruption restored my composure as the first round of applause makes the young lecturer feel free and easy. Seaton, I fancy, smelt battle from afar; he raised his nose defiantly; the erectness of his spine added a quarter cubit to his stature, and he flapped, so to speak, his wings.

Without noticing the moral effect in drawing out character and in confirming courage, or the diversion, excitement, and noble emulation of the exercise, I believe fencing, which of course includes extension movements, to be the very best plastic exercise in the world—in fact, the prince of calisthenics for acquiring grace, ease, and the full use of the limbs. It would take half the evening to recount and account for its good effects in training, strengthening, and developing the muscles, in

setting up the figure, in opening the chest, and in counteracting the habits learned in the lesson room, so I will mention only one. It makes the gait easy and the carriage graceful as that of the Eastern woman whose youth passes in poising the water jar. Do not we say in England, "Straight as a dairymaid, or a Fulham strawberry girl"?

It gives abundant exercise within a short time, no small recommendation during "the season," when we have so little to do and yet so little time to do it in. Really, an hour a day may easily be borrowed from the ride or the walk, and the good results will appear in sound sleep, untroubled by dreams.

"I think we have read something about that already," Shughtie observed with significance; "besides, dancing, however pleasant, useful, and hygienic, does not develop the arms and upper muscles. In the ladies' fencing room, however, the master requires peculiar qualifications. He must make the exercise amusing as well as profitable; he should inspire his pupils with the wholesome ambition of becoming accomplished fencers, which, of course, they will not be."

"How unkind!" said Lady Margaret. "And why not? I have read of a certain Donna Maria whose recreant lover fled from love and Lisbon to Goa; she followed him and challenged him with sword and dagger, but he preferred to marry her."

Donna Marias are rare, and on the whole happily so. Your main disqualification is the happy want of weight of muscular strength. The essential differences of the sexes are in bodily force and in the quality which phrenologists call "destructiveness," the source of power. Women write charming poems and novels, but which of them ever succeeded in satire or in caricature?

III.

It is the custom to represent fencing as an affair of skill, a mere turn of the wrist. Nothing can be more erroneous. Moreover, I have never found a woman willing to go through the preparatory work, however trifling it is in my system. All want to fence loose, even before they know the routine of the room, or even *tierce* from *carte*.

"Is not that part of the national character?" Lady B. asked.

I should say so. The Englishman, who as a rule prepares for the business of life with a patience of methodical training certain of success, is whimsical to a degree about his "accomplishments." In this he contrasts strongly with Continentals. The foreigner will spend a year obediently, not to say tamely, in mastering the musical scale. After a month the Briton insists upon learning a bravura song. Then in painting we insulars begin landscape or portraits before we know how to mix the colours. It is the same with sculpture, with modelling,

and with other branches of what are called "the fine arts." This results from art being to us, I may say with Renan, to Protestantism in general, a pastime, not a study, a devotion, a religion. In the United States, where English feeling is of a more luxuriant, not to say ranker, growth than in the climate of our moderate land, and where society is English with the weight taken off it, I have heard an eminent statesman (the late Mr Seward) congratulate himself that his fellow countrymen did not waste their time upon "daubing" and "fiddling," as he called painting and music.

"I'm certain we have here a partial truth," said Shughtie. "Dilettantism and amateurship are the banes of what you are pleased to call, in outrage of all respectable authority, the Anglo-Scandinavian and Anglo-Celt. He cribs a few hours from business, he reads a few books on architecture or antiquities, and straightway he becomes an architectural or an antiquarian authority. He doesn't show to advantage amongst men who've begun the study in their boyhood, and who've possibly inherited it from father and grandfather; he'd stand out far better if men looked at his ledger or his cash book. Dilettantism is very well in its way as that great political compromise 'half a loaf,' but it will boast itself to be the whole. I for one, whenever they tell me that Mr So-and-so writes poetry during his leisure hours, always feel antipathetic to Mr So-and-so, and as for reading his poems——" the sentence ended in a shudder.

"Shall we come to the point?" asked Lord B.

IV.

I do not propose to enter upon a course of fencing. You will find that in the thousand-and-one treatises of which we spoke last night. Let me particularly recommend in the French school those of Professors La Boëssière (15), and especially of MM. Gomard (16) and Grisier (17), the most noted *plastrons* of their day, who fitly represent the first third of this century. In English read good old Angelo and for modern Italian Marchionni (18). Of course, I protest against their excess and

(15) Boëssière (M. La): *Traité de l'Art des Armes à l'usage des Professeurs et des Amateurs.* 8°. 1818. Paris. (Twenty plates.)

(16) Possellier, A. J. J. (dit Gomard): *La Théorie de l'Escrime, enseignée par une méthode simple, basée sur l'observation de la nature,* &c. Paris. 1845. Twenty plates. (With an historical introduction.)

(7) Augustin Grisier: *Les Armes et le Duel.* Paris. 1863. With a preface by Alex. Dumas. Drawings by E. de Beaumont, and portrait of author by E. Lessalle. (1st ed. 1847.)

(18) Alberto Marchionni: *Trattato di Scherma sopra il nuovo sistema di giuoco misto di scuola italiana e francese.* 8°. 1847. Firenze. (Lithographs and woodcuts.)

wantonness of rules, their waste of precepts, their barbarous luxuriance of feints and thrusts, of parades and ripostes, of counter ripostes and combinations—in fact, against all the "stuffing" of their schools, or rather of their school books.

We all know that a very few pages on botany, for instance, extracted from a wearying amount of mathematical definition and barbarous nomenclature, will supply the beginner with certain sound principles. He bears these in memory, and thus during his daily walks he builds slowly but surely upon solid foundations; he assimilates his materials by gradual mental digestion, and almost unconsciously after a few years he becomes botanist enough for all practical purposes. The same powers will make him a geologist, a meteorologist, or anything else.

"So far so good," said Seaton. "We all know how difficult it is to handle a lance; well, in India I learnt it easily enough by never riding out without a boar spear and by 'prodding' at everything in the way."

It is the same with the sword, and I differ completely from those who attach great importance to variety and complication of play. The latter is a positive evil, because it distracts the thoughts, and all must own that, however useful in the room, it is absolutely valueless in the field. Hence we have sets of feints for the *plastron* and not for the assault, and movements for the assault, not for the combat. And what more common than to read: "Les coups désignés ci-dessus peuvent se tenter une ou deux fois dans au assaut, mais jamais en duel, car ils présentent de grands dangers." (19)

The excellence of a fencer consists in a just appreciation of his own powers and those of his adversary, in readiness of judgment, in quickness of hand, wrist, and forearm; in stability and regularity of position, and in the *à propos* or propriety of his movements, whether attacking, parrying, or riposting.

The alphabet of the sword, allow me the borrowed expression, is absolute and invariable as that of language. For letters we have certain calculated positions resulting from the natural equilibrium of our bodies; for words, a few simple movements which are instinctive to all, such as contracting and extending the arm; for phrases, easy combinations of the two former. This language has its questions and answers, and with knowledge of the vocabulary we shall find it highly expressive. I need not enlarge upon this; my intelligent audience know enough to carry out the idea What I shall attempt is to show how mind should agitate matter, without which all fencers would be as dull and regular as the finest piece of machinery ever invented.

This, then, will be my first object, to prove how simple and

(19) This is one of the practical differences between foil play and the épée de combat.

easy it is to acquire a certain mastery of arms, provided that the teacher adopts a right system. You will remember, please, that this is a conversation, not a lecture; you will kindly interrupt me when you like, and the oftener the better.

A "h'm" of doubtful import came simultaneously from the direction where Seaton and Shughtie were sitting and smoking, the one a Manilla, the other a Havannah.

I resumed: Let me begin with a few words upon the origin of fencing proper. I shall not give you that inevitable "historical sketch" which is the despair of travellers and travel readers, but only enough to explain how the several great schools arose. Draper (*History of Civilisation*) and other learned or ingenious writers have shown how printing by movable metallic types led to improved navigation with compass and astrolabe; how navigation directed the discovery, or rather the rediscovery, of the New World, so called because it is older than the Old World; and how this material enlargement of boundary in the universe gave a stimulus which culminated in changes of religion and politics affecting, and long to affect, the whole of northern Europe. These are serious reflections upon such a subject as fencing; but you know as well as I do that the smallest events are connected with the greatest by a subtle tie, none the less real because it cannot readily be detected.

V.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that Quaternery epoch of the human mind which doubled for us the material size of the universe, and which modified the habitable region into its modern and actual shape and form, bore such men as Shakespeare, Camöens, and Cervantes; Michael Angelo, Bacon, and Montaigne; Luther and the Reformation; Loyola and the Jesuits. It brought into England a host of minor novelties besides, such as potatoes, turkeys, and beer; and with these blessings came the Art of Arms—that is, the point, which led to the Bayonet of Bayonne.

As usual in those days, the invention was the gift of the Latin race. The Spaniard Pons is a mysterious figure; not so the learned Achille Marozzo of Bologna, who wrote his famous treatise *De l'Arte de l'Armi* in 1517, erroneously post-dated to A.D. 1536, and he continued to re-edit it for nearly half a century (1568). (20)

The rapier of those times was by nó means the light and handy weapon that it is now, nor had its peculiar modification, the foil, been called into being. The favourite sword

(20) Burton requires a little correction. The title of the first edition was not *l'Arte de l'Armi*, but this was the author's description of himself, *Maestro generale de l'arte de l'armi*. The title being *Opera nova chiamata duello, o vero fiore dell' armi*, &c.

was shaped like one of those Andrea Ferraras which are hung in the hall. Its straight, bi-concave blade had a central groove, the "incavatura," which the Neapolitans call "scannellatura," inscribed with the maker's name. It was of exaggerated weight, length, and breadth, probably to allow for wastage in grinding and re-grinding; the beautifully chiselled shell (or guard) was a little shield, and, though the sharp point was there, the double edge was still much used. Finally, as parrying had not become an art, the sword was supplemented by the dagger, by different forms of shields, or simply by a cloth wound round the left arm. You have read Walter Scott and you remember the use of the targe.

What Achille Marozzo really did during his career of half a century was to show that the *spada sola* might be used, and that the dagger in the left hand would serve as a shield. He had no guard properly so called, but in chapter 100 he gives the lunge, curious to say, with face averted. Agrippa (1568) (21) defined the lunge, and invented the four guards—"prime, seconde, tierce, and carte."

Grassi (1570) (22) cunningly devised the "four lines"—high, low, outer, and inner. Salvator Fabris (1606) (23) named and figured the modern "guards"; but he also used the term for offensive movements (the lunge) as well as for defensive or the engaging guard proper. To Giganti (1608) (24) we owe the counter-parades, the flanconnade, and the *tagliata*, *coupé*, or "cut over" the blade.

Thirty-seven years after Achille Marozzo the Sieur Henri de Sainct-Didier (25) modified the work of Grassi and dedicated to Charles IX. his *Traicté Contenant les Secrets du Premier Livre sur l'Espée Seule*. He was followed by another Frenchman, Liancour (26), who began as fencing master in 1680, and

(21) Camillo Agrippa (Milanese): *Trattato di Scientia d'Arme, con un dialogo di filosofia.* 4°. 1553. Roma .2nd edition, 1568. (Portrait of author and fifty-five copper-plates in text.)

(22) Giacomo di Grassi (da Modena): *Ragione di adoprar sicuramente l'Arme si da offesa come da difesa.* 4°. 1570. Venetia. Translated into English by J. G., 1594.

(23) Salvator Fabris: *Scienza e Pratica d'Arme.* Fol. 1606. Copenhagen. (Portraits of Christian IV. of Denmark and the author, and 190 copper-plates in text.)

(24) Giganti, Nicoletto (Venetiano): *Scola overo teatro nel qual sono rappresentate diverse maniere e modo di parere e di ferire di spada sola, e di Spada e pugnale.* Obl. 4°. 1606. Venetia. (Portrait and forty-two copper plates.) 2nd edition. 1608.

(25) Sainct-Didier, Henry de (Gentilhomme Provençal): *Traité, &c.* 4°. 1573. (Portraits of author and Charles IX. and sixty-four woodcuts.)

(26) Wernesson de Liancour: *Le maistre d'Armes, ou l'exercice de l'espée seule dans sa perfection.* Obl. 4°. 1686. Paris. (Portrait of author and fourteen copper-plates by Perelle.)

died in 1732; and by a host of others, who formed the French School. This system finally abandoned the rude and homely cut for the refined and fatal thrust, which presently found its way all over the civilised world.

The earliest regular and original treatise in German known to me is *Ein neue Künstlich Fechtbuch in Rappier*, &c., by Michael Hundt, the "Freyfechter" of Zeitz (1611) (27)

England seems to have learnt the art abroad until 1755, when the Livornese, D'Angelo (28), generally called Angelo, opened his *salle* in London.

VI.

It is curious to follow step by step the mighty changes which took place in the early days of swordsmanship proper, what some call the fatiguing development of the science of arms. Not a few writers have assumed that our modern system began with extreme simplicity; that it was an infant which had everything to learn, all things to discover, whilst others opine that our schools, after developing into complexity, are now returning to their older form. The contrary is a matter of history. My reading convinces me, as I should have expected, that in this, as in other arts, simplicity is the reduction of a mass of complications; we begin with combinations and details which we end by throwing away. Let me quote a familiar instance. The "petard" which hoisted its own engineer was a costly, clumsy, and artificial bit of machinery. Now we hang a bag of powder to a gimlet and we blow down the gates of Ghazni without affording sport to the spectators.

I cannot do justice to my subject without a few words about the schools. Of the first or Spanish we know little except that it begat the Italian (29). This venerable institution is not, as

(27) This was a quarto published at Leipzig, but it had been preceded long before in Germany by the earliest treatises on fencing. Talhoffer's *Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre*, 1467, *Gerichtliche und andere Zweikämpfe darstellend.* Edited by G. Hergsell (Prag. 1887). With 268 plates. *Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre*, 1459, from the Ambraser Codex, with 116 plates; and *Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre.* 1443, from the Gothaer Codex, with 160 plates, were published in 1889 by the same editor. Other very early German works are Andrea Paurnfeindt's (Freyfechter zu Wien). *Ergrundung ritterlicher Kunst der Fechterey* (1516, Wien), treating of the two-handed sword, and translated into French in 1538 under the title of *Noble Science des Joueurs d'Espée;* and Hans Lebkommer's (i.e., Lecküchner's) work *Der alten Fechter gründliche Kunst* (1531), with engravings by Hans Brosamer, after the drawings of Albert Dürer; and Joachim Meyer's (Freyfechter zu Strasburg) *Gründliche Beschreibung der Freyen*, &c., *Kunst des Fechtens* (4°. 1570. Strasburg), introducing the rapier, with numerous woodcuts.

(28) Angelo's *L'Ecole des Armes* was first published in London in 1763, with forty-seven copper-plates.

(29) Burton would scarcely have written thus after reading Mr Egerton Castle's *Schools and Masters of Fence.* wherein the Spanish

some say, rapidly disappearing, its connection with the past being gradually but surely severed, and Spain still preserves not a few traces of pristine rusticity. You will appreciate them by a glance at the older treatises (30), where the field is covered with mathematical diagrams, with lines and with tangents, chords and circles, and segments of circles, as if all the problems of Euclid had been thrown at your feet. Similarly, the maps of that age are webbed with rhumbs (31) like spider's toils. Here, then, we trace the origin of those peculiar gainings of ground with the left foot foremost, those steppings aside and oblique springs, those vaultings and voltes, that stooping with or without the support of the unarmed hand, and that slipping down which may still be seen practised by first-rate Neapolitan fencers, General Bosco, for instance.

VII.

The earliest form which all systems, but especially the Hispano-Italian, preferred, was the complication of *espada y daga*—sword and dagger. This two-handed exercise long haunted the fencing-rooms, and greatly modified their practice. The stiletto served for offence as well as for defence; it was made to parry in certain lines and to deliver, not a riposte, but an attack upon an attack. Thus it was a prime object to "lock the swords" and to clash the hilts (*incocciatura*), thus making way for a hand-to-hand thrust with the shorter weapon. The remains still linger in the Italian position of guard when the dagger is absent; the left hand is held horizontally extended across the middle of the chest, not in the airy curve of the French school, and it is evidently intended to take part in the parade. The advantage is that by throwing it back a greater impetus is secured for the lunge; on the other hand, it is apt to bring the left shoulder forward, causing increased exposure when standing on guard. In practising, and more especially in serious *rencontres*, at Naples, the seconds always determine how far the left hand may be used; for instance, whether it must be confined to sweeping away the thrust, or if it should be

school occupies sixteen pages; but Mr Castle's opinion of it as having no permanent influence upon the art of fencing does not differ substantially from Burton's. The Geometrical School of Fence, greatly as it affected and exercised our Elizabethan ancestors, has now completely passed into oblivion, except as a matter of history and except in so far as it may survive in Spain or Italy, as suggested by Burton.

(30) Such as those of Carranza, Don Luis Pacheco de Narvaez (continually alluded to by Ben Jonson), and, last and greatest in its futile magnificence, the *Académie de l'Epée* of Girard Thibaust, based upon its mysterious circle. The link between the last named and the present work is that Thibaust first speaks of "le sentiment de l'espée."

(31) "Rhumbs" or "rhombs" were the lines of navigation drawn on maps and charts by early geographers.

allowed to grasp and retain the blade. Hence it often involuntarily led to unfair play; a hand accustomed to seize the sword not unfrequently did so instinctively, with consequences regretted till the end of life.

In the Neapolitan guard the heels are lately, at least, in the position of the French, which usually measures two to two and a half of the fencer's foot-lengths. The right arm is outstretched nearly to the full extent, leaving less opening than the elbow bent at the *saignée*, and the domed shell of the rapier, often 4in. in diameter, and derisively called a *plat à barbe* by the satirical rivals, acts like the umbo (boss) of the Gulf Arab's shield, and adds to the difficulty of attacking. The point faces the opponent's breast, not his eye, the rule of the French school. As the extended area is much more easily fatigued, the crossbars connected with the haft and the shell give a firm grip by admitting the two first fingers, and, finally, for additional support, a silk kerchief or a bandage binds the other digits and the wrist to the handle.

The French have never inclined to this system. They complain that it is barbarous and ungraceful. They declare, with truth, that the kerchief and the crossbar prevent all delicacy of digitation, the reversement of the hand and the suppleness of the wrist; that the rigidity of the grasp reduces the movements to a few rigid extensions and contractions despised by the Northerners; and they highly disapprove of the asides, the slippings down, the effacements, and other irregularities which have survived the old mathematical school—in fact, they look upon them as something uncanny, unfair, almost disloyal.

The Italians reply to these objections that the prime object of fencing is, as Molière expresses it, "Toucher et ne pas l'être" —the first and best definition of the science that can be given. They uphold the superiority of their style by proving its absolute practical utility. This is part of the national character, which is never recognised by passing strangers. The Italian is a Janus, the model of a two-sided race. The face which first strikes you expresses the romantic and poetical, the gushing and the sentimental, almost the childish; behind it and far below it there is another countenance, whose characteristics are the baldest realism, the hardest matter of fact. The iron purpose which runs through Dante's "Comedy"—why that absurdity the "Divine"?—distinguishes it from the epic poems of the world. Compare it, for instance, with *Paradise Lost*.

And the Italians prove their point, and explain the pique which drives Frenchmen to speak of *les anciens errements de l'école Italienne*—in fact, to abuse the mother system. During the first quarter of the present century, especially in the days of Murat, when duels with the small sword were weekly occurrences in Southern Italy, the French rarely recorded a victory. It is true that their adversaries gave themselves the most perfect

training. They found in the open air a very necessary change; after the comparative darkness of the Salle d'Armes, the distance almost always appears less than it really is, and thus an inferior fencer, aware of the difference of measure, may get the better of a better man. Instead of confining themselves to the stuccoed floor and the resined parquet, they practised upon stony ground and upon slippery grass, and, by way of accustoming the eye to the true point, not to the button, they screwed on a goad (32) about half an inch long, which it was very advisable to parry. *Experto crede!*

The career of the celebrated Count C., who ended life in a pistol duel with an Englishman, was typical of the time and country. Certain peculiarities of make and manner had made him a kind of butt in society, and society, as it often does, went too far. C. suddenly disappeared, and for three years was supposed to be travelling—he had travelled only to a back street off the Toledo, where he spent day and night in practising and studying the sword. At last he as suddenly reappeared, and was greeted with a shout and a cry of "Ecco il nostro bello C.!" The *farceur* who uttered the words received a *schiaffo*, and the result was a duel, in which he had the worst. This was followed by others, and I need hardly go on with the story to the bitter end. With the small sword Count C. was simply invincible.

VIII.

Of late years the Italians have modified their system by the so-called *Giuoco misto*. The inventor was a fine old sworder, Alberto Marchionni, who died about 1870. At the age of fifteen he began service with the French Empire, whose "legions had married Victory"; after ten years he retired, and was chosen master of the Reale Scuola di Marina at Genoa, with the brevet of His Sardinian Majesty. He then went to France, where he "found all save his own country," and finally settled at Florence, where he opened a celebrated *salle*, and worked out the *nuova sistema*. His *Tratatto di Scherma*, published in 1847, is said to be an *opera originale;* but experts declare that it was greatly assisted by a certain ex-lieutenant and professor of arms, Sampieri, of Florence, whose name is quoted in the supplement, not on the title page.

Marchionni, originally a fencer of the French school, began the study of the Italian comparatively late in life, and flattered himself that he had combined the advantages of both. I do not like his system, but I must own that it has merits, especially

(32) This anticipates the "pointe d'arrêt" introduced a few years ago by the French into the épée competitions in Paris, and since universally employed, in various improved forms, to assist the judges in scoring encounters with the épée.

that of simplicity. (33) To sketch even an outline would lead me deep into unseemly technicalities; but I have made extensive notes upon the subject, which, though still in manuscript, are entirely at your service. The system has become general in Upper Italy, where, however, "hostile *rencontres*" are nowadays usually settled with the sabre. As the point is freely used, in addition to the edge, nothing can be more illogical; a curved weapon with a centre of percussion thus takes the place of the stiff, straight sword, not the bent wire of the Frenchman, whose speciality was the thrust. Perhaps broadsword is chosen because it is, generally speaking, less mortal than rapier, but if so, why use the point?

IX.

Has anyone in this room ever been at Bologna, where the Lambertini, father and son, teach the *scuola mista?*

"I was there last year," answered Shughtie, "and you seem to forget, or, perhaps, you don't know, that Vittorio, the son, went to Russia in June, 1873."

My dear Shughtie, why will you be everywhere? Why not leave us some place unvisited by "Master S., the great traveller"? However, you will correct me if I have wrongly appreciated the "City of the Leaning Towers," the home of Achille Marozzo, the learned inventor of all modern fencing, not to speak of the Carracci and Domenichino, of Galvani, and of Mezzofanti.

There is a something in the presence of Bologna that softens the soul; a venerable, time-honoured aspect, a more mediæval Tours, which appeals to feelings not wearable upon the sleeve; a solemnity of vast, ruinous hall and immense deserted arcade; a perspective of unfinished church and mediæval palace, relics of the poetical past, with its old-time quietude and privacy, which have projected themselves into the prosaic present. You will find the timber supports of the old Etruscan temple still lingering in these "grand and awful times" of ours. You learn with pleasure that you can lose yourself in the long, labyrinthine streets, wynds, and alleys, such contrasts with the painful rectangular regularity of New York and Buenos Ayres. The artistic Greeks preferred straight lines of thoroughfare intersecting one another; but they had æsthetic reasons for the plan which led to the principal temple, and they applied it to their miniature official towns, where it must have compared pleasantly with the large, irregular suburbs beyond the walls.

(33) Fencers of our generation will remember the admirable exposition of "mixed play" made by the Cavaliere Pini in the Empress Rooms against Kirchhoffer, the French champion. The foil the Frenchman broke on Pini's breast is preserved in the Sword Club, in Durham-street, Strand. A fragment of it fell at the King's feet in the heat of their assault.

The moderns have adopted it, and, adapting it to a vast scale, we have produced not a copy, but a caricature. Briefly, to describe the effect of the aristocratic old city, the "rural capital of the Emilia," you have only to remember that of Manchester and Birmingham, and to conjure up into imagination the direct reverse. It is a noble mediæval castle dwarfing the brand-new semi-detached villa.

"True, O king! But what has this poetical and unpatriotic description to do with fencing?"

Nothing, I replied, my Shughtie; *aliquando bonus dormitat.* Pardon again!

X.

Blasco Florio (34), a highly distinguished modern writer (1828) on the use of weapons, thus sketches with a master hand the characteristics of the several schools, and, though the idea is the same, yet all vary like the physiognomy and the language of their different races. I will not adopt the ugly modifications of Lambertini.

Of the Spanish school, he writes:

"The Spanish school, neglecting all elegance, and resultless expenditure of force; with a plain, true guard; with the body well poised, and with the arm wholly extended towards the object of aim; with all the self-contained gravity and thoughtful seriousness proper to an action which represents the Duello; handling a sword with a most solid blade and a shell-hilt armed with crossbars; abandoning every movement which savours of the cut; this system, I say, looks only to defending itself, and to offending by the shortest, the most covered, and the most cautious ways with the least possible outlay of strength and with the least waste of space." Unhappily, this noble and most ancient school may now be said to have died the death; modern Spaniards use the French style.

Of the Italians we read:

"This system may be divided into three well-marked branches. There is (1) the Italian, properly so called, and extending throughout the Peninsula; (2) the Neapolitan belongs to the south; and (3) the Sicilian is peculiar to the great Trinacrian Island. Florio asserts that the Italian school of his time happily blended, as was the character of the nation, French vivacity with Spanish gravity, whilst its weapon and its guards held the *juste milieu* between those two extremes of racial character. The Italian proper aims at covering the shortest distances with the least expenditure of strength, and at touch-

(34) The works and editions of this writer between 1820 and 1866 fill one and a half pages of Mr Carl Thimm's *Bibliography of Fencing and Duelling* (1896). Burton quotes from his *Discorso sull' utilita della Scherma* (1st edition, 1825). *La Scienza della Scherma* appeared in 1844.

ing the adversary whilst consulting its own security." As the date shows, this description refers to the palmy days of the Italian school, before the "mixed play" came into existence.

Of the Neapolitan we are told:

"The Neapolitan fencing, twin sister of the Sicilian, but less fond of movement; using the weapon and showing the gravity of the Spaniard; with its peculiar guard, based upon the principles of animal mechanics; with all the concentration of purpose and the finesse mixed with the lightness of spirits proper to an action that represents sport and combat; this style proceeds with the greatest economy of force, of space, and of measure; it never makes a pass nor comes to a parry without studied foresight and the conviction of success . . . in fine, abandoning the useless, the casual, and the inopportune, it proposes to itself the safest, the simplest, and the easiest modes of offence and defence."

Since these lines were written the Neapolitan school, preserving its old traditions, has become the Italian school; Peninsular writers always contrast its guard and lunge with the French. The Sicilian is in these times practically unknown to Englishmen, so details of its peculiarities are interesting:

"The national Sicilian style, fiery as its own Etna, fecund of ideas as its soil, brisk as its air, with a more workmanlike guard than the Italian, and with the Spanish blade, adds to the agile movements of the French school more subtlety and more combinations than all the other systems; its cautious and tortuous lines of deception converge upon the main objects of self-defence and of disabling the adversary."

I should rather say that the Sicilian school, invented by Giuseppi Villardita, called "Il Nicosioto," has preserved whilst others have forgotten the multitudinous feints and the gymnastic action of the old masters, such as the *sbasso* or *sparita* (bending to ground); the *inquarto* or *scanso di vita in dentro* (taking ground to the left); the *intagliata* or *scanso di vita in fuori* (taking ground to the right); and a host of others to which writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries give so much importance.

XI.

We cannot but observe how much the Italian invention of the sixteenth century affected Italian poetry. Compare, for instance, the Monomachia or Singulare Certamen of Homer, Virgil, and Milton with the duels of Ariosto and Tasso; you at once distinguish the effects of Achille Marozzo's art engrafted upon the characteristic realism of the romantic school in poetry. What can be more true to life than the lines of "l'Omero Ferrarese," describing the duel between Ruggiero and Mandricardo?

Tasso's duel between Tancrede and the "fero Argante"

(vi., 42) is also perfect, and in Canto xix., 11, he shows all the finesse of art:

E con la spada sua la spada trova
Nemica, e'n disvïarla usa ogni prova.

Again, of feinting (vi., 42):

Or qui ferire accenna, e poscia altrove,
Dove non minacciò, ferir si vede;

The "dynamics of the sword," time, distance, force, and velocity, are well expressed in the duel between the noble Italian and the fierce Circassian (xix, 11):

E di corpo Tancredi agile e sciolto
E di man velocissimo e di piede
Sovrasta a lui con l'alto capo, e molto
Di grossezza di membra Argante eccede.

Compare with vi., 42:

Ciascuno ai colpi move
La destra, ai guardi l'occhio, ai passi il piede;
Si reca in atti vari, in guardie nove;

We find even the use of the "helo" (ha!) called in modern Italy "dar delle voce" (vi., 44),

Con la voce la spada insieme estolle,

and the preparatory extension movements before the combat (stoccata all'aria), where Argante

Nuda ha la spada, e la solleva, e scote,
Gridando, e l'aria, e l'ombre invan percote (vii., 53).

and the primitive practice of striking with the pommel (xii., 56):

E più ristretta
Si fa la pugna: e spada oprar non giova
Dansi co' pomi, e infelloniti e crudi.

We can hardly wonder that the "incomparable" Tasso's duels are lengthily quoted in every Italian "Trattato," and that Baron Rosaroll (1803) (35) boasts himself to be a "pupil of Tasso." The unhappy poet was a practical man as well as a theorist. In his biography (Giov. Batta Manse, Chap. xi. Venice, 1815) we read how he defended himself single-handed against four brothers; how he wounded two, and how probably he would have put the rest *hors de combat* had the populace not interfered. (36)

(35) Scorza Rosaroll, author (with Pietro Grisetti) of *La Scienza della Scherma*, 4°, 1803, Milano (ten folding plates), and of *Trattato della Spadancia o sia della Spada Larga*, 8°, 1818, Napoli.

(36) The following are translations of the most important of the above passages from *Gerusalemme Liberata*:

Still parrying stroke with stroke, he tried
All points of skill to turn the assailing sword aside.
—J. H. Wiffen (Bohn.), xix., 11.

To resume our notices of the schools. Concerning the "Scherma Settentrionale," we read:

Fencing, being an indigen, so to speak, of the temperate climes, where we find great mobility, quickness, and readiness of body and mind, shows that of the extremes. The man of the north, having strong muscles and an equable temper, the result, says Cabanis, of great cold, shows but feeble and depressed sensibilities. Hence he shows feinting, rapidity of action, and elasticity of movement; nor can we say that the Teutons or the Scandinavians have any school of their own. Their proper exercises are those of the heroic ages, wrestling and pugilism, which combine few corporeal movements with weight and great exertion of thew and sinew. Those few who study fencing have wholly adopted the French school. In London, however, a *salle* was opened by the famous Antonio Francolanza, of Catania, the last descendant of the well-known Sicilian fencing master. In Germany and Hungary, and generally in the provinces bordering upon Turkey, the favourite weapon is the sabre, and the people have become most dexterous in its use.

The French system is thus described:

The French fencer, armed with a blade lacking shell and cross-bars, is unable to adopt some attacks and not a few defences; he must ever come to the parry, and in order to ease himself he must carry the body and the right arm eccentrically curved. By way of lightening his weapon as much as possible, he holds it like a stick; hence his style, ignoring economy of space, is fitted rather for cutting than for thrusting. . . . He is obliged, and often inopportunely, to get within measure; to lose the advantages of time and *sang-froid*, and consequently to miss the proper object of fencing, to touch and not be touched.

Close at his surest ward each warrior lieth;
He wisely guides his hand, his foot, his eye;
This blow he proveth, that defence he trieth;
He traverseth, retireth, presseth nigh;
Now strikes he out, and now he falsifieth (feints);
This blow he wardeth, that he lets slip by;
And for advantage oft he lets some part
Discovered seem; thus art deludeth art.—FAIRFAX, vi., 42.

Raised with his voice his sword aloft.—BOIAR, vi., 42.

Tancred of body active was, and light,
Quick, nimble, ready, both of hand and foot,
But higher by the head the Pagan Knight
Of limb far greater was, of heart as stout.
Tancred laid low and travers'd in his fight.
Now to his ward retir'd, and now struck out.
Oft with his sword his foe's fierce blows he broke,
And rather chose to ward than bear his stroke.
—FAIRFAX, xix., 11.

No room have they to foin, no room to lash;
Their blades flung back, like butting-rams they bound,
Fight with the hilts, wild, savage, raging, rash,
And shield at sounding shield, and helm at helmet dash.
—BOIAR, xii., 56.

In his frankness and good faith he falls into the opponent's snares, and thus he loses the meed of subtlety, of "foiling art by art." Finally, considered with respect to the prettiness of its movements, the rhythm and mannerism of its practice, and the attitudes of its guard and other actions, his assaults, instead of imaging the duel, resolve themselves into a gallant show of ceremony which borders upon the ridiculous.

This celebrated passage has been much commented upon, and it can hardly be considered fair. The French do not, and never did, use their swords like sticks; in fact, artificiality has ever been, till lately, their main defect. "Parmi nous, l'adresse trop recherchée dans l'usage des armes, dont nous nous servons à la guerre, est devenue ridicule," says Montesquieu. Of the vivacity of their attack we have ancient testimony: "Proprium gallicani usus pugnare caesim," and long ago it was remarked of the Gaul:

> Impeto fu nelle tuttaglie prime
> Ma di leggier poi langue e si reprime.

In Montaigne's day the French studied arms in Italy (37), and since that time they have often tried to "napolitanizzarsi." The old French guard bore two-thirds of the weight on the left leg, and the body slightly thrown back, an immense error, which we have perpetuated to the present day. In lunging, again, the right hand was held high above the head, rendering it necessary to loosen the two smaller fingers and risking an easy disarm. Of course, the school had first-rate fencers despite all these disadvantages; but I may ask, what would they have been without all these senseless complications of the old classical school?

XII.

There are phases in the modern French system which require some allusion. The first is fencing considered in the light of a graceful rather than a manly exercise; "a school of deportment," as were the universities, the lineal offspring of the *salle*. I have seen old Angelo (38) at Oxford bring his foil to the

(37) We travel into Italie to learne the art of fencing, and practise it at the cost of our lives before we know it; it were requisite, according to the order of true discipline, we should preferre the theorike before the practike. We betray our apprentissage.—Florio's *Montaigne*, ii., 37.

(38) This would be Henry Angelo the younger (1780-1852), fencing master and superintendent of sword exercise in the army, son of Henry Angelo the elder (1760-1839), author of the *Reminiscences* (1830) and *Angelo's Pic-nic* (1834), and head of the academy from 1785, and grandson of the original Angelo (1716-1802), *alias* Domenico Angelo Malevolti Tremamondo, who opened his fencing school in Soho (1759) and published in 1763 *L'Ecole d'Armes*. In 1770 the salle d'armes was at Carlisle House, overlooking Soho-square; then was moved to Opera House-buildings, Haymarket; next to Old Bond-street; and finally, by Henry Angelo the younger to St. James's-street (1830-1896)—the premises now occupied by Sandow.

salute, and, bowing profoundly to some undergraduate wild from the woods, pronounce with magisterial emphasis, "This, sir, is an academy of politeness as well as of arms!" Fencing was considered an "elegant" appendage to a gymnasium. It had its rules like the country dance or the quadrille, and all *écarts* were put down as bad taste. Indeed, its nature was almost chorographic, its combinations and interlacing movements, purely artificial and inartistically showing art, made the glorious exercise look trivial and effeminate. Its highest developments always suggested a terrific *combat de théâtre* on the French stage—for the English, with rare exceptions, have preferred the hanger, used like a walking stick, for "thrashing" purposes. How popular the same "Judicium Dei" still is in Paris, we may judge from the fact that M. d'Ennecy, who writes dramas for the Porte Saint-Martin, concludes 198 with sword, 168 with pistol, ten with hatchets, and eight with knives, thus showing the comparative favour and disfavour of the weapons; and when a Frenchman would describe angling, he naturally represents it as "a duel between the man and the fish."

"At any rate," interrupted Seaton, "it does their artists a good turn. See the perfect truth of 'A Duel in the Snow.' Our poor fellows must draw upon a not too lively imagination. In one of the illustrateds I actually saw two men represented at the Bois de Vincennes, where there is less police than in the Bois de Boulogne, preparing for business. And how do you think they stood on guard? In prime, faugh!"

This was spoken with ineffable contempt. I resumed. As in the rhythmical theatrical duel, the expression of fencing was found in a series of familiar pases, parries, and ripostes; in methodical advancings and retirings, and, generally in profound veneration for academical legends. The first principle was the elevation of the hand—*la main haute*—in order that the *forte* of the blade might theoretically command the *foible* of the adversary's. If you "buttoned" your opponent a dozen times, carrying the hand in lunge lower than the head, you were a *tireur à main basse et à bras raccourci*. Another Medo-Persian law was never to touch above the shoulder blade nor below the waist; you passed what would have been a mortal thrust to the throat or to the stomach; the adversary said, not "touché!" but "trop bas!" or "trop haut!" I shall return to this "precious ridicule."

"Which is the essence of first-rate swordsmanship," said the indignant Seaton, who could no longer keep silent.

The second aspect of fencing represents it as a science to be studied in all its details, to be questioned for its secrets, to be reduced into a regular system. Like all sciences, this demands special gifts, and without a peculiar organisation and

a grace of intuition, the privilege of the heaven-born swordsman, aided and worked out by conscientious study and imperious labour, constant withal and uninterrupted, no man can expect to arrive at real and remarkable force. Fencers of this calibre have at all times been, and will ever be, rare; such incontestable superiorities show like great constellations amongst those stars, the *jolies forces courantes*, the average first-raters. The last generation of Frenchmen probably carried their art to its apogee, and it would be easy to quote a number of unprofessional men, who held their heads high amongst the masters of the world.

The third aspect is fencing considered purely as the art of defending oneself, and of offending the enemy. Here the traditions of the *salles* are valued only as they suit the student's individuality; he modifies them for and to himself, instead of doing, as his father did, the reverse. He ruthlessly sacrifices ornament to utility; he rejects complication and combinations, the superfluities introduced by time and professors, which are admirable with buttoned foils, but which fly from the point. The play becomes a serious and threatening struggle; its characteristic is the unforeseen, *l'imprévu*, to which the first Napoleon attributed such mysterious powers, and which has ever since been the characteristic of French—I may say European—politics. Instead of graceful pass and learned parry, blade meets blade with rude vigour, bent only upon finding an unguarded spot. It is the fray, not the sport. It is a fight, the more impressive because science offers her omnipotent aid, and her myriad resources are accepted only so far as they add to the power and efficiency of the man.

"It is strange," objected Lady B., "that you Englishmen brought up abroad can hardly speak of a foil without taking off its button—mentally and instinctively."

Hence, I continued, acknowledging the remark with a sal'am, the difference between the two methods, the ancient and the modern French system, we will call them.

The one would preserve intact and pure of alloy, as of progress the academical traditions of bygone days; and would touch or be touched, would win or lose, like the old Austrian marshals, by norm and rule. It reposes upon authority; it has, like other matters which shall be nameless, an infallibility of its own. It begs the world to stand still, because movement is irksome to it. Its motto is, "Thus far you shall go, sir, and no farther." Like Free Trade, it would be a benefit to one and all, if one and all would only adopt it—unfortunately they will not.

The other flies to the opposite extreme, and to a certain extent does well, because extremes define the so-called "golden mean." It would change everything, the bad to the good, the

good to the better, despite that subtle suggestion of Satan—Oh, excuse me!—*le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.* It looks upon all that is old with suspicion, as fitted for its own day, unfit for ours. It believes in realism, utilitarism, progress, development, and its device is "Sic itur ad astra."

XIII.

Thus was the fencing room a picture of modern society, a miniature of the world. From the days of Locke (39) the great modern school of thought, which practically makes actual sensible experience, with its legitimate inferences, the sole sources of human knowledge, though exceedingly repulsive to the majority of mankind, has steadily gained ground.

(39) The following is the *locus classicus* upon fencing from the great Utilitarian's work *Of Education* (§ 199). On the whole, he seems rather to discourage the art for fear of fomenting quarrels and duels, and the last paragraph shows that he did not foresee fencing would survive duelling:

As for fencing, it seems to me a good exercise for health, but dangerous to the life, the confidence of their skill being apt to engage in quarrels those that think they have learned to use their swords. This presumption makes them often more touchy than needs, on points of honour, and slight or no provocations.

Young men in their warm blood are forward to think they have in vain learned to fence, if they never show their skill and courage in a duel; and they seem to have reason. But how many sad tragedies that reason has been the occasion of, the tears of many a mother can witness. A man that cannot fence will be more careful to keep out of bullies' and gamesters' company, and will not be half so apt to stand upon punctilios, nor give affronts, or fiercely justify them when given, which is that which usually makes the quarrel. And when a man is in the field, a moderate skill in fencing rather exposes him to the sword of his enemy than secures him from it. And certainly a man of courage, who cannot fence at all, and therefore will put all upon one thrust and not stand parrying, has the odds against a moderate fencer, especially if he has skill in wrestling. And therefore, if any provision is to be made against such accidents, and a man be to prepare his son for duels, I had much rather mine should be a good wrestler than an ordinary fencer; which is the most a gentleman can attain to in it, unless he will be constantly in the fencing school and every day exercising. But since fencing and riding the great horse are so generally looked upon as necessary qualifications in the breeding of a gentleman, it will be hard wholly to deny anyone of that rank these marks of distinction. I shall leave it, therefore, to the father, to consider how far the temper of his son, and the station he is like to be in, will allow or encourage him to comply with fashions, which, having very little to do with civil life, were yet formerly unknown to the most warlike nations, and seem to have added little of force or courage to those who have received them; unless we will think martial skill or prowess have been improved by duelling, with which fencing came into, and with which, I presume, it will go out of the world.

The labours of Hume, Adam Smith, Bentham, and John Stuart Mill are gradually establishing utility as the test of morals, and therefore of law, and therefore of fencing. An ever-increasing success tends to weld into one mass our knowledge of physical nature and our acquaintance with the moral world, fencing included. France has brilliantly opposed it with the epithets of ignoble and one-sided; Germany has severely denounced it and scientifically attempted refutation. In England also it has seen many reactions, and even within its limits there are mighty controversies as to the true nature and application of its principles. Its best supporters own that it has never been, and never perhaps will be, popular; and yet, strange to say, it advances with giant strides, and it threatens to make experimentalism and utilitarianism the faith of the civilised world.

Solemn silence No. 2. It was not perhaps the "perfectes herald of joy."

"My opinion is," quoth Seaton with extra assertion, "that the art of arms is another king retired from business—a poor old Lear stung by his serpent's teeth. The throne is a new Tower of Babel—all talk and bustle and no understanding. This one wants to speak a private and particular language. The gentle legends and testaments of our great men only warm up this modern vanity. We change about and wheel about, and call it progress; it's the progress of the blinded camel turning its mill. This decline and fall of swordmanship is greatly the fault of the professors. At first they disdained the movement, and then burst into rage when too late, somewhat like poor Colonel Sykes and the India House. It'll be the ruin of the art, and now every man'll be his own artist."

Surely you go too far, I interposed when my sanguine and choleric friend stopped to recover breath after his commaless burst of eloquence. You speak true, but not the whole truth. Even in the mania of revolution, had you looked into the salle of my old professor Pons (40) you would have found

(40) The celebrated Professor Charles Pons (1793-1885) flourished as maître d'armes in Paris, was teacher of the "Cent Gardes" of Napoleon III., and was the master of many well-known amateurs including the Baron de Bazancourt. His portrait is given in *L'Escrime Française* (May 20, 1890), and his salle d'armes first in the Rue St. Honoré, then in the Rue de Pyramides, was the first salle in Paris to be turned into a club. It was subsequently merged into the Salle Mimiague now in the Rue St. Honoré, presided over by the well-known Professor Rouleau, assisted by his two sons, Adolphe and Georges, the latter of whom made so fine an assault with M. Camille Prevost in London at the Portman Rooms in 1899. Pons was run through the body by a foil at an assault in London in 1840, and on his recovery dedicated the foil and the fencing jacket he wore as an *ex-voto* in the Convent of the Annunciation at Mentone (see a letter from his grand-nephew

group of amateurs who combined with the energy and individuality of the new system the tastes and the traditions of the old. The moderate party in life is far more numerous than you men of extremes suppose. For one who, like Dr Chalmers, held humanity a little higher than the angels, or one who, as did a writer that shall not be specified, believed him to be much lower than the devils, there are millions that place him in the intermediate rank.

I might dispute on metaphysical grounds (a manly murmur of "don't") the implied and usurped superiority of idealism over realism. For me there is no reason why the dream should be the type of perfect beauty, the wakening state that of homeliness and deformity. But I will return to the sword ("Thanks" in a more audible tone).

Meanwhile, by the side of the venerable retrogrades—I thought this fair—and of the madcap progressionists who wish only to enthrone their extravagances, there is a third body, which is carrying everything before it. These are the experienced swordsmen, whose judgment and practice have been matured by study and science. They not only accept the position of things, the revolution, in fact, for it is nothing else; they demand it, they hail it. They say to the older school, you are an academy, a sort of "elegant exercise"; you have carried to excess your agility, your address, your artificiality; you read like a book.

But what remarked the Fox about the tragic mask? However fair be the front, there is nought behind; it is an absolute "dickey," a hole where we expect a hill. You have prescribed, nay you have issued, your syllabus, your anathema-maranatha against the individuality of man, against that *imprévu* upon which every strong man relies. We want a larger arena; we want elbow room for our own natures. You must clear the way, or——

Seaton groaned aloud, and I respected his emotion.

XIV.

There was a dead silence—No. 3. I resolved to remain voiceless till called upon to speak.

"Can you not," Lord S. said, "put the question before us in calmer terms than these?"

"Yes. Do mix a little water with all that wine!" suggested Shughtie, who disliked "volcanic language" from anyone but himself.

I will do my best. The modern system claims to have reason

Armand Pons to *L'Escrime Française*, March 5, 1889; and *L'Almanach de l'Escrime* for 1899). "M. Pons aîné avait tous ses élèves pour amis," wrote Legouvé in *Deux Epées Brisées* (see also *Discours prononcé le 3 Janvier, 1884, à Chatou sur la tombe du Maître d'Armes Pons*, par Arthur de Grandeffe).

on its side. It aims rather at reconstructing than at abolishing; it would not suppress, it would supplement.

Hear the voice of one of its masters (41):

The true strength of a swordsman consists less in the charm of his manner, in the academic grace of his pose, in the magisterial regularity of his movements, than in his judgment, his spontaneity, and his quickness of attack and defence.

When a fencer has once mastered the few fundamental rules upon which his science, like all others, is based;

When his hand and arm, in perfect unison with his body, have acquired the proper degree of muscular equilibrium;

When his sinews have learned the difficult task of applying the exact force required, neither more, which would throw his sword out of line, nor less, which would deliver him into the hands of his enemy;

When he appreciates the full significance of what can be effected by a step forwards or a step backwards;

When he is aware of the danger incurred by compound attacks, and can rely for simple attacks upon his hand and his *coup d'œil;*

When he has learned what nature has given to him and what she has refused, where he is likely to fail and how he is likely to succeed;

Then, I say, allow him to take the path to which his instincts tend, and to use according to his inspiration the fruit of his studies.

On the other hand, do not say to him:

Here is the narrow circle beyond which you shall not stir, the fatal bourne of all your actions, of all your ideas.

You find it easier, for some physical reason—I hope not hepatic—to attack, parry, and ripost, with the body bent forwards from the waist. No matter; sit straight upon your haunches like a military rider. *Allons, redressez vous!* The *Academy* says: "Je n'admets pas que dans un coup d'armes on doive porter le corps en avant; cette position est dangereuse, inutile pour atteindre son adversaire, et défavorable pour se relever de la jambe droite après avoir attaqué." What can be more contrary to common sense?

This was more than impatient Seaton could bear. "The *Academy,*" he cried, "is not half severe enough upon your mad freaks. This is a French Revolution you propose—a mere rationalism without tradition, a breaking with the past and no eye to the future. In practice we all have the fault of leaning the body forward. Look at the mass of evidence collected by Capt. George Chapman (*Foil Practice, &c.,* pp. 14-16). You

(41) This is a free rendering from Bazancourt's *Secrets de l'Epée* (First evening, Ch. vii., pp. 32-34 of Mr C. F. Clay's translation). In his preceding "three aspects of fencing" and elsewhere, Burton also follows Bazancourt's lead more or less closely.

would raise this vice into a virtue, you would teach it to your pupils—you are immoral, you are dangerous."

We must both keep our own opinions. But to resume my quotation:—

You prefer to keep out of distance, and you find that a closer approach preoccupies your mind, embarrasses your thoughts, and subjects you to the surprise of a swift lunge, which comes upon you like a flash of lightning. Not at all; you must take your place within the recognised limits—that is, within reasonable reach of the opponent's weapon.

You feel yourself overweighted in the match; your adversary has the better of you in straight thrusts, in dégagements, in upper-cuts (*coupés*), and in the more complicated attacks; your sole defence is to withdraw your blade from his, so as to leave him no base of operations, as it were. On the contrary, you must offer him your sword, *il faut donner le fer*. Such is the rule, such is the law; only bad swordsmen and *ferrailleurs*, who thrust wildly right and left, attempt to do otherwise.

Your hand has not the height of the classic fencer, you sometimes thrust with a bent arm, and you even strike low—in the stomach, for instance. Certainly in a duel nothing could be more fatal, yet the *salles d'armes* tell you that it is bad form. Therefore the mistake must not be repeated.

"Amen!" quoth Seaton.

I suppress the discussion which took place upon this occasion, and I shall do the same whenever the debates, which were ever recurring, failed to fix themselves upon my memory whilst writing out my notes next morning.

XV.

All these are prejudices, pure and simple. The assault is the image of the fight; it is what drill is to battle. Only your artificial systems of arms allow one style in the fencing school, another in the field. Such "company manners," as my nurse called something of the kind, are not admissible. They are shams, they are snares, they are delusions.

The natural system, based, I have said, upon utility and experiment, allows every man his liberty of action. It does not pretend nor attempt to teach him grace and neatness of execution, if his instinct and his individuality find these qualities factitious and foreign. Let your pupil form himself after his own image as far as you can with conscience. If you force him to copy, to resemble you, it will make him only an easier victim to all the originals of your traditional system.

As a master, if you fence with him, take advantage of his faults—'tis the readiest way of correcting them.

As an adversary, if you find his play dangerous, without being pleasant to the eye, try to combine both advantages; perhaps he may be induced to imitate you.

The student of arms should at once be encouraged by the amplest liberty in choosing the style which suits him best. You will see it dawn during the first hour after he has held a sword in hand, and it is so little possible for one man to take the just measure of another man! How often we confound with wild hobbies and eccentricities that which does not satisfy our ideas, although it has been founded upon the truest science; how often we despise as the merest ignorance the fruit of intelligent study. Someone has called individual man the microcosm and the rest of creation the macrocosm. I feel myself the macrocosm.

"Rank metaphysical heresy," quoth Shughtie.

When you, O Seaton, find yourself hand to hand with these sons of the new system, you doubtless know that they belong to one or the other of two species.

The first. Your adversary has adopted his own and peculiar form of attack and defence; after a course of reasoning and of self-examination he has found what is best for himself and what is worst for you. He may have been nursed and fledged in the *salle d'armes*, but he has whetted and sharpened his own beak and talons, and if you oppose him with any academic banalities you must expect to suffer from peck and tear.

The second. Your opponent acts without judgment, beating, as it were, the blades, whipping the air, making futile half attacks; lunging when out of distance; stopping you at the moment most dangerous to himself; parrying, now dully, then with a convulsive force; unsteady in the left leg and nervous with the right foot. In dealing with such pupils of the modern or individual method you will have no difficulty. The practised chess player, however third rate, is always master of uninstructed genius, however lofty. With your experience and dexterity you at once drive him into a corner, and his instincts will probably lead the silly bird into the first gin which you draw from your pocket.

"With your system," cried Seaton, "I shall find nine of the latter to one of the former kind."

'Tis the same with yours! But beware of *my* tenth.

XVI.

Here, then, ladies and gentlemen, is the disputed question, the great quarrel of the two systems, the Artificial and the Natural. It is inveterate as the Wars of the Red Rose with the White Rose, and it much reminds me of the oft-quoted Shield with the gold and silver sides. I might on a former occasion have fitted it into its own little niche of our nineteenth century edifice, but that you will do more satisfactorily for yourselves.

This time the expressions of gratitude were warmer and more marked. The hour hand approached midnight.

I have not spared details which fix facts and theories upon

the memory; and allow me to thank you for the exemplary patience and long-suffering shown this evening."

"What will there be to-morrow?" Lady B. asked.

I can hardly say. It is impossible in such matters to follow out a regular order, and there are certain digressions which have legal rights upon a speaker. And after saying so much upon the principles of the schools, the logical sequence would be their practice.

"What! logic even in fencing!" said Lady Margaret reproachfully.

Logic in everything; only let us be careful to set upon a basis of its own the logic of things as distinguished from the logic of words.

An "Oh!" like a sigh welcomed this unhappy but emphatic observation.

"I see," remarked Lord B., "that to-morrow evening it will be man's fate to be alone."

Solemn silence number four. The consensus of those concerned was stronger than any expressed assent.

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"At any rate, I shall hope before long to hear something about your regiment of Amazons," said Lady Mary, the blonde, by way of softening the blow. But the faces of Seaton and Shughtie were sore to look upon.

The cosmopolite, after the candles were lighted and the door was closed, growled thrice, picked out a briar root, and retired to the darkest corner, promising to turn off the gas within a quarter of an hour. I left him alone without the Amazons.

THE THIRD EVENING.

I.

DURING the day I had reflected upon the easiest and neatest way of explaining my method of simplification—my conviction that simplicity alone makes the *belle manière*. In my youth I had tried the same with cavalry drill, never being able to understand why in these days, when arms of precision and rapid fire are universal, ranks should be doubled. From my own system of bayonet exercise I had extracted a few simple movements, which could be contained on a page of note-paper, and yet which would enable the soldier to defend himself against most comers. It is evident that the same can be done with fencing.

II.

At last the smoking party met, and I addressed it from my cane-bottomed chair:

You have been told that fencing, stripped of its factitious ornaments and freed from the lumber and rubbish of the *salles*

d'armes, with their complicated and innumerable details, is a far easier matter to learn than men generally suppose. The process of simplification is not new; many writers recognised only four elementary passes and parries, namely, Seconde, Tierce, Carte, and Octave, to which some added a fifth, Septime. We may further reduce the elements to two, and, do what we will, we cannot extend them beyond four. Let us tabulate them thus:

1. Attacks:
   - (*a*) Simple attacks.
   - (*b*) Compound attacks.
2. Parries:
   - (*c*) Simple parries.
   - (*d*) Compound or counter parries (*parades de contre*).

And thus we have the following:

Simple Attacks:

Straight Thrust (especially in carte with a right-handed man).

Disengagement, or passing the point under the opponent's blade.

The Cut Over (*tagliata*, *coupé*), or passing the point over the blade

Compound Attacks:

One, Two:

The Beat, followed by straight thrust.

The Beat, with disengagement.

The *liement*, or Binding the opponent's sword from higher to lower line.

Simple Parries:

Tierce (high line outside), when tolerably sure of the adversary.

Carte (high line inside), when tolerably sure of the adversary.

Seconde. Carte basse (low carte).

Compound Parries:

Counters or demicircles (half circles in tierce and carte).

Full Circles (especially useful to the imperfect swordsman).

This certainly does not look like the many-headed hydra which is supposed to require a Hercules.

"But you've forgotten," interrupted Charles, "an immense number of lunges and parries. Hardly possible to write such stout folios as those upstairs on a simple expression like this."

Said Shughtie: "I see that our neologistic and progressive friend has done what he proposed to do with the Sanskrit

declensions—reduced them from ten to two or three, thereby worse confusing their confoundedness."

"Yes," added Seaton, "his simplicity has become silly. Can't he see that a variety of movements is the best practice to attain excellence in a few?"

I have forgotten them with malice prepense, because I believe them to be useful only to the teacher, not to the learner. I look upon them as part of the profession, and professions must live. *Je n'en vois pas la necessité* is hardly a fair rejoinder to *il faut vivre*. The surgeon often advises you to part with a leg or an arm—did you, by the by, ever see a one-legged or one-armed doctor?

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III.

But, supposing the teacher to teach all these complications with *bona fides*, as doubtless he generally does, I then observe that they are calculated only to embarrass the intelligence of his pupil. The more you simplify the means of action in the use of weapons the more readily they are learned and the more easily they are executed. Surely this is self-evident, even to you, O Seaton!

Remark, also, that I have given you a full—perhaps an unnecessarily full—list of attacks, parries, and ripostes. Many might reasonably be retrenched, because they are mere modifications of the same movement.

Thus, for instance, "One, two," is a couple of simple disengagements, the first executed in the line of tierce, we will say, and the second in carte.

One, two, three, *par parenthèse*, is becoming obsolete (1) on account of the risk which always accompanies a complicated attack, giving room for a time thrust (2).

The battement (beat) and straight thrust, again, is as evidently a combination. I do not mention the *froissement d'épée* (3), or sliding parry, which is now used only in the preliminary salutes. It is a favourite with schoolboys for disarming the antagonist; but on the field you cannot thrust at a man with naked hand, and in the *salle d'armes* you are bound, by courtesy, to pick up his weapon for him. Formerly, when foils were capped with leather, not with gutta-percha knobs, some puerile dexterity was also shown in locking the buttons

(1) One, two, three is still largely used in the lesson, and fairly often in the assault.

(2) A time thrust (*coup de temps*) is an attack made with opposition in a complicated attack, and intended to intercept the line, when such an attack is meant to finish. Badminton *Fencing*, page 91.

(3) The *froissement*, or *froissé*, is executed by rubbing or scraping one's foil along the opponent's

and in screwing the foil out of the opponent's grasp. Disarmings, in fact, are fitted only for the theatres. I may add that these and other methods always failed if the fencer held the handle properly. He should accustom himself to feel his weapon with his little finger and its neighbour. Remember, also, that grasping the grip or putting any strength in the forefingers and thumb not only tires the wrist, but also makes the point wander. Some men have a trick of laying the index along the handle, but I never found their fencing good style; it is even advised by masters, who forget that straining the muscles is the chief result of the exceptional position. At best it can be useful only to relieve for a minute the sinews fatigued by tension in one direction.

It would be better, too, if we slightly altered the hilts of our swords. Throughout Europe the pommel end droops down, when evidently it should be turned up so as to fit into the commissure of the wrist and give greater leverage. You will soon find this out by cutting at an object with all your might and missing it; if you are holding in your gloveless grasp an old top-heavy cavalry sabre, with its short, round handle, the latter is sure to loosen the hand. The cut-over (coupé), again, which should be done in one movement, not in two, and with blade whistling like a whip, is merely another form of the disengagement intended for the same end, and received with the same parry. You must not forget that the fundamentals are the straight thrust and the disengagement, and that the further you recede from them the worse for you. Let me warn you very strongly against a succession of two or even three cuts-over (coupés), which raise the point from its proper normal position opposite the adversary's eye, and which offer a tempting opportunity to a low thrust. You will find in the books fancy evolutions called *coups de trois* and even *de quatres mouvements*; allow them to remain there.

The *liement de l'épée*, binding the blade, like the *flanconnade*, the *croisé* (4), and others of their kind, are valuable chiefly when the adversary keeps his point, as some cautious men will do, scrupulously directed towards you, and perhaps extends his arm with the benevolent intention of making you spit yourself. These several twistings of the sword, after engagement has taken place, offer the solid advantage of holding down and commanding his blade if he permits you to occupy it, and if you have more muscle than he has, should he parry, as often happens, with the middle or the "feeble" of his blade, you may force in

(4) *Liement* (binding the blade) is executed by passing the point over the opponent's sword without losing touch of his blade, straightening the arm and lunging in one movement, with strong opposition. *Flanconnade* is the *liement d'octave*. *Croisé*, or twist, is bringing the adversary's blade from an upper to a lower line, when the other's point is too low.—Badminton *Fencing*, page 53.

his guard. I presume you know that the rapier used to be divided into four parts, which were also subdivided into eight. The first simplification was reducing the four to three equal measures, beginning from the hilt—the *forte*, the medium, and the feeble. Now we prefer halving it: the "strong" from the shoulder to the middle, the defensive, the weak being used for offence, and such is the leverage of the length that the strongest arm cannot make the latter master the former.

You will also read of the *menacé coupé* and the *menacé dégagé*, which are merely the "coupé" and the "dégagement" without the lunge. Again, the *tour d'épée, soit en tierce, soit en quarte* is a long phrase for the common counters of tierce and carte, converted from semi-circles into whole circles, from parries into attacking measures.

These few offensive movements are absolutely all that you require. Yet every school has some "dodge" of its own; I will call these fancifications by no other name. This makes its pupils practise *feintes à droit*; that, the *feinte seconde, et tirer droit*; whilst these teach them to drop the point and bring it up to the attack. Movements of this kind are without end; I could invent on the spot half a dozen.

Yet observe that the three simple attacks and the four compound movements which I have given you may form a formidable list of combinations. *May* is the word. The less you attempt them the better. When you can play with your adversary as the cat with the mouse you may, perhaps, allow yourself an occasional *écart*; yet even then beware. I think Seaton can say something upon that point.

My friend's brow clouded a little, but he laughed it off good-humouredly, and, after a fair amount of pressing, he proceeded to tell the tale.

"It goes against me, but never mind. It has often made men laugh, and I dare say will do so again. I was at Abbeville, and at a country ball, as usual in a field or an orchard. There was a 'difficulty' between me and one of the dancers—of course a Frenchman. The *casus belli* was a pretty face, which levels distinctions. France also was then *en république*, which doesn't consider differences of master and man, Jean often holding his head higher than M'sieur Jean. A challenge passed for the next morning, and I found from my second that the 'other party' was a journeyman tailor. When we 'peeled' to the shirt and had been searched for weapons, I easily saw that my friend had no idea of using a sword, and I admired the little beggar's grit. It was a cold morning, threatening rain, and we'd danced till late, which makes one shaky. I could have 'cooked his goose' with half a thrust, but I wanted to let him off easily, and after a little by-play to drop my point upon his shoulder, to draw first blood, to give a *poignée de main*, and to wash my hands of the silly affair. But I reckoned without my host. The

gallant little snip would take no denial. He waited till he saw my point well out of line, and then he at me, ducking his head like a charging bull, and following his sword, which went fast enough. It ran me clean through the wrist, and, but for a turn of the muscles, I might have had a spare inch or two in my right breast. After which he 'confounded himself' in excuses, and pleaded that it was for the justification of 'son honneur.' I never felt so foolish in my life. My only plan was to tie up my arm, to pack up my box, to pay down my money, and to bolt before the town heard of the adventure. Besides, it might have been no joke. Imagine what a death for 'an officer and a gentleman'!"

* * * * * * *

IV.

I resumed.

You will bear in mind that, throughout its attacks and parries, the sword can follow only these four lines: 1, high line (*la ligne haute, la linea alta*), threatening the noblest parts of the body, the upper torso covered by the plastron; 2, low line (*la ligne basse, la linea bassa*), the lower part of the plastron and "below the belt" in pugilism; 3, outside line (*le dehors, la linea di fuori*), professionally called tierce, which menaces the shoulder and the flank; and 4, inside line (*le dedans, la linea di dentro*) or carte, aiming at the breast and the stomach.

Thus, by reducing to its simplest expression this imbroglio of technical terms, of feints and double feints, of true engagements and false engagements, of "menacés" and "coulés," of "croisés" and "flanconnades," of "pressions" and "dérobements" (5), of "reprises" and "remises," of parries and half parries, we obtain two distinct advantages, both equally to be valued.

The pupil's mind sees more clearly the foundations of all practice, and can at once analyse any combination which offers itself. This is not so easily done by our typical English rule of thumb, and the greatest enemy to excellence in arms is that hazy idea of its principles that satisfies so many students. Further still. The hand reflects the lucidity of the thought (6); in the pupil of a good school it never falters; it goes straight to the point; it cannot stray, and it gains immensely in freedom, readiness, and facility of execution. Hence result the five most important qualities, which represent the cardinal virtues of the sword. These are, in due order of precedence:

Nerve, *alias* presence of mind.

(5) *Coulé* is gliding the blade along the adversary's without pressure or scraping. *Dérobement* is quitting the adversary's blade by dropping the point a few inches below it.

(6) It is interesting to see how Burton has been influenced in this part of his subject by Bazancourt's book (see pages 44-56 of Mr C. F. Clay's translation).

Judgment, especially of distance, combined with sharp eyesight.

Quickness of movement in hand and body.

The tact of the sword (*i.e.*, nice sense of touch), and

Regularity.

Combined in a high degree of excellence, they form the complete swordsman.

V.

Presence of mind I need hardly explain. Judgment is a term which makes you shrink; it suggests, like "common sense," special gifts, trained and matured by long experience. I mean by it nothing more than that ordinary amount of intelligence which average men bring to whatever they do. Each well-reasoned lesson will add something to your judgment, and the precision begotten by practice will give it the perfection of which it is capable. Indeed, the beginner is advised not to preoccupy himself with "judgment," as such process tends to cloud the lucidity of thought.

Judgment in arms displays itself chiefly by distrust of the adversary's movements and by a wise prudence in your own; by divining what is most likely to deceive him; by the mute interrogation of the sword, and by the just appreciation of difficulties, general and special. I need hardly tell you that a hundred men will show a hundred styles. Judgment of distance is the great secret of all hand-to-hand weapons, from the dagger to the lance. It must not be confounded with judgment of distance as taught in musketry schools, yet both are mastered by the same process—practice aided by theory and perfected by application.

Quickness, meaning not only of the hand, wrist, and forearm, but of the whole body, is undoubtedly an immense merit, both in the attack and defence, the riposte and the retreat. "Slow and sure," *chi va piano va sano*, do not apply to our art. There are writers who hold quickness to be the very commencement of the fencing lesson, as it is the capital point of the fencer. Listen to one of the best (7): "I believe that we must guard against the usual style of instruction, which consists in repeating over and over again, 'Go slowly; study quietly the thrusts and parries; attend to your position; separate your movements by mentally counting one, two, and so on; don't hurry; quickness will come in due time.' It is doubtless useful to train the hand by lessons with the plastron, but it is not useful to train it into slowness. The pupil, after being made to understand the mechanism, the analysis, and the meaning of each movement, should at once begin to practise it as quickly and sharply as possible. A tardy, 'dawdling' style is so convenient, and so seductive, by the facility with which it effects

(7) See Bazancourt (Clay's translation, page 47, *et seq.*).

each movement, that it will soon react upon the judgment and acquire all the force of a habit, making intelligence idleness.

"If, under pretext of training the hand and decomposing the movements, you allow this habit a chance of existence, you will sow the germs of a defect which may presently become ineradicable. It is your work to oppose it.

"When the child begins feebly to totter over the ground, stumbling and threatening every moment to fall, you do not take it in your arms; you support it, but you allow it to walk. By degrees the bones are strengthened, the use of the muscles is learned, and the two-year-old treads firmly as the young bird flies.

"Such a child is the pupil. As his science and experience grow in stature, so will many weaknesses and defects cast themselves off, and finally they will easily be rectified by reason and judgment.

"But quickness is purely a mechanical and material process, which cannot be reasoned out, which cannot be analysed, which can be produced.

"Feed, therefore, the fire, instead of allowing it to die out for want of fuel.

"Do you think that it will suffice to say at a given moment, 'Now do quickly what you have so long been doing slowly'?

"It is a new order of ideas to which you are introducing your pupil. Those are fresh obstacles which you oppose to his progress."

* * * * * * *

I made the fifth virtue "Regularity"—a poor word for want of a better. You will understand by it the consensus, the union, of all the bodily movements, the correspondence of the eye with the hand, for instance, the suppleness of the wrist and forearm, and the co-relation of forces required. This is especially the mysterious gift which distinguishes the good shot, the billiard and quoit player, the cricketer, the trapeze gymnast, and others of the same category. It is born with man; some have their pint, others their gallon, but few are wholly without it, whilst those who possess the *donum dei* to a remarkable degree at once take the highest places in their several pursuits.

But though *nascitur non fit*, this Regularity is susceptible of great culture. Its development depends upon daily studies conducted under the careful eye of the master. The least tendency to assume a bad habit—not those so called in the *salles d'armes*, but a habit which does not belong to the pupil's individuality—should be pointed out, commented upon, and corrected. It is hardly fair to expect this amount of time and trouble from the average teacher, who after a certain number of years must find the average pupil exceedingly flat and stale. But the student can, as usual in all studies, do much for himself—ten, in fact, to Mr Professor's one. He will, as a looker-

on when others are taking the lesson, carefully note their defects and obtain their measure by comparing them with the master. He will apply these observations to himself and easily hit upon the way of cure. This, too, is the best treatment of tricks such as turning the toes in or out, opening the mouth, stiffening the fingers of the left hand, squaring the left elbow, and so on. But the pupil must not be too pedantic with himself. The right foot, for instance, by academical rule, should be placed straight to the front. If he learn that he gains base and strength by a trifle of deviation, why should he not do so? I have found it a good plan at times to practise before a pier-glass.

VI.

"It is early in the evening," Lord S. said, "and I should much like to see you put your practice into action."

Willingly, replied I. As a volunteer teacher of sundry friends my proceeding has been as follows: For the first month the time required is half an hour a day, provided that there is nothing to unteach. Afterwards three half hours a week are sufficient. The earliest lessons are devoted to explaining and demonstrating the capital importance that resides in the mutual dependence and in the perfect equilibrium of the movements; it is, in fact, an essay on 'regularity.' I make my neophyte stand on guard, advance and retire, lunge and recover himself with aplomb and without crossing—that is to say, placing the right foot out of line, the directing line, the *ligne directrice*, the German *Gefechtslinie;* otherwise he will surely stumble, and perhaps fall. The defect is sometimes found in excellent fencers, and when chronic it cannot be cured.

"What is the directing line?" asked several voices.

The perpendicular drawn from the left heel of a right-handed man through the heel and toes of the right foot, to be preserved both in guard and during the lunge. The old rule was to set off at right angles from the base, formed by the left foot. We moderns are more liberal; some align the forward heel with the hollow of the other foot, and others, I myself included, with the ankle bone.

The most ordinary intelligence will learn by these first lessons the mechanism of the various positions and actions—a mechanism based upon the nature and instinct of our organisation.

"Try the experiment upon Charles," Lord S. suggested.

I would rather not. He has already, he tells me, taken a few lessons. I want someone who is utterly innocent of fence. If the Rev. Mr O'Callaghan has no objection to be used as a demonstration, he will be my choice.

Mr O'Callaghan, curate and chaplain, was a born sportsman, although bred to a black cloth. He gave laughing assent,

remarking, however, that he would probably be a very awkward example.

I replied, Perhaps so, during the first quarter of an hour. Such is the common law, and none may claim immunity from it. Josephine herself can hardly have made grace out of the goose-step. Please to look at me and to place yourself on guard. This word alone explains the end and object of the process.

To be on guard, to guard yourself, that means to assume the properest position for defence and its complement, offence. Now that the heels are parted by the proper distance, say two foot-lengths; of course it differs with every man. Bend your knees; in other words, sit, as it were, without sitting down—so. You must expect the position to cramp you at first, so would a few miles of saddle-work after a year of walking. But the more you bend the spring, the greater will be the recoil, and the more sudden and rapid will be your movements.

Your right arm according to the *salles* should be half bent, because over-tension of the muscles would fatigue it. After a time you will choose your own measure. As a general rule in the French school the pommel of your sword is opposite the right breast, with the point to the adversary's eye. In this position it can most easily be brought to cover all the lines which require watching. Later on—if you determine to be a swordsman—you will allow the penchants and instincts of your organisation, the convenience of sight, for instance, to modify these academic dicta. The important point is to preserve the aplomb of the body and to use the limbs easily without *gêne* or stiffness.

I now advance upon you. You naturally retire. To do this and to keep your distance there is only one way. You move back the left foot more or less, and you allow the right immediately to follow it. I always insist at first upon a full step, not a kind of shuffle backwards, as it is one of the beginner's difficulties. Stamp, please! It will give rhythm to your movement and ensure a good position.

I now retire, and you advance upon me. It is the same operation, only reversed. Do not raise the foot so high, you waste time; nor yet draw it along the ground, which might cause a stumble. You will find advancing much easier than retreating. And, again, as a beginner, always stamp; it makes the body sit firm and motionless on the left.

Bravo! You move like a professor. Bend your knees a little more, and when you practice alone—for I see that you will be a swordsman—bend them as much as possible. The academic law is that the knee should be on a plumb-line with the instep. As regards the left leg, a string dropped from the hip bone should fall along the thigh, the outer knee, the lower leg, and the ankle bone. Few men go beyond or outside of

this imaginary perpendicular; many inside—that is to say, the knock-kneed fencer is more common than the bow-legged. Both are faults, because they take from the power and spring of the lunge; but they are mostly matters of organisation, and cannot be altered without a damaging process.

The rule for the body is to be bolt upright upon the haunches, easily and without stiffness. If, however, you feel inclined to bend, bend forward; but never backward—the system of the old French school. When the body is carried to the front you will often see the master lay down his foil and set the pupil up like a sculptured torso with both hands. This is dancing master's fencing. There is no harm in the forward position; it does not increase exposure, because the angle which it assumes diminishes the area of surface, and to a certain extent protects itself by giving additional trouble to the adversary's point. It is also a sovereign remedy against low thrusts. On the other hand, bending backwards is an absolute defect; it is ruinous to all quickness, both in attack and in riposte. Besides, it always exposes you to a time thrust. Do you feel tired?

"No."

So much the better. It shows that your position is easy and natural; that the muscles are not contracted; and that cramps do not paralyse your movements. You will not forget to keep your left shoulder well to the rear so as to show only a profile to the adversary. In due time you will be able to take some liberties in this matter, and, indeed, there are first-rate fencers who show two-thirds of front; but these are men whose well-trained muscles obey like lightning every order of the brain, and who can escape the thrust by an almost imperceptible amount of shrinking. And, remember, shoulder always low, and no extra strength applied to it, or you will "counter from the shoulder" and strike with your point the ground instead of the adversary.

Such, then, is the posture of defence. Rest yourself whilst I pass to the offensive part.

VII.

You might attack your adversary by running into him, as happened to our friend Seaton, or by a spring, a buck jump, like the "Turcos" in *Punch*, with both legs to the fore. I once saw an excellent swordsman surprised into being touched by this simian process, but the usual, nay, the invariable, plan is sharply to lunge—that is, to shoot the right foot from guard some 18in. forwards, shaving the ground, and simultaneously to straighten and stiffen, not to half straighten, as the idle apprentice often will, your left leg. Do not make any false movements with the right foot before you advance it. This is called in technical language *tricher*, and

it warns the adversary of your intention. Remember the golden rule of the lunge—two movements, not one. The first: Raise the right arm, depressing at the same time the left. No. 2: Move the right foot and extend the left leg. If the first precede the second your aim will be wild. Make your pass even and regular, as if carrying a glass of water to your adversary's breast. The better to confirm the lunge, I often teach the demie-allonge—the right arm raised as to make the pass, the left leg extended without further movement.

At first you must be careful to keep the left foot firmly on the ground; it is apt to turn and to drag an inch or two forwards, which, besides having a slovenly look, alters your distance without your being aware of it. When lunging, rest upon the major arch of the left foot, formed by the heel and the cushion behind the big toe. This firm base gives immobility to the left leg, which is apt to be shaken by the vigorous tension of the bow. The cap of the right knee bone must be perpendicular to the instep, or, if you prefer it, to the toe-tip, as the schools direct.

Whether your attack be simple or compound, ever remember what I here repeat: The movement of point and hand, together with the extension and elevation of the arm, must precede, though almost imperceptibly, the action of the body and the legs. This is an invariable rule. If your lower limbs begin the move you lose equilibrium; your lunge will give notice to the adversary, and your point will wander from the mark. Great fencers sometimes reverse the process by way of *tour de force*.

The point in the French school should be lanced out, as it were, and be withdrawn instantly, like the cat's claws. And do not forget that the "recovery," the return to guard, must be as prompt and sudden as the lunge. You have failed in your swoop; like the hawk, you are in a position of the greatest danger from the hern, and the sooner you retire from it the better. Nothing can be worse than a slow and "dawdling" retreat, which encourages the enemy to attack you whilst in disorder by what is technically called a *riposte en temps perdu*.

Every *salle d'armes* will show you men who are fond of remaining at the lunge, trying the dangerous and objectionable thrust called *remise de main*, which, except under certain well-defined circumstances, is permissible only to great artists—feinting at close quarters and engaging in *la bourrache*, poignarding the adversary, and displaying what I call the pugilism of the sword. The whole process is thoroughly out of character. The attack should consist simply of a rapid lunge and an immediate return to guard.

So much for the offensive part of the process. Mr O'Callaghan, I am greatly obliged to you. Do not forget my prediction.

"I would ask a question," Charles said. "Is it necessary

when on guard, gracefully to curve that left arm and to lower it when lungeing like a mill-sail along the left thigh?"

There is no necessity, but in both schools, Italian and French, the left arm acts as a counterpoise; it is the rope dancer's balance pole, it gives equilibrium to the movements, and it introduces symmetry and equality in the action of the two limbs. You must do something with your left arm, and it seems hardly natural that it should hang down dead by the side or be carried "a-kimbo," when it becomes mere dead weight. If you reflect you will probably find the French style best. I have described the Hispano-Neapolitan posture—the left hand opposite the pectoral muscles. This may be considered obsolete now that the dagger is not used. *Au reste*, not a few wear the left arm with the hand on the hip, and the German *sabreur* often places it behind his back. Do with it what you please, only do not put it in any position which may bring the left shoulder forwards and offer more body to the adversary's sword. I never quarrel with my pupils, except when idleness or carelessness is shown in neglecting the left arm, and as a thing of beauty is a joy for ever, and beauty, like poetry, is "Nature's brag," I do not allow the elbow to be angular or the fingers to project like those of a Mandarin upon a tea caddy. Grace is the truth of action, want of grace its falseness.

As you may imagine, these simple movements can be modified in a variety of ways. For instance, instead of the common return to guard by the right leg, the left may be brought up; this is, however, confessedly dangerous. Then there is the inverted lunge with the left foot, called *se fendre en arrière*, and there is much to say about it. Again, the body may be suddenly thrown backwards in guard, which places it out of measure, beyond reach of the point. When advancing, the left foot may furtively be brought close to the right so as to double the length of the lunge. You will see these and many other tricks done in the fencing schools, sometimes even in the field, by gentlemen who are "renowning it." But the fatal objection to them is that they are not generally adopted, showing that they are not generally valuable.

VIII.

I have now made you as wise as myself upon the subject of moving the body and the limbs, which indeed is all the mechanism of swordsmanship. A few words before we separate.

Why have these positions and these movements been chosen, been universally approved of by the civilised world? The reply is because they are intuitive and instinctive. See how the races that use the knife naturally seize it with the right hand, drape the cloak round the left arm, and, under cover of the body, prepare the weapon for a fatal thrust

"I'm certain," Shughtie said, "that they are wrong. Have the cloak if you like, it may always be useful, but hold your bowie-point to the fore as if it were a sword. Why, man, you've quoted Achille Marozzo, and already you forget his principles. There are two common ways of using the knife—underhand and overhand. Underhand is rare, being easily stopped; overhand, if you treat it as I would, may be received upon the point. An acquaintance of mine had a third way, which was not without its merits. He rejoiced in the sobriquet of 'Flat-footed Jack,' being, or rather having been, one of Her Gracious Majesty's hard naval bargains. The Argentine gargotti's not a bad place for knife practice. The Flat-footed in his cups would quarrel with his own hat; hence many a difficulty. When *cuchillos* are drawn Señor Spaniard, old or new hemisphere, has a silly habit of showing off. The world must see the curved beauties of his deadly blade. It's like the Tartar prince, who by herald informs the kings of the earth that they may dine, as he has finished his meal of mare's milk. And it's quite unlike the sensible Japanese, who, holding the scabbard in the left hand, draws his sword with so little loss of time that he opens his man from belt to shoulder."

A very old manœuvre of the Italian and German schools, I interposed.

"Well," resumed Shughtie, "while the particular Don was intent upon his gambado, Flat-footed Jack suddenly let fly at him a perfectly straight thrust with a common whittle some 6in. long, and worth when new 4d. He was only careful to put his thumb along the bone handle. Of course, every blow killed. I should be afraid to name the number of our countryman's triumphs."

This was a long speech for Shughtie. I knew that he would not readily do it again, and resumed.

Such, then, is the rule of the sword—we will drop the knife—and it is based upon nature and truth, upon practice and experience.

And what, you ask, is its proper object?

In the defensive position of guard to allow the limbs their fullest liberty of action and to cultivate as much as possible the ease and the elasticity which reside in them.

In the offensive action the opposite is required; here we must develop and utilise all the power and the momentum, the vigour, weight, and speed of which the body is capable.

I seem to be talking mere truisms—"the truths of M. de la Polisse." But you see a master in every school daily and hourly protesting against the awkwardness of his pupils' guards, against the clenching of the hand, the tension of the arm, the stiffness of the shoulder, in fact the wilful and sinful expenditure of force, without once explaining to them, so clearly that they never can forget it, the essential difference between the com-

plete repose of the guard and the vivid muscular action of the attack.

To show how natural is our position, attempt in any manner to change it. There are many ways, but all will equally fail. Take one for instance, and stand up, like the old Spaniard, with knees unbent. This at once throws the whole machine out of gear; you cannot without great difficulty perform the simplest movement of attack, defence, or retreat. The body has lost its aplomb; it can no longer make sure of hand and arm; it insists upon devancing them or upon lagging tardily behind. See how slight a change causes the virtue to depart from you.

The houghs, the popliteal muscles, are the two springs which project the body and which, properly managed, give it rapidity of motion. When you clear a fence or a ditch you imitate the grasshopper, not to mention the more lively animal that can hop over its own St. Paul's. When you drop from a wall or make a low jump you also bend the houghs to prepare for the feet touching the ground, otherwise you suffer from the jarring shock. How many men have been injured and even killed by suddenly stepping into a hatchway imprudently left open? If prepared they could have managed without difficulty twice or three times the amount of fall.

I insist upon these facts, which are the axioms, the groundwork of our science. My pupils are always taught their absolute necessity and their relations as cause and effect, or, if you please, sequence, consequence, concatenation. Upon this point——

"Eleven-forty p.m.!" Shughtie briefly ejaculated.

—I will only say that instinct has here been our earliest guide, and that experience has tended to explain and consecrate the principles. But I add:

When sufficient practice shall have made these movements familiar to you, when you feel the ease and rapidity which result from them, and when you are conscious that they have given, with the patience of assured strength, a new life to your thews and sinews, then you have a right to venture upon certain modifications. If, after careful comparison and many experiments, you find that your individuality craves for departure from the beaten path of elementary rule, do so without fear, but do so with judgment. The best guard and the best lunge are those which allow body and limb to act with the fulness of freedom, preserving at the same time a perfect equilibrium. Possibly some peculiarity of conformation—a very long arm, for instance, or a remarkably short leg—may suggest important changes. But remember that the margin of deviation is not large; it is a narrow path, and a precipice yawns on both sides. Bear in mind that all excess is more or less faulty, especially when it declines from grace and beauty.

And I confess to disliking a rugged or grotesque fencer, although his thrusts may tell and his parries do their duty. A thoroughly well formed and set up physique—of course, when in

youth and health—must be "elegant"—*passez moi le mot.* If not there is some fatal defect which tailor or dressmaker has succeeded in concealing from all eyes but those of the physiologist.

Sur ce, messieurs, bonne nuit!

THE FOURTH EVENING.

I.

It was easy to see from the first aspect of the smoking-room that it was again to be a *soirée,* when pipes would predominate. The first half hour was passed, naturally enough, in talking over the events of the day. What added animation to the dialogue was the fact that one elderly gentleman, a visitor from town, evidently considered himself half shot in consequence of a country friend having fired across him. When giving my reasons for not joining in the English battue, I forgot to mention the chance of losing an eye or the use of an ear. So, before the days of the iron horse in India, a friend accounted to me for his longevity by the fact that he had never been exposed to railway travel. His idea suggested the man who refused to take such hot and rebellious liquors in his blood as tea and coffee, but never refused whisky, toddy, or iced punch.

II.

Invited to "address the assembly," I lit my weed and spoke as follows:

We will continue, O Signori, the mode of instruction whose first page only is known to you—that is, to most of you. I enter, it will be observed, into the minutest details, without which, in fact, you might as well consult a treatise.

My pupil—I regret that the Reverend Mr O'Callaghan is not here—already knows the different positions of the body, and has practically learned to appreciate the results to which their use leads.

During the very next séance I would put a foil in his hand—always supposing that his intelligence equalled that of the average Church militant—and teach him the thrusts and the simple parries. Every day's work would be divided into three sections, each of eight to ten and even fifteen minutes, and later on I should even allow the patient to sit down before this term has elapsed. In the fencing schools you see men who think they are "blown" after a third of the time. The best fencers always save themselves during the assault before they become thoroughly tired, and the play becomes wild; the repose of the guard, properly understood, gives great relief, and allows much longer continuance of exertion.

"Would you give your half hour at once, or separate it by long intervals?" asked Shughtie. "I'm certain that the latter

is the best plan when learning the elements of a language—a pure work of memory. A man who labours two or three successive hours at his vocabulary is to me like a school lad of eight, who studies throughout a third of the day."

Your rule is good for languages, and you have founded it upon the best of reasons; but swordsmanship has little to work the memory. My practice is never to let the pupil go on fencing when I see that he is fatigued. But I also never let him sit down till he requires rest. The thrusts and simple parries are, I venture to remind you,

Straight thrusts,

Disengagements and cuts over (*coupés*) in *tierce* and in *carte*,

Parries in *tierce* and in *carte*,

Circles and demicircles.

The passes develop the regularity of bodily action, the parries give force and suppleness to the wrist. You must be careful, however, not to depend only upon the wrist; in the circles especially there should always be a slight rotatory motion of the elbow. In fact, you should feel that you have an elbow. A man in perfect health never feels that he has anything; we recognise our limbs only when there is something unsound about them.

I make my acolyte advance and retire till he finds it easy as walking, skating, or waltzing. From his *début* I demand from him the utmost vivacity of movement and rapidity of execution. It must always be well understood that slowness is the one sin which cannot be endured; it is the implacable enemy of anything like excellence; it is the *infâme* which must be crushed. The best way to punish a lazy lunge or a "dawdling" recovery is a stiff thrust in the lower ribs, with the hand low, so as not to allow the blade to bend. This should be repeated each time the fault occurs. Whatever the professors may say—and they all say the same thing!—I prize exact regularity far less than rapidity of execution, and I strongly object, except in special matters, to what is called "decomposing the movements." My object is to make even the first lessons so lively, so emotional, that the learner has not time for the *ennui* which attends the beginning of studies. It is, of course, necessary to point out the rocks upon which he may dash, and to save him from the wildness and extravagance of movements which must accompany unskilled quickness.

I would be more urgent upon this point of rapid execution amongst Englishmen than amongst Frenchmen or Italians, because a certain ponderousness of movement, "the stately lounge of the English gentleman," slowness decorated with the Order of the Garter, has become an insipid national boast, a Dundreary manner of superiority. I accustom my pupil to spare himself when tired, by relapsing into the repose of the guard, so as to be better prepared for rapid action when re-

quired, and, above all things, I never speak to the intelligence at the cost of bodily activity.

Then I pass to the parries and compound attacks. I have named them to you, and you will know both how they are composed and how few they are.

And here allow me to remind you once more that the modern or natural system has introduced an important simplification in what used greatly to "exercise" pupils and retard the quickness of their movements. The old method made the hand, in *tierce*, as in *prime* and *seconde*, turn the knuckles up and the nails down, whilst *carte* reversed the operation. These movements appear to us mere complications, the inevitable effect of the *maître d'armes*. We now make the same position serve for both, only remembering to offer more opposition to the opposing blade. We never turn the hand in the style of our fathers, except when we would master and force through the enemy's guard by a kind of dagger thrust. You will bear this in mind, especially when fencing with a left-handed man. If you attack him in *carte*, you run your head against his wall; always attempt him by his feeble side—*tierce*.

"I dislike the change very much," cried Seaton, who appeared this evening a trifle more excited than usual. "You take away one of the beauties of the guards. This is another step from the simple to the silly. Such levelling doctrines may tend to make all men equal—before the sword. I can't say that they suit me."

"I hope," suggested Shughtie quite gravely, "that you are not doing to swordsmanship what the Japanese propose to do with English—to reduce everything irregular to the regular; to say, for instance, 'I catch, I catched, I was catched,' *et hoc genus omne*. I'm sure that irregularities, like exceptions, are the most piquant beauties of language, especially of ours."

Your dislike, O Seaton, is an affair of sentiment. The change has been made, and has been accepted.

To resume. The counters, the double counters, and the turns of the sword are the most useful of exercises, because they work, or, as the French say, they "break," the wrist in all directions, giving it at once suppleness and strength. I would also remind you that, though *carte* is the easiest and the most natural parry, the *contre de quarte*, from left to right, is far more difficult, because it requires more opposition than the *contre de tierce*, consequently it demands much longer practice. I should advise the aspiring swordsman to give it five minutes to one of the other. In the former the muscles seem to act against the grain, in the latter they play naturally. This is not the case, but we are more accustomed to draw the arms towards the body than to the reverse movement.

At the end of the lesson I call the serious attention of my pupil to the faults which each half hour has developed. I

show him whence they arise, the dangers to which they must inevitably lead, and the easiest method of present cure and future prevention. He may then practise alone if he pleases and bring me his results.

If, for instance, he inclines, as many do, towards the irregular practice of suddenly dropping the hand or of drawing back the arm, as for a stab, I should make him attack and ripost in the high lines, even in the heights of the classicists, until his wrist is forced to acquire a certain amount of elevation, and *vice versa*. The perfect swordsman may, it is true, take such liberties with his art as the poet introduces a hiatus, the musician a discord. These blemishes in places become beauties, but the greater the artist the more prudently he will use them.

And, in the matter of the high right hand, held above the head, French pedantry has done its worst. The old position of the Italian, or, rather, the Neapolitan, lunge was on a plane with the right shoulder. The "mixed school," again, trims between the two. Every French *maître d'armes* will insist upon what he calls "elevation," as if it were a *sine qua non* in good fencing. Ask him why? Because with a low hand you expose the upper part of the body. Tell him, with my compliments, that you do nothing of the kind.

III

Here, then, is the whole of the lesson which has been made such a bugbear to the uninitiated.

"I saw," Shughtie said, quoting the Arab proverb, "a monster from afar; nearer it became a man, and presently I found it to be my brother."

Yet professors still lose themselves in a dædalus of attacks, parries, and ripostes, through which nothing but the Ariadne's clue of lifelong labour can guide the unhappy wanderer. Go to any continental fencing school of the old style, and you will find the more advanced pupils passing through a half-hour's course of combinations, mere trials of ingenuity, simple multiplications for the purposes of multiplication, of which a tithe is never used in the assault, nor a fifth in actual combat. The master will tell you that they have their merits, and this is true to a limited extent. "Hop-scotch" may do some good to the embryo opera dancer. But the serious disadvantage is that they leave no time for repeated practice of the small number which is really wanted, and in which I try to perfect my pupils. One of the most successful sportsmen with big and dangerous game ever known to me used to work with steel-tipped bullets at fifty paces, never farther, and for good reason, till he was certain of a shilling. And you will know who wins at billiards—not the man who now and then makes a brilliant stroke that delights the gallery, but he who never misses an

ordinary pocket and cannon. Moreover, a very limited number of movements greatly facilitates their execution to the beginner and sinks deep in the matter of his mind. When he has passed into the advanced stage he may please himself, and even win the praise of the world by the variety and the mobility of his play. It is enough for me to see that my pupil understands thoroughly what he does, and that his hand becomes the faithful echo of his thought. The young idea so taught cannot fail to shoot straight and to shoot far.

We now approach another section of my subject, upon which I am in complete disaccord with almost every teacher and every treatise. The latter will not even reason with the pupil during the first month, and actually refuse to teach him the names of tierce and carte, lest, like the recruit, he should confound his right hand with his left, and the idea of anything beyond the plastron lesson seems to give them the horrors. One well-known *Traité* (La Böessière's) gives fifty-four lessons before coming to the loose fencing, and, supposing that each takes a week to master, you end the year. We are, even so, warned against the faults arising from *des leçons trop précipitées*. The Frenchman is not the only one who has written a chapter "upon the danger of premature assaults"—*anglicè*, of fencing loose too soon. Briefly, I begin my pupils within a month or six weeks.

Seaton had sniffed the fray from afar; hence probably the unusual restlessness which had been remarked.

"I expected this hideous heresy!" he cried. "More than once I've seen it come and pass by. In my day we were taught to believe that the professor who even allows, much more who encourages, loose fencing in beginners destroys a career. It's the worst form of condescension, to use a dainty word. It spoils good gifts; it wastes preliminary studies; it stands in the way of all progress. Are you speaking in parables, Sir? Or, perchance you are qualifying for a line in the Budget of Paradoxes? After a dozen riding lessons you do not send a boy to play polo, or to dance a quadrille the week after he puts on his first skates, do you? And what did you yourself say about the bravura song and the practice of painting, of art in general? You should be sent as consul to Trieste, or any other place of discipline, before you've thoroughly corrupted the youth of this unhappy land!"

A noble rage had made him forcible, facetious, prophetical.

Du calme, I suggested. Let us avoid attributing evil motives and forecasting highly unpleasant contingencies.

Permit me to resume my sentiment in very few words. I do *not* allow my pupil to fence loose before he knows tierce and carte, but with me he learns them easily. I do *not* cram him without consulting his intelligence; and I do *not*—as you do—keep him back when he longs to go forward. My system

introduces him to the assault as quickly as possible, yours as slowly. That is the main difference.

I am at war with you to the knife upon this point, having suffered much and long from what I will take the liberty to call a prejudice. In mere childhood two brothers used to hide themselves in the garden and fence loose because the masks were locked up. One suffered severely from a thrust in the palate, and this would not have taken place, my Seaton, had not the master been of your school—shall I say your form?

"You both deserved a good flogging, and so ends that matter!" was the natural rejoinder.

But to speak more seriously. I find the professional opinion utterly inapplicable, even to those who would study arms professionally, and who by obstinate toil would rise to the heights of our difficult art. How much less, then, can I apply it to the generality of men for whom a modicum of skill suffices?

Masters, especially masters after a certain age, will not, or rather cannot, comprehend this. They look back through the mist of years at the long life journey which it has been theirs to make. They see in the dim and fading vista the boy with his little foil, the lad, the youth, the adolescent, and the man—always, ever, foil in hand. They exaggerate the difficulties of beginning an art whose end they have reached. It seems monstrous to them that a pupil of yesterday should venture, as it were, to attack them. See the nervousness with which the grey-headed clerk allows the young quill-driver to make his first entry in that awful ledger. You, John Shughtie, do you not feel a certain softness of heart when some Orientalist in embryo, and just out of jacket, brings you his Arabic alphabet and begs you to bind him upon that fiery gridiron? If you do not, I do.

Thus, observe, I well understand what lies at the poor *maître's* heart, and what obscures his understanding. Sentimentally he is right; logically he is wrong. And there is still a something eating at his feelings. In all the fine arts, as in literature, a man leaves, or may leave, traces behind him; the pictures and statues survive the painter and statuary; the poet bequeaths to posterity his poem; the musician his music. But it is not so in the personal, corporeal exercises, such as equitation, dancing, singing, acting, and fencing. These exist only in the memory of contemporaries, and, whatever be the excellence of the expert, a name, and nothing but a name, floats down the stream of time.

The science of arms—by which, of course, I mean the methodical knowledge of the small sword—is subject more than any other to different appreciations, and especially to divers degrees of study and proficiency.

Are you sure then, MM. the professors, that these "premature

assaults," as you agree to term them, exercise such pernicious effects and sow the seeds of so many faults? Right or wrong, I persist in thinking that if they do harm, the harm comes from you, the masters. And it is my conviction that, properly directed, they do good.

Excuse me if I quote my own case. After months and sometimes years of exile, when my sword-play has been confined to a bout at broadswords with a capering Hindu or to a trial of singlestick with a muck-running Malay, it has been my fate to return to this world. Religiously, each time, I begin the lesson and the *mur*, which is *le fond et la base des armes*, like a little child, and shun the temptations of the assault for a month or so, till right and left hand have remembered their former cunning. But there is some moral courage in this process, *se remettre aux armes*, as the French say; do not doubt it. The dreariness of the *leçon* reminds me of that one road in some Brazilian town which the necessity of walking exercise compelled me conscientiously to tread day after day, and it requires no little perseverance to persist in the constitutional when you know the face of every rut and the form of every pebble upon your beat. And why should I expect the average man to do what is irksome even to the old practised hand?

In short, I make no difficulty about indulging my pupil as soon as possible. All vary in capacity for work and in capability of progress. But as a rule, after a month, more or less, of regular study, when my acolyte has learned to understand the small number of movements which have been described to you, and when he executes them with vivacity and relative regularity—why, I put on my mask and plastron, and bid him come on and do his best. As the ladies are not here I may confide to you that acolytes of that "persuasion" have sometimes insisted upon attacking me within the week, and have shown themselves aught but grateful—indeed, most recalcitrant, almost threatening to call me out—when debarred of such enjoyment. This is the bravura song without knowing the scales.

IV.

I need hardly say that we must expect the first attempts at loose fencing to be loose indeed, awkward as are all the early efforts of an intelligence which has just freed itself from the shell. It will be a rudimental affair, faulty, and full of extremes, not unfrequently grotesque, violent, or feeble. But why is the master there except to set matters right? And what is the use of the lesson, unless it gives the opportunity of so doing?

Moreover, one advantage must not be concealed. The pupil has been left to himself—not Scotticè, I hope; he has been released from the trammels of a system; he has come out in his own and proper colours. If the *maître d'armes* deserve the name he will carefully note the germs of future gifts and defects for

encouragement and correction. He will hardly learn this so well from the behaviour of the acolyte under the lesson.

Our rude beginner, like the young bird trying its wings, sets out clumsily upon his first journey; still, he has started in life. Already he shows what part of the lesson has become part of himself and what portion has been thrown aside as lumber; we observe that this thrust is of his predilection, that parry is only troublesome to him His individuality appears, rash or prudent, slow or petulant, steadfast or wavering. You are studying his instincts, his character, which he does not dream of concealing, and which, perhaps, he could not conceal if he would.

Let me quote a great master and a distinguished amateur upon this subject:

"Les effets de l'escrime donnent lieu aux plus curieuses observations. Buffon a dit (by the by, he did not) (1) 'Le style c'est l'homme.' On pourrait presque dire aussi qu'en escrime 'le jeu c'est l'homme.' Le caractère s'y révéle tout entier—franchise ou mauvaise foi, nonchalance ou activité, timidité ou audace, orgueil ou modestie, finesse, astuce, ruse, en un mot, toutes les nuances du caractère, même les plus faibles, se font jour au milieu des péripéties de la lutte. . . .

"L'escrime a aussi sa moralité. La lutte des amours propres n'est pas moins vive que la lutte matérielle des épées, et les caractères se modifient, en bien et en mal, à ce contact et à ce frottement. Sous l'empire de la sur-excitation nerveuse produite par les exercises violents, l'esprit oublie souvent la politesse apprise et accoutumée: les gens bien élevés restent toujours convenables sans doute, mais eux-mêmes subissent l'influence de ces courants passionnés. Les défauts de chacun deviennent beaucoup plus apparents. Le moraliste et l'observateur, qui n'ont vu au dehors que des gens revêtis d'un vernis uniforme les trouvent là transformés: plus beaux, plus grands, plus petits, ou plus laids; tels qu'ils sont réellement. Les uns, dominés par une sorte de *furia* irréfléchie, se précipitent en aveugles sur la lame immobile du tireur qui leur est opposé; d'autres, calmes, modérés, pleins d'une ardeur réfléchie mais inébranlable, ne don-

(1) What Buffon did say was *Le style c'est de l'homme même.* But he is generally misquoted even by leading French writers, and I cannot but think that the constant adoption of this mis-version by Buffon's own countrymen shows either that there is very little difference in meaning between the two versions, or that the misquotation corresponds more clearly to the right definition in the minds of those best able to judge. Some of the editions suppress the *de* from the passage in Buffon's *Discours de réception à l'Académie*, and thus, according to some critics, make Buffon say exactly the opposite of what he intended, viz., that what is a man's own in his writing is the "order and the movement which he puts into his thoughts." All the rest may be borrowed, but this *lucidus ordo* or style is the man's own. (See Vapereau's *Dictionnaire universelle des Littératures;* art. Buffon.)

nent rien au hazard, recherchant pour les déjouer les projets de leur adversaire, les devinant parfois à l'aide d'un calcul intelligent, souvent par une sorte d'intuition qui est le privilége des vrais tireurs."

And the pupil's gain is this. No amount of plastroning will do for him what that quarter of an hour has done. He sees now what he is learning; he at once appreciates the benefits of judgment, of regularity, and of quickness; he feels the thrill of emulation, the joys of victory, the griefs of defeat; he knows that instead of grinding on in his dull round he is moving forward. And dimly he realises the presence of that Unforeseen which falls as a shadow upon every pace of his path, whilst he recognises the necessity of training his mind to meet it like a man and a swordsman.

"We are not approaching the Sublime and Beautiful, I hope," said that most practical Shughtie.

The assault is, in fact, I continued, disdaining his sneer, the lesson by the side of the lesson, and no one can doubt that it is a most beneficial change.

For what do the Arabs say? "The lecture is one; the talk about the lecture" (that is practice) "is a thousand."

V.

"Do you know," asked Lord B. with a smile, "that you are not only a heretic, that you are a downright infidel?"

Certainly, as regards these old and obsolete traditions. And so, allow me modestly to observe, was the mighty Bacon. I once heard of an Anglo-Indian officer who, having read for the first time a translation of the *Novum Organum* in Persian, asked who could be the impertinent fellow who had dared to fall foul of "Aristú," as he called Aristotle. But in my turn allow me to question you. Must not the right always begin with one man? Do you find anything wrong in my reasoning?

"I cannot say that I do."

Have you not felt all this yourself, and do you not believe that the protracted lesson adds another sting to the bitterness of beginning, causes the Art of Arms to look irksome, which is worse than terrible?

"You must not make Captain Seaton consider me your abettor in Radicalism."

"Communism!" ejaculated that officer with sententious brevity.

VI.

Permit me to borrow an anecdote from the brilliant but discursive pages of one who thinks as I do (2).

"In a series of witty and humorous articles, M. Desbarolles, one of the most artistic and life-full natures that ever belonged

(2) Viz., Bazancourt (*cf.* Clay's translation, p. 67).

to my acquaintance, recounts how, after having studied the sword with a French *maître d'armes*, in Germany I believe, he returned to Paris. There he at once repaired to the salon of perhaps the most celebrated professor of his day, M. Charlemagne (3), to whom he brought letters of introduction. As usual, the rooms were crowded with amateur *sommités*.

M. Desbarolles was politely asked to take a foil and provided with a *vis-à-vis*. He went through the assault in presence of the great man, and, having acquitted himself, as he supposed, in superior style, he quietly awaited the compliments his due.

"'Sir,' said the authority, 'will you permit me in virtue of my age to offer you a word of advice?'

"'Certainly; I shall be grateful.'

"'Very well! Work at the plastron for a whole twelve months before you allow yourself a single assault.'

"M. Desbarolles pleasantly describes the shock of revulsed feeling which these words caused, but—he adds—the counsel appeared sincere and possibly good; he followed it, and he never found cause for repentance.

"I should have hoped from him more originality than to have taken such advice *au pied de la lettre*; and in all cases I affirm that the process itself only delayed the great artist in becoming the admirable swordsman he was known to be."

* * * * *

Captain Seaton will probably urge against me something as follows:

You own that for the assault you want suppleness of wrist, quickness of execution, activity of body, and presence of mind. Well, then, you will learnt them best under the hands and by the lessons of an able preceptor. He has only to measure out his instructions according as you require them, and, above all things, not permit you to run before you can walk.

"Don't appeal to me," said the person alluded to. "For the sake of saving time and trouble, I here join issue with you upon your opinions, private and public, one and all."

Fortified by this assurance, I shall take the liberty of thus replying to Captain Seaton, or rather to my own idea of Captain Seaton:

Thanks for your generosity! I want bread, and you give me boiled rice. Gramercy for your offer of factitious energy; of quickness by word of command; of merging my individuality into another's; of pinning my faith upon the *verba magistri*. Truly I shall go far by this training of an intelligence, which is unerring only because it walks in leading strings under the

(3) Charlemagne, b. 1759, d. 1857, was professor of fencing in Paris from 1815 to 1841. His portrait, showing a certain resemblance to Lamartine, is given in *L'Escrime Française* (July 5, 1889).

master's hand, and it depends upon the indications, always just, always true, of his sword. It will be a pleasure to resemble the man who, safe in his swimming belt, peacefully studies his own movements, his specific gravity, his style and form of swimming, caring little for the fact that if you remove the corks he would at once disappear under the waves.

Far from me to deny that the plastron takes an important part in forming a fencer. It gives all the mechanism of material execution. But our friend Plastron claims to be so high and puissant a seigneur that his flag must precede all others, that his rights are universal, and that he may trespass with impunity upon the estates of his neighbours.

What we reply to him is once for all. You are base, being mechanical; your very intelligence is that of a calculating machine. What you have never done, cannot do, never will do, is to nerve heavy heart and brain against that King of Terrors, the Unknown, that spectre which, omnipresent and Protean in form, often melts away with its cold breath the most beautiful theories and the wisest combinations of mankind.

"Are you haunted by *L'Imprévu?* Is it your Fylgja or following spirit?" asked Shughtie. "Surely it's not fair to call up one ghost twice in a single evening!"

Whereas the assault is for the sword what to a young man first entering life are light and air and rich horizon, and journeys promising the excitement and the adventures for which his soul has long sighed. It calls upon him to bring his personality to the front, to inspire himself with his own individuality; in a word, to be himself, and not to recite page after page from the dulled lessons of others.

And yet out of deference to my friends I say this much for the plastron. Most fencing masters neglect one of its most important uses. As soon as the pupils have made a modicum of progress towards the necessary regularity, let each in his turn put on the leather jacket and give the lesson to his fellows. It will teach them tolerance for those who are feebler than themselves. I presume the fencing schools neglect this useful practice because it is wasting time, and because the parents who have paid the master expect all the teaching to come from him. It is wonderful how a few hours of giving lessons will fix the mechanism of fencing in your memory. I can compare it only with writing, which makes a man exact, after he has filled himself by reading a language.

"Yes," said Charles, "and there is at Oxford a sharp-witted undergrad—they say there always is one—who has made that system pay. His college tutor advised him to take a private coach, and so he took a private pupil."

At any rate, in the fencing salon, *vive* the Lancastrian system for ever! I have only one caution for the young master, which, indeed, is often equally necessary to the old master.

Avoid advancing the chest to receive the thrust: it is injurious, because it trains the eye to errors of distance.

VII.

The smoking-room showed a positive unwillingness to agree with me. Possibly Seaton, having long been the only authority upon the subject, had succeeded in inoculating the hearers with his ideas. I had spoken quite enough about the assault—indeed, far more than would have been necessary elsewhere—yet, in view of the said mute opposition offered to my favourite theory, I determined not to spare a single detail.

Perhaps you will find this iteration—well, unpleasant, and this presenting every facet and angle of the question the reverse of amusing. But my object is amiable; I would imbue your thoughts with that conviction which is in mine, and I would induce even the most obdurate to try the question fairly in his mind.

Seaton only fixed his eyes upon me. He reminded me of another Anglo-Indian friend whose characteristic was combativeness and whose chief mental pabulum was contradiction. I was momentarily puzzled to know what he would do when a bad sore throat arrested the action of his vocal chords. He looked at me and nodded—that was enough.

If you knew, I continued, how many striking instances of my assertion being true have passed before me! Hardly a fencing school in a great European city but presents the edifying spectacle of several advanced scholars still working at the plastron. It is a pleasure to see these gracile youths courting the warlike goddess; they are universally pronounced to be *superbes*. They have balance of body, elasticity of limb, accuracy of hand; all is in the highest state of training. They follow the professor's blade through a learned series of feints and counter-feints, attacks and demi-attacks, parades trompées, ripostes and contre-ripostes. Not a fault, not a deviation from line! They are walking treatises of the Art, which their master, justly vain, turns over for you to admire.

But when it comes to the real struggle, the lively image of war, these scholars are no longer the same. Their superiority in the lesson degenerates in the assault. Their mechanical dexterity, no longer having the same base, the accustomed *point de départ*, is paralysed. They know too much and they do not know enough.

For the assault is no longer the lesson. The adverse blade no more presents itself with the precision to which the scholar is accustomed; the contact of the swords has not that delicacy which was reflected in the pupil. Consequently he is in popular parlance "all abroad." He vainly seeks the regular graduation of passes and parries so long familiar to him; he finds here well-organised attacks, there extravagant movements, while in fact he is quite unprepared for either the one or the other.

Instead of the straight macadam, the king's high road, along which the scholar was wont luxuriously to roll, he suddenly debouches upon a goat path, narrow, rough, stony, and often so obscure that he must grope his way without self-confidence to support his steps. Yet perhaps even in the assault the "plastrooner" is correct and graceful by mere force of habit. He must, however, despite his science and his abilities, which have in certain points been over-cultivated, expect frequent defeats at the hands of many a less erudite swordsman, the *tireur malin* trained to the habit of combat, accustomed to face its *péripéties*, and familiar with that strange tongue which speaks equally well the idiom of every individuality.

These remarks have been made by everyone familiar with the *salles d'armes*, though men are often too indolent or incurious to hunt out the causes of such things. I am persuaded that such show scholars, such pattern pupils, such gold and silver exhibition medals of the master have simply been spoiled by over-lessoning. If, instead of cultivating to the highest degree the monotonous mechanism of the plastron, they had inured themselves to the changing fortunes of the mask, they would have become at the same time correct theorists and dangerous practicians.

I will not pretend to say that chance, or whatever you please to call it, has not made certain and sundry exceptions, but we cannot found a rule upon what is not subject to rule.

VIII.

We have now passed through the long avenue which led to the building, and we tread freely and firmly upon the vast arena which men call the assault; that is to say, the image of battle, the trained and gladiatorial struggle; difficult, full of fever and passion, between the men who bring to their aid everything that they know, and whatever they think likely to turn in their favour the scales of combat.

As regards myself, I never take up a foil for a serious assault, especially to meet a stranger, without a real emotion, a sensation that makes the heart beat quicker and the brain "look alive." And I do not doubt that all men of the same temperament as myself feel something of the kind (4). It is no disadvantage, although perhaps for the first minute the foil may not be quite so steady as usual. Possibly, it is a greater advantage than is usually believed. I envy the unimpressionable being who, without an additional pulse-beat, without the least sensation of chill in hands and feet, stands up to address the Chambers, the theatre, the banquet, or the Christian Young Man. But it is he whose head throbs and whose heart thumps against his

(4) Burton might have placed this passage between inverted commas (*cf.* Clay's Bazancourt, p. 73).

ribs who hurries the hearer along with him, and who brings down the house in thunderous cheers.

In this arena we shall find the two methods to which I have already alluded, the natural and the artificial, drawn up facing each other in hostile array. I will go round the ranks with you, and subject to a rapid review the multiplied phases which are likely to strike your glance.

The pupil, who began by standing before you ready for the goose step has now become a fencer. He has laid aside the plastron, and he has assumed the mask, prepared to do battle with all comers. Will you assist in the spectacle which is prepared for you?

"Willingly," said Lord B., "and I think that I can answer for these gentlemen to-morrow night."

THE FIFTH EVENING.

At the next smoke-séance without further preamble I spoke as follows:

I.

The assault is the fencer's life, after he has emerged from the chrysalis state of the *plastronneur*. It is a career full of dangers which incessantly repeat themselves; of rocks and shoals that must be weathered; of snares and pitfalls that must be avoided; of ruses and sharp encounters in which wit must be opposed to wit. It is the history of man with its illusions and disenchantments; its fortunes and misfortunes, its defeats and its victories.

Believe me, the innumerable counsels which fill your ponderous treatises, the preparations for all and everything that may occur, are as feather weights when actual experience sits in the other scale. Does a man ever profit from the experience of another man? The Spartan mother, when she buckled upon her son's arm his father's shield, only said to him, "Be strong, be brave, be prudent!" These words resume everything mental that can be brought to bear upon the subject.

All modes of strife for mastery essentially resemble one another, from the snowballing of the village green to the triumphs of strategical campaigns, and the mighty battle of life itself. All tuition and advice must inculcate in some form or another the elements which rule in the attack and the defence, namely energy and daring, prudence and stratagem. "Les qualités d'un bon tireur," says a first-rate authority, "sont les mêmes en effet, toute proportion gardée, que celles d'un bon capitaine, la prudence, la fermeté, la décision prompte, l'exécution rapide." Indeed, the comparison between the general and the fencer is one of the banalities of the fencing book.

To outwit your enemy, to attack him when it suits your convenience, and not his interests, such is the secret of success in the fencing room, as in the field.

To suspect the ambuscade which he prepares for you; to unite the prudence which trips up his fraud with the energy and audacity which drives in his force; to inspire him with a rash self-confidence that makes him sure of success; to turn the obstacles which if attacked would render victory almost as fatal as defeat; to feint and manœuvre upon the centre when you would mass all your strength to assault the flank; to show weakness where you are strong, thus inviting the enemy to bruise and break himself upon you; to defeat cunning by plain dealing, which is often the highest form of deceit, as honesty is, commercially speaking, the best policy; to dissimulate your approaches, so as to surprise and demoralise, by the sudden impetus of the attack, and, perhaps, the *ne plus ultra* of practical wisdom, to contrive a safe retreat when fortune does not think proper to favour you.

Are not these, and have they not been from time immemorial, the rules and maxims which have governed the great warriors of the world?

Such is the science of the field of battle; it is also that of man individually contending against man. And why? Simply because versatility of resources, stratagem, and science may change name, but must ever preserve nature.

These are the words of wisdom to be impressed upon the pupil's mind. The rest belongs to inspiration, to that subtle spirit of intuition which emanates from the grave of many a dead trial, which warns us, which guides us, and which ever redoubles itself by rising higher as the occasion demands.

But this "familiar" cannot be made a slave of the ring by the mere study of facts and forms; it yields only to the exercising of lucid intelligence devised by science and experience.

If the glorious gift of understanding, after being polished and perfected as far as teaching and training permit, be dealt out in such humble rations that it can divine nothing, cannot follow the course of events as they fly, cannot inspire itself with the opportunity before too late, then, I say, expect nothing from it. A deaf ear will be turned to your voice, and the words of counsel had better remain unspoken.

I find solid truth in these words: "L'escrime exige des facultés variés, celui-la seul y deviendra supérieur, qui sera d'une constitution physique avantageuse, qui à un morale solide unira l'intelligence, le coup d'œil, l'à-propos, la sensibilité du toucher, qui joindra au sang froid, qui permet de prévoir et de concevoir, *l'impétuosité* reglée qui exécute, et enfin, qui saura mettre d'accord toutes les facultés diverses pour en former l'ensemble de son jeu; quelques uns moins bien doués pourront devenir des tireurs difficiles, sans jamais être des tireurs sérieux; d'autres, enfin, selon le degré d'inferiorité de leurs facultés physiques, resteront plus ou moins dans la position du paralytique qui veut marcher. Lors même que le préjugé du duel aura complétement disparu de nos mœurs,

l'escrime subsistera comme le plus noble exercise auquel puissent se livrer ceux qui aiment ce qui est beau, savant et utile."

Here is the point where the two methods, the two systems, the old and the new, the artificial and the natural, begin to branch off from each other. In the former, the presiding genius is routine, in the latter intelligence; that is provisional, this is perpetual. (1)

"Linnæus and De Candolle," muttered Shughtie.

II.

If I could lead you into a fencing school as it was some half a century ago, and show you the ceremonious assaults of that day, you would find that our present form, even amongst those who are careful to retain, as far as possible, its academical traditions, can only be described as revolutionary, as subversive.

"The International!" ejaculated Seaton.

Imagine what it was when every man wore, upon the breast leathers of his fencing jacket, a fine, big heart of red cloth, which told the world where the thrusts were to be and not to be. A point denting any other part of the garment was considered, not only a failure but a blunder; it was not merely condemned by the rule of arms, it was overwhelmed with contempt. Circles, equally limited, were traced out for everything in the shape of attacks, parries, and ripostes. And as the *maître d'armes*, though retired into *bourgeois* life, was almost invariably an old soldier, the discipline of the *salle d'armes* was in the hands of a rigid Sir Martingale Martinet; and its rules and regulations were kept sacred with that hieratic conservatism proper to old soldiers—shall I say of that day?

The assault without buttons was then, moreover, a far more popular way of whiling away a dull morning hour than it is now amongst Continentals, especially military men, lawyers, and writers for the press. Thus, many a disputed thrust, half in or half out of the fine, big red heart, was made a pretext for settling disputes whose true *raison d'être* was to be kept from the world. In those days also it was the habit to wear in the fencing salon a certain ruffling air, which said clearly enough "You have only to ask me!" or that even more unpleasant affectation of wildness which suggests "When roused, I am more dangerous than other men."

In the south of France it was the custom to make passes in the upper lines, easily done by holding the wrist higher than that of the adversary. Hence, when both touched one would exclaim, "J'ai le haut, j'ai raison," and his claim was admitted. The same was the case throughout Italy.

(1) In the foregoing and hereafter Burton follows Bazancourt more closely than he has before done, and much of the dialogue is a free translation.

On the other hand, in Paris there was a system to be resumed in these words: "J'attaque, j'ai raison, vouz deviez parer," and this was considered unanswerable in the case of a time thrust.

Presently the ace of hearts disappeared from the game. A thrust in the upper or lower chest, and even beneath the arm, was admitted—under protest. Still, a point in the stomach, especially in the lower stomach, was considered to be what the Germans call a *Schwein-stoss* or a *Sau-hieb*. "Good heavens!" said the gallery, "where must we go to find his blade? The next thing he will do is to tilt at us between our shoulders."

"That's unfair," said Seaton, rousing himself after a cross kind of silence, "mere persiflage. The bull's-eye had its use, and we've lost by being laughed out of it. It directed eye and hand, it also made men aim at the centre. If they failed a little, the thrust was still good. In your modern school I'm obliged to keep a sharp look-out upon my left hip."

And why should I not disable your left hip if it can be done?—which, of course, it cannot be without exposing all my chest to you. What more fatal than a thrust in the *bas ventre?* And yet, curious to say, a point in the thigh or in the forearm was perfectly allowable on the field, whilst it was inadmissible to buttoned foils, to the *combat à armes courtoises*. Besides, how can you trace the line when and where not to touch? How many men have been killed by a pass in the back after "running in" to a *corps-à-corps* and then shrinking instinctively from the point?

This curious demarcation between the real thing and its shadow acted badly by leaving you unprepared against the blind and irregular onslaughts of unskilful hands. The sooner, therefore, it was abolished the better. The swordsman then, and then only, stood in readiness to resist ignorance, as well as to guard against the learned combinations with which he was familiar.

"And the old style acted well," said Seaton, "by teaching the pupil the superior necessity of guarding his vitals. Many a man has saved his life by allowing his antagonist's sword to entangle itself in his arm or leg whilst he returned the thrust in a more decorous place."

III.

It was still evident that my auditory was only half convinced, if even so much, and that a second home thrust was required. As usual, I began with a feint, so as not to let them see the point.

How often you hear in the *salles d'armes* "I do this in an assault; I should never attempt it in the field."

Now this is playing, mere skylarking, with the foil. If the action be really good it is fit for both forms of combat, and *vice*

versâ. On the other hand, you are right to encourage eccentricity of fence when dealing with a man whose peculiar style you would study. You are never thoroughly safe until you have learned to defend yourself against any attempt which might have a fatal result.

I cannot insist too strongly upon this point. So not to admit thrusts in the low lines from flank to stomach is, according to me, nothing but a vulgar error, with the dangerous consequences common to all error. If we judge from the results—and I do not see what other measure of value we can have—this despised, this interdicted point merits something of our esteem.

"Who was it that said," asked Shughtie, "his plan was when wanting an original and interesting book to run his eye down the pages of the *Index Expurgatorius?*"

It is not that I have any theoretical fondness for low thrusts; they are in one point, at least, essentially vicious if they expose all the upper part of the body. But I fear them, and therefore I respect them. It has been my lot to cross swords with almost every kind of fencer, and experience has taught me the full risk of not being prepared for these dangerous exceptions.

"I suspect," said Lord B., "that you must bring more reason to bear upon Capt. Seaton before he consents to raise the excommunication."

Let me try. The many fencers who are in the habit of presenting the point when they break or step backwards almost always drop the hand so as to threaten the lower line of the adversary's body. The few, again, who lunge to the rear, and bend the body backwards, instead of retreating from your attacks, according to rule, are almost sure to do the same. I need hardly say that the man who is ignorant of the sword always begins by using it to stab underhand, with wrist low and perhaps in old tierce. He is probably right, whether he knows it or not. The skilful fencer, again, will certainly attempt to make a point by a low thrust when, judging from the academical elevation of his hand, you do not expect it.

The stomach, therefore, must be defended quite as carefully as the chest; and the same reasoning will show you the propriety of attacking in the low lines those who neglect to prepare for you.

IV.

I continued:

> Ut silvæ foliis pronis mutantur in annis
> Prima cadunt; ita verborum vetus interit ætas
> Et juvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque.

And what is true of leaves and words applies equally to fencing. Old Girard Thibaust, of Anvers, who is one of the worthies of the rapier, consecrates whole pages (*Académie de l'Espée*,

MDCXXVIII.) to a pleasant thrust, which he calls *Le coup de pointe dans l'œil droit*, thereby distinguishing it from the slash, which would also bring about the same happy result. And his princely folio offers a multitute of illustrations to those who would master the proper way of blinding an enemy.

The adversary attacks you; you parry; he doubles himself up, as it were, and your ripost touches his mask, his back, or his arm. "The mask! the back! the arm!" says your antagonist, recovering guard indifferently, and airily denoting with his sinister finger tips the place of dishonour. And there are many who go on lunging as if nothing had occurred.

The mask, sir! But do you reflect that this thrust might have passed through your brain, which would have been quite as effectual as passing through your lungs? That other would have introduced six inches of cold steel into your back. The third would have pinned your arm to your breast. You place your face, your back, your arm where your breast should be. I touch what is before me, and I feel, you may be certain, amply satisfied with the result.

Do you really believe that were the buttons removed from the foils you would consider it equivalent to parrying or to escaping a thrust, this substitution of one part for another? That you are out of danger because you only expose your head, your back, or your neck to be drilled through?

Certes, it is the height of desperation to risk blow for blow when both you and your adversary suffer equally. To use such means as these shows that you have no others at your disposal; yet it must always be borne in mind that you must use what you have.

"All right," cried Seaton, with bitter irony, "introduce face blows, and presently we shall have occiput strokes. It is perhaps happy for reformers that, like revolutionists, they never know, and never can know, how far they're going; in fact, what they're really doing."

* * * * *

By way of an escape from a very ticklish topic, I pursued: And, as we have mentioned the eye, it may be as well to lay down the proper use of it, before being subjected to Mr Thibaust's process, *bien entendu*.

Some masters tell you to watch the adversary's eye, and to interrogate his every glance. But the man cunning of fence will soon find that you rely upon his look, and he will take advantage of your simplicity by looking at the precise place where he does not intend to strike. Others say, "Keep your sight fixed upon the button" on the point of the sword. But the sun may be shining upon the blade, or the morn may be somewhat dark for the button to stand well out. My plan has ever been to distribute my vision equally, so that my bow may have two strings, and

long practice has made the process so natural that I cannot say what I am looking at.

"The eye for ever!" came from the proper quarter.

V.

I now proceed with pleasure to another heresy of my practice.

"What ferocity of heresy?" Shughtie groaned; "the man might hail from Arabia Felix."

You will read in the fencing books; "Une fois en mesure, les vrais tireurs ne doivent marcher ni rompre d'une demi-semelle, mais de leurs places faire franchement des attaques qui peuvent être précédées d'engagements, et de quelques petites attaques au fer avec finesse, qui doivent finir par un coup tiré à fond."

My advice to every pupil is exactly the reverse.

Whenever you are attacked, retreat, if it be only a half pace. There is everything in favour of the practice, nothing against it, except in the bad opinion of your adversary. He certainly will find cause to complain.

Let us consider the many advantages which result from it.

Rompre n'est pas parer, I read. But by breaking—that is to say, by retiring, I increase the efficacy of my parry. I am more assured about it, because it is not my only resource, my last card. And the retreat of the body doubles the vivacity of the hand.

If the attack has been made more rapidly than the parry, by retreating I parry twice; first, with my sword, which overtakes, if it cannot accompany, the enemy's blade; secondly, with my body, which, by retiring, preserves its distance, and causes the thrust that would have reached me, had I stood still, to fall short of its aim.

The retreat is invaluable against simple attacks, because it takes from them their *élan* and rapidity of execution.

The retreat is invaluable against compound attacks, feintings, and so forth, because, by remaining in place, your hand often acts too fast, and your blade only beats the air. It is also the surest way to avoid the body stab delivered by shortening the arm. In the latter you may, it is true, stop the adversary by a time thrust, but in the field most probably both will fall, because it places him beyond reach of, and safe from, either surprises—and *tirer de surprise* is a favourite plan with some men. It also saves him from those blind and savage attacks in which certain natures seek a chance of success.

This part of our system immensely increases the fencer's self-reliance. At the same time, it diminishes the confidence of his opponent; the latter, after successive failures, is likely to lose head, always a gain to you, and perhaps to rush forward with a compound attack. In this case you meet him hand to hand with a "Contre de Tierce" or "de Quarte," and, if your wrist be strong and dexterous, you may make his sword strike the

ceiling. Even if he does not rush, he is most likely to throw himself open in some way.

To advance upon the sword is always the most dangerous action and the most difficult part of the Art of Arms.

It loses time; it uncovers one side by covering the other, and it cannot be effected without somewhat shaking the play. It is only comparatively safe for a very short man against men much taller than himself.

Nor must you think the retreat, as some do, injurious to the ripost; on the contrary, it makes the latter at once surer and easier.

It often happens that after a lunge freely made the lunger remains for a time without recovering himself, attempting second thrusts, or *remises de main*, straight thrusts on the side where the parry took place. The two adversaries are now at quarters so close that the ripost can hardly be made without shortening the arm and exposing the breast. A step backwards saves all this.

Nothing prettier, nothing more artistic, I freely own, than the parry and ripost, delivered with the feet motionless as a statue's. That tic! tac! movement is the height of art. But against fencers of different styles, perhaps dangerous withal, you must not often attempt such *tours de force;* otherwise, like the man who hunts tigers on foot, your discomfiture is only a matter of time. You may do it, as you may not bet, only when you are perfectly certain of your "coup." To make it the systematic base of your play is, I believe, unreasonable as it is dangerous.

"And if," said Charles, laughing, "the adversary do the same, you'll soon find yourselves not only out of sword reach, but out of pistol shot."

The result will be three advantages to you, a thing certainly not to be despised.

Firstly, if your opponent has had the same thought, or has received the same advice, it is a testimony in favour of the manœuvre.

Secondly, his rapid retreat clearly shows you that he also dreads surprises and "closing-in" movements, that his chances of success will not be sought in this order of ideas, and that his attacks will be prudent and reasoned.

Thirdly, and especially when preparing for actual combat, these few seconds of preamble allow you to settle your equilibrium, to draw upon your self-confidence, to face without emotion that sword point which threatens you, and to allay the first involuntary movement of anxiety which, in such cases, the strongest nature must endure for a moment. Moreover, you have been able to entrap your adversary in a comprehensive glance of observation, and to draw your own conclusions from his position, from his handling of the sword, and from the general way in which he offers battle.

This renders it worth your while to stand for a few minutes even out of pistol shot.

VI.

A low murmur received these remarks, so I continued them.

My mind has long been made up on this point, and my pupils must perforce do the same. It is the more necessary for me to impress it upon them, because the masters are against me almost to a man.

The highest honour is justly given by them, as by myself, to the parry without retreat. The retiring parry, on the other hand, is unjustly regarded by them as a resource *in extremis*, as a last refuge, a confession that the action wants quickness, or the judgment maturity. And many professors would, I am certain, rather see their pupils "buttoned" than escape by a pace backwards.

Perhaps there is a deeper cause for this prejudice than is usually suspected. In old duels men have been tied by the left foot, and even still in parts of Europe, Heidelberg, for instance, a line of chalk marks the *ne plus ultra* of retreat. The idea of "falling back" is always distasteful, and the single step to the rear in the rude and instinctive judgment of men represents the *premier pas* of flight. I once made a man an enemy for life by simply saying during a hand-to-hand "scrimmage," "Don't fall back."

Let me thus state my rule of contrary:

In general and on principle, accompany the parry with a retreat of either a full pace or a half pace, according to action of your adversary. Parry with firm foot only when, like the conjuror forcing a card, you have led the adversary to make the attack for which you are prepared.

If you see in the opponent a disposition to attack with firm foot within middle measure, without either advancing or retreating by sudden and irregular movements, never attempting to surprise nor to deceive by unforeseen combinations, then a tic! tac! or two may be allowed. But beware of the man—especially if there is what hair-cutters call a "thinness" upon the upper part of his head, or if the corners of his beard show a slight powdering of pepper and salt—who tries to shorten distance between himself and you by stealthily gaining ground under the mask of some well-devised feint. *Fœnum habet in cornu.*

Finally, I am strict with my pupils upon the manner of their retreat. Some shuffle the left foot, others take a succession of steps, or rather back stumbles, which seem really to be the beginning of flight. But, above all things, I warn the learner never to stand within measure—a position of endless and useless danger to himself or to the adversary; perhaps I should say to himself and the adversary.

"What answer have you to all this, Capt. Seaton?" the Marquis asked.

But Seaton threw up hands and eyes to the ceiling. This time indignation made him speechless. He was "not equal to the occasion," as said the Californian of a thousand oaths when his cart was bogged.

"I think," articulated Shughtie without removing his briar root, "that it would not be difficult to interpret our friend's thoughts. He would express something of this kind.

"This heresy, which strikes at the very root of all that is great and good in swordsman nature, doesn't gain dignity by being analysed. It's in the category of Royal Roads, of Something-made-easier, of This-and-that-without-a-master, of So-and-so-taught-in-a-month.

"Let us see what this person proposes to do. He would confine his attacks, simple and compound, to eight, and of these he holds only four to be absolutely necessary; in fact, he reduces the supremacy of the foil to the humility of the broadsword. He treats the parries as cavalierly, and he dismisses from the service callously, as if he were a Liberal Government, all but seven, characteristically allowing the only four good places to his especial friends. Total, eight movements out of what he himself stated to be twelve.

"After this you'll not be astonished to hear that his pupil learns the whole art and mystery, the *tota res scibilis*, in a month. We'll allow another week for this precious idea of retiring instead of parrying. We'll even be liberal and throw in seven more days for 'finishing lessons,' as the singers say—for French polish, in fact. So that this individual proposes to do in six weeks what took our friend Seaton at least six years.

"Such things may be, but they're not probable. The world would have heard of them before. Men have fenced even before A.D. 1500, as we've been told with much erudition. The world, I don't doubt, will hear of it. It strikes me that, like a young member of the House of Commons who harangues and specifies and divides his orations into first, second, and third place at 'tea-fights,' you are talking like a book and for a book; but I fear lest the world will say *allez vous promener*.

"Didn't you vex the dull ear of a drowsy man one whole evening last week with crotchets about happiness?—how every being, human or otherwise, comes into the world with a certain capacity for enjoyment which can't be increased and can't be decreased?—how every being, human or otherwise, is equally blest absolutely in equal measure, though one's always *in extremis* and the other's not?—how this results from creation being governed by an unknown *x*, proved only to exist by its efforts, the unconscious, or rather the non-conscious, thought and will which work out the world-process?—how it's this form of instinct, not our vulgar reason, that makes all of us want

to be richer, healthier, wiser, or more famous, when the same vulgar reason teaches that the possession of the globe wouldn't add a milligram to our happiness, and much of the same kind? And what did I reply? Sir, you see the whole world running after wealth and fame, and so forth. Well, then, are they all wrong and you all right? You may be clever as Voltaire, *jeune homme*, but, like him, you can't be cleverer than everybody. I say the same of the fencing crotchets. Go to, man! the world would have heard of this before."

It was a wondrous tirade, considering that he never withdrew his pipe, and actually puffed between the sentences. Hardly fair of him, however, to quote the philosophy of the unconscious and to mix up my lay sermon with fencing. This, I suppose, threw me off my guard.

Have I not said before that after a thousand, possibly a million, of failures and errors. one single intelligence—some man who has never been heard of, a man whose name the world would most willingly let die—strikes into the right path. Galileo——

A groan broke from every sitter, a well-defined and several groan.

I hastened to change the subject. The movement of the earth and the circulation of the blood are worn out. But I retain my own opinion upon the subject of happiness, ditto of simplifying the sword, ditto of retreating during the parry.

VII.

A bright thought struck me, I would show the benighteds who disagreed with me how the "seven days of French polish" so rudely sneered at could be turned to exceptional advantage.

But after such a rebuff a long exordium was necessary before coming to the point.

It is hard to believe, I continued, in a long concatenation of attacks and parries, ripostes and counter-ripostes, unless upon the stage or between two fencers who have previously settled what to do. And when I hear of duels that take half an hour before first blood is drawn, it is easy to see that the fight is only for first blood. The twelve fought in France in 1873 averaged only eight minutes each.

"Yet," said Shughtie, "I have read of an assault which took place in Naples between two first-rate men—the Principe di Carusa and the Cavaliere Achille Cipriani—who fenced without a thrust going home till they could no longer hold the foils.

Yes, I rejoined, but it was considered a miracle of skill, presence of mind, and prevoyance.

In swordsmanship all manner of pre-occupation is an additional weight. It is like wearing sabots instead of dancing bottines; hence another necessity for simplification. The fencer

who first stands before his adversary is travailed in mind about the line of assault: is it the outer or the inner, the upper or the lower that is most likely to be chosen? He will probably wait till the antagonist clearly develops his intention, and thus he exposes himself to a disadvantage. If the attack be simple, and if the hand conduct it rapidly, the attacked gives away the chance that resides in a well-judged onset carried out with thoughtful ardour. We rarely find, even amongst the oldest swordsmen, that excessive tact which alone can divine the intention of the adversary, and enter, as it were, into his thoughts. The peculiar gift also often accompanies other and deteriorating qualities. So we sometimes note an artist, who can make a first-rate likeness, but who cannot paint a portrait.

What, then, is the remedy? We must evidently seek some parry which, mechanically traversing all four lines, cannot but meet the enemy's sword whatever direction this may happen to take. When such comprehensive defence is found, apprehension and anxiety calm down, and the wandering thoughts range themselves willingly under orders of the will; there is no more uncertainty; indecision is at an end.

The simplest and by far the most natural of the universal parries is the complete circle described by the sword point, which, in the language of the fencing schools, "picks up" every thrust. Of course, it is double, as it may be begun from tierce as well as from carte. It may be varied at times by compound counters—for instance, *contre de tierce* and *contre de quarte*, or, *vice versa*, *contre de quarte* and *contre de tierce*. As you must not allow the adversary to discover the mechanism of the parry, you will occasionally try a single counter, say of tierce, followed by an opposition in carte. I should advise you to reserve for your greatest needs that in which you succeed best. And kindly do not forget what I said concerning the relative facility of the *contre de tierce* (*sur les armes*) versus the *contre de carte* (*dans les armes*).

"After heresy," cried Seaton, "we now arrive at charlatanism in all its integrity. What can be easier than to evade such grind-organ, windmill-like action? Where is your circle if attacked by a circle and a disengagement?"

Of course, nowhere. Parries can be deceived—what parry cannot? "L'escrime," says an author, 'vit de loyales perfidies." What pass cannot be parried? If you should happen to invent an impossible thrust or an infallible parry—mind, I do not doubt your power of so doing—take out a patent at once, become one of the millionaires of the world, and found a Seatonville.

I said the other evening that a fencer's force consisted, according to me, far less in the variety of his play and in the combinations of his feints than in the soundness of his judgment and in the quickness and vivacity of his hand. This is so true that

almost all swordsmen, professionals as well as amateurs, have certain favourite forms of attack, parry, and ripost. These are, as it were, bosom friends, to whom they ever recur in the hour of need. And it surely will not take more than a few lessons to find what movements are the most appropriate to the fencer's physique and morals.

Amidst the divers phases of an assault the same passes and parries often bear but a minimum of resemblance to one another. The fact is, they are varied in form and modified in action according to the individuality which uses them and that upon which they are used. Indeed, this is the main secret of their force.

I would address these remarks to any intelligent—and unprejudiced—student of arms.

Let us take as an illustration the simplest of all parries—tierce and carte.

How many times does not this elementary movement vary? How many transformations cannot it assume?

Light as a feather with this man, sturdy and vigorous with that; idle and flaccid, or energetic and even violent; high or low, conforming itself to every exigency and responsive to every appeal.

Follow the movements with your eye. Now the blades part suddenly, as if severed by repulsion; then, magnetically attracted, the one holds down and dominates its opponent.

It is a proper appreciation of this endless variety in action, of these infinite nuances in the same movement, which constitutes the true swordsman.

I repeat to you: he who contents himself with reciting the burden of his memory, however fluently, however correctly, will never be anything but a pupil or a parrot—let him choose between the two.

That thrust was severe. I resumed:

VIII

Amongst the old *bouquins* which sleep peaceably upon the upper shelves of the library I found one, dating from A.D. 1600, containing these lines:

"Car combien que la loy de suivre les mouvements naturels doive estre inviolable, toute fois il faut entendre que la necessité n'en a nulle, et qu'elle enfonce toutes loys, quelque stables qu'elles puissent estre."

It would hardly be fair to abuse this unprejudiced maxim by enlarging and commentating upon it, as it has abused the good old Latin proverb. But in the art of arms, methinks, we may use it, and use it well.

After treating of the parry, we come to the ripost. Upon this subject a few words suffice.

Remember that the parry and the ripost are sisters—Siamese twins, in fact—two-headed nightingales, which, once parted, would lose their vitality, their *raison d'être.*

The ripost must be so connected with the parry that it may be considered its second part, its continuation, its conclusion.

Therefore, as a general rule, make your ripost in the line where you have met the sword, inside or outside, above or below. The ripost by straight thrust, they say, soon becomes mechanical. Yet to change is to lose time, to waste in combination what had far better remain single. It also frequently allows your adversary to recover himself, or, worse still, to make a *remise de main.* Above all things never shorten the arm, or your ripost will be lost—it is throwing gold upon the pavement.

Every ripost must have its opposition—that is to say, covering oneself on the line of the adversary's blade. Such is not the rule in prime, but I have already warned you against that antiquated position.

Avoid as a rule riposts against half-lunges, because they are expected and prepared for.

If you suspect that the adversary, as often happens in the case of a cool, old, wary sworder, attacked you with the object of drawing you on, and especially if you remark that he covers himself well upon that side, leaving the other at all exposed, you may avoid the snare by a single disengagement or a cut-over in the direction which he does not expect. But never risk more than one.

Cultivate in the ripost the utmost possible simplicity, combined with all the quickness of which you are capable. The great secret of success here lies in the parry, to which nine pupils out of ten habitually apply double the strength required. And this fatal practice often becomes so engrained that when they would relieve their muscles the action becomes soft and slow.

A few words about the *remise de main*—one of the most dangerous of passes if used by a skilful swordsman, one of the most objectionable in the hands of ignorance. It is, in fact, a form of redoubling—that is to say, of multiplying thrusts before returning to guard. As a rule I teach it late in the course, because it is so liable to gross abuse, and often in inexperienced hands it results in *coup pour coup,* which, as the treatises say truly, dishonours a fencer. The legitimate form is when the adversary, after parrying your thrust, removes his opposition, either from futility or with the object of a ripost. You may then either make what is called a "false retreat"—that is, return halfway to guard—or, better still, deliver the *remise* from the full lunge. It is valuable against a man who hesitates about his ripost, and some fencers are so fond of it that they owe to it half their successes.

IX.

Will you allow me to take a liberty, I said to the dark youth in the corner, and ask you to sum up the case as it now lies before the jury?

He assented willingly and without *mauvaise honte.*

"You've told us that the lesson is a preparatory study—a copy of the master's style. The assault is the pupil's individuality brought out by himself—the original poem which genius produces after its apprenticeship of imitation.

"The only general, fundamental, and universal rules that can be given are those which in all ages have governed the attack and the defence.

"In the attack, energy controlled by prudence and reasoning; in the defence, firmness, astuteness, and self-confidence.

"And now, passing from the ensemble to the details of your new or natural system.

"The error of the *salle d'armes* has been to prohibit passes in the lowest and in the highest lines, debarring the pupil from the practice of defence, and exposing him perhaps to a thrust which may be fatal.

"On guard, as much relaxation of muscle as possible. In the attack, all manageable vigour and momentum. When parrying, the just amount of muscular force required—no more—and not less.

"As a rule, parry with a step or a half step in retreat, so as to give the parry double security and the ripost more liberty of action. Parry with the feet firm only when you are certain of what is coming on, when you have learned that your adversary is easily managed.

"For greater freedom of thought and escape from preoccupation, usually employ a compound parry that covers all the four lines, and must meet the sword of the adversary whatever be its direction. At times change it, or the opponent will divine the mechanism of your action.

"Fix your look upon the adversary's point and eye, not upon point or eye. Make your riposts in the straight line, and avoid especially the complications which would admit remises and redoublings.

"As a rule, don't attempt the *remise de main* unless the adversary neglects his opposition."

* * * * * * *

A murmur of applause was heard when the youth ceased to speak; he deserved it for interpreting my thoughts and resuming my words with so much ability and conciseness.

"The sooner you leave England the better," cried Seaton, meaning me, "or the noble art of fencing will be no more."

After this there was nothing to do but to separate for the night *à l'aimable.*

My rapid retreat upstairs did not quite save me from a sermon duly delivered by Shughtie.

"What is all this?" said he, with more than usual gravity. "Are you again at what our Irish friend used to call your 'tricks.' Is this merely your common banter of what you modestly call feebly intellectual folks, and your fun in shocking what you look upon as their prejudices? Is Seaton to be brought low with insomnia, athumia, asthenia, and other things beginning with alpha priv., that you may make holiday for an hour? Or have these heresies, these perversions of judgment, actually affected your unhappy brain?"

"A curtain lecture is a comedy compared with this," I cried, rushing wildly down the corridor.

The Sixth Evening.

I.

The last discussion had been stormy, and I confess to having felt somewhat nettled by the obstinate *vis inertiæ* of the moribund school, that mass of artificiality, the gift of tradition and authority. It reminded me of a certain old man of the (Central African) sea.

During the forenoon I was asked what would probably be the subject for the evening, and my reply was the tyranny and usurpation of *le sentiment du fer*. Perhaps the seductive antithesis or oxymoron had its effect, for the Marchioness signified her high will and pleasure to be present with her two daughters—a sentimental foil, sounding in English somewhat like an oyster in love. On the other hand, Capt. Seaton declared solemnly that he washed his hands of the whole affair, and that whatever horror of heresy might issue from my mouth, he would not be induced to utter a word. I suspect that he had constituted as his spokesman John Shughtie, whose temper was more tranquil, more sage.

At the accustomed time I took my wonted place, and spoke as follows:

We will begin by defining *le sentiment du fer*, which can hardly bear translation as "the sentiment of the sword." The word *d'outre manche* expresses a something between sense and sentiment which we do not possess. Perhaps *le tact du fer* is a more intelligible synonym.

"The French is not only the natural language of the chase, but that of love and of war, in which ladies should be won and enemies defied." Without going so far as the misguided Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, we may, however, own that the Neo-Latin tongue has made itself at home in the fencing school, and we may use it without suspicion of "pedantry"—the cry

generally raised by ignorance against knowledge. Italian expresses the same things equally well, but, then, it is farther off than the French.

The *sentiment du fer* is that supreme art of digitation which is to the complete swordsman what the touch of the pulse is, or rather was, to the old physician who disclaims the new-fangled thermometer. It begins to make itself felt as soon as the blades come into contact. Essential to the highest development of our art, it is the result of happy natural disposition, of long study, and of persevering attention. To the hand it gives lightness and that indescribable finesse which guide the cue of the billiard player; to the passes it communicates quickness directed by an appreciation of the case which can hardly be subjected to analysis. It is that mysterious *résumé* of delicate manipulation, of practised suppleness in wrist and forearm, and of precision in movement, which makes the adversary feel powerless before it, which startles at the same time that it commands him. No quality in a swordsman is more rarely found in any degree approaching perfection. To say that I have not the highest admiration of it would be to set myself down in the lowest ranks of materialism—as the world understands the word. But its very potency suggests the absolute necessity of providing against it when we find so rare a gift opposed to us.

"A woman's wit would suggest that the easiest way would be to oppose it by equal sentiment," said Lady B.

And she would be right, supposing everything to be as it ought to be. But if the gift be seldom found how can we expect to see it equally distributed between two swords? We must reason upon the generality of fencers and not upon exceptions. The man who has mastered this supreme excellence of swordsmanship envelops, so to speak, within the circle of his will the hand and the point of his adversary; he attracts them alternately and repels them; he plays with them; he fascinates them as the serpent holds the bird with its glittering eye. It represents what the mesmeriser calls the power of volition; it is the *aura magnetica* of the sword. Where, then, shall we find the means of counteracting the influence? Evidently by withdrawing ourselves from it. I need hardly explain what our neighbours mean by *donner l'épée*. When two fencers, after falling on guard, have "engaged"—that is, have crossed weapons—the thing is done.

Here, then, is our only safeguard—not to give the sword; to remove the blade from that of the adversary; rarely, if ever, to permit the foils to meet. The professors, the schoolmen, and all who stand upon the ancient paths—this was said with intention—loudly declare that not to "give the sword" is a mere corruption of swordsmanship; that it means to thrust and tilt blindly and without judgment; that it exposes both fencers

to passes driven home at the same time, to the *affreux combat de gladiateurs où les deux antagonistes sont blessés à la fois;* that it leads to what is technically called *plaquer* (that is, to strike the antagonist with the flat blade, not with the point); and that it prevents the pupil ever reaching the apogee of his art—namely the *sentiment du fer.*

II.

The idea of developing this defence was suggested by a comical dialogue in the rooms of an old professor, Constantin, of Boulogne, when a friend, who was quite of second-rate strength, had been placed opposite an older hand, and a far better fencer than himself. The latter, I should add, was also one of those many perverse people to whom custom and routine represent supreme law.

My friend fell into position, and after the foils were crossed, by way of signal to begin, withdrew his blade either purposely or by accident, and managed to touch his adversary several times in succession.

"Will you be kind enough," said the vanquished one, "to give me your sword?"

"Why so?"

"Because if you don't give me the sword how can you expect us to fence together?"

"We will fence as we can!"

"No! You ought to give me the sword."

"I see no 'ought' in the case. You're trying to touch me, I'm trying to touch you. My plan seems to succeed well—all the better reason for keeping to it."

"Possibly," replied the routinist; "but this can't be called fencing when you don't give the sword."

By this time all the fencers in the *salle d'armes* had interrupted their assaults and collected in a little knot to hear the discussion.

"Let's sit down for a minute," said my friend, "and settle the question quietly. Allow me to ask whether you complain of my passes."

"Not at all!"

"Of my parries?"

"Not the least!"

"Have I retreated too much? Have I kept too much within distance?"

"Neither!"

"Have I attempted by strength to force in your guard?"

"No!"

"Have I attacked you out of my turn, or have I risked our both being touched at the same time?"

"Never!"

"Then what do you want more?"

"I want you to give me the sword!"

"In order to be agreeable to you? In order that you may touch me when I'm touching you?"

"I don't say that, but it's not fencing when you don't give the sword."

Some of the bystanders were of one opinion, others were of another. But it was impossible to drive the old hand from the position which he had taken up. Like the Hindu Yogí who stands ten years under a tree, he was not to be moved.

* * * * * * *

And thus it is, thus it ever has been, and thus it ever will be, fortunately in some senses for man, whenever the so-called sacrilegious hand touches the ancient traditions of anything in art, in science, or in anything else. The most obtuse cannot but feel that this is the signal for putting an end to the quiet life of Old Routine, and of turning him adrift upon the wide, cold world of reform, of novelty, of progress. He resists, he struggles, he fights, because he feels that you are tearing him away from his line of placid successes, his pleasant habits, his occupations which have been learned by heart, and which are regulated, like a piece of music, phrase after phrase. We cannot, therefore, wonder that he loses temper—again said with intention—but that does not prove him to be right. And the mass of society hates new things; they introduce an element of discomfort.

"I think," said Shughtie, "that we have heard that before. O cobbler, do keep to your last!"

"A pun?" asked Lady Margaret.

Heaven forefend!

III.

By not giving the sword, you oppose an unexpected obstacle to this dangerous tact; you escape from the fascination; you break the spell. By never allowing the adversary his customary base of operations, you defeat his manœuvres; you make him enter upon a new mode of tactics. An able general will alter his plan, and seek a triumph by beating you with your own arms. But he feels the difficulty; he is no longer upon plain ground, master of himself, and assured of every movement.

By giving the sword, you must always stand within distance of the point. That is to say, you must at all times be exposed to an attack *de pied ferme*, when it is most likely to succeed, we will say, by a strong straight thrust, or by a *dégagement de vitesse*. It is impossible, even for the most practised hand, to be certain of parrying such an attack, and, if the measure between the points be somewhat short, the best fencer may find himself "buttoned." Under such circumstances thought, which is ever on the alert, finds itself troubled and excited; apprehension and preoccupation work the brain, and it is vain to attempt maturing an attack.

When it happens—you have been warned how rarely—that two fencers equally matched meet to share the danger, then I say to them, "In this matter do as you think fit."

But in other cases, I say to the feeble one, "The act of refusing to give your sword, combined with keeping your adversary out of distance, compels him to advance for the purpose of attack, a proceeding not only dangerous in itself, but also beneficial to you as betraying his intention. You are thus no longer in the presence of an imminent catastrophe, which takes from you all liberty of action, all coolness of judgment. You disquiet your adversary by leaving him in doubt as to which of the four lines you threaten; you can consult your own time and convenience, and, when it suits you to attack or to parry, you can sharply engage the enemy's sword.

Never lend ear to innuendos about *donner l'épée.* You will find that it is an "inartistic ruse and weakness, a want of taste, dignity, and moral greatness." Reply that your object is to touch, and not be touched, and that this is your mainstay of defence against *coups de vitesse* generally, and especially against a man who is strong in the straight thrust.

I find in this system one real and absolute good—it guarantees your personal safety. The list of other advantages which it presents would be long to recite. Old and wary swordsmen delight in surprises, because they find such ruses easily passed upon young hands; so the aged lion and the worn-out tiger become man-eaters. The middle-aged fencer, whose arms are like iron, affects those passes which enable him, by mastering the centre of your blade, or by gliding from the strong to the weak kind, such as the *liement de l'épée,* the *pression,* the *battement,* the *croisé,* and what are called in general *les attaques de l'épée,* to force in your guard. These advantages on your adversary's side will not be annihilated, but their danger will be sensibly diminished; at any rate, their execution becomes more difficult, and it is accompanied by a far greater amount of risk.

Here, however, a word of warning! When I tell you never to give the sword, it is not meant that you should uncover yourself in order to keep your blade out of line. That would indeed be an error.

IV.

I must not leave you under the impression that this part of the New or Natural system, namely, not giving the sword, is useful only to a feeble fencer engaged with a skilful and experienced sword. There is no reason, at least that occurs to me, why skill and experience should not make equal use of an innovation against which so much clamour has been raised.

Its enemies, I have told you, declare that it utterly destroys the beauty and regularity of the play, that it leads to wild practice or practices; that the style becomes harsh, irregular, *décousu,* and that the danger of simultaneous thrusts is increased.

I pretend, on the other hand, that this is only the abuse, not the use of the change; that it enlarges the circle of the arena, gives far greater latitude to individuality; multiplies the action and the difficulties to be surmounted, and overthrows certain ideas which have been falsely admitted as inexpugnable.

Why, may I ask, must my sword wander about in blindness and error because it is not incessantly glued to yours?

A hair's breadth may separate our weapons, which will still be in the classical and scholastic line of direction.

If you speak of the beginners, the bunglers, who blindly rush upon each other, they can certainly heap fault upon fault when giving as well as when not giving the sword. But why, when you raise to so giddy a height of excellence what you call *le sentiment* or *le tact du fer*, should you dethrone a rival sovereign of equal puissance, who may be called *le sentiment du regard*, *le tact du regard?* Why allow this tyranny, this usurpation? At any rate, instead of ranking the former absolute, and the latter a nonentity, allow them the respective titles of Kaiser and King, and let them draw lots for the choice of precedence.

Do you want antiquity, do you want quarterings for the noble house which claims part of the throne and crown? Here, then, is an extract from one of the classical works (Thibaust).

"Il s'ensuit que tout l'avantage de l'art consiste en l'assurance de faire les approches, ce qui ne peut estre pratiqué sans avoir entière connaissance de l'importance du sentiment" (observe the tact or touch) "et de la veue" (remark the importance given to the look); "et croyez que ny la vitesse du corps ny la promptitude des bras ne sont rien auprès d'une bonne approche."

How wonderfully the old writer, allow me to remark, goes to the heart of the subject; how, speaking of attacks, he gives its own and its proper relative value to the judgment of distance, to the *sentiment du fer*, to the *sentiment du regard*, and to the rapidity of action. It is strange to see that the new is not seldom only the very old; it is sad to think how often when we deem ourselves inventors, we are only unconscious revivers. And the modern Italians are right. When speaking of a discovery they never say *trovato*, but *ritrovato*.

"And the Lakes of Central Africa?" asked Lady Mary.

Alas! some two thousand years ago they were navigated by the good pilot Diogenes.

"See *Zanzibar*, vol. I., chapt. 1, p. 5," said Shughtie; "it is too charming when an author talks his own books."

Yesterday evening I offered certain suggestions for the mechanical use of the eye. The great conjuror sent by the French Government to neutralise the mesmeric and the electro-biological semi-miracles of the Algerine and Moroccan Shayks had trained his glance to take in and his brain to remember the whole details of a furnished room at a single cast. His

errand was hopeless; a single Pharaoh's magician against a host of Moses, his poor rod was soon swallowed up, and he narrowly escaped the silver bullet as the enemy of mankind was run through the body in Gil Blas. But his training of the eye was perfectly successful.

I remember unconscious homage to the look being rendered by a gunner on board the Griffon, an item of the West African Coffin-Squadron, long since sunk or burnt. Mr Richards, who had trained in the Excellent, was teaching cut and slash to a very mild-looking specimen of the British lion, whose expression of countenance as he regarded his adversary was characteristic of benevolence and perhaps of being somewhat bored.

"Don't look in that way, man!" shouted the stentorian voice; "look at him as if you'd eat him!"

V.

Now see the swordsman who combines both "sentiments." He keeps his adversary at a distance, threatening him with agile blade, which gleams like lightning before his glance, and throwing him into confusion with the calculated irregularity of its action. His watchful look, fixed equally on point and eye, questions the coming movement, divines the thought that would conceal itself, and peers into futurity with a something of prophetic strain. At the same time neither eye nor point betrays to hostile scrutiny aught of its secrets. In due time and at ease to himself, when everything has been weighed, disposed, and matured, this *tireur roué* wisely foresees both the attack and the ripost which is to follow it, presents his blade, and meets his adversary's; so that by bold and resolute action he wins the day.

"It appears to me," Lord B. said, "that you allow the poor adversary no quarter."

"Yes," Shughtie muttered, "as the Luck of Roaring Camp says, 'you see, it ain't no square game. They've just put up the keerds on that chap from the start.' He hasn't the ghost of a chance, poor wretch! But, after all, you're bound to let us know what you do if in his turn the adversary will not give *you* the sword."

The answer is easy. The great art of swordsmanship consists in laying successful snares, such as making your opponent expect the attack exactly where it is not intended. To deceive his expectations, to break up what he combines, to disappoint his plans, and to narrow his action; to dominate his movements, to paralyse his thoughts, represent the art, the science, the skill, and the power of your perfect swordsman.

I reply, "If the adversary will not give the sword, force him to give it." This is the proper opportunity for feints, threats, and half attacks which would otherwise be misplaced. Either he parries them, or he attempts a time thrust, or he proceeds to stop you by presenting the point. In either case he must

offer you his blade, and you accept it as a base for the *pression*, the *flanconnade*, the *battement*, the *croisé*, the *liement*, the *froissement d'épée*, or any pass you see most appropriate to the occasion.

VI.

A word about these movements, which are most affected by short men, and which, powerfully executed, shake the antagonist's system, and sometimes reduce him to the weakness of a child. The *pression*, or weighing upon the adversary's blade, is becoming obsolete; but I do not see the reason for ranking it below its neighbours when carefully carried out. The *flanconnade* is the resource of a physically strong against a weak man; it may be used against a left-handed fencer, but then it must be inverted. The *battement* in the Romantic School was done by sharply turning the hand in old carte, or nails up, when engaged tierce, and in old tierce (nails down) when engaged carte. This only adds to the difficulty, and my system is, act by the elbow spring, which increases the leverage. The *croisé* is effected by turning the adversary's blade from carte to seconde or from tierce to demicircle; if the hand be not well elevated, the fencer runs the risk of a *dérobement* on the blade being withdrawn from him. I have seen the *froissement* followed by a disengagement, which is, of course, simply an abuse.

These movements do not belong to my system, but they must be studied and guarded against. And, remember, there is nothing bad in fencing, provided that it succeeds.

VII.

In the use of arms, as in war, you must expect nothing to be given to you. You must follow the good old plan of taking whatever your friend cannot keep, and, when the lion's force fails, then, as the old saying is, follow the fox.

And now I will place before you two pictures, and crave your judgment of the contrast.

The first is an assault between two of those academical students so dear to the soul of our friend Seaton. Both are in the highest state of training, in art as in physique. They stand firmly upon their feet like "stone-gals," both equally disdain to retreat, and consequently neither need advance. In this perilous position feint follows feint, parry parry, pass pass; simple attack ends in compound attack, and *vice versa*. The body, perfectly balanced, has never moved from the perpendicular; the admirably taught fingere and hand, wrist and forearm, have added an extreme delicacy to the nice conduct of the sparkling blade. You follow the glittering flight of the point with a manner of marvel; you are at first lost in admiration. But this lasts only till the few first passes are delivered and parried. Then begins a sense of weariness. Nothing in this

triumph of mechanism moves or excites you; there is nothing in these carpet knights to make your finger tips tingle or your hand feel for a sword. It is interesting as a game of chess between first-rate players, and that is all.

You have looked upon that picture, now turn to this. The pair is equally skilful and well matched, but the system is widely different.

Remark the style. Instantly when the swords are crossed within measure both place themselves in safety. Far from standing with firm foot and blade to blade, each chooses his own distance. With the eyes of the lynx and the glance of trained intelligence, they watch, they question, they examine each other. There is a slight approach, the swords meet, a lunge, quick as lightning, flashes past your look. The attack was cunningly contrived and forcibly carried out; but a sharp step backwards, perhaps a spring with both feet from the ground, *ritrarse in stancio*, as the Italians call it, and a parry which makes the weapons grind, defeated the thrust, and prepared for a return of compliment. It is a struggle between sturdy combatants, "rough customers" they would be called in the dialect of another exercise; supple and subtle, ardent and energetic as they are sturdy, calling to their aid all the resources of their art, the stores of their experience, the knowledge of their powers, and the suggestions of their individuality.

You will agree with me that this is fencing in earnest. What you have before seen is cunningly playing at fence.

VIII.

These innovations cannot fail to gain ground; they have suddenly enlarged, as modern science ever must do in all that she attempts, a field which formerly had narrow limits. As yet, however, they are recognised only by the general remark: "Fencing has gained in difficulty what it has lost in grace. M. *Un tel* is a difficult swordsman."

May I ask why one of these qualities should exclude the other? Would you own that the graceful fencer is easy to conquer? I suppose that you mean by difficult, hard to touch, dangerous in his play. Well, then, with all my love of and admiration for the grace of an Antinous, I should much prefer, supposing that the combination were beyond my power, the vigour and "difficulty" that lack it.

But the whole idea is founded upon a mistake. Grace is the result of form; and manly grace, robust and energetic, that of the athlete, that which distinguished our doughty ancestors, is the progeny of strength united with shapely lines. The boor may have both, and be ungraceful withal; but we are not speaking of the untrained man, who bows servile over his mother earth.

I would risk martyrdom at the hands of the theorists, and

still say, "Above all things, be dangerous, be 'difficult,' since that is the expression consecrated by use. Beyond this quality there is no salvation; all the rest is a mere fantasia, a weapon loaded with powder and lacking ball."

But my words must not be strained to mean more than they intend.

They exhort you to follow the instincts of your nature, the inspiration of your thought; to be, in a word, yourself, not a living lesson, the pale reflex of a master. Avoid the classical style—a systematic, artificial, and acrobatic exercise, without judgment or settled purpose. Shun as carefully the brutal style, which rushes upon the adversary like the bounding of a wild beast.

It would be as wrong to take such exceptions for our models as it is unjust to use them in attacking the innovations of the modern system.

The *soi-disant* fencer may touch a swordsman once or even twice by surprise or by chance—for chance, I repeat, plays its part in fencing as in other affairs of life. But the art of arms cannot stoop to notice certain styles which may be termed the fisticuffs of the sword; eccentricities without value, the spawn of their own ignorance, which admit no principle, which belong to no system, and which have their roots nowhere. Still, you may never undervalue your enemy—a saying worth repeating a thousand times; you must learn to conquer him and his irregularities; only after victory you may despise these vagaries.

Here, again, is one of the broad lines which separates the two systems. The new is admitted into certain houses of the Faubourg Saint Germain; but under a kind of protest, like a man whose place in "society" is not quite defined by the Peerage, the Baronetage, and the Landed Gentry. But I can assure you that, though it chooses to rank amongst the roturiers and the parvenus of progress, it comes from an old and noble stock. And if it did not, still, the garden rake cannot keep out the tide.

"Haven't we gone far enough into this part of the subject?" asked Shughtie. He was right. Progress is still a kind of war-cry, and not a few of the *ancien régime* not only deny its existence, but also look upon it as a polite invitation to tread upon the tails of the progressive man's coat.

I have said it once, and I say it again—the device of the man who uses a rapier is the maxim consecrated by Molière. Let science teach him to touch well, to touch according to all her rules. But, above all things, let her show him how not to be touched, badly or well, by the first ignoramus who takes sword in hand.

To turn one's eyes from this point, which is the very end and aim of the Art of Arms, is equivalent to losing oneself in a chaos of darkness. The *utile* must come before the *dulce*. And

he must be excused, even he who upon such a subject airs his Horace, in the presence of the other sex.

IX.

A few words upon the subject of our tools.

The origin of the foil is unknown. We can only say that it was at first the Toledo or Spanish rapier with "bated" end; that it is popularly, and perhaps erroneously, attributed to Maestro Ricconi, of Siena; that it became general in the early part of the seventeenth century, and that shortly afterwards it was provided with a button. But this is a debated matter, of which I have treated elsewhere. The Plastron was begun as *un petto di cartone;* it is alluded to by Morsitato (1670), and a modern writer wonders if men did not perspire in those mediæval times. Till the first half of the last century the wire safe for the face had not been adopted. Let me quote what *L'Encyclopédie* of A.D. 1755 says upon the subject under the word "Masque":

"On a quelquefois poussé la précaution jusqu'à mettre un masque pour se garantir des coups qui peuvent être portés au visage, lorsqu'on s'exerce à l'art de l'escrime. Il est vrai que ceux qui sont encore peu versés dan cet art peuvent blesser leur adversaire en tirant mal, ou se faire blesser en relevant une botte mal parée. Cependant on n'en fait aujourd'hui aucun usage."

The article evidently re-echoes the ideas which were generally admitted at the time. To put on a mask was to show the adversary that you feared the result of his awkwardness; it was a precaution which bordered upon the offensive. Possibly, also, behind it lurked the instinct that it is not manly to take too much care of oneself; to Rareyfy (1) when you should break a horse. This was, in fact, what an African king said to me when I proposed a way of handling trade muskets which would prevent them from shattering his men's hands.

"The wretch!" said Lady Mary; "I should so much like to hear the story."

You shall be obeyed when I have got rid of the mask. In those days of the good old school, which perhaps, Lady Mary, you will be surprised to hear is so far from extinct that it shows many signs of vigorous life; in those antiquated times, still reflected by our own, fencing was a series of feints, of attacks, of parries, and of riposts, previously calculated and combined like "openings" in games of skill. One move inevitably brought on another. The man who during the early part of the performance, the manœuvring phase, dared, instead of curiously following the labyrinth traced by the enemy's blade, to lunge

(1) Rarey was a famous horse-tamer in the late fifties and early sixties, whose system was ridiculed in *Punch*.

with a home thrust—in fact, to leap the hedge—would have been held *un tudesque*, an *ignare*, an incremental form of the ignorant, and would have been ignominiously turned back to his A B C.

Another safeguard to both fencers was the classical and academic height to which the right hand was condemned by public taste. One of the greatest compliments paid to the far-famed Saint Georges by his favourite *maître d'armes*, M. la Boëssière, *père*, was upon the elevation of his hand, and the result—that he never touched a man in the face. Yet towards the end of the Chevalier's short life (he died from neglecting his health at the age of fifty-four) the mask had gradually grown into fashion.

It was, however, only a tin plate, with peep-holes, recommended by the professors to the lower order of scholars Presently it so happened that three *maîtres d'armes* lost one eye each in rapid succession. The wire face-safe was then adopted, and M. La Boëssière, *fils*, claims it for his father. But the old *régime* groaned over the degeneracy of those latter days. And still it groans. Now the fencing mask is—shall I again say was?—worn even at the Roman carnival to defend the face from sweetmeats of chalk and lime.

The origin of the leather jacket remounts to the days of defensive armour; it was the jerkin used under the coat of mail for comfort; so the Turkish tarbúsh, which my friend the good Shepherd of Cairo would call a "tarbrush," was the nucleus of the turban in the heroic age of the race.

I strongly object to the sandal, or fencing shoe, with a long projecting leather, which is supposed to assist the right foot in making a resonant sound. Practice does this with the common cricketing shoe easily and loudly enough, provided the sole is thin, but not too thin for protecting the foot. And those who wish to avoid a profligate waste of muscle should use the elastic connections between the heel piece and the sole invented (*ritrovato?*), I believe, by the late Mr Dowie. They say that he was not allowed to patent them because they might be useful to the army, so the army is left without its elastics and Mr Dowie without his patent.

Finally, the heel of the left sandal should be somewhat higher than the right, as it saves fatigue and gives aplomb and mobility to the foot; yet many masters deprecate the use of it altogether.

The glove is mostly of two kinds, the common leather of the Italian school, whose foil has a shell hilt, and the padded back rendered necessary by the double loops of the French weapon. Both may or may not have wrist pieces of stiff leather, and for broadsword these should extend to the elbow—there are few things more unpleasant than a cut, even with a blunt edge on the "funny bone." Do not think these matters trifling;

I have seen bad wounds given by broken blades, when a little caution might have prevented regrettable accidents.

Having digressed so far without being recalled by public disapprobation, I will venture upon one farther *excursus*. Against the new system of small arms, which began with Minié, body armour is held useless; possibly the same will eventually be the case with plated ships, which will be band boxes built in any number of compartments. But for the "white weapon" flexible coats of mail are still made in all the capitals of Europe, and there should be scant shame in using a precaution which the Duke of Wellington and Prince Bismarck, to mention only two of many, did not disdain. In the Franco-Prussian war plates of thick hide, literal cuirasses, with an angle to the fore, were found useful in deflecting the conical balls of modern warfare, from the chest and stomach. For broadsword, especially in the East, where the crooked sabre never allows a thrust, a few curb-chains may be so disposed as to make the wearer almost invulnerable. A pair should cross the head; one on each side should run from the top of the jacket or tunic collar to the shoulder and down the whole sleeve, and it would be better to have another line more in front, defending the collar-bone; your Oriental affects only two cuts, the shoulder blow and the "kulam," or leg slash. The latter is made vain by a chain extending from the hip to the foot.

Thus, the limbs are adequately protected against any average danger without the risk of splinters, or links of iron being driven into the wounds by stray bullets. I need hardly remind you that the chains to be of full use must be sewn inside the cap and dress, and that the less said about their presence the better. I have proposed these precautions, both the cuirass and the chains, half a dozen times, and some day they will be adopted.

The following paragraph appeared in most of the London papers:

"Capt. R. F. Burton suggests certain precautions in fighting the Ashantees in the following terms: 'During the last Franco-Prussian war several of my friends escaped severe wounds by wearing in action a strip of hard leather, with a rib or angle to the fore. It must be large enough to cover heart, lungs, and stomach pit, and it should be sewn inside the blouse or tunic; of course, the looser the better. Such a defence will be especially valuable for those who must often expose themselves in "the bush" to Anglo-Ashantee trade-guns loaded with pebbles and bits of iron. The sabre is hardly likely to play any part in the present campaign, or I should recommend my system of curb-chains worn across the cap, along the shoulders, and down the arm and legs.'"

X.

That portion of my audience, which may be called the Cigarette, had listened with exemplary patience to what could have offered

but scant interest. I was sorry for it, but it was my "duty," as people say when they are preparing disagreeables, to apply the *miséricorde* to my ancient enemy the Old School at this last opportunity when the *coup de grâce* might be feasible.

I will not delay you longer. A few general remarks shall end this evening's conversazione.

Not many years ago the excessive use of feints, as you have already learned, was held in highest honour. But the whirligig of time now shows another face. The tacit convention between fencers, which made it a point of politeness for one to follow wherever the other led, has gone out of fashion—that is out of the world. If you manœuvre too much, I make an opposition of the sword, and lunge home without a word of apology; or I extend my arm and touch you with a stop thrust in the midst of your flourishes and arabesques.

These are passes which are now taught in the *salles*, and which appear in every modern treatise.

The old system possessed the merit of being well suited to its own formal age, when men had still to learn the art and mystery not of governing, but of being governed. The abuse led to strangely despotic theories, which, like the well-known front of brass and feet of clay, were obliged to succumb when the lieges succeeded in mastering the secret of its anatomy. It has been overthrown, perhaps, with some unnecessary violence; hence heart burnings, wrath, and quarrels, and, perhaps, the lingering belief that the old idol deserved a somewhat more tender treatment, prevents its being quite broken up, even to this day.

"And now that we know all about the sentiment of the sword," said Lady Mary, "I do wish you would tell me about the Amazons and that horrid King of Dahomi."

It was very kind and flattering. But . . . nothing shall persuade me to repeat what I did say.

The Seventh Evening.

I.

The day had been rainy, too rainy for shooting, riding, and driving in anything but a shut carriage, and that is not amusing. We sought "indoor recreations," which at the Castle were manifold, and whilst the others "did" the picture galleries, the muniment rooms, and the library, besides the stables, the billiard-room, and the smoking-room, Seaton and I had a quiet talk and a peaceful bout of tierce and carte. Both preferred to be alone. When a "ring" is formed emulation is roused, and men fence, not for instruction, but for victory. We went through the regular lesson, whilst I showed him the modifications proposed for modern practice, and we tried the "best of twelve," he fencing as a

Frenchman against me, a Neapolitan. That he was completely worsted, run through the body, riddled like beef *piqué*, was not his fault, but that of his school; moreover, being short armed, he was unprepared for the constant stop-thrust.

He carried his defeat like a man and a swordsman, only remarking, "That's all very well, but it's not fencing. You touch me, but you don't fence." I saw that this position could neither be assaulted nor flanked nor taken in the rear, so we said *au revoir* and promised each other a full amount of difference of opinion in the smoking-room.

The number of guests was greater than usual, so great, indeed, that the party naturally divided itself into two. Those who took no interest in detached observations upon swordsmanship were grouped on the left of the spacious fireplace. At times, however, our party was reinforced by a stray secessionist, whilst the other was not.

II.

The mine developed by an energetic and an intelligent swordsman who carefully cultivates his individuality, and who gives himself up to his inspirations, is practically inexhaustible. The details neither should nor, indeed, can be attempted; they belong to a man's intuition, his sentiments, his moral and physical organisation. It is simply impossible to provide a pupil with *l'à propos*, *le génie des armes* except by actual experience, but we may consider the subject as a whole.

I have spoken to you of parries and riposts. You know what can be expected from the tact of the sword—the *sentiment de l'épée*—and the electricity of the look. You are aware that the intelligence of man seizes upon Science, the fruit of his study and experience, and compels her to obey him; that in all the combinations which he invents, and the calculations which he meditates, he cross-examines her, he penetrates into her secrets, and he fashions her to his proper purpose until he has won the thing he wills. I have pointed out the secret of success—self-confidence, wariness, and calm and calculated energy.

It remains now to say a few words upon attacks. Attacks made by advancing are more dangerous, let me repeat, than parries. You instinctively feel that you are exposed instead of making the enemy expose himself. The great difficulty, which only study and experience can solve, is to know how much may be risked and to proportion your venture to the gain expected. I need not warn you that in fencing, as in human life, *Nullum numen adest si absit prudentia*—a golden rule hardly enough applied to the many failures which seem to cumulate every condition of success.

"Ahem!" John Shughtie observed with an unpleasant laugh.

Nor is it necessary to point out that prudence directed by reason is not to be confounded with indecision, but to prudence

you must add familiarity with swordsman-life. It is indispensable to leave no style untried, even those which hardly deserve the name, or, to speak more clearly, which are utterly undeserving of it; still, these bastards exist, and you must not allow them to boast of victory, or to enjoy well-founded confidence in their own results. It is this part of our art, without which no sworder should consider himself at the height of his organisation, that requires six years instead of six weeks.

It is due to the moral power of the sword that those who know nothing, or the mere elements of it, should not be permitted to fancy themselves capable, by means of mere energy or blind vivacity, of successful defence against a hand familiar with weapons. Confidence, the strength of strength, should not be left to the share of ignorance at the expense of knowledge. And ignorance can surprise only the one-sided man who has accustomed himself to nothing beyond the regular routine of passes and parries.

A general fault which I see in the Salles is the following: The *habitués* cross swords, fall on guard, and proceed without reflection to heap feint upon feint, pass upon pass, thrust upon thrust, attack upon attack, parry upon parry. I judge them at once. They may have rapidity of hand and fineness of execution, but only the half the man, the so-called physical half, is engaged in the fray. It is inordinately rare to find a pupil who has taught himself (for the masters do not teach what we call *malice*) to keep out of measure, now refusing to give his blade, then giving it suddenly and oppressing that of his adversary with confidence and resolution; who has learned by indispensable tentative movements and cunningly devised demi-attacks to interrogate the swordsman opposed to him; and who by cumulating arguments—by a *Sorites*, as the logic men call it—so confounds the adversary that he can no longer conceal weakness or strength.

Man should imitate the cock and the bull, and be wise. See the former in its poultry yard, the latter in its pasture, how they both before beginning a fray observe and measure the foe, each seeking to secure some advantage, whilst their sparkling eyes and wandering looks prospect the place upon which to plant the deadliest blow.

Who taught them so to act, instead of rushing precipitately upon each other? What man terms instinct, another word for reason, the former being the lower, the latter the higher, action of a brain, or spinal marrow, or nervous system, or *tout ensemble*, or whatever the psychologist of the future shall determine to be the *causa causans*, with less grey matter, or fewer folds, or shallower convolutions, or, again, whatever may make the difference. So Reason proudly looks down upon Instinct and says, "You are a lower order of being; you and I are not of the same flesh and blood. I——"

"Metaphysics?" Shughtie interrupted.

A thousand pardons for so forgetting myself! Well, this Instinct, with a capital I, is the teacher, this love of life, this idea of self-preservation which exists in all organic nature. And from instinctives we reasonables may take a useful lesson.

You easily understand how much you disturb by this prudent reserve the movements of a man who is taught, "As soon as you are on guard, before your adversary has time to think, at him with a home thrust!" Or of this other, whose only thought is to throw himself like the avenger of blood upon his opponent.

However little such heads may be capable of reflecting, both will soon succeed in seeing that the distance between you and themselves, physical as well as moral, will prevent anything like a *jeu de surprise*. If they attempt it their movements will be disordered; they will run upon the extended sword, or, at least, they will show you that they are coming on to the attack.

"How many years do you think it'll take at this rate?" asked Seaton, "before new theories 'll overturn these so-called novelties, overturn and turn them into *vieilleries*?"

Such is the fate of everything. The form may, perhaps, nay, certainly will, change, but the foundation, the ruling idea, must survive, for the idea is immortal and eternal—

> Emerging from the storm,
> Primæval Faith uplifts her changeful form,
> Mounts from her funeral pile on wings of flame,
> And soars and shines another and the same.

"Eh?" said Shughtie.

Here is a fair proof that the oldest system contained the embryo of the new, as the new contains that of the newer. It dates from some two centuries ago, and it speaks thus of the marches or advances:

"La raison pourquoy on observe cette inégalle quantité de pas est qu'on tient, par ce moyen, l'adversaire tousiours en suspens et incertain de ce que nous ferons. Car si nous poursuivons nostre action touiours d'une mesme manière et avec mesme quantité de pas, il pouroit estre que l'ennemy feroit bien son conte qu'il nous attraperoit, non seulement en la place où il nous void, mais aussi en cette où il sçauroit qu'il nous faudroit venir; ce qui lui est, par ce moyen, empesché."

One would imagine that these words were written not in the seventeenth century, but in our own. Certainly, no professor, however first rate, could express himself more clearly or more concisely.

Yet, as I before remarked, the weapons of those days were very different from what we use; they were heavy cut-and-thrust blades, single or double-handed. But the rules of judgment and prudence and stratagem were the same, and so will they be two hundred years hence.

III.

I must here mention a fatal habit which is general in French *salles d'armes*, and universal in English fencing rooms. The latter may be excused because, as the negroes say, they are "fencing for fence," but not the former.

When a thrust has been driven home, the pupil who has been touched makes some sign of acknowledgment, and the victor, instead of sharply recovering himself and standing upon the defensive, either drops his point or slowly resumes guard. How often we see, even in assaults, a ripost follow a successful pass so quickly as to be almost simultaneous, and get home chiefly because there has been undue neglect in returning carefully and quickly *en garde*.

How often it has happened that a man mortally hurt has with his last thrust killed his antagonist, and, indeed, he is justified in so doing by all the laws of the duello. Remember that the wound leaves always a second or two before the effects show themselves in dropping the weapon, staggering or collapsing to the ground.

"Our soldiers soon found that out in the old Arabian and Afghan campaigns," said Shughtie. "Many a lancer lost his right arm after running through the body one of the Yownsmi pirates, as we call the Kawasim still. And the sturdy robber of the Bolan Pass will say to you, 'Adam bi-yeb kurd na miuflad'—a man doesn't (mustn't?) fall from a single knife stab."

"Yes, and in the 'Trucker Campaign,'" added Seaton, "how many poor fellows were cut down by the wild Baluch swordsman because they did not learn bayonet exercise; whilst some 'clubbed their muskets," that is to say, used the pommel instead of the point of the sword, others thrust so violently that the weapon couldn't be drawn back without applying leg and foot as a lever."

Infandum jubes, &c. O Seaton! I was the first to point that out in my bayonet exercise published shortly after the "Affair of the Hills," and what was the result? A succession of official "wigs" from the "Hall of Lead," and, when the system was forced into the Army by public opinion, a letter from the Treasury, large as an average portfolio, and with a seal the size of a crown piece. And what do you think it contained?

"An order for £100, I suppose," said Lord B.

No! A shilling.

* * * * * *

IV.

After a decent and decorous pause enabling me to recover from the shock of such a reminiscence, Seaton continued:

"You're more tractable this evening, which may come from having taken that shilling. I've heard you often talk of the stop-thrust; surely you must own that in your new and natural (?) system it is grossly abused."

Or rather misused, I replied, which means much the same thing. The fact is, the stop thrust is rather instinctive than reasoned, and so it easily becomes the resource and the refuge of those who cannot parry. But, observe that it is a most dangerous position, from which it is very difficult to dislodge the enemy.

Speaking Science, I cannot for a moment support a style of play which is ever outstretching the sword without reason. But that does not render it less imperative upon us to study how to escape the difficulty. For which purpose let us analyse the matter.

The treatises divide the *coup de temps,* or time-thrust, into three; the *coup d'arrêt,* or stop-thrust, and the *coup sur le temps.* But as the latter is worse than useless, and generally ends in both fencers being touched, I will speak only of the *coup d'arrêt* and the *coup de temps,* the time-thrust proper.

The *coup d'arrêt,* or *tension d'épée,* is justified only when the antagonist advances upon you imprudently, when he indulges in long compound attacks, and when he shortens the arm—in fact, generally when he exposes his body. Yet it is the pet movement of those who, on settled principles, cleave to the defensive. I admire this simple extension of the point when neatly done, because of the judgment and *coup d'œil* which it requires. But my approval is given solely upon the condition that during the same assault there must not be, as often happens, a succession of failures. Otherwise it is clear to me that chance has been the only guide. Great sobriety is required in the use of this pass, unless your antagonist lays himself open by violent and disorderly attacks, by the *jeu dur,* and by convulsive movements which you have artfully exaggerated. As a feint, you may be less sparing of it, because it shows him that you are on the alert, and that he must not expect to charge you with good result.

The *coup de temps* is a parry and pass of opposition taken at the end of an attack, when you have divined the line which the sword will prefer. This anticipation of the opponent's lunge is taught in every school, but you rarely see it used except by a skilful sword playing with a beginner. It is the most dangerous of its kind, leaving you utterly undone if you have mistaken the adversary—and who in such matters must not expect to make mistakes? Again, it often leads to double thrusts, when both are touched. I would willingly see this objectionable movement banished from the schools, even as an exercise. It never can equal the true parry which, if at first misjudged, can at any rate be continued or repeated. And for one time-thrust of intrinsic value how much false coin has been put into circulation?

An easy way of discouraging these feints is by the lunge backwards (*se fendre en arrière*). It is done by sharply retiring the left foot and inclining the body, so that the adversary's sword

passes harmless over the head. This movement has been falsely reported to be an upstart, an innovation due to the system purposely decorated with the style and title of Romanticism. It is old, very old; and if it is not proved to have been used by the Greeks, it is not, therefore, the more modern.

Briefly, whenever you find an opponent who is addicted to stopping you on all occasions, never attack him, without vigorously mastering his sword, by a *croisé*, a *battement*, a *liement d'épée*, a *pression*, or a *flanconnade*. This will reduce him to impotence, if, at least, he is unwise enough to give you the sword. Or you may proceed by a false engagement, your weak being opposed to his strong, or again by a demi-attack which is safe enough if freely marked. Either the adversary comes to the parry or he extends the sword; you then take possession of it, being careful never to quit it, and, above all things, not to feint.

I am speaking scientifically, you will observe, of these various "stoppings." If a man says to me, "I know very little of fencing, but I defend myself as I can," he is welcome to all the faults he fancies; indeed, these are his right and his only science. But the complete swordsman must not make faults, or rather he must avoid them as much as possible.

V.

"What is your opinion," said Lord B., "of what the French call *les bottes secrètes*, and why they are not taught in the schools?"

The latter part of the question is easily answered. If they were taught they would no longer be secret. But I hasten to say that I do not believe in *botte segrete*, any more than in the *parata universale* or in the Philosopher's Stone. *Par parenthèse*, the word *botte* has lately been pronounced too trivial for the art of arms, and we are ordered to say *coup;* the Italians are not so fastidious.

"Yet there must be some foundation for their existence, as the idea is so generally received."

Perhaps I would rather say the possibility of their existence. It is a phantom which comes straight from the Hispano-Italian school, which, as has been said, is still, though notably modified, the base, the *point de départ*, of our modern system.

In France we often hear of a master who "possesses, they say, sword *bottes secrètes*." A challenge has passed, and one, perhaps both, of the combatants will go to him for advice, and both probably learn the same.

These passes, improperly called secrets, are mere irregularities that do not belong to everyday practice. So far I admit them, but no farther. The *ignotum* is not only their sole strength, but their single chance of success. Remove this

false prestige, and they will become not merely harmless to you, but proportionally dangerous to him who uses them.

I will divide them into two categories—the attacks and those that oppose or follow the attacks. Sometimes an adversary will during the attack suddenly withdraw his arm so that you parry in the air, and then rush upon you, leaping to the side and thrusting at the flank. Or, after a false attack, he will bend to the ground so as to avoid the ripost which passes over his head and strikes you in the low lines because you are unprepared for this sudden disappearance. Old "dodges," these—mere revivals and not survivals of the fittest.

Others, again, before the onslaught, make a resonant *appel*, utter a loud ha! ha! or a piercing and violent cry, an *urlo* like the houp-la or the Pistache in the hunting field, at the same time withdrawing the sword. The start perhaps causes an unwary adversary to stop involuntarily, and thus he is buttoned, no matter where, no matter how. Others, again, after mastering the blade, make a demi-volte to the fore by bringing the *circolata* left foot in front of the right, and thus reversing the position of the body. It is a venerable practice of the Italian school, at least three centuries old.

So much for the attack. If, on the contrary, these movements are directed against the attack they are simply inverted. For instance, I lunge freely at my adversary, who, instead of parrying, springs out of line to right or left. Nothing is before me; sword and body are both absent; my attack is lost in the void, and the opposite blade is in my stomach or my flank. This so-called "secret bout" was still taught during my boyhood in the French *salles d'armes*. Now it would be looked upon as irregular and almost as illegal.

Again, my adversary bends to the ground, supported by his left hand, allows my sword to pass over his head, and thrusts me in the low lines. This *Sbasso*, or *Sparita*, was also a favourite with the Neapolitan school, and, for aught I know, is so still. And, yet again, my adversary beats down my sword, makes a demi-volte to the front, and before I can spring backwards or recover my guard raises his hand in old tierce and thrusts downwards—the venerable *Imbroccata*.

I could infinitely multiply such instances, but, as you see, all these "bouts" proceed almost by the same means, and differ only in detail. And you will understand without demonstration what a "neck or nothing" game it is—how completely a failure plays into the opponent's hand. The sole danger of these movements consists in the resolution and the recklessness of one who risks all upon a single throw.

"Yet wouldn't they be doubly dangerous if used by a strong man against a weak?" asked Claude.

Doubtless, although I should hope that the strong man would not make use of them. If he stands before an ignorant fencer,

what need has he of such stratagems? If, on the other hand, his opponent be of equal ability and sang-froid he cannot forget how much he throws away in case of failure.

I must again draw your attention to a golden rule in the study of the sword. The first preoccupation of the man who attacks should be never so to commit himself that if his attempt happen to miscarry he cannot once more return to safety. In other words, never attack in such a way that you cannot defend yourself against the ripost.

Want of faith, then, is one of the most essential points in our difficult art. It is equivalent to the study of your adversary; it not only removes a host of dangers from yourself, it also transfers them to him who opposes you.

We may fairly pronounce the "secret bout," like the churchyard ghost, to have been laid at rest for ever by Science, who goes her ways without another thought upon the subject. To revive the defunct would be a return to old traditions and to systems which were the property of past ages. In these days the *botte secrète* suggests a something of treachery, and no man of honour would purchase victory at such a price.

These are individual opinions, but honour is an individual code which a man draws up for himself according to his conscience and his sense of right. He certainly does not and should not borrow it from his neighbour.

In the world where we live there is a host of things which lie upon the debateable borderland, the frontier line between right and wrong, which are not cognisable by the law courts, but which are not the less subject to trial by public opinion. I knew a man who killed another in a duel by dropping his sword and looking behind the adversary as if the police were coming. The opponent fell into the trap, and received a thrust which caused his death within an hour. The manslayer could not be punished in the tribunals, but society took charge of the offence and excommunicated him.

If some fatality forces you into the field, sword in hand, your victory must not give rise to the shadow of a question. The thrust which prostrates your adversary must be loyal as the bosom which he presents to you. I am not even certain that a friend of mine was justified in looking fixedly at the low lines of his antagonist, and then by a flip of the point, a sudden jerk of the hand, wounding him in the fingers. But actions must be measured by results, and as nothing more serious than first blood occurred the *coup de Jarnac* easily passed off.

"Please be good enough to set me right," said Charley. "Does a 'Jarnac blow' mean absolute treachery?"

Not quite. It is, properly speaking, a surprise, a something that does not sound "nice," a "dodge," neither quite fair nor absolutely unfair. The story is this: A certain Chabot de Jarnac and Vivonne de la Chataigneraie, a noted duellist,

having quarrelled about a certain fair person, fought with sword and shield *en champ clos* before Henri II. and the ladies of the Court (July 10, 1547). Vivonne made an *imbroccata*, or binding of the sword, with thrust from high to low line. Jarnac, a man of humble birth, who had taken lessons from an Italian, got within measure and delivered two hamstringing cuts (*fendente al poplite*) right and left, and his opponent died of rage within two hours. The King, furious at the loss of a favourite, called it a *coup de traître*. He was followed by his courtiers, and the expression has passed into everyday use. But Marozzo (Chapter LXXXV.) had described the pass as *un reviscio segato per le gambe*, and in this very duel it was provided for and foreseen—the seconds had settled that a dagger was to be carried by way of guard in the left *borzacchino* (jack-boot). Henri II., however, swore to forbid further single combats, and was accidentally killed in the same year by the Count de Montmorency.

The only loyal approach to a "secret bout" is some personal modification of a recognised pass. Such, for instance, are the so-called "retrograde movements," passes and parries with the forearm withdrawn instead of being extended as usual. The complete swordsman studies his own physical powers and discovers the utmost use that can be made of them, thus technically called the *jeu de tempérament*. One man is strongly made in the upper works and fines off below the torso. This, the French shape, will require a different method from the opposite or English make. The short man gains by standing upon the defensive, by advances within measure, by *battements, croisés*, and parries in seconde. The tall man loses in attempting to imitate him; he should keep long measure and affect the time-thrust. You will easily see how far these considerations can be carried. I have, for instance, my own modification of *une, deux*, founded upon a heavy shoulder and an unusual *supinator radii magnus*, and it has more than once done me good service.

"Will you kindly let us see it?" asked Seaton.

No, my Seaton, I will not!

VI.

And now, having disposed of the *botte secrète*, I must confess my perfect disbelief in the many current tales anent *maîtres d'armes* killed by *conscrits*. Such events may happen; so in the street you may come to your death by a tile.

"And Abyssinian Bruce," said Shughtie, "died of a fall when leading a lady downstairs to dinner."

The stories have gained currency and credence through the ignorance of the narrator and the hearer. Nothing more appropriate for the brilliant, purposeless sea novels of Capt. Marryat than to make Mr Midshipman Easy quite sure of

success with the small sword, because he had never learned to use it. Nothing more natural for the exciting low-art military romances of Mr Lever's first phase than to show the British Ensign, whose knowledge of weapons was probably limited to a bout with singlestick, triumphantly defeat the French captain, a finished swordsman. But a rule of proportion, a page of statistics, would at once, believe me, disperse the illusion which has been, and which still may be, mischievous.

When it does happen the fault is with the fencer who has not prepared himself for the occasion. Many men attend the schools for years and never take the trouble of trying the experiment how they would act if opposed to a vigorous and resolute man who has never had a sword in hand. The attack —I would call it the wild-beast style—when, as Tasso says, *Toglie * * * il furor l'uso del arte*, may sometimes succeed by chance. I have heard of an English naval officer who, utterly ignorant of the foil, when placed before his opponent began to use it like a horsewhip, and succeeded. A cooler and warier adversary would have spitted him like a lark.

Another explanation, very patent and intelligible, especially after hearing Capt. Seaton's little accident, is the fatal facility with which the practised swordsman despises his ignorant adversary. And we must not forget that mortal weapons level to a small extent all distinctions. The sharpened point resolutely presented at the face or the breast is always a most intelligible threat. The naked blade is a reality which dispels many a dream. Science still holds her own, but prudence and sang-froid, energy and animal courage, count for much in the struggle.

This also is a good opportunity for a word about not misjudging your enemy. Perhaps he turns pale, his hand trembles, and his fingers begin to twitch and fidget. Amongst savages, barbarians, and even semi-barbarians, like the "valiant Figg," these would be simply signs and symptoms of cowardice. But civilised peoples, in whom the purely nervous, the nervo-bilious, and the nervo-sanguine temperaments predominate, are not so to be judged. The brain may be working violently and the heart beating with unpleasant force, yet the settled purpose is there, and the abnormal state will last only till real danger shows itself. And you will probably find your man far more to be dreaded than one of the unimpressionables who go to the fray as they go to the feast.

"How do you account for the strange fact," asked Shughtie, "that the bravest of men have been called cowards, Napoleon the Great, for instance, after the Bridge of Lodi, and the Duke of Wellington, the hero of a hundred fights. Possibly the same was said of Alexander and of Cæsar by the *freluquets* of Athens and Rome."

You must allow much to envy, hatred, malice, and all manner

of uncharitableness. Besides which, men of the higher and the highest temperaments, who do not show certain marks of what is called euphemistically "nervousness" and who are utterly destitute of physical fear, are exceedingly rare. I have seen only two who could sit amongst the pattering of bullets and the clattering of swords without a shadow of change, external or internal. Everyone remembers the story of the Crimean officer who, pale and trembling whilst leading his company to the breach, was laughed at by his comrades, and who turned the laugh against them by standing his ground when they fell back. There are many different kinds, not a single kind, of courage, and in one especially, constancy under physical pain and even torture, women are generally far braver than men. Again, the same individual will vary at different times of his life. Rochester, a wit and a hero in youth, ended with the reputation of a wit and a poltroon. The opposite case is the more common, when a timid boy, possibly depressed by bad health, ill-treatment, or unwholesome conditions of life, develops like Abyssinian Bruce into a man of remarkable daring and *sangfroid*. A friend of mine always "contended," to use his own phrase, "against the effeminacy of civilised life" by acting upon an individual by-law: "Whenever you fear a thing, do it," and the "thing" ranged between a "teafight" and a *combat à outrance*. He had another more questionable maxim: "Always tell the truth when you are afraid of telling it." And doubtless familiarity with danger has so strong an effect upon some minds. In early youth I acted as "friend" to a brother ensign whose "nervous state" was such that he had to be assisted out of bed. This all passed away before his second "difficulty," and he eventually became, in fact, rather a troublesome fire-eater.

"That," said Lord B., "is the national value of hunting, of foxhunting; it keeps up the practice of incurring moderate danger."

"And Alpine climbing, glacier crossing, &c.," suggested Shughtie.

"And African travel," quoth Seaton with a smile.

I can hardly agree with the latter speaker, because what is gained in the habit of danger is lost in health of nerve.

This led to a debate. As it again offered nothing new, the process of reporting would be supererogatory.

VII.

I resumed when we had finished with nerves and nervousness.

It is a mistake of the modern schools not to make more use of the true rapier in the lesson as well as in the assault. The weight is different, the blade is broad, straight, and comparatively unelastic, and the change of weapons gives *aplomb* to the hand. In the present day there are many salles that

have never seen a pair of rapiers, and even duels are mostly fought with French foils, which I have called mere bent wires.

"That wasn't the case with the old school," quoth Seaton.

True, and here the march of reform has been far too rapid. The style of rapier-fencing at once changes. You have more of the extensive movements, and especially the parries of contraction, indispensable to the Neapolitan school, but little used, or rather wholly disdained, by the French.

Place these weapons in the pupils' hands, and already the assault no longer resembles that of the familiar foil. One would say that the rapier-blade, though buttoned and consequently harmless, has preserved a something of the real combat, the strife between man and man, the point of steel against the naked breast.

It is no longer the careless exchange of thrusts, the tentative passes, the perilous ventures, often more brilliant and enterprising than reason permits. Both adversaries, without rendering an account to themselves, have looked upon the *rencontre* as a far more serious affair than usual, a sport approaching the earnest. Each, perhaps, says to himself, "Let's see how it would be if the swords had no buttons."

The different mounting of the weapon, the peculiar strident sound, the *strischio*, of the edges that meet, produce at once their effect. The adversaries watch each other, study the movements opposed to them, and preface execution by threatening approaches. The weapons reflect their hands, the hands their thoughts, and both seem to speak with lips. You cannot fail to make this remark whenever you happen to "assist" at a meeting of the kind.

If so great a difference is engendered by the mere change of harmless weapons, believe me the transition is far more abrupt from the buttoned blade to the pointed blade.

The eccentricities and arabesques of the salles disappear, and, with the rare exceptions of men who cannot keep their tempers under any circumstances, a serious discretion takes the place of that recklessness which risks nothing but a thrust in the leathern jacket. This is a natural sentiment; the stakes are now of a very different kind. And on such occasions it is that men congratulate themselves upon familiarity with different styles of play, and do not think that time wasted which has been spent in the study of the bad as well as of the good.

VIII.

"You have not yet enlightened us," said Lord B., "upon the subject of the left-handed fencer, concerning whom we hear so much."

And I was about to neglect him because there is so little to say upon the subject. The Treatises, which are exceedingly prolix wherever they can be, here perforce fall back upon

succinctness; there exists absolutely no rule which can be personally and exceptionally applied to the *gaucher*. All you have to do is to reverse your play with him.

"Then you do not think the difficulty so great as it is generally supposed to be?"

There is certainly a relative difficulty, easy enough to explain, but it is not that of the born blind who on some points can never thoroughly understand what they call "the sighted." One of my fencing friends, a left-handed man of course, used to declare that all the difficulty was the invention of right-handed men. The epigram was rather witty than wise; evidently so complete a reversal of the usual style is a serious obstacle to those who have not the habit of practising it.

The real and solid advantage of the *gaucher* is our being more familiar with right-handed men. Change this condition, and the pair are absolutely equal in their chances of victory. Two first-rate left-handed fencers are never at home with each other, and a *droitier* always fencing with *gauchers* would lose much of his skill against right-handed men.

On the other hand, the serious disadvantage of the left-handed man, and one impossible to remedy, is that he presents the more dangerous side to the sword. Again, I doubt whether the conditions which cause a man to be left-handed are not obstacles to perfect manipulation. It would be interesting to see a list of first-rate left-handed painters and sculptors, swordsmen and marksmen, billiard players, quoit players, and so forth.

The *maître d'armes* may always annul the incognito of the left-handed man by representing him at times in lessons to his pupils. Some do so, and they do right. The pupils also, should they have leisure, must not neglect to work both sides of the body.

"I think you advised the same in bayonet exercise," Shughtie remarked.

Certainly. The want became evident to me when I saw a number of men in every regiment with right shoulders permanently depressed by always carrying the musket on one side. And it is curious to feel how much good ten minutes with the left has done to the right, especially as regards the legs. Men are so apt to fit themselves into the grooves upon which they run smoothly, and to make habit something more than a second nature. I know dozens of good riders who would feel very awkward if compelled to mount a tall horse on the off side, like a tailor, as they say.

And from my youth upwards I have ever been at war with "habits." What makes a man old in what may be called the prime of life save habits, without the self-confidence, the pugnacity, and the animal spirits to oppose them? Why are my contemporaries of Alma Mater for the most part *bochi e relli*,

with bald heads and grey beards, with paunched eyes and worn countenances? They have risen before 9 a.m.; they have broken their fast between that hour and noon; they have lunched about 2 p.m.; they have dined between 6 and 9, and they have found themselves in bed we will say before midnight. Whence, therefore, this premature look of antiquity? All are under middle age, which, however, supposes man to reach the century. The fact is that quiet domestic life——

"Shall we not," suggested Shughtie, "return to our *gauchers*?"

A thousand pardons! Can anyone tell me that the left-handed man has at his disposal a single pass or the shade of a parry which does not belong to the right-handed man? Certainly not. Only the latter, through want of practice, finds greater difficulty in adjusting his thrusts, for the simple reason that the inside of the arm becomes the outside and *vice versâ*. The *gaucher* also always attempts to draw you on in carte, where he is quite at home, and if he be of fair force it is useless to attack him on that line or to encounter his counters of carte. His foible is in tierce, and he cannot defend his shoulder and flank like his breast; he is also more vulnerable in the high than in the low lines.

These are general rules known to every teacher. But you must not believe those who assure you that the left-handed man lacks variety of movements; this depends upon his individuality. If all *gauchers* resembled one another like the fingers of the same hand it would not be difficult to learn them by heart.

IX.

No one contradicts me, no one even "differs in opinion" with me. I shall not last long if you give me my head in this way.

I have tried not to omit anything which may please and interest those who love the sword, and those who feel that they might love it. My object has been to work out essential points and lines, and willingly to neglect that multiplicity of details which would overload the picture and sink the ensemble in its component parts. These details, I repeat, are the natural results of practice and experience; they are conquered, rather than learned, by the shock of steel with steel, by the variety of styles which offer themselves for study, and by the habit of meeting the sudden and unforeseen difficulties that may at any moment arise.

Look at that *débutant* entering life, emerging from the chrysalis-state of school and college into the butterfly form called man of the world. How shyly he enters the room and acknowledges the hostess and mingles with the many. "Poor youth! he is modest," say the ladies with that pitying charity which makes the grande dame so especially delectable. By no means, miladi! He is suffering from what, perhaps, his seniors

have forgotten, from self-consciousness which haunts him like his guardian angel. He, the great unknown, to be so unknown! He, the macrocosm, to be so very microscopic! Society would worship him as a demi-god if it only dreamed of his real, his unappreciable value. But how teach it to the world? He owns with a flush that he knows not—perhaps this is the only thing that he does not know. So he flushes alternately and turns pale when that audacious virgin looks straight between his eyes; he stammers and says the wrong thing, and he talks for talking sake, not daring to be silent, when that juvenile veteran of a matron amuses herself with drawing him out by way of keeping her hand in; and he helplessly offers his arm, hating himself and her all the more for such weakness, when that old soldier, that "widow who has seen better days," tells him that she would willingly "go down to supper."

Now see him after a single year. The virgin droops and drops her eyes before a steady glance which looks beyond her, which says "I know something more than you do." The pretty matron begins to think of him—the first point gained—and owns to herself that he is "very nice," that she wishes he would call a little oftener. And the dowager, emboldened by her first success, tries the manœuvre once more, and duly finds herself anchored upon the arm of a far younger young friend.

What has worked this marvel of transformation, of metamorphosis? Our *débutant* has entered into the struggle of life, and friction has begun the work of rounding off his angularities. He has associated with a host of fellow-creatures, some better, many inferior—for he is still young—to himself. He has found a standing point, and is no longer wandering vagrant-like about the circle. And the world, which, goodness knows! *can* look deep enough when the trouble is justified, contents itself with remarking that in ease and *savoir faire* he has become one of themselves.

It is the same with fencing. The art and finesse, the tact and *à propos*, come by themselves naturally and gradually, as feathers grow upon the young bird's wings. I will end with saying a graceful thing. Remember that the lesson and the plastron are your first masters, and never abandon them. This would be ungrateful, and ungraciousness and ingratitude is a flaw in the Perfect Swordsman.

The Eighth Evening.

I.

At this seance Lord B. was not present; he was dining at one of those feasts of plain roast and boiled and flow of heavy port and sherry, the prerogative and the high privilege of every English country gentleman who takes an intelligent interest in his party, his county, and his native land.

"What have we for our evening?" asked Charley, after the occupation for the several places and the usual half-hour of preliminary chat which Seaton, who still loves curries and cleaves to the Oriental Club, despite the 8gs. a year, profanely calls "Gup."

I really cannot say; my budget is clean empty.

* * * * *

II.

After a long pause there was a murmur, which gradually shaped itself into these words:

"If you are at an end, we shall not let you off so easily; we have listened, and now we will question."

Proceed, then, I replied.

"What do you think of the relative merits of sword and pistol in the matter of duelling?"

The answer would lead me far. In England we consider, or, rather, we considered, powder and ball to be, upon the whole, a fairer way of settling a dispute than steel.

Possibly, I own; but listen to the view from the other part, the words of young France.

"It cannot be repeated too often that blind chance is not seldom the most powerful agent where we least expect its interference. It is this fact which makes the duel with the sword, in my opinion, the only equitable and honourable form; the single process, in which the feebler of two men has always something to expect from his own energy, courage, and resolution."

"In the duel with pistols what a melancholy part is assigned to both combatants!"

"Energy serves for nothing; courage becomes a useless weapon, and resolution only teaches a man to stand up like a target, and to await a bullet which he cannot stop. Under these circumstances, faint heart is equal to stout heart; softness and effeminacy, even cowardice itself, can triumph over the highest bravery, the incarnation of manliness. The finger touches a trigger, and all is said."

"The pistol duel has ever appeared to me a monstrous idea, and it is with joy that I see it disappear gradually, but surely, from amongst us, and lose root in our manners."

"After all," said Seaton, "this is merely repeating in new words the old French knight's dictum that gunpowder was the grave of honour."

Evidently, but the modern practice of France and of the Continent generally is to use the sword for lighter matters, the pistol for graver subjects of dispute.

Yet it must be owned that the greatest skill in arms does not make the fencer invulnerable. To believe the contrary would be a strange abuse of self-confidence and a dangerous error.

"Do you consider this an advantage or a disadvantage?" Seaton asked, evidently perplexed.

In my opinion, it is the only thing which exalts, which ennobles fencing in the hour of battle; even the feeblest find unforeseen chances of escape, protecting hazards, strokes of luck, which prevent the combat degenerating into manslaughter.

If the science of arms were exact and mathematical, admitting rigorous demonstration like a theorem of Laplace, if an unparriable pass could be invented, where is the man who, certain of conquering his opponent without running a shade of risk, would universally and loyally draw upon him?

"And what can an unhappy Englishman do," said Claude, alias "Jock," "who knows nothing of either sword or pistol?"

I see no difficulty. Do you remember the great Tom Cribb's answer to that parlous youth who asked him what was the best posture of defence: "Keep a civil tongue in your head!" Many Englishmen have lived abroad in the most troublous times, and yet have had the tact and good sense to keep out of quarrels. Of course, there are circumstances which make it absolutely and imperiously necessary for you to fight or to leave the town, in which case one of your compatriots will probably take your place. At ——, in my day, poor Charley S., the best of friends to everybody but himself, organised a little circle with the object of keeping up the national reputation. Whenever an Englishman was insulted by a foreigner, he was waited upon by the committee, and politely requested either to fight or to run away.

"And if he refused to do either?"

He was simply cut by everybody, which appears a sufficient penalty.

"Still, I want to know how my ignoramus manages to save his life," persisted Claude.

Some, like D. C., unhappily also gone, gallantly took the risk, and received a thrust in the arm. Others as a rule preferred the pistol, because every English gentleman shoots more or less, and the difference of a very few feet absolutely levels all distinction. At twenty-four paces everything is in favour of the practised shot; at twelve a large proportion; at six nothing.

"But what about choice of weapons?"

Everywhere the right resides with the challenged. A man, fixing a quarrel upon you, insults you; you return it by a blow, *pro formâ*, as it were, with your glove, and when he sends you the cartel you prefer pistols.

Connected with their opinions upon providence and destiny, the duel became part of the national life. It then passed southwards throughout Europe, where neither council, nor Pope, nor priest could abolish it. A hundred times anathematised and punished with terrible severity, the duel as often revived,

and reappeared under different shapes. If you ask me why, I answer, "Because it was necessary for the age."

At length, civilisation triumphed over the judicial or purely superstitious combat, and this ordeal became a mundane and secular thing, to be treated according to the fashion and the freak of time and place.

In some countries, and at certain epochs, those who revived the obsolete appeal to the God of Battle, which, however, sad to say, Christian Europe retains in time of war, were subject to long and cruel imprisonment, or were put to death often with tortures. The same was the case with the seconds, who, in the Judicium Dei, attended their combatants, and, under certain casualties, protected them with their shields.

Elsewhere the dueller, abusing its impunity, especially in the ages when swords hung by all sides—we see a survival in our Court costume—ran howling like a Bacchante through the streets and squares. It was good taste to *mettre flamberge au vent*, by way of filling up, as it were, a leisure hour, and dwelling for a day in the mouths of men. These rufflers drew under the lamps, in the parks, everywhere, in fact, for a word, a riband, a bet, an anonyma, a nothing. And the seconds, who yesterday might have been the best of friends, cut one another's throats to-day.

Every age seems to have its own follies and superstitions, its eccentricities and "white horses," its peculiar phase of that which in the individual we should call an "obscure disorder of the brain." But our times would look with anything but favour upon the "raffiné," the Mohock, who took a pride in drawing his sword or in notching his saw-handles, "the same which we shot Capt. Marker."

Yet what shows the ineradicable form of vitality residing in the personal appeal of the offended to the offender is this: almost throughout the civilised world, the duel, which arises about a point of honour pure and simple, which has for object not the death of the antagonist, but a man's self-approbation and self-esteem, and which cannot be traced in connection with anything unworthy or unfit for the eyes of the world, that form of obtaining satisfaction has outlived every phase of abuse, both the punishments threatened to it and the excesses which merited them.

Forgive me this long prologue, or, rather, be grateful to me for not making it longer. To condense so vast a matter into a few minutes' of speech is not an easy task.

"Thanks!" was the general exclamation.

III.

"Strange," said Shughtie, "that a custom so clearly un-Christian as the duello should obtain almost entirely amongst Christians. The old Greeks and Romans, the Hindus and Persians, the Egyptians and Chinese had their chance rencontres,

like all semi-barbarians, they fought for 'best man,' but they had no regular duel. The Moslem, if obedient to his Apostle—I won't say 'prophet,' a vulgar error—will bear a slap of the face and run away rather than lift his hand upon a brother religionist. Against a Kafir, of course, the case is very different, but then the Koran says openly 'Slay them' (*i.e.*, the unbelievers) 'wherever you shall find them.' The passage has been often glossed over, but there it stands."

It is rather, I replied, ante-Christian than anti-Christian; I can account for it only as a fragment of the Pagan temple, built up into the Christian Church.

"At any rate," said Charles, "we've got rid of it in England. What do you think will be the result at home?"

Simply nil. It had almost died out before the law was made so stringent, and, since the law has passed, there have, I believe, been as many duels between Englishmen as there were during the five years preceding it. Of course, they were fought abroad.

Upon such a subject there cannot fail to be differences of opinion. Our friends of the Manchester, utilitarian, middle-class school consider that the abolition has affected a pure and unmixed good.

"And no wonder!" cried Seaton. "These are gentlemen who are far from being nice or touchy upon the point of honour; 'mildew' and commercial morality are not dainty in such matters; an appeal for satisfaction is much more pleasantly passed on to a solicitor than settled by a second. They remind me of the timid burghers of certain foreign cities, who torment every dog with a muzzle for fear one in ten thousand should bite. These *pékins*, these *mandarins* wish to justify Napoleon's sneer about the nation of shopkeepers."

Which was fairly answered by Pitt's "nation of stage-players," I retorted, although, the actor being an artist, would, abroad at least, rank himself before the *épicier*.

But there is still a moderate opinion upon the subject in England which speaks somewhat as follows:

The duel is one of those provisional arrangements which, like cannibalism, slavery, polygamy, and many others, belong to certain stages of society, and which drop off as decayed and dead matter when, no longer necessary, they become injurious excrescences upon the body social. Those who look only at the surface of things consider these temporary institutions as unmixed evils, forgetting the immense amount of good which they did in their own day.

It may be questioned whether we have not been premature in thus striking at the effect before we can reach the cause, in throwing away the empirical remedy before we have found the scientific cure. The duel has been abolished, but the "court of honour" has not become a part of our social system. And there are cases—surely I need not specify them—which defy all courts.

Instead of absolutely forbidding duels, the law might allow a certain latitude by trying every case upon its own merits or demerits. For there are still many who look upon it as

To us a landmark of the times when Honour ruled the Land.

"They said that abolishing the prize ring would increase the use of the knife," remarked Claude, "but I don't see that it has."

Nor I. But that was simply a prize-fighter's argument against being abolished. The fact is that he abolished himself by a development of ruffianism and rascality which made him impossible.

If, however, novels be a reflection of life, I can only say that during the last few years, since duelling became rarer, the amount of "thrashing" that your six-foot-six and well-biceps'd heroes have to do is more startling than pleasing.

"And if they draw the rein tighter," said Seaton, "they'll make matters as they are in Russia, where no duel is allowed. It's only lately that an officer smarting under insufferable wrongs, and unable to call out his injurer, simply sabred him. And who does not remember how the two civilians in high positions settled a quarrel without scandal by tossing up, the loser to blow out his own brains."

"Yes," said Shughtie, "our 'Liberals' and Rads. borrowed a system of competitive examinations for their embryo Mandarins from China; the next thing will be to settle affairs of honour by the 'happy dispatch' of Japan."

We are getting on fast, I thought.

"And what claim has England," continued Seaton, "to say that what she does is right and that the rest of the world is wrong?"

Right and wrong, O Seaton!

"Oh, bother your metaphysics! Next we shall have ontology in the smoking room. Why should England be justified in making duel murder, when at most it's manslaughter in France and Italy, in Germany and Austria? It's my opinion that the new law does no good at home. Abolish duelling and you introduce an extra pacific view of every question, public as well as individual. And the Englishman is naturally too long suffering. John Bull fights like a man when his blood is heated, but how hard it is becoming to raise the spirit of the British lion up to positive fighting point! He growls, and shows teeth and claws, and looks ugly; but the voice of the charmer whispers cabalistic words—capital, commerce, cotton, corn, taxes. And behold he lies down, grumbling withal, but still he lies down."

Moral coercion, the public opinion of an enlightened nation, O Seaton——

"*Don't*," cried that irritable officer, "unless you wish to drive me mad!"

"And I'm certain," said Shughtie, "that the working of the

law will do us no good abroad. All the world knows how far it may go with John Bull before he rouses himself thoroughly, dashes his hat to the ground, pulls off his coat, tucks up his sleeves, and roars 'Come on!' He himself told his fellow creatures that he was about to become a very long-suffering man when, somewhere about 1850, he proposed a *pax vobiscum* to creation in general; he talked of paying off his army, of turning his navy into emigrant transports, and——"

Shughtie, you exaggerate! I interposed.

"Not very much, certainly not the language of the peace-at-any-price party, before the nation took the alarm and volunteered to arm itself, greatly, I must say, against the grain of those who should have lent a hand. I also nearly managed to get into hot water by proposing a rifle corps, but that's neither here nor there. If you will abuse yourself, justly or unjustly, you must expect your friends to adopt the worst view of you. You can't object to being judged after your own estimate. All of us know how high a hand the French took in half a dozen national affairs—look at the Recognition of the Empire, the Suez Canal, the 'Charles et Georges' business. And why? Do you believe they fancied that they could beat us? By no means! But they knew that a war is always more or less popular in France, rarely in England, now a financial rather than a commercial nation, except when it ought not to be so, like that fatal Crimean blunder."

"Well, we may say what we like," cried Seaton, "but whilst the present state of what the papers call 'unprecedented material prosperity' lasts we must expect to see John Bull below par in the political Bourse of the world. For my part I only wonder what will be the reaction. For it must come, and it'll be a 'caution.' And the first great 'shake' will bring it."

The remark seemed to give general satisfaction.

"But what," cried Shughtie, "can poor John Bull do without an army—for regiments he has, army he has none!"

Seaton was on his hobby in a moment. "What can he do, you ask? Why, one of two things. Reduce his force to half and double its prospects—I don't mean £.s.d., but pension the old soldier and his family. So we shall get good men, not the skulkers who disgraced us in the Crimea by lying down in the Redan trenches. Don't I remember the French taunt, 'You, Johnny, Redan, no! no! Malakhoff, yes! yes!' and the growling reply, 'Waterloo, you beggars!' The other plan, which of course we shall come to, is a general conscription, the Prussian fashion modified. I'd begin with reviving the old militia law, and make every man serve in the second line between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six. At the first war I'd make service in the first line compulsory on gentle or simple. Please, somebody, stop me, or I shall go far into the small hours."

I offered him a Manilla.

IV.

"And now we can proceed with the judiciary combat," said Charles.

You wish me, in fact, to consider fencing with the point of personal utility, which naturally follows the assault, and which puts the colophon upon the art of arms?

"We do."

I obey. The duel on one side is an assault composed of a series of passes and parries between men who are accustomed to the exercise of arms, in different degrees, it is true, but still proceeding after tolerably regular principles. On the other hand, it is a serious encounter with points which threaten one or two lives. A single home-thrust only is wanted, no matter how, no matter where, rightly or wrongly delivered. Here, do not forget it, in addition to stratagem, address, and science, there are other and unknown factors—surprise, brutal strength, savage ferocity, and the furious onslaughts of ignorance.

The face and those parts of the body whose defence in the assault we unjustifiably neglect have blood which your enemy may cause to flow. Your adversary is not picked out by yourself. The choice of chance, he may be short or tall, strong or weak, your inferior, your equal, or your superior in physique.

It is no longer a play in which pupils seek to display their brilliant science, a struggle of address in which you expose yourself voluntarily to be touched, perhaps twice or thrice, and thus inspire your enemy with a confidence which causes you to triumph in the end. We are far from the peaceful trial of strength executed under the master's eye, according to the rules of art and with arms of courtesy. This struggle differs from the assault even more than the latter does from the lesson.

The man who stands before you, who threatens you with his weapon, may be a consummate swordsman, fighting perhaps for the fifth or sixth time with all the advantages which an old campaigner must have accumulated; or he may never have taken a sword in hand, and rely solely upon his energy and upon his sang-froid, or even upon good luck, to serve and save him.

Are you about to engage an antagonist who calculates his movements, and who ably keeps his distance, advancing and retiring after the rules of art? Or perhaps the man opposed to you will count only upon a supreme effort of audacity, of recklessness; he may defeat all your calculations, and by making use of his sword with the mere animal instinct of self-preservation he may trample under foot every received principle of the art.

V.*

I need hardly speak of the part which the second ought to take before his friend is placed in the field. You will readily understand how imperative it is for him to exhaust all means of reconciliation, of preventing a hostile meeting, and how every chance of an honourable settlement should have been tried and found wanting before he consents to attend at the supreme arbitration of the sword.

There are men who have ignored the fact that they are guardians at once of another's life as well as of his honour, and who, fantastically to preserve the one, have foolishly or foully risked the other. But such things hardly belong to our times. The professional second, so brave with another man's skin, is all but extinct, except in comedies, and I only hope that we shall never see him again.

The chief muscle of a true man's arm is his firm belief in the goodness of his cause. All the power and, I may say, the religion of the second lie in the calmness and firmness, in the justice, loyalty, and conciliation which he brings to his most unpleasant duty. It is a task that will always win for him, not praise, but obloquy, and his main consolation will be found in the approval of his own conscience.

Speaking personally, if you allow me, gentlemen, when the duel becomes inevitable, after all my efforts to settle a difficulty, and when my conviction is that false vanity and dangerous *amour propre* are more concerned in the affair than wounded honour, I should not hesitate to express my opinion and to withdraw. Duels fought for the gallery are now considered either odious or ridiculous; they have passed out of our manners; they belong to the lumber-room of the past.

I shall differ from many, especially in the "Sister Island," upon the following point: In my opinion jealousy or rivalry for the affections of a woman is not a subject to fight about. If you want to see who is the "better man," ride stirrup by stirrup at a 6ft. wall, try the most of twelve tigers on foot, or go to the sources of the Congo River, but do not fight for the fair hand after the fashion of all the lower animals; such action simply degrades a man. You are always bound in honour to fight about her, not for her, to take up a woman's cause.

Said Shughtie: "One of the prettiest things in Afghanistan is a chivalrous custom, *not* taken from Europe. When a woman of rank is insulted or injured she sends her veil to the bravest chief of her acquaintance. His duty is to fight out her quarrel *à outrance*."

* Sections VI. to XI., besides exposing Burton's own ideas, embody most of Bazancourt's remarks in the Seventh to Ninth Evenings of his *Secrets of the Sword* (Clay's translation, pp. 153-172).

But—need I say it?—the more you avoid fighting, the better for her good name. She will feel that more strongly than you do, unless she belongs to that odious demi-monde which would add to her bad reputation notoriety and, let me term it, infamy, by causing blood to be shed about herself. And one of the difficulties we Englishmen find on the Continent is to avoid being drawn into the complications that are ever arising between our fellow-countrywomen and foreigners. The Continental considers it a duty when entering life to *faire ses épreuves*—in other and very blunt words, to prove that he is not a coward. We English assume every gentleman to be brave and every gentlewoman to be honest until the reverse is established. Your foreigner in love becomes extra pugnacious, and if he can win and wear *la belle* after a duel, *tant mieux, c'est beau!* I know nothing that offends my sense of delicacy more deeply than such affairs as these. My plan is at once to take up my hat and to make my last bow.

On the other hand, any assertion against character or conduct which tends to lower a man in his own esteem or in that of his kith and kin, his friends or his acquaintances, demands an apology—or the alternative.

In proportion as the second shows himself yielding and conciliatory before the hour of action, so when that hour has come he must be decided and inflexible. His part has changed, but only to burden him with a new responsibility.

It is now that the "friend" must foresee everything, calculate all chances, fear everything, and provide for all contingencies in order that his *partner* may enjoy the tranquility of mind, and especially the sang-froid, which he will need so much. Nothing, in fact, is trivial in the thousand and one details which precede a single combat. The most futile in appearance may suddenly assume abnormal consequence.

The stake is far too heavy to be thrown with careless hand and thoughtless head upon the green table of chance. In the first place the health of the combatant is highly important, and all the peculiarities of his eyesight, as well as his wind and training, must be carefully noticed. Familiarity with his habits may be the means of avoiding a fatal mistake.

The ground also has its claims to study. It should be chosen because flat, uniform, and without rises and falls that might be dangerous. Observe narrowly the place where your man is about to stand, and do not trust him to observe for himself. A tree root, imperceptible to a rapid survey, might cause him to stumble and receive a thrust from the opponent before the latter can stay his hand. All this may appear puerile, but experts will know how easily that tuft of dewy and slippery grass, that small round pebble, which can cause a man to lose his balance and his life.

The light demands all your sagacity. The best position for

the combatant, with sword as well as with pistol, is to stand against a dull foreground which does not define and throw out his figure. Never let the sun or the glare fall upon his face; it makes the blades sparkle, renders the *coup d'œil* uncertain, and inevitably results in hesitation.

Remember that we fight with the look as well as with the sword. The look is thought; it warns us of danger, and it instinctively points out the adversary's weak side. Further still, the fixity of the glance, the eye which, like the olden god's, does not wink, the steadfast survey of the motionless pupil, the light of battle as it is called, have a fascination of their own. Whilst the steel menaces, the eyes discourse in questions and answers, and they convey to the brain information which it could not otherwise receive.

Never allow the shirt to be removed. The sudden effect of the air, especially in the case of one unaccustomed to it, may act upon the combatants in very different degrees, according as their constitutions are more or less impressionable.

"But if one of the two demand it?"

Refuse for the other. It is the habit of the French *caserne*, and it should not be tolerated beyond the barrack yard.

"May a glove be used?"

It is the custom, but custom is not law. Although many think it a right, it cannot claim all the privileges. Usually it is settled beforehand, whether fencing gloves may or may not be used. As a rule they are, because they grasp the grip with greater certainty and render disarming more difficult. Besides, the handle of a foil or rapier is hard enough to tire or blister the delicate naked hand, and the fingers in contact with it suffer from every full-toned parry and from every shock of the swords.

If, however, one side refuse, the other cannot insist upon the glove being accepted, or upon claiming that advantage for itself.

An objection, for instance, might be started that the glove, familiar to the practised fencer, is strange and useless to one who has never worn it. This would rarely be done, because the man whose palm has never touched a sword would feel its roughness more than his experienced adversary. At all events, whether the opponent choose or refuse, you may use a kid glove, well chalked to prevent slipping, or wind a kerchief about your fingers, always, however, being careful not to let an end hang floating so as to embarrass the action of the enemy's blade.

VI.

"May the left hand be allowed to parry?" asked one of my audience.

I reply, in the French school, positively, No!

"But if both combatants consent?"

It is a consent which ought never to be asked nor to be granted. I am aware that many professors are of a different opinion, and that the Comte de Chateauvillard, an authority upon the subject, has declared "Que le fait de parer avec la main peut être l'objet d'un accord réciproque." Yet that changes in nothing my opinion. I say clearly and once for all, "Since you have evidently the right of accepting or of refusing, invariably refuse."

"But why?"

In the first place, it does not belong to the school; it is now, if it has not been, foreign to its habits, to its manners, and to its practice.

It might, moreover, be dangerously unfair to one side, who, like an enormous majority, had never heard of such a thing, whereas the other might have made it his careful study, with the ultimate view of using it in the field.

In the Italian school, as I have already explained to you, that form of parrying, or rather of putting aside, the enemy's pass had its *raison d'être;* in all others it becomes an imperfect and dangerous parody.

The French system throws back the left arm in order to profile the body and offer less surface to the enemy. It cannot use the left hand without compromising this position—at least without subverting its principles.

Furthermore, I have visited most of the famous *salles* of the world, and no modern professor—at least, after La Boïssière (1818)—ever advocated parrying with the hand. In the numberless assaults witnessed by me no scholar ever attempted it, nor proposed it to his antagonist. Never, at least, that I am aware of, has *maître d'armes* taught it to his pupils, even as an exception which might present itself, and against which it is wise to be forewarned.

Why, then, when the assault ceases to be sport, and when life is in question, should you offer or accept a convention which thus transgresses all received custom?

Years ago I was fencing at the rooms of my friend MacLaren at Oxford, and by way of surprise introduced this Italian style of parry. There was a peculiar expression upon the countenance of my adversary, and I asked him what he thought of it.

"To speak the truth," was the reply, "I see no reason, when you use your left hand in that way, why I should not come down upon your head with the pommel of my sword!"

And he was perfectly justified by the traditions of the old Peninsular masters.

I have quoted the *dansi co pomi* of the great swordsman Tasso. *Rosaroll and Grisetti* (1803, part 2, chap. 3) gives rules for the *colpo di pomo* in double-short measure, and a blow on the temple would easily kill.

"You forget," quoth Seaton, "that the old term 'pommelling one's enemy' arose from this use of the heavy knobs on the antique sword guards."

If we admit this peculiarity of the Italian school, we can hardly object to the others, such as the parries of contention, the *volta* and the *circolata* (vaulting), the *inquarto* (spring aside), the *sbasso* (slipping down), and the *sparita di vita*, or *effacement du corps*, the *incocciatura* (hilt clashing), the *imbroccata* (dagger thrust), and the *balestrata* (tripping-up), which guard by the movements of the muscle, not by the sword.

Such a concession might also, without any counterbalancing advantages, lead to mortal errors and to fatal consequences.

Allow me to explain. Between the open hand which sweeps away the thrust and that nervous contraction of the fingers which involuntarily closes upon the blade, the difference is hard to define. The latter may be done almost without intention, and, if the result be a thrust mortal to the adversary, it will be followed by life-long regrets, by vain repentance. The very possibility of such an accident taking place, even once in ten thousand times, should make us guard against accepting any convention that might lead to the fatality.

It is as bad for the seconds as for the principals. It is difficult, not to say impossible, even where the practised eye is concerned, to appreciate in the rapid rencontre of rapiers, in the lightning-like exchange of passes, parries, and riposts, when the blades, sparkling in the sun, intertwine as though they were things of life, the difference of two movements, one being the result of agreement and the other a chance which suddenly changes the duel into manslaughter. The question is so thorny *per se* that with the best will it can hardly be so grasped as not to produce two widely different interpretations—and of the latter which of the two is right? The fact upon which both repose has passed away, rapid as a look, fugitive as thought itself. Terrible position in the presence of a fellow creature stretched upon the ground, cold and inanimate, who might still be in the vigour of youth and life! Who would accept a responsibility so heavy as this is?

VII.

I am exhausting your patience in describing the many duties of the second upon the field, and the minute appreciation of details which should ever be present in his thoughts. Yet, without going deep into the matter, it would be useless to attempt handling it.

Here is another point which demands extreme attention.

When the swords have crossed, the seconds, armed with foils or canes, should stand within reach of the combatants, ready to interfere in case of any irregularity. One of the two may, perchance, slip, stumble, take a false step, be disarmed, or be

wounded. The latter accident is especially worthy of their vigilance, because two phases, both equally fatal, may present themselves.

One of the principals receives the thrust. The victor, in the heat of action and excited by the natural animation of battle, is often unconscious that he has disabled his opponent. Before he sees the effect upon the latter, or even before he can stop his own impetuous career, he may strike him a second time unless the seconds beat down the swords.

The wounded man, on the other hand, may not immediately feel the effects of his hurt, and may risk, by continuing the encounter, one still worse. It might also happen—and this perhaps is most to be feared—that, blinded by rage, he throws himself madly upon his adversary.

Again, the combatant who feels his sword bury itself in the opponent's side stops instinctively, and hesitates to take advantage of a wounded man, although the latter may be continuing the attack. During this critical interval his antagonist, rushing in with senseless fury, may either run him through the body, or, if he has calmly returned to guard, become the victim of his own impetuosity.

After the first wound the encounter should end, or at least be suspended. And the seconds will justly incur blame if, by want of vigilance, they have neglected to stop useless effusion of blood.

It is evident that sometimes, despite all our attention, the attack is so rapid and headlong that it cannot be arrested in time. But then we shall feel no relf-reproach.

However rare, and happily so, are such contingencies, still they may occur. Thus it is of the highest importance for the seconds to follow with vigilant eye the conduct of the swords, and even to forecast their movements in case one of the combatants be hurt, however slightly.

If after inspection the wound prove of little consequence, and it be resolved to continue the combat, the two adversaries will at any rate have found time to recover their calmness and their self-possession.

This necessity of minute attention is one of the gravest points; it is also an absolute *sine quâ non*. And here it is that the *rôle* of the second finds its highest difficulties, for here his responsibility is complete.

"It appears to me," said Charles, "without knowing anything of the matter, that the best second in the field would be an old fencing master."

If you can make it worth his while, I replied. The usual practice of the day, especially when serious consequences are anticipated, is to hire a couple of soldiers, privates in the line, at the cost of their discharge and their trouble. And every year it becomes a more serious thing to ask the assistance of a

"friend" who has anything to expect from society. The late Roumanian pistol duel between Prince Siretzo and M. Ghika ended with the imprisonment of the seconds for two and three years, when others escape with a few francs fine and a nominal imprisonment. If this new view prevail the duello in France will go the way of the bowie knife and black room in the United States.

VIII.

"I'd like to hear," said Seaton, "what you think ought to be done in the case of *corps à corps*, when the principals meet body to body."

It is a most delicate point, which should always be previously arranged between the seconds. You cannot stop the fight except by agreement, and if you do not it generally ends with mortal wounds on both sides, which are called *en partie double*.

Here prudence, resolve, and perfect fairness are required.

If, for instance, one of the combatants has thrown himself violently upon the other, the blades should not be struck down before the side which has endured the attack shall also have used his right of ripost.

But there are questions and casualties of perpetual recurrence which can be resolved only by the presence of mind and by the just appreciation of the second.

In former days the case was otherwise. Now it is not too much to expect that the second will disdain to consult the interests of his principal by turning a convention, loyally offered and loyally accepted, into something favourable to his friend and unfair to the other side. Such would be, for instance, suddenly arresting the rencontre when a case specifically expressed threatens to occur but does not occur.

"But if it happen?"

Then each man consults his judgment and his conscience upon what his conduct should be. Some might peremptorily demand that the rencontre cease; others that the combatants return to their places.

"And now let me ask you another question," said Shughtie. "I've often heard a man say 'If in a duel about a small matter a dead thrust were made at my principal's chest, my impulse would be to stop it.' Is he right or is he wrong?"

Evidently wrong. His motive is amiable, his action more natural than reasonable, but he has assumed the most crushing responsibility. Let us follow it out to its possible consequences; what is called Transatlantically "going the whole hog" is no bad test of principle, however opposed to our distaste for extremes. The mortal thrust has been stopped by the second, not parried by the principal. The fight continues and your "friend's" adversary is killed by the sudden change of that

chance which at first stood in his favour. What now says your conscience?

The duel is a sad resource, but after you have honestly and honourably done all in your power to prevent it, allow fortune to pronounce between the principals. You may take any means in your power to diminish the fatality of the combat, but above all things fair play.

Shughtie persisted. "There are many who think that a point or two should be stretched in favour of a friend."

I am afraid there are. But this is the emotional and feminine view of a man's duty. Once "stretch the point" and tell me if you can where it will end?

"It's clear to me," remarked Claude, "that nothing would persuade me to be a second with all these responsibilities."

Many say the same. The part is, in fact, one of the most serious that a man can assume; to take it up lightly is blameable in the highest degree. I do not envy the second who sleeps soundly and without sombre reflections throughout the night before the affair. His consolation must be the firm resolve never to transgress the strictest limit of absolute right—for his friend as well as for the other party.

You will now see how many gifts are required for a second in a duel of swords. The first is that tenacity of look and certainty of *coup d'œil* which result only from a long habit of arms. The last is that energy of character which predisposes him to take an active part; the purely passive conception robs it of all its force, all its nobleness, all its dignity.

IX.

What do you say to the disputed question, "If one of the combatants wants to rest, can he be forced to go on?" asked Seaton.

That again should always be settled either by previous arrangement or by mutual agreement. Otherwise unpleasant discussions may arise. You have the right to compel him, but how enforce it?

"Surely it would be repugnant to one's feelings not to give breathing time to a man who's sinking with fatigue, whose hand can't hold the sword and whose breath is gone?" said Claude.

Yet the right of insisting upon continuing the encounter is there, and for this reason. Why is he more exhausted than his adversary? Possibly, and I should say probably, because he has begun the fight with effort, with violence; he has used an imprudent activity without reserve and without consulting his strength. The other side has had to support these incessant shocks and attacks; it has better estimated its means and resources, and it has relied upon the result, despite the many risks incurred. The moment of success is evidently when the

attacker, tired out by the number and impotence of his attacks, is able to offer the least resistance.

And what do you propose? That he should rest himself, recover breath, regain vigour, return to all his energy, and possibly renew his violent onslaught. Where is the reward of your prudence and husbanding strength if the danger which you have avoided the first time should be forced upon you the second?

"Still," Claude persisted, "one could hardly strike a man with a sword who can hardly hold his own."

Such is the feeling of every gentleman. Yet in the French *barrière* style of pistol duel a combatant, after receiving the adversary's fire, will not be ashamed of advancing and of discharging his own weapon. Here the opponent is even more unprotected; nothing can restore to the pistol the ball which it has discharged. In a rapier duel, on the other hand, however worn out a swordsman may seem, a supreme exertion of the will may rally his scattered forces, and enable him, dangerous still, to deal a death blow.

But custom is often stronger than truth. With the innate sentiments of chivalry, the essence of the *pundonor*, you will feel a repugnance, an incapacity for taking an advantage to-day, when to-morrow under identical circumstances you will claim all your rights.

"The difference appears to me," said Shughtie, "that with the pistol you may miss; with the sword you can't. There's something cold-blooded in wounding a man with a mortal weapon, whereas a pugilist has no scruple in giving the knock-down blow that ends the fight."

I pursued. My memory recalls another argument of a classical friend who quoted these verses of the Æneid:

> Ille pedum melior motu fretusque juventa;
> Hic membris et mole valens; sed tarda trementi
> Genua labant, vastos quatit æger anhelitus artus.
>
> ÆNEID V.

So it is with arms in the hands. Two men meet upon the field. This has all in his favour but one thing; he has height, length of arm, rapid execution, science of arms. That has only great muscular vigour, and the advantage of wind. The combat is unequal, and the tactic of the fencer must be that of the wrestler.

Here there are two wrestlers; one has every advantage of size, strength, and weight; the other has in his favour youth, suppleness, and agility. The latter evidently knows but one tactic, that of wearing out a superiority from which he has been compelled to run many a risk. Would it be fair in the first to require a suspension of the struggle, and thus deprive his opponent of an only chance?

Is it reasonable that one should be invited to sacrifice a part of his chances when the other would add to his own gain the

loss of his adversary? The former, by calling for a halt, a truce, demands that the latter should give up the good resulting from his strength, "stay," and wind. But he himself at the same time has not renounced the benefits of his height, his skill, and his other gifts, and he will be careful not to renounce them when the combat shall be renewed.

We might pursue this subject far. The strength whose advantages you expect the combatant to sacrifice may be the result of short and heavy limbs, which, depriving him of elasticity and rapidity of movement, add greatly to his difficulty and his danger. The long-windedness of which you would disarm him, to the profit of his enemy, may be owing to the development of his lungs and breadth of chest, which presents the greater surface to the enemy's sword.

I have now shown what are the rights of the question according to justice and fair play.

"Fair play," interrupted Shughtie, "is one of the two new ideas in morality which have sprung from the British brain. What the other is you will all guess. When we pass away we shall leave this legacy to the world."

The exceptions can depend only upon individual considerations, such as constitutional feebleness, sickness, a disposition to faint, and so forth. All are cases which should previously have been foreseen and provided for.

I have treated this point at full length. Of capital importance, it is subject to very different appreciations. In conclusion, allow me to say that such questions must, as a matter of delicacy, always be debated between the seconds, and never reach the principals. In this case one of the latter might seem to crave a favour which the other has a right to refuse.

X.

"A last word," said Charles. "Can a man be compelled, as one reads of in books, to fight two or more duels in succession?"

In these days certainly not. Formerly all the officers of a regiment would call out a man who was supposed to have insulted the corps. I knew an Englishman who almost in his boyhood shot three adversaries in one morning; and there have been horrible instances of combined assassination even in our day. But now we should look upon such an accumulation of cartels as murder pure and simple.

Once the duel finished the combatant should be inviolable to all, and in no case can he be compelled to cross swords a second time. Remember that I am not speaking of the pistol duel. Fatigued as he is, or as he may be, by the first encounter, the chances of a second would not be equally distributed between him and his adversary.

If another rencontre be inevitable, and be honourably settled upon by both sides, it can take place only after many hours of rest, or, better still, on the morrow. At the same time, should the "party interested"—that is to say, the man who has fought—demand an immediate settlement of the question, there is no moral reason for not conceding it. I should never allow my "friend" to accept it, save under very exceptional circumstances, such as the absolute necessity of a journey, for if successful he would certainly be misjudged by the world.

But there is one precaution which is absolutely necessary. Under no circumstances whatever should the man who is about to become an adversary be allowed to be present, either as spectator or as second, at the combat which precedes his own. The primary law, equality of chances, would be thereby utterly violated. The simple act of looking on has given him a real, an incontestable advantage. With eyes sharpened by necessity he has watched his enemy, at a time, too, when most probably the latter was the least capable of concealing his play.

"Explain!" was the word.

In a rapier duel there are two important points to be learned. The first is the adversary's style and knowledge of the sword; the second is the nature of his moral organisation upon the field. It is evident without argument how much you gain by knowing whether the man before you is impetuous and fiery or calm and cold; if he will stand upon the defensive or resolutely proceed to the attack; whether his plan is to parry the pass, to retire, or to extend the sword—in fine, if he is energetic or "dawdling," skilful or unskilled, "difficult" and dangerous or tame and phlegmatic.

By the mere act of being present at a first rencontre you know all that as though you had fenced with your adversary a dozen times. Your confidence increases with your knowledge, your energy redoubles; your presence of mind, untrammelled by doubt, preoccupation, or the necessity of study, belongs to you in its entirety. You have read the book, you have surveyed the country.

Though you be completely ignorant of arms, and even though a study of the sword, more or less superficial, may not enable you amply to take advantage of the occasion, as a practised student would do; still, the simple fact of having witnessed the rencontre is enough to lay the terrible phantom which we call the Unknown, to point out to your intelligence the line which it should follow, and to show you the certain way to success.

Your adversary, on the other hand, ignores all this. He is uncertain whether you are practised or unpractised; whether he should attack you or await your attack; if your nature is receptive and impressionable or stolid and aggressive, cool or liable to be carried away. He walks like one blindfolded;

you are the book with uncut leaves, the unexplored region. It remains for him to divine everything, to learn everything.

And as but lately I claimed for the man who, in default of study or acquired science, enjoys such advantages as well-developed lungs and abnormal resources of muscle the plenary right of using his superiority as the adversary had not failed to do, so in the situation which we now consider I unhesitatingly reject anything that may destroy the equality of chances and may make the scale incline to one side or to the other.

Under these circumstances, were I a second, my first step would be an absolute refusal to be present at a rencontre so irregular and so unequal.

The Ninth and Last Evening.

I.

In consideration of the occasion—the melancholy occasion—we were promised a visit in the smoking-room, but not so early as usual—as sundry Philisterines (feminine of the Philistines), who had been dining at the castle, might not order their carriages till late.

I am trying to remember, but I cannot, that the gathering in the Fumatory was at all remarkable for gloom or sadness. The *séance* began with the usual light talk about current topics, and when every cigar and pipe was under a full head of smoke, the subject of the final discourse was asked.

This evening I propose to speak of the combatants themselves and the means of attack and defence which offer them the most favourable chances. We will avoid anything verging upon the triste or the terrible, and do our roaring very gently. Indeed, the occasion is already sad enough to——

My sentimental attempt—why will the hearer always mistake them?—was nipped in the bud by a general movement of hilarity. Youth is so unpleasantly sanguine; the time before it is so interminable, and the years roll on so slowly. It is only after—ahem!—that man begins to find the stream gain swiftness, break into a torrent, and rush madly past its banks towards the sea—the eternal sea. It is only then that he realises and quotes:

> Eheu fugaces Posthume! Posthume!
> Labuntur anni.

It is only then that he begins to review the past, to think of what might have been, of all that he might have done, to recall to mind, to quote:

> And of the learned who with all his lore
> Has leisure to be wise!

Perhaps, oh, poet! the truest wisdom for prosaic personal use, at least, if not poetical purposes, is never to look back upon the

past, to ransack the present for every possible enjoyment, and even at eighty to anticipate the future, to begin building a house or a family or a fortune at the age of seventy or eighty with mental eyes fixed upon the long and brilliant perspective which spreads itself before them.

I have a young friend of eighty-four who hopes that someone will shoot him when he grows old. I was once dining at the house of another *jeune homme* of seventy, a statesman, a littérateur, and a man of the world, who had lived, as the saying is, every moment of his life. His sleep was so sound that no one ventured to ask him in the morning how he had passed the night, and his appetite, even at breakfast, was always of the healthiest.

But at that especial dinner I could not help remarking to my neighbour that the host was "hungry as a hunter," and in higher than his usual high spirits.

"Don't you know why?" whispered Meph. "I do; he has just received a letter announcing to him the death of one of his oldest and best friends."

The anecdote is not amiable—like Fontenelle's "point de sauce blanche"—and I hardly know why it has fallen from my lips. Yet it is true, true to the letter; my belief is that it portrays a really wise man. And did not the correct Archbishop of Cambrai, if we may trust his own madrigal, which, by the by, was suppressed *par les nonnettes*, record a similar sentiment?

Jeune, j'étais trop sage
Et voulais trop scavoir.
Je ne veux à mon âge
Que badinage
Et toucher à mon dernier âge
Sans rien prévoir.

Fénélon also had evidently found leisure to be wise.

A long silence followed. I was preparing some final remarks.

II.

"What! positively in a brown study?" said that vexatious Shughtie. "One would almost suspect that the sweet youth's in love!"

Another burst of juvenile enjoyment, which had one good effect, that of rendering all further sentiment impossible. So I resumed in my soberest and most businesslike tones.

Yesterday we settled the vexed question of what a second is expected to do and not to do. I attempted to point out, as lucidly and as completely as possible, the qualities required in your "friends," their multifarious duties and precautions, the preliminary studies demanded of them, and the anxious circumspection which must preoccupy their minds at all times and upon every point. For the world will charge upon their shoulders the greatest part of the responsibility, and the world

is right. Half the duels in the olden time arose from putting one's "affair" in the hands of Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

The preliminaries are all ended. Each combatant has received a blade of equal length.

"I have heard," said Lord S., "that on the Continent sometimes allowance is made for natural length of arm. Is it the case?"

An energetic second will occasionally try to secure that advantage for his principal, but it should never be admitted. The long arm is certainly in the fencer's favour, but it may be comparatively weak, or accompanied by feeble loins and legs, and surely one cannot think of handicapping on such occasions. Moreover, the longer the foil the greater practice is required to use it properly.

Both are now placed fronting each other. One of the friends stands between them; he turns alternately towards both principals and asks them:

"Gentlemen, are you ready to stand on guard?"

And upon receiving the affirmative reply he moves from between them, giving the word to begin.

Now the combat opens; both men, attentive and still motionless, feel that their lives are protected by the points of their swords—nothing else.

III.

Under these circumstances only three hypotheses are possible. I will briefly examine them all.

The first is that in which a man who has never handled a foil or a rapier, or who has that dangerous thing a little knowledge, stands in presence of an adversary who is familiar with his weapon; this is perhaps the most usual case. The second is that in which both the combatants are equally "profane" in the Art of Arms; and the third is when both have a modicum of skill or are equal in swordsmanship. With respect to the last phase, I will somewhat extend what was said before about the levelling properties of the buttonless foil or rapier. In the field the degree of superiority as regards science, for which one of the combatants may be noted in the *salle d'armes*, often disappears, and is much more than compensated for by the difference of organisation. Here, and I cannot repeat it too often, the object is not to touch often and brilliantly; the one thing needful is to touch once in any way you can.

We are no longer in the age when every gentleman who wore a sword was supposed to have learned its use, and was expected to draw it whenever opportunity offered. The beaux and the dandies of the Georgian era, like the *raffinés* on the other side of the Channel, considered it a mark of high breeding not to disable the antagonist, except by a brilliant, scientifically combined pass. There is much to be said in favour of the practice;

it was more graceful, more gentlemanly, more chivalrous, and it showed the old knightly quality of being perfectly familiar with the use of weapons. But, however that might be, the man who used his sword like a spit, even though he succeeded in passing it through his adversary's body, would have made himself the laughing stock of men and an object of contempt to women.

We have changed all that; the conditions of the age no longer admit it. Ours has become a workaday world, and England is fast teaching the rest of mankind to quote her peculiarly national and characteristic proverb, "Time is money." We attempted to introduce the Turkish bath, which, connected with ceremonial ablutions, in Turkey occupies the best part of four hours. What was the result? The City man drove off to Jermyn-street or elsewhere, undressed, sat five minutes in the *tepidarium*, rushed into the *calidarium*, oscillated between the two for a quarter of an hour, lay fidgeting for another fifteen minutes in the *frigidarium*, hardly waited till the first perspiration had passed off, rubbed himself down, re-dressed, and drove back whence he came, in nervous anxiety lest he should be too late for a business letter or a party of pleasure. After this can you wonder that he execrated the Turkish bath, and that his friends sometimes attributed to it his apoplexy, his epilepsy, or his paralysis?

And so it is with fencing. In these days young men have no time for it. Hence the art is neglected, and it is very rare that both combatants know how to make the best use of the arm which they hold in their hands.

I now proceed to consider my first hypothesis.

IV.

In France the man who knows nothing of the sword, whether he has never touched a foil, or he has, at rare intervals, beaten the air in the rooms of some young friend, when suddenly forced to fight goes straightway to a professor with the object of obtaining some notion which can enable him to defend his life. The laws of society permit him to haunt the *salle d'armes;* he may spend every moment of the interval in study, and, if the duel be with pistols, he may frequent the *tir* and get useful hints from the experts, who in France especially teach the art of shooting. In England we do not exactly consider such practice fair play.

You will here allow me a few words of digression. When a really good fencer is somewhat rusty of hand, after, we will say, from six months to a year of non-practice, I should advise him to do nothing of the kind. It generally happens that the first time he touches a foil his movements, though by no means so correct, become much more "difficult" and dangerous. The irregularities that manifest themselves and the rude vigour

that breaks out more than compensate for the absence of closeness in pass and parry. Upon the same principle a man often shoots notably his best at the very opening of the season, on St. Partridge his day.

To return to my young man. He walks straight into the *salle*, and he says to Mr Professor, "I want you to teach me something of fencing. I'm to fight to-morrow."

"Do you know anything about the sword?"

"Half nothing, I may say."

"At any rate, you know that you must hold it by the handle and try to touch the enemy with the point—that's about all, isn't it?" rejoins Mr Professor, with a queer kind of smile. He then takes down two buttoned foils, hands one to his visitor, and begins the lesson.

As you imagine, this rapid course of instruction lacks variety; indeed, it cannot be, it should not be, otherwise. The whole point of the instruction now consists in its simplicity, in its being intelligible and practical. For the man who knows nothing the most indispensable conditions are calmness and sang-froid. These qualities acquire a greater value, because they will often be opposed in one combatant to excitement and temerity in the other.

What the professor must regard above and before all things is the natural position, the attitude, of his pupil. It should be determined in a great measure by the person most concerned; it may not be modified, except for the indispensable necessity of action, such as a certain regard to balance and to facility of using the muscles. The main object is to give the improvised swordsman confidence in himself and to turn his faults and imperfections to the greatest possible advantage rather than attempt to correct them.

I attach the utmost importance to not putting the pupil "out of conceit with himself," as children say, but, on the contrary, to increasing his self-reliance by word or deed. A little humouring will make him feel at home, and the effect will be a certain freedom of thought, of behaviour, and of action. The errors and irregularities which may lead to the greatest dangers should simply be pointed out, and the result must be left to himself.

The neophyte is sure not to sit straight upon his haunches; he will bend one way or the other, and happy for him if the inclination be to the front. He can then be taught in a few minutes to let the upper works—that is to say, the bust—impend over the lower. This, combined with the hand and the hilt, arm and shoulder, will serve as vanguard and shield to that part of the body where every thrust is almost always mortal.

You have been told that there is a something instinctive even in our modern and civilised style of fencing. This is so true

that if all of you, even those who have never touched a foil, were to arm yourselves from that bundle in the corner and were to stand on guard, not in sport, but in real and terrible earnest, supposing that Indian mutineers were thundering at the door, your positions would greatly resemble one another, with only the light varieties resulting from differences of physique.

"I've never touched a sword!" cried Mr X, taking up a foil, "and I'd like to see the result."

At that moment entered the Marchioness and her daughters, and after a general and comprehensive survey of the room took their accustomed seats.

"I hear that you are all fighting duels, gentlemen, under the peaceful tuition of Capt. Burton."

As usual, they malign me, Lady B——.

"Then what is Mr X doing? Where is his enemy? Who is the other desperado?"

Poor Mr X sat down, foil in hand. I relieved him of his weapon and turned to Lady Mary. Pray hear my prayer! It is only a little discussion concerning falling on guard. You are going to take lessons. Do let this be the first. I will place myself as if about to attack you, and you will oppose me as you think fit. The charming blonde, *grande et gracieuse dans ses moindres mouvements*, like La Belle Hamilton, stood up at once, slightly flushing, and smiling kindly assent. I presented the weapon, which she took with that kind of hand which at once attracts eye and heart, when the stunted, etiolated extremities of the Hindú or Hindí Venus cause a cold shudder. Let us have full-sized hands of perfect shape, according to the Greek and Roman canon, not the dwarfed beauties of the Norman-Scandinavian model type. And how set free poor Fancy from those eyes of liquid blue, the turquoise of Sèvres porcelain, with the soft lights of youth and life and happiness shining within them? Again, what a contrast with the big, owlish orbs of the nearer Asiatic, the Turkish, Egyptian, and Syrian girl, which are large enough and black enough and dull enough for a "book of beauty"! And that wealth of golden hair which the good term flavescent and *beurre frais*, and the evil disposed "barley sugar"! We wanderers of the outer East adore every variety, from simple blond and *blond-cendré* to the *fulvastre*, coloured like the lion's mane; from the *blond-fulvide*, approaching the true rufous, and the *Maryland*, palest of browns, best worn rough and dishevelled, like the article which names it; to the *rulide*, which Raphael delighted to honour, and—shall I own it?—to the fiercest *pelo rosso*, which the wicked brand as "carroty." Compare that glorious tint that glitters as if borrowed from the morning sunbeam, which seems to shed light upon the features like a halo, an aureole, and which would only look dull if gold powdered,

with the blue-black *crinière* of Southern Europe, the raven's wing of which men rave and write—I think of the difference between the loveliest spring day and wintry night.

But the time of trial was come. I mastered my emotion with a mighty effort, and before the fair girl had time to prepare herself I stood straight before her, threatening with my point that loveliest of lovely bosoms. Instinctively the tender, graceful lines, wavy as those of the palmlet, lost much of their *abandon*; the stature grew to its full height, and a young Penthesilea stood before the delighted room. The guard was perfect.

Oh, remain so for a minute! The position might be photographed! Such, ladies and gentlemen, I resumed in my driest tone, is the living proof which will convince the most sceptical. Can you not see in that attitude of defiance the *pointe de départ* of the complete swordsman? And so it must be, because it results from the nature of our organisation, and of our offensive and defensive instincts.

"I hardly think that I can stand long so," said the adorable patient, who had remained scrupulously still. Oh that Titian could have seen her with that complexion,

Making her white robe dull and wan,

that colour heightened by exertion and by the novelty of the exercise!

Only one second more, I begged. You will tire yourself if the right arm is stretched too much. Shorten it a very little and hold the sword very lightly with the thumb and two first fingers, feeling the hilt somewhat more firmly with the rest; the right shoulder a trifle lower, and, above all things, no unnecessary force, no rigidity of muscles in the shoulder.

"That is far more comfortable; it hardly tires me at all!"

You will find it still easier if you will not allow the waist to droop, the bust to bend carelessly a little forwards, the left foot to draw somewhat nearer the right, and the knees slightly to bend, ready for a rapid movement forwards or backwards.

"Now I feel the stiffness much less!"

Admirable! Only keep the right shoulder somewhat more effaced without effort or inconvenience. Place the left hand upon the waist, propped by the thumb and fingers. Now you are all perfection. If I move towards you, resolutely extend the foil, pointing at my face, taking at the same time one step to the rear. So! Admirable again! And yet you have not yet begun your lessons! I can hardly believe it; you seem to have practised for months. Capt. Seaton is to be envied his most promising pupil. I shall always claim for myself the high honour of having first put the foil into your hand.

"Is the demonstration over?"

Yes; and a thousand thanks! If another is wanted I can hardly venture to ask again. But——

"I also have something to ask you, so we may be upon terms of equal concession," was the reply, accompanied by a too enchanting smile.

And the beautiful experiment sat down after showing us a *tableau vivant*—a vision of grace, a personification of girlish loveliness—which no man in that room will ever forget if he lives to the age of Mr Parr, sen.

It was no mere compliment to say that one would have supposed her not to have been a beginner. Here sex told. Women are so much less awkward than men, and their finer sense of the fitness of things, combined with superior powers of intuition, takes away so much of its *gaucherie* from the first steps in physical exercise. See the difference between boy and girl entering upon their first positions in the dancing-room.

And in the use of weapons women, although deficient in bodily force, which to a certain extent is the root of all excellence, far surpass us as a rule in strength of nerves, simply because their mode of life is not so trying to the system. I lately gave but a simple lesson with *pistolets de salon* to a fair friend at Florence. She had never touched the weapon before that morning, and in her next trial she made several bull's-eyes.

This same nervous strength and quiet life explain why so many of the sex, especially the blondes, in whom oxygen predominates over carbon, return home from India "fat, fair, and forty," when their husbands and brothers wear the light mahogany and maple tints which characterised the old "Nabob."

V.

What, then, is the sole lesson, the only salutary advice, which, according to me, a fencing master can give to the man who says, "In two hours or to-morrow, as the case may be, we fight"?

A short digression, before I reply to myself. The *maître d'armes* can hardly be expected to be outside and beyond the general run of his profession, but an exceptional man, who is somewhat a physiognomist and—excuse the dreadful word!—an anthropologist—it has nothing to do with anthropophagy—may dive into the secrets of his client's organisation with results which enable him wonderfully to condense instruction; such a compendium, a *multum in parvo*, will take the place of a dozen lessons given by an average, or what American citizens better call an 'or'nary," man.

I once went through a course of lectures in phrenology, my deceased friend Dr D. being the instructor, an able follower of Gall, Spurzheim, and Co.

"Excuse me if I interrupt you," said Shughtie. "I was never satisfied with that full-fledged invention of the German *Geist*, and lately, turning over old *bouquins*, I hit upon the *Margarita Philosophica*, Fribourg, 1503; it contained a skull marked and mapped much as those were by Mr de Veal—who called himself Mr de Weel. A curious question whether it was known to Gall!"

Possibly, but to continue. My friend's sharp Celtic wits, he was born a Galway "buckeen," had been prodigiously sharpened by the *res angusta*, and by a fine young family with fine young appetites. He was a perfect study in his professional studio, garnished with the usual lines of banal plaster busts, Michael Angelo and Mr Rush, Mr William Palmer and the Vertical Section of the Brain, Rev. Thos. Binney and Mr Greenacre, Mrs Manning and the Idiot Girl of Cork, Professor Owen and the Skull of the Black Monkey. He received tributaries seated before his table, where lay the compasses and callipers, the list of prices (fee 5s.) for disclosing to you the inner secrets of your soul, and the skeleton printed papers to be filled up with your passions, your sentiments, your perceptions, and your reflections.

His dissection of the victim commenced even before the door was opened. Some knocked loudly and decidedly, others softly and with protest, as it were. These turned the handle without preliminary, those apologised for intruding; one took off his hat when he came in, another wore it, and wore it on the side of his head. In fact, everything was noted by that old man's wary eye, from the first knock to the final arrangements about the cost of the "character." The biceps were, of course, felt, measured, and made the subject of the usual commonplaces and generalities. But they were evidently the matter of the very least importance.

I remember once saying to him, after witnessing two or three of these scenes, in which he who consulted the oracle divulged everything that he wished to learn:

"Doctor, the man begins with the ends of his hair, and ends with the tips of his toes. Give me his boots, usual wear, and they will do my turn as well as the bumps do yours."

The old man subtly looked at me over the upper rim of his tortoiseshell spectacles, and replied, "My dear sir, every profession has its professionalities."

* * * * * *

And now to answer myself. In the assault we obey certain rules previously laid down, accepted, and learned by heart; we do not attempt to touch the adversary, save under specified conditions. A mask covers the face, a plastron protects the chest.

But the faults which we would avoid in the *salle d'armes* are useful in the field to intimidate the opponent's practice, and to cause hesitation in his movements. For fencing, no matter what

the masters say, is perhaps the science in which certain irregularities may, at a given moment, be of the greatest advantage to those who commit them Otherwise, it would be a song to be committed to memory, more or less correctly, and he who knows it best would then have nothing to fear. If the *maitre d'armes* attempt anything like beginning at the beginning, in working up to a knowledge of passes and parries, he is simply wrong. He must foresee that the undeveloped intelligence before him will be troubled by the natural emotion of the combat, and the lesson must not add to that trouble. All he teaches, in fact, should be clear, simple, and facile in comprehension as in action, taking its source in that instinct of defence which belongs to every nature.

"You're evidently qualifying for a professorship, or for the House of Commons," said Seaton. I regret to own that the "Cigarettes" enjoyed the remark.

It is a serious subject which must not be treated with lightness, I replied in my most dignified tones.

There are certain principles of prudence and personal security so invariable that to question them would be madness. They apply to one and all; they are the natural base of every struggle between man and man.

As soon as the seconds have given the word, the pupil must learn, by a sudden and rapid movement, to break backwards one or two measures, so as to guard himself against a possible surprise. And in the course of the combat he must break, incessantly break, but little by little, not covering too much ground, and not like one who fears, but like one who awaits.

Never forget the sole formula which at such supreme moment is at the disposal of the man who cannot call in science to his aid, the rule upon which he should concentrate his attention—break and extend, which means defend yourself by threatening. There must have been something ludicrous in the idea of threat and menace connected with the bright vision that had just appeared to us, for John Shughtie indulged in a low laugh. As I looked at him reprovingly he covered his recklessness by remarking, "It's not so easy to threaten when one doesn't know how!"

Pardon me; the very act of presenting the point suffices. He who sees it glittering even motionless before his eyes must feel its presence preoccupying his thoughts; he dwells upon it the more when he knows that the hand which guides it is without training, obeys no law, seeks no feint, but is ever there like a watchful sentinel at his post.

To explain myself more clearly I will say: the retreat is your defence, the extension of the sword is your mode of offence—the only mode permitted to those who have not studied in the schools.

By retreating you maintain full or long measure between yourself and your opponent, you prevent his easily mastering your blade by means of half attacks, and by remaining on guard you block up the way against surprises, against blind and furious onslaughts.

This extension of the sword arm was the only tactic of M. Edmond About when he fought M. Hervé and of the naturalised Parisian M. Rob. Mitchell when in 1874 he met his "brother" journalist, M. Aurélien Scholl.

The only further movement which I would teach the neophyte is this: When breaking and extending, change line at times by passing underneath the opponent's sword, which is, in fact, only a simple disengagement.

Nothing is easier to learn. The retrograde movement of the body facilitates the action. An hour's work, even for a man who has never handled a sword, will render familiar to him this change of line, which strengthens at the same time the defence and the offence.

And while making a neophyte repeat this simple exercise, I would also teach him to keep the sword point now at the height of the breast, then directed towards the flank—that is to say, menacing the upper and the lower lines.

He is thus, by means of an extension of the arm, an upward and downward movement of the point, called in Italian a *mezza-cavazione*, and a disengagement—absolutely nothing more—able to threaten and control the only four lines known to the attack and to the defence.

There was a movement of impatience, especially amongst the pipes, as if the instruction appeared too elementary.

Allow me to remark that I am simplifying my demonstration, perhaps to puerility. I am detailing and analysing each movement, and especially I am avoiding technical terms, for my lecture is mostly addressed to those whose lessons are still to come. On the other hand, even the practised swordsman will find some advantage in thus taking to pieces the mechanism of his art and in assigning to each item its relative value and significance.

VI.

"With permission of my future pupils," Seaton said, "I'd ask why you now avoid mentioning the lunge to the rear, *se fendre en arrière?*"

Simply because, according to me, this system, useful in exceptional cases, may become very dangerous to one applying it by chance or at inopportune times. It would most probably compromise his defence and throw him into the hands of the adversary.

The tactic which I advocate—that is to say, the step backwards, the simultaneous extension of the arm, either in the

same line or by disengagement, followed by recovering guard and shortening the arm—is far preferable to this hazardous movement. Whether you win or lose depends upon the skill and prudence of the adversary. But, at any rate, you are always firm in the defence, solid upon your legs, and in perfect equilibrium, ready to repeat the same movement whenever the opponent advances; and after wearying him out and inducing him to attempt some dangerous attack which thoroughly fails, this identical outstretching of the point will direct it to his arm, to his shoulder, or to his breast.

But if you lunge backwards—that is to say, retire the left foot some 15in., whilst the right continues in position, and your body is thrown back—what benefit do you expect?

You are unskilful in arms. What secret instinct points out to you the very moment of action? For after this movement you must recover yourself, and rapidly too; you must return to guard without a moment's loss, and this will be found by no means easy. Meanwhile the opponent, taking advantage of your inexperience and the disunion which cannot but arise in the use of your limbs, presses you with vivacity, and perhaps secures your sword.

You escape, we will suppose, this first danger; and take warning not to repeat it, however sorely you are tempted by the attacks and the half attacks of your adversary. You resolve to reserve the lunge backwards for an opportunity. But you cannot do this, especially upon the field, without judging when it can be done safely, and judgment in arms implies knowledge. I am now concerned only with those who have neither one nor the other.

Therefore I should strongly dissuade a man who is not in the habit of using the sword from attempting to lunge backwards. It may be done by the trained hand, but he will use the movement sparingly, and rather as a *hors d'œuvre* than a *pièce de résistance*. It is a reversal of the normal action, and consequently it is opposed to the first principles of fencing.

VII.

I was most anxious during that last evening to make the lecture as light as possible, and to introduce a few brilliant flashes of wit and humour, as those of silence were rendered impossible by the condition of things. Probably the will to do blocked the way; moreover, at this ninth *séance* no one seemed willingly to differ in opinion or even to interrupt me. I could only continue my subject doggedly, trusting to a contingency which—alas!—never came.

We have seen all that can be done for a man who knows nothing whatever of weapons, and whose only chance of safety, in presence of one who does know, consists in the extreme of simplicity. Let us now pass to the pupil who has already a slight acquaintance with arms. This is a very different case;

the circle of the lesson greatly widens; he has learned something of the language, and we must show him how to make the best use of it.

To such a fencer I would say: "Take the guard already advised, but play a little with the sword, changing freely from one line to the other, ranging inside and outwards, high and low, so as to discomfort the opponent. Offer now and then an attack in order to regain lost ground, but never commit yourself to a real offensive movement unless you are sure of success. It is throwing away the scabbard; it is burning your ships."

I would add: "Sometimes, but always accompanying a half or a whole retreat, make a circle with the sword or a counter of tierce and carte simultaneously, so as to traverse all the lines; then again, "as you were," with the point threatening the adversary's face. If he attacks you freely, and in the higher direction, retire the left foot a little, without, however, attempting the lunge backwards, and withdraw the face and the upper part of the body. The best way of recovering or returning to guard after this is to spring to the rear with both feet off the ground before the opponent, if he has escaped your extensive movement, has time to push his advantage.

"Pray explain one thing," Seaton objected. "A few evenings ago you told us that the principal rule, the fundamental law of the sword, is to parry. Now you advise your pupils not to parry at all."

You are right, and I am not wrong. Remember, please, that we were then talking of fencing as the science, or rather as the study, of arms. Now, there is no question of the kind; we are speaking of those who cannot pretend to any but very moderate skill.

Permit me a comparison. The "odious" practice often illustrates new things, paints them like a picture—*oculis subjecta fidelibus.*

Here is a man overboard. As usual with that provident being the British seaman, he is helpless in the sea; he cannot swim a stroke, and he is bound for the bottom as fast as possible. Do you thus address him: "Man, inflate your lungs gradually and fully; don't lose presence of mind; strike the arms outwards, and immediately follow with the movement of the legs"? No! you do not. You cry out to him: "Catch hold of the rudder or the rope or the patent life-saving apparatus," and you trust that something of the kind may keep his head above water till he is picked up.

This is exactly our position. The danger is imminent, and it is my duty to save you by any means in my power.

VIII.

Certes, this man who in a few hours will be upon the field of fight might learn from me a variety of new passes and

parries, but they will hardly suffice him, except they be those which I have said traverse and cover all the four lines. What would be the result of over-instruction?

The adversary would find it child's play to deceive this "newly acquired knowledge" ever alternating between the two extremes, soft, slow, and "dawdling," or rash, violent, and erratic, sweeping in huge circles round the sword instead of lightly contouring its point. The neophyte's blade meeting nothing would beat the air, and, carrying with it his wrist and forearm, leave the chest, in fact the whole trunk, completely uncovered.

Supposing also that the opponent has not made use of the disorder which he caused. The neophyte, seeing his own importance, would ask himself the means of avoiding a similar danger on a new attack. This hesitation is usually fatal. When a man hesitates about what he is to do or not to do his mind becomes troubled and excited; he whips the wind with his blade as the drowning man beats the waves, and he ends either by exposing himself to the thrust which will end the combat or by throwing himself upon the adversary's sword at the risk of being run through the body.

This is the reason why I should never attempt to teach any but an experienced man movements which he is incapable of executing correctly. Now analyse the process which I have advised him to adopt.

By "breaking," or retiring, he escapes the thrust—one great point gained. To escape the point, either by withdrawing the body, by retiring *en règle*, or by a spring to the rear, is not parrying, I own, but it is the equivalent of the parry, since the sword does not reach you; and even if it does the wound will be slight, for you have made the adversary lose by your retreat what he expected to gain by his attack.

Furthermore, feeling that your point is ever kept steadily opposite him, he does not venture to be impetuous and to assault you with all the freedom of which he is capable. If carried away by temper he does so at last; you have at least the chance of touching him, involuntarily and accidentally, it is true, but probably that would be a matter of little importance to you.

"I can't understand one thing," said Seaton—"why that unhappy adversary doesn't master your sword, since you're offering it to him every moment."

Doubtless that is what he ought to do, and what he will try to do. Can you suppose that the man who comes to a fencing master for advice about to-morrow's duel, owning his ignorance of his weapon, or that the pupil of a few weeks can be mad enough to expect the odds in his favour? This would be too convenient; this would make it more rational not to know the sword than to pass months and years in studying it. Ignorance

would, indeed, be able to boast at the expense of knowledge and experience.

The man who has never been taught to handle, or who knows but little of the arm that must defend his life, can expect only to diminish the fatality of the chances opposed to him. The part of the master is limited to inculcating self-confidence, and to teaching the only path, prudent and defensive, upon which it is comparatively safe to walk.

By following these counsels, I repeat, the young fencer, even when over-weighted, will create serious difficulties for his adversary; will compel him to act with reserve, keep him out of measure, and oblige him to advance when attacking. You know the danger of the latter step, which may be further increased by neglect or loss of temper. But I am far from believing that the sang-froid, the science, and the experience of a complete swordsman cannot avoid the pit-traps placed in his way by ignorance and inexperience.

As regards mastering the sword, I have already said that the sole hope of safety is to keep the point in perpetual motion, and, whenever the attack is prepared, to meet it, so that the forte, and not the feeble half of the blade, is liable to be engaged. This, in fact, must conclude that momentous preliminary lesson or lessons.

And when all is said we can only resume our advice as follows: "Be prudent, be calm, be resolute, and—Allah Karim!"

IX.

"I have heard some men assert," said Lord B., "that the best thing for a poor fencer to do is to attack his antagonist the moment both are on guard. What do you think of it?"

I think it by far the best way of risking to be run through the body. Why suppose your opponent, who, like yourself, has been warned by the seconds, is unprepared to receive you, or likely to let himself be surprised? Either the man who stands before you is cunning of fence (and then he will hardly want your assistance in view of all contingencies), or he is skill-less as yourself, in which case the chances are equal. If, therefore, reasoning and forethought advise such an attack both are in error. If it is the result of an impatient, feverish, passionate organisation, which cannot wait with calmness or stand quietly upon the defensive—this is quite another thing.

To the man of sanguine temperament and violent temper, constitutionally unable to act with coolness and prudence, I would say: "Follow your instincts; obey the impulse of your nature. It will certainly expose you to much greater danger, because your attack, your rush, your onslaught, will be haphazard, without calculation, and without the counsels of experience. Its sole chance of success, even in your own eyes,

will consist in its dash, its suddenness, and its thoughtless impetuosity, which may astound the adversary and induce him to parry wildly with sword and arm. Only, before making your swoop, at least try to engage his sword by any means in your power, or to deflect it by a violent *battement*, for instance, up or down, inside or outside. In this way you provide against thrust for thrust and extension of the sword, and nothing remains, after feeling the opponent's blade, but to spring forward in right line without a moment's hesitation.

"Certes, even this simplest of movements is much easier to speak of than to execute."

It is possible that you may succeed. Chance and a man's star play such a capital part in the drama of life. But if you fail, the blade which touches you will inevitably bury itself up to the hilt, and this last consideration may, methinks, suggest a little reflection—throw some cold water upon your fire.

Therefore I should never suggest this line of action; the perils are too serious and imminent to be incurred willingly. It is permissible only in the case of a man who knows nothing about the sword, but who uses his weapon with that energy and resolution which strong and fearless nations derive from the very imminence of the danger which assails them.

X.

The second hypothesis, in which both combatants are equally "profane"—in the Italian, not the Ay-merican sense—need hardly be considered; there is little to say about it which has not been said concerning the artless opposed to the artful fencer. It will be enough to remark that one or both must expect to suffer, perhaps to *enferrer* each other fatally. Concerning the third, which supposes both combatants to have a modicum of skill, or to be equal in swordsmanship, a few words will suffice.

This is no longer a case in which ignorance and experience seek in extreme measures a chance of safety. The struggle is now more or less equal, for, I repeat it, the sharpened blade, which brings out differences of organisation, often levels distinctions of skill. The first thing to be borne in mind is the well-known saying that in the affairs of this world man is saved not by faith, but by want of faith. Distrust and suspect your adversary—such is your best guard.

I need not recall to your minds—for the advice has often been given during the last few evenings—the necessity of providing against surprise, which can be done effectively only by standing out of measure until you see the moment for advancing within distance.

If your adversary offers to shorten the space which separates you he must advance and place himself at a disadvantage. He may uncover himself to your profit; at any rate, you watch

him, you harass him, and your sword point ever presented straight at his face, breast, or flank, always threatening one of the four lines, renders his action tardy and uncertain. He must, by the very conditions of the case, forewarn you of his attack, and forewarned is, under these circumstances, forearmed. You cannot be surprised, and you will come to the parry more easily and more effectually. The advance and the action of the hand and arm which accompany it have already revealed to you what is the amount of the science which you have to encounter.

But if your opponent remain obstinately upon the purely defensive, showing you that he intends to await the attack, you feel that something must be done. Gain ground by half measures, masking the intention as much as you can with the body easily seated and every movement in equilibrium, so as to spring back if required with all your activity.

In order to diminish the danger, ever imminent, of gaining ground, embarrass the opponent, and preoccupy his thoughts by frequent menaces, which he may mistake for the forerunners of attacks. Thus you force him to guard himself, you prevent his taking the offensive, and you are able to shorten distance insensibly, without unnecessary exposure.

At times feint as though you intended to thrust home, in order to let him explain himself and divulge to you his play. Thus you will learn whether he intends to retreat, to parry, or to extend the sword. A man under such circumstances must be perfectly sure and master of himself not to betray his "little game" by instinctive and involuntary movements. This word of advice applies generally to the weak as to the strong, to the skilful and to the unskilled.

You have banished from your minds the phantom called and miscalled *bottes secrètes*. As regards refusing the sword, a few last words may be added.

There are many ways of counteracting this absence of the weapon, but all are difficult, and each demands skill and practice. Most often the adversary, disquieted by a movement to which he is unaccustomed, and vainly seeking for a *pointe d'appui*, hesitates, and thus loses all his rapidity of execution.

If his play is complicated you extend the sword, retiring a half measure, and fatiguing, tormenting, and enervating the hand opposed to you.

If his movements are simple, the opponent will dread risking blow for blow. The more skilful he is the greater will be, or at least should be, his prudence. And, as I said when prescribing for the assault, you can always lessen the danger of a free attack by a sharp retreat, either of full or of half measure. Thus you render the parry easier, you increase the distance, and you oppose, by a double precaution, the rapidity of the adversary's offence.

You may be touched, but it will be lightly; at any rate, far more lightly than you would have been by parrying with firm foot. You may succeed, on the other hand, in the parry; you have thus saved yourself from the *corps à corps*, and the escape will give more security to your ripost.

Let us now assume the contrary hypothesis.

You attack, either because you rely more upon the agility of your hand than upon the certainty of your reply, or because the adversary, persisting in his defence, constrains you to take the initiative. Here, then, prudence is your only safety.

The first and last rule must be never to venture upon offence without having succeeded in mastering the weak part of the sword opposed to you.

Above all things, no feints; I have told you their dangers. This is the essential difference between the assault in play and the assault in earnest, the foil that "buttons," and the point that kills.

Allow yourself only the most simple passes, preceded by controlling the enemy's blade, either with mere pressure or with an engagement, or with a *battement*, whose strength must depend upon the amount of deviation required. This process will be greatly facilitated if the adversary gives you the sword.

If, on the contrary, he persistently refuses it, your only plan is to master the difficulty by agility and address, fairly compelling him to change tactics. Finish your attack when this takes place, or when the adversary, still anxious to avoid the engagement of weapons, exaggerates his precaution, and leaves himself exposed. In the latter case, simple straight thrusts almost always succeed.

Such is the general advice to which I would draw the swordsman's attention. At the decisive moment of a *rencontre* the thoughts should dwell only upon the salient points requiring attention, and these may be resumed in the words—self-confidence, energy, and prudence

"Well," said Charles, "I suppose you're right; but how about remembering it all?"

Remember only half, I replied, and you will do well. There are so many who remember nothing, who think of nothing.

XI.

My lady, my lord, and gentlemen, I resumed in the official lecturing style:—You have mastered "The Sentiment of the Sword." Allow me to thank you once more, with grateful heart, for the exemplary patience and long suffering which you have brought to this *séance* and to those of the last week.

CONCLUSION.

Noon, on the day after the last evening, saw the period of a visit which will remain indelibly fixed upon my memory.

Castle . . . was in those days (186*) separated from its

railway station by a drive of twelve miles, and the "Highflyer," a model specimen of the old English stage coach, drawn by a rattling team of dark bays, and tooled by a burly son of "Black Sam," used to draw up at the gate, the guard announcing his approval by too-tooing lustily upon his "yard o' tin."

John Shughtie and I, after heartrending adieus and au revoirs, which seemed only to amuse Seaton, the *mauvais plaisant*, climbed up to our places outside. As he was known to be setting out upon one of his most perilous explorations, all the household collected upon the lawn to give him God-speed, and, whilst the windows showed a host of peeping faces, the juniors added a hearty British hurrah!—not the degenerate "hooray." Cambric was also made ready to flutter gaily like wisps of morning mist in the fragrant breath of the clear blue sky.

* * * * * *

The castle disappeared from view, then the grounds, then the porter's lodge. Presently came the cross-country road, wild and bare, the pretty bit of common dotted with firs and maples, and perspectives of ruddy autumnal glades, and yellow hills and dales, and straw-coloured plains, and the first glad glimpse of the pale green English sea. And so the dream dissolved into an airy nothing, leaving to me only the perfume of a Russian cigarette and the vision of a fair phantom extending a ghostly sword.

THE END

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